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# "Making Hegel Talk English" — America's First Women Idealists

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Dissertation

"MAKING HEGEL TALK ENGLISH" —  
AMERICA'S FIRST WOMEN IDEALISTS

by

DOROTHY G. ROGERS

B.A., Gordon College, 1986  
M.T.S., Boston University, 1991

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Introduction

This is the first philosophical examination of the women of the St. Louis and Concord philosophical movements -- both individually and as a group.<sup>1</sup> The St. Louis Philosophical Movement (1866-1880) and the Concord School of Philosophy (1879-1888) were two branches of the same idealist movement which attempted to adapt German thought (primarily Hegel) to the American context; or "to make Hegel talk English," as its leader, William Torrey Harris (1835-1909) described the groups' objective. Toward this end, Harris and his colleagues applied their philosophical ideas to practical matters: social and political concerns -- education in particular. Many of the members of the movement during its early years in St. Louis, therefore, were educators in the public school system, and the majority of these were women.<sup>2</sup>

Although their influence waned greatly after the turn of the twentieth century, the lives and works of the men of the St. Louis and Concord movements were relatively well chronicled over the years. Biographies were published on four of the men in the movement, and over a dozen books or theses discuss their influence or aspects of their theory. In addition, there are over thirty articles and book chapters discussing the men and their ideas. The women who were part of these movements, on the other hand, have largely been ignored by historians of philosophy in America. Aside from this book, the following have been devoted to a discussion of America's first women idealists: one thesis, one booklet, and one fairly lengthy unpublished manuscript; sixteen articles and book chapters. And the majority of these works focus on one woman in particular and her educational theory.<sup>3</sup>

One plausible reason for the near exclusion of women from the historical exploration of the American idealist movement is the fact that their work focused almost solely on education. As educational theory joined the several social sciences in becoming disciplines distinct from philosophy in the late 1800s, both

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<sup>1</sup> Short memorial or biographical sketches have been produced, and in some cases the St. Louis and Concord women have been recognized for their practical work, but they have not been discussed as philosophical thinkers.

<sup>2</sup> Of the twenty-eight individuals who were active in the St. Louis movement, sixteen were public school teachers. Ten of these were women. See Appendix I for a list of these individuals.

<sup>3</sup> The woman most widely recognized for her achievements was Susan E. Blow, who imported German kindergarten education theory into the U.S. The book and manuscript mentioned here discuss her life and work. Ten of the articles and book chapters also focus on Blow.

the women idealists and their ideas were set aside by students of philosophy. Two are still recognized as important educators, but their theoretical work has never been admitted into the philosophical canon.

Another likely explanation for their exclusion is the fact that they were women. This is not simply to charge philosophers and/or philosophical historians since 1900 with sexism. It is instead to point to a very significant reality in the professional development of women philosophers during this period: namely, academic opportunity. Although 'female seminaries' where young women could get a degree of academic training came into being in the 1820s and 1830s, more nearly equal educational opportunities did not become widely accessible until the 1870s when a number of state universities became co-educational. Even then, the more elite institutions barred admission to women. Therefore, the women discussed here did not have access to the duties, benefits, and privileges that come with entrance into the halls of higher knowledge. One of the five, Susan Elizabeth Blow (1843-1916), had no formal education to speak of but instead was privately tutored. The education of three of them, Anna Callender Brackett (1836-1911), Grace C. Bibb (1842-1912), and Ellen M. Mitchell (1838-1920), ended at the secondary school level, although this almost certainly included 'normal school' training for each. Only the youngest of them completed a bachelor's degree. This was Marietta Kies (1853-1899) who then went on to earn the Ph.D. Unfortunately, even late twentieth-century feminist historians did not encounter the St. Louis and Concord women, perhaps because they were not political activists, although some were on the periphery of the suffrage movement.

Yet these were accomplished women who participated in the early stages of the development of idealism in the U.S., and they deserve more attention than they have had in the past. In the pages that follow, a chapter is devoted to each of them. The first half of each chapter focuses on the subject's life and practical work; the second half discusses her philosophical ideas. However, discussing the women alone would be to tell only half the story. Therefore, the book begins with a discussion of the St. Louis movement as a whole and its later incarnation in New England at the Concord School of Philosophy.

Chapter one gives brief descriptions of the male leaders of the movement in St. Louis and Concord: William Torrey Harris (1835-1909), Henry C. Brockmeyer (1826-1906), Denton J. Snider (1841-1925), George H. Howison (1834-1916), Thomas Davidson (1841-1900), Louis Soldan (1842-1908), and George S. Morris (1840-1889). It might disappoint some readers that I have chosen to begin with a chapter on the

male contemporaries of America's first women idealists. Yet, as with all thinkers, the women in St. Louis and Concord did not create their ideas *ex nihilo*, but instead were part of an intellectual community. Furthermore, while the women were quite well-known in their day, their male contemporaries received more lasting attention, thus more information is available about them than is the case with the women under discussion here. Therefore, this book necessarily opens with a look at those traditionally considered the "true leaders" of America's early idealist movement: the men.

This points to a problem that constantly presented itself throughout my research on this group of women. Not only did male historians fail to chronicle the lives and work of this group; the women themselves failed to leave a decent paper trail. None of the women published a work comparable to Denton Snider's recollections, *The St. Louis Movement*. None produced an intellectual/biographical sketch of any of her female contemporaries. And the letters and unpublished manuscripts of this group have rarely been preserved. Only Susan Blow collected and preserved her correspondence, yet this contains few references to women in her philosophical circles. Thankfully, because men in the St. Louis movement were such good promoters and archivists, letters to Harris from Beeson, Bibb, and Blow and letters to Davidson from Beeson, Bibb, Brackett, Mitchell, and Sherman also remain.

Particularly in St. Louis where the movement began, philosophy was thought to have practical significance, and education was its main focus. Not only was Harris the founder and editor of the nation's first journal devoted to exclusively to philosophy, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (1867-1893), he was also a principal in and then superintendent of the St. Louis public school system (1859-1867; 1867-1880), an active member of the National Education Association (1872-1909), an officer of the American Social Science Association (ca. 1870-1900), organizer and primary lecturer of the Concord School of Philosophy (1879-1888), and finally U.S. Commissioner of Education (1890-1906).

Other men in the movement were also committed to both philosophy and its practical applications. Each was either a member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society or a contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. In most cases, they were involved in both of these projects. To cite some examples, Soldan, Snider, and Davidson taught in the public schools in St. Louis. Soldan was also a member of and leader in

the National Education Association. Both Soldan and Davidson joined the Missouri Equal Suffrage League with Harris. Brockmeyer practiced law and held public office for a period of time.

It was through the Philosophical Society, and an elite sub-group of it, the Kant Club, that the St. Louis group did its most theoretical work. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy (JSP)* grew out of this group, as did Harris' works on Hegel, *Hegel's Doctrine of Reflection* and *Hegel's Logic*. Chapter one discusses in more detail what role each of these fellows played in both the Philosophical Society and *JSP*. It also indicates when and in what manner each of them influenced or were influenced by the women in this study.

Chapter two discusses the life and work of Susan Blow, who contributed to the life of the St. Louis movement as a philosopher-practitioner. As director of the kindergarten program in St. Louis, the nation's first successful free public kindergarten, Blow developed a pedagogical theory in which play is the best means of fostering the intellectual and moral growth of children. This, she maintains, involves a dialectical process in which a child is faced with opposition in the form of the role or character that he or she has chosen to assume. While in this role, the child is estranged from him/herself. The child then "returns" from the role to the original self that faced this opposition, and grows from what has been learned about his or her own abilities.

In addition, Blow intertwined her theory of childhood education with a theory of motherhood that is completely compatible with the Hegelian view of women as outlined in the *Philosophy of Right* -- that is, as more subjective, consumed with love for their children, and fully actualized in the home. In her view, women are undoubtedly the first educators. Early childhood education is both their natural responsibility and their special skill. Yet, maternal instinct is not enough to educate a child; systematization of methods is needed. And to effect this systematization, Blow established a kindergarten training school and classes for mothers. At the same time, however, the way in which Blow professionalized early childhood education contributed to its becoming a legitimate career. Thus the maternal instinct that she believed to be inherent in women's nature moved from the private sphere of home and family into the public realm. And in this sense, she departed from Hegel's ideal.

Chapter three looks at Anna Brackett, another pedagogical theorist, who focused on the other end of the learning continuum: higher education. Drawing on the theory of Hegel's disciple, Karl Rosenkranz (1805-

1879), Brackett adopted the Hegelian view of education as a process of the unfolding of the self, of the self-development of the individual. This process takes place in stages, which requires that different methods be used to teach students at different cognitive levels. Literature plays the same role for older children, in Brackett's view, that play does in Blow's scheme for kindergarteners, only on a more conscious level. That is, it initiates a dialectical process of self-estrangement and return by introducing a child to a world different from his or her own, and then allowing the child to "return" to his or her own world, yet with a broader understanding of his or her surroundings.

The important twist to Brackett's theory, however, is in its application to women specifically. As principal of St. Louis' normal school (for teacher-training), Brackett was responsible for the education of, almost exclusively, young women. And, in stark contrast to Blow, she denies that women have any *natural* inclinations toward the care and nurture that Blow believes makes women especially well suited for the teaching profession. Instead, in Brackett's view it is because of women's *social role* that they often choose to become educators. On this point, Brackett also challenges Hegel's view of women as wholly internal and subjective. In her understanding, women -- through education -- are able to cross into the public realm, becoming individuated and rational beings. In this sense, Brackett is not only an educational philosopher, but also a feminist theorist, dissenting as she did from traditional views of women as more suited to work in the private sphere.

In chapter four, I discuss women who played less central roles in the St. Louis and Concord movements. There are over a dozen women whom I have called "peripheral" to the idealist movement, although they were either members of the groups established by the movement, colleagues of Blow and Brackett in the public school system in St. Louis, or regular participants at Concord School sessions. In addition, there are two "minor" figures, Grace Bibb and Ellen Mitchell. Both published less that is philosophical but made other practical and theoretical contributions, thus several pages are devoted to the life and work of each. Grace Bibb was a member of the National Education Association and in this capacity advocated equality in employment opportunity and compensation for women educators. She also gave regular reports on the activities of the St. Louis circle in *The Western Review* (1875-1880), an educational and literary periodical. Ellen Mitchell lectured at national congresses of women both on philosophy and on women's rights. She



was also one of only a handful of women to lecture at the Concord School of Philosophy (1887). Later, Mitchell became a faculty member at the University of Denver (1890-94). Mitchell demonstrates a better acquaintance with Hegel than does Bibb, although she does not develop a theory of her own as did Blow and Brackett. Both Mitchell and Bibb were feminists who were supportive of the suffrage movement. Both authored feminist pieces that are discussed in chapter four, because they point to an openness to progressive ideas within the St. Louis and Concord circles.

The third major woman idealist, Marietta Kies, ventured beyond the public school classroom, both literally and figuratively. Like Mitchell, Kies was among the few women who taught at the college or university level in the 1880s and '90s. Somewhat younger than Blow and her colleagues, Kies had greater educational and career opportunities so was not confined to public school teaching. In fact, Kies developed an interest in political, rather than educational, philosophy and authored two books on the subject before her early death at the age of forty-five. And, following Hegel's lead no doubt, her political theory covered the major institutions within society: family, school, civil society, state, and church.

Yet Kies' work hardly addressed "women's issues" at all. Instead she seemed to assume women's participation in the public realm -- with the exception of voting rights, which she believed should be limited to a certain narrow ranges of issues for women. What Kies did do, however, was put forth a theory of altruism in contrast to egoism as a valid ethical principle in business and economic decision-making. And the business world is of course, a segment of civil society. This is a very bold move, because Hegel himself had upheld the view of civil society as the realm in which individuals are free to pursue their interests and wants. Yet Kies built a system that anticipated many recent feminist theories of care, as noted in chapter five. In fact, her theory approximates what some contemporary feminists have suggested is missing from the Western political philosophical tradition.

### *On Being Philosophical Enough*<sup>4</sup>

Just how philosophical were the members of the St. Louis and Concord circles? According to Leidecker's biography of Harris, very. In fact, Leidecker prophesied that Harris, if not his colleagues, would grow in renown in American intellectual history over time (see the preface to Leidecker's biography, *Yankee Teacher*). So far this has not been the case, even though the institutional structuring of schools that Harris introduced is almost synonymous with the meaning of "education" in the U.S. today. Why? Because Harris and his group of followers were dedicated to the idea that philosophy is a *practical* enterprise. For them, philosophical principles and concepts could and should be applicable to everyday life. In their pre-professional, or perhaps more accurately, para-professional philosophical framework, they did not develop the sort of overarching, systematic philosophy that their ideal philosopher, Hegel, did. And as the discipline became a professional academic field after the turn of the twentieth century, the American idealists were left behind. Yet there is no shortage of the purely philosophical in the works of any given member of Harris' group – the women being no exception to this general rule.

Blow and Brackett applied a Hegelian dialectic of self-estrangement and return to the education of children and youth. Blow ventured somewhat further into philosophy proper than Brackett, commenting on the nature of the individual, the design of the cosmos, and God as Person, for example. In fact, she considered her last chapter of *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten* the most important in the book. The chapter's title? "Three World Views," which consisted of nothing less than an examination of the superiority of idealism over atomism and pragmatism.

Bibb and Mitchell each developed a feminist theory that shows strains of idealist influence in their published work. Mitchell tried her hand at philosophy proper with her *Study of Greek Philosophy*, but like Harris and G. S. Morris, she was less inclined to posit theories of her own than to review theories of others, namely Hegel and Zeller. (Unlike her male contemporaries, unfortunately, Mitchell was harshly criticized for this approach, and was even accused of dilettantism. This is discussed in chapter four.)

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<sup>4</sup> This section was prompted by discussion of the problem of distinguishing between philosophers, essayists, and poets, especially among women, in earlier historical periods at the Seventeenth-Century Women Philosophers conference held at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, November 7-9, 1997. A good resource on women philosophers in this era is Mary Ellen Waithe, ed., *A History of Women Philosophers*, vol. three, (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

While we do not find in Kies as much metaphysical inquiry as is present in Blow's work, the ideas that she does present come in a much more comprehensive and systematic format than do those of her contemporaries. Therefore, perhaps the works of Kies and Blow fall more legitimately under the heading "philosophy" than does the work of the other women in this book.

Yet, I am inclined to question comprehensiveness and system as the two primary criteria for deeming a thinker a philosopher, particularly when considering pre-twentieth century women. I make this rather bold rejection for two reasons. First, women's intellectual explorations were limited in this period. They could write, teach, discuss, and often attend meetings with male colleagues, certainly. But, regardless of their intellectual ability, women were often confined to certain areas of inquiry: education in Blow's and Brackett's cases; religion or aesthetics in others'. Such intellectual confinement was due partly to historical circumstances, which helped shape expectations of women, partly to the choice of the women themselves.

Yet it is true that the women in Harris' circle had *chosen* the particular branches of thought that they then became well-known experts in. Susan Blow chose kindergarten education as a means to attaining 'spiritual motherhood'. Anna Brackett clearly had a rather overt feminist agenda in promoting normal school training for young women. Still, in this period, women had very few career options – if they were to pursue a career at all. So these women made 'choices' within a very narrow range of options. Perhaps Marietta Kies, who was a full fifteen to twenty years younger than the original group of thinkers in St. Louis, demonstrates most clearly that, with even a slight shift in social norms over time, women had begun to venture beyond the branches of philosophy that had been considered acceptable for them when Harris, et al had begun their philosophical project. In short, given the historical and social context in which these women were working, even their choice to remain within certain intellectual confines may have resulted more from the "closing of the tops of the chimneys" as Brackett described their limited educational and professional opportunities, than from free choice.

Do I assert a mere sociological determinism then, suggesting that social forces pre-determined these women's professional development and thus excuse their philosophical lack of system? To an extent, yes, I do. At the same time, however, I recognize that within the social constructs in which they were operating, the St. Louis and Concord women made choices and their male colleagues provided them with opportunities

that catapulted them far beyond their female peers in intellectual and professional achievement. In this sense, it is to their credit that they chose philosophical work at all. The fact that their philosophies weren't as comprehensive or systematic as others is incidental.

This leads to a second observation regarding the understanding of philosophy as mandating comprehensiveness and system. The exclusion of women like those in this study from the philosophical canon has necessarily contributed to the shape that canon has taken. The points of emphasis, structure of arguments, and form of conclusions reached are both a result of and subsequently a cause of these women's exclusion from the American philosophical canon: What is acceptable as philosophical thought has taken on a distinctly different tone than might have otherwise been the case; because of this tone, these women's interests have been deemed too unphilosophical to be canonized. This is not to say that because they were women the ideas of Blow and her colleagues were of an inherently different quality. It is rather to concede that as women their experiences were different. Thus their contributions to the development of philosophy as a discipline were of a different character than many -- though certainly not all -- of their male counterparts. In fact, Leidecker's erroneous prophecy regarding the impact of Harris and his colleagues points directly to this same issue. Although he was (obviously) male, Harris' concerns and his tendency to focus on practical applications of philosophy rather than solely on its theoretical development, resulted in the de-emphasis (if not the exclusion) of him in the canon. Similarly, Denton Snider and Thomas Davidson have not been given the attention they deserve because their intellectual interests crossed disciplinary boundaries, thus not fitting into what came to be deemed 'philosophy' into the twentieth century. Had philosophy developed only slightly differently over the course of the last one hundred years, Harris and his colleagues -- male and female -- might have continued to hold a more prominent place, and thus to have given a different shape to philosophical discussion than what we have seen until very recently.

Discussion of the philosophical-ness of these women's philosophies is necessary, simply because theirs is a body of work that has not been examined prior to the publication of this book. Even among historians of philosophy who discuss the work of women in the discipline, questions arise as to what can be counted as philosophy. Do we include Louisa May Alcott or Rebecca Harding Davis, both of whose novels conveyed important ideas about women and social stratifications within society? Probably not, otherwise what is to

prevent us from placing Mark Twain and Henry James under the heading “philosopher”? Perhaps, then, Ann Bradstreet’s moral injunctions to her son can be counted. After all, Aristotle’s ethics were intended as a guide for his son to follow. Clearly there is no question as to whether Aristotle is a philosopher. Well then, let’s explore this question further: Is Anna Maria van Schurman a philosopher or merely, in her own phrasing, a “Learned Maid”? Soren Kierkegaard presents a similar dilemma when we stop to think about it, repeatedly referring to himself as a “mere poet,” eschewing the title “philosopher” (although most likely as an inside joke between him and his more sympathetic readers).

We can see then that the title “philosopher” is not without a degree of ambiguity, be it in reference to a man or a woman. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the women under discussion here certainly were philosophers and, as my readers will discover, that their ideas are in many ways applicable today, both within and outside of the halls of the academy.

### ***The Feminism Question***

A good part of my decision to embark on this project lay in the fact that these thinkers are women. The idea of recovering the works of women appealed to me for personal as well as academic reasons, both of which I would call feminist. When I began my research, I was certain that, as women, Blow and her colleagues would point to a new way of looking at Hegel, particularly regarding his configuration of the intersections of the public and private realms in the Western philosophical tradition. And in many instances, this hypothesis proved to be correct. Susan Blow’s kindergarten theory blurred the distinction between a woman’s maternal role in the home and her professional educative role in the school. Brackett took the professionalization of education a step further, and advocated the higher education of women, particularly teachers. This meant that she dismissed Hegel’s understanding of women’s nature, which in turn relegated them to that most natural of human institutions, the family circle. More dramatically still, Marietta Kies reinterpreted Hegel’s notion of civil society in such a way as to incorporate altruism into the mix, dethroning egoism as the operative ethical principle for “industrial relations” -- i.e., the business world. Minor and peripheral figures also made contributions to the development of early American idealism, although more as participants and implementers than as theoreticians.

Yet, is the fact that these were *women* interpreting and applying Hegel to the American context sufficient reason to call them or their interpretations "feminist"? As with any historical analysis, importing contemporary ideas into theories of times past is naive, if not misleading. First we have to determine what we mean by this term, when it originated, to what degree it has evolved, and whether our current standards of what is "feminist" are applicable to this bygone age. This is not a particularly easy task, but certainly not an insurmountable one, either. Without attempting to give a full account of the history of the "first wave" of feminism, I think it will be helpful to give at least a little background on this movement.

The first wave of feminism in this country is generally thought to have begun with the first women's rights convention held at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The term "feminism" itself was not operative at this time, however. In fact, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "feminism" was first coined in the 1850s, and until the 1880s it was used in the sciences to refer to feminine sex characteristics in plant and animal life. Its current meaning, connoting pro-female ideas and practices, started to develop in the 1890s, then became more widely used between 1900 and 1920. Even so, a concept of women's rights had developed even before Seneca Falls, and was invoked as a reason for enacting the New York Married Women's Property Act in 1836, which allowed a woman to retain power over her assets after marriage rather than being required to entrust them to her husband, which had been the case until that time. This was the first in a long series of social and political changes that were made as the push for women's rights gained strength and momentum throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.

Then as now, however, not all feminist advocates were in agreement about the meaning of the term "women's rights." Many concentrated almost exclusively on increased access to the public realm: (higher) education, broadened employment options, pay equity, and the rights to vote and to hold public office. Others focused on ways to better women's private lives: relaxed divorce laws, child custody reform, and temperance legislation, for example. But the first-wave feminist movement had one overarching theme. It sought to draw attention to injustices done to women, primarily *because* they were women and to remedy those injustices through social and political change. And although we second-wave feminists often disagree about the goals to be attained or where to place emphasis, much as our first-wave foremothers did, feminism today continues to seek to end injustices to women. Therefore, this is the way in which I use the term

"feminist" throughout this discussion; as a commitment to improving women's situation when they have been excluded because of their gender.

So the initial answer to the question of whether the women in this study and/or their works were feminist must be: "Well, yes and no." Certainly for women to pursue educational and professional equity with men at this point in history was in some sense to be feminist. The dual emphasis of education and employment had been part of the first-wave feminist agenda since its origins in the 1840s, after all. Although the subjects in this study had come of age more than a quarter of a century later, neither equal education nor full employment of women was anywhere near to having become a reality. So sheerly in terms of their practical achievements, these women embodied feminist principles.

However (and this is an extremely important "however"), even though an early twenty-first century reader might see feminist implications in the lives and works of these women, it is not quite appropriate to label all of them "feminists." Susan Blow, a very conventional woman, was raised in upper class society and forbidden by her father to work. Therefore, she served in her position in the St. Louis school system as a volunteer, accepting no pay for eleven years. This she did despite holding the title "Director of the Kindergarten" and reporting directly to the school board herself rather than to Harris, the school superintendent. In addition, while her systematization of early childhood education may have had the *effect* of professionalizing the "women's work" of educating children, she herself never explicitly stated this as her objective. In fact, Blow did not have a commitment to feminism as I have defined that term. She was opposed to two primary feminist causes for which her contemporaries fought: voting rights and equal employment opportunity. Further, there is no evidence that she made any efforts to improve women's educational opportunities, win them pay equity, or improve their lot in marriage. In fact, Blow's theoretical work was based on an understanding of women as maternal and most readily fulfilled by their work in the domestic realm -- i.e., the home. It may even be that Blow would take offense at being referred to as a "feminist."

Anna Brackett and minor idealists Bibb and Mitchell, on the other hand, were quite intentional about incorporating feminist ideas into their work. Education was itself a feminist process for Brackett, taking a young girl out of the family circle and sowing in her the seeds of independence and self-sufficiency as it did.

Her strategic omission or outright rejection of certain beliefs of Hegel and his disciple Rosenkranz regarding the characteristics of men and women, then, can readily be called “feminist.” So too with Bibb and Mitchell. Both were self-consciously and explicitly feminist, like Brackett. In fact, it would be a misrepresentation of the work of each of these three women *not* to recognize their commitment to feminism.

When we look at Kies, however, we are back in the feminist quandary that Blow puts us in. Kies attained the highest level of education of any of the women in this group, earning a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1891. As an alumna of Mt. Holyoke College and one of the first women to earn a doctoral degree in philosophy, she was clearly a proponent of higher education for women, in practice, if not in theory. Yet Kies devoted virtually no time to discussing women or women's issues in her written work. In fact, the aspect of her theory that is most enchanting to current feminists -- the idea of "justice" and "grace" as complementary principles -- is void of any reference to gender. In one sense Kies' "grace," or altruism, anticipates the "ethic of care" that Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* indicated might emerge if women were admitted into moral/ethical discourse. Kies wishes to correct the perception that "justice" is the only valid principle for ethical decision making in the business world. But its complement, "grace," is a principle she imports from the church, not the ladies' parlor. Furthermore, Kies too was unfriendly to women's suffrage. While she conceded that an abstract right to vote did exist for women, she maintained that on the practical level women should cast a ballot only on matters of concern to them: education, temperance, or perhaps labor issues, for example. So to call Kies a feminist would also be a misrepresentation of her life and thought, despite the fact that today's feminists might find her ideas particularly instructive and appealing.

Throughout this discussion then, I have tried to do three things in addressing "the feminist question." First, I have tried to use the term feminism consistently, and hope to have done so successfully. Second, I have tried to use the broad categories "liberal" and "maternal" feminism<sup>5</sup> in order only to compare each

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<sup>5</sup> "Liberal" and "maternal" feminism are the terms I use for the two main branches of feminist thought. Liberal feminism grows out of the Western individualist tradition, focusing on women's similarities to men, and generally emphasizing women's equal access to social goods that are routinely allotted to men. Maternal feminism insists that women *do* differ from men, even though that difference may be a result of nurture, not of nature. Nineteenth century maternal feminists often argued for a greater role in public life for women, based on the principle that they could use their caretaking and nurturing qualities to help clean up the social and political orders. Recently, maternal feminists have charged that a focus on the similarity of women to men has provided only formal equality for women, and that women's difference from men requires



woman's ideas about women to those that are prevalent today. At the same time, however, I have tried to apply the term "feminist" to a particular thinker only if she herself would have been likely to have considered herself a part of feminism's first wave. Third, I have tried to point out when one of these women's thoughts or actions have had feminist implications, *based on the way we see women's situation today*. In this last case, I by no means intend to impose concepts on my subjects that they were not aware of or may even have been hostile to. For example, I suggest that Susan Blow's kindergarten work had feminist implications in that it turned what had been considered maternal instinct into a professional skill. However, I do not mean that she consciously sought to bring about a change in women's status in the professional world, only that her work had the effect of doing so. As with all people who live on the cusp of great social change, the deeds of these women had unforeseen consequences, some of which served to facilitate what came to be feminist goals over time. So then, when I have ventured into pointing out feminist implications of a woman's work, I have tried to do so with care. With any luck, I have succeeded in maintaining consistency and faithfulness to each woman's view of her work and in presenting it effectively.

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social and political change in order to give women true access to goods that are denied them simply by virtue the fact that they are women.

## Chapter 1

### The Origins of American Idealism

#### *The Role and Influence of the St. Louis Movement*

The St. Louis philosophical movement (1866-1880) is an episode in American intellectual history that has largely been forgotten today. Yet the leaders of this group deserve attention, because they are responsible for having introduced German idealism to the reading public in this country. They published the first English translations of selections from the works of Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, and others in the nation's first philosophy periodical, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. They also presented preliminary interpretations of the ideas of these thinkers in the *Journal*, thus ushering discussion of German thought into American intellectual discourse. While these first attempts at understanding German thought were awkward at times, the effort "to make Hegel talk English,"<sup>1</sup> led by William Torrey Harris (1835-1909), was not a failure by any means. In fact, because Harris and his associates studied the texts of German idealism (they read and interpreted more thinkers than Hegel alone) in the original language, rather than relying on commentaries imported from England, they were more rigorous and genuinely philosophical than the majority of their more famous forerunners, the New England Transcendentalists.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the St.

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<sup>1</sup> Making Hegel "talk English" was Harris' mission, as reported by Denton J. Snider in *The St. Louis Movement in Philosophy* (St. Louis, MO: Sigma Publishing Company, 1920), 279. Goetzmann suggests this was the shared mission of Harris and Brockmeyer. See William H. Goetzmann (ed.), *The American Hegelians: An Intellectual Episode in the History of Western America*, (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 3.

<sup>2</sup> The Transcendentalists relied primarily on the translation of Cousin's *Introduction to the History of Philosophy* for their knowledge of both Kant and Hegel, after having found Coleridge's discussion of them too abstruse. Frederic Henry Hedge is one exception, as he had read the German idealists in the original. See J.H. Muirhead, "How Hegel Came to America," *Philosophical Review*, 37:227-8 (1928). Hedge also introduced Margaret Fuller and James Freeman Clarke to the German language and thought, meeting with them regularly in 1830 to read Goethe and Schiller together. Fuller developed a deep interest in Goethe's work, but it is unclear whether she and Clarke read German philosophy along with the literature that they had discovered. See *Margaret Fuller: From Transcendentalism to Revolution*, by Paula Blanchard (Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1987), p 66-70.

The St. Louis group, on the other hand, started with their well-documented effort to translate Hegel's *Science of Logic* and continued with a weekly study group at Harris' home on *The Phenomenology of Mind* in German. [See Herbert Spiegelberg, transcription of Harris' Record Book for the Philosophical Society, in Archives of the St. Louis Historical Society, for Harris' notice of this study group being formed, 32, (October 5, 1866)]. Writings of the women in this study demonstrate their familiarity with Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, *Philosophy of Nature*, *History of Philosophy*, *Philosophy of Right*, and *The Philosophical Propædeutic*.

Louis group "provided the material for . . . more systematic treatises which in the [eighteen] eighties and nineties rivaled similar [work] in England."<sup>3</sup>

Members of the St. Louis movement were not the very first to have been idealism's proponents, however. The earliest representatives of Hegel in America were Frederick A. Rauch (1806-1841) and Francis Lieber (1800-1840), both of whom were Germans. Rauch, a student of Hegel, arrived in this country in 1831 and was president of Marshall College in Pennsylvania from 1836 until his death. Lieber had come to America in 1827 and taught at the University of South Carolina and later at Columbia College. Due to their early deaths, these men's impact on American thought was limited.<sup>4</sup>

A group of Ohio Hegelians, three of whom were German-born, also preceded the St. Louis group's study of Hegel by about a decade. These were John B. Stallo, Peter Kaufmann, August Willich, and Moncure Conway. Stallo was the only one of this group to publish a full work on Hegel's thought, although the group's other members published books on other subjects, as well as a fair number of pamphlets, editorials, and addresses.<sup>5</sup> Yet the circle of thinkers in St. Louis had greater influence overall, primarily because they were so enthusiastic and -- more importantly -- so systematic about promoting and applying idealist principles to real life issues, education and political life in particular.

Members of the movement were prominent in St. Louis and many gained recognition nationally. The majority were educators in the public school system, which explains why education was one of the group's main concerns. The prevalence of educators in the movement has greater significance, however, for the purposes of this discussion. Namely, many of the movement's leaders were women who expounded on Hegel alongside their male contemporaries. The most prominent of these female philosopher-educators in St. Louis were Susan E. Blow (1843-1916), Anna C. Brackett (1836-1911), and Grace C. Bibb (1842-1912). Blow directed the kindergarten program in St. Louis, the nation's first continuous free public

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<sup>3</sup> See Muirhead, 240.

<sup>4</sup> Muirhead mentions Rauch in "How Hegel Came to America," 232. A profile of each is given by Gustav E. Müller, "Der deutsche Einfluß," *Amerikanische Philosophie*, (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommans Verlag, 1936), 113-115.

<sup>5</sup> See Loyd Easton, *Hegel's First American Followers* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1966). As Easton points out, the fact that Harris had invited Ohio Hegelians Stallo and Willich to be auxiliary members of the St. Louis Philosophical Society has led some to assume that the Ohio group was an outgrowth of the St. Louis movement. However, Stallo et al were active in Cincinnati before the St. Louis group came into being, 1848-1860. Stallo published his *General Principles of the Philosophy of Nature* in 1848.

kindergarten system, and published five books on the philosophy of early childhood education. Brackett was the first woman to be appointed principal of a secondary school, and directed the course of the St. Louis normal school (for teacher training) in its early years. Brackett was also a feminist who applied the educational theory of Hegel's disciple, Karl Rosenkranz, to women and girls. Bibb played more of an administrative role, facilitating the movement's work behind the scenes as a reporter for *The Western Review*, its educational and literary publication.

The recognized leader of the movement, however, was William Torrey Harris, who was an educator himself and firmly believed in the applicability of philosophy to education and other practical matters. As superintendent of the St. Louis public school system (1867-1880), he is credited with helping to establish the nation's first free public kindergarten, instituting the graded school system, establishing a uniform curriculum at all grade levels, developing a method for cataloging library books, supporting "normal" schools for teachers, encouraging instruction in art and music, advocating equal education for African-Americans, and promoting the co-education of women and men.<sup>6</sup> Such sweeping changes brought Harris a good deal of recognition in the educational world, and he became involved in national education policy as a result. Most notably, he was a member and frequently an officer of the National Education Association from the early 1870s virtually until his death in 1909.<sup>7</sup> Because he was such a prominent educational leader, Harris was also appointed U.S. Commissioner of Education in 1890, a post he held until 1906.<sup>8</sup> For nearly every aspect of his educational work, Harris gave a philosophical explanation, and a number of his educator-philosopher colleagues in St. Louis shared his views.

It is strange today, of course, to think of one of the nation's first groups of philosophers as having come out of this context. Yet intellectual life was of a very different character over a century and a quarter ago. Institutions of higher education were still dominated by religious leaders and ideals. Thus many ideas were

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<sup>6</sup> See Kurt Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), for information on Harris regarding: the founding of the kindergarten, 270-1; the graded school system and uniform curriculum, 181-2, 270, 280; a library cataloging system, 277-8; normal schools, 281; music and art education, 275-6; education for African-American students, 173-4; and co-education of women, 265-6.

<sup>7</sup> See *Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1870-1900*. Letters from Harris' colleague, Louis Soldan, give an in-depth look at the workings of the NEA and Harris' active role in it while Soldan was president of the organization in the 1880s, in William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

<sup>8</sup> Leidecker, 297-8.

considered too radical to admit into the academy. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, for instance, Harvard was beset by religious controversy when two deaths required its board of overseers to appoint a new president: when Henry Ware, a liberal, replaced Joseph Willard, a moderate Calvinist; then again when Samuel Webber, also a liberal, replaced Ware. Even at this elite institution, the moral, theological, and political were intermingled, and as late as 1851, a professorship was denied to an “especially outspoken Unitarian Whig,” largely due to his religious views.<sup>9</sup> For the first half of the nineteenth century, the country's most elite institutions -- Harvard, Yale, and Princeton -- shied away from teaching German philosophy, deeming Kant and other modern thinkers “subversive of morality.”<sup>10</sup> This is the intellectual environment that confronted Harris and other eager young thinkers when they were entering college. And in Harris' case, this was enough to make him disenchanted with his study at Yale. In fact, he dropped out toward the end of his third year, because he had developed an interest in German thought and found Yale's focus on the ancients deadening to his intellectual development.<sup>11</sup> If Harris' experience was typical, this explains in part why early American idealism took hold in the “real world” of public education, rather than within the halls of academe.

In addition, academic credentialing in America was just beginning to become uniform around the time that the St. Louis group was active. The first doctoral degrees granted to men were given at Yale in 1861. Boston University was the first institution to confer this degree on a woman in 1877.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, a man who had amassed two or three years of college education, as Harris had at Yale, would still have been among the nation's best educated in the 1860s. Furthermore, in considering the women of this circle, it is important to remember how very limited their career options were. School teaching was among the handful of professions that middle class women were permitted to pursue in this period. Therefore, the most intellectually talented women were often drawn to education. In the case of the St. Louis idealists, this is the field in which Susan Blow and Anna Brackett did their theoretical work.

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<sup>9</sup> Particularly regarding the religious controversy surrounding these appointments, see *A Stream of Light: A Short History of American Unitarianism*, Conrad Wright, ed. (Boston: Skinner House Books, 1989, pgs. 8-11; 35-37.

<sup>10</sup> Muirhead, 234.

<sup>11</sup> Leidecker, 47-50.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Crosby Eells, “Earned Doctorates for Women in the Nineteenth Century,” *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, vol. 42, no. 4 (Winter 1956), 645.

Furthermore, by focusing on education Harris and his colleagues were more true to Hegel's thought than is at first apparent. The concept of *Bildung* is one that held great currency for Hegel and his associates. Not easily translated into English, the term *Bildung* is perhaps best defined as a hybrid of the terms “education” and “culture.” Yet it was an ideal that inspired the St. Louis idealists, who came to identify it with the acculturation or even cultivation of the individual, particularly of the child or the youth. The St. Louis group imported discussions of culture into the American educational enterprise, debating the value of “culture studies” versus practical training at their local and regional teachers’ conferences, for example, to be looked at more closely later in this chapter. Certainly, Susan Blow’s kindergarten work was an attempt to properly acculturate youngsters as much as it was to educate them, given as she was to guiding them in their use of color when weaving or to attuning their ears to the finer tones of music. Even the various branches of their movement, such as the Art Society and Public Library Association, were efforts to extend the influences of education farther than they might otherwise reach. These organizations brought the highest achievements of culture to a broader audience, and primarily to adults, demonstrating that the St. Louis group had faith in the ability of the human mind to grow and imbibe culture beyond childhood.

Another thing to keep in mind when considering the intense focus on education among the St. Louis idealists is that Hegel, their model philosopher, had taught secondary school as rector of a boys’ school in Nuremberg that specialized in classical studies. This was after he had already taught at the university in Jena, thus Nuremberg presented its own challenges. For instance, in this position Hegel had to adapt his instructional methods in order to teach students at this level. At first he had begun with the nature of Spirit in the world and worked his way down to the manifestations of Spirit in the natural world and in society. But he found that his students were more able to grasp higher principles of thought after having been presented with examples of them. After this discovery, Hegel began his courses by discussing practical matters, such as the role of the state and of religion, then he worked his way up to how these institutions are manifestations of Spirit.<sup>13</sup> The *Philosophical Propædeutic*, later compiled by Rosenkranz, constitutes the bulk of Hegel's lectures to his Nuremberg students.

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<sup>13</sup> See Frederic Ludlow Luqueer, *Hegel as Educator*, (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 162, quoting Hegel's October 1812 letter to Niethammer.

In Hegel's Nuremberg lectures we find him addressing many of the issues that his American followers elaborated on: the value of classical literature for individual development; the need for students to be active learners, rather than passive recipients of knowledge; and the relation of the school to both family and civil society.<sup>14</sup> St. Louis circle members were familiar with at least some of Hegel's Nuremberg lectures, which Harris had translated in *JSP*. But the group was also aware of another application of Hegel's thought to education, namely Rosenkranz's *Pädagogik als System*, which Anna Brackett translated for publication, also in *JSP*. And even if the St. Louis group did not have the benefit of exposure to *Hegels Ansichten über Erziehung und Unterricht* (1853), by Gustav Thaulow, which rather conveniently compiled any and all of Hegel's thoughts on education and culture and provided citations from his collected works, they, like Thaulow, were concerned that education be granted its rightful place in philosophical thought, and aspired to make their educational theories true to Hegel's philosophical system. For instance, they described the education of a particular mind as the embodiment (in microcosm) of the process of Spirit in its development. This is a notion they derived directly from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which Hegel claims that education "regarded from the side of universal Spirit . . . is nothing but its own acquisition of self-consciousness."<sup>15</sup> Again, in *The Philosophy of Right* Hegel makes strong assertions about the right of children to be educated, parents' responsibility to provide it, and society's duty to ensure that the education provided is adequate should parental efforts fall short.<sup>16</sup> No doubt, this is also linked to the concept of *Bildung* – cultivation/acclulturation – that the St. Louis group found so central to the educational enterprise. It was only right that children be well-acquainted with the highest ideals of culture. In fact, it would be failing both them and society if the imparting of *Bildung* did not take place. This idea was appropriated by each of the women discussed here, whether her primary focus was on education, as with Blow and Brackett, or on political life, as was the case for their somewhat younger contemporary, Marietta Kies.

Even though education was a dominant concern, it was not the only item on the St. Louis circle's agenda. The group was also attuned to religious, political, and social issues. And this is an arena in which

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<sup>14</sup> Each of these topics are addressed in Hegel's first, second, and third Nuremberg lectures, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §28, A. V. Miller translation, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 16-17. Hegel's fuller discussion of human knowledge as a phase of Spirit occurs in §§26-30.

<sup>16</sup> See especially, *Philosophy of Right*, §174, Addition; §175; §187, Note (in which education or culture – *Bildung* – is called a form of liberation); §239.

the group distinguishes itself as a body of independent thinkers. None of the members of the St. Louis circle fit neatly into the right, left, or center columns when considered as Hegelians. In some ways, St. Louis thinkers were center-right Hegelians. Harris and Blow, for instance, were orthodox religiously; Blow considerably more so than Harris. And Blow in particular saw education as a way of inculcating the “correct” moral values in children. Snider, Davidson, Brackett, and Mitchell, on the other hand, were religious radicals by just about any standard. In fact, Davidson all-but-established his own “un-religion” in founding the Fellowship of the New Life, a group which Blow found to be objectionable at best. Each of these four had close ties to one or all of the most progressive religious groups of the day: the Free Religious Association, Ethical Culture Society, Unitarians, and/or Universalists. Religiously then, these members of the St. Louis circle could easily be called left Hegelians.

Yet, with the exception of Blow, each of those mentioned would best fit under the left or left-center Hegelian heading in regard to social and political issues. Harris, Davidson, and Soldan all supported the feminist movement along with other progressive causes. Davidson and Kies went even further, with ties to the socialist movement. Marietta Kies advocated the institution of a welfare state in her works on altruism, *The Ethical Principle* (1892) and *Institutional Ethics* (1894). Both she and Davidson, then, belong in the left Hegelian column politically. Similarly, given the strong identification of Brackett, Bibb, and Mitchell with all aspects of the feminist cause, it is fair to label them left Hegelians as well. Both Anna Brackett and Grace Bibb espoused many feminist causes, like pay equity for teachers and voting rights for women. Ellen Mitchell shared these views and even went so far as to condemn prostitution from a feminist standpoint.

In short, members of the movement took philosophy seriously as a means of infusing life with purpose and effecting change in the world. In Snider’s words, they sought “to give a rational account of [their] vocation . . . [to] philosophize [their] practical life and not wander into the regions of mere speculation.”<sup>17</sup>

As part of their effort to advance their understanding of idealist philosophy and then put it into practice, Harris and his associates established a number of societies and organizations, some of which later grew into or merged with national movements: the State Teachers' Association, the Art Society, the Public School

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<sup>17</sup> Denton Snider, *A Writer of Books*, (St. Louis, MO: Sigma Publishing, 1910), 317.



Library Association, the Pedagogical Society, the Pen and Pencil Club, the Aristotle Club, the Kant Club, and the Philosophical Society. The last two mentioned were the means by which the St. Louis circle of thinkers did their most theoretical (as opposed to practical) philosophical work. The Kant Club came to focus on Hegel's thought over time, even though its name was never changed to reflect this shift. Harris' book analyzing Hegel's thought grew out of the insights he gained during this group's meetings in fact.<sup>18</sup> The role of the Philosophical Society is even more significant in that it is here that the group began to bridge the gap between theory and practice. After the group had been meeting for a year, Harris convinced its members of the merits of publishing a journal, and *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* was established. This was the first periodical devoted solely to philosophy in this country (1867-1893), and it came to be known outside the U.S., in both England and on the Continent. The pages of *JSP* were filled with translations and essays on education, of course, but articles also covered ethics and political theory. The range of topics covered, along with items that appealed to the practitioners in these fields (again, especially education), helped establish the St. Louis group as themselves philosopher-practitioners worthy of attention both at home and abroad. Thus *JSP* made its editor, William Torrey Harris and his colleagues who contributed to the journal regularly, known quantities in the philosophical world.

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<sup>18</sup> William Torrey Harris, *Hegel's Logic: A Book on the Genesis of the Categories of the Mind*, (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Co., 1890). [Reprinted by Kraus Reprint Company, New York, 1970.]

### ***Three Themes: Education as Civilizing Force, Self-Estrangement, Self-Activity***

Three major philosophical themes recur throughout the works of the St. Louis circle members under discussion here. The first is of education as a process through which the reconciliation of individual and society can be accomplished. The St. Louis group shared Hegel's objection to the view of education put forth in Rousseau's *Emile* in which a child is to be kept away from the corrupting forces of society. Hegel insisted that

pedagogical experiments in removing people from the ordinary life of the present and bringing them up in the country (cf. Rousseau's *Emile*) have been futile, because one cannot successfully isolate people from the laws of the world.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, in Hegel's view education in isolation was not education at all, but was instead savagery.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, the St. Louis idealists saw the growth of an individual as possible only *within* society and education as a civilizing, even humanizing force. No individual could be truly educated outside of society; no society could attain true culture without educated individuals. Contra Rousseau, Harris and his colleagues believed that only by rehearsing the feats of our predecessors, by being schooled in human conventions, and by aspiring to reach human ideals are individuals truly educated. Harris and Blow were particularly insistent on this point.<sup>21</sup> Brackett took a giant step in applying Hegel to the American context, by infusing a bit of American individualism into this idea. She, Harris, and Snider had a strong sense of the role of the individual in society, one that became instrumental in establishing a norm within the St. Louis movement.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps more significant is Brackett's dismissal of traditional understandings of women's role, which were still clearly in place in Hegel's works, penned as they were early in the nineteenth century. Such a dismissal indicates that Brackett didn't take all social convention as given and thus worthy of reinforcement. Even so, on the whole, for the St. Louis idealists society was meant to foster rather than to stunt individual growth.

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<sup>19</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, §153, Addition.

<sup>20</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, §194, Note.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Blow offers an extended criticism of Rousseau's view of education, calling it a form of atomism in *Symbolic Education*, (NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1918), 5-15, a criticism that Harris applauded in his preface to the book.

<sup>22</sup> See Frances Harmon, *The Social Philosophy of the St. Louis Hegelians* [New York: Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1943], especially pages 8-11.

A second major theme of St. Louis idealism is its application of the idea of self-estrangement and return to the educational process. This is an idea that descends directly from Hegel and was described as central to the educational process by his disciple, Karl Rosenkranz. As noted above, during his Nuremberg period Hegel himself suggested that youth should be required to read the classics of Greek and Roman literature. In Hegel's view, this would help acquaint youth with one of the highest points of human culture and introduce them to true beauty as discovered by the ancients. But via Rosenkranz, the St. Louis group expanded the importance of the classics. In their view, this and all great literature helps to distance youth from themselves and the world with which they are familiar, thus introducing "the other" in the form of an entirely different set of circumstances than those facing them. Confronted with otherness in this way, youth encounter an opposition that calls for them to look at their own situation in a new way. They then "return" from their studies with a consciousness that has been transformed. Two of the women in this study, Susan E. Blow and Anna C. Brackett, rely heavily on this aspect of Hegel's thought for their own theories of education. As director of the St. Louis kindergarten, Blow saw children's play as approximating, as nearly as possible given the tender age of kindergarten children, this same process. In Blow's view, through play young children create an alternative reality in which they too are faced with otherness, and thus a form of self-estrangement. When the play has ended, they are also enriched by their experience. Brackett agreed with Hegel's view of the role of classical literature, although along with Rosenkranz she believed classic *children's* stories could also suffice. In addition, as a feminist responsible for the education of primarily young women at the normal school, she applied this idea to women's and girls' education.

Closely related to the idealist understanding of education as a process of self-estrangement and return is the third major theme, the idea of "self-activity." This is a term that St. Louis circle members invoked regularly in their educational-philosophical discussions, and it first came into use with Harris' translation of *The Philosophical Propædeutic*. The term in question is *Selbsttätigkeit*. Harris tried to adhere as closely as possible to Hegel's language, thus the sentence,

*Der Geist aber nach seiner Selbsttätigkeit innerhalb seiner selbst und in Beziehung auf sich, unabhängig vor der Beziehung auf Anderes, wird in der eigentlichen Geisteslehre oder Psychologie betrachtet.*<sup>23</sup>

Harris rendered: "But the Mind, according to its self-activity within itself and in relation to itself independent of all relation to others is considered in the Science of Mind proper, or 'Psychology'."<sup>24</sup> The term "self-activity" stuck, and was appropriated by not only Harris' immediate circle of associates, but by others as well and as late as 1909. Recent translators, however, have chosen not to use "self-activity" as a technical term, but have instead chosen to refer to "Mind as spontaneously active within itself."<sup>25</sup>

Over time, Harris and his followers came to associate the term "self-activity" with Hegel's *Begriff*, the Notion or Concept, as evidenced here in an excerpt from Harris' book, *Hegel's Logic*:

*'Begriff'* as self-activity is possibility of all determination, the universal; as active determiner opposed to passive possibility of being determined, it is cause (*causa efficiens*) opposed to matter (*causa materialis*) and this duality is particularity. . . . It is individual or singular when considered as annulling this opposition or antithesis of active subject and passive object . . .<sup>26</sup>

In Harris' view, Hegel's greatest insight was his recognition of the power of individuality to annul the opposition between subject and object and thus to render knowledge a relation of the two, rather than the power of one over the other. Plato, Aristotle, and the Scholastics had an idea of *substantiae separatae*, "but its relation to the universal and particular was not seen so perfectly as Hegel saw it," in Harris' view.<sup>27</sup>

In short, over time, "self-activity" came to refer to both the self-determinative power of the Absolute as a wholly independent, self-motivated and motivating force and that same power (to the degree that it exists) in human beings as the creatures that most nearly share in the attributes of God. Although the question of whether the Absolute can be equated with God is a point of debate among Hegel scholars themselves, it is

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<sup>23</sup> See Hegel's *Philosophical Propædeutic*, §5 [in Johannes Hoffmeister, *Hegels Nürnberger Schriften, Sämtliche Werke, Band XXI*, (Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1938), 201].

<sup>24</sup> See William Torrey Harris, "Outlines of Hegel's Phenomenology," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 3:166 (1869). Years later, Harris also used the term "self-activity" in translating "*Sichselbstbewegens*." See Harris, *Hegel's Logic*, (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Company, 1890) 77.

<sup>25</sup> See Millicent MacKenzie, who used the term "self-activity" throughout her work, *Hegel's Educational Theory and Practice*, (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd., 1909). [Reprinted by Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1970.] Luqueer in *Hegel as Educator* (1896) also used the term, as did W.N. Hailmann in his translation of Friedrich Froebel's *Education of Man* for the International Education Series, of which Harris was editor. Compare this to the modern translation given above, by Michael George and Andrew Vincent, eds., *The Philosophical Propædeutic*, A.V. Miller transl., (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 57.

<sup>26</sup> Harris, *Hegel's Logic*, 161.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

accurate to represent the St. Louis group as holding this view. Susan Blow in particular had a strong sense of the theological sense of the term Absolute, as well as of Spirit. In fact her later thought was dominated by an understanding of the Absolute as a *personal* divine being, expressed most fully by the Christian religion through the incarnation of Jesus. The link between this sense of the Absolute/Spirit and the “self-activity” that is engendered by education, then is profound. And it is in this sense that the St. Louisians most frequently used the term, because human self-activity is central to the educative process. Blow was particularly fond of the term as it applies to early childhood education. However, she, Harris, and Kies also discuss self-activity as it applies to larger philosophical issues, for instance, social policies regarding labor laws, the relation of humanity to the Divine, or the nature of the Trinity.

### ***The Migration to Concord***

There was a later incarnation of the St. Louis movement after Harris had resigned as superintendent of the St. Louis public school system and returned East: the Concord School of Philosophy and Literature (1879-1888). It had long been a dream of New England Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Amos Bronson Alcott to establish some sort of public forum for the discussion of ideas in Concord. Yet it wasn't until Harris, their admirer since his youth, left his work in the St. Louis schools and returned East that the Transcendentalists' dream became a reality. (Emerson and Alcott were aged by this time, of course; in fact both died during the years of the School's sessions, 1882 and 1888, respectively.) As one historian of the movement, Henry Pochmann has noted, although Emerson and Alcott favored Platonic thought, with Harris as one of the main organizers and primary lecturers of the School, the Hegelian brand of idealism won over in the end.<sup>28</sup> No doubt there were three factors at work that led to the prominence of German idealism at the Concord School: its novelty, its practical applications, and the energy and enthusiasm that the St. Louis group brought to the School. Certainly Harris was among the most enthusiastic proponents of

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<sup>28</sup> Henry A. Pochmann, *New England Transcendentalism and St. Louis Hegelianism: Phases in the History of American Idealism*, (New York: Haskell House, 1970), 80-81.

German thought, and with his compelling personality and nearly evangelical approach to philosophical discourse, it is not surprising that the movement caught on in Concord.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the Concord School is most significant as a vehicle through which women attained access to advanced higher education. While college and university level instruction was fairly accessible to women by the 1880s, only a handful of institutions were willing to allow them to study at the graduate level.<sup>30</sup> The Concord School was open to all who were able to attend and pay its rather modest tuition. At Concord, women had the opportunity to study under some of the most prominent intellectual figures of the day. These figures included both the older generation of thinkers largely associated with the Transcendentalist movement and the new class of academic philosophers: Frederic Henry Hedge and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in addition to Emerson and Alcott; Nicholas Murray Butler (Columbia), William James (Harvard), James McCosh (Princeton), and Noah Porter (Yale). Note that these contributors to the Concord School program were not in the immediate circle that Harris had established while in St. Louis. The original St. Louis/*JSP* associates also lectured, of course: Snider, Davidson, Mitchell, Morris, and Soldan, along with Harris. Initially, plans were in place for Blow and Brackett to lecture at Concord as well, but such plans never materialized.

The chance to study for even a short time alongside many of the greatest names in American intellectual life at the time was an opportunity that many women were loathe to miss. In fact, two of them, Ellen M. Mitchell (1838-1920) and Marietta Kies (1853-1899), capitalized on it, becoming the first women in the St. Louis and Concord circles to publish works on philosophy proper, rather than educational theory, after completing their study at the Concord School.

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<sup>29</sup> Denton Snider observed that Harris sometimes zealously introduced his philosophical ideas to people, holding them somewhat unwilling, yet also engaged, captives. "I have seen him force some new insight of his . . . upon an unwilling listener whom he had cornered and who could not in decency get away. This was one of his best traits and it gave him in the long run a personal influence which was unique." See *A Writer of Books* (St. Louis: Sigma Publishing Co., 1910) page 312; see also page 392.

<sup>30</sup> When the Concord School began, only four universities had opened graduate programs to women. By the School's end in 1888, that number had increased to ten and reached thirty by the close of the nineteenth century. See Walter Crosby Eells, "Earned Doctorates by Women in the Nineteenth Century," *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors*, vol. 42, no. 4, (Winter 1956).

## *St. Louis Circle Members*

### *William Torrey Harris*

Who were the main characters in the St. Louis circle? As I have noted, Harris is generally considered to have been its leader. He was a Connecticut-born and Yale-educated young man who decided to seek his fortune in the West during a period of expansion in the region, just prior to the Civil War. Arriving in St. Louis in the summer of 1857, he struggled financially and emotionally for just under a year, trying futilely to establish himself by offering lessons in shorthand, half-heartedly engaging in pen- and book-selling schemes, and generally fending off depression as he increasingly began to fear that he would not be able to make his way in the world --- or at least not alone in the West.<sup>31</sup> Harris' Yale education put him in good stead though, as he was able to earn money as a private tutor for at least one or two prominent families in St. Louis during this time.<sup>32</sup> He was also wise enough to have taken the teachers' examination soon after his arrival in the city, even though teaching was absolutely a last resort for him. The idea of managing a classroom of unruly little children was repugnant to Harris. In fact, in his journal, he said as much after an offer to teach: "The opportunity to teach school is not a very agreeable thing, I must confess. I could do better selling Protean pens."<sup>33</sup> But he finally felt forced to submit himself to this indignity after several letters from his parents urging him to do so. Parental pressure along with repeated job offers by public school officials who were impressed with his score on the teachers' exam made teaching his only real career option at this point. Harris had no way of knowing that his public school work would win him such prominence in the future, of course. And in the days just prior to the start of his teaching job, he wrote in his diary, "I wish I had some other way to earn money than by teaching."<sup>34</sup> This is certainly not a particularly enthusiastic beginning to a new career.

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<sup>31</sup> For a description of this difficult time in Harris' life, see Kurt Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher*, 81-88; 97-106. Although perhaps half-jokingly, Harris even mentioned suicide at one point, writing in a letter to his family, "[I won't] commit suicide or get married until I have discharged my duties to others."

<sup>32</sup> Harris became a tutor for the family of Henry O'Fallon, a St. Louis railroad magnate. Leidecker, 94.

<sup>33</sup> Leidecker, 148-52.

<sup>34</sup> Leidecker, 151.

But Harris had found another meaningful avenue for self-growth outside of his school work, namely his involvement with the St. Louis Philosophical and Literary Society.<sup>35</sup> This was an eclectic group with a rather bohemian flair to it. Most of its members scoffed at orthodox religion. They had an intense interest in spiritualism, Swedenborgianism, phrenology, and other unconventional schools of thought. And they seem to have found Harris a bit too mainstream for their liking at times. This was a strange reception for Harris who was considerably progressive by New England standards. He too was intrigued by phrenology and was somewhat drawn to spiritualism at this point in his life, although he would reject it later.<sup>36</sup> In his exploration of religious and philosophical ideas while at Yale, in fact, he was enthralled by the ideas introduced to him in a lecture by Amos Bronson Alcott, the Transcendentalists' great "orphan seer."<sup>37</sup> Harris' religious views greatly concerned his church-going mother and grandmother, both of whom had a profound influence on him and to whom he deferred when his views were considered out of line.<sup>38</sup> He was also warned by a teacher that Alcott's "occult" views were a great evil to be avoided at all costs -- a warning that intrigued him even more. But while Harris' romance with spiritualisms of all sorts was forbidden fruit in his native New England, it was standard fare among his new acquaintances in St. Louis. To his own surprise, he found himself actually defending many orthodox positions and was once reprimanded by the group for addressing a topic considered too biblical.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these points of disagreement, Harris threw himself into this little community, becoming its secretary.<sup>40</sup> Then after a January 1858 meeting of the Society, he met both a more like-minded soul and an Alcott-style seer right in St. Louis, Henry Brockmeyer.<sup>41</sup> It was the immediate intellectual connection

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<sup>35</sup> The Philosophical and Literary Society is a different organization from that which Harris established with Henry C. Brockmeyer in 1866, the Philosophical Society. Sometimes there is confusion over this, however. For instance, George Howison's biographers seem to have confused the two groups. See John Wright Buckham and George Malcolm Stratton, *George Holmes Howison: Philosopher and Teacher*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 49-50.

<sup>36</sup> Leidecker, 140-41. Harris' rejection of phrenology may have been prompted by Hegel's criticisms of it in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§330-340.

<sup>37</sup> Harris first met Alcott when the latter was giving a lecture at Yale while Harris was a student. Alcott was well-known by this time and his "orphan sayings" had been published in the Transcendentalist magazine, *The Dial*. See Leidecker, 358.

<sup>38</sup> Leidecker, 142-143.

<sup>39</sup> Leidecker, 141-142.

<sup>40</sup> Leidecker, 140-141.

<sup>41</sup> Henry A. Pochmann, *New England Transcendentalism and St. Louis Hegelianism* (New York: Haskell House, 1970), 10-11. As a note, Brockmeyer was indifferent to the spelling of his name, thus it appears at times as "Brokmeyer" and others "Brockmeyer." I have chosen the spelling Snider and Harris used in their mentions of him.



between these two men and their exchange of views and visions for the intellectual life of St. Louis that was to lay the groundwork for the Philosophical Society, and thus the St. Louis Philosophical Movement.

### *Henry Brockmeyer and the Founding of the St. Louis Philosophical Society*

Some historians credit Brockmeyer (1826-1906) with being the true leader of the St. Louis movement.<sup>42</sup> And in some ways this could be argued. Brockmeyer came to the U.S. as a teenager sometime in the 1840s, reportedly to escape his parents' tyrannical tendencies, but political turmoil in his native Prussia may have also been a contributing factor.<sup>43</sup> Once in the U.S., Brockmeyer attended Brown College where he studied the works of Hegel and other German idealists, later presenting their ideas to Harris. Perhaps it was Brockmeyer's role as an enlightener in this sense that led Harris and many of his contemporaries to see him as the genius behind their movement, although they realized that Brockmeyer's "genius" was pretty much neutralized on the printed page. (As Denton Snider put it, "the cream got quite skimmed off the top" of Brockmeyer's thought when it was put into writing.)<sup>44</sup>

Harris relied on Brockmeyer to translate Hegel's *Science of Logic*, and tried to help him get it published, although it is interesting that he never printed it himself in *JSP*. Presumably this is because it was too literal – it seems that Brockmeyer took little heed of the conventions of English grammar and syntax – and thus confounded rather than elucidated many ideas. So Brockmeyer, while an inspirer, did not have the literary skill that Harris and others of the movement would develop. Nor did he have the organizational or administrative savvy of Harris. He could be a gruff and inconsiderate man. He shunned social standards of propriety and cared little if he shocked or offended his audience when he spoke. In fact on one occasion, Harris refrained from asking Brockmeyer to lecture in New England for fear he would "spill over into some diablery, or even profanity," as he had once done "in reply to Miss Brackett."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Cleon Forbes, "The St. Louis School of Thought," *Missouri Historical Review*, 25:95 (1931).

<sup>43</sup> Sources have not been clear on the date of Brockmeyer's departure. Forbes places it at 1848, claiming that Brockmeyer was exiled with other German intellectuals, including Carl Schurz, 90, citing a letter from C.H. Calhoun. Pochmann places it at 1844, prior to the Prussian revolution, claiming that Brockmeyer left to escape militaristic oppression, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Forbes, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 282. See also Forbes, 97, 100.

Although after the Civil War, Brockmeyer rose to prominence in public life as a lawyer, state legislator, and then lieutenant governor, he also had a reclusive streak. When he and Harris first met, Brockmeyer had just emerged from a seclusion that made Thoreau's "flight to his shanty on Walden Pond" look like "an inconsequential lark."<sup>46</sup> Reportedly, he had built a small shack for himself deep in the forest, became good enough at hunting to procure each day's food in an hour, and spent the rest of his time reading and contemplating philosophical questions.<sup>47</sup> He had only relatively recently tired of this lifestyle and taken a job at a foundry when he met Harris, but he took on the same lifestyle again years later, after his political career had come to a close.<sup>48</sup> Still, it was Brockmeyer's ability to alternate between the roles of the common man, intellectual elite, and public figure that drew Harris and others to sit at the foot of him as their teacher and try to emulate what they saw as his wisdom.

The meeting of Harris and Brockmeyer was a significant moment in the St. Louis movement, but it does not mark the beginning of the St. Louis Philosophical Society proper. This was not to happen until 1866. Between 1858 and 1860, Harris began a systematic study of Hegel with Brockmeyer's help. He and two friends, George Stedman and John Watters, commissioned Brockmeyer to translate Hegel's *Logic*, striking a bargain in which they would fund his stay in a room in downtown St. Louis, where he slept on a pallet on the floor, and he would work on the translation and offer instruction to them.<sup>49</sup> The arrangement seems to have been suitable to all involved, and the intention originally was to publish the completed work. The Civil War struck, however, shortly after the translation was finished.<sup>50</sup> Brockmeyer signed up to fight for the Union forces, and the publishing plan was deferred for the time being. Harris, who had suffered an injury as a child leaving him with one glass eye, was exempt from fighting so stayed on at the public schools.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Henry A. Pochmann, *New England Transcendentalism and St. Louis Hegelianism: Phases in the History of Idealism*, (NY: Haskell House Publishers, 1970), 9.

<sup>47</sup> Forbes, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Forbes, 21.

<sup>49</sup> Forbes, 92. Harris mentions Stedman and Watters by name in his preface to *Hegel's Logic*, xi, in which he describes the beginning of his study of Hegel.

<sup>50</sup> Forbes, 93.

<sup>51</sup> Leidecker, 40, 197.

While Harris maintained his interest in and study of Hegel during the war, applying the dialectic to the struggle between North and South, freedom and servitude, etc., he seems to have been busy making a number of adjustments to his professional and personal life. Harris was married in December 1858 to a woman he had been courting while at Yale, Sarah Bugbee.<sup>52</sup> With the following school year, he was promoted to principal of a new school which was a consolidation of a number of smaller schools. Even though the work of overseeing an entire school rather than being directly responsible for a classroom of students was more appealing to Harris,<sup>53</sup> he no doubt took on a considerably larger administrative burden in accepting this position. He and his wife began their family between the years of 1858 and 1866. All of these changes certainly had to have for a busy, exciting, but stressful time for Harris personally.

In addition, the region itself, and thus the public schools, were under strain during this period. Missouri was a slave state, but St. Louis was adamantly pro-Lincoln. The city schools flew the Union flag during the war<sup>54</sup> and provided education for its African-American children before the Emancipation Proclamation.<sup>55</sup> Because of the effect of the Civil War on the nation's economy, like many other cities, St. Louis suffered financially and had to impose budget cuts; thus there were teacher shortages. While Harris and his circle spent whatever free time they had discussing the war as Hegel's dialectic in action, and speculating that some sort of reconciliation could and must come about in order for history to manifest the realization of Spirit,<sup>56</sup> they were not yet at liberty to make their philosophical inquiry more formal at this time.

The Philosophical Society was formally established in 1866, and in its early years Harris faithfully maintained a record of its proceedings. The official Record Book that remains is not complete, covering only the period of time between its founding in January 1866 and its re-organization in 1871. The information that is available, however, is certainly enlightening, giving us the group's statement of purpose, names of participants, and topics addressed. The Society's statement of purpose points to its real-world

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<sup>52</sup> Leidecker, 184.

<sup>53</sup> Leidecker, 148-150; 155-56.

<sup>54</sup> The flag itself was provided by Henry O'Fallon whose children Harris tutored his first year in St. Louis. Leidecker, 169.

<sup>55</sup> Leidecker, 266.

<sup>56</sup> Leidecker, 164, 175.

focus: it is an organization "for the promotion of Speculative Philosophy *and its application*."<sup>57</sup> Only months after the organization of the Society, this purpose was amended to be even more specific:

. . . in order to encourage the Study and development of Speculative Philosophy, to foster an application of its results to Art, Religion, and Science, and to establish a philosophical basis for the professions of Medicine, Divinity, Law, Politics, Education, Fine Arts, and Literature.<sup>58</sup>

Those present at the first few meetings of the society were: William Torrey Harris and Henry Brockmeyer; Denton Jacques Snider, a high school teacher and literary scholar; George Holmes Howison, a professor at Washington University; and John Watters, a professor at the State Medical College; Britton A. Hill and Gabriel Woerner, each of whom were lawyers, and J.Z. Hall.<sup>59</sup> These men were the "directors" of the Society -- the active members who approved, by vote, the nomination of all new members. There was also an associate member category, and a number of people were brought into the fold with this status. Thomas Davidson and Louis Soldan are among those granted associate status whose work is significant to this discussion.<sup>60</sup> Aside from Harris, Denton Snider and George H. Howison are Society members who became important characters in the lives and work of the women in this study. Therefore, a brief discussion of each of them may be helpful at this point.

### *Denton Snider*

Denton Snider (1841-1925) was a high school teacher and a good friend and admirer of William Torrey Harris. As a literary theorist and self-described "writer of books,"<sup>61</sup> Snider's chronicling of the group's growth and development and characterizations of its members in his work *The St. Louis Movement in Philosophy* is an invaluable resource. Closely associated with Harris in St. Louis and then later when Harris became a national figure, Snider described his friend as one of the most industrious people he had ever known, keeping a pace that Snider claims would have killed him long since.<sup>62</sup> Harris is definitely the leader

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<sup>57</sup> William Torrey Harris, "Record Book of the St. Louis Philosophical Society," 4; emphasis mine. [Transcribed from the original shorthand text and with an introduction and notes by Herbert Spiegelberg. Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis, Missouri.]

<sup>58</sup> Harris, Record Book, 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> Harris, Record Book, 4, 5, 8. With the exception of Watters, Hill, and Hall, the men listed appear regularly in histories of the movement. Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 359 provided information about Watters' occupation; Spiegelberg provides an endnote regarding Hill, Record Book, 115. I have not been able to learn more about Hall.

<sup>60</sup> These memberships were granted at the November 8, 1867 meeting. See Harris, Record Book, 91.

<sup>61</sup> One of Snider's autobiographical works is entitled, *A Writer of Books*.

<sup>62</sup> Snider, *The St. Louis Movement*, 383.

of the St. Louis movement in Snider's view, particularly as the implementer of its many ideas and visions for change.

Snider's first love was literature, although he also had an interest in law which he studied for a time under Brockmeyer, whom he also held in high esteem.<sup>63</sup> And he resisted the idea of writing to subserve financial or administrative demands, as Harris and others in the circle -- even the independently minded Davidson -- had done. Writing and exploring his own intellectual development was too important to Snider to make his ideas fit publishers' specifications, very few of whom would print his thoughts as they stood. This problem he solved, simply by printing his work privately under the name Sigma Publications.<sup>64</sup>

Forbes characterizes Snider as a kind and gentle man with simple tastes and a love for music and literature. However, based on his own account at least, he also had his prejudices. He admitted outright that Thomas Davidson and he grated on each other's nerves, intellectually as well as personally.<sup>65</sup> He also had a relationship with Susan Blow that was very complex, intense, and often competitive. And part of the complexity, if not the competitiveness, of their interaction seems to have stemmed from Snider's inability to accept a woman with Blow's strong leadership ability. The Snider-Blow relationship will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

Later in his life, and after Harris had left St. Louis to return east, Snider conducted some literary schools in Chicago with considerable success. He discusses these sessions at length, calling it the most significant *practical* achievement of his life.<sup>66</sup> Yet he mentions very little about its female participants, Elizabeth Harrison and Caroline K. Sherman, who were essentially co-organizers. He does mention, however, that Mary Beedy was one of the lecturers in Chicago and later at a literary school in which he participated in St. Louis.<sup>67</sup> So it is clear that Snider knew Beedy as well as her work. Snider also knew

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<sup>63</sup> See Snider's account of his study at "the University Brockmeyer" in *A Writer of Books*, pages 345-354.

<sup>64</sup> Forbes, 25:467-8.

<sup>65</sup> See Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 357-8; 549; 567.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 520; 569. The emphasis on "practical" achievement (versus theoretical) was important to Snider, because in his view he was responsible for both the planning and the implementation of the Literary School. However, Elizabeth Harrison, the woman at the forefront of establishing the School, paints a picture in which Snider's role is much more peripheral, even though she expresses deep admiration for him as an intellectual. Elizabeth Harrison, "Western Pioneering in Culture," in *Sketches Along Life Road*, Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, ed., (Boston: Stratford Co., 1930), 77-80.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 532; 572.

Ellen Mitchell, who acknowledges him in the preface to her book, *A Study of Greek Philosophy*. This indicates that she and Snider also had a working relationship during this time.

### *George Holmes Howison*

George Holmes Howison's (1834-1916) participation in the St. Louis philosophical movement was shorter-lived than the other main characters, largely because he left St. Louis in 1871. But as a professor at Washington University, his involvement with the circle was important to the group's philosophical development. According to Harris' Record Book, Howison was an active member of the group, chairing meetings in the absence of Brockmeyer, and making presentations periodically.<sup>68</sup> He was also one of the first whom Harris informed of his intention to have the Philosophical Society produce a journal:

“We are going to have a German philosophical magazine,” [said Harris] . . . “We don't propose to print it. We are going to make the papers and read them here [at PS meetings], and put them away in a tin box.”<sup>69</sup>

Thankfully, Harris' plans for a journal became more concrete over time, and later Howison was assigned to a committee "to make final adjustments" to the relationship between the Society and *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.<sup>70</sup> In addition, Harris kept close ties with Washington University throughout his years in St. Louis, attending lectures frequently and later giving lectures of his own, periodically or in a short series. This was at the beginning of a long friendship in which Howison and Harris mutually influenced each other, although certainly not always coming to agreement. In fact, one meeting of the Society may have found Howison in disagreement with Harris, but certainly with at least one other member of the group, Alfred Kroeger. This was a debate on Personality as a characteristic of the Absolute that arose at a December 1867 meeting. This debate, along with later evidence that Howison's "personal idealism" had a pluralist focus that was objectionable to both Harris and Blow, suggests that Howison may have argued this point with others in the circle even at this early stage.

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<sup>68</sup> Harris, Record Book, 36-37, 66, 76-79.

<sup>69</sup> John Wright Buckham and George Malcolm Stratton, *George Holmes Howison: Philosopher and Teacher* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), 50.

<sup>70</sup> Also on this committee: Brockmeyer and Alfred Kroeger, along with Messrs Jones and Bernays, about whom little information is available. See Harris, Record Book, 57 (January 4, 1867). Anna Brackett provided valuable editing assistance on *JSP*, but there is no record of her or any other women participating on the Society's *JSP* committee.

Howison's thought seems to have diverged considerably from Harris' over time, but the two maintained a friendly relationship. Howison accepted opportunities to lecture at the Concord Summer School, although only sporadically. He also extended invitations to Harris to speak at meetings of the Philosophical Union he had established at the University of California, where he taught from 1884 until his retirement in 1916. However, Howison seems also to have had some sort of dispute with one of the female associates of Harris, Marietta Kies. This took place in 1891-92 at a Philosophical Union meeting when Kies taught at Mills College, and he voiced strong objections to her views of Hegel.<sup>71</sup> The particulars of this dispute are unclear, but what information is available is discussed in chapter five on Marietta Kies.

### *Louis Soldan*

Louis Soldan (1842-1908) seems to have been a considerate and even-tempered man and non-partisan in his philosophical views. For instance, Snider refers to Soldan as one of the few neutral parties in the Philosophical Society's debates over the merits of Hegel versus other thinkers. He also speculates that Soldan was popular as a lecturer among women's groups because he was the most gentlemanly of the men in the St. Louis circle.<sup>72</sup> Like Brockmeyer and some others in the St. Louis movement, (Woerner and Kroeger, for example) he was German-born. Also like Brockmeyer, Soldan was well-schooled in German thought, and did much to convey this thought to the English-speaking public, translating, for example sections of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* for publication in *JSP*. The majority of Soldan's energy, however, was channelled into his work in the St. Louis Public schools, where he was first a teacher in the high school, then principal of the normal school (succeeding Anna Brackett) and high school, and finally superintendent for nearly forty years. Soldan had a close working relationship with Harris, even after the latter had left the St. Louis superintendency in 1880, corresponding with him until Soldan's death in 1908. During this time, they collaborated on meeting plans for the National Education Association and eagerly

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<sup>71</sup> Georgiana Hodgkins, "Marietta Kies -- A Memory," *In Memoriam: Marietta Kies, A.M., Ph.D.* (Boston: Frank Wood, 1900), 70-71, from the Archives of the Mount Holyoke College Library.

<sup>72</sup> See Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 33-34 re Soldan's neutrality; 342 re his popularity with women's groups. Soldan's tendency to mediate between opposing ideas is also reflected in the position he took on the "culture studies" debate, discussed below.

recommended each other for speaking engagements. At one point in fact, Harris suggested Soldan as a candidate for the presidency of a university.<sup>73</sup>

Most of Soldan's lectures and writings centered on matters related to teaching -- theoretical as well as practical. He outlined the best ways to teach subjects like math and reading, discussed the theory and practice of normal school training, and did his best to maintain a neutral position in the "culture studies" debate. This last issue reads as somewhat obscure to the modern reader, but it most certainly grew out of the enthusiasm the St. Louis group had for the German concept of *Bildung*. If education was to cultivate and/or acculturate students, the liberal arts had to be central in their view. Others pointed out that practical training for life beyond the school was also a form of acculturation that could not be ignored. So the debate developed over time, essentially consisting in a controversy over the merits of a liberal arts curriculum versus teaching the mechanics of learning in early education and of specialized training in later years. Harris was decidedly on the "culture studies" side of the debate, while another St. Louis figure, Horace H. Morgan, was on the special training side. Soldan deftly played the middle, noting that extremes in either case could do little more than cause harm to the student. And in fact he did his best to integrate the two while principal of the St. Louis normal school.<sup>74</sup>

While at the normal school, Soldan had as his assistant, Grace C. Bibb, one of the "minor" Idealist women to be discussed here. Bibb and Soldan appear to have worked closely after she left the normal school as well, as she served on at least one committee (along with Harris) of the National Education Association when Soldan was its president.<sup>75</sup> Bibb regularly attended and reported on the NEA meetings in *The Western* during Soldan's tenure.

Soldan's normal school work seems not to have endeared him to another member of the St. Louis circle, however -- Anna Brackett, whom he succeeded as principal. Brackett's letters to Davidson hint at being

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<sup>73</sup> Louis Soldan, Letter to William Torrey Harris, May 14, 1883, in William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

<sup>74</sup> See *The Western*, vol. 1, 118-119 (February 1876), giving the synopsis of the discussion at the Pedagogical Society meeting in December 1875. See also *The Western*, vol. 1, 176-177 (April 1876), summarizing Soldan's paper to the Teachers Association, again on the "culture studies" question.

<sup>75</sup> Soldan, Letter to Harris, October 8, 1880.



disgruntled with St. Louis and Soldan in particular after her departure to New York.<sup>76</sup> This was no doubt difficult for Davidson to manage, as it seems that he and Soldan were fairly close. In letters to Harris, Soldan expresses a great deal of concern for Davidson, the "wandering scholar" of the St. Louis movement. Probably this was partly due to their very different approaches to life and work. Soldan was a slow but steady and methodical sort while Davidson was often inspired but sporadic in his performance. Davidson's success and well-being were matters that were frequently on Soldan's mind, according to his correspondence to Harris. Yet Soldan could be critical of him at times, as well, declaring in letters to Harris on at least two occasions that he believed Davidson was on the wrong track intellectually.<sup>77</sup>

### *Thomas Davidson*

Although he never held a permanent academic position, Thomas Davidson (1840-1899) wrote extensively, and his work centered more narrowly on philosophy than did that of many of his St. Louis contemporaries. He was primarily a Greek scholar who, like Snider and Soldan, taught in the high school. Because of his interest in the ancients, most of his presentations before the Philosophical Society and later at the Concord School were on Aristotle. He also wrote a number of essays on Aristotle that were published in *JSP*. Yet Davidson was also able to hold his own when it came to the modern thinkers with whom so many of his St. Louis colleagues were intrigued. His contributions to *JSP* also include translations of Schelling, Trendelenburg, and Rosenkranz as well as the introduction to Hegel's *Encyclopedia*. Later on, Davidson developed a friendship with Josiah Royce, who often visited his summer school, "Glenmore," modeled after the Concord School, which he set up in the Adirondack Mountains in New York.

Davidson also knew Harris well. In fact, they were so close that Harris named his daughter Edith Davidson Harris. The origin of her middle name is obvious, and her first name comes from Davidson's suggestion, "the fair-haired Saxon Edith."<sup>78</sup> This is not to suggest that the two were always in agreement philosophically, however. In fact, some of their clashes were said to have been "worth going miles to

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<sup>76</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letters to Thomas Davidson, May 13, 1872 and September 21, 1873, in Thomas Davidson Papers, Archives and Special Collections of Sterling Library, Yale University.

<sup>77</sup> Soldan, Letters to Harris, February 1882 and February 1883.

<sup>78</sup> Leidecker, 346.

hear."<sup>79</sup> And they engaged in such banter quite freely at Philosophical Society meetings, as well as later at the Concord School and other informal "schools" arranged by St. Louis circle members. Generally speaking, Davidson was a pluralist like Howison, and Harris was committed to monism. As time went on, Davidson also deviated from orthodox theology considerably, founding the "Fellowship for the New Life." In fact, it was his 1883 lecture on the New Life in London that triggered the founding of the Fabian Society there.<sup>80</sup> He was also close to leaders of the Ethical Culture Society. While it is not clear what Harris thought of Davidson's progressive quasi-religious views, another St. Louis colleague, Susan Blow, made her thoughts on the matter clear. Blow was committed to orthodox trinitarian religion and reported to Harris that she was "repelled by [Davidson's] little pamphlets on the New Life."<sup>81</sup>

Davidson and Brackett had a close friendship. They corresponded between the years 1867 and 1879, and are likely to have continued to be friends beyond that period, since both lived in New York City in the 1880s and '90s. When they were both in St. Louis, the two had exchanged books as well as ideas, studied and written together, edited each other's work, and occasionally spoke mockingly of certain sub-groups or members of the movement. One of these was the Pedagogical Society, which had really just gotten underway when Brackett left St. Louis in 1872; another was Soldan and the normal school.<sup>82</sup> From Brackett's perspective at least, she and Davidson were part of an "exclusive little group" from which others were to be barred if at all possible.<sup>83</sup> The nature of this relationship will be explored more in depth in chapter three, as it sheds light on Brackett and her work.

Other women also corresponded extensively with Davidson, including Mary Beedy, Grace Bibb, Caroline K. Sherman, and Ellen Mitchell. Each of these women exchanged ideas with Davidson, and Sherman and Mitchell included him on the schedule of lectures for their women's groups each year. Sherman's correspondence is particularly enlightening in the period leading up to the 1893 Columbian

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<sup>79</sup> Henry R. Evans, "William Torrey Harris: An Appreciation," in *William Torrey Harris*, Edward L. Schaub, ed., (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1936), 2.

<sup>80</sup> Harry W. Laidler, *A History of Socialist Thought* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1927), 215, 233-34.

<sup>81</sup> Susan E. Blow, Letter to William Torrey Harris, November 16, 1885, Susan Blow Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>82</sup> See Brackett's Letter to Davidson, May 18, 1872, re the Pedagogical Society. See Brackett, Letter to Davidson, September 21, 1873, re Soldan and the normal school.

<sup>83</sup> Brackett, Letter to Davidson, undated -- probably 1867-68.

Exposition in Chicago. As the representative from the Woman's Branch to the [men's] committee for philosophy and science at the Exposition, she turned to Davidson to ensure that women lecturers would be included on the philosophy program.

What I wish to say to you is this – that no woman is appointed on the [philosophy] Committee. Some of the members of the Woman's Branch of the Congress censured me that I did not see to it that at least one woman was appointed on the Committee to arrange the programme. . . . [I answered] that on any Committee of which Dr. Harris and Prof. Davidson were members, full justice would be done to women.

So I ask that two women be given places on the programme if two women can be found who will be a credit to themselves, to the audience, and above all to philosophy. . . .

You will do the best you can as advocate for women. The largest part of the audience will consist of women and they will not be satisfied if men alone take active parts.<sup>84</sup>

This letter clearly shows that we need not read into historical facts, such as Davidson's membership in the Missouri Suffrage Association, to determine that he was truly supportive of women's issues. His female contemporaries knew that he (and Harris) could be counted on to represent them when needed – so that they could then represent themselves at a major event intellectual life.

Davidson's reputation as a wandering scholar seems to have fit him well, as he never maintained a college or university appointment, but rather remained a freelance writer and lecturer. In the 1890s, he joined Jacob Schiff's efforts to provide adult education to Jewish immigrants on New York City's lower east side, offering an evening lecture series he called "The Breadwinners' College." One of the few non-Jews involved in this project, Davidson was an extremely popular lecturer who inspired great young thinkers, like Morris Rafael Cohen and Felix Frankfurter. They, in turn, would come to be influential in American public life long after Davidson's early death from cancer in 1899, and attributed much of their success to the education they gained under Davidson's tutelage."<sup>85</sup>

### *George Sylvester Morris*

Another member of the movement merits mention, even though he was never in St. Louis, but instead corresponded with Harris, contributed to *JSP*, and lectured at the Concord School. This is George Sylvester

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<sup>84</sup> Sherman, Letter to Davidson, October 27, 1892, in Thomas Davidson Papers, Sterling Library Archives, Yale University.

<sup>85</sup> See Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The Metropolitan Experience*, (NY: Harper Row, 1988), 617-20.

Morris (1840-1889). Morris, like Davidson, was quite accomplished despite an early death. He taught at Johns Hopkins University and later the University of Michigan; wrote articles for *JSP* on Trendelenburg, published a translation of Überweg's history of philosophy, and published an original work on Hegel's philosophy of the state.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately however, this last work, which was published just two years before Morris' death, is disappointingly short on interpretation and analysis.

Like so many of his St. Louis associates, Morris lectured at the Concord School. And like Howison, as a university professor he helped to bring prestige to this summer program. In addition, it is clearly no accident that one of Harris' female associates, Marietta Kies, a participant in the Concord School, was also a student of Morris' at the University of Michigan. Harris wrote a letter of recommendation for her entry into the graduate program there, addressing it to Morris.<sup>87</sup> Kies' and Morris' working relationship was likely to have been egalitarian, since he was said to have been thoroughly non-discriminatory in his treatment of female students.<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately, there are no papers or letters to help explore their relationship more thoroughly. But Morris' influence on Kies will be discussed in the chapter on Kies below.

### ***The Evolution of Idealism in St. Louis***

The original constellation of members of the Philosophical Society elected officers, drafted a constitution, and soon got underway with their real work, inviting Amos Bronson Alcott to meet with them on his journey west in February 1866.<sup>89</sup> Snider did not seem to take Alcott's lectures seriously, calling them nothing more than "an Alcottian redaction of the Neo-Platonic theory of the universe."<sup>90</sup> In fact he behaved rather irreverently to the aged "seer" at one of the Society's sessions with him. Snider had grown impatient with Alcott's method of reading cryptic phrases "in a rather sepulchral voice, as if [they] were issuing from

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<sup>86</sup> George Sylvester Morris, trans., *A History of Philosophy from Thales to the Present Time*, vols. I and II, by Friedrich Überweg (1826-1871), (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871 and 1873). [This translation appeared in five editions, as late as 1900. It was also published by Hodder and Stoughton of London.] George Sylvester Morris, *Hegel's Philosophy of the State and of History*, (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Company, 1887).

<sup>87</sup> Harris, letter to Morris, ca 1884. In James B. Angell papers, Bentley Library Archives, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>88</sup> R.M. Wenley, *The Life and Work of George Sylvester Morris*, (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 302, quoting Mrs. Harold B. Wilson (nee Alice A. Graves), also a one-time contributor to *JSP*.

<sup>89</sup> See Harris, Record Book, 5-7 for reference to this visit by Alcott. He also visited two more times that same year, in April and December, according to the Record Book, 8 and 52.

<sup>90</sup> Snider, *A Writer of Books*, (Chicago: Sigma Publishing, 1910), 341.

the sacred cave," then querying, "What say you to it, gentlemen?" as he tossed each piece of paper to the floor. Therefore, as the evening wore on, he decided to intervene.

The discussion had zigzagged about in all sorts of twists and turns above and below the surface. . . . I rose to my feet and gave expression to the only remark I made during the evening: "Gentlemen, I may be permitted to state my interpretation of this last saying: its hidden meaning is, in my judgment, that only an Alcott can rightly interpret an Alcott. That being the case, we all had better now go home." At this rather un-Orphic deliverance little tidbits of tee-hees fluttered round the circle as the people sprang up and began to take their hats, while Orpheus himself looked at me somewhat oracularly, I thought, and shut impatiently his map of oracles.<sup>91</sup>

Though not to the same degree, St. Louis group members also committed an offense against Emerson on his visit west. Emerson had expressed his dislike for Hegel, which Snider interpreted as an attempt to "Emersonize" him and his colleagues, to say in essence "that we were on the wrong track, that it would be better for us to study Emerson than Hegel."<sup>92</sup> Harris tried desperately, though unsuccessfully, to smooth over any differences in opinion, but Brockmeyer and Snider were more than happy to confront Emerson, stressing the importance of Hegel's thought as a *system*. In Snider's view, it was this emphasis on "system" that irked Emerson, the intuitive Transcendentalist, the most, although his only expression of anger was "a condescending smile of courteous contempt."<sup>93</sup> It may have been this very visit that prompted Emerson to tell a friend of Howison's later that "the Louis philosophers rolled me in the mud. But Harris and your friend seemed to know what to do with those fellows."<sup>94</sup>

Such vignettes in the life of the St. Louis group point to ways in which it established a clear identity very early on in its existence. These challenges to Emerson and Alcott, two thinkers who had come to typify New England Thought, were more than simply symbolic gestures. Instead, they embodied a true parting of the ways between two schools of thought in America: Transcendentalism and Hegelianism.

Other important moments in the life of the St. Louis Philosophical Society as recorded in its Record Book are worth noting. The ideas of the group's members foreshadowed the work that would later be

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<sup>91</sup> Snider, *Writer of Books*, 335-337.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 330-2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 331.

<sup>94</sup> Buckham and Stratton, *George Holmes Howison*, 54. There is no record of other visits to St. Louis by Emerson between 1867 and 1871 in the Society's Record Book. Since Howison had left St. Louis by 1870, this has to have been the same meeting of which Emerson speaks here.

pursued as two separate branches of American philosophy. The first comes in the year of the Society's founding, in July 1866 when participants indicate a propensity for what has come to be called Process Thought, although without the vocabulary available to them which was to be developed in the early twentieth century.<sup>95</sup> The question of the relation of the real and the ideal, which they saw as being at the core of this discussion, was in fact a matter of a relational process of becoming. Quoting from the text of Harris' synopsis will make this clearer:

. . . the totality of any "somewhat" existing is not merely the extant result, the real side, but the union of this with the ideal potential, nature, *in the form of a process*; Neither the abstract ideal nor the immediate real, being the true actual, but *the relation of the two in the becoming*.<sup>96</sup>

The notion of "becoming," of course, was not new to Harris, Brockmeyer, and perhaps others in the group. Yet the union of *becoming*, *process*, and *relation* in this discussion is certainly leaning in the same direction, as such, as many twentieth century American process philosophers, even if not done with the same sort of self-awareness as followers of Whitehead.<sup>97</sup>

The second moment of interest at this point is a December 1866 meeting devoted to a discussion of Personality as the form of the Absolute, an idea introduced by Alcott on one of his visits west. Alcott posited that "Personality [is] the fundamental principle which should be the origin of all." While Alcott himself tied this notion to his concept of "the lapse," the group's discussion "turned principally to Personality" and its relation to the Absolute. Kroeger took exception to this idea, and is singled out as the member who maintained that Personality could not be the "form of the Absolute" but that it should be free of predicates.<sup>98</sup>

The full discussion is not recorded, unfortunately, and such a brief mention would not be significant were it not for the facts that: 1) the idea of Personality as an attribute of the Absolute may have first been

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<sup>95</sup> I use the term Process Thought to refer to the tradition established primarily by Alfred North Whitehead and his followers, Charles Hartshorn and Lewis Ford. The central idea in process thought is that reality, including God or the Absolute, consists in a process of becoming; it is not static, but continuously evolving.

<sup>96</sup> Harris, Record Book, 21. Quotation marks around "somewhat" I have added for clarity; emphasis is also mine.

<sup>97</sup> The union of becoming, process, and relation is an understanding that continues to be in place among Hegelians today. I note that the St. Louis group made these connections in order to point to their philosophical foresight. In her unpublished letters, Susan Blow is particularly strong in this area, although she warns against developing a cosmology in which God becomes an impersonal force.

<sup>98</sup> Harris, Record Book, 48.

introduced to the St. Louis group by Alcott; 2) that this idea was adopted/adapted among members of the St. Louis movement, in particular Howison and Blow who sharply disagreed as to whether it was pluralistic or monistic; 3) this discussion took place within the St. Louis circle well before Personalism became a clearly outlined and recognized movement early in the twentieth century.<sup>99</sup> Further, given the charges of pantheism many made against Harris and his followers, this controversy regarding Person as *the* vital force within the universe is not to be overlooked. Unfortunately, in this particular case the absence of a full record of the discussion makes any extended discussion of it mere speculation. Still, as a foreshadowing of philosophical movements to come it is worth noting.

Part of the reason that the Philosophical Society was so influential was that, quite simply, it was very good at self-promotion. This it did largely by turning the request for support into an invitation to be a member. This is not a particularly novel concept today, and perhaps not even then, but is an effective means of leading others to feel they are part of the in-group then as well as now. Friends and luminaries both were brought into the St. Louis philosophical fold by granting them associate and auxiliary status. These included Amos Bronson Alcott and Ralph Waldo Emerson; John B. Stallo, an Ohio Hegelian; Henry James, Sr., the writer; I.H. Fichte, the German philosopher and son of J.G. Fichte; and Karl Rosenkranz, Hegel's disciple. Virtually all accepted of course, and the work of the Society gained the esteem and recognition of some of the intellectual world's most admired members.

Another factor that contributed to the success and influence of the Philosophical Society was the fact that, through its associate and auxiliary membership structure, all branches of Hegelianism were represented. Prior to Harris' organization of the St. Louis circle, right-wing Hegelians like I.H. Fichte and Jacob Bernays, had no impetus to ally themselves with those from the left-wing like Willich and Feuerback. Center Hegelians like Rosenkranz and Thaulow also appear to have kept their distance, until Harris invited them into his American consortium of Hegelians. But from Harris' point of view, they were all simply Hegelians, leaders in German philosophical thought who had something of value to bring to his idealist

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<sup>99</sup> Personalism's most famous adherents were Edgar Brightman and Borden Parker Bowne, both of whom were professors at Boston University in the early part of the twentieth century. The movement had a journal entitled *The Personalist* (1920-1979), which became the *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* in 1980. Susan Blow favored a monistic Personalism, rather than the pluralistic version Howison espoused.

project. As noted earlier, Harris and his followers tend to defy strict adherence to the Hegelian categories. In some areas, like religion and perhaps educational theory itself, Harris and certainly Blow would fit into the center or center-right column. Rosenkranz's claim that Hegel would have rejoiced over Harris would certainly support this categorization.<sup>100</sup> Yet in other regions, such as social and political theory, Harris himself is more of a center-left Hegelian and his colleagues like Davidson, Brackett, and Kies, fairly far left Hegelians.

It is not possible to determine whether Harris had secret designs to unify Hegelians across the spectrum, since the Record Book makes no mention of whose idea it was to extend membership to such a wide range of thinkers, nor of the intended outcome of enacting such a policy. However, Harris did use the policy liberally and later headed up the effort to start a journal in which to publish the work of the Society's members. Regardless of whose idea the associate and auxiliary member plan was, it certainly also helped to facilitate the distribution of *JSP* to a broad spectrum of thinkers, and to an international audience at that.

The purpose of *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* was made explicit in its first issue, namely, to present idealist thought to the English-speaking public and encourage its *application* to society as a whole. But if Denton Snider's recollection of Harris' incentive to establish *JSP* is accurate, there was also a personal reason for doing so: Harris' article on Spencer was turned down by the editors of *The North American Review* as too abstruse. Snider describes the scene colorfully:

[Its] editor, Charles Eliot Norton, I believe, wrote to him a disparaging letter, in substance declaring the article unfathomable, unreadable and especially unliterary. To a group of us assembled at Brockmeyer's office, Harris read this letter with sarcastic comments which made us all laugh; then he jumped up, clenched his fist and brought it down defiantly upon the empty air, saying: "Now I am going to start a Journal myself!" This he did at once, the first number appeared in January, 1867, with the condemned article among others.<sup>101</sup>

Not incidentally, Snider believed that the publication of *JSP* started too early, that the group would have done better to have let its ideas mature and to have thus produced a better product. Still, though he found Harris "a little heady" in founding *JSP* at this early date, Snider conceded that it was "indeed the most

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<sup>100</sup> *Yankee Teacher*, 351-52.

<sup>101</sup> Snider, *Writer of Books*, 326.



famous and striking philosophical product of our movement, thanks to the tireless activity and daring of its editor.”<sup>102</sup>

### ***The Women of the St. Louis Movement***

The contributors to *JSP* most often were also members -- associate, auxiliary, or otherwise -- of the Philosophical Society, with one notable exception: its female contributors. Women were not officially recognized as members in the existing record of the Society,<sup>103</sup> although they were not barred from attending its meetings. In a handful of cases, the presence of particular women was noted by name. Just as often, however, they were listed en masse in a special category designated as "ladies and guests."<sup>104</sup> There is explicit mention of the participation in one or more of the Society's meetings by Mary E. Beedy, Susan V. Beeson, and Anna C. Brackett<sup>105</sup> -- all of whom were active members of the St. Louis circle in other capacities. In fact, the Society's Record Book indicates that Brackett was the only woman contributor to the fund to bring Emerson to St. Louis in 1867.<sup>106</sup> Other women whose roles in the movement were less certain are on record as having attended, as are wives of Society members: Miss Smit, Miss King, Miss Child, and Miss Harris; and Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Kroeger, Mrs. Lowry, Mrs. Barnett, Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Sturgeon.<sup>107</sup>

Given the fact that Harris, Davidson, and Soldan were supporters of equality for women in education, employment, and political participation, the failure of the leadership of the Philosophical Society to grant full membership to women was clearly an oversight. Yet there is no evidence that an issue was made of women's membership one way or the other. The women themselves do not appear to have petitioned for membership, neither formally in the PS Record Book nor informally in letters. One would imagine that the matter would have been addressed in women's favor, had such a petition been made.

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<sup>102</sup> Snider, *Writer of Books*, 326-28.

<sup>103</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 294-95.

<sup>104</sup> See Harris, Record Book, 79, 93, for example.

<sup>105</sup> Harris, Record Book, 49.

<sup>106</sup> Harris, Record Book, 85.

<sup>107</sup> Harris, Record Book, 49. Miss Harris was probably William's sister Sarah, and Mrs. Harris his wife. Mrs. Allen may have been the Mrs. Allen who was an associate of Rebecca Hazard the suffragist, both of whom are mentioned below in chapter three as likely associates of Anna Brackett.

So then, it is difficult to trace the level of participation of a number of women who were writers and translators for *JSP*, although information available outside of the Society's Record Book is of some assistance. Susan Blow, for example, while not mentioned in the Record Book, was someone that Snider considered to be one of the movement's leading members. Blow contributed a translation of Goeschel on immortality as a series in volumes 17-20 of *JSP*. This contribution itself is significant: Blow, the most conservative of the women under discussion here was clearly familiar with one of the more right-wing of Hegel's disciples. She also published a book-length study of Dante as well as five books on kindergarten education. As a theorist of early childhood education, Blow worked with Harris in the public schools and invited him and other members of the St. Louis circle to lecture at her kindergarten training school. She continued to correspond with Harris long after they had both left St. Louis, until his death in 1909. Due to the close working relationship she had with Harris, Blow is among those I consider "major" women idealists. Thus her life and work will be discussed in its own chapter.

Anna Brackett clearly was active in the St. Louis philosophical movement as a whole, as a frequent contributor to *JSP* and member of the elite Kant Club which is where the St. Louis group's most intensive work on Hegel took place. She was also a member of the Art Society, the Pedagogical Society, and the Teachers' Association, all of which were outgrowths of the Philosophical Society.

Brackett strongly advocated women's rights,<sup>108</sup> which is a cause for which several others in the St. Louis circle also had a great deal of sympathy, despite the frequent omission of women in the Record Book of its Philosophical Society. She was likely to have been active in the St. Louis Women's Club, having presented a paper on Margaret Fuller to this group in 1871.<sup>109</sup> Based on the little information about the Women's Club that remains, this was an organization quite intentional about encouraging women to be more assertive, career-oriented, and public minded.<sup>110</sup> In an address to the National Education Association, Brackett also made a strong, though less feminist, statement about women's role in education, pointing out

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<sup>108</sup> Leidecker, 243. Brackett was a member of the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association, as well. See William Hyde and Howard Conard, eds., *Encyclopedic History of St. Louis*, (New York: Southern History Company, 1899), 2529.

<sup>109</sup> Published in *The Radical*, 9:354 (1872).

<sup>110</sup> Women's Club Papers, Missouri Historical Society Archives, St. Louis, Missouri.

that as a female-dominated field it was the perfect avenue for women to achieve as women and to prepare themselves for domestic work.<sup>111</sup>

In the early volumes of *JSP*, Brackett wrote poetry before graduating to short translations and then a full translation and exposition of Rosenkranz's theory. Brackett contributed to *JSP* far more than any other woman, and more than many men. She also published both edited and original works of her own, and for this reason she too has been selected to be considered as one of the major women idealists in this study.

Other women present less definitive records of involvement within the St. Louis philosophical circle, although they did contribute to *JSP*. One of these, Ellen M. Mitchell, wrote a critique of Schopenhauer and an analysis of Plato for *JSP*, and each of these show signs of Hegel's influence on her thought. In addition, she wrote a short introduction to Greek philosophy which, unfortunately, demonstrates perhaps too heavy a reliance on Hegel; as critics noted it is a near paraphrase of Hegel's thoughts on the same. Mitchell also made presentations to two Women's World Congresses, one on philosophy, the other on prostitution from a feminist perspective. Finally, she was associated with Harris both in St. Louis and later at the Concord School of Philosophy where in 1887 she lectured along with Thomas Davidson on Aristotle.

Another woman with somewhat different qualifications is Grace C. Bibb, who corresponded with Harris for a number of years. Bibb was a member Pedagogical Society, and the State Teachers' and National Education associations. Along with Brackett, Bibb was also a member of the elite Kant Club. She contributed to the St. Louis *Journal of Education* and to a sister publication of *JSP*, *The Western Review*. Bibb's works that are of interest for this study are her article "Women as Teachers," published in *The Journal of Education* and her attempt at a sympathetic feminist portrayal of Lady Macbeth in *The Western*.

Both Mitchell's and Bibb's writings are decidedly more feminist than philosophical, but for this very reason they demonstrate that the St. Louis circle was by and large a feminist-friendly group willing to support feminists in their work. And although Mitchell and Bibb did not publish as extensively as Blow and Brackett did, they do have relevance to the overall focus of the St. Louis movement. Therefore they will be included in this study, but as "minor," not "major," idealists.

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<sup>111</sup> National Education Association Proceedings, 1872. The Teachers Association was just becoming integrated into the National Education Association at this time, therefore, Brackett's address appeared in the NEA's proceedings.

Other women fare less well, unfortunately. Ella S. Morgan translated selections from Schelling's work and also wrote a short piece on justice and society, which were published in *JSP*.<sup>112</sup> Mary E. Beedy was a suffragist who contributed an essay to Brackett's edited work, *The Education of American Girls*. Beedy was also an associate of Denton Snider, giving a lecture at his Literary School in Chicago in 1887.<sup>113</sup> But she, like Susan Beeson, while verifiably involved with the Society, contributed little or nothing to *JSP* -- Beeson only one essay on St. Jerome to *JSP*,<sup>114</sup> Beedy, nothing at all. Other cases are similar; women appear merely as names on the contents page of *JSP*: Gertrude Garrigues, Alice Graves, Caroline Eliot Lackland, Sue Longwell, Sara Carr Upton, and Florence James Williams, for example. Every attempt to locate these women on the philosophical map beyond an article or two in *JSP* was unsuccessful. Another pair of women, May Wright Sewall and Lucia Ames Mead, were younger contemporaries who were associated with Harris and others in the movement, but focused on Kant's theory of perpetual peace. While their work is substantive and important, it will not be discussed here, because to do so would be to range too far afield. Still others' contributions to *JSP* consisted specifically of literary or artistic analyses, these include: Alice S. Millard, Ida M. Eliot, and Martha Walker Cook.

### ***The Women of the Concord School***

Finally, another group of women have associations with Harris that can be traced, not to St. Louis, but during the years that he was among the chief organizers of the Concord Summer School of Philosophy in Massachusetts (1879-88). These women are Ednah D. Cheney, Julia Ward Howe, Caroline K. Sherman, and Elizabeth Peabody. Their work will not be discussed here because they were not as centrally focused on importing idealist thought to America as the women I have chosen to discuss here. Another Concord associate however, will be included: Marietta Kies.

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<sup>112</sup> See Ella S. Morgan, trans.: "The Method of University Study of Schelling," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 11:92, 11:160, 11:225, 11:363; "Schelling on the Historical Construction of Christianity," *JSP* 12:205; "Schelling's Academical Lectures," *JSP*, 13:190, 13:305; "Schelling on Natural Science in General," *JSP*, 14:145; "Schelling on Medicine and the Theory of Organic Nature," *JSP*, 15:1; "Schelling on the Science of the Fine Arts," *JSP*, 15:152; See also Ella S. Morgan, "On the Relationship of Politeness, Justice, and Religion," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 11:318.

<sup>113</sup> See Mary A. Beedy, "Girls and Women in England and America," in *The Education of American Girls*, Anna C. Brackett, ed., (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1874), 211-254. Beedy's lecture at the Chicago Literary School was entitled "The Symbols of Punishment in Dante's Inferno," December 28, 1887. See Snider, *The St. Louis Movement*, 531.

<sup>114</sup> Sue V. Beeson, "Domenichino's St. Jerome, or The Gospel of Pain," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 16:426.

Kies was a younger contemporary of both the major and minor idealists, therefore she was a bit too young to have been a contributor to *JSP*. In addition, she was a student, rather than a lecturer at the Concord School. However, the philosophical work she produced is substantive enough that she merits inclusion as a major idealist on this count alone. Kies compiled and annotated Harris' Concord lectures and *JSP* articles in *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*, which she used as a textbook while an instructor at Mt. Holyoke College. She also wrote her dissertation on political theory, publishing it as *The Ethical Principle*. She then reworked the ideas in this book, expanding it to explain her theory more comprehensively as *Institutional Ethics*. Unfortunately there is no correspondence or other manuscript sources to tie Marietta Kies more closely to Harris and his circle, as there is with Blow and Brackett. However, it is certain that Kies attended Harris' lectures at Concord. In addition, her work shows a familiarity with Hegel's theory of the state as outlined in *The Philosophy of Right*, a book discussed at length by George Sylvester Morris, mentioned above. Therefore, Kies too will be considered a major idealist in this study with a chapter devoted to her alone.

### ***Philosophy at Concord***

Snider speculated that it was Harris' secret desire to return east to be at the center of an endeavor like the Concord School as early as 1867 when he invited Alcott and Emerson to meet with the St. Louis Philosophical Society. Even if this is not the case, as a native of New England, Harris had a reason for returning east when he resigned from the St. Louis public schools: homing instinct. After establishing friendships with Alcott, Emerson, and Peabody, and attaining such a high level of prestige, Harris received a hearty welcome when he expressed interest in settling in Concord in 1880. In 1878 Harris had had a debut of sorts with the intelligentsia at Concord in the form of a lecture series conducted with the Platonist from Illinois, Hiram K. Jones, at Orchard House, the home of Amos B. Alcott.<sup>115</sup> Harris had been acquainted with Jones and admired his thought, although they did not often agree philosophically. In short, this first set

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<sup>115</sup> Pochmann, 80.

of summer sessions was a success and Harris and others were inspired to realize the oft-dreamed scheme of Emerson and Alcott: an annual series of summer sessions in Concord.

Harris and his long-time correspondent, Franklin B. Sanborn<sup>116</sup> were undoubtedly the two people most responsible for getting the Concord School up and running, despite one writer's giving credit to Alcott.<sup>117</sup> Harris was a quick and original thinker, but his real strength was administration. Alcott, on the other hand, was a great inspirer of others, but not particularly well-suited to turn ideas into action. He may have been the first to conceptualize a summer school in the 1840s.<sup>118</sup> However, it took over thirty years before the dream would become anything more than Alcott's vague notion, when Harris came on the scene and teamed up with Sanborn to do the actual *work* it took to organize and implement it.

The Concord Summer School of Philosophy started off a bigger success than anyone had initially imagined. The first year, over two hundred people were listed as having attended this program of lectures by Harris, Alcott, Snider, Jones, Davidson, Morris, and Sanborn, among others.<sup>119</sup> The focus of the School was decidedly shifted away from the educational theory in which Harris had been so steeped in St. Louis. Instead lecturers explored their own interests, primarily philosophical and literary. In the first year of the School's existence, for example, Harris discussed problems ranging from knowledge and intention to the immortality of the soul, Alcott spoke on personality, the "lapse," and eternal life, and Davidson gave a presentation on ancient Greece. With a total of ten lecturers, the wide range of topics covered made for quite an offering, and the Concord School was well underway.

The School's participants ranged from professional academics to interested lay persons. A large contingent of St. Louis public school educators was present throughout the School's existence.<sup>120</sup> No doubt this helped tip the balance in Harris' favor in the above-mentioned contest between Hegelianism and

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<sup>116</sup> Sanborn had long been prominent in Concord, and had gained a reputation as a staunch abolitionist because of his support of John Brown. In fact, Sanborn was implicated and arrested as a conspirator in the Harper's Ferry incident. See Franklin B. Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, (Boston: Gorham Press, 1909).

<sup>117</sup> See Florence Whiting Brown, *Alcott and the Concord School of Philosophy* (Boston, 1926), an address originally presented to the Concord Antiquarian Society, August 1923.

<sup>118</sup> Pochmann, 79.

<sup>119</sup> All information about Concord School attendance and lectures is from the William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of the Concord Free Library, Concord, MA.

<sup>120</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 271. Susan Beeson, the last surviving member of the movement, also confirms this in a 1929 letter to Charles Perry. See Perry's *The St. Louis Movement in Philosophy: Some Source Material*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), 19-20.

Platonism at Concord sessions. As was the case with the St. Louis Philosophical Society's challenges to Emerson and Alcott, the St. Louis group's "victory" over Platonist thought in New England was significant. First, it shows us that the group thought independently. Despite Harris' early admiration of the Transcendentalists, he did not simply mimic them and adopt their belief system – nor did he try to persuade his colleagues to do so. Second, it points to Harris' ability to articulate and convey ideas. He made Hegel not only understandable, but also applicable to real-life issues. His followers saw themselves as holding a unified, cohesive set of ideas of their own that was worth implementing. They had broken from tradition and were founding a new tradition. They were "making Hegel talk English."

In later years, the school's popularity got in the way of its productivity, philosophically speaking. In fact, Harris and his colleagues were called upon to put more emphasis on literature. I should note that this shift was not entirely *imposed* on Concord School leaders. Many of them, Snider for example, were comfortable with more fluid boundaries between disciplines than we are generally accustomed to today. Therefore, a discussion in which literature, psychology, philosophy, and religion converged, made perfect sense to the Concord School participants.

In the final year of its existence, Concord School leaders tried to encourage participants to come prepared to discuss Aristotle, Leibniz, Lessing, and Hegel. A six-page bibliography was compiled with notes interspersed as necessary to illuminate the significance of the work, so that the School's students would be well armed. While not a complete failure, neither was the School's effort to infuse more rigor into its program a success. By 1887 the series was only two weeks long, versus the original five-week long sessions of 1879. In short, the School had lost its charm and a great deal of its momentum. No doubt the deaths of two of Concord's greats, Emerson and Alcott contributed to the waning of its popularity. The increased professionalization of philosophy within academia is likely to have been a contributing factor as well. And what had been envisioned as a permanent fixture became instead a short-lived experiment in community education programs.

### *The Concord School and Women's Higher Education*

Still, the Concord School left its legacy. In many ways a man of "firsts," Harris began what was one of the first adult education or extension schools in the country. The experiment at Concord laid the groundwork for other such schools to be established -- in Milwaukee, Chicago, and New York in particular - - all of which were quite successful.<sup>121</sup> And, as previously noted, the School provided a venue through which women could gain access to intellectual material and the thinkers who produced it. Higher education options for women, while expanding in this period, were still extremely limited, and co-education was even less accessible. And although a full range of statistics are not available, the attendance list for 1879 shows that two-thirds of the participants were women and seems to have remained at this level or higher throughout its years of existence.

The female-male ratio was repeatedly mentioned in news reports of the School's sessions. Journalists often added to this comments, sometimes with a hint of scorn, on the dress and manners of the "philosopheresses" in attendance: their surprising displays of femininity, their predictably stuffy intellectualism, or conversely their implied liaisons with male participants. A joke that circulated and was printed in the newspapers is particularly illustrative of this last point:

Two philosophers, a man and a woman, were promenading in the Walden woods, and had become deeply entangled in a warm philosophic discussion, when the woman was heard to exclaim: "Pshaw! You are no philosopher, else you would understand the Yesness of my No!"<sup>122</sup>

It should come of no surprise that the journalistic world would display some degree of hostility toward their intellectual contemporaries. Certainly to those in the everyday world, philosophical and literary investigations are obscure. Yet, it is relevant to ask whether the verbal jabs made here and there were in part a reflection of reporters' inability to take seriously an enterprise that educated such a high percentage of

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<sup>121</sup> Harris, Snider, Soldan, and Davidson participated in each of these schools at one time or another. Snider was involved in organizing the Milwaukee and Chicago schools; Davidson hosted his own summer school in Glenmore in the Adirondacks and gave lectures at Jacob Schiff's Educational Alliance in New York City. The very first school of this sort was established in 1878: the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle in New York. Rev. John Heyl, its founder, called it "a college for one's own house" -- i.e., it was both an on-site lecture series and a correspondence course. The Chautauqua Circle was much more successful than its competitors. In fact it was so well known that the term "chautauqua" came to describe any relatively informal program of adult education. It thrived until the first World War and had thousands of subscribers each year. See Harlow G. Unger, *Encyclopedia of American Education*, vol. 1 (NY: Facts on File, 1996), 179-8

<sup>122</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 275.



women. Further, that it did so with such a great deal of hooplah and in a public setting. Opposition to co-education, especially in higher education, was still very strong during the Concord School years, and talk of women's sphere a part of the vernacular. Therefore, it doesn't seem unreasonable to speculate on the relationship of the "woman factor" to the overall reception of the Concord School. Perhaps the high representation of women was part of the reason that "for many years, no one could [mention the Concord School] with a sober face."<sup>123</sup>

Even so, the Concord School can be credited, first with bringing the St. Louis circle and New England Transcendentalists together, if only to point to the differences between the two schools of thought in the end. Second, it is responsible for extending even further the number and range of people who were exposed to, not only German idealism, but philosophy in general. Third, it bridged the gap that was just beginning to develop between professional and freelance philosophers. Finally, it provided access to the intellectual world to women. In short, the Concord School provided a unique setting in which women could discuss their views and pursue their ideas, and stand as intellectual equals with men.

### ***Conclusion***

Both the St. Louis movement and its later incarnation at Concord contributed to the development of American philosophy, and on this basis alone they deserve attention. But the openness of these two branches of the movement to women's theory and practice makes them important from a feminist perspective as well. Because of the St. Louis circle's focus on education, many women who taught in the school system were introduced to philosophical ideas they'd have been unlikely to have encountered otherwise. And as the chapters that follow will make clear, the most talented among them thrived in this educational-philosophical environment, grasping the ideas presented readily and applying them to their vocation. This was certainly the case with Susan Blow, Anna Brackett, and Grace Bibb, all of whose work was facilitated via their participation in the St. Louis branch of the American idealist movement.

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<sup>123</sup> A.E. Winship, "Friends and Acquaintances," *Journal of Education*, May 28, 1925, 603-607.

The summer school at Concord was spoken of as “the dream of a life” by Ellen Mitchell, no doubt because it provided educational opportunities that women were hard-pressed to find elsewhere, as noted previously. Better still, there is evidence that the men at the Concord School actively engaged women in post-lecture discussions as equals, not as auxiliary participants or spectators.<sup>124</sup> It was out of this context that Mitchell was able to prepare and publish her only major work in philosophy and that Kies was able to produce her introductory text in philosophy and begin exploring political theory.

Yet it would be misleading to suggest that the benefits of women's participation flowed in only one direction -- intellectual goods issuing from the movement to the women in that movement. As I hope to make clear in the chapters that follow, the women in St. Louis and later at Concord were not beneficiaries only, but were also contributors to the development of idealism in this country. In fact, while the ideas of each of the three major women discussed here are consistent with Hegel's philosophy as a whole, each also makes important amendments to or adaptations of it that are significant. Susan Blow, for instance, wedded Froebel's method to Hegel's theory, which resulted in a systematic, idealist approach to children's education that stressed individual development without neglecting the importance of community values. Yet by professionalizing early childhood education, Blow also inadvertently justified women's increased participation in the public realm. Hegel, meanwhile, envisioned women as most fully realized within the confines of home and family -- within the private realm. Similarly, Brackett's application of Hegel's philosophy to education, via Rosenkranz, made for a structured approach to secondary education that was true to Hegel's understanding of education as the unfolding of Spirit. At the same time, however, Brackett quite intentionally then applied this theory to women, again, reconfiguring the Hegelian understanding of women as inherently natural and subjective creatures. Finally, Kies conformed well to Hegel's theory of the state, until she introduced altruism into the mix -- and within the quintessentially egoistic world of business relations. Again, her own perspective ended up casting Hegel's thought in an altogether different hue, yet without undermining it completely.

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<sup>124</sup> Ellen M. Mitchell, “Concord School of Philosophy,” in *Free Religious Index*, September 23, 1880, page 147.

This is not to say that Harris and his male contemporaries did not influence Blow, Brackett, and their female colleagues. Particularly because gender dynamics during this time period made for an environment in which male authority was assumed, it may even be that any one of the men in the St. Louis circle had more influence on a particular woman than would have been the case vice versa. For example, Susan Blow held Harris in high esteem, and therefore completely dismissed her own central role in establishing St. Louis' kindergarten program in the history that she herself wrote on kindergarten education in America. Harris, of course, would never have done and never did do the same. But the point of this study is not to dwell on past omissions or to champion one gender over the other. It is instead to outline, analyze, and assess the import of the contributions of this particular group of women to American intellectual history, contributions that for too long have been ignored. If I have been successful, that is what the following chapters accomplish.

## Chapter 2

### Susan Blow -- Philosophy *in* Education

#### *SECTION I: LIFE AND WORK*

##### *Susan Elizabeth Blow: An Introduction*

Susan E. Blow (1843-1916) easily qualifies as the most prominent of the women of the St. Louis Philosophical Movement. She is best known for having established the public kindergarten system in St. Louis, and for this reason is still a recognized figure in the educational canon. Because her pedagogical theory grew directly out of her connection with the St. Louis circle, she is mentioned by name by more historians of the movement than any of its other female participants. In fact, Denton Snider, the group's self-appointed historian, recognizes her as one of the four major figures in the circle, along with William Torrey Harris, Henry Brockmeyer, and himself.<sup>1</sup> Another historian declares that Blow "may almost be called the heroine of the St. Louis School of Thought."<sup>2</sup>

Attention to Blow is certainly deserved, on both the practical and theoretical levels. Her practical contribution to the St. Louis movement was her founding of the kindergarten in 1872 and overseeing its operations. Blow not only provided a valuable public service to one of the growing cities of the west, she also gave professional status to the care and nurture of young children -- which had been a private endeavor. Alongside the kindergarten itself Blow established a training school for potential teachers. In this capacity, she also facilitated much of her male colleagues' work, inviting them to lecture to her classes of kindergarten teacher trainees and to any visitors present, particularly in her evening classes. Blow also presented a good

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<sup>1</sup> Denton J. Snider, *The St. Louis Movement in Philosophy*, (St. Louis: Sigma Publishing Company, 1910), 301.

<sup>2</sup> Cleon Forbes, "The St. Louis School of Thought," *Missouri Historical Review*, 25:619.

deal of her own ideas before these classes. The theories she later put into print grew out of the thoughts she developed in this kindergarten teacher-training work.

Blow's kindergarten work also involved educating mothers about their children's educational needs and development. To this end, she formed classes for mothers, which were a sort of predecessor of twentieth century parent-teacher associations. While she does not appear to have shared the feminist convictions of some of St. Louis' other philosophical circle members,<sup>3</sup> Blow did begin to develop a theory of woman and of motherhood, partly through these classes.

Theoretically, Blow's system of early childhood education was tied to her understanding of philosophy, Hegel in particular. Her kindergarten theory is interspersed with discussions of the merits of different schools of thought within philosophy: idealism, atomism, pragmatism, or Eastern philosophy of religion, for example. At times she links these discussions back to their impact on education. At others, however, entire sections discussing philosophy proper stand on their own in Blow's published work. In fact, in her latest book, *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten*, Blow devoted an entire chapter to "Three World Views" -- i.e., three philosophical systems, the most adequate of which is monistic idealism. In addition, Blow's correspondence with Harris and another male associate, James Jackson Putnam,<sup>4</sup> demonstrates her ability as a philosophical thinker, as she often discoursed on points of philosophy with them. This philosophical aspect of Blow's participation in the movement points to ways in which she joined Harris and other colleagues in developing early American idealism.

Blow participated to an extent in the teachers' organizations that had been formed, of which Harris was a prime mover, both on the state and national levels. However, her involvement here does not rival others in

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<sup>3</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Mary Beedy, Amelia Fruchte, and Ellen Mitchell were members of the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association, as were their male colleagues, William Torrey Harris and Thomas Davidson. See Hyde and Conard, 2529. Mary Beedy was active enough in this movement to have been mentioned in *The History of Woman Suffrage*, compiled by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (3:595-605). Grace C. Bibb and Ellen M. Mitchell were also committed to the feminist cause, as the writings discussed in chapter four will demonstrate.

<sup>4</sup> James Jackson Putnam, a close friend of William James, was a Harvard Medical School professor and Blow's physician when she was seriously ill in the 1880s and 1890s.

the St. Louis circle, such as Anna Brackett and Grace Bibb, both of whom spoke fairly frequently before these bodies. She seems instead to have put more energy, and on occasion money, into educational displays for the national and world-wide expositions that won the St. Louis public school system such recognition. This and all of her educational contributions were hailed by William Torrey Harris, who as the superintendent of schools was Blow's supervisor and later good friend.

Still, while Blow's work is the best chronicled of any of the women of the St. Louis circle, this is not to say that adequate attention has been paid to her in histories of the movement. Blow's practical work was in education, but she was also a theorist who saw herself as expounding idealism -- Hegel in particular. While Blow's theory was, like many of the St. Louis thinkers, really "Hegel after Harris,"<sup>5</sup> it was an early attempt to apply German idealism to the American situation, and for this reason alone is worth looking into. First, however, as will be true of the other women in this study, it will be helpful to give some background information about Blow and her work in St. Louis in order to give a context to her theoretical work.

Susan Blow's origins cannot be called humble. Her father, Henry T. Blow was a successful businessman and prominent Missouri politician, and one of the state's most avid Unionists. In fact, Henry and his brother Taylor were instrumental in helping Dred Scott attempt to gain his freedom prior to the infamous U.S. Supreme Court ruling. Peter Blow, Susan's grandfather, had held legal rights over Dred Scott at one point. Later his ownership was transferred to another family who refused to give Scott his freedom, despite the fact that he had been living in a free state, and virtually as a free man, for a number of years. Henry and Taylor helped Scott file the lawsuit that eventually was taken to the U.S. Supreme Court. When the Court ruled that as a slave, Scott could not be deemed a citizen and therefore had no right to freedom, Henry and Taylor

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<sup>5</sup> This is Forbes' (25:620) way of abbreviating Snider's comment that, like the rest of the group, Blow philosophized "after Hegel, interpreted by Harris." See Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 295.

arranged to have his ownership transferred back to the Blow family. The Blows then granted freedom to Scott and his family.<sup>6</sup>

The Blow family's wealth and prominence provided Susan with a good many advantages, of course. Her father seemed particularly interested in the quality of her formal education, for example, and tried to ensure that this was attended to.<sup>7</sup> When she was sixteen, Susan was sent to a new private institution for girls, Miss Haines' school in New York City.<sup>8</sup> Blow herself later said that while Miss Haines had a "comprehensive mind," she was not "thorough"; she paid little attention to a historical error of two or three hundred years, for example.<sup>9</sup> Still, Haines' school provided Blow with enough of an educational grounding to continue to study on her own after her formal education had ended. Among the list of books Blow reported having read as a young adult is J.H. Stirling's *Secret of Hegel*, the same volume later used by the Philosophical Society in its more intensive study, although she admits not having gained a very clear understanding of Hegel from this first encounter with it.

### ***Discovering Froebel***

Some of Henry Blow's political posts called for travel, which provided Susan with another set of valuable opportunities. In fact, after the Civil War, he was appointed minister to Brazil, where the entire family spent a year, with Susan acting as his secretary. Susan's sister, Nellie, developed a love interest over the course of their stay in Brazil, which resulted in an invitation to Europe by the Russian dignitary whom

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<sup>6</sup> Scott died just a year later, in 1858. See Joseph Menius, *Susan Blow: Mother of the Kindergarten*, (St. Clair, MO, 1993) 15-16. Regarding Henry Blow's Unionism in general, see Menius, 21.

<sup>7</sup> In letters to his wife, Minerva, while he was in sessions of the State Senate in Jefferson City, Missouri, he expressed concern over Susan's education. November 12, 1857; January 14, 1857, cited in Menius, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Menius, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Hilliker, "The Blow Family," Address to Carondelet Women's Club, February 7, 1955, 9A, citing 1892 letter to William Torrey Harris from Carondelet Historical Society.

she later married.<sup>10</sup> It was on the family's European tour that Susan Blow first encountered the thought of Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), a German theorist of early childhood education. And understanding Froebel's educational method is essential to understanding Blow and her role in the St. Louis movement.

Froebel's system consists of using common objects and activities -- which he called "gifts" and "occupations" -- to instruct young children.<sup>11</sup> Froebel's goal was to develop in children many of the same skills we identify as important today: manual dexterity, observation, and original thought. Other objectives were also part of Froebel's system that are foreign, at least to western education today, such as to fortify children's will power and to introduce an understanding of causal relations so that they can begin to develop their "self-active" powers. As noted in chapter one, "self-activity" is a recurring theme for the St. Louis Hegelians. In this particular case, it simply points to children's growing ability to recognize themselves as conscious decision makers who can not only determine their own actions, but also act in such a way as to have an effect on other beings and objects around them.

Froebel's gifts and occupations are an important part of his system which Blow saw as his "practical response to the cravings of childhood,"<sup>12</sup> and which she implemented fully in her own kindergarten work. But these tangible manifestations of Froebel's theory are connected to a series of songs, games, and "plays" in the *Mother Play*. Since this work features over forty such activities, it isn't feasible to discuss each of

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<sup>10</sup> Menius, 29-30. Unfortunately, Susan's romantic life did not fare as well. She had fallen in love with a man named Coyle, a colonel during the Civil War, but her family considered a general, John Parker Hawkins, better suited for her and sabotaged her relationship with Coyle. She balked in regard to Hawkins, however, and remained unmarried. See Menius, 24.

<sup>11</sup> The first gift consists of six soft balls through which children learn about changeability as well as the exertion of force. The second gift consists of a sphere, a cylinder, and a cube, each of which has properties that increase children's understanding of the world by acquainting them with experiences of color, position, and direction. Steps three and four of Froebel's system introduce his occupations: weaving, cutting, folding, and nurturing plants and animals. Each of these activities is intended to teach children about the elements of life, both organic and inorganic. In steps five and six, children move on to more advanced occupations, experimenting with different forms of creating and building to increase their artistic power. They now draw, weave, and paint as well as use sticks, rings, peas, and clay to make figures and models. See Susan Blow, *Symbolic Education*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1894), 127-8.

<sup>12</sup> Blow, *Symbolic Education*, 127.



them fully. However, there are some that Blow herself lingers over, and it will help to illustrate Blow's theory somewhat to introduce these.

Each of Froebel's "plays" and games are familiar parent-child activities, such as the "All-Gone Song" and "Peek-a-Boo." The "All-Gone Song" teaches children there are limits to food, toys, and play periods. "Peek-a-Boo" shows children that a parent will return after an absence. In a non-threatening way, both introduce children to the fact that no one person or thing is constantly present.<sup>13</sup> "Falling-Falling," in which a child falls or jumps into an adult's arms, simulates Hegel's idea of estrangement and return with each "fall": the child is momentarily "estranged" from, then suddenly reacquainted with the same adult. The "Taste Song" turns food-tasting into a guessing game and has a very different emphasis. The child not only experiences new tastes and aromas, he or she is also taught temperance and discipline. Too much of any one food is unhealthy, and certain tastes such as sourness, indicate that a food is detrimental to health. Introducing children to these important lessons in life will reduce the likelihood that they will develop "more fatal forms of self-indulgence" when they reach adulthood.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, there is the game "Fish in the Brook," in which children are encouraged to reach into the water to catch a fish. For children, of course, this game provides a chance to test their agility, but its real purpose is to acquaint them with another creature whose survival is dependent on an element different from their own: fish live in water; children can swim in water, but must breathe the air. Metaphorically, this game teaches children that each individual needs to be in its "own ideal element" in order to develop its "free activity."<sup>15</sup> It is important to note that Blow denies that this game is appealing to children because it allows them to act aggressively. Fear, aggression, and the like are realities, of course, a fact that Blow doesn't ignore. But in her view these are "lower impulses"<sup>16</sup> which education not only must not, but *can* not

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<sup>13</sup> Blow, *Letters to a Mother on the Philosophy of Froebel*, (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), 296.

<sup>14</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 172-3; 175.

<sup>15</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 298-9.

<sup>16</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 289.

develop in children. True education elicits and nurtures only the higher impulses in each individual. Furthermore, since aggression is linked to natural drives, such as hunger or self-protection, at the most fundamental level it implies the desire to satiate a need which in turn implies "consciousness of a possible state of satisfaction as contrasted with a state of discomfort."<sup>17</sup> In "Fish in the Brook" then, any childish aggression masks a desire to know more about the fish, to experience what the fish is experiencing. More play is the solution: children can pretend they are fish, and thus "satisfy the impulse which prompted their seizure" of the animal.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Froebel and Hegel***

Such a systematic approach to early childhood education was itself novel, but more novel still was the way in which Froebel's system took children's play seriously and incorporated it into an educational program. Yet the St. Louis circle as a whole is supposed to have been a movement in which *Hegel* is the central figure. So how does Blow's use of Froebel come into play?

In her own exposition of idealism, Blow did not indicate when she was speaking as a Froebelian, as opposed to a Hegelian. This is because she did not see the need to delineate between the two: they were completely compatible in her view. And in some ways, this makes sense. It is unclear whether Froebel and Hegel knew each other. In fact, from 1799, when Froebel began attending classes at the university in Jena, until 1818, when Hegel accepted a faculty position in Berlin, the comings and goings of the two consisted of a series of near misses.<sup>19</sup> Yet Froebel and Hegel were certainly a part of the same movement, having been

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<sup>17</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 292-3.

<sup>18</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 295.

<sup>19</sup> Froebel left Jena in the spring of 1801, just before Hegel went there to teach in the fall. Both were in Bamberg, but again missed each other, although this time by three years; Froebel was there 1803-4, Hegel 1807-8. Then in Berlin, where Froebel was a curator in the museum of mineralogy from 1812-16, he turned down an offer for a faculty position the same year Hegel also decided on an offer in Heidelberg, rather than Berlin. Hegel would later go to Berlin in 1818, of course, where good friends of Froebel's, Wilhelm Middendorff and Heinrich Langethal, were students. But even here, the potential for linking Froebel to Hegel himself is unfulfilled. Shortly after meeting them (in 1814), Froebel discovered his love for education and convinced his friends to join him in Greishaim where he established the "Institute for Universal German Education" in 1817.

influenced by the same forces and associated with the same people, even if they had never met. Hegel, of course, knew Schelling personally and was well acquainted with Fichte's work. Froebel had noted Schelling's influence on his thought (although it is not clear whether he actually studied under him at Jena). He later established a long friendship with Schelling's disciple, Karl Christian Friedrich Krause. In addition, both Froebel's wife and two longtime friends had studied under Fichte and Schleiermacher in Berlin. And all three -- his wife and friends -- shared Froebel's vision for an educational system based on the highest human ideals, which they tried to put into practice at Froebel's school in Kelihaul.

So the working out of idealism as a school of thought was something that both Hegel and Froebel were party to; Hegel as an intellectually active force, Froebel as a student and practitioner. Both were exposed to an intellectual environment in which *Bildung* – education-culture – was a central concept. Among the romantics and idealists that the two associated with, this term was used to convey more than a superficial attainment of taste and/or propriety. Instead, *Bildung* involved a noble and ennobling process of bringing a person's higher self to fruition. However, while both shared this common understanding of the role *Bildung* could (and *should*) play in the life of the individual, in the final analysis, Froebel was by no means the philosopher that Hegel was. In fact, Froebel was influenced as much by romanticism as by idealism. His educational ideas involved more a poetic imbibing of the beauty of nature and an intuition that the spirit of the universe is an organic whole than a working out of a system of how that beauty is made manifest and how that organic whole communicates its truths. Even so, Froebel was adept at putting together a *method* with which to teach and to introduce *Bildung* into the life of his students, even if he did not present it as a *system*. And this is why Blow could espouse both Hegel and Froebel simultaneously: Froebel provided the method and Hegel the theory that shed light on and justified the use of that method.

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(It was later moved to Kelihaul) This was a school for children aged five to twelve primarily, despite its grandiose name. The next year, Froebel married Henrietta Wilhelmine Hoffmeister, whom he had met through Middendorff and Langenau. See Emilie Michaelis and H. Keatley Moore, trans. and eds., *Autobiography of Friedrich Froebel*, (Syracuse: C. W. Bardeen, Publisher, 1889), 35-40, 102-104, 120-124.

With many of the games outlined above, Froebel's interpretation is much more simple and direct than Blow's. For instance, "Falling-Falling" in Froebel's view was primarily about developing physical strength and building trust between parent and child. The additional meaning of the game as simulating self-estrangement and return is Blow's Hegelian reading of the game's deeper purpose. Similarly, Blow's argument against aggression as the motivating factor in "Fish in the Brook" is her way of fitting the exercise into her Hegelian framework. Metaphorically speaking then, Blow uses Hegel's theory as the city plan, and Froebel's methods as the buildings within that city. So well do the two complement each other in Blow's understanding that they barely need to be distinguished.

Blow's discovery of Froebel came to her after she had already become acquainted with Hegel's thought, and this was largely because of her family's social standing. It was considered unseemly for a young woman in Blow's economic class to engage in work of any kind. She was to be well-read certainly, and was expected to obtain culture, but for the purpose of becoming a wife and mother, not in order to gain prestige or recognition. So, while Henry Blow had gone to some lengths to make sure his daughter was educated, for many years he forbade her to pursue a career. Later in life Susan attributes her father's stance toward women and work to her own relatively late start in the professional world:

Had my father permitted, I should have gone into some definite work long before I did, but I would never have done anything against his wish, and I remember definitely saying to myself that I would get ready for work, and when the right moment came God would show the work. -- Christ waited till he was thirty.<sup>20</sup>

Blow herself was nearly thirty when she encountered Froebel's theory, which led to the opportunity to become director of the St. Louis kindergarten system. This in turn led to her acquaintance with William Torrey Harris and the St. Louis circle. To a woman as religious as Blow was, this must have seemed truly

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<sup>20</sup> Hilliker, Blow Family, 11.

pre-ordained. When she did begin her work, -- both practical and theoretical -- of course, there was essentially no stopping her. But again, because of her position of privilege, Blow was called upon to accept her job as kindergarten director without pay. This may have been a condition imposed by the school board because of its tight budget. But it was also very likely to have been a condition insisted upon by her father who did not approve of his daughter working. By accepting the position as a volunteer, Blow was acting more like a missionary than a spinster school teacher, and thus was still able to retain her status as a woman of privilege in the public's eye. At the same time, however, she pursued the meaningful work that she had been yearning for. So as Margaret Hilliker put it, Blow's success came, "more or less in spite of her family and position."<sup>21</sup>

### ***Founding the Kindergarten***

With only a cursory glance at the origins of the kindergarten in St. Louis, one could be led to believe that William Torrey Harris was solely responsible, not only for its conception, but for its orchestration and implementation as well. Biographer Kurt Leidecker, for instance, gives Harris most of the credit for establishing the kindergarten. According to Leidecker, after a suggestion by Francis Berg, Harris immediately saw the value of early childhood education and worked to get it in place. Blow is mentioned, but her central role at the ground level is not given nearly enough recognition.<sup>22</sup> Another St. Louis circle historian's account improves somewhat. Cleon Forbes acknowledges Blow's participation in implementing the kindergarten experiment, but he implies that she was vague on the theory behind it: "Dr. Harris," Forbes says, "aided [Blow] immeasurably with his clear insight into the educational principle upon which the

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<sup>21</sup> Hilliker, Blow Family, 9A. We can't ignore the fact that it was Blow's social position that made it possible for her to work for free, and by doing so she set an unfortunate precedent that other women -- perhaps less fortunate than she -- were then led to follow. See Hilliker, Blow Family, 16; Leidecker, 270-1.

<sup>22</sup> Kurt F. Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher*, (New York: Philosophic Library, 1946), 270.

kindergarten is based."<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in Charles Perry's centennial tribute to Harris, the author actually quotes Susan Blow's memorial address honoring her colleague, but then continues on with citations of Harris' comments on kindergarten education, completely passing over Blow's own expertise in this area.<sup>24</sup>

Given the period of time during which these authors were writing and their accompanying zeal to chronicle the work of their male predecessor, we can forgive such oversights. More distressing by far is the fact that in her history of the kindergarten Blow herself credits Harris completely with its founding. In fact, she does not even hint that she played any part in establishing or implementing the kindergarten program, despite the fact that she was the central figure in both.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, it takes a much closer look at the St. Louis circle to get a clear picture of the high level of Blow's involvement in the movement. It is true that Blow *was* greatly assisted by Harris, particularly in the kindergarten's very early stages. Harris himself had taken an interest in pre-primary education before Blow met with him to discuss the idea in 1871. It is also the case, however, that Blow was an adept organizer and strong leader who was at the center of getting the project up and running.<sup>26</sup>

Blow's objectives in providing kindergarten education were distinct from those of Harris.<sup>27</sup> For Harris, education served a civilizing function. In the first year of the project, he cautioned the school board not to

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<sup>23</sup> Forbes, 25:619; 25:88; 25:295.

<sup>24</sup> Charles M. Perry, "William Torrey Harris and the St. Louis Movement in Philosophy," in *William Torrey Harris 1835-1935*, Edward L. Schaub, ed. [papers presented in commemoration of Harris at the centennial of his birth at the meeting of the Western Division of the American Philosophical Society], (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1936), 39.

<sup>25</sup> Susan E. Blow, "Kindergarten Education," *Monographs on Education in the United States*, Nicholas Murray Butler, ed. [originally presented at the Paris Exposition, 1900], 5-7.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Palmer Peabody had started a public kindergarten a decade earlier in Boston, but with limited success. It was shut down after just a few years, due to the Boston school board's refusal to continue funding it. In 1870 she encouraged Harris to institute the kindergarten in St. Louis. Harris seemed genuinely interested in pursuing the kindergarten experiment, recommending that early childhood education methods be incorporated into teaching in the primary grades. After a committee appointed by the school board visited a play school in New Jersey, but found no evidence of bonafide kindergarten methods elsewhere in this country, the decision was made for St. Louis to be the first to introduce the kindergarten to America. See Blow, *Kindergarten Education*, 3; Hilliker, "The Life and Work of Susan Blow," unpublished manuscript in the collection of the Carondelet Historical Society, 1-4, 13.

Other kindergartens soon followed the St. Louis model in the 1880s and '90s: in San Francisco, run by Kate Douglas Wiggin; in Chicago by Elizabeth Harrison and a Mrs. Putnam; in La Porte, Indiana, by a Dr. Hailman; and in Milwaukee, founder unknown. See Kate Douglas Wiggin, *My Garden of Memory*, 130-133 and Elizabeth Harrison, *Sketches Along Life's Road* [Boston: Stratford Company, 1930], 60-76.

<sup>27</sup> Hilliker, *Life and Work*, 3. Elizabeth Peabody's view seems to have been similar to Blow's.

expect an advance in intelligence as much as the formation of good habits in kindergarten children. This in itself is a valuable function for education to serve and the pre-primary years are an optimum time to do so, thought Harris, because good habits are more easily formed between the ages of three and six than six and nine.<sup>28</sup> But prior to the founding of the kindergarten, most children attended school only during this latter age range. In large measure, Harris' goal in pushing for education to begin at a younger age was to extend the period of time they spent in school. He had very little hope that parents would be willing to extend their children's education at the upper age levels.<sup>29</sup> After all, this was the period of time during which children actually became *useful* to their parents, particularly in working class and agricultural households in which extra wage-earners or field workers were sorely needed. Harris knew and understood this, and thought that education, an equalizing force in society, could bring culture, discipline, and good moral and mental habits to the masses. If the kindergarten could help to do this sooner, all the better.

For Blow, on the other hand, formal education played an important role in facilitating the gradual process of the unfolding of the self. It awakened a young mind which otherwise would be closed to the universal truths that await discovery. The "gifts" of Froebel's system did not simply acquaint children with the material world, they drew the child's attention to properties in the objects around them. The child then could be introduced to contrasts between one object and another, then the relations between objects, and finally to the universal truths that lay behind those objects. This was not all going to occur in the first year of a child's introduction to formal education, of course, but kindergarten was a crucial step in the initiation of this process. Similarly, the use of games in kindergarten classes were not merely forms of recreation, but were instead exercises that help build trust and cooperation among children. Kindergarten education might indeed have a civilizing and equalizing power, as Harris believed, but this was not its most important function for Blow.

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<sup>28</sup> Hilliker, *Life and Work*, 20.

<sup>29</sup> Hilliker, *Life and Work*, 3.

However, neither Blow nor Harris explicitly acknowledged their different emphases. Perhaps this is because the two views were so very complementary in practice. Blow could implement her kindergarten programs in such a way as to facilitate exactly the kind of growth she thought necessary. All the while, Harris would congratulate her for producing such fine, well-mannered children who would, no doubt, grow to be even finer citizens. The two views by no means mutually exclude each other. In fact, if they were consciously aware of their respective foci, it is unlikely either would have objected to the other's view. Harris was concerned more with education's role in society, Blow on its importance in individual development and personal relations. In the end, however, they are just two sides of the same proverbial coin, because a good society is made of good individuals and vice versa.

Today, early childhood education is so much a part of our social experience that it is difficult to imagine how very revolutionary the kindergarten ideal was at the time. Yet in its day it was indeed among the most innovative of methods. Education in this time period, when not conducted fairly haphazardly by a series of tutors in the home, consisted of a very rigid set of practices. Students often had to memorize long passages from classic works of literature, some of which (or likely most of which) they didn't understand. The main concern most teachers had in the classroom was with keeping order, enforcing discipline by whatever means necessary, and virtually drilling information into their charges' heads. It is no surprise that generally children under seven years old were considered too young to endure the trials they would meet at school. The kindergarten by contrast, allowed a degree of freedom and exploration, yet in a controlled environment. Before the opening of Blow's first kindergarten class, it was unheard of for a teacher to use moveable tables and chairs, encourage play, and incorporate observation of real flowers and plants in a garden on the grounds of the school.<sup>30</sup> But this is what Blow did, successfully applying Froebel's theory and thus working

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<sup>30</sup> Hilliker *Life and Work*, 5.



with children's natural tendency toward play and creativity, rather than against it. Furthermore, she did so with "complete devotion to the work and [with] an infectious enthusiasm."<sup>31</sup>

### ***The Move Toward Theory: Teacher Training and Mothers Classes***

But Blow, who was described as an extremely quick-minded and insightful woman by contemporaries, could not be content with kindergarten teaching alone. By 1877 she recognized the need for a school in which potential kindergarten teachers were put through a program of systematic instruction in kindergarten practice and theory. In order to become familiar with the methods used in such a school, she travelled to Europe to study under Baroness Marenholz von Bulow, another Froebel expert.<sup>32</sup> When she returned to St. Louis she was well prepared to open the first training school for kindergarten teachers in this country.

A component missing from the kindergarten program until this time was a clear set of criteria for certification as a teacher. Therefore, as part of her kindergarten training school project, Blow established an examination committee to draw up such criteria,<sup>33</sup> which resulted in approval of a two-level system: certification either for instruction of children or for training of kindergarten teachers. In each case the candidate needed a recommendation from their immediate supervisor in the kindergarten classroom to which they were assigned; the approval by vote of the Kindergarten Society, a group of the directors of all the kindergartens in St. Louis; and approval of the Board of Education.<sup>34</sup>

A second innovation was Blow's teacher training classes themselves. At first these classes focused on the basics of Froebel's theory and educational techniques in which her students improved their drawing skills or learned how to design geometric figures, for example. They would then present the products of

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<sup>31</sup> Hilliker, Blow Family, 25, quoting Kate Douglas Wiggin, a younger contemporary of Blow who established a kindergarten in San Francisco.

<sup>32</sup> Forbes, 25:620. Von Bulow was an associate of Froebel, see *The Autobiography of Friedrich Froebel*, Emilie Michaelis and H. Keatley Moore, trans. and eds., with (Syracuse: C. W. Bardeen, Publ., 1889), 143.

<sup>33</sup> Hilliker, Blow Family, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Menius, 39.

such sessions to the kindergarten children, giving them tasks to perform with which we are familiar today, such as coloring, folding, or connecting dots. Teaching in general was not usually approached in so systematic a fashion, and kindergarten teachers often received much less training than did primary teachers. In fact, Elizabeth Harrison, a student who had travelled from Chicago to study with Blow for six months noted that she was lucky to have received so much kindergarten training, as most teachers had only two or three weeks of instruction at a summer institute.<sup>35</sup> Given the newness of the kindergarten, and no doubt their new-found access to a bonafide profession, the women in Blow's school are said to have approached their work with a passion. In Denton Snider's words, they were like "modern missionaries . . . on their own soil" who were "afame with zeal and sacrifice for a noble cause."<sup>36</sup> Harrison demonstrates further how devoted many women were to their kindergarten training, as she recalled virtually begging the director of the St. Louis art museum for private lessons in geometric design in the evening since she couldn't attend the classes offered during the day.<sup>37</sup>

Once this first level of training classes was well established, however, Blow decided more teacher-training was needed in which she introduced her students to the higher theories behind her educational ideals. This seems to have been in 1880, as Denton Snider indicated that she introduced literature into her training classes at this time, inviting him to lecture first on Sophocles and then on Homer, Herodotus, and others in later years.<sup>38</sup> This was a chance for Blow's "kindergarteners" as her teachers and trainees were called, to attain more "culture." At least this is how one student, Elizabeth Harrison, saw it. To this end they also heard lectures from other St. Louis circle members, on philosophy and religion as well as literature. Harris certainly was one of Blow's regular speakers. Even as late as 1887, well after he had left St. Louis, Blow was planning a series of lectures that she wished Harris to give. She even suggested the

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<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Harrison, *Sketches Along Life's Road*, Carolyn Sherwin Bailey, ed., (Boston: Stratford Company, 1930), 65.

<sup>36</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 319.

<sup>37</sup> Harrison, 73-4.

<sup>38</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 316.

topic Harris should address (Orientalism), indicated the format he should follow, and sent a list of those attending.<sup>39</sup> It isn't clear who else in the St. Louis circle may have been among Blow's "faculty," if I may call it that. Based on Blow's distaste for Davidson's views, as noted in chapter one, it is unlikely that he was among her lecturers. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that suggests she enlisted any of her women colleagues.

Since the lectures in Blow's training school were open to visitors, they drew an audience from outside of the kindergarten program and were very well attended. In fact, Elizabeth Harrison was surprised to walk into a room of two hundred people at her first kindergarten training class.<sup>40</sup> Blow herself as well as her colleagues would have gained some much-welcomed recognition by giving these lectures. Denton Snider in particular benefitted in this way. His lectures to the training classes helped him make a name for himself both locally and regionally within the kindergarten movement. As noted in chapter one, Snider later became involved in a literary school, which became the Chicago Kindergarten College.

Blow's teacher-training school certainly served a practical purpose. The St. Louis school system was growing rapidly, and the new kindergarten program was being expanded to meet its high demand. The resulting influx of new teachers called for more systematic methods of training. In addition, as will become more clear in the next chapter, the education of educators was often sporadic and spotty. Many of Blow's students may have received only a very basic education before entering her training school. Therefore, they may have greatly needed and benefitted from having Froebel's theory supplemented with the literary and philosophical greats. In Elizabeth Harrison's case, the experience of being in Blow's class was nothing short of epiphanous:

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<sup>39</sup> Susan Blow, Letter to William Torrey Harris, March 1887 (specific date unavailable) from Susan Blow Papers, Archives of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

<sup>40</sup> Harrison, 61.

[I had] been shown the path by . . . which one might ascend to the realm of truth, such truth that nothing could ever again shake its foundation. The clear-cut logic of Miss Blow's arguments had led me step by step from the commonplace things of every-day life to the possibility of "companionship with God." . . . Never will I forget . . . the light and inspiration she gave me on that Saturday morning.<sup>41</sup>

Despite this impassioned testimony, the inclusion of such seemingly unrelated theories in classes for kindergarten teachers was sometimes met with skepticism.<sup>42</sup> For Blow, however, education at its foundation was philosophical, and her students needed to understand the origins of their work in order to perform their tasks intelligently and thus to do justice to their calling.

Yet from a feminist perspective, it is difficult not to speculate that Blow's advanced teacher training classes were in a sense her excuse to expand intellectually. This is not to say that she feigned belief in the relevance of the theories she and her colleagues expounded in these classes. Along with her colleagues in the St. Louis circle, Blow certainly took philosophy and literary theory very seriously. Furthermore, she firmly believed in the need for teachers at all levels to attain a certain level of "culture" through education. But at the same time, the teacher-training classes allowed her to instruct students in classic works of literature, explore her own ideas, and engage in discourse with colleagues on a regular basis. Given her contemporaries' high estimation of her intelligence, it would be surprising if Blow did *not* yearn to continue expanding her mind in such a way once she had mastered Froebel's theories. What else should we expect from someone who early in life was deemed "too bookish, as displaying quite too much erudition for a

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<sup>41</sup> Harrison, 64.

<sup>42</sup> Harrison notes that theoretical instruction for kindergarten trainees was looked at as indulgent. In addition, an 1874 article by Sarah McGruder all but derides the kindergarten effort, saying childhood instruction is integral to the mother-child relation and Froebel's theory makes too much of it as a system. This article appeared in *The Inland Monthly*, a short-lived journal in St. Louis published by Charlotte Smith and edited by Mary Nolan (1872-76). While these women do not seem to have been involved with the St. Louis movement, they did feature contributions by Denton Snider and other men on the periphery of the movement. Clearly, however, the two were not strongly allied with Blow. The publication's sentimental views about women also make it unlikely the editors would have shared the feminist views of Brackett, Beedy, Bibb, Fruchte, or Mitchell. *The Inland Monthly* vol. 5, no. 3, (March 1874), 271-274.

woman"?<sup>43</sup> And if Harrison's experience is any example, Blow's erudition was being put to good use at long last in the kindergarten teacher-training classes. In any case, by all accounts others, and quite likely Blow herself, considered these training classes her "chief contribution,"<sup>44</sup> not only to the kindergarten project, but to the culture and history of St. Louis.

Blow's classes for mothers of kindergarten children is another aspect of her work in St. Louis that is important to her kindergarten theory overall, especially as it was developed in her published work in later years. The origin and focus of these classes are not well documented, but they seem to have been established after her study with von Bulow in Europe. Blow's intent in establishing mothers' classes was to procure their support of the "Play, Art, Work" model used in their children's classes. Many women, though intelligent, did not understand kindergarten method or theory, and these classes were an attempt to acquaint them with both, as well as to encourage them to use Froebel's songs and games when at home with their children.

While at this point there is not enough information available to make an intelligent guess about the success of the mothers' classes, Blow's student, Elizabeth Harrison, indicated that it was very difficult for her to spark interest when she tried to start her own classes for mothers in Chicago in 1884. Blow may have encountered resistance to the idea as well. Yet this was the period of time during which Denton Snider believed Blow was at the pinnacle of her influence:

“She possessed the ability and the ambition to make her class the central one, and herself the center of the movement in the city. This she did easily; the leadership came to her by a kind of natural selection, and she by no means shrank from her pre-eminence.”<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, it is unlikely that Blow found herself lacking an audience of mothers in St. Louis -- or anyone else for that matter -- for many seem to have been eager to hear her speak.

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<sup>43</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 295.

<sup>44</sup> Hilliker, *Blow Family*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 316.

## *Personal and Professional Challenges*

This "pinnacle" of Blow's success had been ushered in by her contributions to important educational meetings, both national and international. At the 1875 Normal School Association meeting, she presented a paper, "The Kindergarten: Its Aims, Purposes, and Results," in which she outlined the theory behind Froebel's methods and listed the benefits of kindergarten education.

After this we find Blow presenting award-winning kindergarten displays at this nation's centennial exposition in Philadelphia and then at the Paris exposition two years later, both of which won her a great deal of recognition. During the first event, the nation was experiencing a serious economic depression, so Blow volunteered to cover all expenses for her presence at the exposition as well as for materials for the display. This ended up being a good investment for Blow, as she was given an award from the U.S. Centennial Commission "for excellence of work and for the establishment of kindergartens as a part of the public school system." In Paris, too Blow's display was highly commended.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps most important in regard to this second event is the fact that the American kindergarten system received international recognition, and Blow along with it.

It must have seemed at the time, both to Blow and her colleagues, that she was nearly invincible. Her success seems to have continued into the early 1880s, after many St. Louis circle members had moved on to other ventures. As late as 1883, in fact, Louis Soldan wrote to Harris that "Miss Blow is working with her usual wonderful energy, and has a large class of ladies studying Dante with her."<sup>47</sup> But it was near this time or shortly after that Blow began to become ill with Graves disease, although she did not receive a diagnosis

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<sup>46</sup> On Blow's commendations at these expositions, see Leidecker, 375-6. An additional unforeseen outcome of Blow's work was her influence on Frank Lloyd Wright, whose aunts both studied kindergarten theory during this time, although it isn't possible to determine whether they were students under Blow. Perhaps at their suggestion, Wright's mother attended the Philadelphia Exposition and was so impressed with the display Blow presented that she adopted Froebelian teaching method and practice. Years later, Wright attributed the development of his spatial abilities as an architect to the influence of the Froebel blocks he played with as a child. See Meryle Secrest, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 58-61, 70, 121.

<sup>47</sup> Louis Soldan, letter to William Torrey Harris, October 17, 1883, William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

until several years later, after she had already suffered a great deal.<sup>48</sup> The impact of this illness on Blow's life and work cannot be overstated. While Snider spoke of it as a sort of tragic-heroic malady that was somehow brought on by a "long private trouble which colored her whole life,"<sup>49</sup> Graves, or hyperthyroidism, can have devastating physical and emotional effects. For much of the 1880s and into the 1890s, she suffered severe headaches, eye problems, bouts of nervousness, and an inability to concentrate due to the disease. Worse still, her primacy in St. Louis began to waver just as the disease was taking hold.

In 1884 Blow decided to take a year off from her public school work in the hope that she would be able to recover from her as-yet-undiagnosed illness. When she was unable to return the next year, the school board appointed Mary McCullough to be director of the kindergarten without soliciting Blow's input. This in itself was an offense in Blow's view, but added to it was the fact that she preferred Laura Fisher for the post, her good friend and one of the instructors in Blow's teacher training classes. School board members would have been aware of Blow's preference for Fisher over McCullough, of course, and Blow and her advocates were conscious of this. A number of Blow's supporters, including Fisher, resigned their teaching positions in protest, and the school board became divided over the matter.<sup>50</sup>

Amid professional turmoil, Blow had been experiencing personal loss as well. In 1880, her brother John had died, and while it is not clear that they had been particularly close, the death of a sibling certainly could not have been easy. But more recently, in 1885 her brother-in-law had died, the husband of her sister Nellie to whom she was very close. In addition, her sister Lucretia died in childbirth that same year after a troublesome early marriage to a man the family did not approve of. This left Susan with the responsibility of helping to raise her sister's four children, all of whom were under five years old.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Hilliker, *Blow Family*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 324.

<sup>50</sup> Hilliker, *Blow Family*, 16-17.

<sup>51</sup> An April 18, 1885 letter from Blow to Harris alludes to her deep grief over a recent death in the family, which is no doubt in reference to this sister. Susan Blow Papers, Archives of St. Louis Historical Society.

Somewhere on the continuum between the personal and professional is another loss that Blow experienced in the early 1880s. Her good friend and supporter, William Torrey Harris had resigned the superintendency in 1880. Reportedly, this was partly because the public schools had become so entrenched in political infighting, although his rationale was that he was in poor health and in need of rest from his long labors (at the "old age" of 45).<sup>52</sup> Harris did not leave St. Louis immediately, and once he did leave, he returned often for speaking engagements at the invitation of Blow and other former colleagues. Still, he was sorely missed in the community. In fact, both Sue Beeson, a woman who played a minor part in the St. Louis circle, and Louis Soldan expressed regret that St. Louis had lost him.<sup>53</sup> As Blow seems to have been much closer to Harris than either Soldan or Beeson, she was certain to have felt a sense of loss with him absent. At the very least she had lost a strong and influential ally in St. Louis public school politics.

By 1886-87, the disease had hit Blow full-force.<sup>54</sup> Her diet was greatly restricted, although it is not possible to determine whether this was due to doctors' orders or lack of appetite, and she continued to suffer with headaches and vision problems. This year, too, she had a "heavy collision with the [School] Board,"<sup>55</sup> and if Snider's assessment of the situation is accurate, she nearly forced the dismantling of the entire kindergarten system, rather than concede defeat. But by this time, the consensus in St. Louis seems to have been that it was Blow, not her opponents, who was at fault.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> As early as 1873, critics were charging that "the Pope in the Vatican is as democratic as the present Superintendent." And by 1878, the *Globe-Democrat* of St. Louis called Harris' pep talk to teachers, "a psychopathic homily in two parts -- part one transcendental, lasting an hour, and part two practical, about ten minutes." See Leidecker, 259 and 343, respectively, and 382-84 regarding political infighting in the school system generally.

<sup>53</sup> Beeson's letter was in fact years later in a December 1, 1887 letter in which she lamented the fact that the St. Louis school system was no longer under his wise guidance. Much earlier Soldan had been hopeful that a rumor that Harris would become chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis was true; this was December 31, 1880. Both letters are in the William Torrey Harris collection at the Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> Susan van Ausdal, "Case Study in Educational Innovation: The Public Kindergarten in St. Louis 1870-1900," unpublished dissertation, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, July 1985, 237-38.

<sup>55</sup> Susan V. Beeson letter to William Torrey Harris, January 14, 1887.

<sup>56</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 584; 576-7.



Despite the grim outlook for Blow's continued career in St. Louis, she still imagined that she would be able to resume work when she regained her health. After a great deal of coaxing by Harris and Laura Fisher, in 1888 she agreed to go to Boston where Fisher had relocated, for medical treatment. Here she met with James Jackson Putnam, a Harvard medical school professor and practicing physician who made the diagnosis of Graves disease. By 1891 she was beginning to recover, and Dr. Putnam advised her to try writing as a way to make the transition into working again; it was not until 1896, however, that Blow was well enough to resume public speaking.<sup>57</sup>

This period, which lasted more than a decade, changed Blow's life dramatically. But had it not been for this halt to her direct involvement in kindergarten work, we might not have evidence of its theoretical underpinnings, because she'd have had no reason to shift her focus from practice to theory. After her illness had subsided, Harris urged her to put her ideas on the kindergarten into print. This resulted in the publication of *Symbolic Education* in 1894, which could easily qualify as her *magnum opus*. The appearance of this book resurrected Blow's old popularity, and she regained a following.

When Blow began public speaking again, she did so in Cazenovia, New York, where she had moved in 1889 to be near her sister. A small group of thirty gathered to hear her at this meeting. Two years later, she spoke in Boston and New York to crowds of three and six hundred, respectively.<sup>58</sup> For the next twenty years of her life, she continued to hold public speaking engagements, and for a time held a position at Columbia Teachers College in New York. She also published four more books outlining her theory of early childhood education. Her friendship with William Torrey Harris remained strong; he would visit in Cazenovia whenever he travelled through the area, and they continued to correspond until his death in 1909.

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<sup>57</sup> Hilliker, Blow Family, 18-19.

<sup>58</sup> Hilliker, Blow Family, 20.

### *St. Louis Circle Connections*

Very little material exists to verify whether and to what extent Blow had friendships with any in the St. Louis circle other than Harris. Therefore, the nature of Blow's relationships with most of its other members is frustratingly vague. She was at the forefront of developing St. Louis' brand of Hegelianism and is said to have attended Philosophical Society meetings regularly,<sup>59</sup> even though her name doesn't appear in Harris' Record Book. And while she seems to have been an active member of the Art Society,<sup>60</sup> there is no evidence to demonstrate that she was involved in any of the Philosophical Society's other offshoots: the Aristotle Club, the Pedagogical Society, or the Kant Club. Nor did she contribute significantly to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.

Blow did not share the feminist sympathies of many of her St. Louis circle women colleagues, so it isn't possible to link her with them by association via membership in the Missouri Equal Suffrage Association, the national suffrage groups, or the St. Louis Woman's Club. However, she may have been a member of the Wednesday Club, in which both Sue Beeson and Amelia Fruchte were involved. And while it is not clear that any other of the women in this study were Wednesday Club members, Blow must have known of Anna Brackett, Mary Beedy, and Grace Bibb, as all were involved with the public schools. Brackett and Bibb in particular both held high posts at the normal school, therefore Blow is quite likely to have interacted with them at meetings of the school board. Even so, despite the fact that Blow's life and work is significantly better documented than most of the women of the St. Louis circle, we still don't have a completely clear picture of exactly what her role was within that circle, or what her relationships with its members were like. There is one exception, however, and it requires some attention: her competitive relationship with Denton Jacques Snider.

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<sup>59</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 34.

<sup>60</sup> Hyde and Conard, 2108.

*"Quite too much Erudition"? -- Snider's Perspective*

In his history of the St. Louis movement, Snider devotes a great many pages to descriptions of Blow. The accounts of the interactions in this work, then, are from Snider's point of view, and this must be taken into consideration. Even so, it is clear that their relationship was intense and quite complex. Snider, an intelligent man with a great deal of insight into the workings of the St. Louis circle, seemed to feel quite threatened by Blow, who easily matched his own intelligence and perhaps even surpassed it on occasion. Still, his assessment of Blow's character sheds light on her personality. It also gives clues as to how a woman with Blow's administrative skill and intellectual talents was taken by at least one man in her day.

In an early reference to Blow, Snider recounts his conversation with her German tutor in 1868 in which he was told that her "culture was too reflective, too philosophical, too much inclined to the abstract and logical rather than to the poetic and emotional."<sup>61</sup> It is not clear whether Snider had yet met Blow at this early date or knew her only by reputation. Since her family was so prominent, it may well have been the latter. In either case, from the tone of many of Snider's analyses of Blow, he seems to have agreed with this assessment of her character.

Snider makes no mention of having actually met Blow until 1879 when he spotted her in the audience at his lecture at the first meeting of the Concord School of Philosophy. He then notes that the next year Blow invited him to her home for dinner to discuss the lectures she hoped he would give to her kindergarten training class.<sup>62</sup> Accepting her proposal, that year he presented a series on Sophocles, as Blow wished to introduce literature into the training school program. Blow then invited him to give another course of lectures in the future, and he agreed.

Based on his account, Snider enjoyed teaching the training classes. In fact, he gave Blow's classes priority over his other speaking engagements. In his words, they had their "sovereign place in the heart of

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<sup>61</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 296.

<sup>62</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 300-1.

the business."<sup>63</sup> At the same time, however, he often belied a degree of resentment toward Blow for holding a position of authority over him. At one point he referred to his first course of lectures on Sophocles as a test he had to pass before Blow would allow him to move on to more challenging material. In addition, although he referred to his next set of lectures for Blow as "the most important and most lasting fact of the season," he also noted wryly, "I was the teacher, but she was the ruler."<sup>64</sup>

In Snider's view, Blow's leadership ability was in fact a serious character flaw: "it lay in her deepest spirit to subordinate."<sup>65</sup> At the same time, Snider also admired this quality in Blow, as he demonstrates in this description of her entrance into one of his lectures:

No sooner had Miss Blow entered . . . than every eye in the room seemed suddenly pulled toward her, announcing her at once to be the center of that company. . . . I immediately directed my look and my talk toward her, she became at once the queen of that audience. . . . Here was the heroine, and everybody present, in spite of a little female jealousy perhaps, acknowledged secretly her supremacy -- I the teacher being therein foremost. She knew well her peculiar power; when I aimed my eye-shot at her -- and I could not help it -- following it up with my words, her naturally red face turned redder with a defiant smile, and flashed a response which I traced thus as writ in her features: Come on, I am ready.<sup>66</sup>

Examples like these abound throughout Snider's account of his interactions with Blow. He expresses awe at Blow's power, mixed with resentment and even a feeling of being threatened by her. In one sense, such descriptions simply point to how myth-laden Snider was.<sup>67</sup> The above quotation, for instance, is followed by a synopsis of his lecture, which he saw as aptly applicable to Blow. He saw Blow as a tragic-heroic figure, and this image is intertwined with his account of his address. The entire scene -- his lecture, Blow's entrance, and the impact of his argument -- all became part of Snider's fantasy of the 'moment of mythic truth' being brought to fruition. In his mind, this moment culminated in his triumph over Blow: "If I

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<sup>63</sup> The "heart of the business" refers to Snider's own lecture circuit in St. Louis, which seems to have kept him very busy during this time period. Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 322.

<sup>64</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 315.

<sup>65</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 347.

<sup>66</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 297.

<sup>67</sup> Van Ausdal has also made this observation, saying Snider was guilty of the fallacy of archetypes, 234-35.

mistake not, I saw her press her lips more firmly together when I spoke of Authority's wrong done to Heroship . . . did she even clench her little fist a little?"<sup>68</sup>

Snider's assessment of Blow's influence in the community could be taken as his attempt at a good natured (though woefully tradition-bound) observation of the excesses of female power. Blow was dubbed the "mother of the kindergarten" after all, by William Torrey Harris early in her tenure at the public schools. A mother nurtures and cares for, but she also scolds and punishes. Perhaps this is the sort of image Snider is trying to conjure up in his discussions of Blow. Her requests he treats as commands. When Blow asked him to speak on Faust, for example, Snider seemed to believe he had no choice but to "obey the summons."<sup>69</sup> Similarly, conflicts with her became banishments; the chance for reconciliation was tantamount to redemption. In a sense then, perhaps Snider was not criticizing Blow as much as mocking his own acquiescence, his own fearfulness of her.

To the modern feminist reader Snider's attraction/repulsion to Blow appears to grow out of a sexism, unintended as this may have been. At times he seemed to have objected to Blow's heavy-handed leadership not only because she was powerful, not only because she was intellectual, but because she was a powerful and intellectual *woman*. And despite the fact that he was a liberal-minded person overall, Snider does seem to have had a problem with strong-willed women. Caroline K. Sherman, who worked closely with Snider at the Chicago Literary School in the 1880s commented on a conflict that had developed between Snider and a colleague of hers in the Chicago Women's Club. Describing the two as being "at swords points," Sherman made a telling observation:

I like Mr. Snider and consequently am all the more sensitive to his faults – especially the one which leads him to take it for granted that his audience is superlatively ignorant and that childish illustrations are needed to make his ideas clear to them. . . . In this age of books, woman's clubs, etc., etc., women are not so ignorant or so dull of apprehension as Mr. Snider assumes.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Snider, 299. The "moment of mythic truth" is my phrase, not Snider's.

<sup>69</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 347.

<sup>70</sup> Sherman, letter to Davidson, September 28, 1886, in Thomas Davidson Papers, Sterling Library Archives, Yale University.

It would be unfair, of course, to hold a nineteenth century man to a twenty-first century standard of gender equality. At the same time, however, Snider's descriptions of Blow seem to me to be unfair, partly because of his gender constructs. It only seems responsible to point out that Snider's sometimes negative slant on Blow's behavior may have grown out of his male bias, at least in part.

This is not to say that Blow was always an altogether congenial and easy-going person. In fact, she and Snider had a serious rift in their friendship, presumably because she could not accept his classical/humanistic outlook. Snider himself interprets Blow as expecting him to fall in line with Harris intellectually, and a later St. Louis circle historian adopts this idea as well.<sup>71</sup> Yet, this is something of a misperception. At the time, around 1883-84, Harris had been charged with pantheism and was beginning to develop an interest in Eastern Indian thought. Blow, in contrast, was becoming increasingly intrigued with Roman Catholicism, and later would even consider conversion. There certainly may have been private conversations between Snider and Blow, specifically about their respective points of agreement or disagreement with Harris, which go unrecorded in Snider's recounting of his days in the movement and Blow's letters to Harris. However, given the evidence available, Snider seems to have underestimated Blow's ability to think independently. She may have disagreed with Snider, but a need to align herself -- and others -- intellectually with Harris does not seem to have been the issue.

Yet whatever the source, the rift that grew out of their diverging views grew into a full-blown conflict during another of his lectures. Again, Snider's account incorporates into the theme of his lecture his perspective of Blow's tragic-heroism and her irrepressible anger at his insightful analysis -- primarily of her character. Snider saw Blow as incurably tradition-bound, and in his lecture clearly addressed what was part of an on-going intellectual, if not personal, battle between the two: the ways in which "Sacred Truth" can become tragic. His description of the event follows.

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<sup>71</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 325; Charles M. Perry, "William Torrey Harris and the St. Louis Movement in Philosophy," in *William Torrey Harris*, Edward L. Schaub, ed. (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1936), 30.

I dared throw an eye-bolt at Miss Blow, behind which every glance in the class fell into line . . . Miss Blow turned on me and broke out into decided passionate exception to what I had said. . . . She whipped the air with her pointed index, her face almost boiled, and her voice was at times pitched to a height which made it grate screechy. She seemed to feel that my interpretation was a personal attack, though I said nothing of the sort, whatever I may have looked.<sup>72</sup>

Even though he recounts this incident over thirty years after it occurred and with the knowledge that her illness was becoming pronounced at this time, Snider seemed to have no compassion for Blow. Instead he still paints a picture in which she is acting out a mythic truth, brought on by her own willfulness. Later, when she declined to reconcile with him, Snider wove this too into his myth of Blow's innate tragic flaw. Of course she would defy him with this "Grand Refusal," Snider concluded, just as in the ultimate act of defiance, she would turn her back on St. Louis where she had accomplished her greatest work. Furthermore, although Snider believed that she alone had the power to resurrect the St. Louis circle after so many of its members had departed, this too she refused to do, continuing on with her work in the east instead.<sup>73</sup>

In a sense, of course, Snider was right. Blow did seem to have turned her back on St. Louis. In fact, she and Harris both snubbed their former colleagues in the public schools by declining invitations to participate in ceremonies for the twentieth anniversary of the kindergarten.<sup>74</sup> But perhaps Blow had simply moved on. After facing the hardships that she did in the 1880s and early 1890s, she then settled into a life of publishing and lecturing, refining her theory and attempting to integrate more of Hegel into it as she went along. And thankfully so for us. As noted above, because of Blow's shift in focus -- from practice to theory -- we now have the benefit of being able to peruse her work, assess its value, and inquire into what Hegelianism, as developed by one nineteenth century woman, looks like.

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<sup>72</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 349.

<sup>73</sup> Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 576, 581-4.

<sup>74</sup> Ausdahl, 264-5.

## SECTION II: BLOW'S PHILOSOPHICAL WORK

### *The Meaning of The Mother Play*

*"There is no philosophy for the young woman to be compared with the philosophy [of the] mother's plays and games with her children."<sup>75</sup>*

The sourcebook for Susan Blow's practical work was Friedrich Froebel's *Mother Play*, which she implemented in her own kindergarten classes early in her career and then taught to others. And when she left the St. Louis school system, she continued to hold it in the highest esteem. She produced two analyses of this work, the intent of which was to clarify some of its points and to elaborate on others: *Commentaries on Froebel's 'Mother Play'* and *Letters to a Mother on the Philosophy of Froebel*. In addition, in two other books Blow gave the philosophical basis for the use of Froebel's method: *Symbolic Education*, her first effort to discuss educational theory, and *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten*, her final major publishing effort. There are many points of intersection among these works, of course, since Blow saw each of them as part of a whole. Therefore, I will discuss them concurrently according to their relevance to Blow's educational theory overall.

Both Harris and Blow seem to have agreed that, while the gifts and occupations were important, Froebel's plays and games were the really strong point of his theory. After all, through these exercises the child "ascends from the world of Nature to the world of humanity; from the world of things to the world of self-activity."<sup>76</sup> Yet while Froebel's games and plays for children are invaluable as an educational tool, Blow stresses that they are not simply an arbitrary grouping of activities, but instead are a logical series of steps intended for the instruction, not merely the amusement, of young children. This is because Froebel saw the value of children's traditional games and recognized the "deposit of unconscious reason," in them.

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<sup>75</sup> William Torrey Harris, introduction to Susan Blow's *Commentaries on Froebel's "Mother Play"*, xv.

<sup>76</sup> Harris, introduction to Blow's *Commentaries*, xiii.



At the same time, he did not simply accept them uncritically, but instead "preserved what was good and omitted what was crude and coarse in these products of instinct."<sup>77</sup>

Since Froebel had been influenced by idealism, it is not surprising that he would view children's traditional forms of play as a sort of cumulative record of the instructional wisdom that had been passed down through the ages. Blow, of course, agrees with this view, maintaining that traditional games are "truer than those of individual children, because they image a wider life."<sup>78</sup> She recognizes that Froebel's choice of games is not flawless, however. In fact, some of them cling to old fashions rather than to permanent realities in her view. But Blow reminds her readers that the exercises in the *Mother Play* serve as "pattern experiences" that a creative teacher can draw on. Adaptations can be made for children in an urban setting: "Nest with Birdlings" can become "Cat with Kittens" or "Mowing Grass" can become "Sweeping the Room."<sup>79</sup> As long as the spirit of Froebel's work is maintained, there is no limit to the adaptations that a teacher can make.<sup>80</sup>

### *Some Kindergarten Errors*

By 1908 when Blow published *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten*, many kindergarten teachers, in her view, were taking too much liberty with their interpretations of Froebel. Blow identifies three approaches that she considers to be serious departures from Froebel's system and even detrimental to children. The first, Blow had first discussed in *Symbolic Education*, and referred to as the "concentric" approach.<sup>81</sup> This is a method in which an idea or symbol is chosen at random and lessons and activities centered around it. One example of the concentric kindergarten that Blow found especially dreadful was a

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<sup>77</sup> Blow, "Kindergarten Education," 38; *Commentaries*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 120.

<sup>79</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 167-9.

<sup>80</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 122.

<sup>81</sup> See Blow, *Symbolic*, 245-247; *Educational Issues*, 1-33; .

series of lessons on Abraham Lincoln in which the ever important element of play was entirely missing. The children weren't encouraged to transform themselves into birds and butterflies through their power of imagination. Instead their teacher lectured to them about Lincoln and forced these "little victims of the concentric program" to re-enact a "dreary drama: as their moralizing teacher implored them to emulate his example."<sup>82</sup> The fact that play is almost entirely absent from this exercise is its biggest flaw for Blow. Another problem is that the ideas being conveyed to the children are too abstract for them to grasp. Blow repeatedly insists that Froebel's method does not teach children explicit moral principles, but that deep truths will be conveyed to children unconsciously. In *Symbolic Education* Blow states this particularly well:

It must not be supposed, even for a moment, that Froebel explains to the child the meaning of his symbolic representations. . . . [He] knows that the mind may be trusted to universalize its ideas, and leaves to its own alchemy the transmutation of the symbol into the reality symbolized.<sup>83</sup>

Another kindergarten method to which Blow objected, and one that is the complete converse of the concentric program, is the "free-play" kindergarten, the name of which belies its focus. Its biggest error is that, while it provides some structure, it does so with virtually no system within this structure. All the children may count buttons simultaneously, for example, or all get a chance to write on the board, but each activity is detached from the other and no effort is made "to lead the children to build better, draw better, model better, or do anything better than they were originally able to do."<sup>84</sup> In short, the free-play kindergarten really amounts to a play school, rather than a genuine kindergarten, therefore it fails to serve one of its main functions: to bridge the gap between family and school.<sup>85</sup>

A third flawed early childhood educational method is really a type of concentric approach, and this Blow terms the "industrial" kindergarten, or socialized school. While this method is a vast improvement over the free play kindergarten, Blow believes that ultimately industrial education fails, because it turns

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<sup>82</sup> Blow, *Educational Issues*, 6.

<sup>83</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 105; She expresses this same idea in *Commentaries*, 22-23 and *Letters*, 189.

<sup>84</sup> Blow, *Educational Issues*, 156.

<sup>85</sup> Blow, *Educational Issues*, 282-284.

education into a means, not an end in itself. It also confuses the role of the school and civil society. She acknowledges John Dewey as a proponent of this approach and quotes him extensively from *School and Society* throughout the second chapter of *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten*.

Dewey and his followers believe that childhood education should be linked to social goals and should familiarize children with the world of work. She cites an industrial kindergarten teaches children about the uses of the potato. The children help dig, clean, peel, and cook the vegetable in a variety of ways. They then learn how to make starch and even use the starch they make on doll clothes. This all sounds useful enough as a series of educational exercises, but in Blow's view, it is completely misguided. The industrial program confuses the role of the school with that of civil society. Along with Hegel, Blow saw civil society as the realm in which individuals perform actual duties and engage in work relations with each other for mutual gain.<sup>86</sup> The school on the other hand is its own reason for being. Education is its only aim. Students should not be encouraged to look for reward or other external incentives, but should be taught to seek growth and achievement for its own sake, and in Blow's view, Dewey's educational program failed to do this. We may disagree with Blow's characterization of Dewey's ideas, but this is a charge she made against him, because she saw it as a grave pedagogical error.

### *Professionalizing Motherhood*

Blow recognizes that in a sense there is nothing new about the Froebelian system. After all, mothers played "Falling-Falling" and "Peek-a-Boo" with their children long before Froebel wrote the *Mother Play*, and they continued to do so even when they were ignorant of his work. Yet in Blow's view what *is* new about Froebel is that he has taken the natural mother-child relation and systematized it. In this way he has succeeded in "vitalizing" "with clear consciousness and persistent purpose [that which] maternal instinct has

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<sup>86</sup> Blow, *Educational Issues*, 336-7.

always blindly and intermittently attempted."<sup>87</sup> In a sense, then, the systematic approach to childhood education that Froebel's theory enforces is almost more for the sake of the mother, than for the child -- at least in Blow's appropriation of Froebel. The system teaches women who work with young children to see their games and activities in a different light, and to use these activities to foster growth. What might even be called revolutionary about Blow's interpretation of Froebel is that it not only affirms women's nurturing role, but also takes it seriously in both practice and theory. Practically, mothers' games with their children have become a professional enterprise. Theoretically, they have been analyzed in the five volumes that Blow had written, almost inadvertently, as philosophy specifically for women.

Blow saw Froebel's *Mother Play* as a "mother's book," whose "chief merit" is that "it finds in typical concrete experience points of contact for the evolution of ideals in the young child."<sup>88</sup> Of course, she recognizes that Froebel has simply appropriated a mother's instinctive knowledge of her child, and observed the objects and activities that give a child the most joy. Yet this is the strength of his system. Having studied the "inmost union and . . . reciprocal influence"<sup>89</sup> of mother and child, he has arrived at a theory that facilitates the mother's instinct to meet the needs of her child. Now she can not only attend to her child's physical, but also aid its moral and intellectual growth, or in Blow's words she can "come to his aid in every crisis of the spiritual battle for liberty."<sup>90</sup> For the child's part, the games he or she plays at home or with other school children become transformed. Froebel's system awakens the child to maternal love in various forms and thus to awareness of his or her own mother's love. This in turn introduces the child to a principle of altruism that is expressed in familial relations, runs throughout nature, and extends to all of creation

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<sup>87</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 104-5; 128.

<sup>88</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 262-3.

<sup>89</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 19.

<sup>90</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 36.

through God's benevolence.<sup>91</sup> In this sense, Blow is very much like Marietta Kies for whom altruism is a main goal of human social institutions.

Yet Froebel's songs and games do not encourage the self-sacrificing devotion by a mother to her child that was so popular in the nineteenth century. Instead, many games are meant to teach both mother and child that children need not be inseparable from their mothers.<sup>92</sup> In fact each will experience periods of separation that will foster mutual growth. Elaborating on this point, Blow notes that the notion that "mother and child should have a common life does not . . . imply that they should always be together," further she adds that "no sensible person will accept the sentimental theory that the mother should be her child's sole and constant companion."<sup>93</sup> Not only does a woman have interests of her own to pursue, if her child is overly dependent on her, this will undermine the child's own self-development. Specifically, if a child does not learn to accept separation from his or her mother, this will result in a failure to experience the ever important process of self-estrangement and return that to Blow is essential to human growth.<sup>94</sup> As noted above, this is what the game "Falling-Falling" introduces to the child, and what other of Froebel's games reinforce. Both mother and child will be better for accepting this lesson and integrating it into their lives, in reality as well as in play.

While Blow's interpretation of Froebel widened women's sphere considerably by professionalizing the private work of early childhood education, generally speaking her view of women was quite conventional. She saw women primarily as caretakers, and in 1909 lamented to James Jackson Putnam that women's struggle for suffrage would only harm them, subjecting them as it would to the "industrial" realm. She would rather have women focus their attention on their domestic role, since the home was where they could

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<sup>91</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 259-61.

<sup>92</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 263.

<sup>93</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 229.

<sup>94</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 229-30.

realize their potential more fully.<sup>95</sup> In her published work too, Blow hailed efforts such as that of the Chicago Kindergarten College, which "consciously attempted the transformation of the girls' college into a school for motherhood."<sup>96</sup> Since young men's institutions of higher learning offered them a wide range of courses, Blow added to her praise a query, "Why should not the colleges for women offer at least elective courses in subjects fitting their students for the vocation of mother and homemaker?"<sup>97</sup> Like so many women writers of her era, Blow saw nurturing others as women's "mission" and the care of children in particular as their "divine appointment."<sup>98</sup> The *Mother Play* then, was the means by which women would become well enough prepared for the challenges that they would meet in this, their calling. Furthermore, once all mothers fully learn its lessons, Blow believes that "the ideal which hovers before us in the immortal pictures of the Madonna will be realised, for then, at last, each mother will revere and nurture in her child the divine humanity."<sup>99</sup>

Blow's idealization of motherhood has its roots in both Froebel and Hegel. Froebel idealized childhood, in part because his own was so drudgerous. His mother had died while Froebel was in infancy, and his step-mother treated him very badly, referring to him in the third person rather than addressing him directly, for instance, while she showered her own son with affection. In childhood, an individual is innocent, free, and near to bursting with potentiality in Froebel's view. And play is to children "what the pure air and wide expanse on the mountain-top are" in nature:<sup>100</sup> the manifestation of the inner soul.

Blow shares these views, but joins to them Hegel's emphasis on the importance of the family as the foundation of society. And of course in Hegel's understanding, a woman finds "her full substantive place,"

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<sup>95</sup> Blow, letter to James Jackson Putnam, June 10, 1909, James Jackson Putnam Papers, Special Collections, Countway Library, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA.

<sup>96</sup> Blow, *Kindergarten Education*, 43.

<sup>97</sup> Blow, *Kindergarten Education*, 43.

<sup>98</sup> Blow, *Kindergarten Education*, 43.

<sup>99</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 39.

<sup>100</sup> Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man*, H. N. Hailmann, trans. (New York: D. Appleton, 1885), §49-50, 118-120. [Reprinted by Augustus M. Kelley, Publ., New York, 1970.]

in the family in her role as wife and mother.<sup>101</sup> Again, rather than choose one thinker's ideas over the other, Blow integrates the two into a theory of her own, insisting on the importance of both child and mother simultaneously. She sees the family as an institution as having grown out of children's need for care while in "the feebleness of infancy," and even goes so far as to call "the little child . . . pioneer of the process which created human institutions."<sup>102</sup> In effect, then, Blow credits the child with initiating the founding of one of society's most important institutions. This is to do more than merely romanticize childhood, as Froebel did, however. Blow goes on to say that the person responsible to this little bundle of human potential --i.e., the mother -- is certainly entrusted with a treasure. In this way, Blow's theory turns maternal instinct into expertise in nurturing a human soul. And this in turn is the foundation of society's foundational institution, the family. Furthermore, the central role that women play in this endeavor can be nothing less than ennobling.

As I noted in the introduction to this study, it is dangerous to assign labels that are in use today to figures from another historical period. At the same time, however, it is also helpful to compare the past with the present. Therefore, I will take a moment here to look at Blow's theory of woman, child, and family from a feminist perspective.

Although Blow was not allied with the women's rights movement, she had more in common with her maternal feminist counterparts than with those who espoused liberal feminism. She certainly ascribed to the romantic notion of "women's sphere" that was so valorized in the mid-nineteenth century writings of women like Sarah J. Hale, Lydia Sigourney, Catharine Beecher, and the later work of Gail Hamilton. The liberal feminists of her day believed that even though differences between the sexes do (obviously) exist, these are not substantial enough to justify making sharp distinctions between them in most cases. In contrast, Blow's

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<sup>101</sup> See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §§158-180, and *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§450-452. Froebel also values the family, but does not discuss it as fully as Hegel does. See Froebel, *The Education of Man*, §86.

<sup>102</sup> Blow, *Kindergarten Education*, 44.

theory of the relation of mother and child and their respective roles in the family clearly would place her in the maternal feminist column. She, like many conservative-leaning nineteenth century women not only believes women are inherently different from men, she also hails that difference as worthy of reverence. Therefore, she insists that more schools are needed that, like the Chicago Kindergarten College, instruct women in childcare. Such schools will not only properly educate women in Blow's view, they will also regenerate all of human life by "enhancing the sanctity and uplifting the ideals of family life."<sup>103</sup>

### *The Dialectic of Play*

The "practical key to the whole book," the *Mother Play*, is that imitation is its primary teaching tool according to Blow.<sup>104</sup> Since children are not yet able fully to understand the world around them on the cognitive level, through play they use imitation and imagination to structure that world. Their infantile representations may not always seem to match reality to the adult mind. In fact, since they are "unable to distinguish the form of the ideal from the wrappage of the actual life, [their] picture of human deeds, being without perspective, is necessarily a caricature."<sup>105</sup> Even so, the process of imitating what they see to the best of their ability is an important cognitive step that all children must take. For it is through this trial and error of imitating that children come to be able to make distinctions between mere empirical facts and ideal truths later in life.

In a very real sense, imitation via play is children's initiation into, not only recognition of the ideal, but also participation in it. Play is children's natural element in Blow's view: "what flight and air are to the bird, play is to the child; it is both his distinctive activity and the element in which his life moves."<sup>106</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that mothers and teachers make the best use of this "natural element" to facilitate children's

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<sup>103</sup> Blow, *Kindergarten Education*, 43-4.

<sup>104</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 26.

<sup>105</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 120.

<sup>106</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 111.



growth. But first, play and its characteristics must be made clear, so that it can be used as a tool of early childhood instruction.

The first trait to note regarding the nature of play is that it operates on the symbolic rather than on the literal level. This explains, at least in part, why children often prefer common objects to act out their imitative fancies, rather than the high quality toys their parents so carefully select for them. A cane often surpasses in excellence the hobby horse that they ignore; a collection of rags bundled together is showered with as much affection as the loveliest of dolls, to give two examples. This is because in play children do not seek perfect representation of a particular object of observation. Instead they want an avenue via which to explore their own internal nature and development: "What a girl demands of her doll is the quickening of maternal love in her heart. What the boy craves of his horse is that it shall waken a presentiment of his own power over nature."<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, this sort of symbolic representation is characteristic of the first stage of cognitive development<sup>108</sup> and in fact is to be encouraged, because "it is the spiritual reality which the symbol suggests that allures the imagination."<sup>109</sup>

A second characteristic of play is that it grows out of children's desire to test their physical and cognitive skills. For this reason, games that require feats such as catching the "Fish in the Brook" are often favorites with children. Meeting such challenges allows children to see the products of their own efforts as well as the extent to which they can exert force and effect outcomes in the world. On a more competitive note, they can measure their own quickness and agility against that of their playmates, and even learn from peers how to improve skills. Guessing games offer the same sort of opportunity on a more cognitive level. Each child

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<sup>107</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 85. Here Blow adheres to gender roles that Brackett will ignore, or explicitly reject in the next chapter.

<sup>108</sup> Harris was intentional about instituting the graded classroom system in the St. Louis public schools, largely because of his belief that different methods of teaching were appropriate to different stages of cognitive development. Brackett also outlined a series of stages of cognitive development, but it is somewhat different from that of Blow. Brackett speaks of imaginative behavior as being characteristic of the *second* stage of learning which takes place in the primary grades; in the early stages, children are purely perceptive. It is not clear if Brackett and Blow mean the same things by "imagination" and "symbol," nor is it completely clear when Brackett thinks the shift from perception to imagination occurs, but it does not seem that she sees it to have begun quite as early as Blow indicates here.

<sup>109</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 85.

can see where they fit in on the continuum, and the natural desire for improvement spurs them on to more growth. Regardless of where the child comes out on such a continuum, however, physically and mentally challenging activity also serves an important social function in Blow's view, it "satisfies that craving for recognition which is at all times the deepest hunger of the human heart."<sup>110</sup>

Another characteristic of play is that, as noted above, it is an effort by children to reproduce the world and thereby to begin to understand it. Much of children's spontaneous play involves creating an imaginary world, but one that is based on the real world around them. They play "store," "nursery," "railroad," "school," or any other number of imitative games. Each time the children may play different roles, or a certain child may prefer to perfect the same role. But in the process of replicating various social settings, in Blow's view the purpose behind the play is not only to 'try on' each social role, but actually to aim at an ideal -- if not an ideal society, then certainly an ideal self.<sup>111</sup> The influence of Hegel's thought on Blow is clear, for in a very real sense, play is a process of self-objectification. Before a child engages in play, he or she begins with at least a nascent understanding of who his/her 'self' is and chooses to take on another persona that then takes him or her out of that original self. The child thus becomes another temporary self that expresses thoughts and feelings, some of which might be shared in common with the original self, some of which might be vastly different. During play, the child has new experiences which then inform his or her image of the original self when the play has ended. At its most fundamental level then, children's play involves the ever important Hegelian process of self-estrangement and return in embryonic form.

Yet in *The Philosophy of Right* Hegel disparaged the play theory of education because it attempts to keep children satisfied with their immature state, thereby discouraging growth and development. In Hegel's

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<sup>110</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 111.

<sup>111</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 113-4.

words, play theory "sees childishness itself as already inherently valuable" and "debases serious things."<sup>112</sup> In light of this, how can Blow's theory of play be deemed Hegelian? Blow makes no explicit mention of Hegel's criticism on this point, but as noted above was critical of what she called the "free play" kindergarten. In the free play setting, children were left entirely to their own whims, their play and activity perhaps organized, but not directed toward intellectual or moral growth. At least on this count, Blow considered the free play method to be superior to a Rousseauian program in which an individual child was free to choose his/her own interests and activities, preferably isolated from other children. Free play did at least provide community among children and a series of planned activities. But this was the limit of its merits. She was as distressed as Hegel was by methods of education in which play is used to "make [children] satisfied with the way they are"<sup>113</sup> rather than spur them on to growth. In this sense, Blow's theory matches Hegel's, even though she does not address this problem directly by making reference to his views on this matter.

Blow's understanding of play parallels Rosenkranz's view of the role of literature in the self-development of youth, which he develops in his application of Hegel's thought to educational theory.<sup>114</sup> For Rosenkranz, the purpose of children's literature is to allow youth to go outside themselves, imagine that they are kings or conquerors, then to return to their everyday experience with a new perspective on themselves and the world around them. As will be clear in the next chapter, Rosenkranz expounded on Hegel's understanding of literature's educative value in *Pedagogics as a System*, and Brackett's translation of this work served to adapt Rosenkranz's system to the American context. We can also see in Blow a fitting of

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<sup>112</sup> *Philosophy of Right* §175. As noted by Allen Wood in the modern edition of this work, elsewhere Hegel mentions two German educational theorists by name in regard to this problem: Johann B. Basedow and Joachim H. Campe. See *The Philosophy of Right*, Allen Wood, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 440.

<sup>113</sup> *Philosophy of Right* §175.

<sup>114</sup> Rosenkranz's theory will be discussed more fully in the next chapter on Anna Brackett who translated his *Pedagogik als System*. Hegel discusses the importance of classical literature in young adult education in his first Nuremberg address. See Frederic Ludlow Luqueer's translation of Hegel's 1809 Nuremberg address, *Hegel as Educator*, (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 157-8

this kernel of Hegel's thought to America's educational ideals. Kindergarten was becoming an institution in this country, and play was its central component in her view. From her perspective, children's love of play time is not simply an accidental property they have acquired, but is a necessity for their self-development -- just as literature is for older children. Further, this need is expressed as creative endeavor later in life: "To objectify himself, to take the world into himself and discover and reproduce the ideal implicit in each -- such are the deep impulses which stir the child to play, as later they impel man to literature and art."<sup>115</sup>

Again Blow's Hegelianism is apparent. Like works of art or products of labor for the adult, play is the process through which the child objectifies him or herself. Through play, children recognize both objects and ideals outside of themselves and appropriate them for their own use. The imaginary world thus created facilitates the development of children's sense of self via the process of self-estrangement and return discussed above. In addition, the development of a healthy play life in children is the first step to procuring both their moral and their intellectual freedom.<sup>116</sup> Regarding moral freedom: for children to imitate the behavior of their elders or to imagine another world beyond their immediate experience is to aim toward an ideal. This indicates that children see beyond the actual to the possible, that they seek a world outside of mere material existence. Most important, when children make choices, albeit not yet quite conscious choices, about who they will be in any particular game they begin to develop a sense of moral freedom; for consciousness of choice is at the core of human freedom.

Imitation, which in Blow's view is "an act of spiritual assimilation"<sup>117</sup> requires a level of understanding that goes deeper than mere assent to a proposition. It calls for comprehending the properties and characteristics of that which is being imitated in such a way as to integrate those properties into the imitator's own sense of selfhood. Again, this is not to say that the child engaged in imitation is *consciously*

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<sup>115</sup>Blow, *Symbolic*, 115.

<sup>116</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 33.

<sup>117</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 32.

comprehending and integrating their subject matter, but only that the imitative process leads them to understand in ways that would not be possible on the conscious and cognitive levels.

Again, children's impulse to play is an expression of their unconscious knowledge that in order truly to find themselves, they must flee themselves.<sup>118</sup> This is why Blow believes that children's fairy tales have such lasting appeal. Blow makes it clear, however, that the best stories for children are the classic tales, not the "sugar-coated pills of useful information and moral advice"<sup>119</sup> that often pass for children's literature. The stories that Blow would have read to children are those in which "humanity conquered and redeeming -- humanity emancipated and redeemed . . . are the ideals which hover before us in the images of the hero and the princess."<sup>120</sup> Much like a child's own games and play, the fairy tale allows him or her to try on a new persona, to be a victorious king or an entrapped princess, and thus to participate in a universal human drama. Vicarious participation in the common human experience through story and their own imaginative activities yields for children a kind of growth in which there is a "double thread of relationship between the child's vanishing selves to his permanent and central self, and the identity of this central self with the colossal self incarnate in the social whole to which . . . he belongs."<sup>121</sup>

Children's tendency to see the world around them as "animated by personal will and consciousness"<sup>122</sup> is a factor that fuels their imaginative impulses. They naturally sympathize with an animal in danger or in pain, and even express protectiveness toward inanimate objects that are being done harm. Interestingly enough, Blow considers it perfectly legitimate for adults to chime in when children assign conscious behavior and motives to inanimate objects. But she cautions that since children are so very sensitive to the well-being of other creatures and objects around them, adults should do so in such a way as to encourage

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<sup>118</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 115.

<sup>119</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 21-2.

<sup>120</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 99.

<sup>121</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 35.

<sup>122</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 88.

care and consideration. The common childish impulse to blame the rock they stumbled over for their skinned knee, for instance, should not be met with an adult sanction to kick or beat the object in retaliation. Instead adults should sympathize with children, but simultaneously encourage compassionate treatment toward the object responsible for their pain.<sup>123</sup> This approach is important for two reasons. First, taking seriously children's animistic outlook validates their attempt to understand the world around them via imagination and play. Second, and of interest regarding Blow's version of idealism, children's animism points to their sense of the spirituality of all being and the correspondence between nature and the "life of the spirit."

“The animism of little children is an expression of the soul's prescient conviction that there is but one real force -- the force of will. Their tireless imitation hints the deeper truth that all living objects *participate* in one great life, all rational subjects in one great mind.”<sup>124</sup>

Children then, through their imaginative power already have a window into reality that is to be nurtured, rather than discouraged. After all, divine energy finds its expression in nature as well as in human beings – a stance that the religiously-minded Blow draws from her reading of Hegel.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, children's spontaneous animism gives them a perspective on the world around them that adults have long since lost. Early childhood educators would do well to use children's play "to reveal to children their own mysterious life through its reflection in the [objects and] sentient creatures who have not yet risen ... into consciousness."<sup>126</sup>

### ***Mind's Self-Activity***

Blow's theory of early childhood education illustrates her understanding of the self-creative dimension of human intellect -- or as she might say, human self-activity -- in adults as well as children. Because the

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<sup>123</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 88-89.

<sup>124</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 32.

<sup>125</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 32-33.

<sup>126</sup> Blow, *Letters*, 249.

mind is an active, not merely passive entity, it is able to seek out and internalize knowledge, even when it is not presented as systematically as Blow sees Froebel's theory as doing. In Blow's words, "the mind's own attractive and repellent power determines the influence it receives from without."<sup>127</sup> Froebel's method works so well, in Blow's view, because it presents concepts to children in logical sequence, and precisely in the order appropriate to their cognitive ability. Since the mind is naturally self-active, and therefore seizes the data before it, Blow believes that material should continue to be presented to it with care throughout a child's formal education.

Yet individuals by nature are prone not only to self-creativity, but also to self-annihilation which for Blow is integrally tied to the process of estrangement and return touched upon earlier in this chapter. Very young children's self-estrangement is facilitated by playful imaginings; that of their somewhat older peers by exposure to fairy tales; youth by acquaintance with the classics. In the positive sense, they all are thus allowed to venture far beyond their usual paths through the magic of story. In the negative sense, by placing themselves in the role of the main characters, they engage in a process of self-annihilation, conquering along with their heroes the wickedness within: "It is by slaying caprice that he attains rational will, by renouncing opinion that he gains truth, by crucifying selfishness that he conquers selfhood."<sup>128</sup> Later in life, religious belief can serve as an avenue for self-annihilation in other forms. Eastern religions strive to surrender the self to the One, although ultimately Blow sees these religions as misguided. Christianity has more nearly perfected the process of self-annihilation through the incarnate Christ, in Blow's view.

But what positive role can self-annihilation play? Certainly learning about other personalities, cultures, places, and times can do no harm. Even metaphorically killing the demons within isn't a bad idea. But unless we keep in mind the Hegelian project in which Blow wishes to participate, all this talk of self-annihilation reads as mere gibberish. Of course the answer to this question is that self-annihilation --

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<sup>127</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 91-92.

<sup>128</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 40-41.

Hegel's notion of negation -- must be supplemented by return to the self in order for the dialectical process to be complete. Just as the child begins with an original self, 'tries on' a new self through imagination in play, then returns to the original self yet with a new perspective on the nature of this first self due to their playtime experience; the adult also enters into a process of estrangement (or annihilation) and return in which they too are transformed. In the individual's relation to the natural and social orders, Blow maintains that by "wandering away from himself into . . . seemingly foreign realms, the individual for the first time finds himself at home."<sup>129</sup> On the metaphysical level, she describes the process in this way:

“Mind reveals itself as a process of estrangement and return, a self-diremption into specific ideas and energies, and a return into itself by the reintegration of its dirempted elements into the unity of consciousness.”<sup>130</sup>

In all cases, the process of self-creation, self-annihilation, and what we might call self-synthesis, the individual is simultaneously active and receptive; each one of these two qualities is impotent without the other.

The fact that all of these phases of individual development grow out of the *self*-active nature of the mind is significant, of course, because it implies that there *is* a 'self' which is able to be active. This observation necessarily ushers in a consideration of self-consciousness and thus of intentionality within the subject. After all, while it is natural for the mind to undergo a synthesis of the self, it is by no means automatic. Instead, the very process of self-estrangement assumes the subject's ability to stand apart from itself and consider the self as object. In Blow's words, the self must produce "itself as object and behold. . . itself in this objectification."<sup>131</sup> In fact, it is the "distinctive characteristic of self consciousness"<sup>132</sup> and a

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<sup>129</sup> Blow, *Symbolic*, 38.

<sup>130</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 111.

<sup>131</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 8-9.

<sup>132</sup> Blow, *Educational Issues*, 373.



prerequisite of self-activity, that the self, having objectified itself, is now able to determine its own course of action.

This is familiar Hegelian parlance, but how does it play itself out in Blow's theory? First, it means that in every individual, the will and the intellect are intimately linked. In the act of self-objectification, the process of making oneself into an object is an act of the will; the process of recognizing this process *as* a process of self-objectification is an act of the intellect. These are not two separate acts, but one act with two phases. Thus the educator must aim to stimulate both will and intellect concurrently so that students may not only reflect on the information at hand, but also will themselves to integrate it into their intellectual lives. With very young children, this is done merely through instilling in them good personal habits and introducing them to social conventions, primarily through play. As children grow, both intellect and will can be instructed more directly.

Further, the process of self-objectification is an on-going, not a one-time, event. The self creates and re-creates itself while both will and intellect assimilate new information and pursue higher levels of knowledge. This is why Blow and her colleagues so faithfully adhere to their educational hierarchy; at different stages of life not only different material, but more challenging methods of instruction are necessary. And both enable the pupil to gather a larger and more complex body of knowledge and thus to assimilate more information. This will become clearer in the chapter on Anna Brackett, but it is true for Blow as well, as is evident from earlier discussions of children's imagination as a predecessor of artistic creativity. Furthermore, while the process of self-objectification takes place within the individual, this is not say it is a wholly subjective process with no metaphysical implications:

“Self-consciousness is the knowing of the self by the self, and this implies both the distinction of subject and object and the recognition of their identity. The life of the spirit is therefore an endless process of self-diremption and of reintegration of its dirempted elements into the synthetic unity of consciousness. Its history is an endless flight from itself in order to find itself.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 6.

Since Blow also claims that self-consciousness is "the form of spirit" and "spirit makes the world,"<sup>134</sup> it is clear that each individual is participating in a metaphysical process when he or she engages in the process of self-objectification and thereby becomes a self-conscious being. Therefore, the individual human spirit shares with God in bringing about the "unity of consciousness" of which Blow speaks. Individual self-consciousness as derived from universal self-consciousness then, is part of the world-making consciousness.

### ***Conclusion***

Today an educational theory as lofty as Blow's is rare. Rarer still is the inclusion of God and the human spirit in educational discourse. Yet this was just the beginning of Blow's intergration of philosophy and educational theory. In the final chapter of her last book, *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten*, she goes into rather extended discussions of the shortcomings of naturalism and pragmatism. She then outlines her own understanding of idealism -- "the only philosophy which adequately interprets . . . educational procedure."<sup>135</sup> At some points, Blow even ventures further into the philosophical, cautioning against process thought, for instance, and making her own case for personalism. And while distinctions between disciplines were somewhat more fluid at the time of Blow's writing (1906-07), her immersion in philosophy seems to have been considered unusual (or as she herself notes, perhaps outdated) then as well.<sup>136</sup> In fact, Blow felt the need to justify herself in print, as well as in a private letter to Putnam:

"I suppose it will really seem ridiculous to most people to have a discussion of naturalism and pragmatism and idealism in a book on kindergarten practice. And yet I am very sure that behind every error of practice has been an error in philosophy."<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Blow, *Commentaries*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> Blow, *Educational Issues*, xiv.

<sup>136</sup> Blow, Letter to James Jackson Putnam, August 1, 1908. Special Collections, Countway Library, Harvard Medical School.

<sup>137</sup> Blow, Letter to James Jackson Putnam, May 17, 1908. Blow makes a statement to this same effect in the preface to this book, *Educational Issues*, xiv.

Of course, some may not have understood Blow's educational philosophy, which may be part of the reason her contribution to the St. Louis movement received less attention than that of her male colleagues. However, for Blow it was not at all ridiculous to apply Hegel's theory to the education of very young children, using Froebel's method as a vehicle. Nor was this an unreasonable notion to the hundreds of women Blow instructed and inspired, as Elizabeth Harrison's testimony made clear earlier. In fact, this may have been Blow's greatest contribution to the St. Louis movement. She made idealism not only intelligible, but also applicable to a concrete set of circumstances. In Blow's view, her system made manifest the rationality that Hegel claimed permeated all of life; and in as unlikely a place as the kindergarten classroom. Infusing so much meaning into the development of little children in itself was an important achievement. Of equally great import is the fact that in Blow's system the power of directing and eliciting that development became not only women's responsibility, but their professional skill.

Had Blow developed more strictly philosophical work, she would have been more likely to be recognized by historians of philosophy, even as her younger contemporaries Mary Calkins Whiton (1863-1930) and Christine Ladd Franklin (1847-1930) were acknowledged *as philosophers* in histories of American thought. But Blow chose instead to tuck her philosophical ideas away in books on educational theory, with titles like *Commentaries of Friedrich Froebel's Mother Play*, *Letters to a Mother*, and *Educational Issues in the Kindergarten* -- the readers of which were primarily women. Thus, as the strength of the St. Louis movement faded, those familiar with Blow's work were less and less likely to be professional philosophers, or even students of philosophy. And Blow was effectively omitted from the philosophical canon. Yet this philosophy that professional philosophers left behind has a good deal to offer, perhaps primarily *because* it was a philosophy for women by a woman. This is also the case with the work of Blow's colleague, Anna Brackett, although as applied to higher education for women, and I will now turn to discussion of her theory.

## Chapter 3

### Anna Brackett: Feminist Philosopher-Educator

#### *SECTION I: LIFE AND WORK*

##### *Anna Callender Brackett: An Introduction*

Described shortly after her death as "one of the most remarkable educators known among women,"<sup>1</sup> Anna Callender Brackett is unfamiliar to most people today. But a quick glance at Brackett's achievements shows that her status as one of the invisible women of American intellectual history is undeserved. She was the first woman to be given full charge of a secondary school in this country when she was appointed principal of the St. Louis Normal School in 1863, then in its infancy.<sup>2</sup> Brackett was also one of relatively few women at that time to hold a professional editorial post when in 1874, she was appointed the New York editor of the Boston-based *Journal of Education*.<sup>3</sup> She authored several articles in both this journal and another by the same name in St. Louis. She also wrote popular pieces for *Harper's Monthly*, *Century Magazine*, and the short-lived western equivalent of eastcoast women's monthlies, *The St. Louis Ladies' Magazine*.<sup>4</sup>

Brackett proved herself philosophically as well. First, she translated the work of Karl Rosenkranz, a friend and disciple of G.W.F. Hegel, in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Brackett was among *JSP's* regular contributors, and must have played a significant role in its production, as Harris acknowledged her editorial assistance in the preface to the journal's first issue. Her translation of Karl Rosenkranz's *Pedagogics as a System* appeared for the first time in English as a series of articles in *JSP* in 1872. She later paraphrased the same work, condensing it for more popular consumption and this also ran as a series in *JSP*. Both the translation and paraphrase were later published as separate volumes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Notable Women of St. Louis*, 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Missouri Historical Review*, 5:187; 34:237.

<sup>3</sup> Maria F. Lundgren, "Anna Callender Brackett: Editor, Essayist, Poet," Iowa State University master's thesis, 1989, 14.

<sup>4</sup> This publication was edited 1870-71 by Mary Nolan and Christine Smith, neither of whom seem to have had connections with the St. Louis Philosophical Movement. Brackett contributed an article for what was probably a regular feature entitled "Woman and Work" in one of the two copies I was able to locate (perhaps the only copies extant).

Second, Brackett authored original works that expanded on Rosenkranz's theory and applied it to women: *The Education of American Girls* (1874) and "Sex in Education." Called a "most vigorous suffragist" by one historian of the St. Louis philosophical movement,<sup>5</sup> Brackett could not have taken lightly the application of educational theory to women. In fact her interest in women's role in society was inseparable from her work as principal of the St. Louis Normal School, since virtually all of her students were young women training to be teachers, one of the few careers open to them in the 1860s and '70s. This discussion, then, necessarily examines how and to what extent Brackett's feminism informs her educational theory and vice versa.

### ***Education and Early Life***

First, however, there is the task of solving the puzzle of just who exactly Anna Callender Brackett was, because in almost every case, historians of the St. Louis circle treated the women who participated in this movement as merely an afterthought. Good and valuable pieces have been written on men like William Torrey Harris, Denton Jacques Snider, Henry Brockmeyer, and their male contemporaries, either singly or as a group of thinkers. But unfortunately women and their contributions to the movement are skimmed over, treated as mere appendices to the real work of the men. As one writer so aptly, and no doubt innocently put it, "Last we place the ladies . . ." <sup>6</sup> as he tacked two and a half pages about Susan Blow, Anna Brackett, and a few others onto the end of his five-part, eighty-page article on the movement.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the fragments of information available, it appears Brackett's early years were uneventful. Born in 1836 in Boston she was the oldest of five children born to Samuel E. and Caroline L. Brackett. Mr. Brackett was a merchant, running a dry goods business with James Brackett, presumably a relative. The family's business seems to have been successful enough to have allowed Caroline Brackett to hire a young woman from Ireland as a household servant, a practice not uncommon for members of the middle class in that era.<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly then, like many young women of relative privilege, Anna was afforded a good

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<sup>5</sup> Kurt F. Leidecker, *The St. Louis Philosophical Movement*, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 243.

<sup>6</sup> Cleon Forbes, "The St. Louis School of Thought," *Missouri Historical Review*, (1931) 25:609.

<sup>7</sup> Forbes, (1931) 25:619-621.

<sup>8</sup> Information about Brackett's family is from Boston City Directories, 1838-1842 and U. S. Census, Boston, MA, 1850.

education -- particularly for a girl at that time. Upon entering the State Normal School in Framingham, Massachusetts at the age of eighteen, she had last attended Mr. Abbot's school, a private school in Boston with a good reputation.<sup>9</sup>

After graduation, she stayed on at Framingham as a teacher (1856-59) and seems to have struggled in the search for a suitable position between 1859 and 1861, reportedly teaching in E. Brookfield and in Cambridge, both in Massachusetts, before accepting the position of vice-principal of the normal school in Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>10</sup> However, Civil War hostilities intervened and Brackett was forced out of Charleston during the battle of Fort Sumter. She had waited too long to leave the area to make her way north by the usual route, so was forced south and west through New Orleans and then north to St. Louis. Although it isn't clear whom Brackett met while in St. Louis and whether she pursued a position or was coaxed into one, apparently the 25 year old educator made a good impression while taking this detour, because a year and a half later she returned to begin work as the principal of the city's normal school.<sup>11</sup>

### ***At the St. Louis Normal School***

There is little information about Brackett's work and involvement in St. Louis during her first year there, but by 1864 she was clearly finding a niche in the city, both professionally and in the community as a whole. She is given credit for editing *The Daily Countersign*, the publication of the Sanitary Fair, a fundraising event for hospital facilities in May 1864,<sup>12</sup> and represented the public schools on one of the Fair's planning committees.<sup>13</sup>

If a grant of leave demonstrates satisfaction with work well done, the fact that Brackett was allowed eight weeks off at year's end just three and a half years into her tenure at the normal school indicates a level of success in her job post. During this time, she traveled to Europe, a trip that lasted well into the summer

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<sup>9</sup> *Register of the State Normal School, 1839-1889*, Framingham State College, from Archives and Special Collections, Whittemore Library, Framingham State College. See also Edith Kendall, "Anna C. Brackett, *In Memoriam*," (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Kendall, 1.

<sup>11</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, June 1863.

<sup>12</sup> *Missouri Historical Review* 46:242.

<sup>13</sup> *Daily Countersign*, May 31, 1864, 12. Other participants in this event were Susan Blow, Susan Beeson, Mary Beedy, and William Torrey Harris.

and one that she used "partially for rest, partially [to] learn something from an observation of European methods of teaching."<sup>14</sup> A particularly significant part of this trip was her visit to the schools in Berlin, as German educational methods were the model for American schools at this time. In fact, Brackett herself noted the value of her Berlin excursion. Whether this trip included a stint in Königsberg to meet with Karl Rosenkranz (1805-79), who was an auxiliary member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society and who later corresponded with William Torrey Harris, is not clear. Still Brackett's interest in and commitment to learning more of German educational practice at this early stage in her career in itself is worth noting.

Of course, the need for respite from her work at the normal school could also suggest that Brackett was already wearying of the constant demand the public schools were beginning to make on her. A little over a year later, in 1867, she confided in her good friend Thomas Davidson: "I work all the time but accomplish very little outside of school work. The demands of that are insatiable and *must* be attended to."<sup>15</sup> This, added to the admiration Brackett expressed for the high quality of Davidson's writing while he was still a teacher in St. Louis,<sup>16</sup> lends credence to a theory of Brackett's growing dissatisfaction with the administrative and bureaucratic burdens that came with the principalship of the normal school.

Yet it is in normal school work that Brackett begins to develop her educational theory. The St. Louis normal school was young and rather troubled when Brackett assumed responsibility for it. Established in 1857, it was barely up and running before it had to close early during the Civil War.<sup>17</sup> The school had been re-opened for a short time when its principal was needed at the high school and the two schools merged.<sup>18</sup> During this period, St. Louis' policy of free education, even at the high and normal school levels, had to be suspended due to economic pressures. By the 1862-63 school year when Brackett arrived, the institution was operating with only two recent graduates acting as interim principal and vice-principal.<sup>19</sup> With Brackett

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<sup>14</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, June 1866, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, December 17, 1867, Thomas Davidson Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University.

<sup>16</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, August 21, 1874.

<sup>17</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1869, 34-35.

<sup>18</sup> The normal school principal at that time was Richard Edwards who joined the high school in January 1862.

<sup>19</sup> The interim co-principals were Sarah Platt and Ann Forsyth, both of whom had graduated the previous year. Platt was struck ill and died the summer after Brackett became principal. See "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1869, 35-36, and "Superintendent's Report," 1863.

in charge, the school was able to become a separate institution again<sup>20</sup> and its tuition-free policy was shortly thereafter re-instated.<sup>21</sup> But the role and purpose of the school was not clear in the minds of the public or of the school board; or rather the *distinction between* the role of the normal school within the St. Louis public school system and its purpose as an educational institution was not made clear enough for Brackett.<sup>22</sup>

### *The Normal School -- Role vs. Purpose*

The Board's interest in the normal school was primarily pragmatic. It was a training school which was to produce teachers for the grade schools -- and quickly -- in a city experiencing a population boom. Previously, the St. Louis school board had imported teachers from the east, but this was expensive and there was no guarantee that easterners would be content in the west. By establishing a normal school, the city could train its own teachers for whom St. Louis was home, and thus attain educational self-sufficiency. And to some degree the plan worked. The number of normal school graduates each year had increased from ten to fifteen when Brackett first began as principal in 1863 to thirty to thirty-five toward the end of her stay in 1872.<sup>23</sup> However, with the increase in population in the district schools, the rate of turnover had also increased, leaving nearly one hundred vacancies per year. Despite the improved "teacher output," the normal school still produced only one-third of the graduates needed to fill these posts.

While Brackett seems not to have had any particular objections to the board's pragmatic view of the *role* the normal school was to play, she did adamantly insist that the normal school also have its own *purpose*, which was distinct from that of any other of the St. Louis schools. She tried to address this issue as diplomatically as possible as early as 1864. Brackett pointed out to the school board that in order to achieve the goal of fully preparing students for a career in teaching, normal school students must not only *attend* the school, but *complete* their studies. Due to the city's eagerness to fill teaching vacancies, students often withdrew from the normal school to take a position in one of the grade schools. Yet these students, many of

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<sup>20</sup> This information comes from Brackett's own report to the School Board: "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1872, 39.

<sup>21</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1864, 23.

<sup>22</sup> The distinction between the role and purpose of the normal school is mine, made from observations of the argument Brackett was making to the School Board. Brackett herself doesn't use these terms.

<sup>23</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1866, 15-16.



whom were not only young and inexperienced, but also minimally educated themselves, had only begun to scratch the surface of the theory and practice of teaching that Brackett felt was essential to their success. In her 1864 annual report to the school board, Brackett voiced objections to the view of the normal school as "nothing but a reservoir" that collects potential recruits. Perhaps trying to present the matter light-heartedly, she said, "There seems to exist a belief . . . that all that is necessary for an appointment as a teacher, is *admission* to the Normal School."<sup>24</sup> While treating the problem as a sort of flattery of the school, she nevertheless clearly asked members to discourage both normal school students and those responsible for hiring them from holding this view of the school.

Yet the early hiring problem points to a divide between Brackett and the school board in regard to their respective visions for the normal school. Brackett's annual school board reports repeatedly stressed the special status of the normal school, presumably because the Board failed to appreciate this feature. The normal school was to prepare teachers for work in the local schools, to be sure, but in Brackett's view, it also had a higher aim: that of training its students in the science of education.

For Brackett, instruction in education as a science requires careful attention to practical matters such as the teaching of reading skills, the importance of elocution, and the scope and purpose of examinations, about which Brackett authored articles.<sup>25</sup> But even in these seemingly mundane educational tasks, normal students are called upon not only to know the subjects they teach, but "to know the knowing of it"<sup>26</sup> as well. This takes time and has as its prerequisite a strong base of knowledge. Many if not most of Brackett's students had not yet acquired such a base of knowledge when they entered the normal school. Therefore, Brackett made a number of changes to the curriculum that would ensure that the education of normal school graduates would be comparable to their counterparts in the high school, adding geometry and Latin to the course of study, and improving the textbooks used for natural philosophy and physiology.<sup>27</sup> She also strongly urged the school board to require an entrance exam for admission to the school as early as 1867.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1864, 23.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, *Journal of Education* (St. Louis), vol. 5 no. 1, p. 4 (1872); vol. 2, no. 5, p. 81 (1870).

<sup>26</sup> *Journal of Education* (St. Louis), vol. 3, no. 6, (1871) p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Geometry was added and textbook changes made in 1864; Latin was added in 1868. See "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1864, 22 and 1868, 19.

<sup>28</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1867, 20.

Although the board was slow to implement this change, use of an entrance exam was finally in practice by the time she resigned in 1872. (It is possible that this change had been made earlier, but not reported.) It is clear that, again at Brackett's urging, algebra was among the list of subjects tested on this exam.<sup>29</sup>

### *The Normal School -- Teaching as a Profession*

But while Brackett believed it was imperative that a normal student's studies be equivalent to that of a high school student, she was also insistent that normal school education should not amount merely to a high school education. For Brackett, teaching was a profession, on a par with any other profession, such as law or medicine.<sup>30</sup> And the education for such a profession needed to be administered thoroughly and systematically. It was a special school that "is developed in the special direction of teaching. . . . Teaching, however, include[s] all that relates to the duty of one who has care of a school, and not merely to signify the communication of knowledge."<sup>31</sup> In order to distinguish the normal school from the high school then, Brackett went beyond upgrading the school's curriculum to fighting for changes that underlay the school board's assumptions about what constituted an adequate teacher.

During this time, it was still common for education to be taken care of by a freelance tutor in the privacy of a family's home. Although school board members, by virtue of their role, certainly would not have considered this an adequate means of educating the young, they also may not have valued education as a profession to the same degree as Brackett. The mere fact that the majority of St. Louis teachers were women, many of whom in the lower grades volunteered their time, considering it instruction for *them* for the domestic work that awaited them, suggests that women themselves may not have taken their roles as educators as seriously as Brackett would have liked.<sup>32</sup>

As part of her push to grant professional status to teaching, Brackett lobbied hard for a change that at first seems fairly insignificant but that has important implications, both for teaching as a profession and for the women who pursue it: an increase in the age of admission from 16 to 18 years old. Brackett made her

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<sup>29</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1872, 34.

<sup>30</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1869, 33.

<sup>31</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1871, 52.

<sup>32</sup> Leidecker, 270-271; Margaret Hilliker, "The Blow Family," an address to the Carondelet Woman's Club, St. Louis, Missouri, February 7, 1955, 16.

argument on two grounds. First, admission at a young age meant that the student would be likely not to have attended high school yet, and as with any other profession, a solid liberal arts education was needed in order for the candidate to be well enough prepared for special study. Second, a young student lacked the maturity, intellectually and otherwise, needed to be able to understand education as a science, the knowing of her own knowledge. In Brackett's words: "The average girl at 16 is only a child, and when she enters the Normal School fresh from Grammar School . . . she suddenly and unexpectedly finds herself baffled and discouraged" by the abstract nature of her study at the normal school.<sup>33</sup>

From a feminist standpoint, Brackett's interest in increasing the age of admission has two effects. First, it puts women in the teaching profession on an equal intellectual plane with their male counterparts. Rather than the normal school amounting to an alternative high school for girls, under Brackett's plan it truly does become a type of higher education to which women just happen to be attracted. The teacher then would have the same base of knowledge as the lawyer, doctor, or theologian, with the addition of the special knowledge of her chosen field.

Second, raising the age of admission to the normal school ensures that those entering the field of education will in fact *not* be children themselves acting as glorified babysitters, but young women managing a classroom -- and potentially beyond the elementary level, secondary schools at this time being the domain of men. With the emotional and intellectual maturity that this year or two would give her, the normal school student would not be reduced to a "baffled and discouraged" youngster. Instead, she would enter with more competence and have confidence in her ability and be able to assume her responsibility as teacher in the manner worthy of a professional. Again, keeping in mind the fact that even the strong-minded Susan Blow *volunteered* her time as director of the St. Louis kindergarten program, it is clear that Brackett's repeated call for professionalizing education was no small step. There would be no more "little lady in the classroom" if Brackett had her way.

It took Brackett four years to convince the school board to implement this one change -- nearly half the period of time that she worked in the St. Louis schools. She first called for an age increase in 1867, but it

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<sup>33</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1869, 40-41.

was not implemented until 1871.<sup>34</sup> Even then the board raised it to only 17 years old. And it seems that including the financial self-interest of the public school system may have helped Brackett win her case:

I cannot too forcibly state my profound conviction based on reason, and supported by more than eleven years experience in teaching in Normal Schools, that there is involved a ruinous waste of time, strength, and health on the part of the teachers and pupils, and of dollars and cents . . . when the age required for admission to our school is only 16.<sup>35</sup>

As noted above, because Brackett's students often had only a smattering at most of a high school education, she had to choose between giving them a solid liberal arts curriculum and practical training in educational technique. Her solution was for the first of their two years of normal training to be essentially a crash course in liberal arts studies, while giving an introduction to "modes of teaching."<sup>36</sup> The second year focused on educational methods. Later the addition of a half day per week of practice teaching was put into effect.<sup>37</sup> While ideally more practical experience would have been introduced to the students -- and earlier in their study -- at least her school would not be guilty of providing little more than "a recitation in the Theory and Art of Teaching once or twice a week"<sup>38</sup> as at some normal schools. Such schools amounted to "nothing but girls' High Schools" in Brackett's view and were not adequate in St. Louis.<sup>39</sup>

### *Harris, Idealism, and Teaching Method*

Brackett experimented for a period of time with a theory developed in Oswego, New York in the 1860s, Object Lessons. This theory was an attempt to break the rigid method of reading and recitation that was the norm in classrooms at that time, and involved simple observation of an object and reflection on it. This might involve inquiring into its composition, potential uses, or contrasts in appearance with other objects. It didn't matter if the object occurred in nature or was manufactured, but it did matter that it stimulate students' interest and encourage discussion and exploration.

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<sup>34</sup> See "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1867, 21 and 1871, 49, respectively.

<sup>35</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1870, 46.

<sup>36</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1866, 55 and 1869, 45.

<sup>37</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1871, 53.

<sup>38</sup> Brackett expressed objection to the use of recitation only in the classroom here and elsewhere in her reports to the school board, see "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1869, 42 and 1871, 53.

<sup>39</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1870, 46.

When Brackett first encountered the Object Lesson method in 1864, she was convinced of its value. "Some teaching of this kind should be found in all schools," she said, as it "possesses a power of awakening and interesting which no mere book recitation can have."<sup>40</sup> Two years later, Brackett was even more committed to promoting and continuing the use of Object Lessons, soliciting donations of "anything and everything which can possibly be used to illustrate any subject, or explain any process whatever, no matter how small or simple." Better still, the board obliged, and the school received a number of items for this display-and-discuss system.<sup>41</sup> By 1868, however, it became "a serious question," for Brackett "how much of this system of teaching we shall adopt in our training school."<sup>42</sup> Whence the shift? In her board report during this year, Brackett went to great lengths to outline the strengths and weaknesses of the Object method, and found the latter to be, not only more prevalent, but more dangerous pedagogically.

The great failing of the Object method, in Brackett's view, was its over-reliance on empirical data. In the early stages of learning, such a method is appropriate, even necessary, to provide children with information about the world around them. As we saw in the discussion of Susan Blow, the "gifts" and "occupations" of Froebel made ordinary objects and activities into learning tools. Yet the issue for Blow was that sense objects are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. The end is to teach children to discern qualities in objects – roundness, hardness, pliability, etc. – to begin to recognize relations between objects in order to increase their powers, not simply of sense perception, but of comprehension of the forces governing the material world, and ultimately of the intuition of speculative truths. Blow believed that an over-reliance on the senses and thus on sense objects in instruction was detrimental to children. She expressed disapproval of one overzealous follower of Pestalozzi, for example, who cited a list of forty-six foods that any kindergarten child should be able to identify by taste or smell – presumably because he believed it appropriate to test the children's power of recognition using these senses alone. And what is the outcome of such an exercise in Blow's view? Little more than success in "assailing the nostrils of infancy with a bewildering variety of perfumes and stenches."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1864, 24.

<sup>41</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1866, 20.

<sup>42</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1868, 21-22.

<sup>43</sup> See Susan Blow, *Letters to a Mother*, 194.

According to the American idealist pedagogical project, it is an even greater mistake to remain within the realm of sense objects when instructing older children and young adults. Brackett agreed with Blow that, in the later stages of learning, a method that is dependent on empirical information fails students, because it considers objects before concepts, words before ideas. In their understanding, this is to put the cart before the horse. Children and youth simply cannot comprehend single objects in isolation, but instead need conceptual framework – a system of relations, if you will – in which to fit these objects. The Object Lessons method gave children no means by which to make connections between isolated facts and events: they were expected to analyze before making the needed syntheses that would make this analysis possible. Object lessons, then, lacked "true generalizing power," a detriment to students that would lead to arbitrariness in teaching methods.<sup>44</sup> In short, the Object Lesson method was by and large empirical; and to Brackett, an idealist, the use of such a method to the exclusion of all others was truly repugnant to the mind.

Not surprisingly, Harris also had reservations about Object Lessons, and also committed a good many pages to discussing its dangers in his superintendent's report to the board the same year. In fact, Harris charged that the method "completely inverts the relation of the knower to the known," and that schools would do better to teach students to be "free . . . from the thrall of the senses and arrive at clear reflection and comprehensive reasoning."<sup>45</sup> Incorporating attack on the theory of Pestalozzi into his discussion, Harris clearly had no tolerance for the use of the method at this stage in his career.<sup>46</sup> Brackett, however, was more moderate in her critique overall, recognizing the validity of Object Lessons in small doses. She also believed that normal school students should be made familiar with its methods, as well as its limits.<sup>47</sup>

William Torrey Harris had become superintendent of the St. Louis schools in 1867, so was in this position for roughly half the time that Brackett was the normal school principal. He appears to have supported her work and shared a number of her views. He was on the public schools' committee for normal

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<sup>44</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1868, 25-26.

<sup>45</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1868, 94.

<sup>46</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1868, 90, 94. Harris' full discussion of Object Lessons runs from 90-95 of this annual report.

<sup>47</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1868, 26.

school education<sup>48</sup> and promoted teacher training in general. In 1867 in fact, Harris proposed that a state normal school be established, and this was later realized at the University of Missouri at Columbia.<sup>49</sup> More important in regard to his relationship with Brackett, however, is that Harris also seems to have held the same vision for normal education as she did. His school board reports as superintendent recognize the distinction between the normal school and other schools in St. Louis, and he attributes this distinction to Brackett's good work.<sup>50</sup> He also echoes Brackett's insistence that teaching requires certain skills, such as management and leadership and that these skills must be taught, "not merely theoretically, but as a sort of second nature -- a feeling, an instinct, which will not rest content until it has brought order out of chaos."<sup>51</sup> Harris also disapproved of corporal punishment, and he favored co-education of boys and girls - views that Brackett shared.<sup>52</sup>

Yet, while according to his biographer Harris "was ever open to new suggestions and put them into practice,"<sup>53</sup> it is worth wondering whether he used his position as Brackett's superior to dissuade her from employing certain methods, such as Object Lessons. Since Brackett expresses doubts about the effectiveness of this method the very same year that Harris does, it is impossible to determine whether she influenced him or he her. It is clear, however, that Harris' criticisms of it are more harsh than Brackett's. Given his position of authority, it is possible that Harris gave a "thumbs down" to this method and that Brackett simply did not feel strongly enough about it to continue to support it as a pedagogical technique. On other educational issues, Brackett was certainly an independent thinker who held her ground in regard to an educational tool that Harris hailed as a fount of knowledge: the textbook. Brackett stated outright her belief that American teachers relied too heavily on textbooks and that teachers were needed who didn't need "the leading strings of the author whose treatise they may be using,"<sup>54</sup> but who instead could provide both content and insight to students and mentor them intellectually.

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<sup>48</sup> *Journal of Education* (St. Louis), vol. 1 no. 10, p. 180 (1869).

<sup>49</sup> An agreement was made in 1870, and the school established in 1872. See Leidecker, 295-96.

<sup>50</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1870, 42.

<sup>51</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1870, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Leidecker, 268-69 and 265, respectively.

<sup>53</sup> Leidecker, 281.

<sup>54</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1866, 18 and 1869, 27-28; quote is from the 1867 report, page 20. See also Leidecker, 182.

But aside from these two points of disagreement, both of which seem to have been reconciled -- Brackett having integrated something of the Object Lesson into normal school instruction, but continuing to eschew the textbook -- Brackett and Harris seem to have been intellectually compatible. Brackett actually accompanied him to Boston in 1867 for a lecture to the Chestnut Club where he scandalized his audience, not only by supporting co-education, but by declaring that distinctions based on sex were vanishing.<sup>55</sup> And years after she had left St. Louis, Brackett continued to contribute to the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Unfortunately, there is no correspondence between Brackett and Harris to help assess the nature of their association more accurately. However, these factors speak to a collegiality and mutual respect between the two, even when some points of disagreement did exist.

#### *Soldan and Normal School Ideals*

Others in the St. Louis public school system, including Louis Soldan, Brackett's successor as principal of the normal school, may not have shared a great deal in common with Brackett intellectually, however, especially regarding normal school education. Under Soldan, the practice of recitation was instituted in the normal school,<sup>56</sup> a technique that Brackett had dismissed outright as inappropriate and unproductive for students at this level. Rather than merely repeat what had been taught them, Brackett wanted her students to integrate this knowledge so that they could convey it to others. Further, Soldan hinted that he disapproved of coaching techniques that Brackett may have used during student presentations, noting that in his school when students recited their lessons the teacher neither asked leading questions nor made corrections in order "to alleviate difficulties."<sup>57</sup> Brackett's students later memorialized her as an egalitarian teacher who was helpful and encouraging.<sup>58</sup> Although she doesn't come across in her writings or letters as overly sympathetic to her students, perhaps her teaching methods were still too collegial for Soldan's liking.

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<sup>55</sup> Leidecker, 266.

<sup>56</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1873, 48. In actual practice, Soldan's use of recitation may not have been as damaging as Brackett had feared. What Soldan's principal's report describes are question and answer periods during which students were expected to convey information, not merely regurgitate the lesson given to them.

<sup>57</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1873, 48.

<sup>58</sup> Kendall, 2.



In addition, Brackett resigned mid-year, shortly after a curriculum change was imposed and a school for classroom observation established.<sup>59</sup> A predecessor of the student teacher programs we use today, this practice certainly does not seem like anything that Brackett would object to, given her interest in giving students more practical experience. The former, however, may have been a problem for Brackett. Her resignation letter does directly refer to the curriculum change, although it is not quite as specific as one would hope: "The new course . . . will undoubtedly, though it merely transposes the old studies, . . . produce a marked effect on the school."<sup>60</sup> There is no printed copy of the 1872-73 normal school curriculum, so it isn't possible to make a thorough review of what changes were made under Soldan's leadership.

Two other pieces of evidence suggest that Brackett may have been disaffected by the school board's actions. First, Harris had noted in 1870 that graduates of the high school were also taking a number of teaching posts.<sup>61</sup> And we have already seen that Brackett saw normal education to be distinct from high school education. If a large number of high school graduates were being appointed to teaching positions, this is certain to have irked Brackett. Second, Brackett acknowledged that the St. Louis public school system "has not been without its fair share of harmful collisions." Then, under the guise of concern at least, she gave a word of caution about the future well-being of the normal school: "The history of normal schools [in large cities]. . . will go to show . . . that unless very carefully guarded they have been gradually destroyed as distinctive schools." She then wished the board well, expressing her hope that the new arrangements they had made in directing the schools would be "more harmonious."<sup>62</sup>

It is difficult with public documents, published largely for administrative record-keeping such as the St. Louis School Board Annual Reports were, to determine where honesty ends and diplomatic flourish begins. But given the degree to which many of Brackett's changes to the normal school were dismantled, it is likely that her parting words were heavier on diplomacy than honesty. The sarcasm in one of Brackett's letters to Davidson suggests this even more strongly. Just over a month after her resignation, she asks Davidson to convey a message for her:

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<sup>59</sup> Brackett resigned on April 5, 1872, see "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1872, 37; the curriculum change is mentioned in Soldan's report, "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1873, 51.

<sup>60</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1872, 38.

<sup>61</sup> "Superintendent's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1870, 16.

<sup>62</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1872, 39.

Tell Mr. Soldan when you see him that I have not forgotten my promise to go to the Normal School for him but have not time now except on Saturday -- when they are not in session -- alas! how can I fulfill my promise then?<sup>63</sup>

Brackett wrote this letter from New York, where she and her long-term companion, Ida Eliot, had begun settling into a new home. Clearly she would have been unable to make a one-day engagement, given the transportation options at the time. In addition, at this point she was still fairly giddy over the success of her new girls' school. Thus, her comment seems more aimed at underscoring her success and full calendar than genuinely lamenting her inability to fulfill her 'promise' to Soldan. Later, alluding to another undisclosed change made to the normal school, quipping, "Mr. Soldan must be well satisfied."<sup>64</sup> Based on these letters, it seems safe to say that Brackett was more than a little disgruntled with Soldan, if not with the entire school board. Incidentally, in the end her concerns for the future of normal education in St. Louis proved prophetic; under Soldan the normal school was subsumed into the high school in 1887.

### *On "Womanly Qualities"*

As mentioned earlier, Brackett's normal school theory is closely connected to her feminism, and her 1866 assertion that teacher training is professional training demonstrates as much. Assuming that teaching, a female-dominated field, is on par with other professions, Brackett declared that the normal school had a specific role that could not be filled by any other institution:

No other can take its place or do its work, any more than a medical school can teach law, or a theological seminary, medicine. We are required, not only to cultivate all womanly qualities and to develop mental, moral, and physical powers, but beyond this, to call out and train certain qualities of mind indispensable to a good teacher; and regulations and methods are needed for this end, which would be out of place in a High or Grade School.<sup>65</sup>

This statement is an important one, especially in regard to Brackett's feminism. Once again, Brackett reiterated her wish that teaching be taken seriously and her belief that its proper function required that educational practitioners received proper training. But why is this significant from a feminist point of view?

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<sup>63</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, May 13, 1872.

<sup>64</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, September 21, 1873.

<sup>65</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1866, 15-16.

While Brackett did refer to the need to "cultivate all womanly qualities" in her teachers, it is important to point out that, unlike many of her contemporaries, she did not believe that women, by nature, were better suited for teaching than for other professions. In today's terms, Brackett would be a "liberal" rather than a "maternal" feminist (discussed in chapter one).

Even though Brackett here invokes the term "womanly qualities" and later even concedes that teaching can be a sort of apprenticeship for domestic life,<sup>66</sup> her primary convictions did not lie with promoting women's difference from men, or in nineteenth century terms, women's sphere. Instead, Brackett's view was that women are essentially the same as men, but their social roles have restricted them in certain ways. Therefore, she was a pragmatist regarding women in the workforce. Women had certain characteristics that benefit them in their work as educators: compassion and the ability to encourage and nurture students, for example. They also brought to their educational work certain weaknesses – sentimentalism, over-subjectivity, and an inability to relate to both students and colleagues in a businesslike manner.<sup>67</sup> Yet in Brackett's view these strengths and weaknesses were not due to anything innate in women's nature, but resulted from force of habit. And she said as much to colleagues at the National Education Association.<sup>68</sup>

In her 1872 address to the NEA, Brackett discussed teaching as a female-dominated profession. She gave statistics showing that women outnumbered men in the profession two to one. Further, she predicted that this trend would continue in the future -- even in secondary and higher education. She also noted that women had been extremely successful in the field, claiming that in the states in which women made up the overwhelming majority of educators, the quality of education was the highest.<sup>69</sup> But Brackett also recognized that women needed to receive more training in the management and decision-making skills required of them as teachers, skills that men took for granted. While a young man had been taught self-reliance from a young age, a young woman found that when she became a teacher she was "forced, for

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<sup>66</sup> Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1872, 185.

<sup>67</sup> Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1872, 185-6

<sup>68</sup> Established in 1857, this was an organization which did not grant women full membership until 1866, and which continued to have a constitutional provision barring women from presenting papers at its annual meetings until 1870. Women were required instead to have their papers read by the NEA secretary or another man in the organization. See the constitution as printed in the Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1857-70. It is possible that in practice women were admitted to full membership earlier than 1870, as the constitution was not printed in each year's proceedings.

<sup>69</sup> Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1872, 184.

probably the first time, upon her own responsibility, able to shelter herself behind no one from the consequences of her own actions."<sup>70</sup> With training and practice, the obstacles that women faced because they had been sheltered so much of their lives could be overcome.<sup>71</sup> In fact, in the same address Brackett noted that women were increasingly managing not only classrooms but entire schools, and quite successfully at that, an indication that they did possess administrative ability.<sup>72</sup>

Here again we see Brackett's tendency toward the "liberal" rather than the "maternal" branch of feminism. Women may have needed to do extra work to get up to speed with men and join the workforce, as teachers or in some other capacity, but they *could* attain the same level of success. The only "difference" between men and women for Brackett was that women were so unused to having professional responsibilities that, in order to compete with men, they had to abide by rules they were unfamiliar with. Such rules seemed strict and inflexible to women at first, yet in her own work at the normal school, Brackett had only her students' best interest in mind in requiring that they abide by such rules:

[because of] the immense advantage to a woman, as to a man, of an independent self-supporting occupation, no one can more strongly desire [than I do] . . . that every young girl . . . shall be afforded the opportunity of [employment] in so honorable a position as that of a teacher, . . . and that she shall not be sent back home, a dependent on the work of others.<sup>73</sup>

In the end, for Brackett women have the same characteristics as men -- they "are wonderfully alike, after all."<sup>74</sup> Clearly reconfiguring the Hegelian idea that women were innately meant to be bound to hearth and home, she wanted women to have the same opportunities as men, so they could reap the same benefits as men did when they became part of the workforce – i.e., civil society. Women simply needed to develop the same habits as men in order to get there.

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<sup>70</sup> Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1872, 186.

<sup>71</sup> Socio-economic class cannot be ignored here. The group of women Brackett was referring to is most likely those of the middle and upper middle classes.

<sup>72</sup> Proceedings of the National Education Association, 1872, 184.

<sup>73</sup> "Principal's Report," St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1871, 50-51.

<sup>74</sup> Brackett, *The Education of American Girls*, 82.

### *Associates and Associations in St. Louis*

Some of Brackett's feminist convictions are apparent from her participation in St. Louis' social and intellectual organizations. In addition, members of the St. Louis circle shared her convictions and were also involved in some of these groups. In many cases, as with the St. Louis Philosophical Society, these organizations and Brackett's role in them do not at first appear to be particularly feminist. In such cases, however, her activities point to ways in which her participation took on a feminist tone -- i.e., challenged gender roles in even subtle ways or called into question male authority. Other times, both the organization and Brackett's participation in it are unquestionably feminist, as with the Missouri Woman's Suffrage Association, and the implications of such activity will be unsubtle indeed.

#### *The Philosophical Society*

First on the list for the purposes of this study is the St. Louis Philosophical Society (1866-1880) headed by Harris. As the group's historian Denton Jacques Snider noted, women were not formally considered members of the Society, although they were not barred from attending meetings. In addition, as mentioned earlier, women's presence at Society meetings was not always recorded with accuracy. So it is difficult to determine the level of participation by women in the Society, even though they may have been verifiably active in the St. Louis circle as a whole. However, an obituary provides a clue from outside of the Society's records which indicates that, in Brackett's case at least, women did not sit passively on the sidelines while their male colleagues bantered about their philosophical notions.

[Anna Brackett] was an independent thinker and took a leading part in the literary activities of St. Louis, being an active member of the Kant Club, and was one of the most aggressive leaders in the philosophical debates.<sup>75</sup>

Brackett appears twice in the Society's Record Book. Once she is named along with several other women as having attended a lecture by Amos Bronson Alcott on "Culture," which she reported on in the *Commonwealth*.<sup>76</sup> Brackett may have been assigned to give this report, as it was often the Society's policy

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<sup>75</sup> "Woman Educator is Dead," obituary from the archives of the State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia, MO, (title of newspaper unknown).

<sup>76</sup> See *Commonwealth*, December 29, 1866. Harris errs in the Record Book, saying this article appeared in the January 3, 1867 issue. See Harris, Record Book, 53.

to do, a rite of passage that indicates her acceptance into the Society's ranks -- and very early on in its history, too. In any case, this piece of journalism is Brackett's first published work, aside from her annual school board reports.<sup>77</sup>

In the second reference to Brackett in Harris' Record Book, she is the only woman listed among twenty six contributors to the fund to bring Ralph Waldo Emerson to St. Louis.<sup>78</sup> This last piece of evidence of her participation in the Society is significant in that it demonstrates Brackett's financial independence, as well as her sense of priorities.<sup>79</sup> Other women who attended the Society's meetings were also employed, single, and without families to support, so they also would have been free to commit funds to this cause, but did not. Of course, since Brackett was the normal school principal, the highest position held by a woman in the St. Louis school system, she also received the highest salary of any of her female colleagues, and therefore had more expendable income. Even so, the fact that she chose to give funds to this cause demonstrates both an interest in and a commitment to the work of the Society.

### *The Art Society*

Brackett was also a member of the St. Louis Art Society, established in 1867, which was an offshoot of the Philosophical Society. Unlike the Philosophical Society, this group was open to women from the start, and according to the membership lists that remain, women were in the majority.<sup>80</sup> Such a gender imbalance is not surprising, since women's intellectual effort was often channelled into literature or the arts in this time period. In fact, this was also true in *JSP*. Articles concerning legal, theological, or political philosophy were most often authored by men; women wrote pieces on the "softer" subjects, or rendered translations, usually of educational philosophy. Other female members of the Art Society who were also active in the St. Louis philosophical circle, as evidenced by attendance at the Philosophical Society meetings or

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<sup>77</sup> The *Daily Countersign* (1864) is said to have been edited by Brackett, but this was very much a newsy piece, and it isn't possible to attribute various columns in the publication to Brackett with certainty. In addition, an anonymous 1852 article in the *Eclectic* on Margaret Fuller was attributed to Brackett in *Poole's Index*, but she would have been only sixteen years old at that time. This article has clearly been confused with an essay on Fuller that Brackett did publish in *The Radical* in 1871.

<sup>78</sup> Harris, Record Book, 85.

<sup>79</sup> Leidecker quoted Brackett as earning \$2,000 annually (p. 258), so the \$3.00 Brackett gave would have equalled 7.5% of her weekly salary of approximately \$40.00. For a public school educator today earning \$40,000.00 - \$50,000.00, this would be roughly equivalent to \$60.00 - \$75.00.

<sup>80</sup> The main source of information for the Art Society is Hyde and Conard's *Encyclopedic History of St. Louis*, p. 2108.

contributions to *JSP*, include Susan Blow, Mary Beedy, Susan Beeson, Amelia Fruchte, and Gertrude Garrigues. No archival material on the Art Society exists, but period sources as well as histories of the movement indicate that its purpose was to educate the public about art, and to thereby refine its taste in aesthetics.<sup>81</sup> Toward this end, the Art Society donated autotypes to the Public Library and held exhibits in the Mercantile Library. It was an organization in which William Torrey Harris was deeply invested<sup>82</sup> and in which other men of the St. Louis movement were also active, including Denton Snider, Louis Soldan, F.A. Holland, F.E. Cook, and Brackett's friend, Thomas Davidson. Information about this organization is valuable primarily for pointing to Brackett's broader interests. Although there is crossover between the memberships of this organization and the Missouri Woman's Suffrage Association, of which Brackett was also a member,<sup>83</sup> few conclusions about the extent of her feminist leanings can be drawn from her membership in this group alone.

### *The Missouri Woman's Suffrage Association*

Brackett's participation in the Missouri Woman's Suffrage Association (1867-1886) most likely to have earned her the title "a most vigorous suffragist." It was the first organization in the nation established solely to promote women's voting rights,<sup>84</sup> and had among its members prominent suffrage activists in the region, Rebecca Hazard, Phoebe Couzins and Virginia Minor, as well as philosophers in the St. Louis circle, both male and female: Brackett, Mary Beedy, William Torrey Harris, and Thomas Davidson.<sup>85</sup> In October 1869, in fact, St. Louis was chosen as the location for the National Woman Suffrage Convention. Brackett was

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<sup>81</sup> *The Western*, H.H. Morgan editor, provided regularly reports on the activities of the Art Society and other organizations in which St. Louis circle members participated. Leidecker also provides information on this organization in *Yankee Teacher*.

<sup>82</sup> Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher*, 384.

<sup>83</sup> Rebecca Hazard, president of the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association in 1878-79, was also a member of the Art Society -- as was Mary Beedy, another suffragist. See Hyde and Conard, 2108 for Art Society membership and 2529 regarding the Woman Suffrage Association.

<sup>84</sup> Mrs. F. B. Clarke, "First Suffrage League in World was founded in St. Louis Fifty-two Years Ago," *St. Louis Star*, February 26, 1919. While other women's organizations addressed women's voting rights along with other issues, this was the first in the nation to focus solely on this issue.

<sup>85</sup> See *The History of Woman Suffrage*, compiled by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage (vol. 3, 595-605) about Hazard's and Beedy's roles in the suffrage movement. On William Torrey Harris' and Thomas Davidson's membership in the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association, see Hyde and Conard, *Encyclopedic History*, 2529. Phoebe Couzins was the first woman in Missouri to earn a law degree. Virginia Minor filed a lawsuit in which she charged she had a constitutional right to vote, based on the privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. See *Minor v. Happersett*, 88 US (21 Wall) 162, (1875).

not active enough in the suffrage movement to have been mentioned in the *History of Woman Suffrage* which chronicles the work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and their followers, as was her friend Mary Beedy, nor did she write anything specifically on this issue to enlighten us further. But she was involved in the movement, at least peripherally.

### *The St. Louis Woman's Club*

Another organization in which Brackett was involved, although it isn't possible to determine for how long a period of time, is the St. Louis Woman's Club. This club was founded sometime between 1870 and 1874 and was revolutionary at that time, in fact even the use of the word "club" by a women's organization was cause for controversy.<sup>86</sup> Arousing controversy, however, was unlikely to have been of surprise to an organization whose statement of purpose was to

Recogniz[e] the value of the frequent interchange of thought and experience among women, [and to] associate ourselves for mutual improvement and a more thorough statement of all questions vital to the interest of *Woman*.<sup>87</sup>

While records of the organization are no longer extant, histories of the period outlined its programs for the first several years of its existence. It began with a focus on domestic work, proposing options such as co-operative housekeeping. Later its discussions centered on themes regarding public life, such as women's role in maintaining peace, the right of married women to work in the schools, and women as "guardians" in women's prisons and asylums.<sup>88</sup> Its general goal was to encourage women to think independently, to think on their feet, and to be prepared to discuss difficult matters in a public setting. Brackett addressed the Woman's Club at least once, presenting an essay on Margaret Fuller that was also published in *The Radical* in December 1871. The tone of this address suggests that feminist sensibilities among the Club's

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<sup>86</sup> The date of the Club's founding is unclear. Missouri Historical Society archival holdings indicate that its formal beginning was in 1874, however, Hyde and Conard's *Encyclopedic History* have its founding listed as 1872. Even better, Brackett's presentation to this group was *published* in 1871, so certainly must have been presented earlier. Most likely, the group met informally for a time, then drew up a constitution and by-laws later.

Regarding the perception of the Club as "revolutionary," see Hyde and Conard, 2522.

<sup>87</sup> Woman's Club statement of purpose (1874), from "Woman's Club Papers," Missouri Historical Society Archives. Capitalization and italics in original.

<sup>88</sup> Hyde and Conard, 2522.



membership must have been fairly well developed, because Brackett opens her lecture with forceful language about social expectations of women:

It is not necessary for one who speaks of Margaret Fuller to defend her from any charge of weakness or want of power. The charge comes from the other quarter, as it does usually to any woman who, by outward circumstance or inner choice, is forced to show . . . the energy of a full life. . . . No one doubted her courage, or firmness, or faithfulness, or patience; but they said she was 'masculine' and then there was no more to be said . . .<sup>89</sup>

A list of members of the Woman's Club is not available, but mention is made of other presenters, who include Harris.<sup>90</sup> There is also evidence that one of the Club's founders, Mrs. Wenzel Holy who was also active in the Suffrage Association, was acquainted with both Brackett and Davidson.<sup>91</sup>

### *The Pedagogical Society*

A final organization that Brackett participated in toward the end of her time in St. Louis is the Pedagogical Society, which focused on practical problems in teaching methods.<sup>92</sup> As was the case with other of St. Louis' quasi-professional organizations, "either from prejudice or from policy, women were not at first admitted to membership."<sup>93</sup> It was established only a year before Brackett left St. Louis, therefore it was unlikely to have been as important to her as the organizations listed above. As a matter of fact, Brackett seems not to have taken the Pedagogical Society very seriously, exchanging barbs about it with Thomas Davidson in a letter written shortly after her arrival in New York.<sup>94</sup> However, her quips may have had less to do with the Pedagogical Society itself than with a general disillusionment with the turn her work in St. Louis had taken.

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<sup>89</sup> Anna C. Brackett, "Margaret Fuller," *The Radical*, 9:354, (Dec. 1871).

<sup>90</sup> Hyde and Conard, 2522-2524.

<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine Mrs. Holy's first name. See Hyde and Conard for her participation in the Woman's Club, 2524. Brackett knew Holy fairly well, as indicated by her request that Davidson give her "kindest wishes." See Brackett's letter to Davidson, May 13, 1872, in Thomas Davidson Papers, Sterling Library Archives, Yale University.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example the discussions of teaching methods published in *The Western: on arithmetic*, (vol. 2, p. 49, 1876; on "culture studies" versus practical training, (vol. 1, p. 780, 1875; vol. 2, p. 118-119, 1876); and phonics versus whole-word spelling, (vol. 1, p. 62, 1875).

<sup>93</sup> Hyde and Conard, entry on Pedagogical Society.

<sup>94</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, May 13, 1872.

## ***Return to the East***

Since Brackett's St. Louis years seem to have ended on something of a sour note, we can assume that her move to back to the East coast was a welcomed change. Brackett abandoned the normal school work that had consumed so much of her time and energy, although she remained committed to the education of women and girls, both in theory and practice. During this period, Brackett published her first book, an edited work entitled *The Education of American Girls*. This book brought her to the attention of the editors of *The New England Journal of Education*, and thus led to her position as the journal's New York editor. She began publishing articles on women's issues in popular journals as well.

Brackett opened a private school for girls with Ida Eliot in New York, which provided instruction to 30-40 students at all age levels in its first year. She thoroughly enjoyed this new educational venture, giving enthusiastic reports on its progress to Davidson. The school, she said, was "a wonderful success, far surpassing our most sanguine expectations," a success that "amazes everyone, ourselves included."<sup>95</sup> And successful it was: brochures indicated that those in the college preparatory program would be admitted to Vassar automatically. Over fifty years later, Brackett was still remembered for holding such high educational standards.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps most important for Brackett's sense of well-being at the time, however, the school in New York was a much-needed change -- both for her and for Eliot, her long-time companion.

## ***"Miss E. and I"***

Eliot's role in Brackett's life merits attention, because Brackett and Eliot may well have been domestic partners.<sup>97</sup> Brackett and Eliot shared housing when both were in St. Louis, and they regularly attended

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<sup>95</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, November 5, 1872.

<sup>96</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography* (1929), 546-547.

<sup>97</sup> Brackett and Eliot were listed at the same address in the faculty directories of the St. Louis Public School Annual Reports. In letters to Davidson, Brackett indicates that she shared a room with Eliot. Many letters also indicate that Eliot was her companion at social events. Brackett's poem, "Very Simple," provides further evidence, "How did I know that she loved me? / I opened the door / and sunlight flashed o'er and o'er / Sudden it broke / Before I spoke / From forehead, and eyes, and trembling lips, / From even the delicate finger-tips / That she laid in my hand so free. / How did I know that I loved her? / I opened the door, / And music throbbed through me o'er and o'er / Sudden it woke, / Before I spoke, / In head, and heart and bewildered brain, / so sweet, so sweet, it was almost pain, / As I gave my hand to her." It is within the realm of possibility that Brackett was simply writing in a man's voice, or speaking of purely platonic love. It is also possible that she writes here of her love for her daughter, Hope, adopted in 1873. But, as a philosopher, one simply *must* take Ockham's razor seriously and come to the simplest and most logical conclusion: this was a love poem to the person with whom Brackett spent years of her life – Ida Eliot.

social events together. Eliot also accompanied Brackett when she traveled with Harris to his speaking engagement in Boston in 1867.<sup>98</sup> When Brackett resigned from the St. Louis normal school, Eliot, her vice-principal, also resigned and joined her in New York to open the girls' school. While in New York, the two shared a home and vacationed together in southern New Hampshire. In addition, many of Brackett's references to Eliot regularly included her as one would include a spouse. Commenting on the quarters they shared in St. Louis, Brackett quipped, "our room is our castle"; the new house in New York was "our house"; the school, "our school." Yet the "clincher" to the twentieth-century mind is Brackett's 1873 announcement to Davidson: "We have, i.e., Miss Eliot and I, adopted a little protégé of Miss E's -- a little girl now three years old."<sup>99</sup> This child she later referred to as "our little Daisy . . . [whose] real name is *Hope*," whom she wanted Davidson to teach Greek before she learned any other foreign language.<sup>100</sup> Whether this was a formal, legal adoption is unclear, but Brackett and Eliot did raise the child to adulthood. And, not incidentally, they chose to send her to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor when she had reached college age. In a letter to James B. Angell, president of the University of Michigan, Brackett inquired into where she might find a home where Hope could board when she entered the university in the fall of 1887. Angell referred Brackett to Eliza Sunderland, a graduate student in philosophy who studied alongside Marietta Kies under George Morris and John Dewey.

However, the social and sexual freedom with which we are familiar today may not have been present in Brackett's life, even within her fairly progressive circles. Therefore, it is necessary to suspend judgment about Brackett's relationship with Eliot. In fact, her relationship with Davidson could also be read as one in which attraction and affection were present. His 1879 relocation to New York, which incidentally, Soldan had anticipated and said would sadden him deeply,<sup>101</sup> seems to have been facilitated by Brackett who had

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For those not familiar with the term, "domestic partnership" has come into use in recent years to describe long-term, committed homosexual relationships, and serves well to shift emphasis in same-sex relationships from sexuality alone to the relationship as a whole. I use it here in this sense. The possibility that Brackett and Eliot were domestic partners was previously noted by Maria F. Lundgren, "Anna Callender Brackett: Educator, Essayist, Poet," master's thesis, Iowa State University, Ames, IA, 1989, 2.

<sup>98</sup> See Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher*, 266 regarding Eliot accompanying Brackett to Boston.

<sup>99</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, December 14, 1873.

<sup>100</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, March 1, 1874.

<sup>101</sup> "I would rather do anything than to have him leave this city, and I know you'll feel the same way." These are words that Soldan wrote of Davidson to Harris in 1872, shortly after Brackett's return East. See Louis Soldan, Letter to William Torrey Harris, June 27, 1872, in William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

been encouraging him to come east since 1874. Brackett worked hard to secure Davidson's move, suggesting potential job openings, writing him letters of introduction, offering methods for obtaining an audience for public speaking engagements, and speaking to prominent people on his behalf -- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. among them it seems.<sup>102</sup> Prior to Davidson's arrival in New York, Brackett also strongly urged him to vacation with her and Eliot at their summer hideaway in Gorham, New Hampshire. She noted that they knew each other well enough to have a mutually fulfilling working summer, filled with reading and writing. She also admitted, however, that she simply desired his companionship.<sup>103</sup> Brackett finally won him over, and he joined them in 1874, but we find her expressing disappointment the next year that he had shunned Gorham for the seaside at Gloucester, MA. Finally, to the very child whom she and Eliot had adopted Brackett attributed similarities to Davidson, claiming the little girl shared his "Scotchness."<sup>104</sup> In this way, Brackett assigned Davidson a sort of intellectual paternity for a child toward whom she had strong maternal feelings.

The status of Brackett's sexuality is a question that cannot and perhaps should not be decided here. Yet I make note of it, because it is important to recognize the influence of this life-long relationship in Brackett's life-- whether it was a domestic partnership or simply a friendship. Eliot herself was an intelligent woman who had taught at the Salem, Massachusetts normal school before arriving in St. Louis. And although she published a great deal less than Brackett did, she was not without literary accomplishments of her own.<sup>105</sup> If Brackett and Eliot were in fact domestic partners, given their respective achievements, their relationship would also have been one of intellectual parity. This is a component that was absent from many heterosexual relationships at a time in which women often were not well educated. Whatever the case may have been, Ida Eliot was certainly a significant force in Brackett's life and one to whom she was very close. Davidson too, was an important friend and ally during Brackett's years in St. Louis as well as in her more comfortable east coast habitat, although less information is available to help chronicle that period of her life.

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<sup>102</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letters to Thomas Davidson, November 21, 1872; December 20, 1872 (recounting meeting with Holmes); December 14, 1873; September 10, 1875; and August 29, 1879.

<sup>103</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letters to Thomas Davidson, March 1, 1874.

<sup>104</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letters to Thomas Davidson, March 1, 1874. Emphasis and quotation marks are in original.

<sup>105</sup> Eliot contributed two translations of Herman Grimm's work to *JSP*. She also collaborated with Caroline Gray Soule on a science book on caterpillars. And, as mentioned earlier, she co-edited a volume of poetry with Brackett, *Poetry for Home and School* in 1876, which was reprinted nine times and was re-issued as *The Silver Treasury of Poetry* in 1889.

Brackett lived in New York and maintained a summer home in Stowe, Vermont until her death in 1911. A group of former students asked her permission shortly before her death to establish a scholarship fund in her name through the Association of Collegiate Alumni, now the American Association of University Women. The fund was established in December 1911 and today has been subsumed under AAUW's grants and fellowships program; an apt tribute to a woman who not only advanced women's educational opportunity, but promulgated the theory that established the basis for that opportunity as well. This discussion will now turn to just this theoretical work.

## ***SECTION II: BRACKETT'S FEMINIST IDEALISM***

### ***Theoretical Groundings***

Once Brackett's St. Louis period was behind her, she quickly moved on from her normal school work to explicating her understanding of idealism in terms of feminism -- and vice versa. In fact by 1874, she had published her edited work, *The Education of American Girls*, in which her own long essay by the same name appeared, an essay which applied Rosenkranz's theory of education to girls and women in particular. She also authored another essay in the same work, "Sex in Education," in which she debunked a number of theories about the dangers of co-education. But before reviewing this aspect of Brackett's thought, it is important to locate her on the intellectual map, as such, and to review the source and nature of her idealism.

As noted earlier, Brackett had returned east before the St. Louis circle began its real work on Hegel in 1874. However, she certainly would have been exposed to Hegel's thought before this, as over a dozen translations of selections of his writings appeared in *JSP* in the first five volumes alone -- from the *Phenomenology* and the larger *Logic* to the *Philosophy of History* and the *Propaedeutic*. Furthermore, she would have been familiar with other German idealists, such as Fichte and Schelling, as well as with the work of commentators on each of these thinkers: James Hutchinson Stirling, Franz Hoffman, A. Vera, and -- most important for this discussion -- Karl F. Rosenkranz; for each of these men also contributed to *JSP* and/or corresponded with Harris and his colleagues.

### *A Defense of Idealism*

The first evidence of Brackett's acquaintance with Hegel in her published works is an 1871 article in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, "An Analysis of an Article on Hegel," in which she summarizes J.E. Cabot's defense of idealism, published in 1868 in *The North American Review*.<sup>106</sup> This article has its strengths and provides us with insights into the development of Brackett's thought. For instance, Brackett gives a listing of the major topics that Cabot covers. She then paraphrases or provides long quotations to explain specific points of his argument. Finally, this brief review also reads as an endorsement of Cabot's views, which in turn are very much in support of Hegelian idealism. However, although it would be rewarding to be able to say that Brackett offers profound insights and greatly illuminates the thought of one of her contemporaries, this is not the case. This article stops short of "analysis" in any real sense of that term. Yet, depending on the extent of control William Torrey Harris exercised as editor of *JSP*, this may have been all Brackett was expected to do. Whatever the reason for the brevity of this article, unfortunately, it is not philosophically significant, nor is it as ambitious as her other works in educational theory.

### *Pedagogics as a System*

Brackett's real effort was channelled into translating and expanding on Rosenkranz, Hegel's younger contemporary and disciple, who applied Hegel's philosophy to education. Rosenkranz's *Pädagogik als System* first appeared in English in *JSP* as a series of articles, beginning in 1872. The system is itself Hegelian in style, outlined as a triad with each member then also being broken down into three's. Part one explains the "general idea" of education in terms of 1) its nature, 2) its form, and 3) its limits. Part two addresses the "special elements" of education as 1) physical, 2) intellectual, and 3) moral.<sup>107</sup> Finally, in part three Rosenkranz discusses at length the "particular systems" of education as 1) national, 2) theocratic, and 3) humanitarian.

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<sup>106</sup> *JSP*, 5:38-48.

<sup>107</sup> This breakdown of categories for education is not original to Rosenkranz, Kant used the same set-up, for example, in his theory of education.

Brackett translated the entire work in volumes six through eight of *JSP*.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly enough, however, her paraphrase five years later reviews only part one and sections of part two, neglecting part three altogether. There is no way to determine with certainty whether this was due simply to a lack of time or Brackett's conscious decision. Since the paraphrase was meant to be a more clear and direct version of the *Pedagogics* for use by educators, she may have omitted these later sections intentionally. Part three consists of a Hegel-style philosophical-historical analysis of the various types of education and their manifestations within different cultures and epochs. Brackett may have considered this to be of little use to educational practitioners in the field. While Rosenkranz's theory is interesting in its own right, particularly as an application of Hegel to educational theory, I will discuss only those sections of his theory that Brackett draws on for her theory of education for women and girls.

Much of the *Pedagogics* is devoted to outlining the stages of cognition and explaining the teaching methods most appropriate to each. The first stage is that of perception, and it is characteristic of infants and young children. The child takes in the information presented to it, whether by a teacher or by chance through experience, and begins to distinguish shape, size, color, and form. While the child in the "perceptive" or "intuitive" stage is indeed engaged in thought, "his thinking is, as it were, concealed from him, because it is unconscious." [§84, JSP15:38]<sup>109</sup> Formal education by nature is very limited at this stage, because intuitive learning is almost entirely based on outside forces. [§84, JSP15:39] It is helpful, however, to present objects to the child and encourage him or her to begin to see these objects' properties and relations to other objects. [§85, JSP15:39] Educators should also allow a good deal of time for play at this stage, because play is a sort of material-gathering activity through which the child gains knowledge of the world. [§84, JSP15:38]

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<sup>108</sup> An exception is the sections on sexual education which were greatly condensed in both the paraphrase and the translation. In both her translation and paraphrase of Rosenkranz, Brackett omits much of his discussion of sexual education: the translation in *JSP* includes §§72-74 on sexual education, but then jumps to §80 which begins the section on intellectual education. Yet she addresses many of the issues in her own works, *The Education of American Girls* and "Sex in Education." Much of the discussion is in proper Victorian language, but Brackett does venture into difficult areas, such as dysmenorrhoea, [AmG67] and male sexually predatory behavior [AmG67-69].

<sup>109</sup> References are generally to Brackett's paraphrase of the *Pedagogics*, because this work makes more apparent instances in which she offers her own interpretations. Citations in brackets give the section number and *JSP* volume and page number for the paraphrase (example: [§84, JSP15:38] = section 84 of the paraphrase, which appears in vol. 15, page 38 in *JSP*). When the citation is from Brackett's translation, the letters "Tr" precede the section number.

The "conceptual" stage takes place when a child is approximately six to twelve years old. The child begins to identify and classify objects of perception, combine perceptions into objects of imagination, and understand abstract signs and symbols. [§91, JSP15:43] At this "imaginative" stage, one of the main purposes of education is to teach the child to distinguish the essential from the inessential properties of an object. [§92, JSP15:43] Education must also work to improve memorization and classification skills.

Perhaps most important during the conceptual stage is the child's own reading, which should be well-monitored by the parent or teacher, but in such a way as to lead the child to believe they are choosing their own reading material. Rosenkranz suggests that certain books be nonchalantly left on a shelf, for example, for the child to discover "as if by chance." [§94, JSP15:44] The best books for a child at this stage are those that encourage the development of the imagination to the fullest extent, and both Rosenkranz and Brackett offer suggestions, such as *Gulliver's Travels* or the tales of Hans Christian Anderson and Lewis Carroll as especially well-suited for this purpose. Such a reading list will not only suit the child's natural inclination at this time in his or her life, it will also facilitate the process of self-alienation and return -- in the Hegelian sense -- that is essential to human growth and development. As noted in the last chapter, Hegel had seen literature as useful in education for precisely this reason. Adventure, myth, and travel stories take the child out of him or herself to places unknown. This fosters a sense of his or her own "otherness" in the world and builds appreciation for a world outside of the self. A gentle initiation to the process of genuine self-alienation in this way lays the groundwork for further development later.

The final stage is the thinking stage in which "the mind attains a sort of universality, for it is [no longer] bounded or limited by any definite present object." [§100, JSP15:50] Having passed from the tales of the child to the biographies and treatises recommended as reading for the teenager or young adult, [§97, JSP15:47] the student is now in his or her "logical epoch." The student at this stage is able to see the necessity of the connections within universal ideas, to understand "forms which . . . have no power of being perceived by the senses." [§100, JSP15:50] This is the work of true Thought or the Thinking Activity that Rosenkranz believes is the pinnacle of the educative process.

Having given an overview of Rosenkranz's educational stages, however, it is important to note that even though Rosenkranz's stages interrelate as a hierarchy, the "lower" stages are never annihilated, but are



subsumed into, the next. And in this regard Rosenkranz is very much like Hegel. Furthermore, at every stage of life each mental process -- perception, conception, and thinking -- is constantly in play. The mature thinker may be more able to inform his or her perception with pure thought, but perception still plays a vital role in the development of knowledge. This is likely the reason Brackett continued to incorporate the Object Lesson method into her teaching in St. Louis to a degree, despite Harris' dislike for it, as mentioned earlier. It is only a naïve empiricism that Brackett objected to as an idealist, one that assumes that unmediated perceptions are possible. As Rosenkranz makes clear, there is no reason to dismiss empirical teaching methods altogether. Brackett clearly agreed with this aspect of his thought. In short, the one who looks "scornfully down on the regions of conception and perception as forms of intelligence quite inferior . . . [makes] the sickly error of scholasticism" in Rosenkranz's view. [§100, JSP15:50]

### ***Feminist Pedagogics***

Steeped in Hegelianism and a proponent of Rosenkranz's theories, it is no surprise that Brackett would describe education as: "a development -- an unfolding of innate capacities. . . . the gradual transition from a state of entire dependence as at birth, to a state of independence, as in adult life." [AmG15-16]<sup>110</sup> Yet unlike Hegel, whose view of women was not particularly enlightened, Brackett considers women capable of participating fully in the educational process. Hegel, on the other hand, believes that "women can . . . be educated, but their minds are not adapted to the higher sciences, philosophy, or certain of the arts."<sup>111</sup> This, of course, would mean that women are incapable of being educated beyond Rosenkranz's second stage: the conceptual or imaginative stage. And in Brackett's view, this is precisely the problem with women's education; it fails to allow girls to make the transition from the conceptual to the logical stage of thinking. Given her explicit objection to a similar misstep by Rosenkranz regarding physical education for girls (discussed below), it is likely that either Brackett had not yet encountered this aspect of Hegel's theory, or that she dismissed it outright as a historical contingency of his thought that is not consistent with this

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<sup>110</sup> See especially §§28-29 in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* for his discussion of the individual intellect as constituting the unfolding of Spirit, and §175 of *The Philosophy of Right* regarding an increase in independence in a child through education.

<sup>111</sup> *Philosophy of Right*, §166 Addition.

philosophical system as a whole. Otherwise, she might have addressed the matter directly. Instead Brackett seems to have been relying solely on Rosenkranz, who assumed equality of the sexes in all other respects. She took this assumption seriously, and the result was her long essay, "The Education of American Girls."

Brackett published *The Education of American Girls* in 1874, and in a letter to Davidson indicates that she was excited about the project. Updating him on a number of new developments in her life, seemingly hastily she wrote, " -- have agreed with a NY publisher to edit a *woman's* book on Girls' Education."<sup>112</sup> In this work, she collected essays from members of the female intelligentsia of the day, three of whom were also associated with William Torrey Harris in some way: Mary Beedy, St. Louis public school teacher and Philosophical Society participant; Ednah D. Cheney, lecturer on aesthetics at the Concord School; and Caroline H. Dall, literary figure and member of the American Social Science Association, of which Harris was secretary. As noted earlier, Brackett wrote two of the essays in this volume, a piece on sex and education, as well as the title essay. The latter is for the most part an application of Rosenkranz's pedagogical theory to women and girls. But this is not to suggest it is lacking originality. In fact, Brackett's systematic philosophical treatment of an issue that was more frequently addressed from a political point of view is quite novel.

Generally a young girl is guided through the "perceptive" stage of Rosenkranz's system, and thus, her power of attention is awakened to a great degree. She is now able to distinguish and compare objects as well as to analyze their properties. She then moves to the "conceptual" stage, beginning to see objects in their relations to each other, and developing her power of imagination. These first two steps of the learning process are foundational, and in Brackett's view no girl can excel later in life without having attained them. However, an education that stops at the end of the conceptual stage can by no means be called complete, nor can it claim to have succeeded in helping a young woman reach her full potential. Yet this is generally the case in the education of women. They are given a solid primary and adequate secondary education,<sup>113</sup> but after this their educational opportunity screeches to a halt.

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<sup>112</sup> Anna C. Brackett, Letter to Thomas Davidson, December 14, 1873. Emphasis and caps are in original.

<sup>113</sup> It isn't possible to parallel the system practiced then with ours today. Elementary education went until a child was twelve or fourteen, then they may or may not have chosen to continue their education in high school. However, high school was often considered "higher education." St. Louis' first high school, for example, was dubbed "The People's College." See Forbes, 25:295. Brackett's students were at this stage. They had a basic education, but had not attended high school.

The result? Women's intellectual, and even emotional and moral, growth is stunted by a lack of education. Brackett's imagery is poignant: "Thus dwarfed and crippled, she remains during her whole life, physically a woman, mentally a child." [AmG75] Obviously, this is no small matter in Brackett's view. In fact, she repeatedly warns of the damage done to a woman who has not been given adequate tools to navigate her own course in adult life. First, it limits a woman's ability to fulfill the role that few at that time disputed was natural to her: motherhood. And like many nineteenth century feminists, Brackett played "the mother card" as often as any others in arguing her point. Second, it restricts her ability to venture into the public realm and establish a career of her own. Though this was a controversial issue, Brackett doggedly lobbied for it, particularly within her own field of education, which was among the more acceptable professions for women at the time. Finally, and in a tragic worst-case scenario, a social context that limited women's aspirations to such an extent could actually lead to a mental breakdown. This last claim is more than just a moment of dramatic flair, for Brackett suggests a link between women's limited career options and mental health problems on more than one occasion in this essay, as well as in other works.

Brackett does not discuss a mother's role systematically, but rather intersperses mention of it throughout her arguments on behalf of women's education. Still, a number of the points she makes are worth looking into. First of all, in claims compatible with the norms of the time, Brackett views a mother as the moral and spiritual head of the household. A child's social education, which includes neatness and manners, is a part of their moral education. Based on Brackett's observations, responsibility for this aspect of education "falls almost wholly into the hands of the mother." [AmG96] It is also her responsibility to "foster and direct" the sentiment and wonder toward creation, which her child naturally feels, as part of his or her religious training. [AmG113] Finally, enforcing obedience, [AmG98] promoting conscientiousness, [AmG109] and instilling a conception of Right, [AmG109] are also within a mother's domain as the first and primary educator of her children. This last aspect of childhood education profoundly affects the entire nation, because the ability to obey and a conception of personal duty and of Right are at the heart of a well-functioning state. Given the inadequacy of women's education in regard to this weighty responsibility, Brackett asks these questions:

How can a woman who has no clear ideas herself of what should be demanded and enforced, and hardly a sufficient command of language to express directions clearly, who was never taught herself to obey, and who has no definite idea of what end she really wishes to attain, educate her children into obedience? . . . Does not the welfare of the country imperatively demand that we give those who are to be the only educators of children in their first and decisive years, a thorough education? [AmG98-9]

Brackett's assertion is clear. At the very least, education should develop women's "directive power" [AmG89] if they are to be entrusted with the development of their children.

### *Education as Equalizer*

Brackett's frustration with women's education as it affects their professional performance was pointed to earlier in this chapter in reference to her normal school work in St. Louis. Women, in Brackett's view, too often did not take full responsibility for their actions, nor did they communicate directly with people. Both within the culture at large and among many intellectuals at the time, women's unfitness for participation in the public world was considered common knowledge. And Brackett certainly was familiar with the vernacular in which "women's way of doing business" [AmG103] was the butt of many jokes. Brackett may not have been familiar with Hegel's characterization of women as too bound by feeling and the dictates of opinion to be able decision makers in matters of society and state.<sup>114</sup> However, both during her normal school period and in "The Education of American Girls" she maintains that any tendency that women had to make seemingly irrational decisions is a result of socialization. Brackett's own words say it well:

The cause of the trouble lies, not in their nature, but in their education, [which] is proved by the fact that wherever women have received a thorough business training these charming and bewildering feminine characteristics . . . are not found. [AmG103]

The solution is to ensure that women are thoroughly educated. But, as noted above, in Brackett's day, a woman's education often stopped at the second stage of learning, when she was around fourteen years old. At this point, she would have been able to think conceptually, but she would not be able to exercise that level of cognition that Brackett deems genuine "Thinking Activity." That is, she would not be able to advance from concepts to the universal thought that unites them; she would be imaginative perhaps, but

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<sup>114</sup> See §166, *Philosophy of Right*, "When women are in charge of government, the state is in danger, for their actions are based, not on the demands of universality, but on contingent inclination and opinion." Allen Wood, trans., [Cambridge University Press, 1995].

unable to comprehend principles; sentimental in her religious understanding, but not truly spiritual. Untrained in abstract thinking, she would indeed become the arbitrary and capricious being that Hegel warned of, if -- heaven forbid! -- she were to become active in public affairs.

Beyond these practical barriers, retarding women's growth in this way causes real emotional and psychological damage as well. Many women whose intellectual talent has been thwarted have in fact suffered mental breakdowns, Brackett claims, because they have had no outlet for their creative energy. The level of conviction with which Brackett expresses her anger over this problem of "the closing of the top of the chimneys," as she calls it, merits another quotation.

This is more true than is generally supposed. If these girls had had real work for which they were responsible, and felt themselves able rationally to utilize the power of which they were blindly conscious, they would not be found to-day in the wards of asylums, or condemned to the luxurious couches on which they spend their "unglorious days. . . ." [AmG82]

Not all women meet such a fate, of course, but even in diluted form, a woman who knows herself to be "half-educated" loses the desire to reach for the "higher plane" that she might have otherwise attained. [AmG83] This creates an "internal barrier" [AmG91] which prevents the girl from applying herself to challenging tasks and/or handling complex matters in an orderly fashion. Such behavior then feeds into the popular conception of women as erratic and disorderly leaders and managers. And the cycle continues.

### ***Girls and the Family Circle***

Although Brackett's primary concern is with extending education into the late adolescent years so that young women have access to higher education, she is also aware of the role early childhood education plays in women's lives. And in its earliest stages, education begins in the home. As a follower of both Rosenkranz and Hegel, Brackett was well-acquainted with the idea of the importance of the home, and thus of the family. In *Pedagogics as a System*, Rosenkranz recognized that the family provides the foundation upon which education then builds; the family is the presupposition, in a sense, upon which education must be based. [§4, JSP12:70] In line with Hegel, Rosenkranz sees the family as an organic relation that grows

out of the natural bonds between parent and child. [Tr-§4, JSP6:292]<sup>115</sup> In addition, it is characterized by love, rather than right; mutual affection, rather than honor. [§44, JSP12:311] This is the case because the nature of this "sacred circle" is such that its members do not have a distinct and separate existence within its bounds, therefore they need not petition for "rights" nor act in such a way as to earn "honor." Instead, simply by virtue of being a member of the family, even a person who has committed an offense is "still beloved, tho' it may be with bitter tears." [§44, JSP12:311]

Brackett agrees that the love and nurture that an individual receives within the family is indispensable. The education the family provides is also essential to growth and development. However, although she doesn't question the Hegel-Rosenkranz idealization of the role of the family, she does make a feminist amendment to this theory. Namely, she points out that, because girls are often confined to *only* the family circle, their intellectual and moral development suffers. Young men, on the other hand, enter into civil society, the realm in which the individuals are torn out of their family bonds thus becoming independent persons.<sup>116</sup> Like boys, girls need to meet and compete with their peers in order to develop the "thick skin" that boys acquire almost from the moment they are aware that they are boys. Without this, there are two dangers. First, girls grow to be ineffective, or even impotent, within the public realm and, as mentioned, reinforce the stereotype of the incompetent woman. Second, and of more danger to their personal well-being, they are prone to too much self-disclosure, making them vulnerable to exploitation by others. Accustomed as they are to the protection that they experience in the home, this is no surprise:

In the unrestrained and affectionate intercourse of the family, the girl has not felt the necessity of concealing in any degree her real self. . . . We must so educate her that she will not lightly give her confidence or show to uninterested persons too much of her real self. . . . This is not teaching deceit. It is only teaching what must be learned, the means of possessing oneself in peace. . . . Men, in their intercourse with the world, learn sooner than women, by the rough teaching of experience, the necessity of fending in their inner selves from the outer world. [AmG106-107]

Parents would do their daughters a service, then, to make certain that they have ample opportunity to engage in activities outside the home. Furthermore, girls and young women should certainly not be tutored

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<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, in her paraphrase of the *Pedagogics*, Brackett omits Rosenkranz's mention of the importance of familial bonds as well as his condemnation of the the Platonic obliteration of them.

<sup>116</sup> §238, *Philosophy of Right*. Again, it is not clear if Brackett was familiar with this work firsthand, but she certainly was aware of the general argument, and that it had been applied only to men to this point.

privately in the home. Individual instruction also shields a girl from the sorts of challenges that only measuring herself against her peers can provide. For this reason, Brackett strongly advocates girls' co-education with boys,<sup>117</sup> which is one of two topics of a feminist nature that remain to be discussed; the other is sexuality, under the heading "sexual education." Since Brackett focuses more narrowly on precisely these two issues in the closing essay of *The Education of American Girls*, namely "Sex in Education," I will draw on both essays while addressing her treatment of each of these issues.

### ***Co-education and "Women's Ways"***

Women's co-education with men, in Brackett's view, is invaluable as a means of combatting the "woman's ways" problems discussed above. [AmG103] As noted regarding the role of the family in female education and development, girls need an extra push in the directions of discipline and rigor in order to function better in both the private and public realms. Yet girls' schools are often smaller than the schools at which boys are educated. [AmG99] In addition, girls' schools often try to recreate the warmth and closeness of a family in an attempt to accommodate their students' emotional needs.<sup>118</sup> These schools, therefore, do not require close adherence to rules, nor do they provide uniform instruction of their students as larger schools do. And this does harm rather than good to girls, who can only benefit from a more orderly approach to their education.

Brackett acknowledges that some would charge her with promoting education as a cure-all, able to counter virtually every disadvantage women encounter. And to a degree, Brackett admits that for her, as well as for many women who themselves are educated, this is true,

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<sup>117</sup> Given the conviction with which Brackett argues for co-education, it is ironic that the school she herself ran was a private school for girls, yet sent her own daughter to a co-educational university. This seeming inconsistency is more understandable in light of the fact that, due to the reputation of Brackett's school, college preparatory students there were accepted at Vassar without entrance exams. In addition, at least according to a fictional account of life at Brackett's school, she was said to be a strict disciplinarian. Thus, she provided the academic rigor and structure that she said most girls' schools lacked – in some sense providing a reconciliation of what otherwise is a living contradiction. For Brackett as a disciplinarian, see Ruth Sawyer, *Roller Skates* (Macmillan, 1936) 26, 128-130, 141.

<sup>118</sup> Anna C. Brackett, *Woman and the Higher Education* (New York: Harper, 1893), 164-166. Aside from this observation, this essay contributes little to Brackett's theory overall. Rather it consists of a discussion of barriers to girls' education because of parental interference.

. . . for the broader grows our experience of men and women, and the more deeply and widely we think, the more inevitably do we find this problem of education appearing before us, in whatever direction we turn. It is like the ducal palace in Carlsruhe, to which all the main streets of the city converge . . .

[SexEd380]

Such a statement can almost be read as confessional in nature. Brackett, a learned woman and an educator of others, cannot help but see education as the solution to -- if not all of women's problems -- then certainly a great many of them.

Interestingly enough, an aspect of Brackett's argument on behalf of co-education has resurfaced today. Some in Brackett's day argued, much as some feminists do today, that integrating boys' and girls' classes would result in educational inequality for girls, because they would be overshadowed by the dominant tendencies of their male counterparts. Rather than argue against this claim systematically, however, Brackett simply makes her own counter-assertion: the person who makes this argument "deprives [women] of all chance, if his effort against co-education should succeed." [SexEd374] Why? Well first of all, even the best of educational institutions for women and girls really and truly were *not* on the same plane as men's schools, in Brackett's view. [SexEd374] Secondly, and here we get to the core of the educational debate for Brackett, a lack of co-education would result in less higher education for women overall.

Public school systems in Brackett's day increasingly educated girls along with boys because it was economically sound practice; maintaining separate schools was costly and inefficient. Largely for this reason, no doubt, public opinion had shifted so that few objected to educating elementary school aged children together. Many saw co-education differently, however, when it concerned students in the teenage and early adult years, as sexuality began to enter into the picture. And although Brackett and her colleagues, William Torrey Harris among them, tried to dispel fears that "promiscuous education"<sup>119</sup> would taint the purity of their girls, resistance was still strong to co-education during the adolescent years. Even so, Brackett continued to urge for women's education *with* men during this stage of their lives, because in

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<sup>119</sup> This is not Brackett's term, but is one I draw from, based on references to "promiscuous" lectures -- i.e., those given to audiences of men and women together, in other nineteenth century writings. The very first such lectures took place in the U.S. in the 1830s, with the abolitionist lectures of the Grimke sisters and Frances Wright. The editor of the first women's fashion magazine, Sarah J. Hale, was so opposed to women speaking in public that she ended her friendship with Elizabeth Oakes Smith for doing so. Over time, women's claims to being called by God, chiefly regarding slavery, temperance, and increasingly women's rights led to the erosion of the prohibition against women speaking in public to a mixed audience. Even so, many still objected to male/female co-education at the time of Brackett's writing.



her view, arguments against opposition to co-education, "implied [more] than appears on the surface; for, in reality, co-education and higher education for women are almost synonymous terms." [SexEd374] Finally, Brackett charges that her opponents only spout vague theories about how joint education might do damage, but have no evidence to support their arguments. She, in contrast, takes the "high ground of philosophy [which] is the only proper one from which to settle the sphere of any human being, and what education will fit her for it." [AmG92] In short, not only is Brackett's argument more sound, in her own estimation, but her policy of co-education is more in line with the American ideal of individual self-determination. Case closed (in Brackett's opinion).

### *Sex and Education*

Most of us are at least somewhat familiar with the ways in which women's delicate health and emotional fragility were invoked in the nineteenth century as justification for denying them educational and employment opportunities. And Brackett addresses this type of argument full force on more than one occasion. In one case, Brackett explicitly objected to Rosenkranz's claim that physical education was not important for girls. In both the translation and paraphrase of his *Pedagogics* Brackett renders Rosenkranz's words similarly:

Gymnastics are not so essential for girls. In its place, dancing is sufficient, and gymnastics should be employed for them only where there exists any special weakness or deformity, when [exercise] may be used as a restorative or preservative. They are not to become Amazons. [Tr-§66, JSP7:54]

In the translation, Brackett lets this comment pass. In her paraphrase she does not remain silent on this matter, however.<sup>120</sup> This is not surprising, as Brackett is said to have been a rather accomplished equestrian, and in her popular writings advocated improvements in women's health and physical fitness generally.<sup>121</sup> In the paraphrase then, she takes the chance to address this issue head on, following Rosenkranz's objectionable statement with her own feminist perspective, which she places in brackets in order to distinguish it from the main text:

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<sup>120</sup> This stands in rather stark contrast to Brackett's failure to make any critical commentary on Rosenkranz's endorsement of corporal punishment, a method of discipline to which both she and Harris were opposed.

<sup>121</sup> Kendall notes that Brackett had interests in this area. She also authored a popular article on horseback riding as a good form of exercise, particularly for women: *Harper's*, 80:236-49 (January 1890).

The German idea of a woman's whole duty -- to knit, to sew, and to obey implicitly -- is perhaps accountable for what Rosenkranz here says of exercise as regards girls. We, however, who know that the most frequent direct cause of debility and suffering in our young women is simply and solely a want of muscular strength, may be pardoned for dissenting from his opinion, and for suggesting that dancing is not a sufficient equivalent for the more violent games of their brothers. We do not fear to render them Amazons by giving them more genuine and systematic exercise, both physically and intellectually. [§66, JSP14:198-9]

This outright dismissal of what Brackett sees as traditional German values is important to keep in mind when we consider other aspects of Brackett's thoughts on women, because it points to ways in which she departs from the Hegelian norm in which women and men have distinctly different natures.

Brackett's essay "Sex in Education" was a response to a recent work by the same name and consists of a much more extended commentary on women's rights and role. The author was a male contemporary, a Harvard medical school professor named Edward H. Clarke, who warned of the dangers co-education posed to women's health and well-being.<sup>122</sup> In her discussion Brackett necessarily addresses issues surrounding women's sexuality in general. Her arguments in this essay were foreshadowed by the commentary on Rosenkranz's view of girls' physical education above and are often complemented by her discussion of sexual education in "The Education of American Girls."

Many women in this era, of course, were agitating for changes in women's social status, and reforming the victorian understanding of women as delicate but valuable reproductive vessels was certainly on their agenda. Like Brackett, many first-wave feminists were comfortable supporting the emotional aspect of women's mothering abilities. At the same time, they were often critical of the way in which this translated into a form of biological determinism. In "Sex in Education," Brackett shared these feminist frustrations, and first insisted that "woman is not merely a 'cradle'" then recognized that "all attempts to settle the question of her sphere by considering her as such . . . excite indignation," presumably justifiably so.

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<sup>122</sup> Edward Hammond Clarke, *Sex and Education, or A fair chance for the girls* (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Company, 1873). Clarke had long argued against women's higher education, claiming that they were emotionally and physically unsuited for it, particularly during menstruation. Many feminists raised objections to this work. Julia Ward Howe also edited a work, *Sex and Education* (Boston: Roberts) in response to Clarke in the same year. In fact, because Clarke's theory had been so influential, the newly established Association of Collegiate Alumnae (now AAUW) commissioned a study to combat claims of this sort -- nine years after Clarke's book had appeared. ACA surveyed over 2,000 college educated women asking them to assess their own health and well-being. Sixty percent said their education had no negative effects on them. See Roberta Frankfort, *Collegiate Women: Domesticity and Career in Turn-of-the-Century America*, (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 87-88.

[SexEd379] On this issue, Brackett again demonstrates that in today's terms she would be more aptly termed a "liberal" than a "maternal" feminist, because she states quite clearly that women's reproductive function does not and was not meant to limit them.

To God, the brain of a woman is as precious as the ovary and uterus, and as he did not make it impossible for her to think clearly when the uterus is in a congested state, . . . no more did he design that the uterus should not be capable of healthy and normal action while the brain is occupied with a regular amount of exercise. Such is our creed. [SexEd378-9]<sup>123</sup>

So then, although women's reproductive capacity may have been ordained by God, their intellectual ability was also part of his design; the two need not mutually exclude each other. Furthermore, women's physical difference from men is not meant to set them apart from men as rational agents in the world.

Strains of Brackett's idealism show themselves in this discussion in that she presents the person as a unified whole with aims and purposes beyond their physicality, which naturally imposes certain limits on them – regardless of their sex. Again, she rejects a view of women that relegates them to "merely so many material organs." The implication here, of course, is that, for many traditionalists, women's concrete, physical existence manifests only one part of their existence. But for Brackett women's intellectual/spiritual nature must also factor into "the woman question." She also questions thinkers who in her mind take only physiology into consideration when contemplating women's role in society. [SexEd382-3]<sup>124</sup> In both cases, Brackett is engaged in another version of her arguments against empiricism, objections that she also voiced during her normal school period. The issue under consideration is different, but the underlying philosophical reasoning is the same. Women are not to be seen simply as physical entities in the world, functioning as "cradles," as Brackett puts it. Instead, their bodies are to be seen as physical manifestations of the spiritual being that is at the core of each woman's selfhood. The body is important, to be sure; but the body isn't all that there is to any particular women's existence in the world.

The debate about female physiology and the accompanying need to protect women's health points to another matter that Brackett addresses: women's control over their sexuality in general. Even if women's

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<sup>123</sup> Brackett's bold declaration, "such is our creed," seems to me to add an irreverent twist to her statement, since this in effect puts feminism on par with religious faith claims. While such phrasing may have been more intuitive than intentional, it seems to me to be worth pointing out.

<sup>124</sup> She mentions Thomas Huxley and Jean Louis Agassiz by name in relation to these concerns.

health is put in jeopardy by increased activity in the public sphere (a claim that Brackett rejects), the solution to the problem should be determined by women, not men. By contemporary feminist standards, her stance on this issue is quite tame. Yet a full forty years before women's health activists like Margaret Sanger began their work, Brackett defines women's health as a gender issue. She notes that while men generally agree with Dr. Clarke's claims, women "condemn [them], denying his premises, disproving his clinical evidence, . . . and protesting against his conclusions." [SexEd390] The discrepancy between men's and women's perspectives on this matter, however, has its root, not in mere speculation by women, but in facts that they themselves have gathered, both in personal experience and in the medical field. And in Brackett's view, it is only appropriate that this should be the case. Women, after all, know what is best for their own kind. In short, for Brackett "this is a woman's question [and] women themselves are the only persons capable of dealing with it." [SexEd388]

With the home playing such a vital role for Brackett, it is no surprise that education about women's health and sexuality should begin here; furthermore that it should be the domain of the mother, the "first educator." When a girl begins to experience the "great excitation of the imagination" at puberty, Brackett maintains, it is "the duty of the mother, who is in this department the proper educator, to speak earnestly, fully, and plainly to the girl of the mysterious process of reproduction." [AmG61] Playing on the Victorian woman's greatest fears, Brackett paints a disastrous picture of the girl whose virtue has been tainted, not by bad moral character, but by a lack of knowledge. The girl whose mother ignores this part of her maternal duty, Brackett warns, will have only

a patched and medley knowledge . . . [that is] garbled and confused, [in which] the sacred seal of modesty [is] torn off, soiled with the touch of vulgar hands, defaced by the coarse jests of polite society, its sanctity forever missed. [AmG63]

In a sort of inverse parallel to her discussion of the over-valuing of women's bodies over their minds, Brackett notes here that her emphasis on sexual education is not meant to "quit the physical for the moral side" [AmG62] of girls' training. Rather, her intent is simply to encourage a valuing of the body as a part of the whole, because sexual education is the "ground where, more than any other, body and soul, matter and spirit, touch each other." [AmG62] By pointing to the intersection of mind with body in this way, Brackett

– again, demonstrating her idealism – hopes to prevent the neglect of the first and the denigration of the second.

Once mothers accept their daughters' sexual education as part of their maternal duty, girls will be fully educated, and thus show "less prudery and more real modesty." [AmG63] Yet modesty (which for Brackett is more like self-possession and self-respect than shyness about one's sexuality) is an important character trait that all girls should develop. In fact, she speaks of the dangers to girls who are too eager to display their sexuality. And these include not only practical matters, like not dressing warmly enough and wearing thin boots in order to "display to better advantage the well-turned foot." [SexEd381] Also at stake is girls' emotional well-being. One example in particular is Brackett's discussion of the damage that results when young women show too much devotion to older men whom they admire. Now, on first reading Brackett seems to be little more than the typical repressive victorian, fearful of anything that smacks of sexual attraction. Yet a closer look finds more going on between the lines than at first appears. In fact, Brackett may even be condemning men who "lead young women astray"; what today might even qualify as sexual harassment.

There are many men in middle life against whose character no whisper has ever dared to raise itself, men of culture and power, men of strong personal 'magnetism' . . . who often attract the most idolatrous admiration of young girls and young women. They may do this at first unconsciously; but they are pleased by it finally, and seem to enjoy being surrounded, as it were, by a circle of young incense-bearers. " [AmG68]

The fellows who attract such an entourage may see no harm in it, and the casual observer may agree. But for Brackett, this sort of interaction with women too young to determine their own path, yet too old to be satisfied with girlish occupations, results in real damage to the admirer. Brackett's language is quaint, but the reality she expresses is a contemporary one. Young women's spirit is only "half-conscious and just awakening" in this time of life; they are vulnerable and full of a longing that they do not understand. Brackett recognizes that it is normal for people in this stage of life to try to find an outlet for their unchannelled energies and half-conscious desires, but this becomes dangerous when a girl grows too devoted to a man she admires. She becomes unable to exercise the self-possession that Brackett so highly

values, as the adored older man's influence over her reduces her to "a most unnatural and morbid state."

[AmG69]

Brackett fails to describe exactly what happens to a young lady when she falls into this "morbid state." Yet it no doubt includes everything from forlorn sighs of unrequited love on the family veranda to sexual self-surrender to a man who wields his influence over her. Based on the tone of Brackett's discussion, I do not think it is overreaching to suggest it is the latter. What I believe she is trying to address here (albeit in terms so polite as to be vague) is emotional manipulation at best, sexual coercion at worst. After all, Brackett does not say that the man's character *is* good, only that no one has questioned it -- or has dared to question it. In addition, today's feminists have a whole host of terms and concepts to call on that Brackett was not at liberty to invoke. She describes a man with a sort of "magnetism" who simply is not aware of his own seductive power. Today's feminists might see him as a man quite aware of his power and even more willing to exploit it. Brackett describes the young women as spontaneously and voluntarily being drawn to this man. Contemporary feminists might see women who are unable to do anything other than "volunteer" to submit to his advances. Because of Brackett's restraint, it would be folly to speculate further than this as to her meaning. We can safely say, however, that, largely because the woman she is concerning herself with are young and inexperienced, and therefore lacking in full agency, she believed that the responsibility lay on the man to defuse the situation. A truly respectable man would not allow such attractions to develop. Instead he would "by the force of loyalty to the simple Right, persistently and quietly, . . . and effectually repel, all such tribute." [AmG69] The man who does not decline the attentions of young women, on the other hand "is responsible for much harm, and must answer for much unhappiness." [AmG69]

But, again, while the man with the magnetic personality bears responsibility for his actions, ultimately the solution lies in education. First, a mother must adequately teach her daughter, not only about the mechanics of reproduction, but about the emotional side of sexuality as well. If a girl "can go fearlessly to her mother with all her thoughts and fancies, foolish though they be . . . she is as safe, . . . as if fenced about with triple walls of steel." [AmG69] It is refreshing to note that Brackett seems to have carried out precisely this policy with her own daughter. While Hope was boarding with Eliza Sunderland's family, Brackett

made it clear that she was “not ignorant about the birth of children,” because she had all of her questions answered “from a very young age” and “*without hesitation.*”<sup>125</sup>

Brackett also held that a girl's education must be wide-ranging. Both her family and her teachers must help her build confidence in herself and her abilities. Then she will be less vulnerable to influence by others and will not be in danger of falling prey to those whom she sees as stronger than herself:

Make her feel that she is a responsible being, accountable only to God and her own rational judgment for her action; . . . give her such a mental training that she shall feel that she is capable of taking her life in her own hand. [SexEd382]<sup>126</sup>

In Brackett's view in everything -- from the earliest recognition of objects in infancy to the most complex of human relationships in adulthood -- education is key. For women, both the acquisition and the pursuit of knowledge has added import: it both frees individual women from their social constraints and brings women together in common cause. The first effect has been discussed fully above, the second, however, Brackett only mentions at the end of "Sex in Education":

One result is marked; from all sections of the country, women heretofore knowing each other only by reputation, or not at all, are being bound together by a common interest in a sense never before known . . . [SexEd390-91]

Yet achieving unity among women is a theme that runs throughout Brackett's career on both the practical and theoretical levels. In her normal school work and theory, as an NEA member, as a suffrage advocate, and in her writings, Brackett continually worked to heighten women's professional status, to impress upon women the importance of seeking goals of their own, and to encourage women to encourage and support each other -- as professionals, and more importantly as full human beings.

## ***Conclusion***

Many feminists in this period shared Brackett's concerns about women's role in society, of course. So in some sense, she could be seen as simply one member of a movement whose work was consistent with that

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<sup>125</sup> Brackett letters to Sunderland, January 14, 1888 and January 23, 1888, in Eliza Jane Read Sunderland Papers, Bentley Historic Library Archives, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor [emphasis in original].

<sup>126</sup> Here the discussion is about dress in particular as a form of displaying femininity, as well as a form of expressing sexuality.

of other liberal feminists of the nineteenth century. However, Brackett was not a feminist activist, but a feminist *theorist*. Furthermore, her solidly philosophical base makes her work one of the better examples of early feminist theory.<sup>127</sup>

Brackett's feminism informed her philosophy and vice versa. In her view, the clearly directed intellect could attain knowledge and thereby participate in Spirit's unfolding in the world. This has many implications for a Hegelian, of course, not the least of which is that, educated to the "logical" stage, the stage of true "Thinking," the individual is no longer bound to the merely sensible. This in turn means that he or she is able to conceive of Right, and thus can be a truly ethical member of society.<sup>128</sup> But as Brackett was well aware, often women could not participate in the process of attaining the knowledge necessary to become ethical in this sense. Therefore, she posited a theory of her own, specifically for and about women. Adhering firmly to her liberal feminist beliefs, Brackett demonstrated that, given the same educational opportunities, women could attain the same levels of understanding as men, and participate just as fully in the social order.

This is Brackett's contribution to the St. Louis movement. By translating Rosenkranz, a disciple who aimed to accurately present Hegel's pedagogical theory, she provided the closest facsimile possible of Hegel's own educational theory. Her translations were widely read and reissued several times. Thus educators throughout the U.S. were exposed to the Hegelian notion of individual knowledge as part of a greater, spiritual process that is the ground of all possible knowledge. But by applying this theory to women, Brackett established the theoretical basis for dissolving educational barriers to women. And women came to be seen as fully capable of initiation into this intellectual-spiritual process. They too were able to become active members of civil society and even of the state. The rather dusty and un-feminist notions that Brackett *should* have derived from Hegel about women's deficiencies were left aside. In their

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<sup>127</sup> Women like Julia Ward Howe, Elizabeth Peabody, and Ednah Cheney, while accomplished and learned, did not have the same sort of background in philosophy that Brackett and other St. Louis women do.

<sup>128</sup> See §209, Addition, *Philosophy of Right*.



stead were her own very feminist, very equitable ideas about women's right to education. This is what Brackett and her St. Louis colleagues agreed was the only form that a responsible idealist educational theory could take. And Brackett introduced her readers to precisely this feminist idealism. Her colleagues, Grace Bibb and Ellen Mitchell, shared her views, and their work is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Women's Philosophy in Classroom and Parlor

#### *Major, Minor, and Peripheral Figures in the Idealist Movement*

Blow and Brackett were exceptions to the rule as far as women of the St. Louis circle are concerned. Each of them was clearly active in the movement, and each published fairly major works, and philosophical works at that. Unfortunately, most other women in the movement fall short of attaining this level of achievement, publishing very little -- even less of which is philosophical -- even though they were often deeply involved in the movement on a practical level, organizing meetings and promoting American idealist principles in the public schools. No fewer than a dozen women fall into one or the other of these two categories. The majority, in fact, fall into both categories, and these I have called "peripheral" figures in the movement. They include Susan Beeson, Mary McCullough, Amelia Fruchte, Gertrude Garrigues, A.H. Blaisdell, Rebecca Hazard, Beverly Allen, and Caroline Lackland. Two other women published, but their works are either not original or not philosophical, so they too are considered only peripheral figures in the movement: Ella Morgan, a translator for *JSP* and Mary Beedy, a feminist and associate of Anna Brackett.

Two women who made more substantial contributions to the movement and whom I have therefore called "minor" figures are Grace C. Bibb and Ellen M. Mitchell, although each is given this higher status for very different reasons. Although Bibb didn't write as extensively, nor as philosophically as one might hope, she was clearly deeply involved in the movement, and verifiably so in both historical sources and material from the period. Furthermore, her published work has a feminist component, which demonstrates that the St. Louis movement and Concord School provided environments within which such ideas were welcome. Mitchell, on the other hand has a hazier image in the practical work of the movement. She did, however, produce some philosophical work and was acquainted with Soldan, Snider, Davidson, Brackett, and Bibb.<sup>1</sup> In addition, some of Mitchell's work also reflects feminist convictions and is therefore of interest from this perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> Mitchell acknowledges the men's influence on her thought in the preface to *A Study of Greek Philosophy*, (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Company, 1891), vi. The women she seems to have been associated with through a number of offshoots of the Philosophical Society.

### ***Women as a Force at Concord***

Perhaps the most important thing about these two groups of women is the role they played in the contest between St. Louis idealism and New England transcendentalism via the Concord School of Philosophy. As noted in chapter one, such a "school" had long been a dream of Emerson and Alcott. Yet it took Harris' administrative savvy to make it a reality. And as Pochman makes clear, despite Harris' admiration of those whom he considered his intellectual predecessors in Concord, his leadership was such that his theories prevailed, not those of the Transcendentalists, at the Summer School. As members of the large St. Louis contingent that is said to have travelled to Concord summer sessions, the women in this chapter most likely contributed to Harris' intellectual predominance. No doubt they were a receptive audience to him and other of their St. Louis colleagues in the School's sessions. In informal conversations outside of the lecture hall, too, they were likely to have propagated the theories they espoused in St. Louis.

While it may not be ideal to present these women and their work in such a hierarchical manner, for the purposes of clarifying the role each of them played and of assessing their various contributions, such a hierarchy seems to me to be a useful tool. With any luck, my readers will both understand my decision to take this approach and will appreciate the discussion that follows.

### ***Women and Women's Clubs in St. Louis***

As noted earlier, since women were not admitted to formal membership in the Philosophical Society, their participation in the St. Louis circle is difficult to determine. Yet occasional references to them in Harris' Record Book for the Society as well as historical sources make it clear that women did indeed attend meetings of this organization, some of them fairly regularly.<sup>2</sup> However, many of the offshoots of the Philosophical Society did grant women membership, the Pedagogical and Art societies in particular, and a

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<sup>2</sup> Beeson's and Beedy's attendance at a meeting of the Society appears in the Record Book of the Philosophical Society, p. 49 and 52. See Herbert Spiegelberg, transcription the Record Book of the Philosophical Society, Archives of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Denton Snider notes that Brackett, Beedy, Blow, and Fruchte were active in the Society in *The History of the St. Louis Movement in Philosophy*, (Chicago: Sigma Publishing, 1910), 34. Finally, Grace Bibb was active in the Kant Club. See William Hyde and Howard Conard, eds., *Encyclopedic History of St. Louis*, (New York: Southern History Company, 1899).

look at some of these groups gives us an idea of the level of participation of a number of women. In addition, as Forbes noted, women "began to see the possibility of their influence in this great movement, and the advantages of working together . . . [Therefore,] they soon began forming clubs [of their own] for study and self-improvement."<sup>3</sup>

Of course, this time period was one in which women's literary clubs and social circles were springing up throughout the country.<sup>4</sup> So there is nothing unique in the fact that the same was taking place in St. Louis. What is notable and important for the purposes of this study, however, is the way in which the women of the St. Louis movement used these organizations to facilitate their own work and thus help to give shape to early American idealism. We have already seen that Susan Blow's kindergarten teacher training and mothers' classes allowed her to develop intellectually. And Anna Brackett's apparent involvement with the rather radical St. Louis Woman's Club and Missouri suffrage organizations provided her with one avenue for working out the relationship between feminism and idealism. Both women later committed to writing what they culled from these forums and in doing so presented two very different views of the role and significance of idealism in America. Because the lives and works of other women in the St. Louis movement are so much more difficult to track than Blow's and Brackett's, however, casting the net wider and including a look at offshoots of the Philosophical Society as well as women's clubs will help us discover some of its more minor figures. In addition to identifying these women, I will discuss their significance to the movement and their philosophical contributions, to the extent that they engaged in philosophy.

### ***The Wednesday Club***

Many women who can only be called peripheral figures in the movement were members of the Wednesday Club. This organization, established by somewhat younger contemporaries of Blow and

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<sup>3</sup> See Forbes, 26:74.

<sup>4</sup> Women's *salon* discussions were a well-established tradition in Europe by this time, having emerged in France the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. See Renate Bridenthal, et al *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987], 251-258. In the U.S., however, the earliest and most famous example of such a group was Margaret Fuller's "conversations" in the late 1830s. After Fuller initiated this practice – and not without a great deal of controversy – the idea caught on and gained popularity. By the 1870s and '80s, women's clubs and parlor circles were the center of social activity for women, particularly in the country's growing urban centers. See Theodora Penny Martin, *The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs, 1860-1910* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1987], 6-7; 98-99, and Paula Blanchard, *Margaret Fuller* [Addison-Wesley, 1987], 144-53.

Brackett, may have been a continuation of the St. Louis Woman's Club, since that organization had held its meetings on Wednesday afternoons. However, the Wednesday Club's mission was clearly distinct from that of its predecessor, even if they were linked. It seems to have been largely a literary and social circle rather than one that addressed difficult social issues, which had been the focus of the Woman's Club. There is no record of the Wednesday Club prior to the early 1890s, but it is possible that the group had been established earlier. One woman's comment indicates that its founders may have delayed formal organization. Susan Beeson (1841-1930), a Wednesday Club member, correspondent of William Torrey Harris, and minor contributor to *JSP*, wrote on Club letterhead in 1892, "See, we show our name and are organized."<sup>5</sup> At the time of Beeson's writing, there were 175 "capable women" participating in the organization who discussed a number of "isms", none of which Beeson found herself in sympathy with, incidentally.<sup>6</sup>

### *Mary McCullough*

Since the only information available about the Wednesday Club is dated well after the departures of Brackett, Davidson, Harris, and Blow from St. Louis, as a group its contributions to the movement are not significant. Yet it is clear from the fragments at my disposal that many individual Club members had ties to the movement and tried to carry on its mission to a degree. Mary McCullough, Blow's student, and later rival for control of the St. Louis kindergarten program, was among the Wednesday Club's founders.<sup>7</sup> She exercised a great deal of authority as director of the kindergarten after Blow was nudged out of that position, and saw herself as continuing Blow's legacy. In this sense she represents an attempt to put Blow's understanding of idealism into practice. However, Blow thought McCullough misunderstood the kindergarten ideal and objected to her appointment as director of the kindergarten. In fact, Blow's failure to attend the kindergarten's twentieth anniversary celebration was due in large part to her dissatisfaction with McCullough's policies.<sup>8</sup> So it seems that, based on Blow's estimation at least, McCullough did not carry on the idealist tradition that had inspired so many St. Louis colleagues in the 1860s and '70s.

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<sup>5</sup> Susan V. Beeson letter to William Torrey Harris, March 16, 1892, in William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

<sup>6</sup> Susan V. Beeson letter to William Torrey Harris, May 10, 1892.

<sup>7</sup> Notable Women of St. Louis, 142-145.

<sup>8</sup> Van Ausdal, 264-5.

### *Amelia Fruchte*

Amelia Fruchte, another of the charter members of the Wednesday Club, was a student of Brackett's at the normal school,<sup>9</sup> later a public school teacher, and one of the first women to hold leadership positions in the Pedagogical Society, the Missouri State Teachers Association, and even the National Education Association.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to the relationship between Blow and McCullough, it isn't possible to determine whether Brackett approved of Fruchte's practical and theoretical approach to education. There is no evidence that Fruchte and Brackett continued to be associated with each other after Brackett left St. Louis, nor did Fruchte leave behind published work that might verify an affinity with Brackett's theory. Yet, based on profiles of Fruchte, she shared much in common with Brackett, in career focus and ideology, as well as in temperament. Like Brackett, Fruchte devoted her life to education. Unlike her teacher, though, she was content to remain in the St. Louis public school system where she taught for nearly fifty years.<sup>11</sup> Fruchte also had feminist leanings. An active member of the Missouri Woman's Suffrage Association,<sup>12</sup> she remained a suffragist all her life and was granted a place of honor on the stage at a 1919 suffrage meeting in St. Louis.<sup>13</sup> She was said to have been "somewhat masculine in her mental attitudes and activities" and to have loved a good argument, "especially with a man."<sup>14</sup> So, like Brackett, it seems that Fruchte was unafraid to challenge her male contemporaries when the occasion arose.

### *Gertrude Garrigues*

A minor contributor to *JSP*, Gertrude Garrigues, is one of the few women recorded as having made a presentation before the Wednesday Club. In a lecture on nihilism, she "defended Hegel from some of his so-called friends," among them Karl Marx. Harris' good friend and St. Louis circle member, Louis Soldan,

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<sup>9</sup> See St. Louis Public School Annual Reports, 1871-72, 34.

<sup>10</sup> According to *St. Louis and Missouri Women*, vol. 1, p. 74, Fruchte was the first woman to be president of the Missouri State Teachers Association. *Notable Women of St. Louis* indicates that she was vice president of the National Education Association in 1912, pgs. 70-75.

<sup>11</sup> *St. Louis and Missouri Women*, vol. 1, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> *Notable Women*, 70-75.

<sup>13</sup> *St. Louis and Missouri Women*, vol. 1, p. 74.

<sup>14</sup> *St. Louis and Missouri Women*, vol. 1, p. 74.

took part in this discussion and presented what Beeson thought was a fine analysis.<sup>15</sup> Garrigues must have been more prominent in the St. Louis circle than her few publications demonstrate, because she was among the handful of women suggested to lecture at the philosophy sessions of the 1893 World's Fair.<sup>16</sup> Garrigues was also a friend of Susan Blow, who in letters to Harris had mentioned study sessions the two had together.

#### *A. H. Blaisdell*

Another member of the Wednesday Club, A. H. Blaisdell, made a contribution to the history of the St. Louis movement apart from her formal involvement in that organization, namely a short work of fiction in which Snider was the hero, as "Professor Wolfgang," and Blow his leading lady as "Rose Duane." The story, *Our Odyssey Club*, presents Snider as an engaging and insightful lecturer, but one who is prone to be a bit too immersed in his own theories. Blow is portrayed as a bright young thing who is somewhat intrigued by Snider, but also critical of him. "He always attempts to infuse so much more into an author's work than the author meant to put there," Duane complains, "even to High Diddle-Didle or the story of Chicken-Licken." Blaisdell even has "Rose Duane" enact a Sniderian reading of the latter of these favorites:

This is her purpose [to warn others of the falling sky] . . . her high and noble purpose. . . . In this tale a careful analysis is necessary to bring all the motives to the surface. Exactly what violation of the code of ethics is hinted at in the falling acorn is not quite apparent. Yet so much is clear, Chicken-Licken *believed* that the sky had fallen; in other words, the whole ethical world was in conflict.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly enough, Blaisdell makes her hero considerably older than the heroine -- he is in his early forties, she only twenty-five years old -- even though in real life the two were nearly the same age. And despite the fact that Duane displayed some critical discernment in regard to Wolfgang's theoretical excesses, Blaisdell ends her tale with the two of them announcing their plans to marry.

Like most Wednesday Club members, Blaisdell's life and work, aside from this one book, is a blank slate. She published no other work and there is no record of manuscript holdings that provide more

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<sup>15</sup> Susan V. Beeson, Letter to William Torrey Harris, May 10, 1892. Note also that *Notable Women* indicates that Garrigues was one of the original members of the Wednesday Club.

<sup>16</sup> See Caroline K. Sherman, Letter to Thomas Davidson, October 27, 1892; in Thomas Davidson Papers, Sterling Library Archives, Yale University.

<sup>17</sup> See A.H. Blaisdell [pseud. Agnes Gragg], *Our Odyssey Club*, (Boston: D. Lothrop and Co., 1886), 20-21. There is no evidence of other writings by Blaisdell under her own name, or using the Gragg pseudonym.

information about her. While this work sheds a bit of light on the complex dynamics between Blow and Snider, it is a work of fiction and cannot be taken too seriously. At the same time, this one publication does show us connections between Blaisdell, Beeson (who in a letter to Harris announced Snider as the hero of the work),<sup>18</sup> Blow and Snider, and thus it demonstrates that strong links existed between some Wednesday Club members and their somewhat older St. Louis circle contemporaries.

### ***The Art Society***

The Art Society, of which both Blow and Brackett were members, provided another avenue for women to participate in the St. Louis movement. Wednesday Club members McCullough, Fruchte, Beeson, and Garrigues were members of this organization. Associates of Brackett committed to the feminist cause, Mary Beedy, Rebecca Hazard, and Beverly Allen were also Art Society members.<sup>19</sup> A pet project of Harris' to help enlighten and ennoble the citizenry of St. Louis via aesthetics, the Society carried out an important part of the movement's mission, and in it we have more evidence of the important role that *Bildung* played in the St. Louis project. Significantly, individual women within the Society also furthered idealism outside of their participation in the organization. McCullough's and Fruchte's contributions have already been outlined. Beeson and Garrigues wrote literary pieces for *JSP*, as did other Art Society members, Caroline E. Lackland and Ella S. Morgan. In the late 1870s, both Garrigues and Morgan were also occasional contributors to an educational and literary counterpart to *JSP*, *The Western Review*.

### ***Still on the Periphery: Ella Morgan and Mary Beedy***

Morgan's translations of Schelling on university education are a particularly valuable contribution to the movement. Unfortunately, other than an original short piece that is indicative of the St. Louis movement's understanding of idealism, "The Relationship of Politeness, Justice, and Religion,"<sup>20</sup> Morgan left no other published work to justify looking more closely at her thought. Mary Beedy made some slightly more

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<sup>18</sup> Susan V. Beeson, Letter to William Torrey Harris, January 14, 1887.

<sup>19</sup> Conard and Hyde's *Encyclopedic History* lists McCullough, Fruchte, Beeson, Garrigues, Beedy, Hazard, and Allen as being among the Art Society's membership. In *Yankee Teacher*, Leidecker also notes that Fruchte, Beeson, and Beedy were members of this group.

<sup>20</sup> *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 11:318.



substantial contributions, although less philosophical than Morgan's. Apart from her feminist activism, Beedy also wrote on women's higher education, authoring an essay published in Brackett's *The Education of American Girls*. Brackett thought very highly of Beedy's work, based on comments the former made in letters to Thomas Davidson,<sup>21</sup> although Beedy's quasi-sociological approach lacks relevance for today's reader. In addition, it is easier to verify Beedy's ties to the movement than it is Morgan's. Brackett, for instance, appears to have been on friendly terms with Beedy<sup>22</sup> who lectured in England on women's health, education, and voting rights for a period of time. Beedy returned to the United States sometime before 1887 when she was teaching at a private school in Chicago and was also a participant in Denton Snider's Literary School there.<sup>23</sup>

Had any of these women published more work, or work that was more philosophical, they would qualify as "minor" idealists, as their participation in the St. Louis movement is clear and often their connections to the original members of the circle quite strong. In addition, many of them followed the movement in its east-coast incarnation, attending the Concord Summer School of Philosophy faithfully it seems. The attendance of McCullough, Fruchte, and Beeson can be verified.<sup>24</sup> Yet, given their failure to demonstrate any strong theoretical understandings of the movement through published work, they must remain at the periphery of this discussion and other female contemporaries given more prominence for the time being.

### ***A Minor Figure: Grace Bibb***

Grace C. Bibb is the only woman said to have regularly attended meetings of the Kant Club, the seemingly elite sub-group of the Philosophical Society that devoted itself far more to Hegel than to Kant. In fact, it was this group that studied in depth Hegel's *Phenomenology* and *Science of Logic* and discussed Harris' work on Hegel, including his doctrine of reflection and his logic generally, about which Harris later

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<sup>21</sup> In a May 13, 1872 letter to Davidson, Brackett comments on "how well Miss Beedy is writing and how much!" She also notes that Beedy's contribution to *The Education of American Girls* was especially good in a March 1, 1874 letter.

<sup>22</sup> Brackett seems to have corresponded with Beedy, and at one point asked Davidson to forward a letter on to her. April 30, 1877 letter to Davidson.

<sup>23</sup> See Snider, *St. Louis Movement*, 532.

<sup>24</sup> *Notable Women*, indicates that Mary McCullough and Amelia Fruchte attended the Concord School (see 142-5 and 70-75, respectively). Susan Beeson is on the attendance list for 1879, as are Blaisdell, as well as minor Hegelians Bibb and Mitchell.

authored books. To have been included in this inner circle, Bibb clearly had to have had close connections to others in the St. Louis movement, and her later correspondence with Harris indicates that this was indeed the case. Bibb seems to have seen Harris as a mentor, updating him on progress in her professional life after she had left St. Louis in 1878. She also asked for his recommendations on reading material, sometimes borrowing from him a particular work that he had suggested. On occasion she would read and comment on a recent work of Harris' and at one time had lamented that she could not attend his upcoming lecture at Washington University.<sup>25</sup> Finally, Bibb used her connections with Harris to help advance the careers of her colleagues, although sparingly it seems; once she asked Harris to support a cousin in her application for an evening school program, another time she suggested a friend for a position in the St. Louis schools should a vacancy arise.<sup>26</sup>

Bibb clearly had strong associations with other members of the St. Louis circle. As a member of the Art Society<sup>27</sup> and Missouri State Teachers Association,<sup>28</sup> she is sure to have been associated with a number of the women listed above, as well as with the men in the movement. In fact, Bibb knew Blow well enough to correspond with her, at least "on a little matter of business."<sup>29</sup> Following the resignations of Brackett and Eliot from the Normal School, Bibb became assistant principal of the institution under Soldan.<sup>30</sup> Even though Bibb seems to have been in St. Louis only a short time before taking the assistant principal position, and thus would have crossed paths with Anna Brackett very little, these two seem to have known each other fairly well. And despite the fact that Brackett's departure from St. Louis seems to have been somewhat bitter, there is no evidence of any animosity between the two. A year after Brackett had left St. Louis, Bibb spoke of her "wise administration" of the normal school in a *Journal of Education* article.<sup>31</sup> In addition,

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<sup>25</sup> Grace C. Bibb, Letter to William Torrey Harris, April 11, 1880, in William Torrey Harris Papers, Archives of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis.

<sup>26</sup> Regarding Bibb's efforts to secure her cousin's admission into the evening school, see Bibb, Letter to William Torrey Harris, October 6, 1878. Regarding her attempt to help her friend get a teaching position, see Bibb, Letter to William Torrey Harris, August 20, 1875. Both letters are in the William Torrey Harris Papers, St. Louis Historical Society Archives.

<sup>27</sup> *Western Review*, 1:66-67, (1875).

<sup>28</sup> *Western Review*, 1:784, (1875).

<sup>29</sup> Bibb, Letter to William Torrey Harris, April 14, 1879.

<sup>30</sup> The St. Louis Public School Annual Report, 1872, p. 38, welcomes Bibb as the new assistant principal and indicates that she came from Chicago. She held this position until 1878 when she became dean of the normal department at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

<sup>31</sup> Grace C. Bibb, "Women as Teachers," *Journal of Education* (St. Louis), vol. 6, no. 1, p. 3 (January 1873).

Bibb seems to have completely relied on Brackett's paraphrase of Rosenkranz in her own teaching work and to have encouraged others to use it as well.<sup>32</sup> And Brackett maintained ties with Bibb, at least on some level; in a letter to Davidson, she mentions having heard from Bibb about her summer vacation plans and suggests that Davidson might see her while he is in Gloucester.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Bibb was a frequent contributor to both *The Journal of Education* (St. Louis) and *The Western Review* and even a correspondent of sorts for the latter, submitting regular reports on activities of the Normal School and Missouri State Teacher associations. As a member of the Normal School Association, she often presented papers at association meetings.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, Bibb reached a broader audience than did many of her female colleagues. This professional exposure may have been what led her to be offered the post of dean of the normal department at the University of Missouri at Columbia, a position that no other woman would hold until 1939, nearly seventy years after the department was established.<sup>35</sup> While Bibb held this position for only five years, apparently leaving because she chose to marry, it was work that she thoroughly enjoyed. She reported to Harris:

My work here proves thus far quite as pleasant as I could have hoped. . . . The president has very kindly assisted me in bringing the Department into order -- entirely at my own request, but says he regards each Professor as supreme within his own department.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Bibb's Work with and Relation to William Torrey Harris*

Given the tone of Bibb's letters during her tenure at the University of Missouri, her experience of being dean was rewarding until at least 1881 when there is a three-year gap in her correspondence with Harris. Just prior to this break in Bibb's communication, she had become increasingly involved in the National Education Association. In fact, under Soldan as president of the NEA, who had appointed Harris to the NEA's Council of Education, Bibb was invited to be a member of the Pedagogics and Colleges Committee,

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<sup>32</sup> In a letter to Harris, Bibb mentions a recent shipment of this work for use in the normal department at the University of Missouri, October 6, 1878 and October 22, 1879.

<sup>33</sup> Brackett's letter to Thomas Davidson, August 21, 1874.

<sup>34</sup> In the *Western Review* Bibb is reported to have presented the following papers to these groups: "Grammar as a Course of Study," [vol. 1, p. 324 (1875)]; "Individuality and the Public Schools," [vol. 2, p. 175-6 (1876)]; and "Culture," [vol. 2, p. 238-240 (1876)]

<sup>35</sup> See Jonas Viles, *The University of Missouri Centennial History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1839).

<sup>36</sup> Bibb, Letter to William Torrey Harris, October 6, 1878.

of which Harris was chair. This was an invitation that Bibb seemed predisposed to accept, although she did inquire into whether it was a working committee (as opposed to an advisory group, presumably).<sup>37</sup> Bibb's failure to write to Harris after 1881, then, may simply be a reflection of the fact that her career made heavy demands on her time. Then again, immediately after Bibb resigned from the university in 1883, the normal department was subsumed into the department of English where it remained until 1891. This suggests that, like Brackett, Bibb may have encountered difficulties in maintaining the purity of normal school education. The busy, but exciting atmosphere of which Bibb was a part early on may have changed over time, and higher level administrators' priorities differed from her own. As with other unanswered questions addressed in this study, this matter too defies coming to a conclusion about which was the case. In any event, Bibb admitted that she missed her career after she moved to Nebraska with her groom, Thomas Sudborough. When she resumed correspondence with Harris in 1884, she confided she was trying to use her time

. . . in literary work, missing as I do, very much, the school work which had become almost second nature -- so much indeed do I miss it that I think were exactly the right position offered, I should take it even though it involved absence from home part of the year . . .<sup>38</sup>

The "literary work" she chose to pursue at this time was educational theory, and the theorist was Rousseau, whose *Emile* she had taught while at the University of Missouri. As mentioned earlier, Harris and his colleagues were not fond of Rousseau.<sup>39</sup> Yet he seems to have suggested to Bibb that she might publish her work on this thinker in *JSP*, because in her second mention of Rousseau, Bibb expressed doubt that it would be suitable for this publication.<sup>40</sup> Only shortly after this acknowledgement, however, she wrote rather enthusiastically to Harris that she was certain she could present her work in the format he seems to have suggested, i.e., as a book for his International Education Series. This series of texts includes a number of works considered important at the time, including Blow's *Symbolic Education* and *Letters to a Mother* and Brackett's paraphrase of the *Pedagogics*. It would clearly have represented an intellectual

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<sup>37</sup> See Louis Soldan letter to William Torrey Harris, October 8, 1880 re Soldan's presidency of the NEA and his appointment of Harris, with Bibb listed as a potential committee member. See Bibb's letter to Harris inquiring into the nature of the committee, May 3, 1881.

<sup>38</sup> Bibb, Letter to Harris, January 28, 1884.

<sup>39</sup> See Blow's discussion of Rousseau as an atomist, and Harris' criticism of Rousseau and Pestalozzi regarding Object Lessons in Brackett's Normal School work, as discussed earlier in this study.

<sup>40</sup> Bibb, Letter to Harris, January 28, 1884.

victory for Bibb to have her name added to the IES list of contributors, and she acknowledges this forthrightly:

I think your Educational Series offers me the opportunity to do some work that I have had in mind for three or four years past . . . believe that I appreciate your kindness in this as I gratefully remember your encouragement of my literary efforts in former years.<sup>41</sup>

Yet seemingly without explanation, Harris appears to have abandoned the idea. Given Harris' own harsh criticisms of Rousseau, this is not altogether surprising, especially since Bibb's letters give no hint of distaste for or disagreement with Rousseau. It is possible, then, that Bibb's approach was not to Harris' liking, that she failed to deliver the same sort of condemnation of Rousseau that he himself would have produced. In any case, Bibb's last mention of the project was a rather apologetic inquiry into why she hadn't heard from Harris -- not to rush him, she assured, but simply in case her previous letter had been lost. Since only one-way correspondence -- from Bibb to Harris -- is available, there is no way to know for certain if Harris made an adequate response to explain the situation. Two things are clear, however: first, although Harris did issue a republication of Rousseau's *Emile* with a forward by a male contemporary, William H. Payne, there is no work about Rousseau by Bibb among the volumes in the International Education Series; second, Bibb's cautious request for an update on the status of her long-sought opportunity to publish a work on Rousseau was her last letter to Harris. Such an abrupt end to their correspondence suggests that the abandonment of this project may have created a rift between Bibb and her mentor.

The handful of articles that Grace Bibb left behind were largely literary analyses, such as an essay on the English novel and discussions of Thomas Arnold and William Thackeray, all of which were published in *The Western Review*. She also wrote a defense of normal school education for the journal *Education* which echoes many of Anna Brackett's views. For the purposes of this discussion however, two pieces in which she demonstrates her feminist leanings are of interest: "Lady Macbeth: A Study in Character" and "Women as Teachers."

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<sup>41</sup> Bibb, Letter to Harris, February 7, 1884.

*Feminist Writings: On Lady Macbeth*

Bibb's essay on Lady Macbeth at first appears to be a "difference" feminist defense of her character. Recognizing that previous scholars have interwoven into their condemnation of Lady Macbeth the charge that she is ambitious, Bibb excuses this character flaw as one that is simply an outgrowth of her feminine qualities. Bibb claims that "personal ambition is not by any means . . . a characteristic of women,"[290]<sup>42</sup> because women are incapable of pursuing their own interests. Lady Macbeth's aspirations are not for herself as much as they are for her husband; hers is a type of ambition, but one that is feminine in nature in that it is "in large measure unselfish." [291]

So it would seem that Bibb believes Lady Macbeth has been misunderstood in part because a male standard of behavior has been applied. She is to be judged for her evil acts, certainly, but differently than she would be judged if she were a man, because her motive is a peculiarly feminine motive: to achieve happiness not for herself, but for her husband. Furthermore, this feminine motive might be thought to arise spontaneously from Lady Macbeth's very nature, to simply be a peculiarly feminine form of evil. Yet Bibb draws on the same sort of "sameness" understanding of femininity that Brackett does in relation to women's role in the working world. In Bibb's view, the injustices done to Lady Macbeth simply because she was a woman explain her passion for more power for her husband, and thus for herself.

Lady Macbeth, Bibb notes, had aspirations for her husband in part because she could not have them for herself: "a separate royalty would have been as impossible in aspiration, as [in] reality." [290] And even though, as the granddaughter of the king, Lady Macbeth had as much claim to the throne as did Duncan, this "diadem, always just beyond grasping," [291] was withheld from her, simply because she was female. Even worse, the wrong she felt was allowed to ferment because, as a woman, she had nothing to divert her mind "from its contemplation by active duties of any wide range." [291] Finally, Lady Macbeth had no female friendships to rely on; she was a woman of a "strong nature [who] suffers in silence,"[291] isolated and alone in a world ruled by men over whom she could exercise no power . . . with the exception, of course, of her husband.

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<sup>42</sup> Citations in this section are from the *Western Review*, vol. 1 (1875)

Yet despite the constraints placed on her because of her gender, Lady Macbeth rebelled against her plight and thus made a departure "from the governing influences of her sex" in a manner that is decidedly masculine.[295] Women's crimes, Bibb claims, most often grow out of an emotional response -- passion, jealousy, or revenge -- to a concrete experience of wrong. Yet Lady Macbeth "resolves upon assassination as the most direct means to an end, calmly, deliberately, with no personal wrongs to avenge." [295] Bibb implies that this evidence of her determination is almost to be admired, particularly in contrast to her husband's lack of will. At the same time, her accompanying "subordination of the individual," namely herself, "to the family" via her attempt to aid in her husband's advancement "lends a color of womanliness to her association with the crime," [295] in Bibb's view.

Bibb's article on Lady Macbeth in *The Western Review* was followed in a later issue that same year by Snider's analysis of the play. Snider was the St. Louis circle member admired most for his literary analysis, of Shakespeare in particular. Offering a much more orthodox interpretation of the evils of Lady Macbeth, toward the close of his essay Snider declares outright that

the somewhat prevalent notion of making love the mainspring of Lady Macbeth's actions and of seeing in her the tender, devoted wife who committed the most horrible crimes merely out of affection for her husband is ridiculous and is, in my judgment, contradicted by the whole tenor of the play. . . . To be wife is clearly not her highest ambition, that she is already; but it is to be the queen. [609]

It is neither necessary nor appropriate in this discussion to argue Snider's point versus Bibb's. But it is important to note that Bibb's argument was somewhat more subtle than Snider seems to recognize. While she did claim that Lady Macbeth acted out of love, she does not mean to say that this is the same tender devotion that Snider implies. Bibb's argument is that Lady Macbeth's actions were due in large part to her derivative status. She was a wife and saw herself as such, but she could never be queen unless Macbeth was king. Bound to an understanding of herself as one with her husband, then, Lady Macbeth was driven to help him seek what he himself shrank from attaining. Despite Snider's harsh criticism of Bibb's perspective, she was not discouraged from making more attempts at literary analysis. In fact, this was the second of five other essays she wrote for *The Western*. As none of these are particularly feminist, and certainly not philosophical, they will not be discussed in this chapter, however.

*Feminist Writings: On Women as Teachers*

In a piece that is unquestionably feminist, and a tinge philosophical, "Women as Teachers," Bibb recognizes that "an essential element of the teacher's character" is sympathy,<sup>43</sup> and that this is a stereotypically feminine character trait. Yet sympathy does not amount merely to emotional connection with another nor to compassion toward them. For Bibb, broadly defined, sympathy includes the ability to transcend one's own experience and enter into a relationship of understanding with another. In her view "the truly educative mind possesses a peculiar power of placing itself inside the circle of another's consciousness" in order to instruct the student.<sup>44</sup> Many of the greatest educators -- Pestalozzi, Arnold, and Mann, for example -- possessed a sympathy of this sort, and for this reason were able to break down the barriers that often exist between teacher and student, which is really a barrier between mind and mind in the end. Given women's tendency to be better schooled in exercising sympathy, however, they are more likely to be able to meet "the sympathetic needs of the child," particularly in the primary grades.<sup>45</sup>

But Bibb insists that women are equally capable of teaching at the higher levels and of assuming administrative positions. In her view, women not only have the same degree of competency for high school teaching as men do, they are often also more responsible and their teaching methods just as philosophical.<sup>46</sup> Bibb recognizes that resistance to women teaching in the higher grades has been strong, yet she muses:

It would indeed be little wonder if woman were an instructive worker merely, what lesson have the cycles of her cathay taught her? To weave and spin, to keep strict guard upon the maids, to sit at home?<sup>47</sup>

While advances in women's education have been made in Bibb's view, the long history of encouraging women to remain secluded in the home continues to have its effects. Like Brackett then, Bibb would be better termed a "sameness" rather than "difference" feminist, as she believes that when women shy away

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<sup>43</sup> Bibb, "Women as Teachers," *Public Education Document*, 3. This essay was originally published in the *Journal of Education* (St. Louis) in 1873 and was made a part of the Public Education series, along with Brackett's "How not to do it: the Art of Questioning."

<sup>44</sup> "Women as Teachers," 3.

<sup>45</sup> "Women as Teachers," 3.

<sup>46</sup> "Women as Teachers," 5.

<sup>47</sup> "Women as Teachers," 6.



from or are rejected for teaching positions in the higher grades, social role expectations are at the root of the problem.

Despite increased educational access for women, there remain in Bibb's words, "influences affecting disadvantageously the intellectual conditions of women which the experimental opening of the doors of a few colleges will not remove."<sup>48</sup> Chief among such "influences" is parents' hesitance to provide their daughters with a solid education. Since girls and young women are not properly schooled, even the brightest among them produce few original thoughts. Instead, they engage in "idle re-discovery and valueless re-statement," because few even "know . . . where originality is no longer possible."<sup>49</sup> Even so, some women overcome a great number of obstacles, continue to grow intellectually, and thus are able to do their work in the schools well -- not merely "as well as a man, for there are many men . . . whose work would be a poor criterion for that of any woman of ability -- but absolutely well."<sup>50</sup>

Yet women who transcend the obstacles before them find themselves beset with constant fault-finding and charges that they are 'too set in their ways'.<sup>51</sup> This is particularly true for the few women who attain leadership positions. Bibb considers such criticism unjust, and points to a number of women educational administrators who have carried out their work with the greatest of success. In doing so, she invokes the name of the venerable Ralph Waldo Emerson who praised the St. Louis schools in which women held both teaching and leadership positions.<sup>52</sup> More important to this discussion, however, Bibb refers to the St. Louis normal school "whose plan and organization have been the work of a woman"<sup>53</sup> -- namely Anna C. Brackett -- and which

produced an army of young women, . . . who have carried into their work an exactness, a knowledge of the limits of methods, as well as of their use, a love of truth, *an enthusiasm*, to which we stand today deeply indebted and upon which we may rely as a material guarantee of future prosperity.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Women as Teachers," 6.

<sup>49</sup> "Women as Teachers," 7.

<sup>50</sup> "Women as Teachers," 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> "Women as Teachers," 8.

<sup>52</sup> "Women as Teachers," 8.

<sup>53</sup> "Women as Teachers," 9.

<sup>54</sup> "Women as Teachers," 9.

Brackett and others like her provide proof that women are competent to be administrators as well as teachers.

Bibb ends this article rather abruptly, making a plea for pay equity<sup>55</sup> and closing with a quotation from John Stuart Mill<sup>56</sup> in which he declares that women will never take interest in activities which it is not in their nature to do. As noted earlier, this article is of more value for what it tells us about Bibb's feminism than as evidence of her philosophy. Yet there are traces of St. Louis Idealism in this short piece. Like Brackett, Bibb sees education as a process of awaking the human mind to the truths that it is in its nature to discover. "All true education is subjective," Bibb declares, "the power is within the mind of the pupil; the work of the instructor is to excite dormant powers, to furnish avenues for the roused activities, and to guide these activities into the channels presented."<sup>57</sup> And like Blow, Bibb sees education as in part a replication of the human experience within each individual. The challenge the teacher faces is "to incite the intellectual and moral faculties to such growth that, by their absorption of the entire being, the lower and baser elements may die."<sup>58</sup> Yet, beyond these glimpses of two of the American idealism's educational doctrines, Bibb offers little philosophical insight, although her affinity with Brackett's feminism is worth noting.

### ***A Not-Quite-Major Figure: Ellen Mitchell***

Ellen M. Mitchell was born in 1838 to Edwin R. and Harriet H. Smith in Geddes, New York, near Syracuse. Little information about her early life or education is available, but we do know that she was educated at Homer Academy in upstate New York, which still exists as a private high school. At the time Mitchell attended the Academy it was considered an institution of higher learning and offered a teacher training program. She is likely to have been a student in this program, since she was teaching in Cairo, Illinois by 1863. In Cairo, Mitchell lived with her uncle and his family until 1865 when she went to St. Louis to pursue a writing career, using the pen-name, Ella Ellwood.

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<sup>55</sup> Bibb reports that men earned \$47/month, while women earned \$34/month. See "Women as Teachers," 11-12.

<sup>56</sup> Like others in the St. Louis and Concord movements, Bibb drew from sources other than Hegel. Kies also draws on Mill, quoting him in *The Ethical Principle*, as I show in chapter five.

<sup>57</sup> "Women as Teachers," 2.

<sup>58</sup> "Women as Teachers," 2-3.

Mitchell seems to have had a troubled personal life. She had been married, and quite likely widowed or divorced, by the time she finished at Homer Academy, graduating as "Ellen M. Slade," not her maiden name "Smith," nor as "Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ Slade" (with husband's name in the blank) as was the convention in identifying married women during this time period.<sup>59</sup> In addition, during her stay in Cairo she was plagued by scandal, as she had fallen in love with Joseph W. Mitchell, a man only recently separated from his wife. Although the two sought refuge in St. Louis where they had arranged to meet in order to escape Ellen's disapproving relatives, the scandal followed them there when Mitchell's wife tracked him down and sued for divorce, charging him with abandonment and adultery. Joseph Mitchell, a lawyer, counter-sued, claiming his wife had in fact abandoned him. In the court case that ensued, a number of his intimacies with Ellen were printed on the front page of a local paper.<sup>60</sup>

Interestingly enough, both the court case involving the divorce and the media's treatment of it became an interrogation into Ellen Mitchell's character. In the newspaper, she is alternately referred to by her pen-name, Ella Ellwood and mockingly called "the poetess", "Sappho", and "Mitchell's Angel." The reporter descended upon juicy tidbits divulged in the maid's testimony such as Joseph Mitchell's late night visits to Ellen's boarding house and the tell-tale discovery of a pair of suspenders among the bed linens during a routine cleaning one morning.<sup>61</sup> Interesting too is the fact that the newspaper so eager to recount these lurid tales was *The St. Louis Democrat*, a competitor of the newspaper Ellen Mitchell is said to have written for as "Ella Ellwood," *The Missouri Republican*. The case is simply listed among other legal decisions in the *Republican*, with no mention of Ellen made whatsoever.<sup>62</sup>

It is difficult to determine how this scandal affected Ellen Mitchell, particularly regarding her relationships with others in the St. Louis circle. Her name is absent from the many lists of teachers available in the public school reports and, based on court records of the divorce proceedings, Mitchell's sole

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<sup>59</sup> Homer Academy college catalogue for 1859, made available by the Cortland County Historical Society.

<sup>60</sup> Information about the divorce scandal is from records of the St. Louis Civil Courts, case #3724, which includes testimony of Mary A. Mitchell, Joseph Mitchell's estranged wife; Wade L. Smith and Anna Smith, Ellen's uncle and aunt; and Amanda Williams, the maid in Ellen's boarding house. My thanks to Melvina Conley, Archivist, 22nd Judicial Circuit of Missouri, St. Louis, for her good-natured help in finding this information.

<sup>61</sup> *St. Louis Democrat*, May 17, 1867.

<sup>62</sup> *Missouri Republican*, May 17, 1867.

focus while in St. Louis was on writing fiction and poetry.<sup>63</sup> It is likely, then, that when she left Cairo, Illinois, she had already decided to abandon school work altogether. She had given very short notice that she was leaving, no more than a day or two, and she left her teaching post in the middle of the school year.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, even if she had considered teaching an option should her writing career not prove lucrative enough, prejudice against her as a "marked woman" after the divorce scandal may have meant the classroom could no longer be an option for her. Harris *was* a progressive thinker. In fact, he had dismissed one woman's charge that his advanced philosophical views fostered an environment in which her husband, a teacher on Harris' staff, was encouraged to have an affair.<sup>65</sup> But it is likely that even he would have shied away from hiring someone already plagued by such a scandal to be a new teacher.

#### *Mitchell's Role in St. Louis*

Mitchell's name does not appear among any of the lists of members of the major organizations connected to the St. Louis circle. Since she was no longer teaching after 1865, this is not particularly surprising. After all, as we have seen, for many women teaching was the main thoroughfare via which they reached the philosophical world in St. Louis. Yet it is a bit disappointing that no mentions are made of Mitchell in available reports on other offshoots of the Philosophical Society -- the Kant Club or Art Society, for example. Nor do we see her in records of or reports on the suffrage movement in Missouri, even though she indicated that she was pro-suffrage in the *Women's Who's Who* of 1914-15. Mitchell was also involved in the New England Woman's Club later in life, one of the leaders of which was suffrage activist Julia Ward Howe.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> After the divorce, Ellen took the name Mitchell in both personal and professional life. In fact, I have been unable to unearth any of the work she wrote as "Ella Ellwood." Even the earliest pieces of her published work -- two 1871 short stories in *The St. Louis Ladies' Magazine* -- bear the name Ellen M. Mitchell. The *Encyclopedic History of St. Louis* (Hyde and Conard, 1344), lists her as the editor of *The West*, another short-lived periodical (1870-71), under the Ellwood pseudonym. Unfortunately, this publication is no longer extant. Her later work bears the name of Mitchell, however, and is absent any efforts in poetry or fiction. It isn't possible to determine whether the divorce scandal's disclosure of her identity is related to her shift from creative to expository writing, but she clearly abandoned the Ellwood name, and perhaps the persona that went with it, shortly after this incident.

<sup>64</sup> This is indicated by testimony of Ward and Anna Smith in the divorce case.

<sup>65</sup> Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher*, 353.

<sup>66</sup> Mitchell seems to have been fairly close to Howe and gave a memorial address to a women's organization after Howe's death. See Julia Ward Howe Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College.

Still it is clear that Mitchell had connections to the movement. A group in which she and her husband seem to have been central figures, the Pen and Pencil Club, was reported on regularly in *The Western Review's* "Current Notes" section. The club met periodically in the Mitchell home, and Ellen Mitchell made at least two presentations to the group, one on DeQuincey, the other on Elizabeth Barrett Browning.<sup>67</sup> While it is not clear how many of the St. Louis movement's inner circle participated in the activities of this group, Grace Bibb seems to have attended its meetings, since she often submitted the updates of the group's activities to *The Western*. The "Current Notes" section of this publication served, in large part, to promote the St. Louis movement and its participants, so, Bibb's favorable reviews of Mitchell's lectures on both occasions is somewhat predictable. Yet one would hope that Bibb's judgment of her colleague's presentation on DeQuincey as "one of the most enjoyable of the season," was not flattery only but represented an honest assessment of Mitchell's ability.

Other than this evidence of Mitchell's link to the St. Louis circle and her contributions to *JSP* after both she and Harris had left St. Louis, she is virtually absent from the philosophical picture here. This may be partly due to the fact that, like Brackett and Bibb, Mitchell was originally from another part of the country and had a limited stay in St. Louis. However, in the preface to her book on Greek philosophy, Mitchell mentions "a little band of women [that] used to assemble every week to study and discuss the problems of philosophy," of which she was the leader.<sup>68</sup> Records to verify this circle's existence are not extant. Yet, it is worth speculating about what the meetings of this group suggests about the relationships among women of the St. Louis circle. Were Bibb, Blow, Brackett, and others members of this group? Or did the idealist women under discussion here each attract their own following, and thus was Mitchell's group one of many in the city, each led by a different woman? These questions may be unanswerable but the possibility that the St. Louis women met and worked out philosophical problems as a group is important to keep in mind.

### *Work in Denver and Syracuse*

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<sup>67</sup> *Western*, 1:395 and 1:189, respectively (1875).

<sup>68</sup> Mitchell, *A Study of Greek Philosophy*, (Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Company, 1891), v.

By 1879, Mitchell had relocated to Denver, Colorado, where she would remain for the next fifteen years and later take a faculty position at the University of Denver, lecturing in philosophy. Mitchell made the same sort of intellectual connections in Denver that she had in St. Louis, and referred to her leadership role in that city's Kant Club for women. While today no evidence of a Kant Club exists, Mitchell was an active member of the Denver Fortnightly Club (1882-97), a women's discussion group for which records are available.<sup>69</sup> Archival material shows that Mitchell was indeed an active member of the Fortnightly Club, chairing a number of committees over the years, holding the vice presidency for a term, and presenting a number of papers. While the papers themselves are no longer extant, their titles provide us with at least a sense of Mitchell's intellectual focus. Of importance to our discussion are her lectures on the philosophy of history in the 1882-83 season; philosophy of art in 1883-84; political ethics in 1889-90; transcendentalism in 1891-92; and Phidias and Plato in 1893. These presentations indicate that Mitchell carried her St. Louis idealism with her to Denver and promoted it there. Perhaps more important in regard to this study, Mitchell introduced *women* to idealist thought. It is possible that Mitchell and Kies were associated with each other during this period. Both had been attending the Concord School by this time, and Kies was teaching relatively nearby in Colorado Springs in 1882/3-1884/5. Mitchell's lectures on the philosophy of history in 1882-83 and her later lecture on political ethics in 1889-90 (the period of time during which Kies would have been beginning to research and write her book *The Ethical Principle*) suggests that they were working on many of the same issues, and perhaps even working *together* on these issues.

Yet unlike many of her contemporaries, Mitchell's philosophical effort was not confined to the relatively informal forum of women's groups, nor even to the elementary or high school classroom.<sup>70</sup> In fact, Mitchell is the only woman in the St. Louis branch of the American idealist movement who taught philosophy at the college level. Bibb was the first woman dean of the normal department at the University of Missouri, but Mitchell's appointment was as a lecturer in the history of philosophy, which, as mentioned above, she held at the University of Denver between 1891 and 1894.

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<sup>69</sup> I must thank my good friend, Glynis T. Hawkins of Denver, for her expert sleuthing to discover this material in the Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

<sup>70</sup> She did teach in a Denver high school in the late 1880s, however. City Directory of Denver, 1880-1888.

Based on the information currently available about her life and work, Mitchell's Denver years were her most active, philosophically speaking. Prior to her university appointment, she authored two articles in *JSP*. She then published her *Study in Greek Philosophy*. At the University, Mitchell was a lecturer in the history of philosophy. While there are no archival holdings to verify whether her courses reflect a strong influence by Hegel, her *Study of Greek Philosophy* certainly demonstrates her Hegelianism, so much so as to be nearly a synopsis of the Hegelian point of view. At the same time, at the University of Denver Mitchell was also among a handful of professors to offer a series of special lectures, which, again, based simply on the lecture titles, seems to have been an original set of presentations. This series consisted primarily of literary analysis, of Shakespeare in particular. The series then culminates with a summary lecture entitled "The Philosophy of Literature."<sup>71</sup>

Given the fact that she credits, among others, Snider with influencing and supporting her academic work, it is not surprising that Mitchell focused heavily on literature at this stage in her career. Snider, after all was devoted to literature and considered a master of literary analysis by his colleagues. In addition, as noted earlier, distinctions between the literary and the philosophical were more fluid during this period than they are currently. Mitchell and her colleagues, then, would have seen such work as legitimately within the philosophical realm, as is particularly evident from the courses of lectures offered at the Concord Summer School of Philosophy . . . and Literature, as it was officially named. And Mitchell, along with a number of other women idealists, was an active Concord School participant. Beeson, McCullough, Fruchte, and Bibb, as well as Blow and Kies were also known to have visited the Concord sessions for at least one season, though quite likely more, given the high numbers in attendance and the enthusiastic support the St. Louis set gave to the program overall. But Mitchell stands out as one of the few women, and to my knowledge the only woman of the St. Louis circle to have lectured at Concord.<sup>72</sup> Her lecture, "Friendship in Aristotle's

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<sup>71</sup> University of Denver college catalogues, 1890-1894, in special collections of the University of Denver library.

<sup>72</sup> Harris had invited Blow to be a Concord lecturer, but she declined. This is probably due to her illness with Graves disease at the time. See Blow's letters to Harris, April 4, 1886 and May 1, 1886, from Susan Blow Papers, Archives of the St. Louis Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

Other women who lectured at the Concord School are: Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Julia Ward Howe, and Ednah D. Cheney -- all fairly frequently -- along with Caroline Sherman and Amelia Hathaway. Unfortunately the woman who chronicled the accomplishments of the School omitted Mitchell from her list. See Sara A. Underwood, "Sketches of Concord Philosophers," *Belford's Monthly*, vol. 10, no. 5 (April 1892), reprinted in Kenneth Walter Cameron, *Concord Harvest*, 337. However, Mitchell is listed on the 1887 program and her lecture was reviewed in the papers.

Ethics," received favorable reviews in the newspaper the next day. The exact text that Mitchell used for this presentation is not available; however, following Harris' lead, Concord School speakers often wrote their own synopsis of their lectures to submit to the press. Luckily, in this particular case, Mitchell too seems to have followed this procedure. While the lecture consisted of a general overview of the treatment of friendship in ancient Greece, it also contains a feminist twist that is of interest for the purposes of this study, and therefore is discussed below with other of her works.

Mitchell left Denver in the mid-1890s and returned to Syracuse where she lived with her aging mother. Now nearing sixty years old, Mitchell was considered a wise older woman and had a fairly large following who attended her women's Round Table discussions.<sup>73</sup> By this time her lectures were almost chiefly literary, perhaps partly by choice, but perhaps also based on the interests of her audience. Local newspapers often boasted of Mitchell's accomplishments, both within Syracuse and beyond when she gave lectures in Boston or New York City. I have yet to determine whether Mitchell's sphere of influence intersected with Blow's or Brackett's during this period. Geographically, the three were once again in relatively close proximity to each other: Blow was now in Cazenovia, and at times in New York City for speaking engagements, and Brackett was in New York City. But there is no evidence to suggest that the three were in contact. In any case, Mitchell had settled into yet another comfortable niche and remained there until her death in 1920 at the age of 81 years old.

### *Philosophical and Feminist Work*

Mitchell published a fair amount of material, including her *Study of Greek Philosophy*, discussed below; literary analyses of Dante, Faust, and Homer; and a booklet entitled, "The Hidden Soul of Harmony," which aims to be literary analysis but really amounts to an inspirational text. She also published two articles in *JSP*, as well as two lectures given before the congresses of women in Chicago and Baltimore: "A Plea for the Fallen Woman" and "A Study of Hegel." Finally, Mitchell was co-editor of a German-English pronunciation guide.

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<sup>73</sup> From Onondaga County Historical Society clippings file, giving reports of Mitchell's lectures.



### Mitchell in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*

Mitchell's contributions to *JSP* include a critique of Schopenhauer, entitled "The Philosophy of Pessimism" and a Hegelian interpretation of Plato, "The Platonic Dialectic." A reading of "The Philosophy of Pessimism," shows Mitchell to share Blow's philosophical views. In this short essay, she gives a critique of Schopenhauer,<sup>74</sup> whom she believes has created a system in which the choice between negation and affirmation lies solely with the individual. This renders genuine Being absent of will; thus, there can be no Absolute to ground reality. Pessimists like Schopenhauer have established "an irrational unconscious impulse" as the supreme force in life. Much like Blow's criticism of Eastern thought, Mitchell declares that Schopenhauer's ideas present a vacuous and futile philosophy, destined in the end to nihilism. Thankfully however, because of its inherent flaws, pessimism's influence will be limited:

What is the future of pessimism? . . . We have but to see how it contradicts itself, how it distorts . . . the purest and highest of all spiritual forces -- love. . . Standing halfway between realism and positivism, pessimism merely proves how impossible it is to banish from thought that Divine Idea of the Absolute which has been the strength and consolation of man throughout the ages.<sup>75</sup>

It is clear from the opening of Mitchell's article on the Platonic dialectic that she has been well steeped in Hegelianism. In fact, much as is the case in her volume on Greek philosophy, this article amounts primarily to a Hegelian reading of the Platonic dialogues.<sup>76</sup> While Mitchell demonstrates her familiarity with both Hegel and his nineteenth century interpreters in this short essay, again there is little here that could be called original. As a distillation of Hegel's thought for more popular consumption, it may have served a purpose in its day, however, and given its brevity this may have been its primary intent.

### The Study of Hegel

Mitchell's lecture, "A Study of Hegel,"<sup>77</sup> can be counted as a success on two fronts for the purposes of this discussion. First, it demonstrates that she had a respectably clear understanding of Hegel's thought.

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<sup>74</sup> Blow also expressed distaste for ideas that leaned toward nihilism. Mitchell also discusses Hartmann in this essay. Yet since this is only a very brief part of the article and Schopenhauer is a more important figure in philosophy today, I have not included this section of her essay in my discussion.

<sup>75</sup> *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 20:194.

<sup>76</sup> This essay was reprinted in *A Study of Greek Philosophy*.

<sup>77</sup> See "A Study of Hegel," presented to the Congress of Women in Baltimore, 1884, (n.p., n.d.). Citations giving page numbers of the printed version of the lecture will follow quotations.

Second, the venue at which it was presented, the 1884 Congress of Women in Baltimore shows us that, like Blow and Brackett, Mitchell made philosophy accessible to women. Blow's kindergarten theory was intertwined with discussions of the nature of the soul and the structure of the universe. Brackett's advocacy of higher education for women was justified by Hegel's philosophical system as she understood it. Written by women and primarily *for* women, the works of both thinkers introduced female readers to the world of ideas -- albeit in a somewhat clandestine fashion, particularly in Blow's case. Mitchell participates in this project as well. In "A Study of Hegel," she too presents philosophy to women who might not otherwise have encountered it. At the same time, she stands apart from Blow and Brackett in that she does so without subterfuge. Hegel is her topic, and an overview of Hegel's thought is what she gives.

Since in printed form Mitchell's presentation is only seventeen pages long, it is not surprising that it doesn't address any one aspect of Hegel's thought in depth. Yet it does touch on a number of matters that were of concern to Hegel: nature, art, and religion among them. More significantly, it lingers on topics that were considered important by Harris and others in the St. Louis movement. Nearly six pages, for instance, are devoted to the relation of mind to nature, subject to object.[2-5; 10-11] Mitchell follows a quotation from Hegel on this topic with an explanation of her own:

We communicate with the outward world through the organs of sense; but the impressions received by this means are confused and unrelated, and do not of themselves constitute knowledge, until they have been referred to the unifying power of thought. [2]

Mitchell continues by trying to demonstrate that there is a unity behind all finite objects that makes them recognizable to us. Yet she leans toward subjective idealism on this point, and is thus in danger of distorting Hegel's thought. She asks, "What is it that enables me to compare the separate impressions produced yesterday and to-day, discovering an identity underneath differences?" and offers her own answer, "thought, the thinking ego, something not given by sense, which remains steady amid the flux of impressions." [2-3] Unfortunately, given the quick overview that Mitchell provides, she doesn't offer more clarity on this matter. But she seems to depart somewhat from St. Louis Hegelianism, particularly that of Blow who was very aware that the mind must not be said to stand apart from the world as Mitchell here

implies. Instead, for Blow sense impressions themselves are unified in the Absolute; it is not merely the individual human mind, but the underlying structure of the universe that makes sense data cohere.

Also interspersed throughout this essay are references to another matter that was of concern to Harris and his followers: the relation of the individual to society. [5-6; 11-12; 15] In line with her colleagues, Mitchell maintains that an isolated individual existing apart from the social order is an impossibility, "an absolute non-entity." [5] In fact, social institutions play a critical role in individual self-determination in Mitchell's view:

I must lose this single, separate self of mine in the larger self of the family, of the state, of the race in order to attain spiritual growth and development. The social institutions that surround me, instead of limiting my freedom, enable me to transcend all that is narrow and selfish, to identify myself with other human beings and make their life my own. [6]

Here we can see the separate emphases of Blow and Brackett in combination. Blow's early childhood education theory relies heavily on children's incorporating previous human achievements into their own sense of selfhood. Brackett favors setting aside individual eccentricities in favor of shared social values. Mitchell, in this brief statement of the relation between self and society, unites the two. Furthermore, she doesn't lapse into a misunderstanding of Hegel as she does on the matter of the relation of mind and nature, above.

Finally, as is also true of Blow and Brackett, Mitchell makes her own critiques of overly empirical methods of inquiry along the way. [8, 9] However, these consist of even briefer statements that give little sense of whether Mitchell shared the strong convictions about this matter that Harris and Blow held. Mitchell's clearest statement on this point is simply this: "The spirit that works through nature first attains true freedom, conscious individuality in man. This is a result which it is impossible for materialistic theories to explain . . ." [8] Unfortunately beyond this, she relies on Caird's commentary on the matter, quoting him at length. By doing so Mitchell again points to her tendency to rely on secondary sources rather than to develop her own thoughts on philosophical problems.

Interestingly enough, Mitchell makes only one reference to the educational process, although she attaches it more closely to Hegel's thought than either Blow or Brackett do. "Mind itself," she declares, "must pass through a process of development before it reaches what Hegel calls universal or rational self-

consciousness." [9] So despite the fact that Mitchell was fairly removed from education for a number of years, she seems to have been acquainted with the American idealist understanding of its theoretical grounding. At the same time, she herself did not make educational theory a priority. In this sense, she stands apart from Blow and Brackett and also represents another approach to interpreting Hegel.

Mitchell's essay makes frequent references to interpreters of Hegel, such as Caird, Stirling, Green, and of course, Harris. In the positive sense, this shows that she kept abreast of the literature and was able to integrate it into her own thought. Negatively speaking however, this belies Mitchell's tendency toward an over-reliance on the thought of others. One damning example is the fact that Hegel's famous claim "the real is rational" she attributes not to the German thinker, but to Caird, his interpreter. [2]

Finally, and a step removed from the essay itself, the very existence of this work speaks of Mitchell's fairly close working relationship with William Torrey Harris. On two occasions she refers to Harris' Concord School lectures. [7, 14] She also directly acknowledges Harris' influence within the text of the essay, saying he is the one "to whom I with many others am largely indebted for any knowledge I possess of Hegelian philosophy." [14] Clearly such a public statement of confidence in and reliance upon Harris speaks to a close working relationship between the two. In addition, Harris must have had some level of appreciation for Mitchell's abilities as demonstrated by this booklet, because he valued it enough to keep it as a part of his library until his death.<sup>78</sup>

### A Study of Greek Philosophy

Mitchell's most philosophical work, *A Study of Greek Philosophy* (1891), was a product of her work with women's study groups over the course of time. The bits and pieces of evidence that exist about her presentations to these groups show that when not addressing women's issues or venturing into political philosophy, as was the case in her presentations to the Denver Fortnightly Club, Mitchell explicated the Hegelian view on the Ancients, their patterns of thought, and their applications to the modern situation. It is

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<sup>78</sup> The copy of "A Study of Hegel" available to me was a gift to Brown University from Harris' library, given by his children after his death.

likely to have been at the Concord School that she drew her notes from these lectures together and compiled her most ambitious work.

Yet there was a fundamental problem with this work, and one that goes right to the core of a divide that still exists in philosophy today. Mitchell's *Study* was a popular piece, which drew heavily on Hegel and Zeller. In fact, the work relied so heavily on these two authors as to be nearly a paraphrase of their ideas. At least one reader noted that this work was less than groundbreaking scholarship and wrote a condemnatory review of it in *The Philosophical Review*.

William A. Hammond (1868-1938) criticized the work as one that "smacks strongly of dilettantism," so much so that "it is unserviceable for pedagogical purposes."<sup>79</sup> He faults Mitchell for relying too heavily on secondary sources rather than offering her own interpretations. It seems that Mitchell's "*Study*" of *Greek Philosophy*, as he referred to it, didn't make the cut, as such, because it "presents nothing new in matter or original in treatment."

In Mitchell's defense, while she falls short of sharp insight in this volume, she does not claim originality, but rather acknowledges her "general indebtedness to Zeller and Hegel" for her interpretation of the Greeks:

I have consulted all the accessible authorities, but have relied chiefly on the histories of Greek philosophy by Zeller and Hegel. The greater part of Zeller's work is to be found in an English translation, but not that of Hegel, with the . . . exception [of Harris' translations of Hegel on Plato and Aristotle].<sup>80</sup>

It is significant that Hegel's *History of Philosophy* was not to appear in English translation until the year after Mitchell's *Study* was published, 1892. Keeping this in mind, Mitchell does present much that is "new" to the reading public that is unable to study Hegel's work in German. Furthermore, through a bibliography, which precedes the main text of the book, Mitchell both provides her readers with other sources to consult and informs them of thinkers other than Zeller and Hegel who influenced her thought on this topic.

Yet Hammond's criticism points to a great philosophical divide. Twenty-three years her junior, Hammond was an up-and-coming academic philosopher who was to become a professor at Cornell. His own book on Plato's theory of virtue in the third and fourth books of the *Republic* was published in the same

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<sup>79</sup> William A. Hammond, review of *A Study of Greek Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Review*, 1:211-13 (1892).

<sup>80</sup> Mitchell, *A Study of Greek Philosophy*, (Chicago: S. C. Griggs and Company, 1891), vi.

year that his review of Mitchell's *Study* appeared in *PR*. His was the new, young class of thinkers ushering in the era of philosophy as a profession. Mitchell was a member of an earlier class of philosopher-practitioners who tied ideas to action, theory to practice. Hers was a waning ideal: that of the public intellectual for whom contemplation was an avocation, not (necessarily) tied to their livelihood, and certainly not divorced from everyday life. His was the ascending vision of what philosophy was to become: a well-defined discipline, insulated from the outside world within the halls of the academy.

So the divide between Mitchell and Hammond was a multi-layered one. In part it was a function simply of the age difference between the two and their differing understandings of what philosophy was, is, and was to become. Hammond later became an active member of the American Philosophical Association, presenting a paper the first annual meeting in 1902. In part, the divide was a product of the disjunction between theory and practice within the discipline, which was becoming more prevalent in this period. In Mitchell's understanding a dynamic, engaging philosophy that grew out of her work with women, whether in discussion groups or in activist circles, was a perfectly natural and intellectually sound entity. Hammond may not have recognized her work with women's groups as "philosophical" at all. Finally, the divide was an outcome of the increased emphasis on professionalism within academic philosophical circles. The Transcendentalist ideal that Mitchell emulated, that of the armchair philosopher who possessed both breadth of knowledge and depth of insight, was becoming less and less acceptable within academic circles. Branches of thought once considered to be under the rubric of philosophy – anthropology, psychology, sociology, and political science – had already begun to break off from philosophy proper and claim an intellectual turf of their own. Philosophy was becoming extremely serious about itself as it worked to become distinct from the new social sciences, while the social sciences did the same.

Unfortunately, Mitchell ended up crossing the road at just the wrong time. Just over fifteen years earlier, George Sylvester Morris had published a paraphrase of Hegel's ideas in *The Philosophy of the State and of History*, and he was applauded for doing so. Three years before Mitchell's *Study* was published, Kies compiled Harris' lectures and essays, and she too was praised. But Mitchell was off, both in her timing and in her estimation of the audience she was writing for. The women's groups she had spent so much of

her time and energy on over the years may well have appreciated this work. The academic audience, however, was more exacting.

### At the Concord School

In her lecture "Friendship in Aristotle's Ethics" at the Concord School, Mitchell again seems to have given more of a summary than an original interpretation, with one important exception, a feminist commentary on relationships between men and women. As noted above, although the actual text of Mitchell's lecture is not available, she probably provided the synopsis of her presentation that the press relied on for their reports on the School's events. Four such synopses of Mitchell's lecture appear in print,<sup>81</sup> and each presents pretty much the same material. However, there are slight variations among them that hint at Mitchell's feminist leanings.

The first report of Mitchell's lecture comes from *The Boston Post*, and it is significant more for what it does *not* say about her presentation than for what it does say. The *Post* tells us that Mitchell gave an overview of the ancients' analysis of friendship and that this overview included her mention of the distinction between friendship and love. The article then reports Mitchell as having said that perfect friendship is based on equality. However, ellipses in this section of the article indicate that it omitted parts of Mitchell's speech and, based on readings of other reports on this lecture, what was omitted seems to have been a fairly feminist critique of relations between the sexes.

Two other news reports, for instance, indicate that Mitchell's discussion of friendship versus love included a critique of the status of women in the ancient world. Since women were "too subordinate and too inferior to man to be his friend in the divinest sense of the word,"<sup>82</sup> their contribution to a relationship, whether in friendship or in marriage, was negligible. Given this low estimation of women, it is no surprise that the Greeks denigrated marriage. Yet Mitchell encouraged her audience to aim for a higher ideal in which genuine friendship is incorporated into the marital relation:

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<sup>81</sup> These news reports are from the scrapbooks of William Torrey Harris, Concord Free Library, and not all of the newspapers are named.

<sup>82</sup> Unnamed newspaper with article entitled, "Field Day for Philosophy."

I would not undervalue a sympathetic marriage, but that of friendship is as high or higher. [The fact] that the Greeks neglected the one [marriage] and exalted the other [friendship] is no reason [to] reverse the case, and act as if a rich and tender intimacy ... were not possible ... between men and women.<sup>83</sup>

A fourth news report from *The Evening Transcript* elaborates more on this point, "true love includes friendship and transcends it. It is friendship glorified. . . . The present ideal is to perfect [marriage] and make the latter [between men and women] possible."<sup>84</sup>

This last article goes further than the previous two in its discussion of the relationship of justice and equality. In an unequal relationship, such as that between the Greeks and their gods in the ancient world, there can be no true friendship because, "one gives more than the other and there is a consequent absence of justice."<sup>85</sup> The same problem plagued male-female interaction in the ancient world, and according to this reporter Mitchell believed it continued to plague men and women in her day:

It is this lack of equality . . . which prevented friendships between opposites in sex, the men standing towards the women, it is to be presumed, somewhat as the gods did toward the men! This idea has not quite disappeared yet, though we are growing out of it gradually."<sup>86</sup>

It is true that these statements give us only hints of Mitchell's feminism. In fact, with only a quick first reading of any one of the synopses of this lecture, its feminist hue might pass us by. Given the context out of which Mitchell was operating, however, it is clear that she would have been at liberty to incorporate a bit of feminist analysis into her discussion. Mitchell's lecture was followed by a lecture by Davidson who, along with Harris and others engaged in "long and excellent discussion" of her lecture.<sup>87</sup> Harris and Davidson, as has already been noted, were both advocates of the feminist cause. Both were members of the Missouri Woman's Suffrage Association and Harris later wrote essays on equal employment and education for women. Mitchell is unlikely to have received pressure from either of these two to curtail her feminist

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<sup>83</sup> Two unnamed newspapers use this quotation, which suggests that it is from Mitchell's own synopsis. The first is the article entitled, "Field Day for Philosophy," the second, "The Philosophers' Picnic," which even indicates that it is quoting Mitchell's own words.

<sup>84</sup> From *The Boston Evening Transcript*.

<sup>85</sup> *The Boston Evening Transcript*.

<sup>86</sup> *The Boston Evening Transcript*. This feminist insight comes immediately after material that is also reported by other newspapers. The first half of this *Evening Transcript* story, in which this quoted material appears, follows quite closely the outline of other news reports of Mitchell's speech. But the author of this article states that she has added her own commentary to the discussion. After this quoted section in the report, then, the text of the report -- though very feminist -- is most likely not representative of Mitchell's lecture.

<sup>87</sup> *Evening Transcript*.



sentiments, then. And since each of them had built up a following of loyal admirers at the Concord School over the years, there is a good chance that those in attendance were of a like mind.

### Concerning the "Fallen Woman"

We needn't rely on Mitchell's Concord School lecture alone for evidence of feminism. An earlier 1874 speech at the World Congress of Women in Chicago stands as a confirmation of her commitment to feminist ideals. This speech, entitled "A Plea for the Fallen Woman" declares that the problem of prostitution is a social issue rooted in women's inequality. Mitchell claims that with more career options, women would be less likely to reach the levels of degradation and poverty that drive them to prostitution. [3] Yet, even given the few branches of employment that women do have, the wages they receive are so low that they can barely support themselves. This latter situation she blames specifically on men, quoting a madame of a brothel whom she purports to have interviewed: "as long as men pay reluctantly the smallest wage for the longest day's work of hard labor, and pay the highest demanded in these houses, they will be continued." [3]

Mitchell then quickly moves to an indictment of double standards for sexual behavior. According to her observations, "a man may have as many loves as he has neckties, wear them as lightly, change them as often, cast them aside as easily as the last," and it neither affects his social standing, nor endangers his primary relationship with a woman. But if a woman should do the same, her male partner

proclaims her disgrace to the world -- to the pitiless world . . . if she turn desperate and defiant, . . . we call her brazen and other words our lips should never utter." [4]

Given Mitchell's experience during the divorce scandal seven years earlier, she may be drawing on her own experience to an extent in this lecture. She was likely to have been considered a bit scandalous by those in "polite society" herself. As mentioned above, most of the testimony in the court case "Mitchell v. Mitchell" consisted of long, involved narratives about the unscrupulous behavior of "the poetess" Ella Ellwood, a.k.a. Ellen Slade, nee Ellen M. Smith. It is true that Joseph Mitchell's first wife testified against him and indicted his behavior. Yet in the court's zeal to prove him an adulterer, it called Ellen's very character into question. What sort of woman, after all, would be willing to entertain a gentleman late in the evening? If Mitchell does make her plea for the "fallen woman" based on an experience in which she may

have been ostracized, it is not surprising that she would encourage her listeners to "insist upon equal purity of life for men as well as women." [9]

While other women addressed prostitution during this period,<sup>88</sup> it was not a common topic of discussion, even among feminists. Unfortunately, Mitchell does not develop her feminist theory further. Yet this and the sections of her Concord School lecture both show that she, along with Brackett and Beedy, had strong feminist convictions that were integrated into their intellectual work. This in turn demonstrates that feminism was a welcome component to St. Louis thought as a whole, and that various arms of the movement even facilitated feminism's propagation.

### *Conclusion*

It would be misleading to make too much of the contributions made by the peripheral and minor figures in the St. Louis movement. At the same time, however, it would be unfair to exclude them altogether. As teachers in the public schools, they made it possible for the theories of Harris, Blow, and Brackett to be put into practice. Because of their work, the leaders of the movement were able to see how their ideas actually played themselves out when implemented. Since a number of these lesser figures not only remained in St. Louis, but continued to teach in the public school system, they also carried the torch of idealism, as such, to the best of their ability. Of course, given the dearth of their published works, it is not certain with what level of faithfulness they were able to be true to their leaders' understanding of "speculative philosophy." Yet the general insights of American idealist educational theory -- graded classes, kindergarten method, normal education, and the like -- was modelled for the rest of the country to emulate and later carried into the twentieth century by these women.

As participants in the many groups that grew out of the Philosophical Society, these women also seem to have been quick and eager students of the ideas being presented to them. Based on Snider's recounting of his days in the movement, those in the St. Louis philosophical circle were truly intoxicated with their new-

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<sup>88</sup> Frances Willard of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, for example addressed this difficult issue in the 1870s [see Karen Greenspan, *Timetables of Women's History*, (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 265]; so too did Victoria Claflin Woodhull and her sister, Tennessee Claflin in their newspaper, *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly* [see Miriam Schneir, *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*, (NY: Vintage Books, 1994), 143].

found knowledge and were nearly evangelical about its promulgation. Not only in teaching method, but in music, literature and art, the unity of the finite with the infinite and the activity of Spirit grounded their understanding of the world. Granted, because of its popularity, German idealism in America became so general as to be diffuse at times. Still, these women's willingness to support the innovations of the movement, particularly in education, provided an environment in which Blow, Brackett, and their male colleagues, could do their work. As we know, they went on to develop their theories further, producing them in published form.

Finally, by participating in the Concord Summer School of Philosophy, these women took part in an important educational experiment. First, they witnessed the cross-pollenization of two important American philosophical movements: New England transcendentalism and their own St. Louis Hegelianism. And while the Concord program became increasingly literary, it was still responsible for introducing modern German thought to the swarms of people who gathered there, particularly in the early years of the School.

Second, the School represents a popularization of philosophy that appears not to have occurred before on American soil, nor to my knowledge since. The School was open to anyone interested who was willing to pay the \$10 tuition. Yet, as noted in chapter one, among its lecturers were some of this country's first professional academic philosophers: Nicholas Murray Butler (Columbia), William James (Harvard), James McCosh (Princeton), and Noah Porter (Yale). This, in turn, speaks to another important aspect of the role the Concord School played and the significance of these women's participation in it.

As mentioned in the first chapter, women were the overwhelming majority of participants at the Concord School. In a short summer session, those to whom higher education was often inaccessible were able to hear some of this country's most important thinkers, to study under their tutelage, to engage in discussion with each other, and thus to pursue their own intellectual development. In fact, it is clear that in two cases in particular, the Concord School was an important step in the professional lives of women in this study.

First and most obviously, Ellen Mitchell was one of just a handful of women to lecture at the Concord School. Her lecture was favorably reviewed in the newspapers, and she began to publish her more philosophical works after this lecture. In fact, the introduction to Mitchell's *Study of Greek Philosophy* was

written by another School participant who was called one of its "principal" figures by F. B. Sanborn: William Rounseville Alger.<sup>89</sup> It may be reaching too far to suggest that Mitchell's appointment as lecturer at the University of Denver is directly connected to her participation in the Concord School. However, it appears that her time at Concord served as a credential of some sort, at least in her own mind, because she indicates that she received a doctoral degree from this "institution" in her biographical entry for the *Woman's Who's Who* of 1914-15. Since no women had earned the doctorate in philosophy when the Concord School started in 1879 and only ten institutions had granted doctoral degrees to women by the time the School ended in 1888, it is certainly understandable that Mitchell chose to claim the Concord School as an alma mater. Whether Harris or one of his colleagues actually went through some sort of ceremony to bestow upon Mitchell this rather illegitimate degree is unclear. What is certain, however, is that Mitchell took her Concord School experience seriously and used it to legitimate her philosophical efforts. Perhaps other women did as well.

Another Concord School participant used the School to gain credentials in a more orthodox way than Mitchell did. Marietta Kies was granted leave time from her teaching load while a faculty member at Mt. Holyoke Seminary to attend Concord School sessions. In 1889 she published an annotated collection of Harris' lectures as an introductory philosophy textbook, some of which were given at the Concord School. She then entered the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, becoming the first woman to earn a doctoral degree in philosophy at that institution. I will now turn to her life and work.

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<sup>89</sup> See Cameron, *Concord Harvest*, 552, in which Sanborn's lists of participants at the Concord School are reproduced.

## Chapter 5

### Marietta Kies: Altruism in Public Life

#### *SECTION I: KIES' LIFE AND WORK*

##### *Introduction to Marietta Kies*

Marietta Kies (1853-1899) stands apart from her women Hegelian colleagues in a number of ways. First, she was somewhat younger than other major Hegelians Blow and Brackett: ten and seventeen years, respectively. In fact, Harris had returned East in 1880 when Kies was barely beginning her academic career as a professor at Mt. Holyoke Seminary. Thus she was not immersed in the work of Harris and the rest of his colleagues in the West. This means that in a sense Kies was out of the philosophical loop in that she was not a member of the philosopher-educator class of St. Louis as were the other women Hegelians, major, minor, or otherwise. In another sense, however, Kies' youth plays in her favor. Since her career was getting underway on the East coast just as Harris et al were setting up the Concord School, she was able to be party to this incarnation of the St. Louis movement. Given the fact that a number of professional philosophers participated in the Concord experiment, she had access to thinkers that earlier women Hegelians did not -- at least not at the same early stage in their careers. Kies is also the only woman in this study to have earned a doctoral degree at a major university. And, like Mitchell and Bibb, she is among a relatively small number of women in the late nineteenth century who held faculty positions at the college and university levels; in Kies' case these included Colorado College, Mt. Holyoke Seminary, Mills College, and Butler University.

Second and certainly no less notable, particularly in regard to Kies' personal and professional struggles, is her social and economic background. Susan Blow was surrounded by not only wealth, but power and prestige, and Anna Brackett's family seems to have been at least well-to-do. Kies, in contrast, was raised on a farm in Killingly, Connecticut, a tiny town in the state's northeast corner, in "an old-fashioned farm house, upon a rugged farm." Her family was not wealthy by any stretch of the imagination,

but instead eked a living "out of their limited acres of rocky New England [terrain]."<sup>1</sup> Her humble origins compounded Kies' late intellectual start in comparison to Blow and Brackett, because her education necessarily was delayed in order to earn the funds to attain it.

Finally, and to be discussed in the second part of this chapter, Kies' published work was not centered on educational theory. Instead, her concern was with social and political philosophy. Focusing more narrowly on Hegel himself than her older contemporaries did, Kies studied not only under Harris at the Concord School, but with the University of Michigan's rising stars, George Sylvester Morris, Henry C. Adams, and John Dewey. In addition, while she seems to have been acquainted with Hegel's *Logic*, it did not serve as the sacred text it seems to have been to Harris and the St. Louis circle. Instead, the texts that Kies focused on were the *The History of Philosophy* and *The Philosophy of Right*. All of these differences between Kies and the St. Louis women Hegelians are important, of course. But as with the others in this study, since so little is known about Kies, I will start with a discussion of her life and education, then go on to discuss her career in part one. Part two will consist of an analysis of Kies' thought.

### **Family, Early Life, and Education**

In her brief biographical sketch of Kies for the journal *Connecticut Teacher*, Gertrude Pradel reminds us that in the rural environment in which Kies grew up in the 1850s and '60s, there would have been virtually no end to the work that was to be done.<sup>2</sup> And it seems that Marietta, the second oldest child in a family of five girls, was called upon to do any and all of the work at hand -- and from a very young age. She is said to have plowed, planted and dug potatoes, and attended to the farm animals as well as to have helped with household chores, such as soap-making, butter-churning, and laundry, which in those days was absolutely drudgerous work. We also see evidence of her family's sorry financial state; in addition to her regular farm and household chores, she periodically worked in area textile mills to earn money.<sup>3</sup> At least a

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<sup>1</sup> S. Sherberne Mathews, "Memorial Sermon," in *In Memoriam: Marietta Kies, A.M., Ph.D.*, (Boston: Frank Wood, printer), July 20, 1899, p. 13, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gertrude Pradel, "Dr. Marietta Kies: The Strenuous Life" in *Pioneer Teachers of Connecticut*, Helen M. Sheldrick, ed. (Winsted, CT: Dowd Printing Company, 1971), p. 47-52. [Reprinted from *Connecticut*, ca. 1950.]

<sup>3</sup> Mathews, 15-16. It was common for children as young as eight or ten to work in factories. William Torrey Harris had also worked in the cotton and woolen mills of Killingly and vicinity.

portion of what she earned seems to have been at her disposal, because her goal was to use this income to procure an education. Thankfully for her, the plan worked. By the age of fourteen, she was knowledgeable enough to offer her services as a teacher. She began her career as an educator close to home, teaching first in Killingly, then in the neighboring town of Putnam -- the latter being the birthplace of William Torrey Harris, incidentally.

Although the setting Kies was born into was rustic, at least two of her female family members distinguished themselves. In fact, even today, it is part of the family lore that Marietta's great, great aunt Mary Dixon Kies (1750-1837) was the first woman to have been granted a patent in the United States in 1809 for her innovative method of weaving a durable textile to make straw hats.<sup>4</sup>

Closer to Marietta chronologically, her aunt Mary Ann Kies (1841-1868) was a teacher in northeastern Connecticut and Rhode Island and a social worker at the Howard Mission for Little Wanderers in New York City.<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann was also a graduate of Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary, an accomplishment replicated by other Kies women for at least two generations to follow. Not only Marietta and her younger sister Julietta attended Mt. Holyoke, their niece, Ida Augusta Stearns also joined the ranks of its alumnae, largely because of Marietta's encouragement to do so.<sup>6</sup> While it is impossible to verify any of Mary Ann's influence on Marietta beyond this Mt. Holyoke connection, it is likely that there was a bond between them. After all, Mary Ann is likely to have taught in the local schools while Marietta was a student, and this is certain to have had an impact. In addition, it is likely that Marietta witnessed Mary Ann's long illness and very early death at home in Connecticut in 1867 when Marietta was not quite fourteen years old. Given the absence of Kies' papers or letters, however, it isn't possible to determine whether there was more to the Mary Ann-Marietta relationship than what appears in these scant bits of evidence.

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<sup>4</sup> This story was first related to me by Kies family descendent, Kristin Orr. Other Kies descendents, Herb Corttis and Betty Richards were also familiar with this story. See Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas, *Susan B. Anthony Slept Here: A Guide to American Women's Landmarks*, (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 78. See also *Bayles' History of Windham County*, (City: Publ., 1889), vol. 2, p. 937.

<sup>5</sup> Mount Holyoke College, Archives and Special Collections, obituary of Mary Ann Kies; Mt. Holyoke biographical directory of alumni, 1937, p. 103. The use of the term "social worker" may seem anachronistic, but I use it in order to describe the work that Mary Ann Kies did, since "volunteer" certainly doesn't seem appropriate and "missionary" is misleading to the modern reader.

<sup>6</sup> See the biographical directory of alumni, p. 178, for record of Julietta Kies. Mt. Holyoke College Archives. Herb Corttis related that Marietta had encouraged his grandmother, Ida August Stearns, to attend Mt. Holyoke. September, 1996.

Finally, a second cousin, Edwin W. Davis (1839-1903?), became prominent in the financial and educational worlds in the West, banking in Michigan and Iowa early in his career, and later making a name for himself as an educator in Colorado. It is unclear whether Edwin crossed paths with William Torrey Harris in his educational endeavors, but his interest in education may have been a point of connection between Edwin and Marietta. Even so, the fact that Marietta chose his home as a refuge when she was seriously ill in 1899 demonstrates that she was close to Edwin and his family, even though he had moved West by the time Marietta was in her early 'teens.

One aspect of Kies' early life that cannot be ignored is the fact that she grew up only ten or so miles from William Torrey Harris' home town of Putnam, Connecticut. Of course, as a young child Kies could not have known Harris personally; he was away at Yale a year or two after her birth and had already gone to St. Louis in 1857 when she'd have been only three and a half years old. However, with a combined population of roughly 6,000 in the 1860s, Putnam and Killingly were not terribly large towns.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the church the Kies and Harris attended the same Congregational church.<sup>8</sup> Since Harris was quite prominent by the time Marietta was in adolescence, visiting Emerson, Alcott, Cabot, and Hedge on his visits East, it is likely she'd have at least heard about this successful educator and philosopher from Putnam.

In addition, Harris was from a large family, and four of his eight siblings were within six years of Marietta's age. More significantly, three of these four were girls -- Anna Rebecca (1847-1873), Mary Jane (1851-1908), and Ellen Elizabeth (1856-1887) -- all of whom studied at Mt. Holyoke. According to one of her memorialists, Rev. Sherberne Mathews, Marietta had long desired to go to Mt. Holyoke, and, as noted above, her aunt Mary Ann was a graduate of this Seminary. But it is possible that the fact that the Harris girls had also attended "Miss Lyons' school" (Ellen Elizabeth in fact had graduated the spring before Kies entered in the fall) made becoming a member of the Mt. Holyoke community that much more appealing. This was certainly the most prestigious women's college in the region at the time. And, again, in these

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<sup>7</sup> Bayles, p. 922.

<sup>8</sup> S. Sherberne Mathews, "Historical Sermon," in *Centennial Celebration of Westfield Congregational Church*, (Boston: Frank Wood, printer, 1901), p. 30.



rather remote towns, it is probable that Marietta knew the Harris girls and perhaps been influenced by them, even if she was not in their social circle.

### ***The Beginnings of an Academic Career***

As noted above, Kies began teaching at a very young age, as did many women in her era (although as noted above, this practice was disapproved of by Anna Brackett). Yet she had been an instructor at the local schools for only a year or two when family friends in Michigan invited her to stay with them and attend Hillsdale College which was nearby.<sup>9</sup> She accepted, seemingly without hesitation. In fact, she is reported to have taken the journey alone, an unusual step for a girl in her mid-teens in the early 1870s. Yet this might speak as much to Kies' socio-economic status as to her sense of independence: perhaps the family simply couldn't afford to send an escort. (This possibility underscores the contrast between Kies and Susan Blow, who was touring Europe with her family during the same time period, 1870-72.) Financial limitations of the Kies family aside, however, as a Kies memorialist noted, the fact that she was willing to take this trip alone shows how eager she was to take advantage of "the somewhat remote possibility of [taking] a collegiate course . . . [which] loomed alluringly before her."<sup>10</sup>

It seems that she was able to study at Hillsdale, but unfortunately Kies was struck by a "severe malarial attack" while there and had to return home to recuperate. It is unclear exactly what type of illness she had at this time. It may have actually been malaria, which had become fairly common in non-tropical climates with the increase in travel during this time period.<sup>11</sup> When she had recovered from her illness, Kies resumed teaching in the local schools, and in 1873 is reported to have been both a teacher and a student in the Danielson High School.<sup>12</sup> It appears that she maintained this teacher/student status until 1878 when she attained her long sought after goal of attending Mt. Holyoke College.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The exact year of her study at Hillsdale is not clear. See Mathews, p. 16. See also Centennial Celebration, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> Obituary of Marietta Kies from northeastern Connecticut newspaper, provided by Herb Cortis from the family's copy of *Institutional Ethics* that Marietta gave to her niece Ida Stearns.

<sup>11</sup> My thanks to Jay Smith, M.D., of West Hartford, CT for this information.

<sup>12</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, p. 16. It may be helpful here to note that Danielson is a borough within the town of Killingly, CT.

<sup>13</sup> Both her memorialist, Mathews, and her friend, Georgiana Hodgkins indicated that Kies had long wanted to attend Mt. Holyoke. See *In Memoriam*.

While little information is available about Kies' primary mentors while studying in Danielson, Mary Dexter and Sidney Frost,<sup>14</sup> their instruction and guidance was sufficient to prepare her to enter Mt. Holyoke as a second- rather than first-year student. This means that Kies had demonstrated a sufficient understanding of the college-level basics of the day: Cicero, Latin prose, general knowledge of the Bible, and English composition, all of which were required of the first-year, or Junior student. Instead, Marietta went directly to material such as German, modern history, the U.S. Constitution, and more indepth biblical studies (the books of Joshua and Judges).<sup>15</sup> But again, Kies' economic status intervened, and she had to spend the 1879-80 academic year teaching in Brooklyn, Connecticut in order to earn enough money to return to Mt. Holyoke. She may have spent her free time during this year studying on her own, because her return to Mt. Holyoke in 1880-81 constituted her last year of study there. Although it has not been possible to verify through the College's records, Kies' memorialists claim that she was at the head of her class at graduation.<sup>16</sup> Whether this means that Kies was in fact valedictorian or simply within the top tier of graduates is still to be determined. Yet it is impressive that she was able to finish the four-year course in two years, valedictory honors included or not.

The years between 1881 and 1885 were a bit of a patchwork professionally for Kies, and they seem to have been dotted with personal challenges along the way, as well. For the first half-year after graduation, Kies taught mathematics at Mt. Holyoke, but soon was lured away by an assistant principal position at Putnam High School in 1882.<sup>17</sup> She remained at Putnam for the remainder of that year and through the 1882-83 academic year. But she was again offered a more attractive position at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. She negotiated her way out of a prior agreement to remain two years at Putnam -- or as a memorialist puts it, she was "released by a considerate committee" -- and therefore was able to accept the offer in Colorado.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Mathews, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Mount Holyoke College, Archives and Special Collections. College catalogue for 1878-79, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> Mathews, 17.

<sup>17</sup> Mathews, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Colorado College records are unclear about Kies' status. Colleagues claimed that she was an instructor in Latin and mathematics from 1883 to 1885. College archives, however, list Kies as the supervisor of a girls' club house and dormitory in one case and as being assigned to the "Preparatory" department in another. In addition, the College shows her tenure there as lasting from 1882-1884. These discrepancies needn't concern us too much. After all, it is conceivable that Kies did indeed teach Latin and math, but at the preparatory rather than advanced level. And she may well have been given the additional

### *At Mt. Holyoke*

Kies' return east in June 1885 brought with it a period of stability and professional growth. She accepted a position at Mt. Holyoke in which she taught ethics and mental and moral philosophy<sup>19</sup> until 1891. Her course descriptions show that it was during this time that she became acquainted with the thought of not only Harris, but George S. Morris as well. The 1885-86 Mt. Holyoke course catalogue, for example, shows her mental and moral philosophy course to cover a range of thinkers -- Hickok, Porter, Hopkins, Bowne, and Harris -- with Hickok's *Empirical Psychology* being the primary text. The much shorter course description for Kies' ethics course mentions only Hickok's *Moral Science*. But the next few years were "the summer of her intellectual growth," according to her good friend and memorialist, Georgiana Hodgkins.<sup>20</sup>

Since 1885, Kies had taken advantage of Mt. Holyoke's willingness to allow her leave-time.<sup>21</sup> First she studied with Harris at the Concord School, which culminated in her collection of his lectures and writings in *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*. Then in 1888, she entered the University of Michigan for graduate study, her application supported by a letter of recommendation from Harris to Morris:

Dear Professor Morris:

I add a post-scriptum (to my letter) in regard to a Miss Kies who has taught philosophy at Mt. Holyoke Seminary (South Hadley, Mass.) for three years and has studied under my direction. She has proved an apt student in the essential problems of philosophy and has succeeded remarkably to interest her pupils in the topic.

She wishes to study at Ann Arbor the coming Autumn with a view to obtaining the degree of Ph.D. and will write you with regard to it (if she has not already done so). All I have to say is that I consider her a *doctor* and a *doctor* in the sense that she has insight (*not* into agnosticism but) into the positive results of philosophy, and makes great intellectual progress from year to year\* in skill in handling philosophical subjects, and promises to become a famous teacher of such matters. She has not as yet made any considerable study of the history of philosophy and will be greatly benefitted by a sojourn at Ann Arbor.

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assignment of house mother to a particular dormitory. Ideally, tracking Kies' career wouldn't require this sort of guess work, of course, but such are the realities of preliminary research on the life of a little-known female philosopher.

<sup>19</sup> Mount Holyoke Archives, college catalogue for 1885-86, p. 5; college catalogue for 1890-91, p. 6, 29.

<sup>20</sup> Georgiana Hodgkins, "Marietta Kies -- A Memory," in *In Memoriam: Marietta Kies, A.M., Ph.D.*, (Boston: Frank Wood, printer, July 20, 1899), p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 18.

I hope that you will find it possible to assign her some theme for a thesis and give her a Ph.D. degree upon it in due course of time.

Sincerely Yours,

W. T. Harris<sup>22</sup>

Kies studied with Morris for a year at Michigan until his sudden death from pneumonia, then with H.C. Adams and John Dewey, graduating with a Ph.D. in 1891.

In Kies' 1890-91 courses at Mt. Holyoke, the influence of both Harris and Morris is evident. But unlike Ellen Mitchell, whose work often lacked originality, Kies did not merely adopt the thought of these two mentors uncritically. Instead, based on her course descriptions (as well as her published work to be discussed later), Kies fully integrated what she had learned into her own thought and arrived at independent positions. For example, in the course entitled simply "philosophy" we see her using her compilation of Harris in the *Introduction*, but she does not neglect "the views of [other] contemporaneous writers" in the process, but incorporates their ideas into the course as well. Similarly, Kies, now teaching the history of philosophy in addition to her previous course assignments, draws on the work of Schwegler and Ueberweg for this course. These are two thinkers with whom Morris was particularly concerned, in fact he translated Ueberweg's work. But here too Kies indicates that she has included "selections from the writings of several philosophers" in the course. Finally and most significantly, Kies' ethics class, while still relying primarily on Hickok's *Moral Science*, clearly demonstrates that she is developing her own line of thought. Citing the course description itself will serve best to illustrate the ideas Kies has developed:

In Ethics, man is studied not as an isolated individual, a compound of virtues and vices, but as a personality developing through the institutions of society. Several authors are consulted [although] Hickok's *Moral Science* is the guide to the students in their work. Discussions upon practical applications of the Ethical Principle in social relations are a chief feature of the course.<sup>23</sup>

While Kies' theory in her book, *The Ethical Principle*, will be discussed later in this chapter, it will be helpful at this point to mention that this book is a decidedly Hegelian understanding of the role of the individual in regard to social and political relations that Kies developed independently. Harris and Morris,

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<sup>22</sup> Harris' letter to Morris, no date (probably Spring 1888 before Kies entered Ann Arbor in September 1888) in James B. Angell Papers, Bentley Historic Library Archives, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The asterisk marks a phrase that Harris inserted, which is unclear, possibly: "... year to year – and progress in – skill . . . "

<sup>23</sup> Mt. Holyoke Archives, college catalogue for 1890-91.

of course would have been sympathetic with Kies' understanding of Hegel on this topic, but neither of them developed their ideas on political philosophy as fully, nor as carefully as Kies does in this book. This course, then, shows us that Kies is not only able to follow through on intellectual projects, developing a theory more fully than either of her mentors had to date. It also points to Kies' intellectual independence. She was, after all, one of few women practicing philosophy professionally during this time and was operating outside the fields of the discipline that women generally addressed: aesthetics, education, philosophical literature, and theories of friendship and love.

### ***At the University of Michigan***

As mentioned earlier, while Kies was teaching at Mt. Holyoke, she was given leave time to attend both the Concord School and the University of Michigan.<sup>24</sup> In Michigan, Kies was part of what appears to have been a lively and intellectually stimulating environment -- one that had been open to women for nearly twenty years when she became a student there.<sup>25</sup> Dewey, Morris, and Adams were each involved in student life, holding classes at their homes and leading various clubs and discussion groups. Adams, for instance led a political economy club and was a popular lecturer.<sup>26</sup> At one meeting of this group, Marx's thought was the topic of discussion. The mood at this meeting is likely to have been one of sympathy for Marx's views, given a rumor being spread at the time that Adams' regular lectures at Cornell were to be cancelled due to his socialist views, a rumor that Cornell did its best to quell.<sup>27</sup> Dewey lectured often to the Unity Club and drew a crowd of 200 or more on at least one occasion. His lecture topics were more wide ranging than Adams' seem to have been, as Dewey spoke on the problem of "Mind Cure", presumably a psychological discussion of some sort, and the philosophical concept of the state.<sup>28</sup> Morris, who was said to have been "in perfect sympathy in every respect with [the] opinions and methods" of Dewey,<sup>29</sup> was a founding faculty member of the University's Philosophical Society, a group open to women as well as men. In fact, one

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<sup>24</sup> Pradel, 51; Hodgkins also indicates that in the fall of 1888, Marietta had just returned to Mt. Holyoke for the new school year after studying at Michigan; see Memoriam, 65.

<sup>25</sup> The University of Michigan began admitting women in 1869.

<sup>26</sup> See *Michigan Argonaut*, vol. 3, p. 18, (February 1885).

<sup>27</sup> *Michigan Argonaut*, vol. 5, p. 101, 110, (February 1887).

<sup>28</sup> *Michigan Argonaut*, vol. 5, p. 134, (February 1887).

<sup>29</sup> *Michigan Argonaut*, vol. 5, p. 71, (December 1886).

female member of the Society, Alice Graves, was among those who signed the group's tribute to him after his death in 1889. Years later she remembered Morris as a professor who was egalitarian in his treatment of women students:

In a University where one heard a good deal of crude and opinionated talk about 'co-eds,' the scholarly atmosphere of the lecture-room was never disturbed by any self-consciousness on the part of the women. . . . even in the small gatherings that sometimes assembled in his library for special discussions, there was never any visible change of attitude toward us.<sup>30</sup>

Graves' criticism of attitudes toward women at the University overall deserves a bit of attention at this point, because Morris may well have been the exception to the rule. Just prior to Kies' enrollment at Michigan, certain efforts had been made to better accommodate women students. A Ladies Reading Room had been opened at the library and specific hours had been set aside for women to exercise at the school's gymnasium, for example.<sup>31</sup> But this is not to say that the learning environment was altogether welcoming. Caroline Miles Hill, who graduated with the Ph.D. in philosophy the year after Kies, expressed her ambivalent feelings about the male dominant atmosphere there when she was a student.

I think my first memory of Ann Arbor is the feeling of great emancipation of being now out in the real world where I could find a bigger family with an enlarging self. . . . [But] here men were a very different proposition and society was something into which you did not go unless a man took you or unless you belonged to a sorority . . . I deeply resented the social situation at Ann Arbor and the attitude towards women . . . Woman's Suffrage may have changed the attitude towards women; the Women's Halls [dormitories] must have changed the feeling of [being] the outsider.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, an anecdote in the student newspaper indicates that at least one faculty member felt at liberty to embarrass a female student in the classroom with a suggestive remark, at least from a Victorian standpoint. Most likely it was in a literature class that an unnamed professor was said to have asked a young woman to imagine herself "gayley [sic] describing a moonlight scene." Then as the student obeyed, he added, perhaps even with a wink, " -- under a particular set of circumstances!" The delivery of this punchline was met with the class's laughter and applause while "Miss \_\_\_\_\_" was said to have wilted.<sup>33</sup> As with all inside

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<sup>30</sup> R.M. Wenley, *The Life and Work of George Sylvester Morris*, (London: Macmillan, 1917), p. 302-3.

<sup>31</sup> *Michigan Argonaut*, vol. 4, (May 1886); vol. 5, p. 55, (November 1886).

<sup>32</sup> Caroline Miles Hill, response to 1921 Alumnae Survey, Bentley Historical Library Archives, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>33</sup> *Michigan Argonaut*, vol. 7, p. 148 (March 1889).

jokes, this anecdote doesn't give us quite enough information to make a definitive judgment about its meaning. Yet the poetic connotations of moonlight alone suggest that the professor meant to call up images of romance. His addition of "under a particular set of circumstances!" (note the exclamation point) in the days of Victorian propriety further suggests that the professor wanted to be sure to conjure up these images in his students. In short, this anecdote seems to be a concerted effort to embarrass "Miss \_\_\_\_\_" via sexual innuendo. And, based on the young woman's "wilting", the tactic seems to have worked. If this and Graves' claim that "crude and opinionated talk" are any indication of what was acceptable behavior at the University, it is no wonder that female students held a session of their own to reminisce at the chapel before graduation. No doubt an instructor such as Morris would have been a welcomed deviation from a very oppressive norm.

Kies' work shows that Morris was undoubtedly an influence on her. Furthermore, since he seems to have been among the more regular attendees of the Concord School,<sup>34</sup> there is a great likelihood that Kies first became acquainted with him there and then was inspired or even encouraged (either by him or Harris) to continue her studies at Michigan. Yet Kies also drew on the work of Adams in her works on political theory, particularly his book, *The Relation of the State to Industrial Action*, which demonstrates his socialist leanings. It isn't clear whether Adams was associated with Harris, et al. Yet certain of Harris' understandings of Hegel and of the role of the individual in society ring true for Adams as well, as will be discussed as they pertain to Kies' work in part two of this chapter.

### ***"A Modern Hypatia"***

Although Kies' career seems to have been going smoothly at Mt. Holyoke, in 1891-92 she made a career shift, accepting an offer to teach at Mills College, another all-female institution in Oakland, California.<sup>35</sup> While at Mt. Holyoke, Kies had been one of a total of eight faculty members with advanced degrees (5 master's and 3 doctoral) on an all-female staff. At Mills she was one of only four faculty who

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<sup>34</sup> Morris appears on the list of "principal names" in the history of the Concord School. See *Concord Harvest*, (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books), p. 552-3. He was also on the list of participants in 1879 at the Concord Free Library, William Torrey Harris Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 19.

seem to have done graduate work. More significantly, she was the only woman on Mills' mixed male-female faculty to have earned a Ph.D. Since little material is available from Mills' archives, it isn't possible to determine if this set Kies apart from her female colleagues and/or brought on a degree of resentment from her male colleagues.<sup>36</sup> But one thing is clear: even if her advanced-degree status caused a bit of friction, this was not the only struggle that Kies had at Mills. Interestingly enough, the nemesis in question was not one of her colleagues on the Mills faculty, but a former member of the St. Louis circle who taught philosophy on the nearby Berkeley campus of the University of California: George Holmes Howison.

As the only really academic philosopher within the St. Louis circle during his tenure at Washington University (1866-70), Howison stood apart from his St. Louis colleagues -- from a historical point of view at least -- simply by virtue of his status. After he left St. Louis, and after a fairly long period of searching for another academic post,<sup>37</sup> Howison's views evolved and even ran counter to Harris and his colleagues. By the time Kies arrived in Oakland, Howison had become fairly well known as a "personal idealist." Whether their understandings were accurate or not, to Harris and his colleagues this was to say that Howison had given up on their Hegelian notion of the unity of all within the whole. At least this is how Susan Blow saw it. In her view, Howison advanced a theory that was fundamentally atomistic: a multiplicity of objects united into a plurality that forms a sort of oneness, but which in fact is not truly One. In Howison's system, the cosmos consists, not of a Oneness that serves as the basis for the existence of the many -- which is the view that Harris and Blow espoused -- but was instead a mere aggregate of otherwise unrelated objects whose conjoining came about randomly.<sup>38</sup>

Given Kies' relative silence on metaphysical matters in her published work, it isn't clear if she shared Blow's objections to Howison's pluralism. It is clear, however, that Harris shared Blow's views. Harris had debated with Howison about just this issue at a meeting of the Philosophical Union, a debate that continued long after the event that precipitated it. It may be that Kies carried on this debate -- or a variant of

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<sup>36</sup> Information gathered from Mt. Holyoke Archives' college catalogue and the catalogue of Mills College, 1891-92. Interestingly enough, the men listed as "professors" did not have a Ph.D. after their names in the Mills College catalogue.

<sup>37</sup> John Wright Buckham and George Malcolm Stratton, *George Holmes Howison: Philosopher and Teacher*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934). Pages 57-87 describe the trying period of Howison's career during which he was looking for a permanent academic placement.

<sup>38</sup> Susan Blow, Letter to William Torrey Harris, December 20, 1891.



it – when she arrived in the Bay area and was a visitor at a meeting of the Philosophical Union. One of Kies' memorialists characterizes this visit as an intellectual ambush in which Kies was "the unexpected victim of a concerted effort by the representatives of a different and antagonistic school . . . to confuse and overthrow this lone representative of the modified Hegelian philosophy."<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, no documents or reports have been located that can provide information about this incident, except that of Kies' good friend, fellow professor at Mt. Holyoke and later at Butler, and memorialist, Georgiana Hodgkins, who tells the story compellingly:

I recall one scene that is to me peculiarly illustrative of [her intellectual] ability. It was at a meeting of the Philosophical Union held in Prof. Howison's lecture-room at the University of California. As a follower of Hegel, and a pupil of Dr. William T. Harris, she had been called upon by this Unitarian Professor to explain the position of her teachers on some of the more vital points of the Hegelian system. She stood alone -- the majority of those present being Prof. Howison's own pupils and therefore naturally of his philosophical bent. And there for a long session she met and parried their attack, answering, explaining, defining, illustrating as composedly as if she had been in her own class-room. As I recall it, no other woman took part in the discussion, but men with a professional training behind them, legal, scientific, philosophic -- some of the keenest intellects in San Francisco and Oakland.

I see her yet as she stood there under the lamplight, her gold-bronze hair agleam, her dark eyes glowing, her strongly yet delicately featured face alight with the fire of a roused mentality. It was a supreme moment. The city papers of the following day referred to her as "a Modern Hypatia," and spoke in warm terms of her incomparable defense.<sup>40</sup>

The dearth of available information makes it unclear whether Kies' dispute with a distinguished faculty member from another institution would have jeopardized her status at Mills. In any case, after just one year at this institution, Kies spent a year abroad, taking on a "strenuous student life at Zurich and Leipsic."<sup>41</sup> She followed this year of study with what could only have been considered a step down academically, even in the nineteenth century's more fluid educational hierarchy: the principalship of a public high school in Plymouth, Massachusetts. This was "a large and difficult" school to manage, although Kies was able to maintain her role here for three years, considerably longer than her stay at Mills.<sup>42</sup> Then in

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<sup>39</sup> Mathews, *Memoriam*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Hodgkins, *Memoriam*, 71. Unfortunately, I have been unable to identify which newspaper Hodgkins refers to here.

<sup>41</sup> Mathews, *Memoriam*, 19; Hodgkins, *Memoriam*, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Mathews, *Memoriam*, 20.

1896 she re-entered the world of higher education and accepted another faculty position at Butler, where she "took the Chair of English Literature."<sup>43</sup>

### *At Butler University*

Kies arrived at Butler with two other young faculty members who were also new to the institution, Edward Scribner Ames and Jacob Forrest, and the three received high praise:

It has been a subject of congratulation that we have been able to secure the services of three additional professors whose degrees represent extensive study in the best universities in this country and abroad, and whose personal worth give assurance of long usefulness in Butler College.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, Kies was singled out as someone who would help to strengthen the English department, which was being re-structured. She was to be professor of rhetoric, a field of study that was replacing elocution, which would now be taught in the department of "physical culture."<sup>45</sup> This position also seems to have come with the responsibility of coaching the debate team, and Kies seems not only to have done this part of her job well, but also to have enjoyed it. According to her colleagues, she was a born teacher, and regularly spent extra hours devoting herself to this aspect of her work with the students,<sup>46</sup> even contributing articles to the student newspaper praising the debate team and testifying to the importance of persuasive discourse.<sup>47</sup> Better still, Kies was officially recognized for both her success in and commitment to this extracurricular work.

Kies assumed other responsibilities beyond her regular academic appointment as well. In the 1897-98 school year, for example, she took on the classes of a Prof. Brown, a Greek scholar it seems, who was too ill to teach.<sup>48</sup> Thankfully, this was not looked upon by Butler administrators as a volunteer effort. In fact, Kies was compensated for this extra work, receiving \$150 on top of her \$800 annual salary.

Other para-academic tasks, however, did not earn Kies additional recognition, nor certainly extra compensation, perhaps largely because it was taken as given that a professor -- particularly a female

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<sup>43</sup> Pradel, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Butler University Archives, Minutes of the Board of Directors of Butler College, July 14, 1897, p. 317-18.

<sup>45</sup> Butler University Archives, Minutes of the Board of Directors of Butler College, April 14, 1897, p. 302.

<sup>46</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 30-32.

<sup>47</sup> *Butler Collegian*, vol. 13, no. 9, p. 337-341, (June 1898).

<sup>48</sup> Butler College, Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 13, 1898; Mathews, Memoriam, 31.

professor -- would make certain contributions to the Butler community. First, Kies offered a regular Bible study for female students as part of the College's YWCA group.<sup>49</sup> This is not terribly surprising, given the more pervasive influence of religion during this time period. Yet there is no evidence that male professors were expected to devote this extra time to male students. It may be, of course, that a clergy member was designated to fulfill this duty for male students. Since very few women were ordained at this time,<sup>50</sup> no such person would have been available to attend to female students' training.

It is also interesting and very telling to note that women faculty were expected to alternate with the wives of faculty members to host "at home days" for students. These seem to have been 'tea and cookies' sorts of meetings, complete with entertaining parlor games, that were scheduled for two hours every weekday in the late afternoon or evening. Kies' designated time slot was the second and fourth Friday evening, and on at least one occasion, she featured a parlor game in which "The Mt. Holyoke Wreath" was the prize.<sup>51</sup> But despite the clue this tidbit of information gives us about Kies' personality and sense of connection to Mt. Holyoke, it can't help but grate on one's nerves from a feminist perspective. Both women and men, no doubt, were expected to take on a leadership role and to be models of conduct within the community. And, based on reports of various "at home days" in Butler's student newspaper, both students and hosts thoroughly enjoyed the chance to socialize. Yet from a twenty-first century point of view, it is wearisome indeed to see this quasi-caretaking role thrust upon certain faculty members simply because they were female.

As one of few women in academia at the time, however, practices that segregated women and men were part of Kies day-to-day experience, and hosting two "at home days" per month was certainly less harmful than some forms that discrimination between the sexes could take. For instance, when Kies was hired at Butler, she was placed in the English department, even though her work at Michigan had been in

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<sup>49</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 31; *Butler Collegian*, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 155, (January 1897).

<sup>50</sup> Antoinette Brown Blackwell was the first woman ordained in any protestant denomination in America, by the Congregational church in 1853. Others followed, but at a fairly slow pace. Olympia Brown and Phebe Hanaford, Universalists; Lucretia Mott, a Quaker; and Anna Howard Shaw, a Methodist were among the few women ordained between 1860 and 1890.

<sup>51</sup> *Butler Collegian*, vol. 13, no. 2, p. 78, (November 1897).

political philosophy and she had studied under well-respected philosophers.<sup>52</sup> Her colleague, Edward Ames, who was her junior by several years and someone with little teaching experience,<sup>53</sup> on the other hand, was offered a place in the philosophy department without a second thought. It is tempting to speculate about how Kies felt about being relegated to English, what has generally been considered a more feminine field, after teaching philosophy at Mt. Holyoke for seven years.

Yet the considerably lower pay that Kies received compared to her male faculty colleagues was likely to have been of more immediate concern. And Kies experienced this in conjunction with being passed over for a promotion later in her career at Butler. As professor of rhetoric, Kies was also considered an "assistant" to Flora Bridges whom we might call the chair of the English department, although this title was not used uniformly at the time. During the 1996-97 academic year, however, Bridges was struck with an illness of some sort and was unable to assume her regular duties. Kies seems to have picked up some of Bridges' responsibilities, and was thanked for it in the meeting minutes of the college's board of directors, but not compensated it seems.<sup>54</sup> Further, when it came time to make a decision about how to fill the gap left by Bridges at the year's end, the board passed over Kies and instead appointed William D. Howe to chair the English department. Kies was to remain in the assistant position. Had Howe been older or appreciably more experienced, such a decision would be understandable. Yet at this point in his career, Howe had not even received his doctoral degree. Granted, he was a Harvard Ph.D. candidate, and this alone has spoken volumes throughout American history. Even so, Howe's *curriculum vitae* shows him to have had far less experience than Kies. He had completed his bachelor's degree only four years earlier and had very little teaching experience, holding two fellowships since completing his master's work. The board decided, however, to hire Howe as chair at a salary of \$1,100 compared to the \$800 Kies would continue to receive as assistant.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> This assigning of a professor to departments other than those for which they were trained was not uncommon. Howison and Royce each experienced this. (See Howison biography and *Letters of Josiah Royce*.) Yet in each of their cases this occurred earlier, by a decade or more, when higher education was (even) less systematic than it was in Marietta's case.

<sup>53</sup> Butler University Special Collections, college yearbook, "The Drift" 1899. At this point in his career, Ames had taught as a fellow at the University of Chicago, after studying with Dewey and Mead.

<sup>54</sup> Butler College, Minutes of the Board of Directors, July 14, 1897, p. 316.

<sup>55</sup> Butler College, Minutes of the Board of Directors, April 12, 1899, p. 387, gives Prof. Howe's salary; Minutes for April 13, 1898, p. 356 gives hers.

Both of these incidents point to a cycle of sexism that it was virtually impossible for women in Kies' era to escape. Certainly her personal and professional history was "remarkable" in the words of one memorialist, particularly since she had come "from a home where she had absolutely no encouragement intellectually."<sup>56</sup> If her background was as impoverished as it appears to have been and her family life as troubled as her parents' divorce suggests, it truly is a miracle that Kies attended Mt. Holyoke at all, let alone ventured on to do advanced degree work. But the simple fact of the matter is that the male colleagues who received promotions and higher salaries while she remained behind to double as a professor-and-at-home-day-hostess had earned both their graduate and undergraduate degrees from Johns Hopkins, the University of Chicago, Yale, and as mentioned, Harvard, none of which granted graduate degrees to women until after Kies had completed her doctoral work at Michigan.<sup>57</sup> So when decision-makers chose Howe or Ames over Kies for more prestigious posts there was a ready-made explanation: these gentlemen had a more impressive educational record. But equal higher education for women was hard to come by when Kies entered the academic world, which means that she was virtually without access to the very institutions whose degrees would help her to gain higher status positions. In short, if Anna Brackett was indeed correct when she declared that no women's college, no matter how good it is, is as good as most men's universities, Kies' deck was stacked against her from the start.

Kies had developed a severe cough just prior to taking the professorship at Butler in 1896; this proved to be a case of tuberculosis, which later took her life. She had always been a hard worker according to friends, a character trait may have turned out to be almost literally suicidal in this case.<sup>58</sup> Over the course of her three years at Butler, she seems to have maintained a demanding workload despite her illness, but by 1899 she was in dire need of rest. She was able to carry out her plan to complete the school year, and even to travel to Colorado where she hoped to be able to recover at the home of her cousin, Edwin Davis. But

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<sup>56</sup> S. Sherberne Mathews' Letter to James B. Angell, from File on Marietta Kies, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>57</sup> Johns Hopkins awarded its first doctoral degree to a woman in 1893; Yale in 1894; Chicago in 1895. Harvard did not grant advanced degrees to women until well into the twentieth century – in fact, Mary Whiton Calkins went to her grave without being conferred with the degree, because she refused to accept a Ph.D. from Radcliffe, arguing that her work was with Harvard professors, therefore she deserved a Harvard degree.

<sup>58</sup> Memoriam, p.

this was the limit to which she could extend herself, and just under a month after she left Butler, Kies died at the age of forty-five.

### **Connections with the St. Louis Circle and at Concord**

Kies does not seem to have had close ties to the other women idealists under discussion here, although she was familiar with at least some of their published work. She was certainly familiar with Susan Blow's *Study of Dante* and Brackett's 1893 edition of Rosenkranz's *Pedagogics, The Philosophy of Education*, citing both of them in *Institutional Ethics*.<sup>59</sup> In her use of Blow, it is clear that Kies considered this colleague's work worthy of attention, since she used points made by Blow to illustrate ideas of her own about moral acts and human nature. Significant, too, is the fact that Susan Blow was also familiar with Kies' *Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*, which she cited in *Symbolic Education*. In the case of Brackett's work, however, Kies focused on Harris' introduction and commentary to the book, rather than on the concepts Brackett conveyed, emphasized, or dismissed in this or earlier editions of the *Pedagogics*.

Aside from the fact that Kies was Harris' student at the Concord School, there are no definitive links between her and other women who had picked up on Hegel's thought earlier in St. Louis. Mitchell, Bibb, Blow, Fruchte, and others, of course, were all present at the Concord lectures, but with attendance as high as 200-250, the majority of whom were women, there is no guarantee that Kies would have become close to any of them. Yet Kies was certainly a known entity in the world of philosophy at this time – among both men and women in the group, because she was one of four women suggested to be lecturers at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Caroline K. Sherman, liaison between the Woman's Branch and the Philosophy and Science Committee of the Exposition, suggested Kies as a possible lecturer at the event.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> See *Institutional Ethics*, 41 and 95.

<sup>60</sup> Sherman's criticism was that Kies was too loyal a disciple of Harris to merit inclusion on the program. Her comments on other women and their merits as lecturers/philosophers is informative: "I ask that two women be given places on the programme if two women can be found who will be a credit to themselves, to the audience, and above all to philosophy. Names have been suggested by various members of the Advisory Council – Mrs. Julia Ward Howe's reputation, tact, and popularity, etc., would render her acceptable to an audience, while her age and acknowledged merit along certain lines would free her from the close criticism that another might received. On the other hand many are tired of Mrs. Howe, think that younger women might share opportunity, etc., etc. Gertrude Garrigues has been named. I object to her voice and mannerism, and she might work so hard to have her paper profoundly Hegelian there might be danger of swamping herself.

An active member of the movement to whom Kies is likely to have been close is Alice A. Graves, a peripheral member of the St. Louis circle who wrote one promising, although brief, article in *JSP*. Graves attended the Concord lectures, but more importantly she studied with Kies at the University of Michigan and, as noted above, was a student of George S. Morris. And Kies is almost certain to have known her in this context. Given the barriers to women's education in this era, it is unlikely that more than a handful of the approximately 175 students in the "Literary Department" at this time were women. Furthermore, with their shared interest in philosophy and the thought of Hegel, Graves and Kies were certain to have been in classes together and thus perhaps to have known each other fairly well. As was also the case with Blow and Brackett during their years in the St. Louis public school system, however, it isn't possible to determine the extent of Kies' friendship with Graves, only that they were sure to have been acquainted.

### **Other Associates**

The published memorial to Kies refers primarily to associates outside the St. Louis circle who also seem to have been valued friends; most of these were also entering the ranks of professional women in academia. Ida G. Galloway, for instance, was Kies' student at Mt. Holyoke and later fellow faculty member at Mills College. Mary F. Hatch was a colleague of Kies' at Colorado College who continued a friendship with her through her years at Mills and then at Plymouth high school where they spent, "a memorable day by the sea."<sup>61</sup> Georgiana Hodgkins, who gave the vivid account of Kies' dispute with Howison, is among another of her friends and colleagues. Hodgkins first met Kies when they were faculty members and roommates at Mt. Holyoke and seems to have continued on to Mills College where she also taught with Kies in 1891-92. Flora Bridges seems to have been close to Kies, personally and professionally. Bridges

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Miss Kies has been named, but she is so obviously a disciple of Mr. Harris that her work seems like an echo. Ellen Mitchell has merit, but she does not arouse an audience. What she says is apt to fall cold, although it may be good . . ." See Sherman's letter to Davidson, October 27, 1892, in Thomas Davidson Papers, Sterling Library Archives, Yale University. Interestingly, Josiah Royce, made the same criticism of Kies in a brief, but not wholly unfavorable, review of her book *The Ethical Principle* in *The International Journal of Ethics*, 2:517. Royce himself presented a paper at the Chicago Exposition and, as a close associate of Harris, may have had input into program planning. It is likely that his and Sherman's views on Kies influenced or were influenced by each other, and that their agreement confirmed that Kies should not be chosen as one of the two women's representatives on the program. Julia Ward Howe and Eliza Sunderland, a fellow doctoral recipient at Michigan, were the women finally selected for this purpose.

<sup>61</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 36.

taught at both Mt. Holyoke and Butler with Kies. In fact, as noted above, Bridges chaired the department of English at Butler while Kies worked under her as professor of rhetoric. Bridges also led student activities with Kies at Butler, such as senior class day and at-home days.<sup>62</sup> Also while at Butler, Kies assumed many of Bridges' responsibilities when the latter was ill, even beyond day to day academic matters. In fact, Kies took Bridges' place as a discussant of a paper on the teaching of literature at an Indiana State Teachers Association meeting.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, Grace Julian Giddings Clarke was a friend of Kies while she taught at Butler. Clarke was an alumna of Butler, earning a bachelor's degree in 1884 and a master's in 1885. Although it isn't clear what her role was at the University by the time Kies began teaching there in 1896, the two seem to have known each other quite well. Kies spent part of a summer with Clarke and her husband at their home near Chicago in 1898<sup>64</sup> and Clarke, the person Kies relied on for help to get to Colorado before she died, provided anecdotes and insights about Kies' life and character for her eulogist, the Rev. Sherberne Mathews. Clarke was active in the women's movement in Indiana as early as 1892, participating in the Irvington Women's Club and became deeply involved in the suffrage movement in the early twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, there seem to be no archival records of the Irvington Women's Club, so it isn't possible to determine whether Kies shared Clarke's feminist sympathies. In her published writings, however, Kies is clearly not strongly in favor of women's voting rights. She did not seem to share with Blow the fear that women's maternal nature would be tainted by participation in political life, but she also believed that only certain issues -- education, temperance, and some labor questions -- were relevant enough to women to justify the extension of the vote to them.<sup>66</sup>

The significance of Kies' friendships with Galloway, Hatch, Hodgkins, Bridges, and Clarke lies in the fact that all were part of an emerging and growing group of women who were able to take advantage of the opportunities that had become open to women by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Vassar,

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<sup>62</sup> *Butler Collegian*, vol. 12, no. 3, p. 120, (December 1896).

<sup>63</sup> *Butler Collegian*, vol. 12, no. 4, p. 161, (January 1897).

<sup>64</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 30.

<sup>65</sup> See biographical sketch of Grace Julian Giddings Clarke in *Notable American Women 1607-1950*, vol. 1, Edward T. James, ed., (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1971), 342-1.

<sup>66</sup> See Kies, *Institutional Ethics*, p. 209-216, as discussed in part two of this chapter.



Wellesley, Mt. Holyoke, and other women's colleges had begun an important tradition of educating women that had been extended to co-education at the college and university levels at this time. While none in this small group of women reached a terribly high level of prominence and little or no material by or about them has been published, their presence in academe alone is a contribution worth noting. Thankfully, Kies stands apart from this group in that she did indeed publish, and this chapter will now turn to an analysis of these texts.

## **SECTION II: KIES' PHILOSOPHICAL WORK**

### ***The Introduction to the Study of Philosophy***

Kies' first published philosophical work is *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*, a collection of the writings and lectures of William Torrey Harris. As Kies notes in her preface, she developed the book primarily for her classes at Mt. Holyoke to help students begin to understand philosophy's major concerns: characteristics of the mind, the nature of the external world, space, time, causality, and the basis of ultimate reality. She organizes and discusses each of these topics in a very Hegelian fashion -- a la Harris -- keeping self-activity (both human and divine) as the central focus. In fact, the majority of the text is devoted to a discussion of self-activity in its various phases -- over 200 of its 287 pages.

Since Kies did not develop her own thought in this work, but appropriated the thought of Harris for her own use, I will not spend time here discussing the *Introduction* in full. However, I should note that unlike Mitchell whose *Study of Greek Philosophy* was harshly criticized for its lack of originality, Kies was sure to qualify that she saw herself as a compiler only, not the originator of the thoughts expressed in this introductory text. In fact, she carefully quoted Harris throughout the text, indicating the source she was drawing from in every instance, and labeled her own thoughts with the abbreviation "ILL." for "illustration." The result was a work that Kies was praised for, as a woman who was able to systematize the thoughts of one of America's learned men into a cohesive and accessible format for use by beginners. From a contemporary feminist standpoint, of course, it is unfortunate that Kies didn't go a step further and come up with an original work that represented her own thought. In many cases, after all, Kies draws from such distinctly different works that in effect she integrates Harris' own disjointed ideas for him. Perhaps at this point in her career it was too threatening to Kies to attempt to venture off and create a philosophical work of her own. Further still, in this time period it may have been an astute move politically speaking for a woman's first published work to showcase the thought of a man; if Mitchell had had the wisdom to do the same, would she have been so harshly criticized?

### *Justice, Grace, and the 'Ethical Principle'*

Kies' more important works are *The Ethical Principle* and *Institutional Ethics*, two works of political philosophy that contrast "justice" with "grace" and suggest how the two might be used to complement each other in society. The first book, *The Ethical Principle*, was submitted for her Ph.D. thesis at the University of Michigan in 1891. The second, published in 1894, was essentially a rewrite of the first, but with some extremely important additions: on the school, the family, the administration of law, and the role of the church in society. Since the two works match each other so closely, I will not discuss each in full, but instead will outline Kies' arguments as laid out in *The Ethical Principle*, which constitutes the kernel of her thought, then go on to discuss the additional chapters in *Institutional Ethics*.

In many ways, Kies' *Ethical Principle* is a early twenty-first century feminist's dream come true. For in this little volume is an alternative to the picture of political life as drawn by the classical liberal tradition: a society of relative equals in which "justice" reigns supreme. Drawing on Hegel (an unlikely candidate from the perspective of many contemporary feminists),<sup>67</sup> Kies presents another way to view society, and in fact social and political progress. "Grace," Kies suggests, in which altruism takes precedence over self-interest, is an equally valid principle of political action. Better still from a feminist point of view, Kies does not attempt to debunk justice completely, but instead is comfortable asserting two truths simultaneously; justice and grace are not competing but rather are complementary principles in Kies' understanding.

The justice of which Kies speaks is an idea familiar enough to anyone acquainted with modern Western political thought. It is the principle via which each individual obtains his or her due and is "the fundamental principle of individuality." [1] It is the responsibility of each person to assert his/her own rights and render unto others what is rightfully theirs. In the realm of justice, the individual "thinks, feels and acts, and receives the like in kind, nothing better, nothing worse." [1-2] Society is by and large an aggregate of individuals in the system that holds justice as primary, and social happiness is roughly equally to the sum of the happiness of all individuals within society. To Kies, this is a mistaken notion, and one that she believes can be repaired by infusing grace into political theory.

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<sup>67</sup> See especially Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

Given her ties to the Christian Socialist movement, there is no doubt that Kies used the term ‘grace’ purposefully. In Christian theology, the word has great import, of course. It speaks to the wholly undeserved gift of salvation that God bestowed upon human beings through Jesus, God incarnate. It is both the gift of salvation itself – i.e., the rescue from eternal damnation – and the process of redemption/regeneration. It also has come to be a shorthand term for divine love. Interestingly, however, Kies does not expound a theology-rich political theory as many in the Christian Socialist movement, such as Rauschenbusch, did. Instead, she simply invokes the term ‘grace’ – perhaps partly for its novel implications in this context – and continues on with her political theory. Furthermore, she defines and contextualizes the term early in the work.

Whereas the process in justice excludes the yielding of one's own for the sake of another, the process of self-sacrifice, of grace, is in its very nature the yielding of one's own immediate thoughts for self for those of, and in reference to, another. [EP2]

It is important to note that here Kies is not simply one of many women thinkers in this period to endorse a heavy-handed Christian doctrine of self-sacrifice (particularly by women) -- this is not the case at all. In fact later in the work, Kies carefully distinguishes between the altruism that she espouses and self-sacrifice for self-sacrifice's sake.[EP12] In fact, attempts at martyrdom are self-centered in Kies' view, because true altruism takes *others* as its object; it does not merely seek self-denial as an end in itself. Furthermore, Kies does not even hint toward a gender dichotomy in her analysis of justice and grace. At no point in her discussion does she suggest that altruism is more readily sought, achieved, or understood by women than by men.<sup>68</sup> Instead, the grace of which Kies speaks is a principle applicable to men and women alike, and which may originate in the private sphere, but can and should be exported to the public realm.

Yet for Kies both justice and grace certainly have their places in an ethical hierarchy. She even seems to have anticipated twentieth century theories of moral development, listing a number of stages that are passed through on the way to realizing the ethical principle. First there are passions, such as jealousy, lust, and revenge, that are below even the child-grade of ethical behavior. But despite the fact that these are

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<sup>68</sup> This stands in contrast to contemporary feminists whose theories have asserted that gender difference is at the root of moral or ethical decision-making. It is ironic that, without so much as hinting at gender difference, Kies has spontaneously arrived at the type of moral theory Carol Gilligan suggested might evolve if different (i.e., women's) voices were allowed into the moral/political dialogue.

lowly states of mind, they do have a place on the ethical continuum, "for so long as human beings associate together, there is a phase of the ethical" [9-10] in all human activity. Second is the child-grade of ethical behavior in which an individual relies on external authority for guidance. This is followed by an individualism that is characterized simply by differentiation of self from other, which can easily develop into the fourth level -- i.e., pure individualism, otherwise known as egoism. Egoism, of course, is the most selfish sort of individualism, in which one's needs are selfishly sought and sometimes callously attained. A more enlightened form of individualism consists simply in the quest for individual happiness. This is the ethical ideal sought by utilitarianism and is generally considered quite benign. Harm to others is avoided, of course, but individual fulfillment is supreme within this stage. Sixth, the utilitarian ideal is extended to the society as a whole, and an aggregate of happiness is thought to be the highest good to be achieved. Finally, we come to the highest stage, which for Kies is altruism. The altruistic individual keeps others as the center of interest and seeks his/her own good only in the "reflected good" that arises as a result of his/her assistance to others. When individuals seek not merely what will bring them pleasure, but are content with the reflected good that their altruistic behavior brings, then the good for all of society is possible.

The "ethical principle" -- i.e., altruism -- is an ideal which may be unattainable, and this Kies recognizes explicitly. [15-16] Yet it is an ideal that one should pursue, because although humans are finite creatures, their thoughts and ideals are infinite and therefore of a divine nature. In fact, ultimately Kies will say that the reason altruism is the highest stage in her ethical hierarchy is because it is most closely modelled after the Christian religion -- hence the word 'grace' to describe the highest stage of ethical thinking -- and as such links the human and the divine. Since human understandings of the ethical and ideals of social good evolve over time, humanity stumbles through the above-listed ethical stages in its quest for perfection, often falling far short of the altruistic ideal.

Having made the distinction between justice and grace clear, Kies now traverses some familiar Hegelian terrain to outline her understanding of the institutions of society and the nature of the state. As with the majority of the Hegelians in this study, Kies recognizes the family as the fundamental social institution. A person is born into a certain concrete family situation and is shaped and directed by the care provided there. There is also, of course, civil society in which the individual differentiates self from other,

and the state which binds the individual to the whole and allows him/her to develop fully as a human being. But Kies points to mediating institutions that are part of the larger whole as well, institutions that play a central role in the theories of her St. Louis contemporaries and her own theory. The first is, unsurprisingly, the school. While Kies acknowledges that this is not a fundamental institution, she does note that as a voluntary organization it supplements the family's educative role. [20] She also recognizes another institution, namely industry, which is another minor institution that allows the individual limited participation in the public realm. Finally, there is the church, which in its ideal is the entrance into communion with Christ, but in its actual manifestation is a voluntary organization like the school which aids in individual self-development.

As noted above, Kies adds chapters to *Institutional Ethics* in which she discusses the role of the school and of the church. In *The Ethical Principle*, however, after this brief overview, Kies turns to the nature of the state "as a moral personality." Therefore, in my review of her thought I will follow her lead. Since the essence of the individual is freedom, and the foundation of the nation is also freedom, the state's role is to facilitate individual freedom, but *within society*. [30-31] Generally, justice has been thought to be the ideal ethical principle to help the individual attain such freedom, and Kies recognizes that justice is fundamental to the activity of the state. In line with Hegel, Kies believes that the state cannot concern itself with abstract "duty" nor with intention. In the first case, duty apart from a concrete set of circumstances is empty; in the second, this is a matter of the internal workings of an individual that cannot be read from the outside, nor guessed at by any arm of the state. Instead, the state takes justice as its guide, and uses it to measure the external act performed by the individual in a particular instance. In the ideal world the act and the intention behind it would correspond, but this is impossible for the state to determine and therefore is beyond its concern. [37-38] But while justice is the fundamental principle of the state, grace too has a role to play in state affairs. Reform movements, for example, have had as their guiding principle self-sacrifice rather than self-interest. Reform leaders both within government and without have practiced altruism themselves and encouraged it among their followers.[36-37] Furthermore, by calling for the suffering of

some, reformers working on behalf of the abolitionist movement, for example, helped effect changes that resulted in the betterment of all.[EP17]<sup>69</sup>

As a preface to her assertion that it is within the province of the state to enforce altruism as a policy, Kies outlines three "attitudes that society presents to the individual" as models for behavior: 1) the principle of individualism, i.e., justice as discussed above; 2) an extreme socialism, in which individual rights "intersect at too many points" and obliterate individuality; and 3) true socialism, or helpfulness, in which individuals recognize that assisting the weak will benefit the whole. [40-42] The last of these is clearly Kies' preferred social "attitude," although she notes that this would be a *voluntary* self-sacrifice by the strong on behalf of the weak.

At this point, it is important to note that another of Kies' mentors, Henry C. Adams may have been an important influence on her. Adams does not seem to have been an associate of Harris, and he didn't lecture at the Concord School. But he was an influential figure in other circles in his day, publishing a number of works on political theory and economics, hosting a summer school on political economy and ethics in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and later serving as statistician and economist to the U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission (1904-09). He had held a dual appointment at Michigan and Cornell from 1880-81 to 1886-87, teaching alternate semesters at each school when he was ousted from Cornell because his advocacy of the labor movement made its administrators uneasy. In the particular instance that disturbed Cornell higher-ups, a labor group grew violent during a strike that Adams had supported whole-heartedly in a previously published address. Adams seems to have been labelled a socialist and was promptly dismissed from Cornell, despite the University's claims to the contrary. The issue and Cornell's reaction to it was so touchy that the University of Michigan's president, James B. Angell, was fearful of keeping Adams on his staff at all, let alone give him a full-time appointment. It was only after a long letter from Adams in which he made a plea for academic freedom -- along with a partial retraction of his pro-labor article -- that Angell took the chance of keeping him at Michigan<sup>70</sup> where he remained to the end of his career.

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<sup>69</sup> Kies also mentions the struggle on behalf of women's higher education here.

<sup>70</sup> See "Introductory Essay," in *Relation of the State to Industrial Action and Economics and Jurisprudence: Two Essays by Henry Carter Adams*, James Dorfman, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 37-42, citing a March 15, 1887 letter from Adams to Angell.

Since the uproar over Adams' purported socialism took place in 1886-87, the year just prior to Kies' first year of attendance at the University of Michigan, it is likely that she was aware of his political views before becoming one of his students. As noted, she had ties to the Christian Socialist movement, "the prevalence [of which] on earth she earnestly looked and every prayed [for],"<sup>71</sup> so almost certainly shared his views. In either case, the "attitude" she hoped society would encourage individuals to take, along with the following distinction she makes between the two "classes" of laws and their application, both point to Kies' socialist sympathies -- albeit, like Adams, a qualified socialism.

Kies calls the first set of laws "protective," and she recognizes that they guard freedom in the negative sense. That is, protective legislation ensures non-interference by other individuals and/or by the state in the pursuit of individual happiness. But there is also a class of "constructive" laws which are not only protective in the negative sense, but are "also positively helpful to one or more classes of society." These laws go beyond preventing one individual or group from harming another, but assert state power to promote the goals of members of a particular class, individually or collectively. [45-46] This distinction by itself is neither new, nor particularly significant; the distinction between positive and negative laws was made well before Kies' time and has continued to be a helpful political philosophical tool since. What is significant, however, is the way in which Kies uses this distinction to advance her theory as a whole.

In Kies' understanding, protective legislation provides only the thinnest layer of security from outside interference for each individual as an equal among equals. It does nothing to nurture individual human potential nor the growth of an entire class of people. Examples of protective legislation include laws against trespass, theft, and assault as well as those requiring payment of taxes. In the first case, individuals are prohibited from harming each other, thus advancing self-interest in the Hobbesian sense: Each individual, in being guarded against the too-aggressive actions of another, is able to pursue his/her own egoistic goals. In the second, each person is required to fulfill his or her obligation to the government; a promotion of self-interest in the utilitarian sense: The sacrifice of a relatively small amount by each results in a wealth of resources for the whole, allowing the whole (the state) to continue to provide a veil of

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<sup>71</sup> Mathews, Memoriam, 25.



protection for each individual. Protective legislation not only supports but promotes the pursuit of self-interest, and therefore is based on the principle of justice, in Kies' view.

The second set of protective laws might be thought to be a constructive provision in that by paying taxes each individual is contributing to the betterment of all. Yet in Kies' system, this level of self-sacrifice isn't sufficient to be considered constructive. Constructive laws are more pro-active than this. Examples of such are laws establishing a progressive income tax and those that prohibit monopolies.[52] In contrast to merely being required to pay taxes, and thus each contributing to the betterment of the whole on a minimal level, a progressive income tax recognizes economic inequities in society and places the burden of contributing to the financial well-being of the state on the wealthy. It actually requires that a certain level of altruism be enforced so that the state can "provide to a reasonable extent for the needs of its poor and unfortunate classes." [65] And Kies' rationale is typically Hegelian: society is an organic unity, and suffering by any of its members harms society as an entity. Similarly, in Kies' view the existence of monopolies is to be curbed by constructive legislation. Yet, she doesn't go into the details of how these constructive laws are to be enacted. This may be due to the fact that at the time she was writing, the labor and anti-trust movements were beginning to gain force, and she assumed knowledge on the part of her readers. The Baltimore and Ohio railroad strike of 1877 initiated a series of labor protests, culminating with the Pullman strikes in 1896. Similarly, the outcry against trusts and monopolies had gained strength in the country at this time, and was being debated as the Sherman Bill in Congress in 1889-90 session, the year before Kies wrote this book. Her readers would certainly have been familiar with the social unrest she was referring to, even if they didn't agree with her assessment of the situation:

the excessive greed and monopolies in ownership of the present time can be successfully replaced by a system more nearly in justice to all only by changing the thought of the nation on this question.[52]

Once public opinion had been changed, "just and lasting laws" would follow, and society will have attained "the higher plane of thought"[52] in which the principle of grace will have primacy.

It is interesting to note that for Kies grace functions on two levels. In one sense it is an ideal to be aspired to in private life. We are all better people, in Kies' view, when we keep the needs of others primary and relinquish our own selfish interests. By putting others first, we receive "reflected good." Although Kies

does not define this term, it seems safe to assume that "reflected good" is a sort of vicarious pleasure, the benefit of seeing our own altruistic act result in someone else's joy or success. But as is clear from her rather strong statements about the nature of constructive laws, it is clear that Kies sees grace as being necessary as a public ethic as well. In fact, she cites several examples beyond those given above in which government can -- even must -- enact altruistic policies. In the railroad industry, sanitation policy, education and labor law, and penal reform, government has been called upon to enact not merely protective, but constructive legislation. And state leaders' willingness to do so

indicates that the intimate connection and relation of all members of society is more clearly understood than in preceding centuries; it [also] indicates that the public has an interest in classes in society that are suffering injustice for others, and in those who are weak, poor, and unfortunate. [72-3]

As was common for thinkers in her era, it is clear from this statement that Kies believed that societal development is progressive, that her era was more advanced than those previous, and that (hopefully) following eras would advance even further. She also asserts that constructive legislation demonstrates an advancement in society's "ethical education" and that ultimately coercion will become unnecessary as a means to realizing the principle of grace in the world.[73]

Furthermore, Kies quite consciously limits her discussion to the "so-called field of competitive industrial activity,"[97] precisely because it is usually considered *the* domain of self-interest. Regarding the extent to which Kies remains true to Hegel's thought, this is an especially important point. After all, in *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel makes it clear that civil society was indeed characterized by individualism and self-interest, recast as a system of wants.<sup>72</sup> And in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel indicates that a formal and abstract "virtue" that tries to subvert individuality within civil society is bound to fail, even to contradict itself, because it is the very nature of individuality to assert itself in this realm.<sup>73</sup> Are we to conclude then that Kies was an undereducated Hegelian, unaware of the more nuanced points of his argument? This is highly unlikely. Kies went to study in both Leipsic and Zurich the year after publishing this book. Therefore, she must have been proficient enough in German to have studied Hegel in the

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<sup>72</sup> See especially *Philosophy of Right*, paragraph 187, 188, and the Addition to 184.

<sup>73</sup> See *Philosophy of Right*, paragraphs 389 and 392.

original. In addition, George S. Morris, had published a book that outlines *The Philosophy of Right* thoroughly. In fact, Morris' biggest fault in *Hegel's Philosophy of the State and of History* is that he was so true to Hegel that he virtually paraphrased him. So Kies was well-acquainted with Hegel's argument in its entirety, whether she read it herself or read Morris' faithful account of it.

The only notable exception is Hegel's gender dichotomy in which he claims that men's nature is external and objective and that they are realized in civil society while women's nature is internal and subjective, and they attain realization within the home. This is an idea that Morris neglected even to mention in his account of Hegel. Such a crucial omission gives us an important clue to the approach of Harris and his associates to certain elements of Hegel's thought. As Brackett's explicit rejection of Rosenkranz's similar claim that girls needn't be given a thorough physical education also suggests, America's early Hegelians seem simply to have dismissed such ideas as remnants of outdated ideas and either amended or excised them altogether.

Key concepts in Hegel's understanding of civil society remained intact in Morris' rendition of her theory of the state. Morris clearly outlined and explained Hegel's system of needs and of the estates. He also remained loyal to Hegel's view of civil society as the realm of individuation, generally speaking.<sup>74</sup> And as a student of Morris at the University of Michigan, Kies undoubtedly would have been familiar with this book. So whence Kies' reformulation of the nature of industrial relations, which is a segment of civil society? First of all, Kies is interested in taking seriously Hegel's idea that society is an organic whole. Second, she takes even more seriously his understanding that the state unifies all members of society, and at all levels, reinforcing the "wholeness" of this organic whole. Third, she introduces altruism as a possible cure for a social ill that was also of great concern to Hegel: the potentially devastating effects that industrialization can have on the poor. Or as one translator from this period rendered it, Hegel was concerned about the "untrammelled activity" of civil society.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See *Philosophy of Right*, §189-208 regarding the system of needs and role of the estates, and §182-187 regarding civil society as the realm in which a person becomes individuated.

<sup>75</sup> See S.W. Dyde's translation of *The Philosophy of Right* §243, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), 231. Other quotations of Hegel are from the H.B. Nisbet translation, Allen W. Wood, editor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Hegel recognized that contingent factors are often the cause of poverty, and this condition leaves them “with the needs of civil society . . . [which] at the same time [has] taken from them the natural means of acquisition.”<sup>76</sup> Yet Hegel was perplexed about how exactly a “rabble” is to be dealt with, should such a class arise. He noted that private charity alone could not adequately make provisions for the poor, but should be supplemented with a system of public assistance.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, however, if a system for public welfare becomes too effective, and the poor were to be sustained at an acceptable standard of living, they “would be ensured [a livelihood] without the mediation of work [which] would be contrary to the principle of civil society and the feeling of self-sufficiency and honour among its individual members.”<sup>78</sup>

This problem was both an inevitable outcome of the success of commerce in the industrial world, and an irreconcilable contradiction within it. Hegel could see only two approaches to such a situation: to “leave the poor to their fate” and force them into public begging, as was the practice in England in Hegel’s day, or to expand the domestic economy by means of foreign trade and colonialism.<sup>79</sup> The first option, begging, provides “the most direct means of dealing with poverty, and particularly with the renunciation of shame and honour”; the second, pursuit of gain, motivates individuals to overcome the obstacles presented by traversing both land and sea. In a sense, colonialism is an expanded version of the natural growth of industry for Hegel. Once a nation’s internal expansion had reached its limits, naturally it had to turn to prospects in other lands to ensure a livelihood for its own people.

In considering her discussion of industry then, it might help to take literally the title of Adams' book, *The Relation of the State to Industrial Action* which she cites at points in *The Ethical Principle*, and look at Kies as one who is assessing the ways in which the state and industry interact. Taking this title literally provides the key, I believe, to Kies' justice/grace system. She is proposing guidelines for government intervention into civil society. The latter may indeed be the realm of free competition among individuals, but the former is a unity into which all else is subsumed. Hegel makes suggestive statements in which he comes very close to advocating state action to ensure the welfare of the whole, yet he falls short in the end.

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<sup>76</sup> PR, §241.

<sup>77</sup> PR, §242, including Note.

<sup>78</sup> PR, §245.

<sup>79</sup> PR, §246-248.

He recognizes the reciprocal relationship that the individual and society participate in, for instance, maintaining that, as members of the public, individuals have a right not to be cheated by producers. And he entrusts the regulation of such businesses to the public authority. [PR §236] Yet, this is the same public authority that is responsible for maintaining roads and bridges, public utilities and other necessities of community life. These still amount to protective measures only, not the truly altruistic constructive measures that Kies is calling for.

In Kies view, when competition harms one or more of civil society's members, the state as the manifestation of reason in the ethical world must *by its nature* rectify the situation. For certain spontaneous, competitive forces within civil society to damage and possibly even to destroy the organism as a whole would be irrational, after all. Looked at this way then, Kies is taking Hegel's acknowledgement of the problem of the welfare of the poor one step further. She is playing out what it means for the state to be rational in regard to the industrial powers that dominated in her day; and this is to enforce altruism. A quote from Kies herself supports my interpretation:

The voice of the organic whole, speaking through representatives who see the needs and correct relations of the different individual groups, demands that one class in society who will not voluntarily give up privileges which their position in society enables them to get, must be compelled to act as if they saw the good of others and the true interests of all classes. [79]

The big strength that Kies brings to the dilemma that Hegel would have left us with is this: she focuses not on the poor and what government should or should not do for them, but on the wealthy and powerful and what the state can legitimately demand of *them* to help improve the plight of the less fortunate. Given the fact that Kies' main project is to explicate her theory of altruism, this makes sense. Her questions were not "What might we expect the poor to do for themselves? What will make them better, more productive citizens?" Instead, she asked: "What can we ask of the commercial powers and well-to-do in order to alleviate the effects of poverty? How can we ensure that large powerful forces in society do not impinge on the rights and interests of those of minimal means and influence?"

At the same time, Kies recognizes that there are legitimate limits to state action. Kies declares that "in many relations of society, assistance from the state other than protective laws is unnecessary, [and] when equilibrium can be preserved without it, [state action] only corrupts and destroys the individuality of the

assisted class." [95-96] Based on this statement, then, it is clear that Kies does agree with Hegel's understanding of civil society operating spontaneously as the realm of individualism. But when a corporate body, such as the cotton or woolen industry, amasses so much power as to obliterate the autonomy of those beholden to it -- whether for goods, services, or employment -- then the state must intervene, check the industry's power, and provide safeguards against it on behalf of weaker forces. Since "the will of man is essentially freedom," neither industrial forces, nor state power should infringe upon that freedom. In fact, in Kies' view when the state

take[s] away from any individual or class rights that are inherent in the personality of man, just then the state begins a process of the destruction of its members, and so begins a process of [its own] dissolution and death. [91]

Again, the state, *as reason made manifest* must act in a rational manner. It would be as irrational for the state to overstep its bounds and thereby undermine individual freedom as it would to fail to act and allow individual freedom to be annihilated.

It is significant that Kies is committed to altruistic action by the *state*. She rejects outright the common conservative suggestion that natural altruistic impulse will become manifest as private charitable organizations and that this can adequately address the ills of society. "Spontaneous private charity," Kies insists, is not "definite and systematized." [EP87] Therefore, it won't ensure that the weaker members of society are provided for. Instead altruism is to be promoted through the enactment of rational laws:

Since the true aim of a nation is . . . to secure a harmonious development of all its members, any legislation which wilfully violates or ignores the rights of any class or group of producers, or forgets to secure the good of an oppressed class, cannot in the long run prove to be correct legislation. [EP86]

"Correct legislation" by a rational state requires exactly the kind of monitoring described above. It must ensure that one force does not acquire so much power that it undermines the free development of individuals. In this way the state protects the natural and continuous development of the whole. At the same time, the state mustn't overreact to what are simply the normal workings of society by restricting freedoms of any one individual (even when that individual is a corporation) or group. The state must pass just, rational laws that will avoid both extremes. But in Kies' view, time has shown that the "laws that time

has proved to be most beneficial to society have place[d] the good of society before private immediate good to the individual." [EP91] Therefore, in her view it is better to err on the side of grace rather than of justice.

In actual practice, however, justice and grace do in fact complement each other rather than compete. In fact, there are three ways to approach industrial relations: 1) from the point of view of self-interest (justice); 2) from the point of view of altruism (grace); or 3) from the point of view of economy and environment (pragmatism). [EP103] Kies goes through a number of examples of how a decision-maker would address real-life problems, depending on the perspective he or she takes. In all cases, the "economic man" would act according to self-interest, the "ethical man" would base his decision on altruism, and the "practical man" would do his best to strike a balance between egoistic/economic interests and altruistic considerations. The commentary Kies laces within this extensive list of examples demonstrates that her own position is more moderate than much of her earlier discussion has suggested. For instance, she points out that, given a chance to purchase a large tract of farm land, the standard altruistic approach might in fact not be the best route to take. Certainly it isn't ethical for the "economic man" to buy up all he can in order to exploit them as "bonanza farms." [110] Yet neither is it as noble as it might seem for the "ethical man" who "realizes that it is necessary . . . that an opportunity be given for [individuals] . . . to exercise [their] own energy upon [their] own material environment" to sell the land in small parcels at reasonable prices or to lease it long-term for co-operative farming. More beneficial overall is the "practical man's" decision to aim for the mean between these two extremes in Kies' view. He realizes that it would be a waste of capital and of resources to divide the land up among several owners. This is because he understands that a large farm is more efficient and will yield more opportunities for labor for working people. A "concentration of means is necessary" in this case, so the "practical man" would carry on large-scale farming, but would hire workers at reasonable wages and carry on business dealings in an ethical manner. [EP110-113]

Kies uses this dialectic of ethics to firmly establish her point: "the ethical principle" -- i.e., grace or altruism -- is in fact operative, even in business and industry. Furthermore, altruism needn't have harmful effects, but can support enhanced productivity in many instances. Finally, altruism may even come to be relied on more fully in the future. In closing, Kies declares that

the 'economic man' of Mill's conception has become the 'practical man' of present writers through the recognition of the fact that men in business relations are moved by motives other than that of self-interest . . . and the 'practical man' of future generations will . . . resemble the ethical man of the present. [131]

### ***Kies on the Family***

As noted above, Kies added entire chapters to *Institutional Ethics* that give us important information about her thought as well as clues about the ways in which Hegel was appropriated by her idealist contemporaries -- Harris, et al. Regarding the family, Kies gives a standard Hegelian description for the most part. She describes the family as being the foundation of both the church and the state, notes that its origin is in the monogamous union of a man and woman, and indicates that in marriage these two people in essence become one. Yet there are also important departures from Hegel in Kies' discussion of the family. First, the only hint that a woman is more suited for activity in the private sphere comes in Kies' discussion of the education of children. Here she notes that the duty of raising and educating children lies *equally* with the mother and father, although "the necessary division of labor and duties between the father and mother . . . [and] the early direction of infant life necessarily devolves upon the mother." [69-70] On this point, there is a similarity between Kies and Brackett. We see Kies denying the existence of maternal instinct, per se. Early in a child's life, of course, biology does play a role and thus requires that a mother take a more active part in child rearing than a father does. But this is merely a matter of the need for a "division of labor", in Kies' estimation, not due to anything inherent in masculinity versus femininity. This claim closely parallels Brackett's declaration that many of women's difficulties with mastering professional duties lay in their socialization, rather than in their nature. Yet Kies also recognizes that women do tend to be more likely to care for young children. In this sense she echoes Susan Blow's thought in that Kies credits women with providing children's early education and serving as a bridge between home and school. "The intelligent answers of the mother to the thousand queries and wonders of the young mind prepare the way for the more definite and extended instruction of the school." [IE70] Within the home, mothers also teach their children to set aside their own selfish wants -- to share, join in family chores and the like. Thus they develop a habit



of altruism early in life. This, as we have seen, is vitally important to society as a whole, in the American idealists' view, and therefore is an invaluable service that women render to the state.

In her discussion of the importance of the moral lessons learned in the home, however, Kies departs from Hegel even further. And this particular departure indicates that she is either not clear on Hegel's vision of the family or is more interested in recognizing the prevalence of American individualism in her own theory than in being true to Hegel. The offending statement is this: "In the collision of wills in the household, one cannot assert all his own peculiarities and particular wishes. One must learn to respect the rights and privileges of others." [71] But for Hegel, within the family there is no need to *suppress* individual wants and desires, because the family relation is such that within it all members are one body, their needs one need, and their interests a unity of interests. Individual will need not assert itself in the family, and "rights" and "privileges" are a foreign notion in this natural relation, which is ruled by love and affection. The contest of individual personalities that Kies seems to be alluding to occurs within civil society, but not within the family circle in Hegel's scheme.

In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's discussion on the family is guided by 1) his concept of marriage; 2) his understanding of the nature of women; and 3) his distinction between public and private life. In one sense, the marriage relation and its natural outgrowth, the family, is an ethical relation for Hegel – it is love made objective. It is through the marriage contract that what would be a merely subjective relation of love/affection becomes objective, an ethically significant and public relationship. Yet because marriage is characterized by love, it is a natural, internal relation in which each person gives up his/her individuality, thus becoming a unity, one person. [PR sect. 158; 162] Once a family grows and children come into the picture, their individuality, too, is subsumed into the unity that is the family [PR sect 158]. A person exists not as an individual, but as a member of the family for Hegel, or as one contemporary feminist has put it, the family is “an unindividuated community.”<sup>80</sup> Members of the family may have particularity,

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<sup>80</sup> See Heidi M. Ravven, "Has Hegel Anything to Say to Feminists?" in *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*, Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, ed., 248-49, n. 26. This and other key essays in the Mills edition provide important insights into the problems with Hegel's view of women and/or their role in the family from a feminist perspective. See also, Mary O'Brien, "Hegel: Man, Physiology, and Fate," Carol Pateman, "Hegel, Marriage, and the Standpoint of Contract" (cited below), and Shari Neller Starrett, "Critical Relations in Hegel: Woman, Family, and the Divine." See also, Jeffrey A. Gauthier, *Hegel and Feminist Social Criticism* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1997] (also cited below).

but not a fully realized and rational individuality. Furthermore, any rights that one of these un-individuated individuals can claim are rights *as a member* of the family (most obviously against entities within civil society that threaten the family unit), not as individuals. A person has individual rights only within civil society.

But Kies is writing for a different time and culture than Hegel's. Her recognition a few pages later that individualism has too strong a grip on the family may reflect her awareness that the reality is that the family simply does not function as a unity in most cases. Therefore, she gives her late-nineteenth century audience a more realistic picture of their familial relationships while at the same time pointing them toward the ideal.

The absolute ideal of complete self-development in and through others has not been reached in the family, . . . and the attempt to adjust private personal rights to those of others will always be attended with more or less struggle and friction. . . .

Instead of Aristotle's 'social unity' in the family, in this century the individual has become the center and end of all activity. . . . The idea of personality as true individuality has degenerated into that of individualism, and as such, has been a destructive agency. [IE78]

Still, it is not clear that Kies' ideal of the family is genuinely Hegelian. Along with other feminist interpreters, in my reading of Hegel the family is an institution in which individuation is not only non-existent, but unnecessary. Kies sees the family as a unit, but a unit in which members' self-development is realized (which assumes a certain level of individuation has already been achieved) and personal rights are set aside for the good of all (which assumes an assertion of rights in the first place). Furthermore, following Morris' example, Kies ignores gender distinctions as they relate to individual realization in the family versus civil society. All family members, whether fathers, mothers, brothers, or sisters, have the same expectation placed upon them by Kies.

For Hegel, on the other hand, the family may indeed play a role in preparing young people to enter into civil society, but it is *only* within civil society that they become truly individuated; where they are torn away from family ties to fend for themselves in the world. But, again, as noted by other contemporary feminists, this is true only for men. "In the private dimension of ethical life [children] gain experience of a noncontractual association and so are prepared – or, rather, *men* are prepared – for participation in the

universal public sphere of the state.”<sup>81</sup> The *home* is where women are fully actualized in Hegel’s view. There is no need for young women to tear themselves away from the family circle and fend for themselves in civil society. Instead, each young girl, remaining in the realm of feeling that is the domain of the family, will realize her potential in the warmth of hearth and home. She will then transpose that self-realization to another domestic setting when she becomes a wife and mother herself. There is no need for a woman to *ever* achieve full individuation in Hegel’s system. She will always remain a member of the family circle, never an independent individual. Another contemporary feminist discussion puts this particularly well:

From the ethical household, the husband goes forth into the world of public affairs as its representative, leaving the wife to serve the needs of the (his) household. The feminine life revolves entirely around the private relationships of the family and the duties that these relationships entail. Not a part of the “transcendent” activities of civil society and the state . . . , the woman never achieves recognition as an individual . . . <sup>82</sup>

Given the different historical contexts in which the two thinkers were writing, of course, this lack of fit of Kies’ understanding of the family with Hegel’s is not terribly surprising. After all, she was writing at a time when the women’s movement had begun to gain some rights for women, even within marriage. So it is likely that women had begun to voice competing interests within the family circle much more in Kies’ time than they had at the time of Hegel’s writing. In fact, although Kies does not often voice strong feminist sympathies or address this issue as directly [or certainly as vehemently] as Brackett does, she does recognize that some critics have claimed that women’s higher education would damage the family. And it only seems appropriate that Kies, one of the relatively few women who had achieved such a high level of education in this era, should denounce this claim.

The attitude of independence that woman is enabled to hold, because of her educational and industrial emancipation, changes necessarily the relations of husband and wife. No longer compelled to marry in order to obtain a livelihood, many fear that women will be unwilling to enter the marriage relation, and so the family lose its fundamental place as an institution. . . . [Yet] no amount of education will keep a woman from loving the man who approaches her ideal in his intellectual and spiritual qualities. [83]

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<sup>81</sup> See *PR*, §238, re civil society tearing members away from family ties; See *PR*, §164 and §166 re women as fully actualized in the home. The contemporary feminist being quoted here is Pateman, “Hegel, Marriage, and the Standpoint of Contract,” in *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel*, Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, ed., 215. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>82</sup> See Jeffrey A. Gauthier, *Hegel and Feminist Social Criticism* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1997], 122.

Furthermore, in Kies' view, "a marriage based upon a corresponding degree of development in the masculine and feminine mind" reaches a "higher ethical principle than that based upon obedience and servitude."<sup>83</sup> So Kies' apparent failure to match Hegel's ideal of the family may really have been closer to a re-assessment of its accuracy -- and its appropriateness given women's increased autonomy, which she applauded both in private and public life -- than a deficient understanding of the family's role in his system.

### **The School as a Social Institution**

Kies' understanding of the role of the school conforms more closely to Hegel's, although still there are strains of independent thought throughout her discussion of it. In Hegel's view, education begins in the home and is a character-building process [again, the notion of *Bildung* is key here]. It then facilitates the individual's entrance into ethical life as a child grows into an adult. Finally, the labour of education" allows the subject to "win possession of objectivity." This makes it possible for an individual to attain independent existence.<sup>84</sup>

In Kies' view, the school is an institution, and in this sense, she falls in line with her American Hegelian counterparts, Harris, Blow, and Brackett. This points to an evolution of the American idealists away from Hegel's thought. For Hegel, the school was not one of the social institutions, although it did play an important role in preparing the [male] child for participation in civil society and ultimately the state. But Kies and her colleagues were operating in a different historical setting, in which education was becoming systematic. And, as earlier chapters have shown, Blow, Brackett, Bibb, and their male colleagues had been central to this process of making this systematization take place. Largely because of this, Kies does grant the school institutional status in her system. As such, it is valuable, but not as important as the major institutions in the Hegelian framework: the family, civil society, and the state. [IE 86-87] In fact, the

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<sup>83</sup> Kies, *Institutional Ethics*, 84. Carol Pateman has expanded on Kies' insight on this point, declaring that women's status as subordinates to men make marriage, as Hegel framed it, an irrational, even internally contradictory contractual relationship, because male/female relationships are more akin to the master/slave relationship than that of equals. See Pateman, especially pages 213-219.

<sup>84</sup> See *Philosophy of Right*, section 175, Addition, regarding education as character-building, and section 187, Note, regarding entrance into ethical life and the 'winning of objectivity'. Based on the discussion above, we must recognize that, in Hegel's system, male children enter into ethical life via civil society, female children via marriage and family.

instruction given to children in the school could be provided by any of the major institutions in Kies' view, although not as efficiently as in the classroom setting.

Secondly, Kies gives a description of the function education serves at different stages of life that matches those of Harris, Blow, and Brackett to perfection. Kindergarten education is essentially a continuation of the education given at home. Through play, the young child is encouraged to develop freely in his or her own growth. [IE88] Grade school introduces children to the worlds of both nature and humanity. The fundamentals of mastering language and math skills are essential during the earlier of these years of education. In fact, like Blow, Kies believes that this part of children's instruction allows them to gain the experience of the human race, to replicate human achievement as it has advanced through the ages. [IE89]<sup>85</sup> Later, when children grow into youths, high school education allows them to dominate the world around them, yet it also requires that they curb their selfish desires. [IE94] College provides the "all-round education and culture that the majority of men and women need as preparation for home, business, or professional life." [IE93] Finally, any professional or technical training should supplement, not replace, the "culture studies" that higher education provides.

But, again, in Kies' discussion of education we also find something new. Since education at all levels also teaches children cooperation, it continues and thus reinforces the altruism that children first learn in the home. In a classroom of peers, a child is taught "to think of the good of others along with his own good. He is learning to receive his good from others, instead of the immediate good, which often proves to be a detriment in its secondary effects." [IE95] Like her St. Louis counterparts then, Kies sees education as having a moral as well as an intellectual component. Altruism, which is at first an enforced practice, becomes a habitual response to a child's social environment in the classroom, and finally comes to be second-nature to the properly educated individual. In Kies' own words, these "almost unconscious habits of altruism . . . prepare the young man for a ready grasp of the principles upon which society is founded, and lead to an insight into the reciprocal relations of himself and his fellow-men." [IE95]

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<sup>85</sup> As noted earlier, this is an idea derived from Hegel. See *PS* §28.

Because of education's power to help children develop into not only intelligent individuals, but moral agents in the world, Kies believes that the state has every right to make education compulsory, as did the other American idealists, and Hegel himself. [IE100] Absent laws enforcing school attendance, two dynamics would take hold that would make education a rarity. Some parents would send their children to work, rather than school, due to their need for additional laborers and/or wage earners. Others would simply succumb to the human tendency toward inertia, allowing their children leisure time instead of encouraging them to pursue their education. By setting at least minimum hours for school attendance, the state ensures that a child can attain at least a basic education. In Kies' understanding this means that "the state only gives the child what is due the child and what the parents would grant to the child, except as ignorance and selfish motives hinder -- the right to develop all his powers and to become as strong a personality as possible." [101]

### **Kies on "The Woman Question"**

Now we come to Kies' chapter on the administration of justice, in which she again complies quite closely with Hegel's thought. One exception is her discussion of women's rights, which addresses women's role in political life more concretely than Hegel had done, although she doesn't make bold feminist claims, by any means. Like Brackett, Kies agreed with Hegel that a just penalty is necessary when a person commits a wrong in order to "return to the person his deed." In fact, "it is showing a human being respect to treat him justly," [IE202] because in punishing a person for wrongdoing in essence we are holding him or her responsible for his or her deeds. This may be done directly or through "some symbolic expression of his act." [IE197] But a return of the wrong must occur so that, as Hegel maintains, the negative act can itself be negated and justice prevail. But it is important to note that a return of wrong for wrong is not simply a way to exact revenge. In the administration of the law as well as in its execution, there should be "no feeling or thoughts of anger or revenge," but simply a reconciliation of parties in conflict through justice. [IE197, 207] Particular instances of wrongdoing are settled by the courts and provide society with general principles over time that guide them in determining personal conduct as well as public policy. But there were issues in

Kies' day that she acknowledged had been settled neither by court rulings nor by statutes, such as "the woman question," and to this matter she devotes several pages.

Efforts by the women's movement to win voting rights during this time period were misguided, according to Kies, because

expression of opinion by the ballot is only one step of a complex act of the members of the state. Whether these ballots shall be cast by all the men of the state, or by the men and women, is a matter of expediency. [211]

In Kies' view, it is not particularly expedient for women to vote along with men, because the act of casting a ballot is just the culminating act in a long process of public discourse and debate. Kies thinks it is sufficient for women to participate in political life only up to this level; they can *discuss* policy, but not *enact* it. Her reasoning is common among the more conservative women of her day: "The voice of woman has a power in forming public opinion when unhampered by the duty of voting and ambition for office-holding, [a power that] would be . . . lost, were her work directed in exactly the same channels as that of men." [IE211] Kies does not deny that women have the abstract right to vote; abstractly speaking, women have at least as much of a right to vote as men do. But of course for a Hegelian, an abstract right is not particularly valuable or meaningful. In her view, women's concrete situation in life was more important. They were already able to join in public discourse on matters of interest to them, and thereby they influenced the outcome of elections. So how would voting serve to further advance their interests?

Kies answers her own question with another question, and one that reintroduces her justice/grace distinction into the discussion. She asks: Are women needed to enact and execute both protective and constructive laws? [IE211] Protective laws, of course, guard individual freedoms. That is, they ensure the liberties of life, property, etc. for persons *as persons*. In this sense protective laws pertain to both men and women equally. Kies concludes, then, that women *do not* need to vote on protective measures, because their interests in this regard are no different than men's! [IE212]

It is essential here to keep in mind Kies' distinction between protective and constructive laws. The first prohibit a violation of others' rights, the second regulate the form that individual endeavors can take. Constructive laws are somewhat different then, although Kies' logic takes a puzzling turn. She breaks

constructive laws into two groups: fundamentally constructive laws and special constructive laws. It may be that many fundamentally constructive laws, such as those regarding property and contract, had indeed discriminated against women in the past, but Kies asks,

have these discriminations been against women as women, or against ignorance and weakness and consequent danger of mismanagement? Do not the many changes in laws giving more nearly equal opportunities to women, in part answer this question? If so, can not other changes be made more effectively and with less detriment to the other interests of society than by the direct vote of women at the polls? [212]

The answer in Kies' view is that in the past fundamentally constructive laws did in fact simply mean to shield women from the harm that their lack of experience in managing their own affairs might have brought. She also obviously believes that at the time of her writing women's lot had improved, that society's natural evolution had brought about a change in public opinion and thus in laws, and that, yes, women's status could continue to improve in the future, sans voting rights. Improving women's education will do more to help them advance in society than the ability to vote will, in Kies' understanding.

But there are still special constructive laws to consider. These address social concerns, such as education and temperance questions, and perhaps sanitation, the regulation of some industries, children's homes and prisons. [214-216] Kies' criterion generally is that "where women are the object of interest" they should be granted voting privileges, but their participation in even these matters will not be "an unmixed good." Along with many women in her day, Kies worried that "the same qualities that are developed in men through participation in some phases of political life will be fostered in women." [216-17] Kies feared that women will turn social concerns into avenues for political gain, and she cites some underhanded tactics by the Women's Christian Temperance Union as an example of the sort of maneuverings that women would begin participating in.

Kies' conservatism on this issue is surprising in one sense. After all, Harris, who clearly influenced her, was not only an advocate of women's rights generally, but was also a strong supporter of suffrage. Other members of the St. Louis circle and participants at the Concord School with whom she is almost certain to have been associated also were supportive of the feminist cause. In another sense, however, Kies was more true to Hegel regarding the matter of women's rights than her idealist contemporaries who



avored suffrage and other feminist causes. After all, women's entrance into politics or other aspects of public life would disrupt the organic unity of society as it stood. Furthermore, her stance was certainly not an unusual one, even among the class of literary women of the day. In fact, Kies could be said to be part of a quasi-feminist tradition. Earlier contemporaries, like Sarah J. Hale, Catherine Beecher, and Gail Hamilton stand out as prime examples of women who were fierce supporters of women's education, and who also advocated expanded employment opportunities for women. At the same time, however, they objected to women's sphere extending too far into the public realm. Hale, for instance, championed women in missions and medicine, but objected to them lecturing in public, practicing law, or certainly voting. Beecher also wanted women to have a more active role, but one that was limited to the home, seeking to make "domestic science" a valid profession. Beecher was even among those who circulated a petition against voting rights, which was published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, of which Hale was editor for forty years. Hamilton was more bold, particularly early in her life, and claimed that women should be able to pursue any career they felt an inclination toward. Like Kies, Hamilton even accepted that women have the right to vote, abstractly speaking. But like Kies, Hamilton asked: What, practically speaking, will be the benefit of women voting? Education, employment, and pay equity are of more pressing concern -- will the vote really help them?<sup>86</sup>

When we look at Kies' overall theory of justice, grace and their respective effects on social policy, it isn't surprising that she shared many of the sentiments of conservatives Hale, Beecher, and Hamilton, women's voting rights among them. For women such as these, the public and private spheres were virtually two different worlds. To allow one to impose itself on the other to too great an extent was to risk damaging both irreparably. And, although Kies advances a political theory in which altruism would become a principle for political action, in fact her idea of "grace" at root is not a public political principle, but a private religious ethic. Despite her leanings toward socialism, Kies was surprisingly conservative. Her plan was that the two -- justice and grace -- would complement and even inform each other, not that one would usurp the role of the other.

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<sup>86</sup> See any number of "Editor's Table" columns in issues of *Godey's Lady's Book*, (1836-1878) Sarah J. Hale, editor. See also Catharine Beecher; *The True Remedy for the Wrongs of Women* (1851); *Woman's Profession as Mother and Educator with Views in Opposition to Woman Suffrage* (1872); Also see Gail Hamilton [nee Mary Abigail Dodge], *Woman's Worth and Worthlessness* (1872).

Grace is most fully realized in the church in Kies' view, and its "strongest historical embodiment" is in "the life, teaching, and death of Christ." [235-6] It was part of the vernacular in the late-nineteenth century to speak of Jesus' example of self-sacrifice as central to all church teaching and to know that any Christian worthy of the name is to follow that example. So Kies assumes that this is common knowledge to her audience and does not argue this point at length. Rather, through a concluding discussion of the work of the church in the world and the function of the persons of the Trinity, she attempts to inspire her readers to practice grace in their own lives. Yet in the process of doing so, Kies also insists that in the church as well as in the state, grace and justice do and must play a role. Of the church she says "justice, although the fundamental principle of all existence and all institutions, should remain latent in the Church as a background as it were, for the manifestation and revelation of grace." [248] Regarding the state, Kies celebrates the fact that the emergence of "true socialism" demonstrates a growing "recognition of the fact that there is opportunity for the exemplification of both justice and grace" in the political world. [269] Kies hoped to show that all of the institutions of society -- the family, school, business, church, and government -- constitute an integrated, organic whole, not a set of disconnected social entities. So for these seemingly antagonistic institutions (in the American context in which church and state are separate) to embody complementary principles closes the circle in her view.

Kies made an important contribution to the American philosophical canon on a number of levels. First, she made Hegel's theory concrete and applied it to some very important social and political questions of her day. She also took a bold stance on how to address poverty and social welfare. In this sense she aided in Harris' mission to "make Hegel talk English," in an area that none of her women Hegelian contemporaries did. But her theory of "justice" and "grace" is valuable for political philosophy today as well. In the past two decades, feminist thinkers have made serious and substantive critiques of traditional political and moral theory, charging it with gender bias. Another model of political and ethical action is needed in order to include women in the dialogue, these feminists have claimed. What we find in Kies is precisely this sort of model, yet one that doesn't completely dismiss the tried and somewhat true patriarchal theory of old. Kies' theory of altruism is not the only one in the political philosophical canon, of course, but it is one that succeeds in bridging many gaps, and for this reason alone, it deserves critical attention.

## Conclusion

What did the St. Louis and Concord women as a group contribute to American intellectual history? Primarily three things. As early proponents of German idealism in America, they presented to the American reading public works not previously available in English and provided the first interpretations and analyses of these works. Second, as theorist-practitioners, they provided a model for applying these works to real life situations -- and in an American context. Finally, in both theory and practice, they helped blur the distinction between the public and private spheres, a distinction that had long been invoked to restrict women's educational and vocational options.

Blow and Brackett presented their understanding of Hegel -- via Froebel and Rosenkranz, respectively -- in their works on education, applying the Hegelian dialectic of self-estrangement and return to the education of children and youth. Blow inadvertently professionalized women's caretaking role by importing early childhood education from the home into the classroom. Brackett added to her educational theory a feminist idealism in which women are on par with men socially and intellectually. Bibb and Mitchell shared Brackett's views, and though less philosophical, their feminism matches Brackett's and has echoes of idealism within it. Kies' work remains more legitimately within philosophy proper than does that of her St. Louis and Concord contemporaries. And although not a feminist herself, her theory of altruism embodies many contemporary feminists' principles, such as the "ethic of care" promoted by followers of Carol Gilligan since the publication of *In a Different Voice*.

### ***Women and Philosophy as a Profession***

While a careful look at these women demonstrates that their contributions to American idealism are worthwhile and unique, for close to a century they have gone without recognition as philosophers. Why? A partial answer lies in the reception of them in their own day, a period of time in which philosophy was becoming a distinct and professional academic discipline.

In their day, Blow and Brackett received little besides praise as educators. Blow attained a level of renown not often achieved, particularly by a woman. Her teacher training classes regularly attracted

large audiences of visitors and admirers as well as active and prospective teachers. And her kindergarten displays at both national and international expositions made her a known entity throughout the U.S. and abroad. Her works on kindergarten education were in demand, particularly *Letters to a Mother* which was reprinted four times between 1898 and 1908 and *Symbolic Education*, which went through twelve printings between 1894 and 1918.

Brackett's work on Rosenkranz's *Pedagogik als System* brought her recognition as well. Her translation of this work, originally published in 1872, was issued in two editions and reprinted as late as 1903. In addition, her involvement in the feminist movement and publication of more popular writings helped keep a strain of early American idealism present within the mainstream. It was Brackett's fairly high level of visibility in this way that led to her publication of *The Education of American Girls*, and thus to her application of Rosenkranz's theory to women. In short, both Blow and Brackett were hailed for both their practical and theoretical educational efforts, and truly were "almost the heroines" of American education in the view of many.

Yet neither Blow nor Brackett received as much recognition within the philosophical community. Their works were favorably reviewed in a number of popular and quasi-academic publications: *The Dial*, *Critic*, *Popular Science*, *Nation*, and *Catholic World*. But the philosophical successors to *JSP*, journals like *Mind* and *Philosophical Review*, did not evaluate their work as Harris had been eager to do for Brackett in *JSP*. (Blow did not start publishing until after *JSP* had ceased publication.) There are practical factors that made this true. Both philosophy and education were becoming professionalized and thus distinctly different fields. Education was also relying more heavily on empirical data, and thus grew to consider itself more of a social science than a branch of philosophy. The effect of this change for Blow and Brackett was that toward the end of the nineteenth century their readership increasingly consisted of a relatively new class of professional educators. Their contemporaries in philosophy proper failed to become acquainted with the philosophical ideas underlying their educational theory. Thus, Blow and Brackett were denied the attention they deserved as philosophers.

Instances in which Bibb's work is evaluated are hard to come by, given the fact that so much of what she did was of a practical or administrative nature. However, she was assigned rather important

committee appointments in the National Education Association, and her papers seemed to inspire passionate discussions at NEA meetings. Mitchell, unfortunately, did not fare as well. As we have seen, she was scoffed at as a dilettante who'd have done better not to have bothered the reading public with the publication of her book, *A Study of Greek Philosophy*. And although to some extent this criticism was deserved, at the same time the paraphrase approach that Mitchell took in this work seems to have been both fairly common practice and an acceptable means of introducing a thinker unfamiliar to one's readers.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the scolding nature of this criticism against Mitchell is puzzling.

Kies serves as an important test case for the St. Louis and Concord movements. She received high praise for her compilation of Harris' lectures and articles, *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*. And the works representing her own thoughts were also fairly well received, although not always thoroughly understood. In one instance, a reviewer uses a tone of praise and summarizes well the main points of *The Ethical Principle*.<sup>88</sup> A review of *Institutional Ethics* also gives a reasonably good overview of Kies' theory, with one important exception. This reviewer, W. B. Elkin, misunderstands the relationship that holds between justice and grace in Kies' system. Elkin demonstrates understanding in the statement, "neither is reducible to the other," but the interpretation goes wrong in the second half of this observation: "the former [justice] is primary, and the latter [grace] complementary."<sup>89</sup> A short review by Josiah Royce, a contemporary of Kies who was fairly well acquainted with Harris said that, because of its resemblance to Harris' thought, Kies' theory of altruism "contains little of novelty in doctrine."<sup>90</sup> In addition, both Elkin and Royce use diminutive terms in referring to Kies' works. Royce calls *The Ethical Principle* a "little volume, which is on the whole, a modest and meritorious study." Elkin introduces *Institutional Ethics* thus: "The object of this little book is to show that the Golden Rule is the highest ethical principle . . ." (For the record, while *The Ethical Principle* was a rather short work

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<sup>87</sup> Harris produced paraphrase-types of works in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, particularly in the case of his "Introduction to Philosophy" (1867-68) which came straight from Harris' reading of Hegel. Brackett, too, got a good deal of mileage out of her paraphrase of Rosenkranz, publishing it both in *JSP* (1872-74) and in book form (1878). At least as late as 1887, just four years before Mitchell published her *Study*, Morris published his work on Hegel's theory of the state.

<sup>88</sup> See Charles Cook, *Philosophical Review*, vol. 1, no. 6, p. 673-4

<sup>89</sup> See W. B. Elkin, *Philosophical Review*, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 459-60.

<sup>90</sup> Josiah Royce, Book Review in *International Journal of Ethics*, 2:517.

of 131 pages, although not voluminous, *Institutional Ethics* was not a particularly "little" book at 270 pages.) Why the diminutive terms?

We can learn a great deal from the words of both praise and criticism of these women, as well as from instances in which their work was met with silence. It is unsurprising that Blow, Brackett, and Bibb were praised as educational theorists and practitioners, but that the philosophical community was silent about their achievements. Similarly, we might have expected that Mitchell would be lambasted for falling short of a philosophical standard and Kies would be met with a degree of misunderstanding or dismissal. After all, education had become women's domain in this period, partly because it was the one profession that was closest to women's traditional role in "the private sphere" -- i.e., the home. Blow remained very safely within this sphere as a proponent of early childhood education, and Brackett and Bibb did not wander far from it. Mitchell and Kies, on the other hand, ventured rather far afield. Mitchell tried her hand at philosophy proper, in order to introduce it to her circle of women followers, if not to present it in a system of her own. Kies more adeptly took possession of philosophical inquiry and succeeded in presenting an original theory.

While I do not want to overstate the sexism that is evident here, neither do I wish to ignore it as a possible factor that influenced the response each of these women received, or why their work has been met with silence throughout the twentieth century.<sup>91</sup> Mitchell did not produce original work, but it also seems that part of the reason she received such very harsh criticism was that she was encroaching on what was considered men's intellectual territory. The misunderstandings and gentle dismissal that Kies' work encountered seem also to stem from a similar, but more complex problem. Elkin had difficulty maintaining the dual-truth that justice and grace were *equally and reciprocally* complementary principles. And Royce, who knew Harris well and therefore had plenty of exposure to his ideas, had difficulty accepting Kies' work as original. (Yet Harris, to whom Royce attributes Kies' ideas, never authored a book-length study of his own on political theory, although in a few articles he voiced some of the views Kies discusses at length.)

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<sup>91</sup> I am concerned here with their work as philosophers rather than as educators. Susan Blow is still an important figure in education circles.

Clearly, these reviewers were unfamiliar, and probably uncomfortable, with taking seriously a work of political philosophy by a woman. They could not safely relegate Kies' ideas to the realm of women's sphere, as was the case with Blow. Neither could they condemn her for failing to meet a tacitly held standard of philosophical achievement, as with Mitchell. Nor finally did she belong to the ranks of feminists whose ideas, though provocative, need not concern the more lofty theoretical work of the philosopher. Other women were beginning to practice philosophy at this time, but male philosophers' encounters with them were so far and few between that a woman like Kies was an anomaly.

### ***The Implications for Feminism***

When we look at the significance of America's first women idealists for us today, we can see that each presents a different model of what a feminine (though not necessarily feminist) Hegelianism looks like. Susan Blow's application of Hegel via Froebel established a process by which children could be systematically educated, even from a very early age. Nurture and care are traits that Blow saw as inherent in women's nature, and in her system they were imbued with not only practical, but metaphysical value. In this way, she gave women a reason to take their jobs as mothers and teachers seriously, which has important feminist implications.

Blow believed that women did best by limiting themselves to work that simulated their traditional work in the home. Agreeing with Hegel, it seems, she saw women as being fully actualized within their sphere. In fact, in her view women would be tainted by work that took them too far beyond home and family. For feminists today, this points to an important question: Does a theory in which care is seen as women's primary trait, as is the case in one branch of "difference" feminism, necessarily relegate women to the traditional role Blow would assign them? Or, does Blow's view of women give us reason to re-think the value we place on care? That is, does care belong only within the confines of home and family, or might it be exported, as such, and made use of in what has been thought of as the public realm: work, commerce, and political life?

Blow herself was fearful of women's participation in the public realm. So to be true to her theory, we would have to accept the first option -- that of limiting care, and thus women's work, to a certain set

of activities that simulate those women perform in the home. This is the approach that is called for according to Blow's *theory*. Yet her *practice* resulted in professionalizing women's caregiving activities. Thus she herself did, in fact, export private virtues into the public realm. As noted in the introduction to this work, Blow would not have approved of being labeled a feminist and might even wish to correct my assessment of the feminist implications of her work. Yet her kindergarten theory and practice had the effect of expanding women's role, from private into public life, and thus speaks for itself as to its importance in the evolution of feminist thought in America.

Brackett took the process of making Hegel feminist-friendly a giant step further by applying the American Hegelians' understanding of the unfolding of the self, via education, to women. Of course, this involved drawing on sources other than Hegel to do so. Kant had also been an important influence in the St. Louis circle.<sup>92</sup> Therefore Brackett assumed the notion of the abstract individual that we find in Kant, and applied it to women. This notion, coupled with the American Hegelians' understanding of self-activity, allowed Brackett to grant women their due educationally. As we saw, she rejected outright Rosenkranz's suggestion that girls' physical education be different than boys'. Her central reason for this rejection was the idea was directly linked to her advocacy for the education of women in general: women were *not* fully realized in the home, away from the competition of civil society; instead they were to be socialized into public life via education, just as men were. Not only were women freed from the confines of home and family, via the abstract individuality that Brackett assumed was theirs, they were also able to grasp the material set before them by the educator, because they were "self-active" beings. Women's "self-activity" provided the means to self-development; their individuality allowed them to use this self-activity to pursue their own, individual interests. In Brackett's understanding, the case could not be otherwise.

Brackett never directly addressed Hegel's notion of the complementarity of male and female, object and subject, public and private. Yet her assumption of women's *similarity* (not simply their equality) to

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<sup>92</sup> As noted earlier, the group responsible for some of the circle's most theoretical work had been named the Kant Club, because it had begun its study with Kant before moving on to Hegel. It is not clear when this group was established. However, by the early- to mid-1870s (after Brackett had left St. Louis) it was studying Hegel in depth. Therefore, Brackett might have been party to discussions of Kant in the group's earlier incarnation.



men dismantled an important component of Hegel's understanding of the ways in which Spirit is made manifest in human relations. In Brackett's theory, women were no longer the subjective, internal force that complemented man's objective, external nature. They were instead equally capable of self-objectification and able to participate in public life.

In this way, Brackett stands in stark contrast to Blow. She also most closely resembles the sort of feminism that has come under attack in recent years -- i.e., "liberal" feminism. The charge by some recent feminists has been that liberal feminism undermines women in the end, because it forces them to conform to a male norm of behavior and achievement. If the question prompted by Blow's theory was one of whether women's caring nature relegates them only to the home, the question Brackett forces us to ask is this: Must women be the sort of creatures that Hegel holds men to be -- objective, external, and actualized in the public realm -- in order to be considered full and free human beings?

Such a question might be a confusing one to Brackett. After all, if women did not seek to be considered basically the same as men, what were their options in her day -- to remain bound to the hearth, to have their educational endeavors restricted and their professional options null? But perhaps this is where the male/female dichotomy, and even the public/private distinction, breaks down. Perhaps there is really nothing inherent to "men's nature" or "women's nature" at all. There are elements of the subjective and objective in each of us, after all. Furthermore, both men and women participate in "public" and in "private" life, although perhaps with differing levels of skill and involvement. But the distinction itself and an alignment of a particular gender to each is really quite arbitrary, if not capricious. Brackett, I believe, would be inclined to agree with this dismantling of the gender and public/private distinctions. For her, the issue would not be one of forcing women to meet a male norm, but of obliterating rigid gender norms as a whole so that each individual could freely determine and assert his or her own strengths.

Those peripheral to the movement demonstrate the progressive and inclusive nature of the St. Louis and Concord circles. Overall, the men who organized and promoted the groups' activities were interested in and supportive of women's rights. This is particularly true of Harris and Davidson. Furthermore, many men of St. Louis and Concord acted as mentors to and facilitators of work by the

women with whom they were associated. At the same time, peripheral women figures in the movement also facilitated the work of its leaders, both male and female. They were not only the cheering crowd, but the primary propagators of this version of idealism "in the field." Without their support, major figures in the movement would have been much less effective.

Bibb stands out as one of the more successful of the implementers and administrators of the movement's practical efforts. Her feminist theory is her most important theoretical contribution to the movement in that its interlacing of idealist strains of thought within that theory builds on Brackett's development of a feminist idealism. Mitchell stood on the cusp of attaining the same level of achievement as Blow, Brackett, and Kies. While she demonstrated an adequate understanding of Hegel, her work was too unoriginal to do more than summarize his thoughts. Yet her bold feminist stances show Mitchell to have an ability for critical examination of an issue. Unfortunately, she fell short of adequately integrating her understanding of Hegel into her feminism. Had she achieved this, Mitchell would certainly have been an important figure in the American idealist tradition, and perhaps could have rivalled Brackett in this regard.

In Kies we find the most comprehensive system of any of the American idealists examined in this study -- male or female -- with the exception of Howison, perhaps. While she incorporates a discussion of the role and nature of education into her political theory, she does not focus on this alone, and in this sense goes beyond the bounds that Blow and Brackett had set for themselves (or perhaps more accurately, that were set for them by their social context). Even given her view to issues other than education, however, Kies maintains the general pedagogical scheme that Harris, Blow, and Brackett had put forth, thus solidly reinforcing the existence of an American idealist educational theory. But, as the last chapter showed, Kies went far beyond a discussion of education, venturing into a consideration of justice and state intervention in relations within civil society. Kies proposed her theory of altruism in order to reconfigure these relations and thus to affect public policy. In this way, she has much to offer both political philosophy and feminist theory.

Perhaps the most valuable and instructive aspect of Kies' political theory for feminism is its paradoxical nature. That is, Kies represents the "different voice" that ethic of care theorists advocate,

yet without mention of gender. Kies' theory itself is an expression of an alternative to the Western liberal tradition in which individuality and egoism reign. (However, some have charged that this is a uni-dimensional and overstated criticism.) Yet she never hints that her theory grows out of her experience as a woman -- i.e., that it is a result of her "difference" from her male contemporaries. Within the context in which she was operating, of course, this would not have been a very wise or sensible thing to have done. After all, the point for a woman in Kies' position would have been to prove that one could theorize with the best of them, regardless of gender. It was important in her day to meet the male norm of behavior referred to above. Yet, many women in the feminist movement were basing their plea for rights on their perception that, as women, they could contribute something different to public and political life. So, acknowledgement of women's "difference," and affirmation of the strengths that grew out of it, were not foreign concepts in Kies' day.

Given Kies' objection to women's voting rights and her rationale for this objection, she may have had a sense that her theory of altruism was in some sense a feminine theory. Yet this is not to say it was feminist. In her view, women did not need to have full voting rights, because the issues of concern to them, as women, were limited. Interestingly enough, however, Kies' examples here spanned both the public and private spheres: temperance, because of its effect on the family; education, as the bridge between family and society; and factory laws, which affected working women. Kies believed women were affected by different issues than men. She also may have considered women to have different perceptions of these issues and perhaps different strengths to help them determine the best policy. Yet she in no way suggested that such matters were more appropriate to women because of their boundness to the private sphere. So too with her theory of altruism. It was a feminine theory in that it was formulated by a woman whose experience was shaped to a degree by social forces. Yet there is nothing inherently feminine about altruism as an ethical principle. In fact, Kies derived the notion of "reflected good" from Harris, who also believed altruism to be a viable ethical principle. And she recognized her indebtedness to Harris in her work on this subject. Therefore, she could not have considered altruistic thinking and behavior a special ability that only women possessed.

As a group, the St. Louis and Concord women provided useful interpretations and applications of Hegel's thought. Their emphasis on education is unusual among scholars of Hegel today. Yet, this aspect of their theory provides an inspiring look at the human spirit and its potential, both individually and in community. The school functioned as a minor institution, or even a mediating force, which helped to refine the individual and prepare him or her for participation in two major public institutions: civil society and state. Furthermore, this minor institution was open to women as well as men within the theories of even Blow and Kies, who had more conservative views of women than their contemporaries did. This, in turn opened up the possibility of asserting women's more active participation in aspects of public life, which all of these women advocated in practice, if not in theory. In this way, the St. Louis and Concord women transformed Hegel and in some cases even put forth a feminist idealism -- an unexpected result of their attempt to adapt Hegel to the American context, and one that is of value to us today.

## Appendix I: Educators in the St. Louis Movement

Following are members of the St. Louis Movement, listed alphabetically. As profiles of each make clear, many were educators in the public schools. For convenience I have marked these educators with an asterisk.

**Mrs. Beverly Allen.** Officer in the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association along with Rebecca Hazard. She is likely to have been acquainted with Mary Beedy, Grace Bibb, Anna Brackett, and Ellen Mitchell.

\***Mary A. Beedy.** Teacher in the public schools, a suffragist, and associate of Anna Brackett. Beedy left St. Louis in the late 1870s to lecture in England on women, education, and health. She had returned to the U.S. by 1887 when she lectured at a session of Denton Snider's "literary school" in Chicago.

\***Susan V. Beeson.** Teacher in the high school and normal school, correspondent of William Torrey Harris, and occasional contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Beeson was also acquainted with Susan Blow and reports having attended meetings of the St. Louis Philosophical Society.

\***Grace C. Bibb.** Assistant principal of the St. Louis normal school under Louis Soldan. She later took a position at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she was dean of the normal department. She was also a feminist who supported women's suffrage. Bibb was a member of the Kant Club, corresponded with William Torrey Harris for several years, and was an acquaintance of Anna Brackett and Susan Blow.

**A. H. Blaisdell.** Author of *Our Odyssey Club*, a short story about a women's literary club in which Denton Snider is the instructor and the story's hero. Blaisdell was also acquainted with Susan Blow who is the heroine of her book.

\***Susan E. Blow.** Founder of St. Louis' kindergarten program, the first free continuous kindergarten in the nation. A native of St. Louis whose social status made it unseemly for her to work, Blow volunteered her time as Director of the kindergarten program for eleven years. Her kindergarten teacher-training classes attracted scores of people -- visitors and serious students alike. Blow was a good friend and long-time correspondent of Harris and an occasional contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.

\***Anna C. Brackett.** As principal of the St. Louis normal school, Brackett was the first woman in the nation to be head of a secondary school. She stressed the importance of normal school training as a special course of study. An east-coast native, she left St. Louis for New York City in 1872 to establish her own private girls' school, but continued to be a regular contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Brackett was associated with William Torrey Harris and a good friend of Thomas Davidson. She shared their pro-suffrage views and was a member of the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association.

**Henry C. Brockmeyer.** German-born proponent of Hegel and good friend of William Torrey Harris, Brockmeyer was a co-founder of the St. Louis Philosophical Society. He spent years on a translation of Hegel's *Science of Logic* that was never published because of its too-literal quality. Brockmeyer assumed a number of professional roles throughout his life, including tannery and foundry worker, reclusive outdoorsman, and politician.

\***C. F. Childs.** A good friend of William Torrey Harris and teacher in the St. Louis high school. Childs was an early member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, who died shortly after the organization was founded.

\***Thomas Davidson.** A good friend of both William Torrey Harris and Anna Brackett who taught in the St. Louis high school. He was a member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society and frequent contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. In 1879, Davidson left St. Louis for the east coast where, in New York City, he established the "Breadwinners College," an evening school primarily for young Jewish immigrants, and the "Fellowship of the New Life," a predecessor of the Ethical Culture Society. In the summer Davidson held meetings at Glenmore an informal school in New Hampshire's Adirondack Mountains.

\***Ida Eliot.** Assistant principal of the St. Louis normal school under Anna Brackett. Eliot collaborated with Brackett on a book of poetry and also co-authored a science text. She was also an occasional contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. She accompanied Brackett to New York to found a private girls' school.

\***Laura Fisher.** Associate of Susan Blow in the St. Louis kindergarten program. Blow intended to have Fisher succeed her as Director of the kindergarten, but the school board disagreed and appointed Mary McCullough instead. Fisher left St. Louis for Boston in the early 1880s, but remained close to Blow over the years.

\***Amelia Fruchte.** Teacher in the high school for forty years, Fruchte had been a student of Anna Brackett in the St. Louis normal school. A feminist, Fruchte was a member of the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association and a force behind attaining equal status for women in local and national teachers' organizations.

**Gertrude Garrigues.** Teacher in the public schools. An occasional contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Garrigues was an associate of Susan Blow.

**J. Z. Hall.** Member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society and associate of William Torrey Harris.

\***William Torrey Harris.** St. Louis superintendent of schools and recognized leader of the St. Louis movement. He co-founded the St. Louis Philosophical Society with Brockmeyer and was editor of *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. His closest friends were Susan Blow, Henry Brockmeyer, Thomas Davidson, Alfred Kroeger, Denton Snider, and Louis Soldan. Harris was almost certain to have been acquainted with each of the individuals listed here.

**Rebecca Hazard.** Officer in the Missouri Woman Suffrage Association along with Mrs. Beverly Allen. She is likely to have been acquainted with Mary Beedy, Grace Bibb, Anna Brackett, and Ellen Mitchell.

**Britton A. Hill.** Member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, associate of William Torrey Harris, and a St. Louis lawyer.

**George Holmes Howison.** Professor at Washington University, founding member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, and contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. After leaving St. Louis in 1870, Howison maintained his friendship with

William Torrey Harris, but as a personalist and pluralist seems to have had more in common philosophically with Harris' somewhat younger contemporaries, Josiah Royce and Borden Parker Bowne.

**Alfred Kroeger.** Proponent of Fichte, founding member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, and contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Kroeger was a close neighbor and good friend of William Torrey Harris.

\***Mary McCullough.** Director of the St. Louis kindergarten program after Susan Blow's forced resignation. McCullough thought highly of Blow, but the latter considered McCullough's leadership too heavy-handed and believed she misunderstood the theory behind kindergarten education.

**Ellen M. Mitchell.** Leader of a women's philosophy discussion group in St. Louis and an occasional contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, and later a lecturer in the history of philosophy at the University of Denver. Mitchell was a feminist who was on the periphery of suffrage activism. She credited William Torrey Harris, Denton Snider, and John Dewey with having influenced her thought.

**Ella S. Morgan.** Translator of Schelling for *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*.

\***Horace H. Morgan.** Teacher at the St. Louis high school and editor of *The Western Review*, a sister publication of *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* that focused on education and literature. [No relation to Ella S. Morgan, whose husband was George Morgan.]

\***Denton J. Snider.** Teacher at the St. Louis high school and self-described "writer of books," primarily on literature. He was a member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society, a contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* and *The Western*, and for a few years a regular lecturer at Susan Blow's kindergarten teacher-training classes. Snider was a close associate of William Torrey Harris and Henry C. Brockmeyer. He was once close to Susan Blow, but the two had a rift in their friendship in the early 1880s that was never repaired. After leaving St. Louis, Snider began a series of "literary schools" in Chicago that were quite successful.

\***Louis Soldan.** Teacher, later principal of the St. Louis normal school and then of the high school. Soldan was also a member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society and a regular contributor to *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. As a close associate of William Torrey Harris and Grace Bibb, Soldan recruited them as officers and committee members of the National Education Association when he was president of the organization. Soldan was also associated with Thomas Davidson.

**John Watters.** Professor at the State Medical College and founding member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society.

**Gabriel Woerner.** St. Louis lawyer, later a judge, and a founding member of the St. Louis Philosophical Society. He was an associate of Denton Snider and had offered him instruction in the law, but Snider declined, preferring instead to devote himself to writing. Woerner authored a novella, *The Rebel's Daughter* about the Civil War period in St. Louis.

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