

1-1-1976

# Essentialism in American education.

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ESSENTIALISM IN AMERICAN EDUCATION

A Dissertation Presented

By

T. L. WOOLMER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1976

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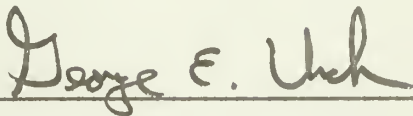
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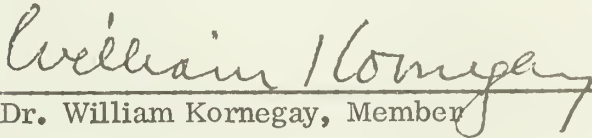
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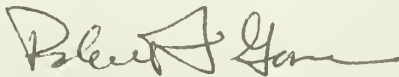
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September 1976

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ABSTRACT

ESSENTIALISM IN AMERICAN EDUCATION  
(September 1976)

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This dissertation attempts an analysis of the traditionalist versus progressive educational debate. It presents a conceptual and historical analysis of the essentialist or classical tradition in American educational philosophy. It seeks to show the identity of views among twentieth century American essentialists, and to link this to the educational philosophy of nineteenth century American educators and to the classical tradition of the Graceo-Roman and European World.

The tradition is seen to be consistent with itself, and consistently opposed to the progressive educational philosophy. This opposition is best described in terms of a model that assumes a continuum from extreme progressive to extreme traditionalist, with the essentialist striving to maintain a central or moderate position between the two.

The tradition is described historically, to demonstrate the existence of what amounts almost to a covert club, membership of which comes by way of an identity of views and by way of constant mutual quotation. Each essentialist tends to read and quote his favorite authorities within the tradition. This study attempts to see this in broader terms, and to collate all these authorities into a greater or perennial tradition. An appropriate metaphor is that of the "saints" of the tradition and the "heretics" outside it. To exemplify this "apostolic succession," Bagley and Barzun are treated in greater detail as typical "saints," and Dewey is examined as a source of great "heresy." The review of literature finds that there has been little appreciation either of the history of this tradition or of its conceptual structure.

Philosophically, the central concept of essentialism is seen to be anti-absolutism or moderation at all points. The conventional view of essentialists as conservative extremists is belied by their moderation on such epistemological issues as the supposed opposites of the disciplines versus integrated study, of sequential versus incidental learning, of liberal versus vocational education, of abstract versus concrete learning, of work versus play, of ends versus means; and their moderation on such metaphysical continua as those of idealism versus realism, of naturalism versus supernaturalism, and of value systems versus nihilism.

Politically, the same anti-absolutism obtains. Education is seen as the initiation of man into his culture, ideally in a democracy that is liberal



but also highly Jeffersonian or meritocratic. Essentialists take an appropriately central stand on such assumed opposites as elitism versus populism, anarchy versus statism, the individual versus the society, and on communism versus capitalism.

Psychologically they seek a moderate position, opposed to progressive extremes as they see it, on the value of psychology, on determinism, heredity versus environment, intelligence, creativity, learning theory, developmental theory and motivation.

Pedagogically, their moderate views on the curriculum stem from their moderation elsewhere, not vice versa. Language and literature are chosen in this study for special discussion, as they are seen by essentialists to be central to the culture of mankind. Essentialists are not die-hards for the study of Greek and Latin; the initiation into civilization is best conducted through the scholarly analysis of English language, literature, and by scholarship in all the disciplines.

C H A P T E R I  
PROLEGOMENA: PROBLEM, PROCEDURE, AND  
PEOPLE

The Problem

The problem is that few people know what they mean when they talk of "traditional" or "essentialist" education. Thus it is a curious fact that, while the practical teacher has a clear, probably intuitive, grasp of the difference between "traditional" and "progressive" education, the more theoretical student of education has a much less clear grasp of the distinction.

This is perhaps because John Dewey and "progressive" educational theory is more easily recognizable historically. It appeared at a more or less definable moment, and has one definable philosophical father in America. It led to a definable, even though not entirely original, pedagogy. "Traditional" education lacks these advantages. It has been apparently always with us. It has no clearly identifiable sponsor. Its pedagogical consequences are less than inevitable; traditional education can be taught in any manner, and traditional educators have been able to borrow from progressive practice in this century.

As a result, few students of education appear to have a clear idea of what progressive education was really attacking. Was there anything to attack? Was the traditionalist anything more than a proponent of Latin and Greek? The traditionalist is visualized, when rarely he is allowed so much attention, as one who represents an amalgam of such influences as Oxford and Cambridge, Tom Brown's schooldays at Rugby or Dicken's Dotheboy's Hall, or Puritan Sunday Schools, or the recitation in unison of anything from the multiplication table or French irregular verbs to the capitals of Europe or the exports of Latin America. Certainly no coherent philosophy is assumed.

This is both unfortunate and the fault, in part, of educators. Those who hold a traditionalist position seldom take the trouble to explain it. They may assume it needs no explanation, and that the mountain should come to the educational Mahomet. Introductory courses of education seldom define the traditionalist position satisfactorily; instead they tend to overcomplicate the issue by devoting a chapter to every major philosophical figure, from Plato to Pestalozzi, often concluding with a final chapter on Dewey, without ever defining the debate. There are, of course, exceptions to this general truth, and some of them are discussed in this dissertation.

An unfortunate result of this piecemeal process is that the anxious student may assume that, for instance, essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism are all discrete units, along with a dozen others. Each label then assumes undue importance, and the student may feel obliged to choose one to the exclusion of the others.

This would seem unreasonable a priori, and in practice one finds a great deal of common ground even between apparent opposites. Theodore Brameld, for instance, in one of the few lengthy treatments of this issue, namely in Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective (1955), has diagrammed the problem by means of four overlapping circles. Progressivism largely overlaps reconstructionism; essentialism largely overlaps perennialism; the two pairs slightly overlap each other. That his definition of essentialism and consequently his judgment thereof is unreasonable, is argued in this work. His division of educational philosophy into these four areas is also unreasonable, for it sells the traditionalist short by labelling him essentialist or perennialist. Brameld, of course, discusses the classical roots of essentialism, but the label remains misleading for all that. Both essentialism and perennialism are terms coined in the twentieth century, and neither have been of much real value; indeed, many members of those traditions refuse to be associated with such labels.

Nomenclature remains a very real problem. "Traditionalist" is probably the most common layman's term, but for many there is a pejorative ring to the idea of tradition. "Conservative" suffers even more from a pejorative association. A clever attempt to capitalize on a fashionable term has been one writer's use of the term "counter-revolutionist," but this cuts off the traditionalist from his forebears. Another, who disliked being labelled an essentialist, argued instead for the term "stalwart." There is much talk today of "basic education." Some of the same confusion reigns in

the opposing camp, and the shades of difference are small between progressives, pragmatists, reconstructionists, revisionists and radicals.

This problem is both insoluble and unimportant. The conceptual differences are what matter. The two main camps are generally important to distinguish, and even they overlap considerably. The one model which allows for this is that of an educational continuum, from progressive to traditional.

This is the central argument of the work, and no attempt is made to settle the dispute over names. The term essentialist is generally used, but so are terms like conservative, centralist, or moderate. The latter two terms suggest, as is argued later, that essentialists generally take a position more central on the continuum than is often imagined.

The chief burden of this work is then to find and analyze the general traditionalist or essentialist argument; to find out what such writers have said, whether it is consistent in itself or with other similar writers, whether they really differ from progressives; in short, whether there is a real tradition.

### The Procedure

The analysis is necessarily wide ranging. Mortimer Adler has written with Milton Mayer, in The Revolution in Education (1958), that "the traditionalist position in education. . . draws its arguments from so many quarters that it is easiest to present in generalized form." This analysis therefore examines the issue in five different but complementary ways.

These five analyses constitute the five chief chapters of the argument; they scrutinize the history of essentialist literature, together with essentialist views of philosophy, politics, psychology, and pedagogy.

The first of these five chapters, The "Pedigree," with the review of literature, discusses the research methodology and limitations of the study. There exists no authoritative history or analysis of essentialism, and there is therefore no clear precedent to follow and no single reputable bibliographical source. The authority adopted is thus the internal authority of the essentialists themselves. The result is an attempt to define essentialists, not by any external criteria, but simply on internal evidence of what they claimed to be and whether or not they were felt by other essentialists to be members of the same tradition. The review of literature helps to explain why this is necessary; there is very little external evidence; the internal is strong. The reader can start with any recent essentialist and, by noting his "heroes" and his "villains," continue to chart out the former especially. Few essentialists fail to quote and refer voluminously. The high concentration of quotations in this work is therefore in the essentialist tradition. This chapter divides the tradition into the more recent strictly essentialist tradition; and the longer perennial tradition, which includes many great classical writers back to Plato and Aristotle. It attempts to show the large agreement and the minor disagreements of the tradition. It seeks for compromise views which are so typical of the tradition. It examines essentialist attitudes to Dewey, in an attempt to show both their general agreement on Dewey and to illustrate their own range of opinion on a subject of

importance. This process has the merit of being inductive and de facto, and it avoids reliance on any previous analysis.

No claim can be made that this study is exhaustive, but all the major figures and most of the minor have been included. Their names become progressively familiar in the text, and a tentative list is provided in the next section. Membership has always been a matter of opinion, and remains so here. This study then goes on to analyze the material in the areas of philosophy, politics, psychology, and pedagogy.

The most important argument is that essentialists, contrary to popular belief, are not extremists but are vigorously anti-absolutist, at every point. They are instead relativists and centralists on most issues, philosophical, political, psychological, and pedagogical. Differences exist among them, of course, but generally these are over degrees of tolerance about the midpoint of the continuum, with some bias to the right or conservative end.

The most central chapter is that on philosophy. The anti-absolutist view is there most clearly evident. Barzun's works are analyzed at some length to illustrate this relativism. Essentialist literature in general is ransacked to analyze their views on epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.

The subsequent chapter, on essentialist political views, seeks to root the tradition in a concept of Jeffersonian democracy. Jefferson is consistently and constantly invoked to bolster a view of democracy that is both open and meritocratic, some would argue almost aristocratic, a view which relies on education both of the mind and of the character, and a view with a strong

bias against undue federalism and vigorously opposed to all absolutisms or totalitarian views: one concerned essentially with the nature of freedom and its difficult reconciliation with discipline, duty and national integrity.

The chapter on psychology applies similar anti-absolutist views to such issues as that of determinism. Essentialists are strongly anti-determinist, while recognizing that both heredity and environment profoundly limit the degree of human choice. They are opposed to the falsely scientific views of some extreme Freudians though not against Freud properly understood, just as they can be socialist but never communist. They hold essentially moderate opinions on the nature of motivation in education and of readiness in developmental theory.

The chapter on pedagogy limits itself, for reasons of space, to the analysis of essentialist views of the function of language and literature, both classical and English. These are seen to be central to the development of man through culture, and to reflect the pragmatic view of man which is neither absolutist nor falsely scientific.

An early chapter is added to clarify some of the issues by the analysis of one important essentialist, indeed the founder of the twentieth century tradition, and it serves the special purpose of outlining all the conceptual issues early on. A purely conceptual approach would perforce leave some concepts until the very end. This chapter analyzes Bagley in each conceptual area in, as it were, a microcosm of the general argument.



Dewey and Barzun likewise receive fuller individual treatment. The chapter on philosophy may be seen to maintain a similar function, for it inevitably strays at points into issues which could be termed political, psychological or pedagogical. This is both inevitable and useful, for it denies the otherwise rather compartmentalized and unintegrated suggestion of the structure. It is correspondingly a longer chapter than any other.

There is room, of course, for much further research or analysis. Large areas of the curriculum are little discussed. No predictions are made of the future. No comparisons are made with other countries, especially Britain, where there has been a recent resurgence of essentialist opinion in the "Black Papers." No analysis is attempted of the effect of essentialism on educational practice at any time in history, nor of its standing today. No measures are proposed to remedy this.

The study concludes with a summary, a bibliography and appendices.

The People

The mainstream of the essentialist tradition, or the covert club which emerges from a reading of the literature, can be represented tentatively by the following names, with birthdates.

M. J. Adler 1902  
 J. Barzun 1907  
 W. C. Bagley 1874  
 I. Babbitt 1865  
 B. I. Bell 1886  
 A. Bestor 1908  
 F. S. Breed 1876  
 W. W. Brickman 1913  
 T. L. Briggs 1877  
 H. S. Broudy 1905  
 N. M. Butler 1860  
 H. Buchholz 1879  
 J. B. Conant 1893  
 M. J. Demiashkevich 1891  
 A. Flexner 1866  
 J. W. Gardner, 1912  
 A. Griswold 1906  
 G. Highet 1906  
 H. H. Horne 1874  
 R. M. Hutchins 1899  
 R. Kirk, 1918  
 I. L. Kandel 1881  
 J. D. Koerner 1923  
 J. W. Krutch 1893  
 A. Lynd 1910  
 T. Mendenhall 1910  
 A. Meiklejohn 1872  
 H. Mumford Jones 1892  
 A. J. Nock 1870  
 P. H. Phenix 1915  
 D. Riesman 1909  
 Admiral H. G. Rickover 1900  
 M. Smith 1906  
 M. Van Doren 1894

To this mainstream there are various minor tributaries. There are a number of earlier Americans, for instance, who are generally read and quoted with approval, especially Henry Barnard, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walter Torrey Harris, Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann and Henry David Thoreau.

Another small group of Americans who, although they scarcely address themselves to educational philosophies, endear themselves to essentialists by their strongly conservative spirit, includes Henry Adams, Walter Lippman and H. L. Mencken.

There is also that small band of Europeans who are quoted with constant approval, especially T. S. Eliot, Ortega y Gasset, Jacques Maritain and, more obscurely, Sir Richard Livingstone.

Finally, the tradition could be said to flow from that well of Graeco-Roman and European literature described as "the greater tradition," and to trickle on today in the bulletins of the Council for Basic Education. The matter is more fully discussed in the next two sections.

C H A P T E R I I  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is no single volume exclusively concerned with the essentialist tradition. The indirect or incidental literature, on the other hand, makes a small library, and is discussed in the subsequent chapters.

The general histories of American education are almost uniformly inadequate in this regard. It appears that Michael Demiashkevich was responsible for the term "essentialism," and it first gained currency in his An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education, published in 1935. Of course, the concepts that make up essentialism are much older; and there are other claims on the subject of the title. Kandel always objected to the word; Bagley preferred the expression "stalwart"; Adler despised the neologism; and expressions like "classical" and "traditional" are equally satisfactory. Demiashkevich coined the term, proposed essentialism as the corrective of progressivism, and was instrumental in founding the Essentialist Committee of 1938, with W. C. Bagley, F. Alden Shaw and others.

Merle Curti's The Social Ideas of American Educators, published in 1935 and revised in 1959, makes understandably no reference to the essentialists as a group, but less understandably makes no reference, even in the revised version, to Bagley, Hutchins or any other significant number of essentialist individuals.

J. D. Butler's Four Philosophies, and Their Practice in Education and Religion, published in 1951, makes no reference to essentialism, while quoting heavily from Demiashkevich and H. H. Horne.

S. J. Curtis and M. E. A. Boulton, in their voluminous and influential "A Short History of Educational Ideas," published in London in 1953, devote several pages to the American essentialists, though the discussion is very generalized and some curiously unimportant essentialists are noted. There is no mention of Michael Demiashkevich.

The best general analysis of essentialism, and its near relative perennialism, occurs in Theodore Brameld's Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective, published in 1955. The title justly reminds one of Bertrand Russell's History of Western Philosophy, in that both attempt to explain philosophical ideas in terms of their social background. Suffice to say for the moment that Brameld's critique is harsh, based on an economic argument, and conducted at a very generalized level. It is frankly reconstructionist, and labels essentialism as a conservative ploy designed to sanction modern industrial civilization; and, while this is clearly true of some essentialists, it is hard to suggest in general and clearly absurd in many individual cases. Brameld's most useful contribution is to remind us that both idealists and realists can coexist within the same tradition. For perennialism he has no time at all, and indeed sees it as a threat to democracy.

A more down-to-earth and detailed discussion, though largely descriptive, is that of Lawrence A. Cremin in The Transformation of the School-Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957, published in 1961. Chapter nine, "The Crisis in Popular Education," is useful bibliographical material, but has little space for analysis, and never mentions essentialism by name.

J. S. Brubaker, in his Modern Philosophies of Education, published in 1939 and revised in 1962, limits his analysis of essentialism to a few pages and largely to the discussion of idealism and realism.

Butts and Cremin summed up the movement thus, in their History of Education in American Culture, 1953

A few educators tried to make explicit some of the implications of the general realistic philosophy for education. . . Breed, Bagley, Ross Finney. . . have in common a respect for the stubborn facts of the physical and social sciences. . . This view, deeply rooted in American educational practice, had a vogue in the 1930's under the name of essentialism. Its practice has remained vitally present, but the name had a relatively short life except in the textbooks of educational philosophy.

If the general textbooks restrict themselves to highly generalized philosophizing about essentialism or to simplistic political judgements, the few doctoral dissertations available limit themselves either to a simply descriptive account or to analyses of one essentialist. They make little attempt at any general conceptual analysis.

The most useful is Father Paul A. Graul's A Historical Study: The Essentialist Committee for the Advancement of American Education, his Ed.D. dissertation of 1974 for SUNY, New York. It is valuable both in that it is recent and that it is well written; and both characteristics distinguish it from its rivals. The study is limited to a detailed historical analysis of the earliest meetings of the Essentialist Committee and the subsequent correspondence of its members.

Steven Innocent Miller's Ph.D. dissertation of 1970 for Michigan State, The Essentialist Movement in American Education; A Critical Analysis, is more ambitious but, as Graul argues, less logical and, as Graul hints, too much indebted to Brameld's reconstructionist simplicities. Both criticisms are just.

Rather less helpful is Charles E. Dyer's Ph.D. dissertation of 1954 for the University of Oklahoma, A Study of Essentialism in Contemporary American Education.

Another recent dissertation which limits itself to the discussion of one essentialist, though it never discusses that label, is Owen George Marley's Ed.D. dissertation, Thomas Henry Briggs: Philosopher and Educator, 1974, University of Massachusetts.

Probably the least helpful is T. A. Shaver's Ph.D. dissertation of 1968 for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, A Critical Analysis of William C. Bagley's Concept of Essentialism and Evidence of its Similarity in Church of Christ Youth Curriculum Materials 1963-66.

The third body of literature is that of the periodicals. This is of two types. First, there are those articles, printed generally in prestigious publications like The Atlantic Monthly or the Saturday Review, which appear in due course as books. Second, there is the more evanescent material published only in periodicals, especially in School and Society and in the bulletin of the Council for Basic Education. A small number of their seminal articles are worthy of initial mention here.

W. W. Brickman's "Essentialism Ten Years After" is a helpful but limited survey of early events in the life of the Essentialist Committee, published in School and Society, May 1948. Gurney Chambers elaborates on this with his "Educational Essentialism Thirty Years After," in School and Society, January 1969. F. Alden Shaw, one of the central founders of the 1938 Committee, has recently published useful material about the original summary of theses, as they were known, in his "The Essentialist Challenge to American Education," in School and Society, April 1971. The material in the Council for Basic Education's bulletin is by design little more than current comment and criticism, and no single article stands out for individual mention. Bagley's own two initial statements, discussed in chapter four, appeared in Educational Administration and Supervision.

The periodical literature, however, suffers from the same limitations as do the dissertations, namely of extreme specificity. The articles either present useful but bald statements of essentialist policy, generally acceptable



to their author but without any more general validation, or they briefly review some of the more obvious literature.

This work attempts to fill the gap between the extreme generalities of the history books, on the one hand, and the extremely specific detail of the dissertations and the periodical pieces on the other, and to analyze the relevant concepts and their intellectual history.

The thesis therefore concerns itself largely with the literary and intellectual tradition described historically in chapters two and three and analyzed in chapters four, five, six, seven and eight. The tradition is, for the sake of convenience and of historical balance, described as of two parts: the lesser tradition and the greater tradition. The former concentrates on late 19th and 20th century essentialists or traditionalists; the latter assumes a larger continuity of the classical tradition since Plato and Aristotle as seen by essentialists. The two constitute a kind of covert pedigree.

## C H A P T E R I I I

## THE PEDIGREE

" . . . stand upon the shoulders of all the tall and sun-crowned men who have gone before."

W. C. Bagley

There being no map of essentialist territory, the interested reader must start in medias re, to use appropriately traditionalist syntax and diction. The reader gradually becomes aware of a tradition amounting almost at times to a covert club, the password for which was quotation from and by other members. At the most obvious level this is revealed in constant reference to Plato, Aristotle and a select few giants; at the less obvious by reference to lesser, more arcane figures of the tradition: the pygmies. In fact, a favorite image in the literature is just that, of pygmies seated upon the shoulders of giants. These two races amount to the greater and lesser tradition, one might argue; although it may be more convenient to understand the greater tradition as including the lesser.

There is no membership proof; no one carries an essentialist card. Membership of the Council for Basic Education might, since its inception in 1956, be the nearest approach to card-carrying status, but doubtless many of its members would resent the label essentialist.

It must be understood therefore that the tradition described exists chiefly in the minds of those who contribute to it. One is left with two chief determinants of membership, perhaps, namely identity of views and degrees of quotation. The first of these is technically impossible to determine finally,

as views invariably, even between two members very close to each other, overlap and differ at certain points. The second method has the merit of some objectivity, although it contributes only as circumstantial evidence.

### Research Data

Therefore, a small project was carried out to confirm or dispel this more purely subjective impression of a covert membership or freemasonry. A selection of essentialist literature was analyzed for what might be termed "in house citation," that is, for all quotations of essentialists by one another. Clearly quotation may imply agreement, disagreement or even neutrality, but its usage indicates at least some degree of inheritance. Details of the analysis are presented in an appendix. A summary of popularity by quotation is presented below in tables one and two.

Clearly this evidence proves nothing, but it suggests or confirms a great deal. After making all due allowance for the vagaries of the sample, for inevitable bias against recency, as clearly Plato has been read for some time longer than Phenix, one can discern something of both the greater and lesser tradition.

Much of the significance of these figures will become gradually clearer in subsequent chapters, but a few general comments are in order at this point.

TABLE ONE  
THE GREATER TRADITION

Authority	References to	Authority	References to
Plato	133	Livingstone	9
Aristotle	102	Russell	9
Dewey	100	Barnard	
Socrates	77	Comte, Maritain	8
Jefferson	60	De Tocqueville,	
Kant	50	Freud	7
Rousseau	49	Harris, Flexner, Swift,	
W. James	43	Thoreau, Ulich	6
Hegel	41	Marcus Aurelius,	
Marx	39	Heraclitus, Barzun,	
Bacon	39	Ortega y Gasset	
Whitehead	31	Demiashkevich,	
Herbart	31	Renan	5
Conant	31	Keynes	
Darwin	30	Meiklejohn, Aquinas,	
Emerson	30	Lippmann	4
Spencer	29	Carlyle, Mencken,	
Comenius	25	Brickman, Democritus	4
Descartes	23	Mumford Jones, Veblen,	
Hutchins	23	<b>Einstein</b> , Briggs, Hook	3
Mann	21	Horne, Wordsworth	3
Arnold	21	Highet, Rickover,	
Montaigne	19	Berkeley, Lynd,	
Pascal	18	Chesterton	2
Newman	16	Riesman	
Bagley	15	Buchholz, Krutch,	
Butler	14	Griswold, <b>Phenix</b>	1
Nock	14		
C. W. Eliot	12		
T. S. Eliot	11		
Bestor	10		
Augustine	10		
Kandel	10		
Voltaire	10		
Bell	9		
Burt	9		
Cicero	9		
Gardner	9		
Rabelais	9		

TABLE TWO  
THE LESSER TRADITION

Authority	References to
Conant	31
Hutchins	23
Bagley	15
Butler	14
Nock	14
C. W. Eliot	12
T. S. Eliot	11
Bestor	10
Kandel	10
Bell	9
Burt	9
Gardner	9
Livingstone	9
Maritain	8
Flexner	6
Ulich	6
Barzun	5
Ortega y Gasset	5
Demia <del>shkevich</del>	5
Meiklejohn	4
Lippmann	4
Mencken	4
Brickman	4
Mumford Jones	3
Briggs	3
Horne	3
Hight	2
Rickover	2
Lynd	2
Riesman	1
Phenix	1
Buchholz	1
Krutch	1
Griswold	1

For instance, it is important to note both who has and who has not been included. Thus Jefferson is a constant touchstone, while Jackson is rarely mentioned. The ranking is obviously important, but it is also important to relate the ranking to the author's general stature. Thus one would find much reference to Plato in any educational literature, from extreme essentialist to extreme progressive. Almost more significant are those minor saints or sinners of the canon who are revered or reviled only by essentialists. For example, Nock ranks high, as an obscure saint; Charles Eliot ranks high, as a lesser villain. It is important also to note that many significant essentialists are not included in the tables above, as the sample examined in such detail was necessarily small. The fuller membership is listed in chapter one, although again no claims are made for completeness; and they emerge gradually in the subsequent chapters.

These statistics only broadly indicate the tradition. Close reading of the literature reveals that it is simply studded with mutual quotation, and these range from extreme agreement to extreme disagreement, some of which is sampled below.

### Continuity

The tradition is composed of a general continuity of views, with some minor discontinuities of various kinds. The continuity, and the minor discontinuities, are discussed by concepts later, but a few examples are discussed by personalities at this point, briefly and selectively, to avoid undue repetition in the later conceptual chapters.

The broad agreement, for instance, sees a fundamental opposition between progressive and traditionalist as though from left to right. It is sometimes expressed in right and left wing terms, sometimes simply as a dichotomy. The arc encompasses more than just educationalists.

The extreme "villains" of the hypothetical left are not always famous. Generally they are extreme progressives or extreme bureaucrats or dangerous political thinkers. Two of the most popular identifiable sinners are Marx and Kilpatrick, the former for his mock-scientific predictions and totalitarian influence, and the latter for his extreme progressivism or pragmatism. John Dewey is justly famous and justly treated by many essentialists; the more extreme the essentialist, the more he disapproves of Dewey; the more moderate, the more he approves of Dewey and merely deplors his influence on weaker minded progressive brethren. A little less feared are figures like Charles Eliot, once president of Harvard, who is generally seen as encouraging selective courses and thereby allowing the thin edge of the progressive wedge to be driven into the traditional classical tradition. At the center of the arc are such figures as Dewey, William James, Freud and Rousseau. James is generally seen as slightly sounder than Dewey. Freud, it is generally argued, has been misunderstood and misused by extreme progressives and all those who seek to denigrate human responsibility by denying the will; and essentialists argue that Freud, properly understood, replaces will and responsibility at the center of man's life. About Rousseau there is enormous

disagreement; Meiklejohn and Barzun see him as the first of the modern world, whereas extremists like Babbitt deplore his supposed influence upon the arts and education.

Moving further across this imaginary arc, one can see that Plato and Aristotle are generally approved, more by the extremists than others, but there are some cries of "absolutist" against Plato, and Jefferson thought him simply absurd.

Most thoroughly approved, and most quoted of the strictly local saints, is Thomas Jefferson. He is the subject of several books by essentialists, and of an enormous body of comment. He is particularly approved as one who manages to combine a properly egalitarian view of democracy with a patrician regard for learning and moral virtue; essentialists are especially fond of Jefferson's view of what he calls a natural, not inherited, aristocracy. He is a vigorous meritocrat, as well as an American founding hero and attractive personality.

This combination makes Jefferson irresistible. The same educational views in a less attractive personality render several of our tradition almost *persona non grata* with their own fellows. Thus Nock, whose economic views in particular closely resemble Jefferson's, is seen by many as too far right. In fact there is a place on the far right, where congregate several minor figures like Nock, Henry Adams, Irving Babbitt and others, who often refer to themselves as conservative radicals, where right wing almost reaches round the circle to join hands with left wing. Nock called himself an anarchist



at one point. Yet they are very little different from, and quote inspiration in, Thomas Jefferson, the fervid anti-Federalist.

### Discontinuity

Almost as significant as the general agreement are the local disagreements and personal vagaries; and we can distinguish, usefully if not finally, several kinds of discontinuity.

First, there are those who are not, in themselves, clearly essentialists, even allowing for the obvious anachronism embedded in the term. This is particularly so with some of the nineteenth century characters, for instance Mann and Emerson. It has, of course, been argued that, before the pragmatists, everyone is an essentialist or traditionalist by definition, but Bagley long ago pointed out that the fundamental dualism of progressive-traditionalist is extremely old. Mann, for example, is very much a traditionalist, and combines a burning desire for general education for all children with a clear desire for the inculcation of moral principles, which makes him a natural heir to Thomas Jefferson, even more so than Barnard. Emerson is a more complicated case, in that he exhibits at times an apparent tendency to progressivism, but his popularity with certain essentialists rests on his idealism, his concern for the state of American culture and learning, and his common-sense view of children and the process of teaching them.

Second, there are those figures for whom there is an expressed disagreement as to their classification. Probably the best examples are Rousseau and Dewey. While the former, and indeed all our examples, deserve individual

treatment, John Dewey demands it, and is treated separately below.

Third, there are what could be described as private saints or household gods. This is a particularly significant group, as they perhaps most clearly mark the uniqueness of the essentialist tradition. Many educational philosophers will discuss Dewey or even Bagley, but only those essentialists on the inside discuss, for example, Renan or Nicholas Murray Butler or Sir Richard Livingstone or Albert Jay Nock. The best examples from amongst these are Sir Richard Livingstone and Nicholas Murray Butler. Butler is discussed by Buchholz, Demiashkevich, Bell, Kandel, Koerner, Highet and Mortimer Smith.

Butler was President of Columbia University for many years, a powerful, autocratic and self-confident educator, whose book, 'The Meaning of Education', has been enormously popular with essentialists from the moment of its publication in 1915. He combined a Jeffersonian desire for meritocratic democracy with a reverence for Kantian idealism and Christian education, and a firm dislike of pragmatism. He is not much read today, one suspects, but will linger long as a minor saint of those essentialists who read each other and fasten on each other's heroes.

Livingstone is an even more extreme example, in that he is a foreigner and obscure even in his own country. Indeed, one could say that he was a prophet without honor except among American essentialists. English essentialists appear not to know of him. Even such a standard English

history of educational ideas as that of Curtis and Boulwood refers to him only briefly, and nowhere discusses him. His twin claim to essentialist fame is that he was a great Platonist early in the 20th century and the president of an Oxford college. He is thus of great interest, for example, to a perennialist like Robert Hutchins.

There is also a measure of discontinuity associated with the dates of a member of the tradition. Larger souls like Plato survive this handicap, and indeed gain stature by merit of their antiquity, but others suffer. For instance, Herbart is an important general influence in 19th century American education, and a number of essentialists like to argue that he is not so far from being a traditionalist as extreme progressives would like to argue. He is the nineteenth century equivalent of Dewey in this respect. Spencer, likewise, is no longer much discussed. By the same token, twentieth century essentialists may achieve a temporary popularity or nine-day notoriety, as did for example Arthur Bestor with his attacks on the training of teachers; that great stir was discussed at length in 'School and Society', but is less known today. Indeed, in so far as most essentialists by definition use the same arguments and attack the same progressive tenets, most of them repeat each other and themselves, and therefore only the most recent and most vigorous attack is notorious at any one period. Currently the stage is held by members of the Council for Basic Education, for instance J. D. Koerner. Sputnik and the armament-education scare put Admiral Rickover into brief but splendid orbit.

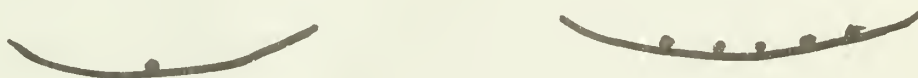
Likewise also the earlier and less abiding Greek philosophers live only in a few more classically educated minds, and examples there would be Marcus Aurelius, Democritus and Heraclitus.

Finally, and most significantly, there are discontinuities associated with conceptual differences or biases among essentialists. As these differences, and the more important agreements, are the subject of the following conceptual chapters, a general description will suffice for the moment. Probably the biggest potential divide is that between realists and idealists. Bagley differed importantly with Demiashkevich at this juncture, and he struggled to paper over this very, as it were, real crack by claiming that his concept of emergent idealism did away with idealism or supernaturalism, while retaining individual ideals like duty. Allied to this dichotomy is clearly that between Christians and humanists; many essentialists have been Christians, and the extreme brethren are often Catholic, while the more purely classical humanists try to derive their ideals more naturalistically. Only this can explain the otherwise bizarre appearance of Ernest Renan in the tradition. His significance is that he abandoned the Catholic priesthood to become a leading 19th century scholar of languages and of the Near East and Christianity; Gilbert Highet describes him as reducing Christ and Christianity to a humanist level subordinate to the god of reason, while cherishing a real regard for the historical Jesus. The person of Socrates is revered for his rather similar humanism; Jefferson's own very unmythical deism is distinctly akin to this.

So one can see where the idealist enthusiasm for St. Augustine, St. Thomas, or Kant and Hegel came from, or the realistic regard for Aristotle, Whitehead and Bertrand Russell; and the fondness for Montaigne, Rabelais, or Voltaire.

Similarly, there are those essentialists who represent a useful touchstone in that they promote discussion in certain conceptual areas. Admiral Rickover has been mentioned, and he is especially popular with those who criticize progressive education for allowing national goals to be subordinated to personal caprice. Walter Lippmann is a useful conservative political theorist used to buttress meritocratic beliefs.

One might summarize therefore graphically by suggesting two hypothetical arcs. The first is that arc from right to left on which one might tentatively envisage a particular point where an educator might be placed. The second arc might be a smaller one, described by the diverse points upon the larger arc representing the different views of various critics. The first position is an average of the second.



In other words, John Dewey is arguably near the center of the first arc. On the second he is variously distributed by those who judge him as either progressive or moderate.

John Dewey

A brief analysis of essentialist views of Dewey will illustrate these arcs, will deal conveniently with the central theme of essentialist and progressive differences, and will represent in microcosm the manner of the later conceptual chapters, by examining Dewey in four areas of his thinking, namely the philosophical, political, psychological and pedagogical.

There are as many views of Dewey as there are viewers, of course, so one must expect a breadth of opinion. These opinions place Dewey at many different points on our second arc, from arch-radical to the architect of moderation; in other words, he ranges from extreme left of the arc to slightly right of center.

The chief barrage of comment is directed at his philosophical views. An early example is the comment of Nicholas Murray Butler in 1915 that "an empirical education is futile," and his argument that all students of education must be serious students of philosophy as well, and that pragmatism destroys that possibility for it

Is not a philosophy at all, but rather a denial that philosophy can exist. With the title of the New Realism, a group of younger writers and teachers has thought it worth while to repeat with no little ingenuity, and to endeavor to perpetuate, some of the oldest and most thoroughly exposed of philosophical errors. Both these movements are revivals of that dogmatism in philosophy which it was hoped had been put to rest forever by the criticisms of Kant.<sup>1</sup>

Irving Babbitt attacked not only John Dewey but the more moderate William James as well, because "James' relativism denied the importance of such

constants;"<sup>2</sup> and he talked exuberantly of John Dewey and his followers "who are suffering from an advanced state of naturalistic intoxication."<sup>3</sup> Herman Harrell Horne, a great idealist of the essentialist tradition, had difficulty knowing where to attack Dewey first, though he also had great respect for Dewey's intentions and intellect. Horne's early The Philosophy of Education,<sup>4</sup> was brought up to date in 1927 with a new chapter called "Twenty-Three Years Later," or "Prmatism versus Idealism." There he recalled that Dewey's "personal development in philosophy began with Idealism."<sup>5</sup> His criticisms centered round idealism and the nature of philosophy; he found two fundamental and mutually opposed views of philosophy, that which saw it as a study of social conflicts and that which saw it as the study of the whole of reality. He anticipated many a later essentialist view by arguing that Dewey's concept of growth never explained growth for what or whither, whereas "idealism regards education as a means, not as an end in itself. . . . The end of ends, according to idealism, is the increasing realization of the Absolute idea for the individual, society and the race. It includes the conception of an ideal social order, which may very well be a social democracy."<sup>6</sup> He went on to argue that "in the one case we have an anthropocentric, and in the other a theocentric, reality."<sup>7</sup> He denied the central pragmatic test by arguing that "ideas are not true because they work, but work, or will work when conditions are better, because they are true."<sup>8</sup> Horne's criticisms of Dewey were more fully worked out in The Democratic Philosophy of Education,<sup>9</sup> which was a paraphrase of and commentary on Dewey's Democracy and Education. It represented the fruits of many years of graduate seminars

based on Dewey's book, and it would be presumptuous to recall all the arguments; however, they follow the idealist argument of the 1927 work. The book was dedicated to "G. W. F. Hegel, Absolutist, Of whom John Dewey, Experimentalist, writes. . . 'acquaintance with Hegel has left a permanent deposit in my thinking.'" Horne argued, in familiar vein, of Dewey that "there are no ends in themselves, no final values, no absolute."<sup>10</sup> Again he rejected the pragmatic test, when he claimed: "The truth of a view is not determined by its influence."<sup>11</sup> His conclusion was that

Dewey's real novelty and originality is in limiting the essentials of educational method to the essentials of scientific method, and this originality, as we have seen, has the defect of its quality. It is strong where education is scientific and weak where education is literary, historical, aesthetic and spiritual. . . education and life are more, much more, than scientific thinking.<sup>12</sup>

Michael John Demiashkevich, the co-founder with Bagley of the 1938 Essentialist Committee, was a similar idealist, and indeed quoted Horne in his 1935 work, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education.<sup>13</sup> His arguments were in general identical to those of Horne; he concluded that:

Religion in reality serves what seems to be an inherent and ineradicable need of man for the ultimate certainty. Neither science nor philosophy satisfies this need.<sup>14</sup>

Like Butler, he argued that any such heresies were thought of long ago; progressives and pragmatists were dismissed as "Neo-Heracliteans."<sup>15</sup>

Alexander Meiklejohn's criticisms were chiefly of a social and political nature, but he included the jibe that "Dewey's followers. . . simply identify 'being scientific' with 'being wise'."<sup>16</sup>



I. L. Kandel argued that "the fundamental emphasis of pragmatism is on method for the continuous reconstruction of experience and, therefore, of values."<sup>17</sup> He argued that Dewey used such qualitative words as "wholesome" but failed to define them, "although they imply selection and subjection to some standards of comparison."<sup>18</sup> His arguments were a subdued version of those of Horne and Demiashevich.

Mortimer Adler and Milton Mayer attacked what they called Dewey's dogmatism, quoting Whitehead:

Nothing is more curious. . . than the self satisfied dogmatism with which mankind at each period of its history cherishes the delusion of the finality of its existing modes of knowledge. Skeptics and believers are all alike. At this moment the scientists and the skeptics are the leading dogmatists.<sup>19</sup>

Meiklejohn likewise argued that pragmatism was out of date and therefore irrelevant by its own criteria.

Mortimer Smith<sup>20</sup> attacked Dewey, "the philosophical godfather of the movement," on what are by now familiar grounds, namely that he never explained growth for what purpose, that expressions such as "satisfactory" were vague, and that "in the end progressivism reduces education to a vast bubbling confusion;" and Smith repeated these arguments in 1954.<sup>21</sup>

Albert Lynd summarized his criticisms of Dewey's philosophy with an appeal to the community which a school might expect to serve:

And how many communities, if so consulted, would be likely to approve a philosophy which is plainly uncongenial to certain loyalties which most plain non-philosophizing people hold, for better or worse, to be important: belief in supernaturalism, in a transcendent moral law, in the immutability of certain moral principles?<sup>22</sup>

And Philip Phenix<sup>23</sup> argued: "Pragmatists tend to swallow up values in process. . . the transcendent ground and goal of the moral enterprise are obscured, if not explicitly denied."

In short, Dewey and pragmatism were seen to suffer from the dogmatism that there is no dogma, or from a faulty application of scientific method outside its proper field, with a consequent vacuity in the areas of ethics and metaphysics.

A similar argument was applied by essentialists to Dewey's political and social views. A philosophy which relied on concepts like scientific evolution and upon adjustment to the environment would naturally throw up that especial horror of essentialists, namely the life adjustment movement, so popular for a time. Paradoxically, this stemmed from an understandable misconception of Dewey. Hutchins argued:

Since he is not a clear writer, his followers may perhaps be excused for their failure to notice that when he talked about adjustment to the environment, he meant that the environment should first be improved. Dewey was essentially a social reformer, and it is tragic that he should have laid the foundation for the proposition that the aim of education is to adjust the young to their environment, good or bad.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, if one does not believe in values, adjustment is inevitable, goes the argument. One finds it again with Mortimer Smith, quoting Bertrand Russell to the effect that Dewey was pre-eminently the philosopher of American industrialism,<sup>25</sup> an opinion which is now popular with the revisionist historians of the radical left. It is not the last time that left and right agree. Smith also argued that one needs a theory of values to be able to choose democracy, and that Dewey provided only expediency.<sup>26</sup>

Russell Kirk claimed for similar reasons that Dewey "was bent, though perhaps only half consciously, on creating an impersonal society."<sup>27</sup> Albert Lynd went further to claim that Dewey was "subversive of traditional religion and of economic liberalism,"<sup>28</sup> which is to say no more than that Dewey was an agnostic socialist. He went on to claim that:

There is political quackery in the new pedagogy. In their constant use of the word "democracy," the educational interpreters of Dewey are evading the first and most fundamental implication of that word: the will of the community. . . I am opposed to a philosophy of education which takes for granted the falsity of all gods. A nonreligious curriculum may and should be quite compatible with an attitude of sincere respect for all religions. The philosophy of Professor Dewey is categorically incompatible with such an attitude. You know your neighbors. How many of them would vote for Deweyism if they understood the philosophical ballot?<sup>29</sup>

The most elaborate political critique of Dewey was Meiklejohn's rather idiosyncratic Education Between Two Worlds. His argument, very briefly, was that pragmatism was not primarily an epistemological or philosophical affair in any way, but rather a movement for social reform. Its

enemies are victorianism and aristocratic practices of any kind.<sup>30</sup> The fundamental flaw of Dewey's procedure, he claimed, was to have set up an unnecessary dualism between an individual and his society. To reduce his lengthy argument drastically, it was that Comenius was right to see the state as theocentric. Locke and Dewey were wrong to see government as merely negative, as a policeman regulating selfish interests. Rousseau got it right:

The peculiar significance of Rousseau for our western culture lies in the fact that he leads the way in the substitution of the state for the church as the primary institution of human brotherhood. . . to minds steeped in Anglo-American competitive individualism, he seems not only wrong but also absurd. And yet I am sure that he is right.<sup>31</sup>

The clue lies in Rousseau's doctrine of the social contract, whereby man chooses society, for it is only in society that he can develop, and that he is therefore clear that he has chosen certain restraints with his freedom.

The Christian tradition is maintained. . . 'whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it' was the old doctrine. It is now replaced by the assertion that each of us, in all well organized society, yields to the state all he is, all that he has, and that, in doing so, each of us becomes a free person.<sup>32</sup>

Meiklejohn's state-centered view is unusual for an essentialist for, as we shall see, there is a strong anarchical thread running from Jefferson's anti-federalism to the more extreme views of A. J. Nock, Henry Adams and others.

While the major criticisms are philosophical and political, these necessarily spill over into the area of psychology. The chief objections here are against what essentialists often take to be an acceptance of at least a mild form of determinism or behaviorism, undue emphasis on environment and not enough on heredity, a false view of interest or motivation, and often a simplified understanding of Freud.

An early and extreme view was that of Horne. For instance, he argued that the pragmatist and the idealist differed radically in their opinion of the role of intelligence:

In the one, intelligence is human; in the other, it is universal, both immanent in human experience and transcending the limits of human experience. . . the former viewpoint leads man to rely exclusively on himself for his social progress. . . the latter viewpoint of idealism leads man to rely on the Absolute, as well as on himself.<sup>33</sup>

Likewise with the doctrine of interest and discipline, again the idealist operates with and through transcendent values--"the sense of ought remains. Emphasis is placed in the one philosophy on the interest that leads to effort; in the other, in addition, on the effort that leads to interest, or, in extremis, to doing right without interest. The latter may involve coercion and obedience in moral issues."<sup>34</sup> Horne invoked the oughts and obligations of idealism where, for instance, Bagley tried to find them naturally through emergent or evolutionary values. Demiashkevich was, of course, nearer to Horne, and argued that "as things are now and are likely to continue, the vast majority of people have to do work that in reality interests them very indirectly,"<sup>35</sup>

and he talked of Dewey as "a moderate behaviorist in psychology." I. L. Kandel maintained that "on the psychological side the theory of the child-centered school was founded for a time on the stimulus-response theory of mechanistic psychology;"<sup>36</sup> and elsewhere that "the injection of a little Freudianism provided a new justification to those who advocated the cult of freedom without authority lest the growth of the individual should be warped."<sup>37</sup> Robert Hutchins declared Dewey's psychology "false,"<sup>38</sup> and that the doctrine of needs itself needed defining:

How do you know a need when you see one? The usual answer is that you know one by the demand. . . the doctrine of needs thus ends in public relations. I think it fair to say that the dominant concern of school superintendents and university presidents in America is public relations.<sup>39</sup>

The practical outcome of all this is the progressive pedagogy. Henrich Buchholz is responsible for the best example of extreme essentialist anger, in this case against the hypothetical progressive fad called petology, a new science of education.

Horatio Bump was a ladylike person with projecting teeth, concave chest, and a cancerous ambition. . . . somewhere he had read that Dewey stressed the importance in education of the child's interest. That was as far as he felt it necessary to accompany Dewey. He asked himself what, from the viewpoint of the nature study department, might be represented as the thing in which children revealed great interest, and his answer was "pets." Here truly was inspiration.<sup>40</sup>

A. J. Nock argued similarly:

One might say that the field of our pedagogy during these three decades has been the drillground of empiricism; large areas of it, indeed, seem to have been, and still seem to be, the hunting-ground of quackery. . . . Yes, yes, we kept saying, let us but just install this one new method in the secondary schools, or this one new set of curricular changes in the undergraduate college. . . . and in a year or so it will prove itself to have been the very thing we have all along been needing.<sup>41</sup>

In short, the curriculum becomes too practical or vocational, too seldom theoretical, imaginative, sequential or important. Teachers become mere aides, not authorities.

Of course, there is a more moderate view or compromise. Innumerable essentialists point out that Dewey in his Experience and Education in 1938 took issue with some of his own less cautious imitators, and that Boyd Bode, also in 1938, sought to prune progressive education of its excesses.<sup>42</sup> Compromise views will be discussed more fully later. Here it will be enough to mention, for instance, Lynd's admission that "of course, John Dewey knew what he was doing at the philosophical founthead of the movement, but Mr. Dewey is not about to set up the curriculum in your local school."<sup>43</sup> The finest compromise critique is that of Jacques Barzun. Writing in 1971,<sup>44</sup> he claimed that Dewey, like every other reformer, was necessary to "break up petrified schooling," and went on:

All that is new or seems new in Dewey (much of it is already explicit in Rousseau) is the recommendation to make early instruction follow the pattern of scientific inquiry. . . James is wiser than Dewey, as I think, in seeing that not all modes of thought are scientific. . . in any case, James and Dewey agree on the essential need to know something. . .<sup>44</sup>

Similar compromise views abound in Barzun's writing.<sup>45</sup> William Brickman had a similar appreciation of Dewey;<sup>46</sup> and Robert Ulich suggested the same, but found Dewey at fault for not being as clear as he could have been:

Had he from the beginning expressed himself so unambiguously about the necessity of regulative and persistent values as he did after 1930 (see particularly Dewey's Experience and Education), when the crisis of our modern society had become apparent, then he would not have needed to remind his own followers that they had misunderstood his philosophy.<sup>47</sup>

Thus the characteristic essentialist stance reveals itself in its attitude to a "heretic" like John Dewey. The following chapter reveals the same essentialist position in the analysis of W. C. Bagley, originator of the Essentialist Committee and "orthodox" at many points where Dewey is not.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER III

- <sup>1</sup>Butler. The Meaning of Education, 1915, p. 7.
- <sup>2</sup>Harris. Five Counterrevolutionists in Higher Education, 1970, p. 66.
- <sup>3</sup>Babbitt. Rousseau and Romanticism, 1919, p. 13.
- <sup>4</sup>Horne. The Philosophy of Education, 1904, revised, 1927.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 293.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 301.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 302.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 303.
- <sup>9</sup>Horne. The Democratic Philosophy of Education, Companion to Dewey's 'Democracy and Education,' Exposition and Comment, 1932.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 139.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 172.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 209.
- <sup>13</sup>Demiashkevich. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education, 1935, p. 139.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 114.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 344.
- <sup>16</sup>Meiklejohn. Education Between Two Worlds, 1942, p. 194.
- <sup>17</sup>Kandel. The Cult of Uncertainty, 1943, p. 63.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 75.
- <sup>19</sup>Adler. The Revolution in Education, 1958, p. 188.
- <sup>20</sup>Smith. And Madly Teach, 1949, Chapter 2.

- <sup>21</sup>Smith. The Diminished Mind, 1954, p. 80.
- <sup>22</sup>Lynd. Quackery in the Public Schools, 1950, p. 188.
- <sup>23</sup>Phenix. Education and the Common Good, 1961, p. 12.
- <sup>24</sup>Hutchins. The Conflict in Education, 1953, p. 15.
- <sup>25</sup>Smith. And Madly Teach, 1949, p. 24.
- <sup>26</sup>Smith. The Diminished Mind, 1954, p. 81.
- <sup>27</sup>Kirk. Enemies of the Permanent Things, 1969, p. 154.
- <sup>28</sup>Lynd. op. cit., p. 187.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 211.
- <sup>30</sup>Meiklejohn, op. cit., p. 132 and p. 145.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 210.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 215.
- <sup>33</sup>Horne. The Philosophy of Education, p. 299.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 300.
- <sup>35</sup>Demiashkevich. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education, 1935, p. 315.
- <sup>36</sup>Kandel. op. cit., p. 70.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>38</sup>Hutchins. The University of Utopia, 1953, p. 28.
- <sup>39</sup>Hutchins. The Conflict in Education, 1953, p. 31.
- <sup>40</sup>Buchholz. Fads and Fallacies in Present Day Education, 1931,  
p. 14.
- <sup>41</sup>Nock. The Theory of Education in the United States, 1932, p. 28.

<sup>42</sup>Bode. Progressive Education at the Crossroads, 1938, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup>Lynd. op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>44</sup>Barzun. "An Opinion: Where the Educational Nonsense Comes From," in The Intellectual Digest, Oct. 1971.

<sup>45</sup>Barzun. Of Human Freedom, 1939, p. 5 and p. 141.

Teacher in America, 1944, p. 14.

The House of Intellect, 1959, p. 100 and p. 136.

<sup>46</sup>Brickman. "The Dewey Centenary," in School and Society, 1958, Vol. 87, p. 373.

<sup>47</sup>Ulich. History of Educational Thought, 1950, p. 335.

## C H A P T E R I V

## AN ESSENTIAL ESSENTIALIST: W. C. BAGLEY

Bagley was himself one of the first to point out that the conservative versus progressive educational debate goes back a long way. He described it as "at least two hundred and eight years old," having in mind a group of seventeenth century educators who described themselves as progressives.<sup>1</sup> No doubt one could, if ingenious and perhaps a little disingenuous, find the same debate even earlier amongst the early Greek philosophers, perhaps in the case of the Sophists, or even more hypothetically amongst primitive societies.<sup>2,3</sup> In fact, the debate is significant especially because Bagley saw it as a "fundamental dualism," to use his phrase, which we shall examine in due course.

Be that as it may, the debate takes on a special interest with the arrival of Bagley upon the field. Bagley was an exemplary conservative (or "essentialist," though the term is anachronistic until 1935), and he was exemplary in two ways, historically and conceptually.

First, historically he lived through a remarkable period. For the purpose of our analysis it would be enough to say that he lived through the entire progressive education movement of America. More generally, he lived through what has probably been the most explosive era of education in any

sense. Indeed, in the words of his official biographer, "to write the biography of William Chandler Bagley is virtually to write the history of American education in the first half of the twentieth century."<sup>4</sup>

A brief outline of his career may help to suggest what is meant. He attended a selective high school in Detroit, and then graduated in 1895 from Michigan Agricultural College, (later the Michigan State College), where his scientific training formed the basis for his thinking for a long time to come, but whence he was doomed to disappointment in his expectation of a job related to his training. He graduated in a period of depression and, like many great educators, drifted into teaching, as the only opportunity which presented itself was a post in a one-teacher school in Garth, Delta County, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

However, he found the work interesting, though he made heavy weather of much of it and attributed this fact to the lack of scientific principles then available. Much later he wrote of this experience:

In short, in so far as well established facts and laws were concerned, mankind at that time knew vastly more about the raising of pigs than about the minds of children. In some of the reading that occupied the long winter evenings, however, I learned that efforts were being made to study mind in the same way that physicists and chemists had long studied matter; in the same way that biologists more recently had so successfully studied living organisms.<sup>5</sup>

In order to learn more of the application of scientific study to the problems of education, Bagley entered the University of Chicago as a

graduate student in the summer quarter of 1896, to study psychology and the physiology of the nervous system, and obtained a master's degree in experimental psychology in 1898. A graduate fellowship at Cornell University then enabled him to obtain a Ph. D. under E. B. Titchener in 1900, with a dissertation on The Apperception of the Spoken Sentence: A Study in the Psychology of Language.

In 1901 he became principal of an elementary school in St. Louis. Then he left to teach at the State Normal School at Dillon, Montana, for the sake of his wife's health; he took with him, thanks to the leadership in St. Louis of William Torey Harris, "the dynamic value of a richly conceived and rigidly wrought system of fundamental principles."<sup>6</sup>

At Dillon he taught psychology, modernized the training school, served as superintendent of the public schools from 1903 to 1906, in 1904 became vice president of the college, and yet found time to publish in 1905 his first of many books, The Education Process.

He transferred to the State Normal School at Oswego, New York, in 1906 to superintend the training school, published his second book, Classroom Management, in 1907, and won a reputation which brought offers of three university professorships in 1908. He spent the next nine years at the University of Illinois, published four books, helped found the Journal of Educational Psychology and Kappa Delta Pi, edited the journal, School and Home Education, was president for a year of the National Society for the

Study of Education, and was soon acknowledged as a leader in American education.

In 1918 he joined Teachers College, Columbia, where he remained until his retirement in 1939. In the meantime he published mightily, participated in consulting work for school boards regularly from 1917 to 1930, enjoyed almost every major educational controversy, dabbled in educational radio programs with CBS, was central in founding the short-lived but powerful Essentialist Committee in 1938, took on the editorship in his retirement of the journal, School and Society, and died in 1946.

In more general terms, Bagley "took up the profession of teaching at a time when both the theory and the practice of education entered on a period of transition," in the words of Kandel.<sup>7</sup> It is worth quoting Kandel at length, as he describes the period so succinctly.

With the conquest of the frontier there began a period of social, economic and political changes which inevitably exercised an important influence on the course of education. A rapid industrial development began and with it a new expansion in the areas of commerce, transportation and communication. This expansion continued through the twentieth century with the multiplication of new sources of power and challenged the inventiveness of a people who had already displayed a genius for inventions and innovations, the spirit of which also infected the progress of educational development.

The conquest of the frontier and the development of large scale industry were accomplished by an increase in the country's population, both by natural process and by immigration. At the same time the larger concentration of industry produced a

redistribution of the population and the rapid growth of cities. The industrial economy gradually superseded the predominantly agricultural economy of the nineteenth century and in turn helped to promote the mechanization of agricultural production.

These factors would in any case have produced some changes in the character of the American people. But America came of age more rapidly, first, because of the sense of national consciousness aroused and stimulated by the Spanish American War, and second, because of the participation of the nation in two world wars from which she emerged as a leading international power. Attention to the development of a sense of national consciousness was also directed by the increasing number of immigrants different in origin and cultural background from their predecessors in the 18th and 19th centuries; "Americanization" became an important aim in education.

Urbanization, which was inevitable in a country destined for advanced technological development, had its disadvantages. The influx of population, and particularly of immigrants who sought the comfort and aid of their fellow-nationals, too often produced slums. At the same time there was a tendency to exploit the immigrants industrially. Both factors stimulated a certain social consciousness and humanitarianism which sought to improve the lot of those who could not defend themselves and to curb the trends of exploitation and monopolies on the part of big business.

The era of prosperity which began and continued in the twentieth century, despite depressions and recessions, induced a higher standard of living. But the charge was not infrequently made that wealth, accompanied by a declining set of values and the disappearance of traditional moral controls, had a certain debilitating effect. The charges were allegedly substantiated by statistics of crime, the rise of juvenile delinquency, and the general decline of family life and parental control.



The changes in American life described up to this point would have demanded new adjustments and new orientations and emphases in the nation's education. The development of urbanization made possible the construction of larger and more schools whose number required more expert systems of administration than had prevailed hitherto. The improvement of means of transportation had its effect upon the promotion of consolidation of schools and transportation of pupils in the rural areas. Even before these social and economic changes took place, new developments had been foreshadowed, not only in the general theory of psychology but also in the psychology of childhood and of adolescence. Partly as a consequence of the study of the interests and growth of children, and, more particularly as the result of new approaches to the philosophy of education, the nineteenth century tradition of education, especially at the elementary stage, was challenged in all its aspects; secondary education was to be similarly affected later. The foundations for a revolutionary period in education began to be laid in the last two decades of the nineteenth century; the full effect did not actually become apparent until about 1915 and more definitely after 1919 when the Progressive Education Association was established. Long before these dates, however, there were evidences of efforts at innovations which, though not infrequent, never succeeded in establishing themselves for long in the public school systems.<sup>8</sup>

This passage deserves such lengthy quotation for a number of reasons: because it is one of the best general descriptions of the social or political contexts; because it is written by a gentleman who was in his own right an essentialist; because its own assumptions are essentialist, or conservative, as might be more obvious if we contrasted it with the arguments of the current historical revisionists, who would lay the blame more vigorously at the door of industrial capitalists; and perhaps because its very prose style may give us an inkling of what it means to think like an essentialist, for the syntax is measured,

highly wrought, antithetical, the constructions are passive and generalized, the vocabulary Latinate. The relation of style to educational philosophy is something one could pursue further. One could fruitfully contrast, for example, the prose styles of Kandel or Bagley with A. S. Neill, or that of Barzun with Goodman. The process would be all the more relevant in that essentialists are generally most self-conscious and deliberate about their prose style, and the teaching of composition lies high on their list of pedagogical priorities.

Bagley described this social and political setting himself on various occasions, though perhaps less fully than Kandel attempted to do. Thus, writing in 1929 about "The Profession of Teaching in the United States,"<sup>9</sup> Bagley listed what he called the "indigenous handicaps," such as "the divers standards of our conglomerate population" and others which might almost have suggested Kandel's later analysis, and which we shall examine more fully later. His opinion in 1938, both in the celebrated "Essentialist Platform for the Advancement of American Education,"<sup>10</sup> and "The Significance of the Essentialist Movement in Educational Theory,"<sup>11</sup> was more simple, and perhaps even simplistic, namely that the "incontestable weaknesses" of American education were "traceable to the vast upward expansion of the universal school;" though this in turn was the result of many of the factors outlined both by Kandel and Bagley himself.

Kandel, again by way of sketching in the background for an appreciation of Bagley, also described the philosophical and psychological forces of the

period,<sup>12</sup> distinguishing them from the socio-economic-political forces which we have just enumerated.

He saw an attack on the traditional, metaphysical psychology, starting in Germany when Wilhelm Wundt opened a laboratory in 1879 for the experimental study of psychology in Leipzig and sought to place the subject on a scientific foundation. The chain of influence proceeded via G. Stanley Hall and J. M. Cattell to the United States, then via such men as Edward Lee Thorndike and Lewis M. Terman.

The two philosophical movements of importance in this era he also saw as related to this psychological movement, namely Herbartianism and Dewey's pragmatism. These were founded on a psychological basis. 'Philosophy and psychology were inevitably linked together as correlatives in any reform movement. Both were necessarily associated in efforts to improve the curriculum and methods of instruction.'<sup>13</sup>

Herbart's influence in America, via American educators who had studied in Leipzig or Jena, had a sporadic and brief success. 'If they did not introduce radical reforms in the curriculum of the elementary schools, the Herbartians did succeed in emphasizing that instruction must proceed with and elicit the interest, understanding, and intellectual activity of the pupils.'<sup>14</sup> One wonders whether the current enthusiasm for the English elementary open classroom and integrated day is not a similar transatlantic vogue.

Kandel continued, 'the Herbartian method failed chiefly because of the too literal acceptance of the 'five formal steps,' which were too rigidly adhered to and resulted in stilted formalism and monotony.'

John Dewey attacked the Herbartian concept of interest as something extrinsic to the real interests and needs of the child. The Herbartian was, according to Dewey, sugar coating something that did not in actuality represent the child's intrinsic or spontaneous interest which grew out of his own immediate need for expression.

We can perhaps conclude this very brief recapitulation by noting Kandel's brave reduction of Dewey to

two important points. . . . The first was that the past, with its traditional truths and values to be imposed, is valuable only as it can be drawn upon for present use. . . the chief concession that was made to traditional values was to claim that the knowledge, facts and information acquired through passive learning were acquired 'accidentally' when activities were engaged in . . . . The second point emphasized in the pragmatic philosophy was that it got rid of traditional dualisms: school and society, the child and the curriculum, interest and effort, thought and action, learning and doing. In the main the dualisms were expected to disappear when the principle was accepted that education is life and not a preparation for life. . . The curriculum is not fixed in advance but is something that emerges in response to the child's felt needs and purposes. . . education, then, is a process of self-development through active response to 'felt needs' and the effort of solving one's problems and difficulties.<sup>15</sup>

This was remarkably similar to, if not identical with, Bagley's own later views on the importance of what he called "emergent" man and idealism, which we shall meet later.

So much then, even though so little, for the social and intellectual background of Bagley's portrait. It is hoped it has been enough to establish the first of my two general propositions, namely that Bagley is historically a representative essentialist, and that he spans both an explosive period in the history of education and the grand period of American progressive educators and of their counter revolutionaries, the essentialists. The second proposition, that he is representative conceptually may take longer; indeed the remainder of the argument will be a documentation of this.

Immediately this presents a very real methodological problem: how does one characterize an educational philosophy? What topological features need describing to give the shape of an educational position? What is the essence of essentialism?

There have been many attempts to answer the last of these questions. Bagley made various attempts, as we shall see. G. F. Kneller tried, by listing four rather inadequate generalizations.<sup>16</sup> Theodore Brameld tried, by arguing that "essentialism, in briefest compass, views the established beliefs and institutions of our modern heritage as not only real but true, and not only true but good. . . . Indeed, one of the basic characteristics of essentialism is wide eclecticism, typified by the presence within its camp of both professed idealist and professed realist."<sup>17</sup> Kandel acknowledged the difficulty of any definitive statement: "It is difficult, from the point of view of any of the educational philosophies current in the twentieth century, to

classify Dr. Bagley.<sup>18</sup> S. I. Miller in his unpublished doctorate,<sup>19</sup> likewise avoided the issue by claiming simply, "essentialism, as a definite philosophy of education, has its roots both in classical realism and in idealism. It is not, however, a system of philosophy as such, but rather it is concerned with the need to preserve and transmit a definable body of knowledge based on the social heritage and what it conceives of as certain principles of truth." Now this is not very helpful; it relies too easily on Brameld, it fails to distinguish between the suggestions that essentialism is "a definite philosophy" but that "it is not, however, a system of philosophy as such," and it relies too heavily on a purely descriptive approach to the subject.<sup>20</sup>

The practical procedure or methodology here adopted is ultimately Bagley's own. He talked at great length of fundamental dualisms between progressive and essentialist,<sup>21</sup> and listed what he described as 'pairings of assumed opposites,' such as "effort versus interest," "discipline versus freedom," "logical organization versus psychological organization."

This chapter further examines these "assumed opposites." The issues they represent are discussed below in three areas, psychology, philosophy and politics. They are paradigmatic of the essentialist debate.

Of course this division into three areas is imperfect. Each of the three ultimately depends on both the other two. Which of the three came first is a form of the "chicken-egg" debate, or perhaps we may suggest "the chicken-egg-corn" debate to make it triangular. For example, Marxist politics depend

ultimately on the epistemology of materialism.

Whatever the theoretical merits of this methodology, Bagley's contention was always that theories should result in conduct, or, more humbly, that the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

### Philosophy

To examine Bagley's philosophical beliefs independently from his political and psychological beliefs is, one has already admitted, partly a procedure of convenience, so there is no difficulty in further subdividing philosophy for convenience into, for our purposes, epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics.

In the area of epistemology there are a number of traditional dualisms with which the essentialists and progressives did battle against each other, for example, "liberal versus vocational," "subjects versus integration," and so on. Central to this area are two concerns, namely the nature and structure of knowledge, and the nature of proof or logic. Generally one can't have one without the other, but conceivably a nihilist has a logic even if no knowledge, so one may do well to start with the former.

At this point Bagley was incisive but almost irritating. He appears to have believed that proof is necessary and desirable, but that it may not prove possible. In a brief but powerful plea for "Academic Freedom," Bagley reviewed the problems of teachers, especially of politics and economics, in an age when people and especially the media and authorities may "hold an

absolutist position on one side or another." The argument concluded:

Our task would seem to lie in a sincere effort to convince the public that an absolutist position is indefensible from any rational point of view. After all, and in the last analysis, the only effective remedy for prejudice is reason, and reason happens to be--or certainly should be--our particular stock in trade.<sup>22</sup>

This is a fine example of the compromise he sought. He seems to have said, with thought before Karl Popper, that reason is all, but that we cannot expect proof. Seek, but ye shall not find.

That theorizing is necessary we find throughout his work. In his first book, The Educative Process (1905), he dealt with principles rather than with details in the belief that "not the least important element in the formation of effective ideals is substantial theory."<sup>23</sup> Already quoted above is a letter from a former classmate, where he also wrote of his first teaching in 1895 that "the work of teaching seemed pitiably lacking in trustworthy and experimentally tested scientific principles." In Classroom Management (1907) he wrote:

Evolution is simply a progressive development towards forms that are more and more elaborately organized, and in which system and coherence take the place of chaos and incoherence.<sup>24</sup>

He thus linked two of his great themes, logic and evolution, of which we shall hear more later.

One of the great Essentialist cries has always been for certainty. Kandel wrote a book about it in 1943, The Cult of Uncertainty. Bagley, in an



address of 1910, entitled "A Plea for the Definite in Education," said:

The best way in this world to be definite is to know our goal and then strive to attain it. In the lack of definite standards based upon the lessons of the past our dominant rational ideals shift with every shifting wind of public sentiment and demand.

In an article of 1939, entitled "Progressive Education is too Soft,"

he wrote:

When the human element enters, uncertainty enters-- else the world could have anticipated and adjusted itself to Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin and the military obligarchy of Japan and would not be standing dazed and impotent as it stands today.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, as suggested above, he was fiercely Popperian, hated all forms of absolute dogma or final truth, was strongly anti-deterministic about human nature, as we shall argue shortly, and described himself in 1932 as one who played a humbler part than that of setting in train new fashions in education. Rather, he saw himself serving

. . . perhaps in the end an equally significant function-- namely, salvaging from the scrap-pile and preserving for the future the valuable elements which almost every one of these fashions represents--often, I admit, in microscopic amount, but worth saving, nonetheless.<sup>26</sup>

William Brickman described this process indirectly:

Neither a philosophy nor a movement (in the political sense), Essentialism represented a state of mind-- one of healthy skepticism; watchful waiting, and appreciation of the good regardless of age or label. . . it is an approach to set the schools on a straight path, to maintain the proper balance between subject and method, teacher and pupils, school and home, the old and the new.<sup>27</sup>

Bagley's subtle compromise can perhaps best be seen in his debate with the Progressives. He saw them effectively as the cause of all that was weak in American education, and yet he could see their many good points. His most generous statement of this compromise, and the statement of a pattern which governs the nature of my methodology, was in an article entitled, "Just What is the Crux of the Conflict Between the Progressives and the Essentialists?"

He wrote:

Essentialism and Progressivism are terms currently used to represent two schools of educational theory that have been in conflict over a long period of time--centuries in fact.

The conflict may be indicated by pairing such assumed opposites as: Effort versus interest; discipline versus freedom. . . thus baldly stated, these pairings of assumed opposites are misleading, for each member of each pair represents a legitimate--indeed a needed--factor in the education process. The two schools of educational theory differ primarily in the relative emphasis given to each term as compared with its mate, for what both schools attempt is a resolution or integration of the dualisms which are brought so sharply into focus when the opposites are set off against one another.<sup>28</sup>

He used exactly the same argument and many of the same phrases in "The Essentialist Platform," discussing this same "fundamental dualism." At the same time, in this same "Essentialist Platform," he argued vigorously that the Progressives have led to "the discrediting of the exact and exacting studies."

Lawrence Cremin, in his monumental history of the Progressive education movement, noted a similar ambivalence when he observed that Bagley was:

. . . an arch opponent of progressive education; yet he ended up the outstanding exponent of Progressivism in the testing controversy. . . he located the problem within the classic argument about social Darwinism, and took a vehemently reformist position. The IQ rightly interpreted spoke with compelling force not for restriction but for expansion, Bagley concluded. For there was no limit to the educational opportunity democracy might provide--for the super intelligent and for everyone else as well. The only function of the tests was to tell the educator where he began; it was the educator's vision and society's that ultimately set the goals.<sup>29</sup>

We see the same denial of absolutism in an address of 1910 to the St.

Louis Society of Pedagogy:

As I have suggested, there are always two dangers that must be avoided; the danger, in the first place, of thinking of the old as essentially bad; and, on the other hand, the danger of thinking of the new and strange and unknown as essentially bad; the danger of confusing a sound conservatism with a blind worship of established custom; and the danger of confusing a sound radicalism with the blind worship of the new and the bizarre.<sup>30</sup>

So much then for the assumed opposites of certainty versus uncertainty.

The next opposites are old favorites, namely ends versus means.

This particular debate is best left to the following section on political issues, for it is there that Bagley finds his ends, namely in action or social evolution.

The next area, that is the structure of knowledge, is a fruitful one for providing dualisms or opposites: subjects versus subject integration;

specialist teachers versus creative generalists; sequential versus incidental learning.

Bagley summarized the debate thus:

The Essentialists have always emphasized the prime significance of race-experience and especially of organized experience or organized culture--in common parlance, subject-matter. They have recognized, of course, the importance of individual or personal experience as an indispensable basis for interpreting and assimilating organized race-experience, but the former is a means to an end rather than an educational end in itself. The Progressives, on the other hand, have tended to set the "living present" against what they often call the "dead past."<sup>31</sup>

Bagley's view of knowledge as social and intellectual heritage, or as evolutionary, is currently a popular one, and is in a sense undeniable.

Paul Hirst in England and Philip Phenix in America are two of the firmest, clearest and most recent proponents of this view.<sup>32</sup> Yet both merely refine and bring up-to-date Bagley's argument in the light of more recent theories in the various subject areas.

Bagley talked, for example, of "a storehouse of organized race-experience." Or he argued: "The systematic and sequential mastery of past experience as organized in the various fields of human inquiry I regard as the most dependable source of helpful backgrounds."<sup>33</sup>

The assumed opposite is the progressive panacea, as essentialists see it, of interest, or natural motivation. In Bagley's words:

So long as the pedagogical doctrine of interest meant the following of the lines of least resistance, its failure as an educational principle was absolutely certain.

Always to obey the dictates of interest, in this sense of the term, would mean the instant arrest of all progress. But if the interest means the desire for satisfaction of acquired needs, the case is somewhat different. The child is no longer at the mercy of the strongest stimulus; sustained attention directed toward a remote end has become possible. But the point never to be forgotten is this: acquired interests are developed only under the stress of active attention. . . one vital necessity of education, therefore, is to develop in the immature child needs that will demand the acquisition of experiences that will be beneficial in mature life.<sup>34</sup>

The assumed opposite of "immediate" and "remote" goals is another favorite one.

Likewise his views on the subjects of the curriculum are identical with those of the Council for Basic Education today. Language is the bed-rock of an education, as it is the primary medium through which the culture is expressed and how it is passed on; so we would expect it to have figured importantly in Bagley's curriculum.

For example, he wrote:

Language is the most efficient medium for the transmission of experience: (1) because it is the most elaborately organized and hence susceptible of the greatest variety of combinations expressing the finest gradations of meaning; and (2) because it employs words which represent condensed experiences or concepts; thus dealing with experience not in the concrete but in the abstract--dealing in other words, only with essentials.

There are, however, three factors that condition the highest efficiency of language. These factors are especially important in the use of language as a medium of instruction. (1) The first is agreement of meaning. Hence the strenuous effort

in every science to build up a vocabulary of technical terms the meaning of each of which shall be absolutely unequivocal. (2) A second factor that influences the efficiency of language is the danger of verbalism, which is the commonest and most pernicious species of formalism. (3) Thirdly, it is an important task of education in its earlier stages to make habitual the use of conventionally correct forms. . . in general very decided lapses from conventional forms tend to make expression inefficient.<sup>35</sup>

Chapter three of An Introduction to Teaching, by Bagley and J. A. H. Keith, published in 1924, provided an almost splendid apologia for language studies, with copious quotation from H. G. Wells to try to picture for us how man developed language, and how language, literacy and, in due course, printing produced the modern world; language is the basic factor in social evolution. The natural conclusion was:

The teacher whose business it is to teach children to read and write may be thought of by some people as spending his or her time in a humdrum, formal, and quite uninspiring task; but it is doubtful whether any other work in the whole range of human occupations is at basis more significant than this.<sup>36</sup>

In the same chapter he discussed mathematics as a similar phenomenon and tool:

A second group of arts are almost as important as are the arts of communication. These are the arts of computation and measurement. . . . They are not only essential in the cooperative living that modern civilization has brought about; they are in themselves instruments of the first significance in the gaining of new knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

The greatest value of mathematics "lies in the very fact of its abstractness." He allowed a small gesture in the direction of the child's

interest when he added: "On the other hand, there can be little doubt that, even here, the factor of concrete and economic application would add vitality to the pupil's conception of the method."<sup>38</sup>

He allowed a similar sop to those who believe in the preeminence of motivation in the teaching of science. The important function of science may well be to teach "a system of attitudes and perspectives which implies. . . a systematic and rational mastery rather than merely that empirical mastery which is often sufficient for economic purposes;" yet he allowed that applied science is eventually and paradoxically more useful than pure science because its "point and vitality. . . will, if rightly directed, make analytic and heuristic teaching much easier and much more effective than it would be otherwise."<sup>39</sup>

The study of ancient languages is an interesting case, as it involves the very technical debate about the transfer of training. Bagley argued that if, as seemed probable, the specifically mental-discipline argument for Latin was not very strong, then its intrinsic worth was also questionable, as a matter of relative worth, for mastery of the classics took disproportionately long and the classics could be, after all, read in translation for their cultural value. For an essentialist he took a surprisingly soft line on the matter.

History and geography were clearly vital, as they involved the self-conscious study of man's cultural heritage, viewed in terms of time and space. "The viewing of present situations in the light of their genesis. . . modified in a marked degree one's adjustment to these situations."<sup>40</sup>

Essentialists were almost unanimous in their criticism of social-studies in schools, perhaps because many of them were historians or had pretensions thereto. In the Essentialist Platform Bagley wrote:

While the exact and exacting studies were in effect being discredited, the primrose path of least resistance was opened ever wider in the area known as social studies. . . . which are not in the same class with the natural sciences. Their generalizations permit trustworthy predictions only in a few cases and then only in a slight degree. When the human element enters, uncertainty enters.<sup>41</sup>

Literature, art and music and religion, "are the chief sources of materials for the direct development of ideals,"<sup>42</sup> and are "for the purpose of fulfilling appreciative and recreative functions."<sup>43</sup>

Some related dualisms that recurred regularly among essentialists were those of: learning versus teaching; activity methods versus book study or rote learning or passive learning; individual versus class learning; abstract versus concrete; creativity versus disciplined study; logical organization versus psychological; play versus work.

It will be obvious by now where Bagley stood in terms of emphasis in these cases. It is already clear what he believed about logical organization and its relative superiority to motivational schema which entail an incidental approach to structured knowledge.

He made no mention of creativity before 1924. He could then write: "Of late the term 'creative intelligence' has become current. . . the putting together of past experiences in new ways. . . all social institutions are at



basis inventions."<sup>44</sup> In the same work he gave advice worthy of the author of Emile: "Opportunity and stimulus must be provided for the independent activity of the learner."<sup>45</sup> His approval was firm but cautious.

In 1932, in Standard Practices in Teaching, by Bagley and N. E. Macdonald, are included a chapter on "The Project Method," one on "Teaching Through Activities" and a third on "Individual instruction or Self-instruction." The first of these especially could have been written by an enthusiastic progressive; though, of course, Bagley believed the method chiefly suitable in elementary grades and that "it is not a panacea."<sup>46</sup> This again is typical, essentialist moderation.

He had some sensible things likewise to say about the use of the "play-instinct."

Again there must be a nice adjustment of forces. . . an environment of irksome tasks, unrelieved by anything that could gratify the play instinct, would be as fatal to the idea of duty. . . . which carries men safely through so many crises. . . . as an environment that gratified instinct at every turn.<sup>47</sup>

Of individual instinct he had a similar compromise to propose:

What is now known as the "Batavia System" of "class-individual" instruction is perhaps the most successful method yet devised of effecting a compromise between the individual and class methods. In essence, this system aims to preserve the stimulus which comes from group-instruction, and, at the same time, to provide explicitly and systematically for whatever extra instruction the weaker members of the class may need to keep them abreast of the brighter members.<sup>48</sup>

It is also everywhere implicit that for Bagley the abstract was more valuable than the concrete; and that liberal education was more important than vocational, and that teaching was generally what took place before learning, rather than vice versa.

In what loosely has been called the area of ethics, Bagley appears to have been concerned with two fundamental dualisms: freedom versus discipline, and equality versus elitism. He was, arguably, slightly to the right, literally and metaphorically, on both these continua.

He was, for example, worried by too much freedom:

The extent to which these softening influences have gone is most clearly seen in the increasing vogue of what I shall call the freedom theory of education. In its popular form, this theory defines individual freedom, not only as an end of education, but also as the primary and most effective means to this end. Learning abilities must not be imposed, they must always take their cue from the immediate desires and purposes of the learner; . . . he must get a 'kick' out of each learning experience.<sup>49</sup>

As corrective to this license, Bagley proposed duty, as we have already seen. Discipline took its justification from the voluntary nature of democracy: "The newer concept of discipline. . . recognizes that the measures which the school must take to control its pupils should serve as far as may be to illustrate the basic necessity for law and order in a civilized society."<sup>50</sup> The resolution of this dualism lay in the idea of "disciplined freedom."<sup>51</sup> Historically he saw this process at work:

In the history of the race, anything that remotely resembles freedom. . . has been a conquest not a gift. In a very real sense, education must reflect in each generation this element of struggle and conquest.<sup>52</sup>

On the related continuum of equality, he was again generally to the right, in that he was implicitly something of an elitist, though less so than many of his essentialist successors. As an example, one may instance the "Essentialist Platform," where he discussed the need to fail children who cannot keep up, for the sake of the more intelligent, an argument one comes across repeatedly.

In the area of metaphysics one has again something of a puzzle, this time as to whether Bagley was an idealist or a realist philosophically. S. I. Miller, in his dissertation quoted earlier, tried to stay on both sides of the fence, an uncomfortable position but one which seems peculiarly appropriate in this essentialist/progressive debate.

On the other hand Bagley always denied that he was any form of metaphysical idealist; and yet he firmly resisted, as we shall see, a psychology of man which is mechanistic; and in his theory of emergent man he argued that behavioral categories do not serve higher-order thinking. In fact, he coined this higher thinking "emergent idealism." He advocated "a virile idealism in place of the weak opportunism that now prevails."<sup>53</sup> The social heritage, on which his thinking was based, included the material heritage of tool and machine, and the spiritual heritage of customs, traditions, ideals, knowledge and skills.<sup>54</sup> So he was clearly neither realist nor

idealist in the simpler sense. One gets a better idea of the complexities of this delineation on examining his psychological beliefs.

### Psychology

The central dualisms here are those of determinism versus indeterminism and of heredity versus environment. Bagley's decision on these profoundly influenced everything else he ever said. The best source for analysis of this is his collection of essays published in 1925 under the title Determinism in Education.

The general argument rests on two principles, namely "that education, far from being merely an expression or concomitant of intelligence, plays a positive and indispensable role in the development of intelligence," and "that, in perhaps a limited and yet a very real sense, education does operate as an equalizing force among individuals of varying degrees of native endowment-- in short, that education is (or can be made) in some measure a 'levelling-up' process."<sup>55</sup>

Bagley attacked the implications of the tests and mental measurements which were then in a state of youthful exuberance:

It is the purpose of the present paper to show that the sanction which mental measurements apparently give to this particular variety of determinizing is based, not upon the facts that the measurements reveal, but upon the hypotheses and assumptions that the development of the measures has involved.<sup>56</sup>

He described his own first studies in psychology a quarter century earlier, when he was taught that the degree of mentality depended upon the

number of nerve cells in the cerebral cortex; how later he had been taught that the differences in the readiness of synaptic connections were the physiological basis of differences in mentality. In other words, "we had shifted the basis from an anatomical structure to a physiological function."<sup>57</sup>

Likewise, he argued, the higher the ability the less relevant the tests and conclusions from them. This is an early example of the plateau theory: that any one with an IQ of 120 or more can understand or perform any function, and "the contributions of experience become so numerous and so influential that it is the height of absurdity to contend that it is a native and unmodified fact that is being measured."<sup>58</sup> He called the two factors, which Michael Young much later called crudely IQ and effort,<sup>59</sup> vertical and horizontal growth.

For the sake of the argument I will grant that vertical growth is limited if you will grant that the possibilities of horizontal growth are essentially limitless.<sup>60</sup>

What most concerned Bagley was the application of such assumptions to democracy: an example of how our three categories inevitably interact. He predated the historical revisionists of our day by pointing out that tests are being used largely to sort out children for future careers in industry:

Equity of opportunity, then, is the only true democracy according to the determinists. Give every child opportunity, he says--opportunity to develop precisely as his original nature dictates: This one into an artisan. . . that one into a captain of industry. . .<sup>61</sup>

and concluded:

If the determinist is right, the ideal of democracy is wrong. . . let us come then to the real issue, namely, the need of democracy for a high level of informed intelligence as a basis for collective judgment and collective action.<sup>62</sup>

This he applied to his concept of social evolution most powerfully.

Bagley argued, "if I teach an average man" the principle of gravitation. . .

I maintain that I have given him one control over his environment substantially equal to that which Newton himself possessed; and maintain that in respect of this possession I have made this common man the equal of all others who possess it.<sup>63</sup>

Differences certainly do exist, but,

resemblances in ideas, ideals, aspirations and standards may and do unite men by bonds that are vastly stronger than are the differences in native endowment that would otherwise pull them apart.<sup>64</sup>

More generally, in terms of social evolution, with the "dawn of mind and language" man gained at least a partial control over his environment, and it is thus possible through culture to

stand upon the shoulders of all the tall and sun-crowned men who had gone before. . . and the development of the universal school is the latest scene in this great drama of social evolution.<sup>65</sup>

We shall see something of his subsequent disillusionment with the universal school in due course.

In 1925, then, he was still the optimist of his earliest years, and could conclude this essay on a note few essentialists ever sound:

Personally I have still to be convinced that this process of social evolution will disappoint the world in its rich promise to bring mankind into a real brotherhood. What education has already done is only a feeble portent of what education can and will do as its forces become better organized and more keenly alive to their tremendous responsibilities. . . a little more light for the common man this year, next year, a hundred years from now, and the battle for humanity, for democracy, and for brotherhood is won.<sup>66</sup>

The remainder of the book reworked these themes and amassed technical and historical evidence for them, with some very happy phrases:

mentality, among all of the variable biological traits, seems to be the only one that distills its own corrective.<sup>67</sup>

and

The great turning points of social evolution have actually been marked by improved methods of disseminating experience--of letting more light into common minds!<sup>68</sup>

Is it undemocratic to admit one's superiority? Yes, rather all leaders and able people owe a "duty of service" and ought to be sincerely "humble"--two very idealistic concepts!

It is of interest that Bagley relied heavily on Cyril Burt's then recent publication<sup>69</sup> in London, where he computed the relative influence of three possible components on the Binet-Simon scores as follows: to the mental-age of the children thus tested, native intelligence contributed 33 per cent, informal education contributed 11 per cent, and formal education contributed 54 per cent. This reflects the essentialist reliance both on innate ability and on formal schooling.

There was an interesting analysis in his Educational Values as early as 1911 in the chapter headed "The School Environment as a Source of Educative Materials," which hinted at a much later development in the studies of social psychologists and sociologists, namely "the increasingly explicit recognition of the educative influence of the life of the school itself, apart from the content of the formal curriculum."<sup>70</sup>

The key, however, to this antimony lay in Bagley's concept of emergent man. This was most fully discussed in his book Education and Emergent Man of 1934, but was neatly summarized in an earlier paper, "Emergent Idealism" published in his earlier book (1931) Education Crime and Social Progress. This dealt with the same dualisms we have been discussing, and opposed mechanistic or behaviorist psychology with idealism, or "a virile idealism in place of the weak opportunism that now prevails."<sup>71</sup> The argument was that,

While the process of evolution represents a structural continuity, it represents also and just as clearly a functional and qualitative discontinuity. . . it follows that higher-order functions and qualities may be and often are quite new creations, subject sometimes to the laws governing lower-order functions and qualities but often departing from these laws and demanding explanation in terms of quite new principles.<sup>72</sup>

In other words, much behavior may be explained in simple behaviorist terms, but not the activities of consciousness. He coopted the recent work of Kohler and others of the Gestalt school for the purpose. Insight was more



important than the laws of effect and exercise: "It is especially the so-called law of effect that has abetted the emasculation of educational theory."<sup>73</sup>

He argued for three levels of mind: the primitive level of behaviorist conditioning; the conceptual, insightful, which transcends the specific-habit level; and most importantly, the third or social-moral level.

Here I should find a place for the unfettered operation of ideals--especially of such regulative ideals as duty, renunciation, and sacrifice. This is distinctly the plane of the moral judgment. . . conscience. . . it may be that, under the hypothesis of emergent evolution, freedom of moral choice ("free will") and the principle of moral responsibility can find a firm and rational basis. Thus the conception of emergent evolution may become the "declaration of independence" not only of biology and psychology, but of ethics as well.<sup>74</sup>

Here, if anywhere, was Bagley's clearest stand on the realist/idealist debate. He seems to have argued, paradoxically, that idealism can evolve from the real, and that education is the key to that evolution.

He concluded the essay hopefully:

Under this theory we can find a firm place for the finest things in human experience without involving ourselves in treacherous dualisms, without bringing in a metaphysical element of any sort, without committing ourselves to supernaturalism. . . we can, in short, be both naturalists and idealists.<sup>75</sup>

This may help to understand his puzzling statement:

I rather think I would shun the man, however intelligent, who decided moral questions as he decided any others, by weighing the evidence. . . I would prefer a man, even less intelligent, who "followed the rules". Presumably one man's intelligence can never outweigh the accumulated race experience on the issue; a man may adopt as his own quite honorably the dogma of the generations.<sup>76</sup>

This in turn explains his insistence on the inculcation of habit, which sounds at least initially unpalatable.<sup>77</sup> Erwin V. Johanningmeier saw this as one of Bagley's basic arguments.<sup>78</sup> He quoted Bagley as claiming "if there is one psychological principle that may be looked upon as a universal solvent for educational problems, it is this." It makes sense, one can now see, for a child to learn to react automatically to situations by building habits according to the accumulated wisdom of the ages and sages.

Johanningmeier's article was of considerable interest, as it traced in scholarly manner the development of Bagley's views over the first forty years of this century; it especially confirmed Bagley's drift away from faith in scientific research and his gradual espousal of a more political and philosophical attitude, even though these are based on the idea of evolution.

This also helps explain Bagley's later insistence that the teacher is not analogous to the engineer or artisan, and that "the effective teacher must be an artist rather than an artisan."<sup>79</sup>

He also took a very central view on the experiments on the transfer of training. The debate recurred throughout his work; one does not make remotely adequate reference to it by simply saying that, although he believed that the recent experiments showed the limited value and existence of transfer, that some value remained; and that this was ignored because "it was essential at the time that the doctrine of formal discipline should be discredited, for it stood in the way of a very definite type of progress--namely the upward

expansion of mass education."<sup>80</sup> His views on the teaching of classics have been quoted and are typical of his attitude.

One has likewise already seen his position with respect to the value of tests, to the relative merits of interest and the structuring of knowledge, of abstract versus concrete, and with respect to creativity.

The use of psychology in the training of teachers, a topic much debated in the literature, he saw not as a "propaedeutic to teaching in the sense that physics is a propaedeutic to engineering." Rather a successful practice could be explained afterwards in psychological terms, but not before. It could be post-dictive but not predictive: "Good teachers have taught well. . . although quite unconscious of the principles. . . something other than an understanding of theory is assuredly the basic element in successful practice."<sup>81</sup> Essentialists generally hold this cautious view of the value of educational psychology.

### Politics

Inevitably, since the three areas of philosophy, psychology and politics intertwine, one has already a picture of Bagley's political and social views. Much of this section will be recapitulation.

One has seen that the end of thinking is conduct; that Bagley was a vigorous indeterminist who believed, as an existentialist, that we shape our own fate, as individuals and as nations; that social evolution led man out of a determinist past at the dawn of consciousness; that no political creed can be final or absolute.

From this emerges the almost paradoxical view that democracy, if not necessary, is at least best, as it leaves itself open to change. This is essentially Popper's argument later.

Politically, one of Bagley's most significant passages occurred in an article of 1935 entitled "Academic Freedom." The almost comically evolutionary argument was that "academic freedom was developed and persists because in the long run it promotes human welfare. . ."<sup>82</sup>

The article was meant to encourage those teachers who found themselves persecuted by public opinion of administrators for holding unpopular views, for "today it is the teachers of economics, history and government who are in the gravest danger of persecution."<sup>83</sup> One wonders what he would have said of the recent controversies about textbooks between religious fundamentalists and liberals.

The central and most telling argument deserves to be quoted in full, as it speaks for itself:

Nothing is fraught with graver danger than the increasing disposition to regard our social and economic order--whether communism, individualism, or fascism--as always the best and the other as the incarnation of all that is evil. It is just such absolute attitudes, perpetuated and intensified over decades or generations, that lead sooner or later to war. It seems clear that communism or individualism or fascism may be best according to the situation that confronts a society. The nomadic tribes of Mesopotamia, Arabia and North Africa are essentially communistic because communism is well suited to conditions of survival in the desert, where competition for a precarious food supply is a competition between tribes and

not individuals. When the tribes settled in irrigated regions, as motor transportation on the desert is rapidly compelling them to do, communism is a serious handicap. Rugged individualism is adapted far better than communism to small scale farming. . . 84

This is quite a brave statement; it well illustrates his intellectual approach, his openness, his fearlessness and his erudition. It is also typically evolutionary as an argument. The implications are almost fatalistic. That fascism, for instance, may be a necessary form of government is a sad view. Does the system change only when economic conditions change, as in the example above? Elsewhere, one might argue that Bagley would expect man to change his own destiny. What then if any is the role of self-directed political change or even revolution? He does not appear to discuss this.

A second fine source is his Education, Crime and Social Progress, of which we have already examined two chapters, on emergent idealism, and on the relationship of discipline to freedom. For the present purpose one can concentrate on the first two chapters.

Many of the arguments of these chapters appeared elsewhere, especially in an article entitled "The Profession of Teaching in the U.S."<sup>85</sup> and most importantly in the "Essentialist Platform" of 1938. Putting these three analyses together, one can see the picture Bagley had in his mind.

The state of education in America he identified as parlous. Age for age the elementary pupils of America were behind those of other English-speaking countries. For this he used as evidence the study of the Scottish Council for

Research in Education: "Achievement Tests in the Primary Schools: A Comparative Study with American Tests in Fife."<sup>86</sup>

He argued the same for secondary education, though the absence of common or comprehensive schools in Britain at the time prevented direct comparison, and he therefore argued from such indirect data as the "consumption" of "solid" literature, or the incidence of juvenile delinquency although, he hastened to add, "no causal relationship is claimed."

He listed the reasons in various publications, for example in the "Essentialist Platform":

American education has been confronted with difficult and complicated problems which have arisen from a rapid growth in population; from a constantly advancing population; from a constantly advancing frontier; from the increase of national wealth; from the arrival year after year of millions of immigrants of widely diverse national origins; from the complex social and political situations involved in racial differences; from the profound changes brought about by a transition from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial civilization; from the growth of cities; from an ever increasing mobility of the population; and from a multitude of other factors which have operated here with a force unprecedented in history and unparalleled in any other part of the world.<sup>87</sup>

Each of these factors, of course, is worth and gets a great deal of analysis. There is not the time to repeat each one. Suffice to say that most of these issues will recur in essentialist literature. Progressives would likewise see most of these factors as problematic.

Perhaps the only controversial factor might be that of the effects of prosperity. Most of the world would assume prosperity a boon in the develop-

ment of education. The fear of prosperity as a moral irritant is a familiar puritanical cry, however. Elsewhere Bagley wrote,

Certain it is that the present tendencies in our schools towards ease and comfort and the lines of least resistance confirm rather than counteract the operation of that Zeitgeist which reflects so perfectly the moral decadence that comes with prosperity--the letting loose the grip that our forefathers, who lived under sterner and harsher conditions, had upon the ideals of self-denial and self-sacrifice.<sup>88</sup>

This theme is linked to another familiar cry, namely that its

clear tendency is to increase the spirit of individualism--to multiply the opportunities for the gratification of individual desires, and to minimize the significance of sacrifice and renunciation. The increase of wealth and the consequent increase of leisure means an increased moral hazard.<sup>89</sup>

Elsewhere again,

Ease, comfort and security are inimical not only to social progress, but to the welfare and especially the mental growth of the individual.<sup>90</sup>

He especially related this to what he called the slave civilization of America where, he computed in 1931, there were effectively in terms of energy at least thirty-five slaves per citizen!

The converse is the struggle of discipline and exacting studies to achieve freedom and democracy and excellence and high standards. We can learn almost as much about Bagley from the language and imagery of the following as in any other way:

We should not build our democratic structure upon the shifting sands of soft pedagogy. There must be iron in the blood of education and lime in the bone. The only freedom that is thinkable today is disciplined freedom. In the individual as in the race, this freedom is always a conquest, never a gift.<sup>91</sup>

The corollary is clearly crime, what he called the "paradox of lawlessness." Chapter two of Education, Crime and Social Progress was an interesting indictment of American lawlessness and a rebuttal of some of the usual excuses propounded. Bagley argued that "this situation cannot be explained on the theory that other nations have sent their criminal classes to our shores," for example. The reasons were the same, quoted above, as those for the quality of education.

However, he went further to argue:

The spirit of the times has worked increasingly in this direction, and educational theory, in a very emphatic fashion, has compounded this influence. The extent to which these softening influences have gone is most clearly seen in the increasing vogue of what I shall call the freedom theory of education. In its popular form, this theory defines individual freedom, not only as the end of education, but also as the primary most effective means to this end.<sup>92</sup>

Education is assailed on the other hand, he went on to argue, by "the hard materialism which stigmatizes the budgets for public education as squander."<sup>93</sup> The only answer, as he concluded the chapter, was that we could "climb to a new plane--the plane of a virile, practical and dynamic realism."<sup>94</sup>



In spite, however, of Bagley's attempts to stay politically neutral, to allow that communism and fascism might be acceptable in their proper place, it is clear often that their proper place was for him limited. Generally, Bagley, like a progressive indeed, was fiercely democratic.

Paragraphs eight to thirteen of the "Essentialist Platform" make this clear. He saw conflict

with the now-militantly anti-democratic peoples. Democratic societies cannot survive either competition or conflict with totalitarian states unless there is a democratic discipline that will give strength and solidarity to the democratic purpose and ideal.

Elsewhere he spoke disparagingly of the "left in education."

As usual, the answer lay in essentialist education, as the platform made abundantly clear. Elsewhere he wrote,

The complete dependence of democratic institutions is upon the enlightenment of the great masses of the people. . . the hopeful fact is that government of the people by the people becomes stable and effective in precise proportion to the advance that is made toward an effective education of the masses.<sup>95</sup>

The argument can boomerang. He argued in 1931 that

No country which had a well-developed system of elementary schools prior to the war succumbed during the very critical post-war period either to Bolshevism on the one hand or to the rule of a dictator on the other. Furthermore, in so far as I can learn, no country that has had a well-developed system of elementary schools has undergone a civil war or even internal dissension resulting in serious bloodshed since the leaven of the universal school began to operate. . .

as this volume goes to press (November 1930), the German Republic, which has so successfully withstood the economic and political stresses of the past twelve years, is apparently facing the most serious crisis of the post-war period. In how far universal education may be a guarantee of orderly progress under the parliamentary system is likely to be shown in Germany within the coming year.<sup>96</sup>

Bagley was wrong not only as to the timing of this proof.

It was Bagley, though it might have been any totalitarian, who wrote of "social efficiency as the norm" in questions of conduct, and

it is hard to see why the social criterion should not have the position of primacy in a rational theory of education. It is true that the race is composed of individuals, but it is also true that the individual has always been subordinate to the race.<sup>97</sup>

The individual is also debated and, some would argue, debased, in the arguments of the Essentialist Platform, best represented in the following:

Failure in school is unpleasant and the repetition of a grade costly and often not very effective. On the other hand, the lack of a stimulus that will keep the learner to his task is a serious injustice both to him and to the democratic group which, we repeat, has a fundamental stake in his effective education. Too severe a stigma has undoubtedly been placed upon school failure by implying that it is symptomatic of permanent weakness--no less a genius than Pasteur did so poorly in his first year in the Higher Normal School of Paris that he had to go home for further preparation.

It is also perhaps inconsistent that in the Essentialist Platform he condemned those who would use "the lower schools to establish a new social order."

It is consistent that he should believe that local autonomy in the government of education was in need of modification. In fact, with J. A. H.,

Keith, president of the State Normal School, Indiana, Pennsylvania, he presented a brief in favor of federal aid in 1920, "The Nation and the Schools: A Study in the Application of the Principle of Federal Aid in the United States."

On the other hand, his belief in the value of the individual teacher may suggest otherwise. In 1934, he wrote: "Until recently we have been obtuse to the fundamental factor more important than all others put together--namely, the teacher."<sup>98</sup> His article, "The Profession of Teaching in the U.S." was immensely optimistic in 1929:

The advancement in the status of the teacher's calling, while the most recent of the larger developments in American education, is in some respects the most significant and promises for the future the most far reaching results. It is also, I believe, a development quite unprecedented in history and, so far as I know, unparalleled in other countries. . . brought about in part by conscious and deliberate purposing and in part by the fortunate operation of forces and factors that are largely beyond either individual or social control. . . it is within our power as an organized and responsible group to make the American school the greatest single constructive force in American life. I have every faith that our profession will prove neither recreant nor inadequate to its great trust and its great opportunity.<sup>99</sup>

The teacher has a personal influence "on the plastic material that we designate as childhood. . . and can influence definitely, tangibly, unerringly the type of manhood and womanhood that is to dominate the succeeding generations."<sup>100</sup>

He has a further duty, however, to be what he called a "minister of education. . . the teachers themselves must be charged with some measure

of responsibility for contributing, evaluating, and criticising general education proposals and programs."<sup>101</sup>

Kandel placed this in the foremost position when he claimed: "The innovation for which he fought in season and out of season was one that would put a competent and cultured teacher into every American classroom, an innovation that would do more for American education than would all the other proposed innovations put together."<sup>102</sup>

Not only is he optimistic about teachers, he is even partial to professors of education, for whom in general the essentialists reserve their special scorn:

Collectively, then, the professors of education exercise a measure of influence that is almost incalculable in its possibilities for good or for evil. . . in the long run this is likely to affect profoundly the course that the nation will take in the future.<sup>103</sup>

In conclusion, it may be useful to ask how far one can, if the question makes as much sense as one suspects, distinguish Bagley himself from his views on these fundamental issues. Is this position, as we have tried to pinpoint it, on the various continua, enough to characterize him?

Probably not. Almost more of his personality emerges from the style of his arguments than from their content; the tenor is as important as the tenets. One could make the following generalizations about this style.

Bagley was profoundly irreverent and proud to be controversial; he regarded himself as in the minority in most cases: "I have developed in a fairly long professional life the unpleasant habit of disagreeing with most of my fellow workers."<sup>104</sup> And he is said to have concluded an address with the words: "But even though my profession may persist in the pleasant pursuit of chasing butterflies, I still maintain that I would rather be right than Progressive." As he sat down, his friend and philosophical opponent, Boyd H. Bode, is reported to have whispered to him: "Don't worry, Bill; you will never be either."<sup>105</sup>

At the same time he was unfailingly reasonable, as one would expect of those who place reason at the center (see his article on Academic Freedom, quoted earlier, where he concluded that the only remedy for prejudice was reason "which happens to be or certainly should be--our particular stock in trade!"). It is, however, a quality one does not always find in later essentialists, as Bagley himself suggested in his preface to Buchholz' Fads and Fallacies in Present-Day Education, of 1931. He chided Buchholz gently that his picture is "here and there. . . a bit distorted." Buchholz in return accused Bagley of producing "sugar and salt." Likewise, if we compare the relevant tones, Bagley is but a prelude to Bestor's later thunder.

He is highly, indeed irritatingly, repetitive. Themes recur regularly in his books and articles; arguments and even large passages are regurgitated endlessly. On the positive side, this gives his work a reassuring unity. The

composition, scored over half a century, is that of an endless fugue, but it is never fugitive.

There is also much incidental evidence, almost Freudian slips of term or image, to suggest that he was a natural conservative. In 1907 he wrote in Classroom Management--"wherever the young teacher has an option in this matter, then, it would seem to be the wise plan to follow the prevailing practice."<sup>106</sup>

There is constant, almost sexist (to use the current term) choice of image: "Education theory must be strong, virile, and positive, and not feeble, effeminate, and vague."<sup>107</sup> He disclaimed the sexist bias, incidentally, in 1938: "Progressive education. . . lacks virility not in the sense that it is feminine but rather in the sense that it is effeminate."<sup>108</sup>

His rather old fashioned ideal of manhood can be discerned in his description of M. Vincent O'Shea, who taught him at the University of Wisconsin, as "the most nearly perfect gentleman. . . strikingly handsome, always immaculately groomed, with a graceful carriage and an excellent speaking voice."<sup>109</sup>

One can perhaps suggest, though no more than that, that Bagley was meritocratic to the point almost of being elitist, despite the humility and nervousness which his biography describes. His remarks sometimes border on the edge of the nationalist or racist: "The true function of national history in our elementary schools is to establish in the pupils' minds those ideas and

standards of action which differentiate the American people from the rest of the world."<sup>110</sup>

There are similar hints, one might argue, in much of his vocabulary. Strong, weak, virile, effeminate, hard and soft are words typical of his imagery. The syntax is, as the reader will by now be aware, enormously structured. The sentences run out in balanced periods, replete with double negatives, endless verbal repetitions, a highly Latinate vocabulary, and general sonority, as though addressed from a pulpit. We shall see some very different styles in due course; though Kandel's is somewhat similar, as was suggested earlier.

One can see much of his most typical sentiments, and something of the characteristic balance of the phraseology, in the only poem he published.<sup>111</sup>

#### My Kingdom

For this is my Kingdom; My peace with my neighbor,  
The clasp of a hand the warmth of a smile,  
The sweetness of toil as the fruit of my labor--  
The glad joy of living and working the while,  
The birds and the flowers and the blue skies above me,  
The green of the meadows, the gold of the grain,  
A song in the evening, a dear heart to love me--  
And just enough pleasure to balance the pain.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup>Bagley's source, to which he often alludes, is Barnard's American Journal of Education, for March, 1859, where there appeared an article translated from the German of Karl von Rammer, entitled, "The Progressives of the Seventeenth Century."

<sup>2</sup>Bagley. Educational Values, 1911, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin. "The Sabre-Toothed Curriculum," in The Curriculum: Context, Design and Development, 1970.

<sup>4</sup>Kandel. William Chandler Bagley, Stalwart Educator, 1961. The biography was sponsored by Kappa Delta Pi; and the title reflected Bagley's own preference with respect to nomenclature: "The stalwart makes systematic, orderly progress the central feature of his educational program. The progressive recognizes system, if at all, only with averted face."

<sup>5</sup>Kandel. *Ibid.* Undated letter to a former classmate.

<sup>6</sup>Bagley. Craftsmanship in Teaching, 1912, p. 127.

<sup>7</sup>Kandel. *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup>Bagley. "The Profession of Teaching in the United States," in School and Society, Vol. XXXIX, Jan. 1929.

<sup>10</sup>Bagley. "The Essentialist Platform for the Advancement of American Education," in Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. XXIV, April 1938, p. 241.

<sup>11</sup>Bagley. "The Significance of the Essentialist Movement in Educational Theory," in The Classical Journal, Vol. XXXIV, 1938, p. 326.

<sup>12</sup>Kandel. *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.



- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 80.
- <sup>16</sup>Kneller. Introduction to the Philosophy of Education, 1964, p. 115.
- <sup>17</sup>Brameld. Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspective, 1955, p. 254.
- <sup>18</sup>Kandel. op. cit., p. 77.
- <sup>19</sup>Miller. The Essentialist Movement in American Education, 1970.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid. This dissertation has some interesting material on the details of the founding and foundering of the Essentialist Committee, notably the exchange of letters between W. C. Bagley, F. Alden Shaw and M. J. Demiashkevich; but it makes no real critical analysis, and is flimsy in its discussion of anyone but Bagley and Demiashkevich.
- <sup>21</sup>Bagley. "Just What is the Crux of the Conflict Between the Progressives and the Essentialists?" in Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. XXVI, 1940.
- <sup>22</sup>Bagley. "Academic Freedom," in Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. XXI, 1935.
- <sup>23</sup>Bagley. The Educative Process, 1916, p. 101.
- <sup>24</sup>Bagley. Classroom Management, 1915, p. 2.
- <sup>25</sup>Bagley. "Progressive Education is Too Soft," in Education, Vol. 60, 1939.
- <sup>26</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, p. 83.
- <sup>27</sup>Brickman. "A Call to Essentialists," in School and Society, Vol. LXXIX, 1953, p. 91.
- <sup>28</sup>Bagley. "The Crux of the Conflict," op. cit., p. 10.
- <sup>29</sup>Cremin. The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957, 1964, p. 191.
- <sup>30</sup>Bagley. Educational Values, 1911, p. 29.

- <sup>31</sup>Bagley. "The Significance of the Essentialist Movement," *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- <sup>32</sup>Hirst. "The Logic of the Curriculum," in Journal of Curriculum Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1969.
- <sup>33</sup>Bagley. "How Shall We View Elementary Education?" in Mathematics Teacher, Vol. 28, March, 1935.
- <sup>34</sup>Bagley. The Educative Process. 1916, p. 266.
- <sup>35</sup>Bagley. An Introduction to Teaching, p. 10.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 15.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 30.
- <sup>38</sup>Bagley. Educational Values, 1911, p. 210.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 208.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 237.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 240.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 165.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 220.
- <sup>44</sup>Bagley. An Introduction to Teaching, 1924, p. 150.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 180.
- <sup>46</sup>Bagley. Standard Practices in Teaching, 1934, p. 103.
- <sup>47</sup>Bagley. Classroom Management, 1915, p. 151.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 215. Batavia is a small city in western New York, where John Kennedy introduced this system in the late 1890's.
- <sup>49</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, p. 33.
- <sup>50</sup>Bagley. School Discipline, 1915, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup>Bagley. "The Crucial Problem for the Next Decade," in Journal of the NEA, Vol. 18, 1929, and "Some Handicaps of Character Education in the U.S." in NEA Proceedings, 1929.

<sup>52</sup>Bagley. Determinism in Education, 1925, p. 140.

<sup>53</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, p. 112.

<sup>54</sup>Bagley. Education and Emergent Man, 1934, p. 52.

<sup>55</sup>Bagley. Determinism in Education, 1925, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>59</sup>Young. The Rise of the Meritocracy, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup>Bagley. Determinism in Education, 1925, p. 20.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>69</sup>Burt. Mental and Scholastic Tests, 1921.

<sup>70</sup>Banks. The Sociology of Education, 1968, Chapt. 9.

<sup>71</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, p. 52.

- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 54.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 60.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 64.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 65.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 66.
- <sup>77</sup>Bagley. Classroom Management, 1915, p. 16.
- <sup>78</sup>Johanningmeier. "W. C. Bagley's Changing Views on the Relationship Between Psychology and Education," in History of Education Quarterly, Spring 1969.
- <sup>79</sup>Bagley. "The Distinction Between Academic and Professional Subjects," in NEA Proceedings, 1918, p. 230.
- <sup>80</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, Chap. 7.
- <sup>81</sup>"Curricula of the Normal Schools," in The Professional Preparation of Teachers, Bulletin No. 14, New York: The Carnegie Foundation, 1920, p. 179.
- <sup>82</sup>Bagley. "Academic Freedom," in Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. XXI, March 1935, p. 10.
- <sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 12.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>85</sup>Bagley. "The Profession of Teaching in the U.S.," in School and Society, XXIX, Jan., 1929.
- <sup>86</sup>MacGregor (ed.). Achievement Tests in the Primary Schools, 1934.
- <sup>87</sup>Bagley. "The Essentialist Platform," op. cit.
- <sup>88</sup>Bagley. Educational Values, 1911, p. 61.
- <sup>89</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, p. 41.
- <sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

- <sup>91</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime, and Social Progress, 1931, p. 30.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 33.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 34.
- <sup>95</sup>Bagley. "The Teacher's Contribution to Modern Progress," in The Teachers' Journal and Abstract, Vol. 4, 1929.
- <sup>96</sup>Bagley. Education, Crime and Social Progress, 1931, p. 37.
- <sup>97</sup>Bagley. Educational Values, 1911, p. 107 and p. 110.
- <sup>98</sup>Bagley. Education and Emergent Man, 1934, p. 197.
- <sup>99</sup>Bagley. "The Profession of Teaching in the U.S." op. cit.
- <sup>100</sup>Kandel. op. cit., p. 72.
- <sup>101</sup>Bagley. "Curricula of the Normal Schools," op. cit., p. 180.
- <sup>102</sup>Kandel. op. cit., p. 1.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 74.
- <sup>104</sup>Bagley. In Educational Administration and Supervision, Vol. XIX, 1933, p. 561.
- <sup>105</sup>Kandel. op. cit., p. 80.
- <sup>106</sup>Bagley. Classroom Management, 1915, p. 97.
- <sup>107</sup>Bagley. "Progressive Education is Too Soft," in Education, Vol. 60, 1939.
- <sup>108</sup>Bagley. "The Significance of the Essentialist Movement," op. cit.
- <sup>109</sup>Kandel. op. cit., p. 19.
- <sup>110</sup>Bagley. Craftsmanship in Teaching, 1912, p. 177.
- <sup>111</sup>Bagley. Harpers, Vol. 103, 1902, p. 341.

## CHAPTER V

### PHILOSOPHY

" . . . an absolutist position is indefensible from any rational point of view. . . . and reason happens to be--or certainly should be--our particular stock in trade."

-W. C. Bagley

This chapter attempts an analysis of essentialist beliefs or procedures in the area of philosophy. "Procedures" may prove the better term as, contrary to the view of certain critics, the essentialist is less an absolutist than he may at first appear, and consequently is more likely to think in terms of process than product.

Two disclaimers are immediately in order, namely that philosophical matters are not always kept entirely distinct from political and psychological concerns, and that the further sub-division of philosophy into epistemology, metaphysics and ethics is subject to the same imperfection, in that they too stray into one another's fields. That Theodore Brameld employed this same division, into what he called "the three chief areas of belief: reality, knowledge and value,"<sup>1</sup> is not so much the authority for this division as a happy coincidence.

An extreme example of this sort of straying into inappropriate fields must be mentioned at this point, and it is the assertion of such thinkers as Brameld and Bode or indeed Marx that all views, whether educational,

philosophical or religious, are ultimately of social origin. Marx's views are the strongest version of this form of determinism, which essentialists are at great pains to refute wherever possible. One can therefore continue with this division either out of convenience or out of conviction.

It is best to start with philosophy, as it is generally argued, certainly by essentialists, that it is the most general of the ways of thinking, and clearly the oldest. Clifton Fadiman, for example, has argued that "the present educational controversy, like all crucial controversies, has its roots in philosophy."<sup>2</sup> Philip Phenix has argued for "the virtual identity" of philosophy and philosophy of education. This theme constantly recurs.

That philosophy is primary or central is both primary and central to the essentialist argument. Indeed, one of the chief arguments of this work is that the essentialist generally gives philosophy pride of place, and that this is especially clear in his dealings with philosophic absolutism.

### Anti-absolutism.

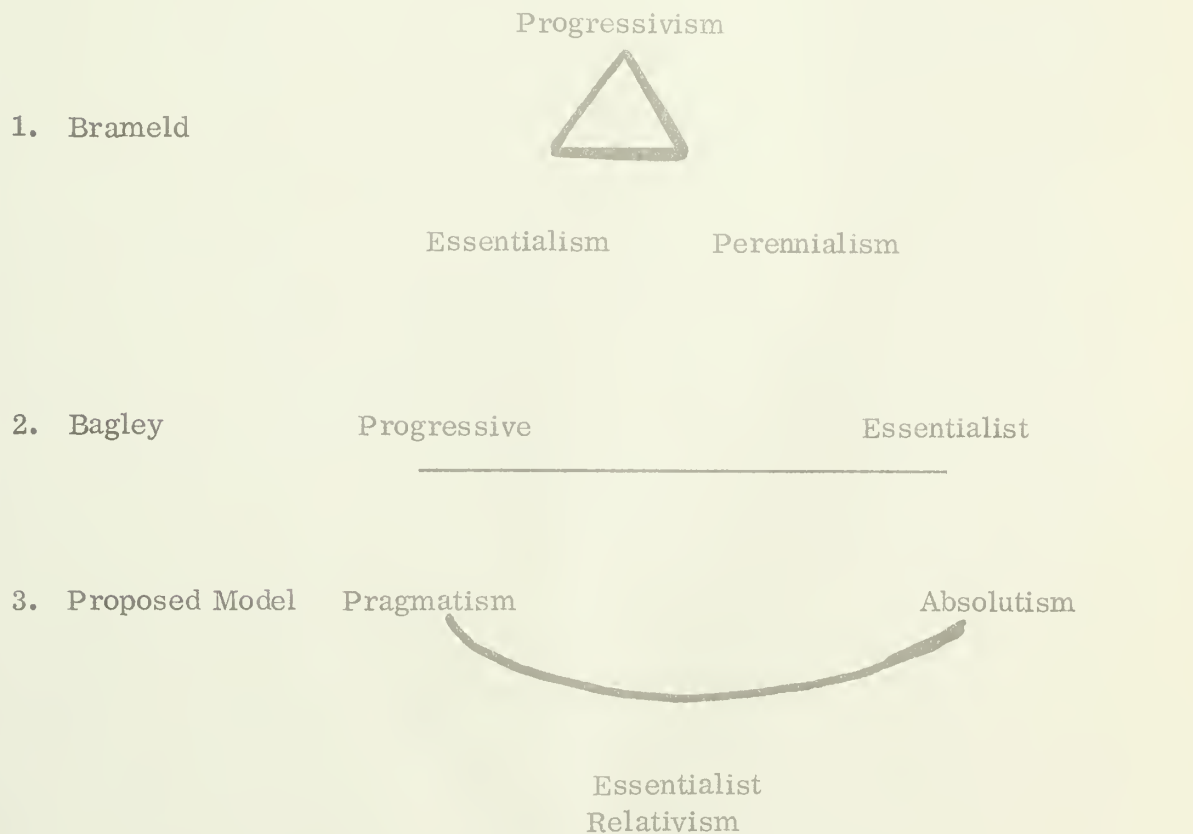
The central argument here presented is that essentialists are generally centralists. Briefly, the great virtue of pragmatism was that it drew attention to the dogmatic nature of extreme absolutists, who claimed that there was an external truth, that it was identifiable, and that they were the only identifiers. Pragmatism argued that there were no such truths, merely conflicting hypotheses,

and that the only test was whether something worked or not. Many essentialists now identify both these positions as extreme, and instead hold to what they consider the golden mean between these two absolutes. They stand between the final truth, on one side, and the impossibility of truth, on the other. Clearly some essentialists veer toward the "right wing" of eternal truth, but how far they are representative will be examined in due course. Whitehead used this same argument, quoted above (p. 32), when he wrote "Nothing is more curious than the self-satisfied dogmatism with which mankind at each period of its history cherishes the delusion of the finality of its existing modes of knowledge--skeptics and believers are all alike. At this moment the scientists and skeptics are the leading dogmatists." One might argue that Brameld was a dogmatist of this latter variety.

Brameld, in fact, distinguished in his Philosophies of Education three main contenders: progressivism, essentialism, and perennialism. However, as he failed to distinguish firmly between the latter two, and criticized them for similar reasons, one could reasonably argue that there are only two main contenders, namely progressive and essentialist. This has the merit of fitting Bagley's own picture of a fundamental dualism. In this case the arc would be bounded by absolutism at one end and reasonable, critical relativism at the other.



Perhaps a better representation might be that of another arc, this time with the two absolutisms of the right-wing final truth and left-wing nihilism at the extremes, with the "reasonable" essentialist between. This is the model employed throughout this work to establish the central argument, that essentialists are generally, and see themselves as, centralists or moderates. The models might be seen as in the diagram below.



As this model will dominate the argument hereafter, a lengthy presentation of the evidence may be in order, although the chief objections to John Dewey's pragmatism, which provided some evidence of essentialist aversion to absolutism of one sort, have already been observed.

The following paragraphs will examine primarily philosophical expressions of this view. Political and psychological and pedagogical expression of it will be reserved for later chapters.

A good place to start is always with Thomas Jefferson. His hatred of absolutism was primarily of a political genre, but philosophically too he was a relativist. An example might be his attitude to religious dogma, as when he wrote:

Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear. You will naturally examine first the religion of your own country. Read the bible then, as you would read Livy or Tacitus. . . . If it ends in a belief that there is no god, you will find incitements to virtue in the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise and the love of others which it will procure you."<sup>3</sup>

This shows a detachment to match even William James' much later The Varieties of Religious Experience. This toleration is central to any appreciation of Jefferson, and it is well demonstrated in his famous announcement in the first inaugural address at Washington in 1801 that "if there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this union or to change its republican focus, let them

stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."<sup>4</sup> This political theme is further expanded in the next chapter. Writing of a then controversial book Jefferson explained:

If M. deBecourt's book be false in its parts, disprove them; if false in its reasoning, refute it. But, for God's sake, let us freely hear both sides, if we choose. . . . The Newtonian philosophy seemed the chief object of attack, the issue of which might be entrusted to the strength of the two combatants; Newton certainly not needing the auxiliary arm of the government, and still less the holy Author of our religion, as to what in it concerned Him.<sup>5</sup>

Essentialists have always admired this trait of Jefferson. For example, Ulich wrote of him: "In one conviction he was unshakable to the point of one-sidedness; this was his hatred of every sort of absolutism or even monarchism;"<sup>6</sup> a judgment which suggests interestingly that Jefferson's political views were subservient to his philosophical views and not vice versa.

A. J. Nock's enthusiasm for Jefferson is likewise instructive, and his charmingly unpretentious biography of Jefferson makes excellent reading. It is an intimate portrait with much apparently trivial detail about Jefferson's many minor interests, such as technical inventions or agricultural experiments, like his proposal to transplant olive trees to America; and it is concerned to show a very practical, non-dogmatic man, a great anti-federalist, and a man who

could defend Washington with the remark: "He errs as other men do, but he errs with integrity."<sup>7</sup> This might be the motto for the essentialist view of the search for truth.

Another extreme essentialist is Irving Babbitt who yet, like Nock, is an anti-absolutist, in spite of criticisms to the contrary: "Standards are a matter of observation and common sense, the absolute is only a metaphysical conceit. Babbitt is an interesting example of the tradition, for he is often bracketed with Nock as an extremist member of whom it is best to beware. Barzun speaks slightly of Babbitt, and Babbitt attacks both William James and John Dewey, even though the quotation above would seem to suggest a certain affinity at least with moderate pragmatists like James. Both Babbitt and Butler, already quoted to the effect that pragmatism is a denial that philosophy can exist, seem to argue, as did Whitehead, that there is an absolutism of the left. Bagley has already been quoted several times on absolutism, to the effect that "an absolutist position is indefensible from any rational point of view," (chapter 4).

Another extreme statement, this time with little redeeming moderation, is Kandel's The Cult of Uncertainty<sup>9</sup> which, as its title suggests, was an attack on pragmatism and progressive education for the uncertainty they promoted. In this instance, he might be seen on the right flank, as it were, of the moderate essentialist view.

Walter Lippmann, a minor "saint" read normally for his political views by essentialists, takes a suitably anti-absolutist view about religious and moral toleration.<sup>10</sup>

Philip Phenix used comparable reasons for preferring an educational philosophy which was analytic to one which was speculative or ideological. He related this to current philosophical inquiry in England and America today which "is largely analytical in method and critical in temper."<sup>11</sup> In the same breath he invoked Whitehead, Bertrand Russell and Einstein; on the other hand, the ideological philosophies "are Marxism, pragmatism, logical positivism and existentialism, each of which, despite denials of the charge, does purport to exhibit the one true way to understanding."<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, as early examples of non-ideological analysis, he quoted Socrates, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus today, "the attempt to fit educational issues into neat systematic packages according to speculation or methodological criteria thus proves to be a questionable exercise in pedantic ingenuity."<sup>13</sup> The answer instead was through inquiry among the various disciplines, the various modes of thinking:

It seems clear that the study of typical concepts and methods in the disciplines is the task to which philosophical analysis may most profitably be directed. Such an approach emphasizes the virtual identity of philosophy and the philosophy of education, for the divisions into which philosophical study naturally falls are mainly the disciplines, which also constitute the basis for the curriculum.<sup>14</sup>

The manner, composed jointly of piecemeal analysis and the epistemology of the so-called disciplines, is characteristic of Phenix's

Realms of Meaning,<sup>15</sup> In fact, this volume, together with Barzun's House of

Intellect, is probably one of the only two volumes in the entire American essentialist literature which are well known outside America.

Some of the same argument can be seen much earlier in Horace Mann's claim that

All our earlier colleges. . . aimed to indoctrinate their students into special denominational tenets, instead of establishing the great principles of practical morality. . . . They ignored the everlasting truth that a man's creed grows out of his life a thousand times more than his life out of his creed. . . . But if truth be ONE and not MANY, then all but one of these faiths--possibly all of them--are wholly or partially wrong. . . . Meanwhile truth exists as certainly as God exists. There it lies, outside or partially outside of all, or of all save one. . . to be capable of impartiality of thought opens all the avenues to truth.<sup>16</sup>

This is a fascinating and early example of the attempt to reconcile idealism and criticism, God and reason.

William James wrote in 1899 of what he called the pluralist or individualistic philosophy: "There is no point of view absolutely public and universal. . . the practical consequence of such a philosophy is the well known democratic respect for the sacredness of individuality. . . at any rate, the outward tolerance of whatever is not in itself intolerant. . ." On the same page he wrote, "the truth is too great for any one actual mind, even though that mind be dubbed 'the Absolute', to know the whole of it."<sup>17</sup> John Jay Chapman,

a private "saint" of Barzun's, has a delightful eulogy of James, which underlined James' pragmatic yet not dogmatic nature: "The great religious impulse at the back of all his work, and which pierces through at every point, never became expressed in conclusive literary form, or in dogmatic utterance."<sup>18</sup> Barzun himself wrote: "No sufficient distinction is made between James and Dewey."<sup>19</sup> Mortimer Smith confirmed this distinction when he wrote of James "whose pragmatism was bound up with matters of religion and beliefs which have no appeal for Dewey."<sup>20</sup>

Elsewhere in the same volume Mortimer Smith fulminates characteristically against the false application of scientific method to education, when public school education "has been taken over by a coterie of experts who have erected it into an esoteric 'science' where every prospect pleases and only the amateur is vile."<sup>21</sup> The answer for Smith is the familiar theme of criticism, that individuals should commit themselves to individual action.<sup>22</sup>

Russell Kirk, one of the more extreme essentialists, wrote that "ideology does not mean political theory or principle. . . it really means political fanaticism" and he used the familiar argument that "objectivity" and "scientism" are abused concepts.<sup>23</sup> He attacked David Riesman for being too far, as it were, left on the continuum as "a Gnostic of the right wing."<sup>24</sup>

A sophisticated discussion of this issue is to be found in Mark Van Doren's Liberal Education. Van Doren attacked the pragmatists:

The priests of change are melancholy fellows who have little hope for the intellect. . . . The absolutists of the new are unaware that the present as they see it is 'but an ambiguous sentence,' says Jacques Barzun, 'out of context.' The problem is one of reading--an art they despise. The past, which they mistakenly identify as the sole concern of liberal education, puts them on the defensive. They think of it, in John Dewey's words, as 'a rival of the present,' . . . The educated person recognizes no dry stretch between now and then. They are one river, and the more he knows about its length the better. . . . The changes he wants are radical; they are improvements in persons. . . . The problem is the primeval one of permanence and change. . . The life of the mind would be simple if there were no change or if every change were total . . . . Past, present and future--they are three gods in one, and worship of them should be wisely distributed . . . . The past is a burden which crushes only those who ignore it. . . dismissed from the mind by 'practical' men, it can bring them to deserve Robert Maynard Hutchins' definition of them as 'those who practice the errors of their forefathers.'<sup>25</sup>

This is a remarkably pregnant passage, for it not only invokes Barzun, Hutchins and Dewey, but it strongly supports the thesis of essentialist moderation by identifying the "absolutists of the new," and raises the issues of the significance of culture, of history, of continuity and tradition, of liberal education, of reading and scholarship, of conservative radicals, of personal change, permanence and change, the life of the mind and false practicality. It is an essentialist creed in miniature.



Van Doren elaborated usefully on these themes by making a number of identifications between elements often thought to be in contradiction to one another. For instance, he sought to resolve the dualisms of ends and means, and of liberal and vocational knowledge, by arguing:

All education is useful, and none is more so than the kind that makes men free to possess their nature. Knowledge and skill to such an end are ends in themselves, past which there is no place for the person to go. It is both useful and liberal to be human, just as it takes both skill and knowledge to be wise. . . . The distinction is false. Technique was the Greek word for art. . . . no antipathy appears between technique and liberal education, if we remember that both are concerned with art.<sup>26</sup>

It is characteristic of centralists or essentialists to curb the spread of false dichotomies or dualisms. A purely vocational education is no less absolute than a purely liberal education out of touch with life.

It is for these reasons, though Van Doren would deny their application in this case, that Sidney Hook attacked Robert Hutchins and the St. John's College curriculum of "The Great Books."

Those who appeal to tradition as a bulwark against change are curiously unaware of its actual content. For most traditions represent departures from earlier traditions, and their subsequent history is full of further departures from their original purposes and beginnings. No one can survey the history of American religious practice, for example, without realizing that tolerance to dissenters marked a break with earlier traditions. . . . Those who speak of the great tradition of the Western world, and charge

"decadent" liberals with attempting to ignore it, betray an insensitiveness to the richness, complexity and contradictory features of what is summed up by the phrase.<sup>27</sup>

Now, while this may be almost fair comment on a rigidly held view that "The Great Books" curriculum is the only curriculum, it is not very fair comment on the less rigid view that it is a good curriculum.

If Hutchins, admittedly well to the right of our essentialist spectrum, is understandably misunderstood, no one could reasonably criticize Jacques Barzun in this way. In fact, Barzun is the clearest and most influential exponent of the middle way, and it is not insignificant that Van Doren leans on him. The concept of moderation permeated Barzun's work.

#### Barzun versus Absolutism.

Barzun's earliest book was The French Race, derived from his doctoral work on the theme, where he examined the phenomenon of nationalism and found it rooted in a false science of race. He concluded:

It has been shown that the very roots of French history since the sixteenth century have been buried deep under and around the issue of race, that is determining whether the France of their day was chiefly German or Roman or Gallic. The respected historians of each century, as well as the obscure pamphleteers of each party, have touched on every important national question. . . . If the actual invasions of Gaul by the Germans are examined in the light of modern scholarship, it is discovered that the process of racial mixture was in fact thorough and its effects reciprocal. Contrary to a long established belief, the fusion of the two races--Romanized Gauls and Germans--was accomplished by the seventh century, not the tenth.<sup>28</sup>

If this appears unlike a philosophical argument appropriate to the immediate theme, it is because one cannot avoid occasional excursions and because this excursion is necessary to see the development of Barzun's view of this centralist theme. His next book was Race, A Study in Superstition, where one can again see the inevitable intertwining of scientific or scholarly views on race with political and philosophical issues. Thus Barzun could argue in the space of only a few pages:

What does genetics actually show about race? It shows by statistics that genes recur in predictable linkages that permit certain physical characteristics to endure in certain successive generations. . . genes will help account for so-called white skin, not for socialism, genius, dipsomania or delinquency. . . all the more reason, then, for the discipline of judging only individuals and thus limiting harm by limiting error.<sup>29</sup>

Related closely to this scientific-historical argument is the political and psychological one that

Whatever its source, the urge to build theories in order to justify collective hostility is strong, as the Nazi regime proved in Germany and as Communist literature continues to prove. Not merely Marxist propaganda but Marxist doctrine at its purest is in form and effect racist thought. Indeed, the class struggle is but the old race antagonism of French nobles and commoners large and made ruthless. Marx's bourgeois is not a human being with individual traits, but a social abstraction, a creature devoid of virtue or free will and without the right to live. . . I am aware that to elucidate the racial conflicts of our time by condemning false abstraction is not usual or popular.<sup>30</sup>

From this point it is not far to the philosophical concomitants, for example that

the issue of equality is in fact irrelevant and unmeaning. Equality is neither provable nor disprovable. This is so for groups and individuals alike. Equality is not a scientific but a political idea, and it is valid only when one assumes it, as do the Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of The Rights of Man.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, when one has exploded false psychologies and ideologies, based on false use of scientific method, one can proceed to philosophical questions. It therefore finally follows that "to ask these questions is to answer them. Peace springs only from the desire for peace and the use of reason in removing grievances."<sup>32</sup>

This is a fascinating example of the use of reason and its evocation in the solution of problems, where science alone cannot prevail. It is a very essentialist argument. If "reason" is one of the mainsprings of the centralist's battle against opposing absolutes, the function of criticism, discussed below, is another. Barzun, in this same work, criticized a scholarly "racist" for arguing that comparative linguistics "has established ethnography on fixed principles by methods that are safe from all criticism."<sup>33</sup> And he soon after invoked his own philosophical preference, relativism, when he argued that,

On the one hand, race appeals to those who find discomfort in relativity--hence its charm for fascists; on the other, it appeals to all lovers of teleology and straight determinism--hence its use by communists in the form of the absolute class-

myth. The bourgeois and the capitalist become genetic entities that engage in necessary strife apart from immediate desires.<sup>34</sup>

The same fundamental argument reappeared in his next book in 1939, *Of Human Freedom*. His introduction was to the effect that,

the events in Russia, Spain, China, Italy, Germany, India, Africa have made it perfectly clear that the absolute dogmas and authoritarian systems which bid for our admiration and support not only are not doing what is claimed for them but are doing just the opposite. . . . We must all acknowledge that we have failed first of all to control our beliefs. We have believed in absolute democracy, absolute personal freedom, absolute peace and fairness in international affairs. Liberals have imagined a slice of European history characterized by absolute moral improvement; or, on turning Marxist, by absolute middle-class evolution grounded in material causes. And when these beliefs proved untenable they were replaced by the bugbear of absolute one-man rule and absolute chaos.<sup>35</sup>

Of the economic question he wrote: "Can the solution of the economic problem be more readily attained under our limping system of theoretical-practical liberties, or under a system of absolute-paternal dictation? That and nothing else is the issue."<sup>36</sup> Barzun's usual answer was given again, that reason and criticism are our best weapons:

If any person or group held the answer, it might conceivably be practical to give up the right to criticize and let them dictate. . . that system is the more practical which leaves as many thinking minds as possible to grapple freely with the realities

that hamper us. That relation of the general intelligence to reality is the key relation in the modern world.<sup>37</sup>

Barzun reiterated the main argument in the same work by stating:

Holding radical opinions is by no means a guarantee that one belongs to the thinking part. It is just as easy to be blind on the left as on the right. . . how to stick to principle or social aims is the peculiar problem for human intelligence in a democratic culture, and this reliance on brain power always implies that it is free, that the choice is real. Hence the need of resisting absolutes--that is, party labels, rigid loyalties, simple rules of thumb, easy or cynical fatalism. Anyone can take sides when things are labelled "revolutionary," "reactionary" or "democratic."<sup>38</sup>

Again he wrote: "The absolute is commonly nothing more than a penny foot rule applied to cases where we need complicated instruments of precision. In the realm of ideas it is a single arbitrary notion used where we need a many-sided concept."<sup>39</sup> This statement is filled out with a footnote about the philosophical labels of metaphysics, idealism, realism, materialism. As expected, he favors a "realistic" compromise:

To the philosophical student it will be clear that the declared indebtedness to James--and, it may be added here, to Berkeley--puts the writer amongst those who reject subjectivism equally with material causation. Objects are real, they truly exist, but the forms of their existence depend upon mind. . . The realm of mind is thus continuous with that of being and its values are to be judged by nothing else than human minds. What mind is, in itself, cannot be answered except metaphorically. Since it means existence, it can be called God, or the Life Force, or Energy, according to one's religious, poetic or scientific bent, without enlightening us much further. As usual, the important thing to decide is what mind does, not what it is.<sup>40</sup>

A similar fusion of political and epistemological concerns followed this, when Barzun declared: "What ever the dogmatist may feel about it, this relativist instrumental philosophy is the philosophy of free democracy par excellence, it is rooted in its culture and it stands confirmed by the two great techniques of the human mind which are synonymous with civilization--science and art."<sup>41</sup> Briefly Barzun argued that neither can be used absolutely. Science must not be erected into a "sinister cast-iron absolute of which racialism is only one manifestation."<sup>42</sup> Art must be neither a mere pasttime nor a propaganda tool for politicians; rather "the man of art, then, is essential to civilization because he is in fact the Eternal Pragmatist, the born enemy of absolute systems, the champion of mind in its struggle with matter. . . in the light of these reasons it becomes clear why it is of the essence of totalitarianism to control art, science and thought."<sup>43</sup> The lesson of art is that "it mirrors diversity and refutes absolutism."<sup>44</sup>

Epistemological argument again leads back to political conclusion later in the same:

The political application is simple if reality is at once individual, like perception, and social, like 'normality,' then free democracy, with its diversity and flexibility, clearly parallels the human mind functioning at its best. . . . Culture is a common heritage which can be added to or changed, but not against our will. . . free democracy is a reality insofar as we sustain it. . . we must resist institutional absolutes, but this does not mean that anarchy should be our goal. Anarchy would only land us in the opposite absolute of gang warfare and perpetual fear.<sup>45</sup>

This is the basis, of course, for Barzun's and others' criticism of campus activists years later in the 1960's.

The last page of this book of Barzun's was perhaps the most far-reaching, for he provided a possible resolution to an important paradox. How can one argue that essentialists are against absolutism, as they clearly are, when so many of them adhere to moral absolutes? One answer is Babbitt's, namely that a moral absolute is not really an absolute, but rather a probabilistic concept, a convenient rule of thumb. Barzun's resolution is different, and it is that

If we desire to accept rather than to exclude, then the love of variety rather than of sameness should combine with an actively pragmatic attitude in a democracy like ours, and even the private, static absolutes in philosophy or religion could find a place. The man who has at last got hold of the truth can live among the infidels if his intelligence is as strong as his faith. . . let us face with open eyes a pluralistic world in which there are no universal churches, no single remedy for all diseases, . . . no world poets and no chosen races cut to one pattern or virtue, but only the wretched and wonderfully diversified human race which can live and build and leave cultural traces of its passage in a world that was apparently not fashioned for the purpose.<sup>46</sup>

The footnote to this magnificent passage was an example drawn from the two very different absolutists, Cardinal Newman and Thomas Hardy, representing a benevolent and a mindless absolutism respectively. Both were acceptable if they would leave each other in freedom and leave the pluralists likewise.



The fullest and most powerful statement of this theme was in Barzun's next book in 1941, Darwin, Marx, and Wagner. Referring significantly to Henry Adams as "the great American who first perceived the fact,"<sup>47</sup> Barzun summarized his argument--"I have spoken of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner's contributions as forming a single stream of influence which I have called mechanical materialism: "the cold world in which man's feelings are illusory and his will powerless."<sup>48</sup> There follows an immensely detailed and powerful proof that these three drove purpose, meaning and will out of man's view of life. They are absolutists of the left. Barzun's expressed preference, to be painfully brief, is for the thinkers of the Romantic period. He argued that they in fact provide much of the material which Darwin, Marx and Wagner merely codified and killed in the process; that

We know further that in diverting Romanticist thought from vitalism to materialism, the three realists knotted together so many incongruous strands of thought that confusion is apparent in their work and chaos in the acts of their disciples.<sup>49</sup>

What Romantic philosophy had achieved was

To bring back into favor certain social purposes and human attributes that the materialism of the eighteenth century and the violence of the French Revolution had obscured. Rousseau, alone in his century and ahead of the Revolution, forecast the achievement; he made clear the function of feeling in life and in the work of reason; he stressed the twin realities of the individual and the group and he stimulated science, together with the love of nature and the direct worship of God.<sup>50</sup>

He made Rousseau sound the perfect centralist. The Romantic movement, however, failed on account of the French Revolution and the subsequent quartering of Europe in a spirit of nationalism. "So the Romanticist doctrines of cooperation and association, of democratic inclusiveness, of social experiment, and of cultural individuality struggled. . . and succumbed at last before the new political strategy, which was nothing but 'nationalism' applied to class, race or country."<sup>51</sup> This era was replaced with one where there was a false scientism, whereas "the truth is that hypothesis, imagination, creation, must precede the collecting of facts; after which what we may expect is not scientific law, but descriptive generalities or measured relations, that may find a place in completed theory."<sup>52</sup>

The final chapter, "The Reign of Relativity," was prefaced with William James' famous exclamation, "Damn the Absolute!" It was a brief analysis of the reappearance of consciousness:

Absolutes were going down one by one before statements of relations. The observer as a mind, a fact, a reality, was re-entering the universe from which he had excluded himself lest the cosmos appear anthropomorphic. Knowledge itself was relative. . . a new reign of consciousness, purpose, teleology, relativity, and pluralism was being quietly ushered in with the new century.<sup>53</sup>

Some of the heroes involved were Einstein, William James, Freud, Bergson, Nietzsche. They were all, in Barzun's mind, relativists and anti-absolutists.

In 1943 Barzun further explored some of these themes in Romanticism and the Modern Ego, later republished under the title, Classic, Romantic and Modern,<sup>54</sup> for reasons explained in the preface of the second edition.

In that preface he explained that

I still see the difference between the neo-classic Enlightenment and its successor, Romanticism, as fundamentally social and political. This may seem a double paradox, first because Romanticism is generally believed to pose an aesthetic, not a political, question; and second, because Romanticism in politics is variously taken to mean the excessive individualism that leads to anarchy and the excessive authority that leads to tyranny. Rousseau is made to bear the guilt of both.<sup>55</sup>

The views of Babbitt and Meiklejohn on Rousseau have been discussed above and it is significant that Barzun singled out the former in this same preface:

"Professor Irving Babbitt of Harvard was only one of numerous publicists who demonstrated the folly of Romantic thought in art and life. Rousseau, being well known by name as well as a central influence upon the Romantics, was the chief scapegoat."<sup>56</sup> And again: "It was logic and not accident that Irving

Babbitt should see in Mussolini the hope of undoing Rousseau's work, even though the dictator's appeals to heroism might superficially suggest the Romantics' love of risk and daring."<sup>57</sup> Barzun's very central position was

again clear:

Today, when threats to a passable life are found severally in mass culture, in the conservative revolution, and in the revolt of the beat generation, the temptation is again strong to explain and damn them all by reference to a new wave of romanticism. . .

This divergence of classic and Romantic corresponds to that which obtains in the conception of the individual: the eighteenth century entrusts everything to the intellect and loves Man abstractly, as an archetype, whereas Romanticism studies sensation and emotion and embraces man as he is actually found--diverse, mysterious, and irregular."<sup>58</sup>

And he concluded this powerful preface with the conclusion:

Such are the reasons why this many-faceted art and philosophy of Romanticism must be understood otherwise than through clichés and must be regarded first as responses to a political desire. If the movement also proposes to answer the psychological riddle--what is the nature of man? -- that, too, is a way of stating the political issue. All political theories begin with a psychology, explicit or assumed, for the same reason that all revolutions want to control the mind. Romanticism has this merit over later revolutions that it was never an ideology.<sup>59</sup>

This too is important material, for it again stresses the essentialist's chariness of ideologies and absolutes, and buttresses the argument that philosophical, political and psychological views are ultimately inextricable.

The book also included the finest critique by an essentialist of the essentialist right flank. Analyzing the spirit of the modern ego which "has lost its faith, and with it the willingness to take risks,"<sup>60</sup> he found several members of the essentialist tradition guilty of undue clamour for certainty. "The moderns . . . wanted a single system which should solve the pressing problems of the hour. For those not attracted by communism there was Anglo-Catholicism;

still others withdrew into Saint Thomas and the Roman Church; artists sought for classical models. . ."<sup>61</sup> And he went on to lament the extremes of T. S. Eliot, neo-Thomism and neo-classicism, Irving Babbitt and the so-called new humanism. He destroyed their basis in tradition very neatly by pointing out that there never was, in fact, much security or serenity in these early traditions:

The belief therefore that the church then afforded intellectual unity is belied by the quarrels of Franciscans and Dominicans, mystics and rationalists, Thomists and Occamites. . . What is true of the imaginary medieval serenity holds good for the classical epoch. . . it takes only a copy of Thucydides and a little sense of history to recognize that the Greeks led the most chaotic, passionate, and disorderly life imaginable. . . . To conclude, what is alarming about the modern ego is. . . that it is walking forward with its head turned back in fear and longing.<sup>62</sup>

The answer was again a bold, forward looking romanticism, and again Barzun returned to William James: "This is why America is the land of Romanticism par excellence and why her greatest philosopher, William James, asserted the doctrine in its fullness against all absolute, classical limits."<sup>63</sup>

He saw Romanticism as "the permanent trait of Western man,"<sup>64</sup> though frequently submerged. Even Plato he found ambiguous in this respect; there was the "Plato of the authoritarian, puritanical Republic," and there was the "Plato of the romantic 'Laws!'" Plato is the first great man of "reason."<sup>65</sup>

The fullness of Barzun's vision and some idea of its complex pluralism can be seen in his summary that

the Romanticists had the task of reconstruction. The vast horizons opened up by war and social upheaval gave romanticism its scope; it was inclusive, impatient of barriers, eager for diversity, treasured fact and represented the individual as a source of fact. Accordingly, its political philosophy was an attempt to reconcile personal freedom with the inescapable need of collective action. Rosseau, Burke, Kant, Hegel, agreeing on the nature of the problem, differed only in lesser particulars. They were not anarchists or imperialists, but theorists of equilibriums in motion. . . . Romanticism gave an impulse to the arts which has not yet died out. True to its inclusive purpose, romantic art was simultaneously idealistic, realistic, and symbolic; impressionist, expressionist and surrealist. It produced forms and amassed contents only now nearing exhaustion, after furnishing the models for the movements which we enumerate through the past century as Realism, Symbolism, Impressionism, Naturalism, and Post-Impressionism.<sup>66</sup>

Teacher in America, published in 1945, while little concerned with such cultural criticism, did include one highly appropriate aside, thrown out while discussing the nature of the tutorial method in teaching:

"(The teacher) no matter how much he knows or how fully he has thought, is relentlessly pushed until his back touches the wall of the great absolutes. For students are ever seeking final answers and they know how to ask questions which no wise man would dare answer."<sup>67</sup> This is of value in that it helps explain the paradoxical idea of absolutes in a tradition which seeks to deny them, for it suggests that they are ultimate questions rather than ultimate

answers. This also helps explain the quotation above that such differing figures as Burke and Rousseau agree "on the nature of the problem," for both are agreed to ask the same absolute questions about man and society.

Barzun's essay "History, Popular and Unpopular," published in 1943, was an application of this philosophy to the nature of historical study. As an example, he attacked the simplistic, common-place view that the writings of Voltaire led to the French revolution: "We have here a good instance of the way nuances are destroyed by popularization."<sup>68</sup> Instead, the historian must struggle with the two-fold task of relating facts and nuances with some "unifying principle. . . lighting up of simple facts by coherent thought. . ."<sup>69</sup> This does not mean that there is a law or science of history; rather it "is the diagnostic power that it develops. Diagnostic power means seeing the familiar within the strange without losing the sense of either. . ."<sup>70</sup>

If this present essay has any value it lies in the attempt to do just that, to see the unifying principle in Barzun's work and again in the larger body of essentialist literature. Barzun went on to argue that, as with science, the facts need interpretation by a human mind or imagination: "consequently the historical virtues become, in ascending order of value: accuracy, intellectual honesty, and artistic imagination."<sup>71</sup> As usual, we must avoid absolutes:

The antidote to conventionality is not debunking but variety, which is a test the lay recorder can always apply. He must hold steadfast to the knowledge that the events and persons of history were each unique, individual, induplicable, different from us; and yet that all history is human history, that is to say, intelligible, communicable within broad limits, popular within the ideal sense of the word.<sup>72</sup>

Barzun's charming book of essays on America appeared in 1954, entitled God's Country and Mine--A Declaration of Love Spiced with a Few Harsh Words, and it too bears the same stamp. The American genius culturally is that it

Has no line, no dogma, but works for results. . . . It is attention to practice and indifference to over-arching beliefs that guarantees our innocence, but our critics are sodden with ideology and cannot take this in. None the less this nonsectarianism is one clear sign of our superiority over Russia. Russia is a hundred years behind us in the mere fact of being bogged down in the party pamphlet of a couple of angry men; Russia's mental date is theirs: 1848.<sup>73</sup>

Something of the same optimism bordering almost on the complacent, appeared in a later discussion of American policemen who, he argued, "had no ideology either. They were for the victim whoever he was."<sup>74</sup> A similar but characteristic optimism suffuses his conclusion that

Similarly if today many men and women are seeking and floundering, it argues a genuine moral preoccupation. The relativism complained of in the press, so far from being the cause of the floundering, is the chief instrument for finding the right moral relation to a changed and ever-changing society.<sup>75</sup>



The same indeterminacy informed Barzun's literary critical and aesthetic beliefs. The Energies of Art, published in 1956, was a delightful collection of essays on Barzun's favorite writers. In general, he argued: "I am moved, it is clear, by the historical spirit, which never tolerates confinement and which, in criticism, can always turn up instances to bend or bulge whatever is too rigid or narrow."<sup>76</sup> "William James and the Clue to Art" was a magnificently powerful essay, which one hesitates to dissect lest the knife slip. It included all the now familiar themes and persons in the briefest compass. The argument, briefly and inadequately, was that William James' "Psychology" of the early 1890's remains a textbook for artists and cultural historians, for it "struck a deathblow at Realism."<sup>77</sup> James sought to destroy the pseudo-scientific belief that the mind copied reality like a photographic plate and to promote Barzun's later view that man created more than he copied. James "revealed Impressionism native and dominant."<sup>78</sup> His now commonplace view of the "streams of consciousness" eventually "displaces from the foreground as ready-made all ideas and objects, it restores primacy to sensation and will."<sup>79</sup> Reality is only what we make of it. "Except for the earliest months of infancy there is no such thing as pure sensation; as soon as the mind acquires the power to reproduce past sensations, the new and the old fuse into a perception."<sup>80</sup> This of course reflected on the period debates, and James provided Barzun with the opinion eventually that Classicism could not have existed without an

antecedent Romanticism "from which to cut away, refine, extract, the classic forms and pleasures."<sup>81</sup> This is why "poets are at first declared to be writing nonsense."<sup>82</sup> Barzun linked James with Emerson and Nietzsche: "Like his almost exact contemporary, Nietzsche, he chose Yea-saying after a harrowing inner storm. The religious and moral impulse derived from his father's ideas and entourage--the New England Transcendentalists with Emerson at their head--remained in William the controlling energy."<sup>83</sup> He further adumbrated this anti-absolutist tradition with such names of the period as Samuel Butler, Bergson, Freud, and their predecessors Kierkegaard, Newman and Bagehot.

A minor "saint" of Barzun, John Jay Chapman, was discussed in the essay, and reappeared in 1957 as the subject of Barzun's edition of The Selected Writings of John Jay Chapman. This choice is tellingly illustrative of Barzun's picture of a tradition of American social and literary critics: "It is as if our American tradition, begun with Jefferson and Cooper, had ended in Chapman's day with Mencken and himself."<sup>84</sup> The membership is curiously like that of our main concern. Barzun elsewhere in the same introduction included other members of our tradition, such as Emerson and Henry Adams. He found further that Chapman too believed that "intellect is always concrete and particular, using abstraction merely as a shorthand to define feelings and conduct."<sup>85</sup>

One example will suffice from what may be Barzun's best known book, The House of Intellect, published in 1959, the book that brought him reknown with the emerging English essentialists. The example is his attack on Marxist doctrine and on the feebleness of intellect which allowed it to spread so rapidly even among intellectuals. Early critics of Marx, such as Shaw, Croce, or Veblen

had little regard for his formulas and apparatus. They might remain Socialists and even accept Marx as an important figure in the history of mankind's rebellion against want, but they were not taken in by the jargon and pseudo-science that were to capture and hold in fetters a good part of the Western world thirty years later. What saved these thinkers was that, though they valued intellect, they never believed in its primacy. They knew that intellect is a servant, and one to be held on a short leash. Intellect is not fit to lead, much less to dominate, for it knows only intermediate or contingent goals: 'If you want this,' it says, 'you must do that.' Or else it assembles instances to guide choices. What is wanted can be sought and adapted by the intellect, but cannot spring from its rules or operations. The intellect, slave to the passions as Hume said it should be, sorts them out and brings them to light. It diverts but does not quell them.

That is why the demand frequently heard that democracy develop an intellectual system, an ideology with which to combat communism and catch the minds of the wavering, is an absurd demand. If democracy means anything, it is diversity of ends. In that diversity it opposes all unitary systems, communist or fascist. Therefore a 'system of democracy' must be either a piece of empty verbalism or the plan of an imposed unity. In pointing this out, intellect is doing its proper work; in cobbling together the proposed system it would be usurping that role of will and making itself a dangerous substitute for satisfactions which democracy denies. To put this more generally, the greatest danger of intellect is that it so readily breeds intellectualism. The symptoms of this disease are unfortunately infinite.<sup>86</sup>

Barzun went on then to treat the paradox he had apparently created, namely that men should both rely more on intellect and yet not too much so. "The paradox or rather, the antinomy, is not one of my creating. It is one that every state that calls itself free must live with. But since the practical difficulties are not new, modern societies need not despair."<sup>87</sup>

Almost more impressive, however, was Barzun's next book, Science: The Glorious Entertainment, of 1964. This was in part a summary of his argument to date, as he pointed out. His entire work was taken up with "this cultural sovereignty of science and its multiplying effects."<sup>88</sup> The founthead for this is Whitehead's Science and the Modern World, which Barzun read at the age of nineteen and which had upon him "the effect of a vision."

Whitehead's view was that the balance produced by the union in science "of passionate interest in the detailed facts with equal devotion to abstract generalization" had produced a "balance of mind."<sup>89</sup> Barzun's later conclusion was that the balance had been lost: "What is felt is the curse of abstraction, the burden of pullulating fact."<sup>90</sup> He promoted the by now familiar role of the critic; he was not for or against such wholes as science or education or the State: "I can as readily imagine being against sunset and for the tides."<sup>91</sup> Chapter five, for instance, dealt with philosophies of scientific method from Bacon to Einstein and Popper; the latter pair are famous relativists, but even Bacon recognized that purpose "is something which has to do with the nature of man, not with the nature of the universe."<sup>92</sup> Chapter seven,

"Behavioral Science," was a typical attack on "the assumptions of physical science transferred to the study of man."<sup>93</sup> Behavioral science has to assume without warrant that "studying a small abstracted morsel of the whole will not distort the results;"<sup>94</sup> and our scientific culture often expects of behavioral science "answers to the question What Ought To Be?"<sup>95</sup> He attacked the pretensions of Karl Marx and Dr. Kinsey to be more than mere reporters, and biased at that. Man, in fact, did not so much behave as misbehave: "From developing allergies, which make poison out of delicacies, to committing crimes which, as in saints and statesmen, can later seem the highest wisdom. . . these facts of experience require that any science of the regularities of behavior be always qualified and admonished by another discipline, a learned love of misbehavior."<sup>96</sup> Diversity rules again. Chapter ten, "The Treason of the Artist," argued that science had invaded art: "By what I have ventured to call treason, artists share with science the faith in independent objects, the love of the abstract, the all-importance of method, the need for structure, and the fear of letting the subjective enter the game by way of humanity."<sup>97</sup> The "burden of modernity" was related to the obsessive use of abstraction, on which there was another magnificent attack in chapter eleven.<sup>98</sup> The final chapter, "One Mind in Many Modes," was suitably powerful and all inclusive to provide the conclusion of this survey. It began: "What we discover as the cause of our panic when we examine the burden of modernity is the imposition of one intellectual purpose upon all experience. To analyze,

abstract, and objectify is the carrying out of a single, imperialistic mode of thought."<sup>99</sup> To tame this extension of science into our lives we must or may fence off the machine from our homes, curb language of undue generalization, regard the self as an end in itself, and keep economy to its proper place:

"No house was ever comfortable or beautiful that was not wastefully built,<sup>100</sup>

or "Mind encloses science, and not the other way around."<sup>101</sup> More

generally, his

full answer is twofold. . . . The first argument against the primacy of the provable is that the improvable and even the doubtful are necessary to man. . . . The ground for the second half of the answer to those who fear the subjective. . . is characteristically the historian's, for the historian understands that there is no such thing as unanimity . . . to his disciplined eye science is no more at one with itself than any creed. . . . He knows that mind exists in many modes. . . . To put the case historically, the twentieth century needs that multiplicity of consciousness which Henry Adams chronicled. . .<sup>102</sup>

Barzun concluded that man must be a natural and moral philosopher. He must return

From zoon to bios. Man alone has a biography, and he but shares a zoology. . . (man may) be skeptical but gay about the prospects of humankind. . . no god and only intermittently god-like, he is the judge and measure of whatever haunts him.<sup>103</sup>

Barzun's work, in short, is a most powerful and wide-ranging statement of the essentialist position; it resists absolutism at every point; it promotes relativism in its place.

### The Role of Reason and of Criticism

One now has an idea of the essentialist view of himself as the critic and the disciple of reason from the discussion of absolutism, and from knowledge of Bagley and Barzun.

Essentialism cannot be equated simply with conservatism for its own sake, only with conservation of what is best. To buttress this argument one may briefly examine further relevant essentialist discussions under three headings, for the sake of convenience.

First, there is the theme of social or political critic, going so far in cases as to include the conservative anarchism of Nock or Henry Adams. The patron saint of this activity was, of course, Socrates; he was the first martyr of the cause, as one can judge by his rating in the popularity poll of Figure 1. Meiklejohn for one quoted his most famous remark: "The uncriticized life is not worth living."<sup>104</sup> Nock was enthusiastic on this count; he talked of education as producing critics necessarily: "Education, in a word, leads a person on to ask a great deal more from life than life, as at present organized, is willing to give him; and it begets dissatisfaction."<sup>105</sup> A famous version of this, regularly quoted by other essentialists, was that of 1932; "The lively and peremptory exercise of dissatisfaction is the first condition of progress."<sup>106</sup> Nock compared Artemus Ward with H. L. Mencken as they both put their finger "upon all the meanness, low-mindedness, greed, viciousness, blood thirstiness,

and homicidal mania that were rife among us."<sup>107</sup> Mencken himself, whom most essentialists appear to have read, wrote of the dangers of being a critic: "Even today, with the scientific passion become familiar in the world. . . . a Galileo could no more be elected President of the United States than he could be elected Pope of Rome. Both high posts are reserved for men favored by God with an extraordinary genius for swathing the bitter facts of life in bandages of soft illusion."<sup>108</sup> Later in the same volume he revealed and revelled in the feet of clay of such American heroes as Washington and Lincoln.

Bernard Iddings Bell claimed his own intention was "to disturb a pseudo-patriotic complacency."<sup>109</sup> Bell likewise, in his forward to Mortimer Smith's And Madly Teach, claimed that Smith was more a revolutionary than Marx: "This man Smith is really and truly a revolutionist, comrade to Socrates, to Isaiah and Jeremy, to the Buddha, to the Christian saints. He, and the rest of us who toss about this sort of dynamite, ought to be locked up."<sup>110</sup> Smith's own conclusion in that work, on the final page, was that individual parents must engage in "extensive critical examination."<sup>111</sup> Smith also wrote an article, "The Perils of Being a Critic," where he concluded: "The fundamental mistake lies in judging criticism on the basis of its source rather than on its merits."<sup>112</sup> Albert Lynd, a very similar critic himself, concluded that "the parent who is opposed to the New Education"<sup>113</sup> ought to fight it vigorously at the local level. Admiral Rickover has written that "as a people we have always frowned on the critic of social mores."<sup>114</sup> Barzun linked



intellect with its "chief business, cultural criticism. . . these considerations make only more imperative the safeguard of the master virtues of intellect. They are, once again: concentration, continuity, articulate precision, and self-awareness."<sup>115</sup> Howard Mumford Jones, himself popular with recent essentialists, wrote of Emerson that "if the protestors but knew it, Emerson is on their side;" the difference is that modern protestors will not "exert themselves in the positive sense of Carlyle's everlasting yea."<sup>116</sup> Walter Lippmann has written, "it is often the case that the critic understands the play better than the actor."<sup>117</sup> Harry S. Broudy has written of intellectuals that "they are the sensitive free nerve endings of society."<sup>118</sup>

Although this generalization holds true in most cases, we find occasional evidence that it should not be pressed too hard. Ortega y Gasset was at the edge of the spectrum when he criticized a certain kind of critic, namely the cynic. He described Diogenes as "the nihilist of Hellenism. . . The cynic, a parasite of civilization, lives by denying it, for the very reason that he is convinced it will not fail."<sup>119</sup> He broadened the scope, and struck two essentialist themes, when he went on: "What is your Fascist if he does not speak ill of liberty, or your Surrealist if he does not blaspheme against art?"<sup>120</sup> It could perhaps be argued that Ortega y Gasset was only criticizing unreasonable criticism.

This is precisely the charge that Sidney Hook levelled against Alexander Meiklejohn, who had urged a more co-operative and less individualistic under-

standing of society; Hook thus accused him that he risked curbing the role of critic and losing the "intelligent vigilance against abuse of delegated power and against usurpation of authority."<sup>121</sup>

The second area where one may examine this role of critic is that of moral and artistic values. Horne indulged in his own characteristically pious tone when he wrote of his vision of the educational truth: "My purpose has rather been to do the more serviceable, if less spectacular, thing of passing on to willing ears the word of the still, small voice as it has vouchsafed to speak to me."<sup>122</sup> Michael Demiashkevich, a similarly extreme idealist with religious leanings, prefaced his Introduction to Philosophy of Education with the following two quotations, significant in their meaning and their connotations: "Philosophy is not a potentate's throne, but a battlefield of ideas" and "Prove all Things; hold fast that which is Good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). A. J. Nock was enthusiastic about Artemus Ward, who earned his way in the world of letters "by the power of his criticism,"<sup>123</sup> and in the same essay Nock linked Ward in a critical and humorous tradition with Mencken.<sup>124</sup> Barzun's view of the artist as eternal pragmatist or critic has already been examined; he spoke, for instance, of Swift that he had "the mettle of the troublesome witness, like Rousseau, Nietzsche, John Jay Chapman or Bernard Shaw."<sup>125</sup> That criticism can also be mere artistic cynicism we have seen in the arguments of Ortega y Gasset or Irving Babbitt, who both appear, at this point and in general, on the conservative flank.

Third, and perhaps fundamentally, one may examine the role of critic as epistemologist. Phenix argued for the necessity of constant re-evaluation in modern analytic philosophy. Horne sounded curiously modern when he wrote: "Philosophy has no new facts of its own to consider, it has only to consider the old facts in a new way."<sup>126</sup> A. J. Nock talked of this in terms of a phrase of Plato's which is often recalled by essentialists, namely that the intellectual is one who tends to "see things as they are."<sup>127</sup> Arthur Bestor counselled that the critic should "love the sinner but not his sin."<sup>128</sup> Bagley remarked, like Horne, that he sought to promote no new fashions "but perhaps in the end an equally significant function--namely, salvaging from the scrap-  
pile and preserving for the future the valuable elements;" and proposed his twin themes of "disagreeing with most of my fellow workers" and that the only remedy for prejudice was reason.

W. W. Brickman, editor of School and Society now for many years, has frequently demanded more public controversy in the field of education.<sup>129</sup> He was probably influenced by Hutchins, certainly by the essentialist tradition. Hutchins saw social and political conformity as one of the principal threats to American democracy and education, whereas "what is in other countries a serious hazard to education, philosophical diversity, turns out to be in Utopia an educational advantage,"<sup>130</sup> and "the great new term of reproach nowadays is 'controversial';" and as a result the university resorts to public relations men, a class which he prays may wither away.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, "a university that is not controversial is not a university."<sup>132</sup>

The Philosophy of Science

The philosophy of science has played a large part in this debate already. The nature of science and scientific proof has, of course, always been important; essentialists tend to find examples to discuss from among the classical Greeks. A special impetus to the importance of science was also given by Dewey's reliance on scientific method for his pragmatic educational views; it is generally on these apparently neutral, value-free arguments that essentialists attack him, as we have seen in Barzun's more general attack on the misapplication of scientific inquiry to fields where it is not germane. It may be worth examining a few more essentialist views in this area.

Horace Mann wrote with great excitement about the history of physical science, and the inadequacy of science teaching "until dogmatic teaching was supplanted by the spirit of inquiry."<sup>133</sup> Emerson, however, was less impressed, and argued that "empirical science is apt to cloud the sight. . . a guess is often more fruitful than an indisputable affirmation. . . and a dream may let us deeper into the secret of nature than a hundred conducted experiments."<sup>134</sup>

A. J. Nock, though accused by his son that he "had no understanding of science,"<sup>135</sup> was typically skeptical about the ultimate meanings of scientific endeavor. Science, he argued, still debates and knows nothing of the causes of things. The answer to the problem of cause and effect we have simply moved "a step or two backward."<sup>136</sup> He discussed this more fully in his delightful autobiography: "When I was a lad, science had tossed metaphysics

on the junk pile. . . straight material monism was the thing. . . Science went on with its investigations. . . like the donkey after the carrot, but the carrot apparently as far away as ever;"<sup>137</sup> and scientists debating the shape of space put on "as fine an exhibit of metaphysics as anything the schoolmen can show."<sup>138</sup> Ortega y Gasset concentrated on the social effects of science: "Science itself, the root of our civilization, automatically converts one into mass-man, makes of him a primitive."<sup>139</sup> Hutchins took a more moderate and typical view when he wrote that "the Utopians have nothing but praise for the scientific method; they are experts at it. Because they are experts at it, they recognize its limitations."<sup>140</sup> Mark Van Doren held a very similar opinion: "If science is master of the intellectual arts proper to the conduct of its affairs, then science is liberal too. . . .The error is to ape science."<sup>141</sup> Mortimer Smith lamented that too many have been taught "to believe only in science, in the kind of truth which can be proven by tangible evidence,"<sup>142</sup> with a consequent impotence in moral or abstract thinking. The Council for Basic Education's booklet, A Consumer's Guide, mocked at the use of behavioral objectives in education as pseudo-scientific,<sup>143</sup> and at various other mock scientific intrusions into education. J. D. Koerner has written that "the efforts of educationists to develop a bona fide discipline lured them for many years into the trap of scientism."<sup>144</sup> Lynd had great fun at the expense of educational researchers in a chapter titled "Research, It's Wonderful," where he concluded that "one of the most wonderful things about Educational research

is that it may be operated like an Easter egg hunt: it seeks and finds something which its promoters have put there in the first place."<sup>145</sup> Russell Kirk has attacked the false scientism of ideologies and behaviorism.<sup>146</sup>

Three more sophisticated discussants, along with Bagley and Barzun, are Mortimer Adler, Philip Phenix and Joseph Wood Krutch. Adler, for instance, with Milton Mayer argued in The Revolution in Education that the difference between what he called traditionalists and modernists was the "fundamentally different views of science,"<sup>147</sup> that "where the modernist asserts the exclusive validity of the scientific method, the traditionalist maintains that there are many valid methods of inquiry, each appropriate to its own subject matter,"<sup>148</sup> that "it is not, however, the scientist with whom the traditionalist is arguing but the modernist,"<sup>149</sup> and paradoxically that the traditionalist might "require more science than the modernist."<sup>150</sup> Indeed, he argued that the infamously essentialist or perennialist curriculum of St. John's College was the only liberal arts course in America that demanded four years of laboratory science of every student, and that it "takes literally that glorious Latin pun 'that serves as the college motto: 'Facio liberos ex libris libraque', or 'I make free men out of boys by means of books and balances'."<sup>151</sup>

He dealt with the issue most powerfully, however, elsewhere. Adler delivered the Aquinas Lecture in 1938 under the auspices of the Aristotelian Society of Marquette University, and he called his address "St. Thomas and the Gentiles." It was modelled on Aquinas' own "Summa Contra

Gentiles," and it was a brilliant attempt to show the relevance of St. Thomas Aquinas to our own day, not as a Christian system builder, but as a debater and open-minded philosopher, and he included a discussion of the relation of science to philosophy. The modern gentiles, by analogy, were those who deny "that there is any such thing as true philosophical knowledge."<sup>152</sup> He was acting as 'philosopher contra positivists.'<sup>153</sup> The only gentiles with whom one could not reason were "those skeptics who are not even silenced by their own contradictions."<sup>154</sup> Just as Aquinas started from his opponent's position, so Adler started from that of the scientists, to show that science presupposed some philosophy, rather as Barzun argued that both scientific and historical data were subject to the mind and imagination. Thus "those who affirm the conclusions of science to be knowledge of an independent real are themselves uttering a philosophical proposition."<sup>155</sup> He found various other such a posteriori arguments, and then showed that "the limitations of science provide a preamble to philosophy."<sup>156</sup> He defended Aquinas against being a rigid systematist, though many of his admirers as well as his detractors have tried to show him so. He quoted Gilson's conclusion that Aquinas "had no system in the idealistic sense of the word. . . (His) ambition was not to achieve philosophy once and for all, but to maintain it and to serve it."<sup>157</sup> Aquinas did not claim to answer everything, but rather eliminated everything except necessary antinomies--"The antinomy points to a mystery."<sup>158</sup> Adler argued entertainingly for the perennial character of philosophical truth:

There is nothing strictly new about modern realism or idealism, empiricism or rationalism, naturalism or absolutism. For each of these errors an ancient or medieval thinker could be named to parallel his modern counterpart, often superior to the latter in the lucidity of his deviation from the truth.<sup>159</sup>

Aquinas taught us, in short, the two essential conditions of philosophic methods: "We must combine the a posteriori method of proceeding always from experience, which is the great virtue of Locke's contribution, with the self-critical yet constructive exercise of reason, which modern thought owes to Kant."<sup>160</sup> This was exactly Barzun's argument about facts and imagination. It was a remarkable lecture, the mere footnotes of which in their complexity one is not worthy to unloose.

Another very powerful book of Adler's was composed of a series of lectures delivered by invitation before the Institute of Psychoanalysis in Chicago, in the spring of 1936, published as What Man Has Made of Man, with the subtitle, "A Study of the Consequences of Platonism and Positivism in Psychology." The argument was, as usual, chiefly epistemological; the psychologist "cannot, as scientist or philosopher, claim to have knowledge of a certain sort, and then as a psychologist deny that men are capable of such knowledge."<sup>161</sup> Perhaps the most instructive thing about this book was the introduction, written by Dr. Franz Alexander, director of that institute, at Adler's request. He vigorously attacked Adler for his "scholasticism, a sterile form of deductive thinking,"<sup>162</sup> which was supposedly an outlet for thinkers who dared not observe the word lest any observation conflict with established dogma. Yet there were



always a priori heretics. The most he allowed Adler was "flawless deductions from incorrect premises."<sup>163</sup> This too could be a dangerous admission if Adler used the claims of science or psychology for his premises. Adler mildly replied to these remarks: "St. Thomas is a philosopher in the same sense that Aristotle and Santayana are," and that scholasticism is not "necromancy with buried syllogisms."<sup>164</sup>

Philip Phenix, a contemporary and sophisticated essentialist, has similarly argued that "the fundamental presupposition of science is taken as a model for the moral enterprise in all its phases. The scientist assumes that there is a truth to be progressively discovered, that acknowledgement of truth is a universal obligation, and that knowledge of it is everyone's privilege."<sup>165</sup> Phenix's view was ultimately that of a Christian deeply involved in epistemology, as is evident throughout his work. "Turning to the physical sciences, one finds an equally comprehensive view of man as that which derives from reflection on mathematics" and

two features of scientific activity are of the greatest human importance. The first feature grows out of the very meaning of science. The subject matter of science may be taken as those matters of fact on which it is possible, in principle, to secure universal agreement. . . . The other most humanly significant feature of the scientific enterprise is its inherent moral imperative.<sup>166</sup>

Joseph Wood Krutch is of interest here for he, like Bagley, struggled hard to reconcile his scientific and naturalistic beliefs with his moral

idealism. His solution, not unlike Bagley's emergent idealism, related to consciousness. "Nature has tended if not intended to increase the degree of consciousness. . . and to make survival depend more and more upon conscious intelligence; if a God did not create Nature then perhaps Nature is creating a God."<sup>167</sup> He was the essentialist who most relied on ecological concerns for his philosophy:

Faith in wildness or in Nature. . . is a philosophy, a faith. . . it puts our ultimate trust not in human intelligence but in whatever it is that created human intelligence. . . this is a modern version of ancient pantheism.<sup>168</sup>

In short, essentialists, though few are expert scientists and many have difficulty inserting their moral idealism, generally accept science as one of the chief models of rationality, especially when limited to its proper place. They resent its application to the less empirical data of, for instance, social sciences, education or literature. Sometimes they even use science as a springboard for arguments of philosophy or value; their view might therefore be justly described as a centralist or moderate one.

There are a number of further related epistemological debates or dualisms on which the essentialists generally take a moderate, central or slightly right wing position. These are not entirely distinguishable one from another, but it will be convenient to deal with the following separately: the disciplines versus integrated studies; sequential versus incidental learning; abstract versus concrete learning; liberal versus vocational knowledge; ends

versus means; work versus play; teaching versus learning; and discipline versus freedom.

### The Intellectual Disciplines versus Integrated Study

Central to the traditional view of knowledge is the nature of the seven liberal arts of ancient tradition. This was most conveniently discussed in Mark Van Doren's Liberal Education, though the theme is popular throughout essentialist literature. Van Doren distinguished between useful, liberal and fine arts; the liberal arts "are the specifically intellectual arts, and therefore are keys of man's operation as man. . . Their two most familiar names are language and mathematics."<sup>169</sup> The classical tradition and the medieval tradition labelled these arts grammar, rhetoric and logic; arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy; and called the two groups the trivium and the quadrivium respectively. "We have reduced seven to two: The trivium is literature and the quadrivium is mathematics."<sup>170</sup> Van Doren warned against assuming that one is more liberal than the other, and reminded the reader that the seven arts are seldom in proper harmony at any one time, as when rhetoric came to dominate in Rome or when early Christians resisted the liberal arts as secular. Literature today has lost its logic, and "has abandoned rhetoric to advertising and propaganda. It is left with nothing but grammar--which, because it works in isolation, knows its terms but one at a time, and naively."<sup>171</sup> This is the same as Barzun's argument above. From this Van Doren goes on

to argue that "a curriculum already exists. It remains only to be discovered."<sup>172</sup> All room for maneuver is but "garnishing the meat with parsley, thyme or a hundred other savors."<sup>173</sup> The curriculum he then chose to discuss was that of St. John's College in Maryland and the "Great Books".

This might be regarded as an extreme conclusion from reasonable arguments, though of course no essentialist claims that the Great Books is the only possible curriculum, with the possible exception of A. J. Nock, who required ideally that the classics should never be read in translation.

The nineteenth century progressives, topped and epitomised by John Dewey, have rightly castigated much education for being too formal, but have been attacked in their turn for being as vague as some classicists were vicious; reaction is no excuse for going too far. In fact, essentialists make great significance of the fact that Dewey and Bode went on record to modify those extreme progressives who exaggerated them.

Kandel took this moderate view in The Cult Of Uncertainty where, invoking John Dewey as another moderate, he argued that the challenge to the traditional organization might prove salutary: "It may be admitted that the curriculum of the traditional school was poorly taught without admitting that the principle on which it was based--the induction of each new generation into the culture of the race as funded capital to be used and not merely stored away--was unsound."<sup>174</sup> This remark also recalls Bagley's insistence on culture as "race-experience."

Demiashkevich attacked "synthetic or integrated study and undue project work" first in his doctoral dissertation<sup>175</sup> and then in An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. His most powerful argument, and there were several, was that integration suffers from a misconception of synthesis:

There is a synthesis which William James would have characterized as staring at fact... there is also a different kind of synthesis, a reconstructive synthesis which unites things only after their resemblances and differences have been perceived by means of dismemberment worked by analysis.<sup>176</sup>

Arthur Bestor used the same word in 1956, when he wrote of the integrated curriculum that "synthesis is a step in thinking which presupposes a prior step of analysis."<sup>177</sup> Bestor was an historian and has argued vigorously against the incursion of social studies into the place of history in schools; he was an arch-proponent of the disciplines: "The liberal disciplines are not chunks of frozen fact. They are not facts at all. They are the powerful tools and engines by which a man discovers and handles facts."<sup>178</sup> The universities were the guardians of the liberal arts tradition and so "curriculum-making, in short, is a task that belongs to the learned world as a whole."<sup>179</sup> There can be no such thing as a general curriculum expert, he argued.

Integration or multi-disciplinary work would only make sense among experts, as at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. It is thus understandable that we find Robert Hutchins in his role at that center stating that "the over-arching theme of studies of the social order now has to be the

nature of world order and the universe of man in its most fundamental aspects."180

Mortimer Smith exaggerated the usual argument when he claimed that "modern" education said that "teaching must be reorganized to eliminate as much as possible systematic learning of logically organized subject matter."181

With Richard Peck and George Weber he advanced the same arguments in a pamphlet of the Council for Basic Education in 1972.182

Jacques Barzun argued that the teacher should eschew "vague topics" like "democracy" and instead "should teach somebody something teachable-- English or History, Greek or Chemistry."183 J. D. Koerner of The Council for Basic Education has published a collection of essays by scholars on their respective fields, where one of them typically concluded: "I believe strongly in the primacy of intellectual disciplines and take a tepid view of the educational philosophy which stresses 'adjustment' and 'the whole child.'"184 Clifton Fadiman, in the first chapter of that volume, argued that the traditional disciplines "are sanctioned not only by use and wont but by their intrinsic value,"185 though he was insufficiently a perennialist and agreed that "with environmental changes the relative importance of the basic subjects will also change."186 R. M. Hutchins was typically essentialist when he claimed that:

The sciences one by one broke off from philosophy and then from one another, and that process is still going on. At last the whole structure of the university collapsed and the final victory of empiricism was won when the social sciences, law and even philosophy and theology themselves became empirical and experimental and progressive.187

However, the finest and fullest expression of the epistemological, liberal arts tradition belongs to Philip Phenix, in two remarkable books, both published in 1964, Man and His Becoming and Realms of Meaning. The latter is well on the way to becoming a classic elsewhere, notably so in England. The case was more simply stated in the former:

The crucial misconception is that the natural sciences have to do only with bodily properties, the social studies only to do with minded behavior, and the humanistic studies only with spiritual realities. It will be shown that all three branches of knowledge have to do with all three of the traditional aspects of human nature, and that every discipline in fact studies man as a whole, comprising body, mind and spirit.<sup>188</sup>

The argument continued: "In brief then, mathematics and the natural sciences are the clue to being and becoming human, the social sciences are concerned with being and becoming related, and the humanities have to do with being and becoming oneself."<sup>189</sup> Phenix then proceeded by an analysis of the epistemological characteristics of each discipline to demonstrate this. For instance, mathematics was the study of

the development of disciplined self-awareness. . . .  
to be a spiritual being is to have the power of self-transcendence--the capacity to be simultaneously a self and an observer and appraiser of the self. . . .  
What the postulational method of mathematics shows is that man as a reflective thinker is free. . . .  
The mathematical enterprise shows man as having a sense of universal obligation.<sup>190</sup>

The argument for the value of the social sciences began significantly with Martin Buber's classic I and Thou, where Buber "holds that relationships are not derivative patterns subsisting between essentially self-sufficient entities, but that they are the primary basis for all being and becoming whatsoever."<sup>191</sup> This underlay the fundamental importance of man-in-relation and a knowledge of these relationships "adds specificity and richness to the universals of human nature revealed by and through the natural sciences and mathematics."<sup>192</sup> The social sciences revealed the many ways humans were alike, for persons can only exist in relationships, and "relation is essential to being."<sup>193</sup> The humanities dealt with each man's uniqueness: "In esthetic experiences there are the roots of what may well be mankind's most fundamental moral persuasion, namely, the inherent worth of the individual. The esthetic attitude is essentially one of respect for the thing-in-itself . and for the freedom of the perceiving subject."<sup>194</sup> Essentialists seldom if ever discuss the nature of dance, but Phenix had it that "the most intricate and direct esthetic presentation of human nature is attained in the dance. . . the dance constitutes a living refutation of the assumption that bodies exist only to support the higher human functions,"<sup>195</sup> and he attributed the marginal status of dance in modern civilization to the dualistic view of man which subordinated the worth of the body to that of the mind. Similar arguments were used to establish music as a spiritual endeavor: "Periodicity is found everywhere. . . In rhythmic patterns there is dynamic order--patterned process--making possible



that balance between security and adventure required for creative advance at every stage in the evolution of the cosmic order. . . music is the art in which this primal fact of constancy-in-change is deliberately celebrated."<sup>196</sup> The value of drama, he argued, consisted in the opportunity it afforded for "self-identification through imaginative participation in the being and becoming of the characters in the play."<sup>197</sup> The value of poetry is in its two essentials of rhythm and metaphor, both of which had the same basic function of establishing "unity-in-difference--an achievement that is close to the ultimate secret of being itself."<sup>198</sup> In fact, the general theme of the individuation of the arts was that most close to Barzun's heart, as is the concept of artist as pragmatist and anti-absolutist. Phenix concluded that "all of the arts at their best--but most powerfully the arts of literature--exemplify the attainment of unity-in-multiplicity and thus serve as models and resources for the development of selfhood."<sup>199</sup> History was likewise "a measure of the meaningfulness of life."<sup>200</sup> The final art, religion, was of course for Phenix the most important, for the "uniqueness of each human person is most persistently and deliberately affirmed and celebrated in the religious tradition of mankind. . . the religious question has to do with the importance or significance of this personal uniqueness."<sup>201</sup> The general theme was very much that of Barzun, as is clear from the following: "When generality rides high, as it does when science is regarded as the only or the best source of authentic knowledge, those who assert the primacy of the individual are

dismissed as romantics and anti-intellectuals."<sup>202</sup> Instead, "complete inwardness is participation in the source and ground of all being."<sup>203</sup> These themes were gathered up, Barzun's view was as it were consummated, in Phenix's vision of a Christian epistemology:<sup>204</sup>

In the light of the singular and unitary nature of man, two of the most important and from a rationalistic standpoint most difficult of the Christian doctrines may prove of special interest and relevance. These are the doctrines of incarnation and resurrection. The doctrine of incarnation affirms that the clue to the significance of human life is given in a particular person in history, and not in any general truths of reason. The ultimate truth of life is not to be found in a supernatural realm of spirit or in abstract ideas, but in a real person living in the world and subject to all the circumstances of natural existence, including death. The doctrine of resurrection is concerned with the destruction of meaning that results from death. . . the name for the resurrectible in personal existence is love. To love another, one has to affirm the uniqueness and infinite importance of the other's being. It is not loving to treat him by the model of one's own uniqueness. To do that is to play God and incur the penalty of permanent death. To love is to live for the other and to find the eternal importance of existence in the act of dying to the presumptuous importance of one's own being.<sup>205</sup>

Phenix reverted to his original theme in the last sentence of the book, which was: "Thus, through diversified liberal studies, one may grow in the grace of true humanness, sincere neighborliness, and authentic selfhood."<sup>206</sup>

The book is a magnificent reconciliation of three strands, the liberal arts tradition, modern Christian theology, and the most recent epistemology. The same themes were worked out much more fully in his Realms Of

Meaning. This was the much fuller work on which Man and his Becoming was clearly based, and it included a lengthy discussion of each discipline. Human beings were so because they "engender meanings," and the "six fundamental patterns of meaning emerge from the analysis of the possible distinctive modes of human understanding. These six patterns may be designated respectively as symbolics, empirics, esthetics, synnoetics, ethics and synoptics."<sup>207</sup> The only novelty in this list was what Phenix has labelled synnoetics, from the Greek synnoesis, meaning "meditative thought," and which included what Michael Polanyi called "personal knowledge" and Martin Buber the "I-Thou" relationship--"This personal or relational knowledge is concrete, diverse and existential."<sup>208</sup> The argument was further structured by three order factors and four factors of selection. The three order factors were, briefly, that all children should at all stages receive some instruction in each of the six areas; that some subjects needed special emphasis at certain times, as does language initially; and that allowance should be made for the developmental and maturational characteristics of children, in the best Piagetian manner. The four factors in the selection and organization of content were first that the content should be drawn entirely from the fields of disciplined inquiry; that only those items in a discipline should be chosen which are particularly representative of that field; that content should be chosen so as to exemplify the methods of inquiry and the modes of understanding in the disciplines studied; and fourthly that materials chosen should be such as to arouse imagination.

That Phenix's view remained moderate, however, can be seen in that, despite his supremely disciplined approach to knowledge, he had no grudge against properly epistemological integrated studies. That the content of the curriculum should come entirely from the disciplines does not imply that the instruction "ought necessarily to be organized into separate courses each of which pertains to one of the disciplines."<sup>209</sup> Indeed, a social studies course might draw upon authoritative material "from the disciplines of history, economics, sociology, political science and literature."<sup>210</sup> His moderate conclusion was that the discipline principle "in practice tends to favor studies along the lines of disciplines or in groups of related disciplines," and that the difficulty with cross-disciplinary studies was that "they offer a temptation to shallow, nondisciplined thinking because of the mixture of methods and concepts involved."<sup>211</sup>

#### Sequential versus Incidental Learning

This is a closely related debate to the one above. Phenix wisely included two kinds of sequence factors, that which was implied by the logic of the subject matter or discipline, and that which was implied by the patterns of human development. The latter significantly is rarely discussed in essentialist literature; and Piaget, for instance, is scarcely known amongst them. The logic of the subject-matter is, however, frequently invoked, though seldom with the thoroughness and moderation of Phenix, who devoted

an entire chapter to the problem, "The Logic of Sequence in Studies," in his Realms of Meaning. He argued, for instance, that the realm of symbolics had priority over the other realms for they all "depend on symbolisms as means of expression."<sup>212</sup> The logic of the synoptic disciplines, for instance philosophy, placed them last in order "because they depend upon all the other realms for their materials."<sup>213</sup> This does not mean, of course, that one realm of meaning has to be completely conquered before embarking on another; rather enough learning must take place in one realm to enable work to proceed in other subjects that are logically dependent on it. There is a compromise, as usual:

Balancing the twin factors of integration and sequential logic, the optimum curriculum for general education would appear to consist of concurrent studies in all six realms of meaning, with early major emphasis on mathematics and languages, and later major emphasis on synoptic studies.<sup>214</sup>

This sophisticated moderation is not always so apparent, however. Abraham Flexner wrote that "chaos supervenes unless aims have been sharply defined and the orderly development of laws and principles assured through intelligent and forceful guidance."<sup>215</sup> Mortimer Smith has already been quoted to the effect that modern education tends to eliminate systematic learning of logically organized subject matter. Barzun demonstrated the same concern for essential features in the remark: "The only thing worth teaching anybody is a principle."<sup>216</sup> The same argument reappears in Koerner's edition of essays

for the Council for Basic Education, namely that

if essential facts are presented to secondary school students as related, logical sequences in a predictable pattern, the exercise becomes one less of memory than of reason. . . too often the victim of inadequate secondary school teaching is amazed to find that there is logic in the past.<sup>217</sup>

The general essentialist argument then is for a return from progressive projects to more logically disciplined subjects, especially in the secondary school, though there is a note of moderation generally. Demiashkevich has written mildly that "desultory, scrappy, haphazard learning, though conducive to shortcomings, is infinitely less so than the tyranny of monotonous programs of study and rigid time schedules. The latter sap, if not kill, the *élan vital*."<sup>218</sup> None of the tradition takes Dr. Johnson's vigorous attitude; when asked by Boswell what was best to teach children first, he replied, as quoted by Lynd:

Sir, there is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your backside is bare.<sup>219</sup>

### Liberal versus Vocational Education

On this debate many essentialists are clear that vocation has nothing to do with formal education, while others see it having a limited place. One can usefully distinguish the hard-liners and the more moderates.

A typical hard-liner is Mortimer Smith who claimed: "Modern

education says: It is the duty of the schools to train youth for vocations."<sup>220</sup> Albert Lynd typically lamented the introduction of purely vocational courses into teacher training.<sup>221</sup> Bernard Iddings Bell quoted Sir Richard Livingstone of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, that "a technician is a man who understands everything about his job except its ultimate purpose and its place in the order of the universe."<sup>222</sup> I. L. Kandel recalled that "the leaders of the Revolution had with few exceptions been trained in the 'aristocratic' studies of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, History and Philosophy," and went on to bewail the "emphasis on the practical" which heralded the twentieth century.<sup>223</sup> Adler had clearly been reading Bell, for he too quoted Sir Richard Livingstone on the nature of the technician, while arguing that "vocational education, as it ordinarily exists, is undemocratic and unjust," for it makes the technically trained person conscious of his practical but not his social responsibilities.<sup>224</sup> Jacques Barzun was his usual witty self, when he differentiated between liberal and vocational studies, where the latter "end in a delicious muffin or a well-drawn lease; they do not lead out to the great network of topics and questions about which the mind feels a permanent lust to know."<sup>225</sup> The most vigorous opponent of vocational education is Robert Hutchins; he fulminated against the educational program for school janitors at Teachers College, Columbia, for majorettes at the University of Oklahoma, for beauticians at Pasadena City College, or for circus performers at Florida State University, or for teachers of driving at the University of California.<sup>226</sup>

Other essentialists have made similar lists for ridicule. Hutchins went on from this to argue that teaching too, like many other occupations, had no intellectual content in its own right: "Wherever you touch education, it fades into something else"--so what a teacher needs is knowledge of his subject and an ability to read, write, speak and figure."<sup>227</sup> An extreme example of Hutchins' enthusiasm for liberal education occurred when he sought to exonerate Jefferson from the charge that his educational plans were too vocational. Although it was clear that Jefferson thought of education "chiefly as the accumulation of useful information," he could be excused on the grounds that he was not proposing a "plan for the higher learning. He was proposing, rather, a system of education designed to produce self-sustaining and law-abiding citizens."<sup>228</sup> It is "because we have misunderstood Jefferson that we have not yet secured a university in the United States," and consequently "in the higher learning the intellectual love of God has been submerged by external goods and the moral virtues," whereas what a university should provide is "an education in disciplines."<sup>229</sup> He concluded later in the same volume that "it is paradoxical, but true, that the best practical education is the most theoretical one," although education should not be a substitute for experience but "a preparation for it."<sup>230</sup> Elsewhere he argued: "Vocationalism leads, then, to triviality, and isolation,"<sup>231</sup> and again went on to argue that professional education was primarily intellectual.<sup>232</sup> In a later volume,



Hutchins leant on Keynesian economics to further his argument; the new surplus economy will both give man more time for leisure and at the same time lessen the significance of his labor: "The worker who previously had only a little time in which to get drunk, beat his wife, or go to burlesque shows now has much more time to get drunk, beat his wife, and watch television,"<sup>233</sup> and again "the problem of making work significant in an industrial, mechanized economy is one of the most difficult in the modern world."<sup>234</sup> Vocational education therefore makes less and less sense, and the proposal to extend vocational training is plainly absurd--"In short, the cure for the disease of no jobs is training for them."<sup>235</sup>

The only member of the tradition to disagree fundamentally is a doubtful member, namely J. B. Conant, who argued for more vocational training, while also hoping to extend an intellectual training especially to the more able child: "Mathematics, foreign languages and sciences I have already indicated are to be regarded as subjects to be studied primarily with a view to the subsequent career of the individual."<sup>236</sup>

More generally, essentialists seek to compromise on this issue, usually by denying that there is any real fundamental opposition between the concepts vocational and liberal. Arthur Bestor, for instance, argued that "least of all is there a sharp contrast between the intellectual and the practical,"<sup>237</sup> though he elsewhere castigated especially pedagogy for allowing the development of "pseudo-vocational" programs.<sup>238</sup> H. S. Broudy

twice quoted Aristotle on the subject, first to the effect that a subject must be studied for its own sake if it is to remain liberal, and secondly that the liberal man is a moderate who, in the words of Aristotle, "neither trusts everybody nor distrusts everybody, but judges people correctly."<sup>239</sup> Horne also sought to compromise: "Any subject in the University catalogue may be either liberal or professional, according to the student's attitude thereto."<sup>240</sup> Thomas Briggs' definition of liberal education was "that it is evidenced by the number, the variety, and the depths of intellectual interests that one possesses."<sup>241</sup> Nicholas Murray Butler had earlier concluded that vocational education should not be included in "the six years that are sufficient for the elementary-school course, properly so-called;"<sup>242</sup> but further argued that "hand or manual training has an intellectual reaction, if properly planned and interpreted."<sup>243</sup> A. J. Nock tried to be reasonable, but hovered on the brink of being his usual extreme self. Nock wanted to insist on cultured plumbers,<sup>244</sup> which reminds one of Barzun's delight in the window-cleaner who enjoyed and recognized the Braque hanging in Barzun's apartment. More usually Nock revelled in Stephen Leacock's account of Oxford and its "useless knowledge," which makes it clear that the business of a university is "to do what for centuries Oxford has been doing."<sup>245</sup> Typical was his distinction between education and training: "Education, properly applied to suitable material, produces something in the way of an Emerson; while training, properly applied to suitable material, produces something in the

way of an Edison."<sup>246</sup> Elsewhere he claimed that it was this substitution of training for education which had revolutionized American education for the worse.<sup>247</sup> Philip Phenix was, as usual, profound and conciliatory when he concluded that "liberal education is entirely consistent with a high degree of specialized technical instruction, provided the latter is carried on imaginatively and with continuous concern for the wider bearings and the deeper meanings of the speciality."<sup>248</sup> Van Doren has already been quoted above to the effect that "no antipathy appears between technical and liberal education if we remember that both are concerned with art."<sup>249</sup> As a final example, it has been argued in opposition to Hutchins' view that Jefferson would "regard as empty and meaningless the recurrent discussion of 'liberal' versus 'vocational' education."<sup>250</sup>

#### Abstract versus Concrete Knowledge

This is another dualism related to those above; it relates most clearly to the debates about absolutism and the scientific method.

The sort of undue abstraction that John Dewey was objecting to can be seen in Walter Torrey Harris's volume on educational psychology of 1898, which was an attempt to "show the genesis of the higher faculties of the mind."<sup>251</sup> His argument was essentially that of Bagley, who owed much to Harris, namely that the higher faculties absorb and transform the lower--"conception really

transforms perception into a seeing of each object as a member of a class." 252

John Dewey's critique of this genre of psychology was symptomatic of the general pragmatic and progressive argument, and it can most neatly be studied in Dewey's review of Harris's new volume published in The Educational Review of June, 1898. Dewey distinguished the "new," scientific psychology from Harris's more speculative, rational psychology, claiming that the former is necessary for translating "the more or less vague, abstract and nominal propositions of the latter into concrete and realizable form. . . without recourse to the technical terminology of transcendentalists." 253 The older psychology was too abstract, for the "perception of merely general principles remains comparatively barren and inert for practice." 254 Dewey struck what is effectively a compromise when he concluded that what was needed were the connecting links, "the intermediate terms lying between the formal, general principles, and the specific details" and that this connection would "make the former workable while it illuminates and emancipates the latter." 255 The pedagogical consequence of Harris's view was lamentable, for Dewey claimed that elementary education was moving away from such traditions and introducing "positive, first-hand contact with the realities of experience," as distinct from the "mere symbols of knowledge." 256

Barzun in turn commented that this criticism was reasonable, and that there was an unchanging core of agreement among, for example, Rabelais, Montaigne, Locke, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, James and Dewey, and

that "the direction is always towards concrete reality, the world of things, from the spontaneity dimmed by convention."<sup>257</sup> Barzun's own hatred of absolutism clearly put him in favor of a proper use of the concrete, though his concern for proper principles has also been discussed. Adler's critique was a similar compromise, namely that while Dewey and the modernists assert the exclusive validity of the scientific method, the "traditionalist maintains that there are many valid methods of inquiry."<sup>258</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch used the example of happiness, for instance, to argue that the positivist cannot by his own epistemology even begin to consider happiness, for it "cannot be measured."<sup>259</sup>

William James examined an entertaining example, that of Jack's love for Jill, where the onlookers cannot understand. If one asked who had a better view of the "absolute truth," James replied that it is Jack, "for Jack realizes Jill concretely, and we do not."<sup>260</sup> Barzun may or may not have had this passage in mind when he described a comparable scene in a train, where he observed a girl who had eyes only for her very ordinary young man. Barzun could not understand it, but the girl had "passion," they had a priceless possession, and why she chose him was "nobody's business, not even hers."<sup>261</sup> This example was, in fact, preceded by a fascinating application of now familiar principles to the subject of sexuality. Sexuality "got lost somewhere on the scientific road of analysis and abstraction."<sup>262</sup> The Kinsey Report's

scientific approach to sex, counting "outlets" and orgasms, has denied all aspects of love except one and magnifies this one into an obsession: "like seeing human skin under a microscope";<sup>263</sup> this image of disgust must almost certainly be a half-conscious echo of Gulliver's disgust when he first encountered a giant's breast at close quarters; Barzun has a special sympathy for Swift. Women have got lost under convention and make-up, and men have to dig through layers of enamel "to find the woman inside the armadillo."<sup>264</sup> Man has thus selected one detail, abstracted and enlarged its importance, and consequently "men and women who have lost one another in life cannot find each other in bed."<sup>265</sup> Looking half humorously into the future, Barzun discerned that "sex having become a pure visual abstraction, modern science will devise for it a simple gadget, which it is easy to imagine though a little hard to describe."<sup>266</sup>

Even A. J. Nock, an extreme intellectualist of the tradition, found time to condemn false abstracts like "capitalism" when carelessly used: "No society ever did or could exist without employing capital."<sup>267</sup> Abraham Flexner talked in the same breath about the "orderly development of laws and principles" and "a sound predilection for the concrete as embodied in the environment and experience of the child."<sup>268</sup>

Demiashkevich, while condemning the activity school vogue as extreme, allowed that "manualism and intellectualism employ the same Procrustean principle," in that one stretches the child and the other cuts him short, that

both errors tried to build the school on the principle "idem cuique" instead of on that of "suum cuique," or "the same to each" instead of "his own to each."<sup>269</sup> The same compromise appeared years later when he wrote that "assuredly, a certain amount of first-hand experience is necessary,"<sup>270</sup> but that the school should, "without violently pushing him, lead the educand along the path of abstract learning." Later still, at the risk himself of undue abstraction, he contrasted the English mind with that of the French on just these grounds. The English with their "impious skepticism" seemed to deny the possibility of any theory, whereas the French had been obsessively rationalistic ever since Descartes.<sup>271</sup>

Arthur Bestor, while recognizing that few children begin by thinking in abstracts, compromised thus: "Let the first grader, then, find out all he can about the local fire-department and the choo-choo," but this process "is not to be repeated indefinitely." All such study must lead on to the "disciplined study of economics, political science, history, and ultimately philosophy."<sup>272</sup>

Philip Phenix had a more sophisticated compromise to offer, based on Whitehead's distinction between the "wood" and the "trees" of knowledge, where the wood is the subject as a whole and the trees are particular instances chosen to exemplify the whole. One can thus teach about the wood by means of the trees, teach about the wood only, teach about the trees only, or teach about the trees by means of the wood. Only the first and fourth of these possibilities were acceptable, with a preference for the former.<sup>273</sup>

### Work Versus Play

This is another apparent dichotomy where the essentialists arrange themselves on the golden mean; both work and play are vital, and the compromise is especially clear in the concept of self-discipline, as distinct from discipline or punishment.

There are those, first, who lean to the right on this matter. Demiashkevich quoted Isocrates approvingly to the effect that "education is and shall remain coercion,"<sup>274</sup> though elsewhere he was more moderate. Irving Babbitt was angry that, thanks to the elective system of President Eliot, Harvard students could now "lounge through their college course along the line of least resistance."<sup>275</sup> W. C. Bagley had used the same phrase in 1911, when he talked of "present tendencies . . . towards ease and comfort and the lines of least resistance."<sup>276</sup> Herman Horne, while stressing that a man can work too hard, generally believed that pupils should be taught that the greatest strength was developed "by doing what they do not like to do;"<sup>277</sup> he called this a form of "asceticism" and invoked William James when he said "keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day."<sup>278</sup> The paradoxical conclusion was that "effort thus leads to interest."<sup>279</sup> Mortimer Smith claimed that anyone who knows children knows that "they don't like to work,"<sup>280</sup> though



he also admitted that in discipline teachers should "arrive at a moderate middle view," and that the progressive revolt against discipline was born largely in outrage at the "harshness of the older education. . . . Unfortunately this feeling became a hard-and-fast principle of pedagogy."<sup>281</sup> H. S. Broudy wrote that to master something a student must realize there is no short-cut, must have a plan, and must do his homework.<sup>282</sup> Clifton Fadiman has written starkly: "We cannot afford pleasure. All education, Aristotle tells us, is accompanied by pain."<sup>283</sup> Adler also invoked Aristotle on this point through the intermediary of Robert Hutchins, who was "fond of Aristotle's cryptic observation that 'education is accompanied by pain.'"<sup>284</sup>

Hutchins himself was more complex than this might suggest. He sounded suspicious of the rhetoric: "The hard-work doctrine would seem to be a defense mechanism set up to justify our failure to develop anything worth working on;"<sup>285</sup> and a similar thought appeared to be in his mind later: "Thought is hard work, but not all hard work is thought."<sup>286</sup>

Philip Phenix broadened the theme out into its social and political implications, and discussed the twentieth century changing concept of work at some length, as had Hutchins in the University of Utopia. Phenix examined the compulsion to work under "the desire philosophy" which is accompanied by "a basic devaluation of labor."<sup>287</sup> This separation of life from work leads men to believe that civilization simply exists and will continue to nurture man without his effort, and at this point Phenix quoted Ortega y

Gasset's Revolt of the Masses, to the same effect. In chapter seven of that book, called Noble Life and Common Life, Ortega y Gasset distinguished from the masses those noble souls who were "active not merely reactive, for whom life is a perpetual striving." These, he concluded, "are the ascetics."<sup>288</sup> The argument was, of course, more complicated than this but equally extreme.

Nicholas Murray Butler had written much earlier that the purpose of discipline "is to develop the power of self-discipline,"<sup>289</sup> and related it to the theory of democracy, for discipline is concerned with the problems of reconciling "liberty with order, progress with permanence, government with justice."<sup>290</sup> Jacques Barzun opposed "fooling" with "work"; he acknowledged that the former in the early years of school life may be an appropriate "introduction to objects and ideas that might not engage a child's attention in any other way,"<sup>291</sup> but eventually "make-believe turns into the exercises of serious work."<sup>292</sup>

Emerson had foreshadowed this view with his argument from nature, which "is a discipline. . . the exercise of the will, or the lesson of power, is taught in every event,"<sup>293</sup> and his anthropomorphic conclusion that "all things are moral."<sup>294</sup>

Demiashkevich distinguished between good and bad discipline, where the latter seeks to treat the spirit, but the former is designed "to help the student to form good moral habits,"<sup>295</sup> and he quoted Bagley at and on this point. Mark Van Doren expressed the compromise perhaps best of all:

The reconciliation is through discipline--another word whose definition involves paradox. There is an inverted romanticism about discipline which takes pleasure in contemplating its pains, but its joys are what matter. Discipline is desirable; indeed, it is craved by all who want wisdom out of their experience, or ability out of their acts. 296

W. W. Brickman used an etymological argument to show that for Greeks and Romans, who used the same word for leisure and for school ("schole" and "ludus"), there was a "connection between education and leisure." 297

Theodore Brameld, however, has sought to destroy this compromise by arguing that essentialist concepts of intellectual and moral discipline merely serve to build "the cultural habits needed by efficient, obedient workers," and that this follows from and endorses "essentialist acquiescence in capitalist-industrialist society." 298

### Ends versus Means

This is another perpetual debate, and one on which the essentialists are less clearly identifiable than usual. Their great criticism of Dewey's pragmatism and much progressive education has been that pragmatism had no identifiable ends, only a constant process of change, the means. As Mortimer Smith put it, "in defining ends Dewey never seems to get beyond such vague terms as 'desirable' and 'satisfactory.'" 299

Many essentialists argued that education is only the means to the good life. Alfred Whitney Griswold has written that college is not an end in itself,

"but the means to an end, the preparation for life, not the final experience,"<sup>300</sup> just as Hutchins has argued that education "is not a substitute for experience" alone. Barzun has argued that facts and knowledge should "remain means to the good life and never usurp the place of ends."<sup>301</sup> Indeed, Alexander Meiklejohn has been criticized, perhaps rather unkindly, that he "dealt only with policy and not with means," and that he indulged in "romanticism regarding the means of implementing those ends. The same flaw marked his life as that which marks his thought."<sup>302</sup> Perhaps this "romanticism" was a factor in his removal from the Presidency of Amherst College.

However, there is another strain in essentialist literature which stresses the idea that the right means are ends in themselves, though without denying that the right end is the good life, namely a meritocratic democracy with high standards politically and epistemologically. Clifton Fadiman has argued that the disciplines are sanctioned "not only by use and wont but by their intrinsic value."<sup>303</sup> Mark Van Doren has claimed that knowledge and skill "are ends in themselves, past which there is no place for the person to go."<sup>304</sup> That this theme is closely linked with that of liberal versus vocational education and of work versus play can be seen by reverting to Phenix's discussion of recreation, where he argued that liberal education and "the allegedly useless classical education" are "both dedicated to intrinsic worth."<sup>305</sup>

One possible resolution of this debate is in the ancient classical idea of the end, and indeed means, of the contemplative life. This may be what Hutchins meant by the end and means of education being "the intellectual love of God."<sup>306</sup> It may be what Ortega y Gasset called "wonder," which is "the luxury special to the intellectual man."<sup>307</sup> It may be the end that Phenix called "reverent devotion."<sup>308</sup> It may be the natural beauties which gave Emerson delight "in and for themselves."<sup>309</sup> The concept is in itself something of a paradox or mystery, and closely related to Keats' famous identification of truth with beauty. On the other hand, it is not far either from John Dewey's concept of growth for its own sake.

### Metaphysics: Idealism and Realism

It is sometimes popularly supposed that the difference between essentialist and progressive education is that between idealism and realism. The situation, however, is much more complex. The view here proposed is that once again the essentialist is generally centralist and resists both extreme materialism and extreme idealism, though he is on average a little closer to the latter than to the former, or a little right of center.

Phenix has pointed out the dangers of using traditional nomenclature in this area, and has argued that the problem is more complex than to decide merely whether one is "a realist or an idealist."<sup>310</sup> J. S. Brubacher has it

that essentialism has roots both in idealism and realism,<sup>311</sup> and Theodore Brameld has concluded that "one basic characteristic of essentialism is a wide eclecticism" for it holds within its camp "both professed idealists and professed realists."<sup>312</sup> In both of these cases, Brameld dismissed the essentialist as one whose search "for a given and uniform reality is a search for a harbor of security," and argued that this is only explicable in political terms.<sup>313</sup> S. I. Miller fastened on to Brameld's analysis but failed to do more than to repeat it.<sup>314</sup>

The evidence for the idealistic strain is strong. Nicholas Murray Butler, in an address of 1896, proclaimed that "the once-dreaded materialism has lost all its terrors," for science itself was explicable by seeing "energy in terms of will," for the "seemingly inert stone. . . is in reality an aggregate of an infinite number of rapidly moving centers of energy."<sup>315</sup> He concluded that an idealism, "shorn of its crudities and extravagances," such as that of Kant or Hegel, was the final answer to materialism, and that "independent, self-active being is the father of all things."<sup>316</sup> Similarly, W. T. Harris, another enthusiastic Hegelian, wrote in 1898 of "the principle of self-activity, which is invoked as the ultimate principle."<sup>317</sup> The same expression tellingly recurred in Herman Horne's argument that "the self-activity of man, conditioning his education, is the clearest expression in the limits of time of the immanent and transcendent self-activity of reality,"<sup>318</sup> though Horne went further and identified this with what he called the Absolute, or God, who

is the "self-conscious unity of all reality," and he labelled this "the doctrine of idealistic theism."<sup>319</sup> That such an idealism recognizes "the place and value of experimental thinking in the advancement of scientific knowledge" he admitted later.<sup>320</sup>

A. J. Nock claimed that his idealism was but an aspiration, "a reverence to a distant, high and unapproachable ideal;"<sup>321</sup> and M. J. Demiashkevich used this distinction between absolute idealism and functional ideas to analyze the English and the French national mind. The English are apparently imbued with the wisdom of the adage that "it is a malady of the soul to be in love with impossible things;" and the "English bias is for utility."<sup>322</sup> Students of the French find for the latter that rationalism is the "key characteristic of their national psychology, and that the resultant ~~ske~~pticism had produced "a greater degree of mystical impoverishment. . . than in England or Germany."<sup>323</sup> France has suffered because "only through a sense of the mystical transcendent can faithful leaders be brought up to serve the nation."<sup>324</sup> Germany suffered Nazi conquest because the feeble liberalism of the time "meant nothing more or less than skepticism, relativism and licentiousness, individual and social" and was therefore easily overthrown.<sup>325</sup> In each case a balanced idealism was seen as lacking.

Alexander Meiklejohn addressed the same problem in his book What Does America Mean? He sought to identify the American ideal, and found that Americans do not think easily in ideal terms: "Rather we shrink from

them. We are realists. We believe more in facts than in longings."<sup>326</sup>

With constant reference back to Socrates, Jesus, Jefferson and others, he examined the spirit of America, and found it damaged by materialism. So idealistic was the language, indeed, that Meiklejohn felt obliged to add a postscript to the book, further explaining his use "of the term Spirit in relation to men and to nations."<sup>327</sup> Life, he concluded, where ideals have been replaced by a theory of mere needs' satisfaction was "nothing else than to take Hamlet out of the human drama."<sup>328</sup> He claimed that William James, "especially in his later, philosophic years. . . was engaged in the same activity as that which Socrates and Jesus followed."<sup>329</sup>

William James discussed ideals at some length in his Talks to Teachers on Psychology, but it was a moderate view of idealism tempered by practicality: "Education is a means of multiplying our ideals" but ideals "taken by themselves give no reality."<sup>330</sup> This moderate view of idealism is the dominant strain in essentialism.

The strain is clear, for instance, in Thomas Jefferson. It is clear in his hard-headed deism, in his very practical life of morality and self-discipline, in his balance of political idealism with realism, and his intense dislike of Plato. The doctrines of "Jesus himself are within the comprehension of a child; but thousands of volumes have not yet explained the Platonisms engrafted on them."<sup>331</sup> Ulich wrote of Jefferson as one with "a disinclination for



metaphysics,"<sup>332</sup> as one who lived by "an ethical humanism."<sup>333</sup>

That Emerson, despite his transcendental idealism, could also be moderate in this area, has been argued above. Robert Ulich ranged Emerson with "the type we may call Platonic;"<sup>334</sup> but Barzun has recalled that, beside the Plato of the idealistic absolutism of The Republic there is also the more moderate realist of The Laws.<sup>335</sup>

The most sophisticated and probably the most useful discussion of this issue is Mortimer Adler's St. Thomas and the Gentiles; indeed this could be the central apologia for essentialist moderation. He examined the modern, though age-old, heresies of "materialism or idealism, empiricism or rationalism, naturalism or absolutism" and concluded that "all of these 'isms' are to be understood as extremes, containing some truth, but false through failure to possess the truth which is also contained in the opposite extreme." Thus the whole truth lies "between them in the eminent mean, which is a synthesis of, not a compromise between, their partial, hence inadequate, insights." The true course is to proceed by "salvaging from the extremes all that could be embraced in moderation and thus rectified."<sup>336</sup> St. Thomas' great contribution is that he is the moderate who sought to resolve Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle had begun this process by holding to the truths he learned from Plato "while at the same time correcting their excesses and supplementing their lack."<sup>337</sup> Adler summarized thus: "Platonism and Aristotelianism can be regarded as extremes, extremes of

idealism and realism, of theologism and naturalism, which are properly mediated by St. Thomas by virtue of his being at once a better theologian than Plato and as much of a natural philosopher as Aristotle."<sup>338</sup>

Barzun, as already argued, took this moderate line in discussing reality, which he described as "a kind of convention;"<sup>339</sup> he declared his indebtedness to James, who is "among those who reject subjectivism equally with material causation."<sup>340</sup> His target was neither "the systematic materialist or idealist" who both attempt wrongly to "reduce all observable phenomena to one or the other of these two causes--matter and idea."<sup>341</sup>

William James, in an essay labelled "What Makes a Life Significant?" proposed this same balance between ideals and reals: "The ideals taken by themselves give no reality."<sup>342</sup> He continued amusingly:

Your college professor, with a starched shirt and spectacles, would, if a stock of ideas were all alone by itself enough to render a life significant, be the most absolutely or deeply significant of men. . . . Ideal aspirations are not enough, when uncombined with pluck and will. But neither are pluck and will, . . . when taken all alone. There must be some sort of fusion, some chemical combination among these principles, for a life objectively and thoroughly significant to result.<sup>343</sup>

His conclusion was strikingly unlike that of a good pragmatist: "Those philosophers are right who contend that the world is a standing thing, with no progress, no real history. The changing conditions of history touch only the surface of the show."<sup>344</sup> The voice could be that of Adler or Hutchins, Horne

or Demiashkevich, even in their less moderate moments.

The two essentialists most usually described as realists are Harry Broudy and Frederick Breed.<sup>345</sup> Broudy described his classical realism thus:

realism, because it accepts as regulative principles the idea of a truth independent of the knower, and the idea of structures in the universe, man and society that are normative for man's striving toward the good life and for the education that will help him achieve it; classical, because the fundamental notions about the structure of human personality, its goals, and its destiny are adaptations of the theories of Plato and Aristotle.<sup>346</sup>

Philip Phenix conveniently reduced thirteen educational positions to two, namely what he called Experimentalism and Classical Realism, in his collection of essays, based on a series of educational television programs, by various authors. The contributor on the nature of classical realism was Broudy. Phenix's differentiation of the two fundamental positions is worth full quotation, for it lies at the heart of the essentialist argument:

Experimentalism, concerned with the modern and the changing, is closely related to education for life adjustment, for psychological maturity, for cultural reconstruction, and for freedom--classical realism, more concerned with established tradition, is closely related to education for intellectual discipline, for moral character, for cultural conservatism, and for national survival, as well as to the three major American religious philosophies of education. . . . Classical realism stems from ancient Greece, chiefly from Plato and Aristotle. It formed the basis for the great medieval systems of thought which culminated in that of Thomas Aquinas. It has come down to the present day in important segments of the literary, philosophic and scientific movements.<sup>347</sup>

Classical realism, in other words, is indistinguishable from essentialism. Phenix implicitly allied himself with this viewpoint. Bestor, Broudy and Kirk did the same in that volume.

The terminology is, of course, confusing. Brubacher used the categories of pragmatic naturalism, reconstructionism, romantic naturalism, existentialism, linguistic analysis, idealism, realism, rational humanism, scholastic realism, fascism, communism, and democracy. F. S. Breed used the categories instrumentalism, idealism, realism and scholasticism. Brameld confusingly subdivided essentialism and perennialism. Phenix implied but two categories, as does this dissertation.

Frederick Breed's most read contribution is an article entitled "The Realistic Outlook" in the forty first yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Breed invoked Bestor and Rousseau and Whitehead to the effect that "we regard philosophy as continuous with science, not separate therefrom."<sup>348</sup> He found that William James, "though a doughty champion of pragmatism to the end, also continued to play with the idea of remaining a realist as well."<sup>349</sup> The principle that unifies realists "is known in brief as the principle of independence. . . Can anything exist independent of our knowledge process? . . . The answer will be in the affirmative."<sup>350</sup> Progressive educators are more likely to regard independent facts as 'prior creations of the mind of man. . . . Objects once built up from problematic beginnings are subject later to the rapid rehabilitation of habit."<sup>351</sup>

Instrumentalism is solipsistic and flouts "the intentions of common sense."<sup>352</sup> Paradoxically, the realist has "more respect than the instrumentalist for the truths of science."<sup>353</sup> Breed approved of a "sane progressivism" when it avoided either-or arguments and assumed "the both-and attitude" and made the issue "one of emphasis or degree, rather than of kind."<sup>354</sup> Relying heavily on Whitehead, he argued that "content" was ultimately "found in the form of activity," in the patterns of vibration which made up content, that is both matter and indeed the process of perception by which man realizes matter.<sup>355</sup> He denied the popular association of realism with materialism. Of Dewey's overzealous followers he was especially scornful: ". . . yet Dewey is to a degree responsible, even if somewhat misinterpreted through exaggeration."<sup>356</sup> Progressives are inadequate in their selection and organization of subject matter for study, and are there opposed by essentialists.<sup>357</sup> William James he commended for doing battle with "the fearsome Goliath of absolute idealism."<sup>358</sup> Of Mortimer Adler he was both critical and approving, as one might expect: "Forget his scholasticism, his supernaturalism, and he still remains a prophet of the disaster that will overtake a divisive individualism, a flabby liberalism, and an impotent skepticism."<sup>359</sup> He summed up essentialist objections to "the progressive extremists" in more than usually formal language:

The battle. . . is between those whose criterion of truth is the satisfaction of man and those whose criterion includes also the satisfaction of fact; between the champions of education as the creation of environment and the champions of education as adjustment to environment;

between advocates of a morality sanctioned by the natural propensities of the individual and advocates of a morality that in addition is sanctioned by the demands of a self-existent social world; between those whose theory of freedom ignores the necessity of external restraints and those who foresee disaster in ignoring such restraint; between believers in an education determined alone by the inner tensions of a personality and believers in outer as well as inner integration.<sup>360</sup>

Bagley was, of course, a classic case, as has been argued earlier, of one who strove to relate his scientific and realistic outlook to a conventional set of ideals. He was much influenced on the one hand by Hegel through W. T. Harris, and on the other by his own search for objective, scientific principle. His own compromise, in the form of "emergent idealism," and his differences with the idealism of Demiashevich, have been described.

J. B. Conant sought a similar compromise when discussing the idea and the practice of democracy; speaking of America he claimed: "Our unique contribution is not in abstract thought. . . it is rather in a demonstration that a certain type of society long dreamed of by idealists can be closely approached in reality."<sup>361</sup>

David Riesman believed that "one must live on two levels, that of practical reform and that of utopian vision," and activity on the one "may accompany temporary defeat on the other."<sup>362</sup>

Clifton Fadiman found a similar compromise on the nature of man, which is neither purely animal nor purely rational, but rather "man's nature is both animal and rational," he argued.<sup>363</sup>

Gilbert Highet took refuge, understandably, in the idea of mystery at this point. "Yes, the outer world--both visible and invisible--is ultimately a mystery," and we were not intended "only to diagnose and calculate, but also to wonder."<sup>364</sup>

In short, the essentialist metaphysic generally steers between materialism on one hand and extreme idealism on the other. It seems to represent the iconoclastic good sense of one like H. L. Mencken who could write: "An idealist is one who, on noticing that a rose smells better than a cabbage, concludes that it will also make better soup."<sup>365</sup>

#### Naturalism versus Supernaturalism

This is a cognate dimension to that above, and shows the same distribution of views, that is, generally moderate but skewed to the right; there are no doctrinaire atheists, just as there are no clear materialists. It has been implicitly discussed in much of the above.

Furthest to the right in general are the various idealists. Horace Mann wrote of education as "the universal diffusion and ultimate triumph of all-glorious Christianity."<sup>366</sup> Horne and Demiashevich referred education to God; the latter, for instance, proclaimed that "doubtless religion will survive the agnostic instrumentalism of Dewey" and that religion alone provided the "ultimate certainty which neither science nor philosophy can supply."<sup>367</sup>

Russell Kirk's central thesis was that America and the West were suffering from normative decay. The three norms of this "common patrimony" were "the theory and practice of ordered liberty. . . an intellectual community in the

great works of literature. . . and the Christian faith, including its origins in Judah and Israel."<sup>368</sup>

Of the essentialists established in the tradition here discussed, few are dogmatic about their faith. The most orthodox is, of course, not an American, though read by all, namely Jacques Maritain, whose views can be most succinctly found in the fifty-fourth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, in an article called "Thomist Views on Education." It is a conventional rehearsal of the Catholic viewpoint. He rejected pragmatism but agreed with many of the practices of progressive educators; it was a matter of "relative emphasis."<sup>369</sup> A similar article in an earlier yearbook by William McGucken, an American but not a prominent essentialist, criticized the intermediate position of such essentialists as Hutchins:

Until the nineteenth century, all education was religious and God-centered, if we except the brief interlude of the Encyclopedists and the French Revolution, which had little immediate influence on school practice. President Hutchins says that modern man. . . is obliged to go to metaphysics to draw education out of its disorder and chaos. Yet Mr. Hutchins knows very well that metaphysics necessarily deals with the existence and nature of God. With the metaphysical principles of which President Hutchins speaks--which Professor Adler has clearly enunciated --the Catholic will readily concur. His only difficulty is that they do not go far enough.<sup>370</sup>

In other words, Hutchins and others are not sufficiently orthodox or theocentric. An excellent example of orthodox Catholic criticism of essentialists is James Brown's dissertation, published as a book in 1940 by the Catholic University of America Press. In particular he found Bagley



lacking any concept of man's divine purpose, and castigated him for "the sentimentalist doctrine that in man there exists a state of perfect harmony." <sup>371</sup> Brown's critique of Horne is yet more revealing. He dismissed Horne's claim to be a Christian, and rejected his "idealistic theism." He argued: "In spite of Horne's repeated emphasis upon the personal nature of the Deity, he actually seems to make no distinction. . . between God and creature, thereby falling into pantheism." His sectarian bias was revealed when he wrote:

Horne, it is true, professes Christianity, being according to Who's Who a member of the Presbyterian Church. However, it seems to be not an uncommon phenomenon in contemporary liberal Protestantism that a sincere profession of Christian monotheism involves a somewhat pantheistic conception of God. <sup>372</sup>

One of the few orthodox Christians among contemporary essentialists is Philip Phenix. This is implicit throughout his work, and has been discussed earlier. His Education and the Common Good, for example, was written to show that "democratic life should be conceived not as an enterprise of autonomous men" but rather as a way of "realizing the will of Heaven." Its theoretical base is largely that of Paul Tillich. <sup>373</sup>

Most essentialists are less orthodox; they are seldom atheists, but they embrace such intermediate positions as deism, humanism and skepticism. Thomas Jefferson has been discussed in this respect and supporting quotation provided. One might simply add Gordon Lee's comment that it may be fairer to speak of Jefferson as a "deistic humanist" than as a Christian. <sup>374</sup>

For the University of Virginia Jefferson proposed no professor of divinity lest there be sectarian strife; instead he proposed that "the proofs of the being of a God. . . will be in the province of the professor of ethics."<sup>375</sup>

Emerson's rejection of conventional Christian dogma is too well known to need elaboration. The resulting mixture of Deism, idealism, high moral tone, concern for American culture and scholarship, intimate acquaintance with European romantic idealists, transcendentalism, New England parochialism and a gnomic prose style, make Emerson a highly congenial essentialist role model.

Emerson's enthusiasm for Emanuel Swedenborg is typical and portentous. He wrote of him that "he endeavors to engraft a purely philosophical Ethic on the popular Christianity of his time."<sup>376</sup> This is the dilemma facing all those essentialists who seek the middle ground or mean between orthodox faith and atheism.

It is also significant how many essentialists are either lay churchmen or ministers. Albert Jay Nock was, like Emerson, a clergyman who resigned, and the son of a clergyman to boot. His own later position of doubt is finely analyzed in his autobiography, though it is a peaceful doubt; he found Arnold's account of religion as "morality touched by emotion" in Literature and Dogma very satisfying. He imagined God as "immensely tickled by the capers of his pretentious little creatures here below."<sup>377</sup> He concluded that his own religious persuasions were "most imperfect and must always be so."<sup>378</sup>

He found no evidence that "Jesus laid down any basic doctrine beyond that of a universal loving God and a universal brotherhood of man."<sup>379</sup>

He thought Christianity had been vitiated by political ambition, such as that of Constantine, and by dogmatic complication, as in the case of St. Paul. He attributed to Paul the creation of dichotomous man, both divine and bestial, with its train of guilt, penance and persecution. His preferred alternative is a post-Freudian plea: "Don't try to repress the bestial side. . . put all your work on the positive side, and you can afford to let the bestial side take its chances."<sup>380</sup> His viewpoint thus minimized the doctrine of sin and forgiveness, as had Jefferson's and Emerson's. Robert Ulich says of Emerson that such doctrines were "alien to his more Apollonian nature."<sup>381</sup>

Canon Bernard Iddings Bell, though more orthodox, was highly critical of the church throughout history, and provided an interesting analysis of the state of the faith at various periods, in the Roman World, the middle ages, the renaissance and thereafter.<sup>382</sup> His analysis of humanism threw light on many essentialists:

On examination a humanist usually turns out to be either one who has degenerated from religion because he has found the search for God too mentally exacting or too emotionally exhausting, or else one who has perceived the inadequacy of things but has not had enough practice in living to discover that human companionships are also insufficient. The humanist is not likely to stop at humanism. He is almost sure, if he is intelligent, to gravitate either toward scientific mechanism, negation of purpose, essential hopelessness, or else toward theism.<sup>383</sup>

This is an excellent analysis of the middle ground on which many essentialists stand and the ground further left which they try to avoid.

Alexander Meiklejohn tackled this same problem. For him the special importance of Rousseau was that he first suggested the possibility that "we moderns can create a nontheological civilization which can carry on the work of morality and intelligence."<sup>384</sup> It is a classic and powerful statement of the humanist case. It takes courage and honesty to discard a faith on which one's civilization has been built; to accept only that of which one has proof is to "have a principle to whose authority one submits one's thinking."<sup>385</sup> If God does not exist, the myths by which man has lived must have been man's own creation, and "this means that in the lineaments of the God whom he has imagined, man can discover his own features."<sup>386</sup>

Barzun revealed his struggles with similar issues in an essay entitled "Policeman Within." He is no orthodox Christian, but "I consider myself a religious man." He concluded, faithful to his belief in diversity, "that there does not exist a single creed which a religious temperament educated in science, art and democracy can accept."<sup>387</sup> He quoted Cardinal Newman with approval on the vision which "inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond solution."<sup>388</sup> Barzun's own choice was distinctly humanist: "Worshiping the divine in man and in nature is not self-worship; it makes one humble, not arrogant."<sup>389</sup> The great difference comes

down to whether "one takes the moral and material universe as finished or unfinished."<sup>390</sup> If the latter, "then the divine is not one and absolute but scattered and emergent."<sup>391</sup> Barzun believed in revelation, but it is the continuous revelation of civilization. Modern seers in the tradition of civilization refine and extend those who went before: "To particularize from among the authors of modern scripture, I find four most persuasive because most revelatory-- Blake, Nietzsche, William James and Bernard Shaw."<sup>392</sup>

It has been said of Irving Babbitt that "although he believed in a humanist higher will, he admitted that it might also have a supernatural basis;" and this may explain the interest Roman Catholic writers have taken in him.<sup>393</sup>

The importance, and the ambiguity, of both Adler and his presidential friend Hutchins, is that they appear to identify metaphysics with theology. The personal faith of either is concealed; what appears is a powerful deism; this, as argued above, was not enough to achieve Catholic orthodoxy. They didn't go far enough. Hutchins, for example, exhibited this fusion, some would say confusion, when he talked of "what used to be called 'the intellectual love of God', what we now call 'the pursuit of truth for its own sake.'"<sup>394</sup> Both his thinking and his style are clear in the following argument: "The aim of higher education is wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge of principle and causes. Metaphysics deals with the highest principles and causes. Therefore metaphysics is the highest wisdom."<sup>395</sup> Again this is the great humanist argument:

"If we cannot appeal to theology, we must turn to metaphysics. Without theology or metaphysics a unified university cannot exist."<sup>396</sup> Adler's similar arguments have been discussed earlier.

More unashamedly humanists are Mark Van Doren, Gilbert Highet, Joseph Wood Krutch and W. C. Bagley. Van Doren has again argued from mystery: "Religion is the art that teaches us what to do with our ignorance." It may provide no final answers for the humanist but may "dignify" with ritual. "The worm does not confess the inferiority of its knowledge," whereas man "can do so, and has erected the act into an art."<sup>397</sup> He invoked Pascal's Pensees, which will bring men as near to religion "as they can come without revelation."<sup>398</sup>

Gilbert Highet relied instead on Ernest Renan to exemplify this same combination of mystery with profound skepticism, as discussed earlier. Renan had an "affection for Jesus, which refused to be transformed into Adoration."<sup>399</sup>

Joseph Wood Krutch shared the humanist and literary world of Van Doren and Highet, but, as a well-known ecologist, also shared the more scientific bent of Bagley. His own compromise was faith in "Wildness or in Nature. . . it puts our trust not in human intelligence but in whatever is that created human intelligence." It was "a modern version of ancient pantheism."<sup>400</sup>

Bagley's own refusal to accept Demiashevich's supernaturalism has been discussed above. Sufficient to recapitulate might be his claim for his concept of "emergent idealism" that it allows him to be both naturalist and idealist "without bringing in a metaphysical element of any sort, without committing ourselves to supernaturalism."<sup>401</sup>

It is clear why in the greater tradition there is so much enthusiasm for such thoughtful skeptics as Pascal, Rabelais and Montaigne. They too stood on this middle ground.

#### Values versus Lack of Values

This last related dimension is again similar to those above and shows the same pattern of distribution. Some essentialists appear to have absolute value systems, whereas most are relativists or moderates. Much of the evidence is implicit above.

The Christians, and especially the Catholics reveal the clearest values. A good example is Philip Phenix, for instance in his Philosophy of Education, which is a sophisticated Christian apologetic: "If values have their sanction in God, there are resources and judgments for education which lie beyond individuals, groups and perhaps even beyond human rationality."<sup>402</sup> The two-fold answer for Phenix was love and holiness.

Nicholas Murray Butler found his moral value in the idea of will, "the only energy of whose direct action we are immediately conscious,"<sup>403</sup> though he was careful to separate religion from moral values; he did not accept Arnold's view that "religion is ethics heightened."<sup>404</sup>

Demiashkevich identified essentialists with Socrates' critique of the Sophists. Sophists and pragmatists preached that there were no real moral values; Socrates and the essentialists preached "permanent, unchanging, moral values."<sup>405</sup> Elsewhere he has written: "The call of today. . . is service for the good of the whole. It is a good old-fashioned call with a Christian ring . . . not primarily for sympathy, but for restraint, for law, for obedience and for duty."<sup>406</sup>

Horne combined Platonism, Kant and Christianity: "Plato showed that the idea of the good is the principle of existence,"<sup>407</sup> and to "some thinkers, notably Kant, a good will is the only thing of absolute value in the world."<sup>408</sup> His criticism of Dewey's pragmatism is that it "leads man to rely exclusively on himself for his social progress."<sup>409</sup>

Kandel had the identical objection to pragmatism which "rejects any predetermined, finite body of doctrines," in a book suggestively titled The Cult of Uncertainty.<sup>410</sup>

Thomas Jefferson was, however, more typical of essentialists because less absolute about moral values. His reasons for virtuous behavior, in the absence of any God, were "the comfort and pleasantness you feel in its exercise, and the love of others which it will procure for you."<sup>411</sup> In a phrase reminiscent of Bagley he wrote that education "controls, by the force of habit, any innate obliquities in our moral organization."<sup>412</sup> Bagley, as argued above, combined a vigorous moral idealism with a naturalistic meta-



physic; emergent idealism, inculcated through the formation of good habits, could be the moral formula of either Jefferson or Bagley.

William James was far from Dewey's position. He laid great emphasis on the will in his Talks to Teachers, described life as "shot through with values and meanings,"<sup>413</sup> and frankly disclaimed that he was any sort of materialist: "In no sense do I count myself a materialist."<sup>414</sup> He too was at neither extreme.

Robert Ulich struck a characteristic note when he argued that a rewarding life was one, not only of freedom, but "of discipline, duty and self-renunciation."<sup>415</sup> Robert Hutchins saw civilization as "the deliberate pursuit of a common ideal,"<sup>416</sup> and argued that "an educational system without values is a contradiction in terms;"<sup>417</sup> pragmatism is such a system, he would argue. Walter Lippmann, talking of Sir Winston Churchill, has said "the springs of greatness lie in the conviction that one must serve the truth and not opinion."<sup>418</sup> Alexander Meiklejohn's What Does America Mean? is nothing more nor less than a plea for American moral values, and his Education Between Two Worlds suggests how to reach them without resorting to absolutes or to revelation. Gilbert Highet, though generally more skeptical than most, agreed that "some values must be postulated. Poetry is better than pinball."<sup>419</sup> W. W. Brickman's regular editorials for School and Society are full of ethical analysis and injunctions: "We can see the withering away of man if the standards of interpersonal ethics are allowed to erode. Hope for man

remains in education toward moral and ethical commitment and conduct."<sup>420</sup>

H. S. Broudy, in a chapter titled "Education and Values," concluded that "the ultimate aim of education is to establish tendencies to choose."<sup>421</sup>

The danger of the extreme wing represented by Dewey, essentialists argue, is that there can then be no justification for values. This argument has been amply demonstrated above; one final example may suffice. Mortimer Adler accused Dewey of assuming a "continuity between value and fact,"<sup>422</sup> thereby denying the fact of value, thanks to a false view of the philosophy of science.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER V

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- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xi.
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- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 100.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 207.
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- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 94.
- <sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 29.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 64.
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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

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- <sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 283.
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- <sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 297.
- <sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 306.
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## C H A P T E R V I

## POLITICS

"Nothing is fraught with graver danger than the increasing disposition to regard our social and economic order--whether communism, individualism or fascism--as always the best and the other as the incarnation of all that is evil. It is just such absolute attitudes. . . that lead sooner or later to war."

W. C. Bagley

Civilization and the Theory of Culture

Essentialist political beliefs are related to their philosophical beliefs. Their theory of culture or of progressive civilization depends ultimately upon epistemological grounds, in that knowledge and its history are responsible for civilization in the essentialist view.

Nicholas Murray Butler wrote that culture is identical with the Greek concept **of paideia** or the Roman concept **humanitas**;<sup>1</sup> in either case the epistemological roots of culture are clear. Irving Babbitt linked metaphysical concepts with culture when he wrote: "To repudiate the traditional Christian and classical checks. . . is to be guilty of high treason to civilization."<sup>2</sup> A. J. Nock has said that his principal concern was the quality of civilization in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Bagley equated experience and education with culture: "The essentialists have always emphasized the prime significance of race-experience and especially of organized experience or organized culture--in common parlance, subject-matter,"<sup>4</sup> and argued

that "language is the most efficient medium for the transmission of experience."<sup>5</sup> This idea was repeated in a recent work by Barzun and others: "The world of books is the most remarkable creation of man. Nothing else he builds ever lasts."<sup>6</sup> An extreme view was Meiklejohn's that the purpose of teaching is "to express the cultural authority of the group by which the teaching is given."<sup>7</sup> Barzun has specifically made the same link: "Democracy is a culture--that is, the deliberate cultivation of an intellectual passion in people with intellects and feelings."<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere he described the American spirit as compounded of three philosophies, namely the eighteenth century enlightenment view of progress toward social reason, the Romanticist view of man's diversity, and the "native tradition" of deafness to doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Arthur Bestor has argued that intellectual training is central to a healthy culture though not enough without a value system.<sup>10</sup> W. T. Harris wrote that education could only be "wisely administered. . . from the high ground of the spirit of civilization"<sup>11</sup> and went on, like Bagley and shortly before him, to talk of the civilization of "the race."

Parallel with this theme is the fear that culture today is literally not what it was. Barzun has written of "signs of a turning point in civilization. The high Renaissance ideas on which we have lived for five hundred years have lost their power and we drift. We shall do so until the collective mind is emptied of dogmas and slogans and turns once again to the actualities of



teaching and the plain limits of schooling. Then some of the principles found in the perennial philosophy of the old reformers will regain their place of honor, after being restated by some crusading genius and being hailed as great new discoveries."<sup>12</sup> Mortimer Adler quoted Gordon Dupee of the Great Books Foundation "that our culture is a culture of blood, guts, gastronomy and a little God."<sup>13</sup> Bernard Iddings Bell talked of the "beast-men" of his generation who appeared determined "permanently to unhitch man's wagon from the stars,"<sup>14</sup> echoing Emerson. All shared, and many quoted, Ortega y Gasset's analysis that the rise of the "mass-men" has threatened to "send our continent back to barbarism."<sup>15</sup> I. L. Kandel attacked pragmatism as the "cult of change, precariousness, and uncertainty" which expressed a "contempt for culture as concerned only with the past." This theme is especially popular, for many essentialists have been historians of one sort or another. Many at this juncture in the argument included Matthew Arnold, both for his humanized Christianity and more for his analysis of culture. Kandel discussed his definition of culture at this point, namely that "culture is a knowledge of the best that has been said and thought in the past."<sup>16</sup> Both A. J. Nock and Irving Babbitt held modified versions of Arnold's view of cultured man as the "remnant" in an uncultured horde.

Philip Phenix' analysis was, as usual, particularly penetrating, and conveniently linked the theme of cultural crisis with some typical essentialist factors; to the crisis, he argued, there were "four possible lines of resolution."

The first of these is "to retreat into pure individualism. . . affirming the essential autonomy of the solitary person." The second is the "creation of a monolithic universal culture. . . . The preferred goal of utopian world planners." The third system is to "create a system of cooperating cultures." The final possibility and the most promising, he proposed, is "the emergence of a single pluralistic world society."<sup>17</sup> The first two of these represent the two absolute wings that essentialists generally seek to avoid. The third represents the compromise most seek. The last represents a theme that a small number have discussed, namely world government with individuality nonetheless preserved. It is remarkable that there appears to be only one reference to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's The Phenomenon of Man, whose view is the natural apotheosis of much essentialist argument; it is less remarkable that it is Phenix who makes that reference.

These twin themes of the importance of culture and the imminence of its collapse run throughout the essentialist analysis and could be much further documented, at the risk of undue repetition. Almost more important than this product is the process of its transmission; the essentialist answer is here to rely unequivocally on the concept of a Jeffersonian democracy.

### Jeffersonian Democracy

The founding father of essentialist political theory is Thomas Jefferson. He is invariably discussed and invariably approved in essentialist literature; and several have written books on him, including A. J. Nock, J. B. Conant and Howard Mumford Jones.<sup>18</sup>

Jefferson's educational view was fundamentally political and moral, with less regard for epistemological or psychological niceties. He was vigorously anti-absolutist, and the Declaration of Independence decries "absolute Despotism." He relied instead on "the education of the common people."<sup>19</sup> The answer, even to "error of opinion," is that state where "reason is left free to combat it."<sup>20</sup> From the common people there was to be selected, very much as in Plato's Republic, those "whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue," who shall be "rendered by liberal education" fit to "guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens."<sup>21</sup> To achieve this, Jefferson proposed a system of free public education for boys and girls who could not otherwise afford it, to be organized locally, much as it now is. The system was designed to be increasingly selective; examination at various stages would weed out all but the most able. This vigorously meritocratic, though at the time most generous, procedure would be such that "by these means twenty of the best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish annually;"<sup>22</sup> and it is this phrase which has especially delighted and astonished essentialists over the generations. Most glory in

it, while a few make mild excuses. These geniuses 'nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich."<sup>23</sup> His conclusion was:

That form of government is best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government.<sup>24</sup>

Together with these major essentialist doctrines, Jefferson also included a suspicion of central government, a desire for local initiative, a preference for small scale and independent farming, a distrust of even limited industrialization, a happy balance of classical education with a grasp of practical affairs, and a passion for hard work. It is a powerful but puritanical doctrine. A characteristic letter to his daughter of March 28, 1787, is harshly loving:

You know what have been my fears for some time past; that you do not employ yourself as closely as I would wish. . . of all the cankers of human happiness, none corrodes it with so silent, yet so baneful a tooth, as indolence. . . . No laborious person was ever yet hysterical. . . . If at any moment, my dear, you catch yourself in idleness, start from it as you would from the precipice of a gulph. . . . I do not like your saying that you are unable to read the ancient print of your Livy. . . . It is a part of the American character to consider nothing as desperate. . .<sup>25</sup>

The only moment at which Jefferson is seen to have feet of clay, arguably, is at the point when he sought to prescribe the political texts for students at the University of Virginia. Jefferson and the Board of Visitors, talking of political views, decided that "none shall be inculcated which are

incompatible with those on which the Constitution of this State, and of the United States, were genuinely based, in the common opinion"<sup>26</sup> and made specific suggestions instead. Gordon Lee has argued of this that "some will argue that here Jefferson woefully contradicted himself. But others will see in this a measure essential to the very survival of the democratic way."<sup>27</sup> Arthur Bestor, in a very scholarly analysis of Three Presidents and Their Books, concluded on this issue that "the partisan aspects of the University action have been over-emphasized in most discussion. Only one of the six documents in the list. . . reflected in any way the strictly party position of Jefferson and Madison."<sup>28</sup> Robert Hutchins found that he could not thus condone Jefferson's action, but concluded that it "must be regarded as the hasty act or momentary lapse of a politician bearing the scars of heavy fighting."<sup>29</sup>

### Liberal Democracy versus Fascism and Communism

The more recent heir of Jeffersonian democracy is, for essentialists, their concept of liberal democracy. The simpler term democracy is generally used, but it has to be distinguished generally from its perversions, the absolute democracies of left and right, communism and fascism.

As usual, essentialists see themselves as holding the high middle ground against absolutes on both sides, though there is some ground for arguing that they appear often slightly right of center. Sidney Hook so accused

Alexander Meiklejohn, whose views of cultural authority have already been examined. Hook feared the "abuse of delegated power and usurpation of authority" in Meiklejohn's ideal government.<sup>30</sup> However, Meiklejohn was atypical in this respect, and few have argued as he. Meiklejohn, of course, anticipated and dealt with this criticism before it was voiced, and argued that his balance and Rousseau's between the individual and society was indeed a bulwark against fascism and totalitarianism.<sup>31</sup>

More typically, A. J. Nock argued that "the antithesis of democracy is absolutism; and absolutism may, and notoriously does, prevail under a republican regime as under any other."<sup>32</sup> Bagley argued that "democratic societies cannot survive either competition or conflict with totalitarian states" unless there is a "democratic discipline" that will give strength and solidarity to the democratic ideal.<sup>33</sup> I. L. Kandel wrote a powerful indictment of national socialism in 1935 and its "cult of absolutism, authoritarianism, and the will to power,"<sup>34</sup> though his friend Bagley was less prescient on this subject (page 81 above). J. B. Conant wrote that "conservatives and radicals alike join in repudiating the totalitarian notion that the State as such is a mystic entity to be worshipped or a transcending force to direct the lives of ourselves or of our children."<sup>35</sup> A. W. Griswold wrote of the "growth of the state throughout the world" and of the "tide of totalitarian dictatorships" which were obvious "first in Russia, then in Italy and Germany, then receding from Western Europe but spreading into China."<sup>36</sup> The

three revolutions most commonly examined in the literature are the American, the French, and the Russian; whole-hearted approval is reserved for only one of these. One of the more sophisticated analyses was Robert Hutchins' passage on "The Totalitarian Exception" in 1968.<sup>37</sup> Barzun found the same cancer of totalitarianism in "Russia, Spain, China, Italy, Germany, India, Africa."<sup>80</sup> Admiral Rickover spear-headed the most direct attack on totalitarianism in his published fears of Russian military and technological dominance: "We are engaged in a grim duel . . . Democracies move slower than totalitarian dictatorships."<sup>39</sup>

The center position is, instead, liberal meritocratic democracy, and this is at the heart of much essentialist rhetoric. The arguments generally repeat one another, so the order of presentation is unimportant. There follows a mere selection of illustrative material, which may serve to deny Brameld's accusation that both essentialists and perennialists are subversive of democracy.<sup>40</sup>

Howard Mumford Jones, for instance, has argued of Emerson that "like Jefferson he thought there was a natural aristocracy of genius and virtue."<sup>41</sup> Yet he has claimed that, for Emerson, Napoleon haunted the imagination, in the way Hitler later did for others, as a problematic child of democracy.<sup>42</sup> Emerson described Napoleon as "the incarnate Democrat" for he was the idol of common men, as he had "in transcendent degree the qualities and powers of common men,"<sup>43</sup> one of which is envy. Napoleon,

in short, furnished Emerson with that typically essentialist caution of democracy, that it may be too common. Joseph Wood Krutch addressed this problem in his half humorous essay, "Is Our Common Man Too Common?"<sup>44</sup> Mencken was more humorous and less forgiving when he exaggerated this fear to write "adultery is the application of democracy to love,"<sup>45</sup> and to suggest that democracy, like puritanism, depends on the envy of little men.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere Mumford Jones has invoked Ortega y Gasset and proposed as a major problem of American higher education its "multitudinousness."<sup>47</sup>

If Mumford Jones appears a little right of center, A. J. Nock appears at times a little left thereof, and at times further right. For instance, he resented the untutored mass, and claimed that "the popular idea of democracy is animated by a very strong resentment of superiority."<sup>48</sup> On the other hand his violent hatred of government and statism earned him the title of "latter-day spokesman for an American tradition of anarchist elitism,"<sup>49</sup> a peculiarly essentialist hybrid. His vigorous preference for Jefferson over Jackson is abundantly clear in his autobiography.<sup>50</sup>

A favorite source for recent essentialists has been Walter Lippmann, who shares this concern for how democratic power may be shared: "The fundamental question is how the formless power of the masses shall be organized, represented and led."<sup>51</sup> His is a more moderate view of Ortega y Gasset's fear of "the political domination of the masses."<sup>52</sup> Despite his



apparent extremism, however, Ortega y Gasset purported to take the central position and averred that no one has ever ruled "essentially on any other thing than public opinion;"<sup>53</sup> and he opposed "Bolshevism and Fascism" as the "two clear examples of essential retrogression."<sup>54</sup>

Bagley's very open-minded view has been discussed above: "It seems clear that communism or individualism or fascism may be best according to the situation that confronts a society."<sup>55</sup> His colleague Demiashkevich, wrote that "the political ideal of the essentialists is in the direction of liberal-individualist democracy of the type embodied in the American Constitution."<sup>56</sup>

H. H. Horne, another idealist, criticized Dewey's naturalistic vision of democracy and proposed a supernatural vision in its place: "Democracy is a grand ideal. It lacks and, in the judgment of many, it needs the dynamic of a belief in God who works with man,"<sup>57</sup> At the same moment he allowed that "a democratized society is similar to but not identical with the religious conception of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth." In content they are the same, but differ "in inspiration and motive."<sup>58</sup>

Philip Phenix made this identification unabashedly: "Democratic life should be conceived. . . as a way of realizing the Will of Heaven."<sup>59</sup> He distinguished between "the democracy of desire" and "the democracy of worth," where the latter centers around devotion to "the good, the right, the true, the excellent."<sup>60</sup> Alexander Meiklejohn has been examined above as one seeking to remove this frankly theocratic notion.

Bernard Iddings Bell, another openly Christian apologist, found in England surprisingly an example of what he regarded as properly democratic, namely the scholarship system to English universities.<sup>61</sup> He too invoked Ortega y Gasset when discussing the relative roles of what he, Bell, called the Common Man and the Gentleman. The Common Man had been repeatedly fooled, though not "if we had bothered to educate him instead of merely training him technically."<sup>62</sup>

Mortimer Adler relied a great deal on Robert Ulich in his version of this discussion; and he may have had Jefferson in mind when he wrote: "The democratic principle is to be satisfied by an equal quantity of basic schooling for all, while justice is to be satisfied by differentiation in the kinds of advanced schooling for children of differing abilities."<sup>63</sup>

Robert Hutchins frankly claimed Jefferson as his support: "The great democrat. . . divided the community into the laboring and the learned."<sup>64</sup> Elsewhere he linked two popular themes when he wrote: "The heart of democracy is independent criticism, the basic freedom is freedom of thought and expression."<sup>65</sup> From this he derived the need for constant, public controversy; without it a society "is on the way to totalitarianism and death."<sup>66</sup>

Mortimer Smith went on the attack and claimed that reconstructionists like Brameld were trying to "have democratic history and biology--in the interests of reconstruction,"<sup>67</sup> or to monopolize the truth in authoritarian manner. Such men are democratic only after they have had the opportunity "to

mold the majority's desires, "<sup>68</sup> he claimed.

Arthur Bestor wrote, in his best known work: "This book is offered as a confession of faith both in education and in democracy"<sup>69</sup> and nostalgically recalled Horace Mann whose "ideal is as valid today as it was when he set it forth."<sup>70</sup>

Lynd's argument has been noted earlier, where he criticized Dewey for concealing the naturalistic consequences of his philosophy from the average parent. "How many of them would vote for Deweyism if they understood the philosophical ballot?"<sup>71</sup>

Admiral Rickover has argued that the student will have attained full political maturity "when he realizes that he is personally responsible for making democracy work, that he has no alibi if his country is badly governed."<sup>72</sup>

Mark Van Doren has argued of democracy that "the term is central to any modern theory of education;" that it is a misuse of democracy where education devotes all its energy to defending "the democracy in force today" and that "education, having the same end as democracy, can best serve human good by perfecting itself."<sup>73</sup>

I. L. Kandel has likewise written at great length on democracy and education. He has reminded us that "the leaders of the Revolution had with few exceptions been trained in the 'aristocratic' studies of Latin, Greek,

Hebrew, history and philosophy."<sup>74</sup> Elsewhere he quoted Santayana's description of English liberty: "It moves by a series of checks, mutual concessions, and limited satisfactions; it counts on chivalry, sportsmanship, brotherly love, and on that rarest and least lucrative of virtues, fair-mindedness; it is broad-based, stupid, blind adventure towards an unknown goal;" and this, he concluded, "is, in essence, the definition of liberal education."<sup>75</sup>

J. B. Conant defended Jefferson against charges of being an elitist, though this is unusual in the literature, and may be explained, as it were, by Conant's own "unsoundness." Many essentialists have suspected his optimistic manner. He has written of Jefferson as an "anti-aristocrat" and as "the young radical of 1779."<sup>76</sup> He was more orthodox in his conclusion that what American education needed was "to stress the selective principle in education not in terms of a hierarchy of prestige values but in terms of each individual's realizing his own potentialities with consequent benefit to himself and to the nation."<sup>77</sup>

The same tone appeared in his report on the American high school in 1958, where he clearly sought to upgrade the academic standards. The document, in fact, is a fascinating example of compromise between essentialist principles and progressive demands.<sup>78</sup> Elsewhere he has criticized the "Jacksonian tradition" which "denies the reality of intellectual talent;" and in that same volume he has revealed himself as vigorous as any essentialist in his attack on communism: "We must study cancer in order to learn how to defeat it. . .

if an avowed supporter of the Marx-Lenin-Stalin line can be found, force him into the open and tear his arguments to pieces with counter-arguments."<sup>79</sup>

The term "liberal" and "liberalism" is problematic in the literature.

A. J. Nock may have been exaggerating his dislike of liberals, but one often senses a longing for radical action. Most generally, however, essentialists defend the liberal and usually identify him with the balanced democrat.

Kandel talked of "the ideals of liberalism and democracy."<sup>80</sup> Barzun was more subtle in his perception that "those who face the dilemma are nowadays branded with the odious name of liberal."<sup>81</sup> Ortega y Gasset has eulogized liberalism at some length, for it is "the supreme form of generosity; it is the right which the majority concedes to minorities."<sup>82</sup> Kirk was more critical, for he saw some forms of secular liberalism as becoming "very nearly a secular orthodoxy among American writers;"<sup>83</sup> and he criticized David Riesman for being little more than an "amiable liberal" who had lost his ideals.<sup>84</sup> Brameld's judgment, needless to say, was that essentialism and the more radical, "later liberalism" were opposed, in spite of any rhetoric to the contrary.<sup>85</sup>

### Individual versus Society

It is clear by now that the essentialist position on this continuum is again central; much evidence has been seen implicitly to show this compromise. Brameld has claimed this central position for progressivism perhaps prematurely: "The important thing for our understanding of progressivism

is that the education for which it stands. . . is saturated with both kinds of virtue--individual and social."<sup>86</sup> Dewey's position was a little less individualistic: "As mere individual, man cannot ascend above savagery. . . as social whole he constitutes a living miracle."<sup>87</sup>

The typical essentialist is slightly closer to Brameld in this case, though there are repeated assertions that essentialists are in danger of being fascists. This was Hook's fear of Meiklejohn. It is a potential criticism many essentialists, including Meiklejohn, seek to meet before presented; and indeed there may be a grain of truth in it, perhaps especially in the idealism of Hegel and its often nationalistic implications. Curti argued that this was true of W. T. Harris' use of Hegelianism which "rationalized the victory of nationalism, imperialism, and industrial capitalism by insisting that true individualism could be realized only by subordinating the individual to existing individuals."<sup>88</sup>

Another comparative extremist, this time straddled across two extremes, was A. J. Nock, who believed at various times in government by an elite, and no government at all, best revealed by the title of one of his books, Our Enemy, The State, or in his statement: "The anarchist and individualist has a strictly practical aim. He aims at the production of a race of responsible beings."<sup>89</sup>

It has been seen that Rousseau is an interesting dividing line in this respect; Nicholas Murray Butler accused him of "extreme individualism,"<sup>90</sup> while Barzun saw him as the "proponent of balance."<sup>91</sup> Meiklejohn's view of Rousseau also places him at the center of a sophisticated compromise between individual and society. Bagley, Damiashkevich, Horne and others used the concept of "race experience" or simply "culture" to express this same identity of individual and society.<sup>92</sup> Damiashkevich pushed this to its logical conclusion: "We must concentrate upon the individual and seek to give him the right education for world co-operation."<sup>93</sup>

Both Van Doren and Emerson have stressed the individual within the group, a typical compromise. The former wrote that "democracy wants millions of one-man revolutions."<sup>94</sup> The latter wrote that "who so would be a man, must be a nonconformist. . . . Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world."<sup>95</sup>

This fear of conformity is fully documented in David Riesman's powerful study of American character, The Lonely Crowd. This most powerful work argued briefly that the old individualist or "inner-directed" person has been replaced by the conformist, "outer-directed" person. The process begins early in school, where the

breakdown of walls between teacher and student permits that rapid circulation of tastes which is a prelude to other-directed socialization. . . . The teacher conveys to the children that what matters is not their industry or learning as such but their adjustment in the group. . . . hiding her authority,

like her compeer, the other-directed parent, under the cloak of reasoning and manipulation. . . often holding the children back because she fails to realize that children, left to themselves, are capable of curiosity about highly abstract matters. . . thus the children are supposed to learn democracy by underplaying the skills of intellect and overplaying the skills of gregariousness and amiability--skill democracy, in fact, based on respect for ability to do something, tends to survive only in athletics<sup>96</sup>

It can thus be said, with minor caveats, that the essentialist again takes a centralist line; the individual and the society are both important, indeed inseparable.

#### Anarchy versus Statism

This related continuum has also been implicit in much of the above; as usual, the essentialist seeks to compromise between these two, in the vision of a government limited only to essential services.

This was, of course, characteristically Jeffersonian. A. J. Nock, in his biography of Jefferson, quoted him to the effect that "the path we have to pursue is so quiet that we have nothing scarcely to propose to our legislature. A noiseless course, not meddling with the affairs of others."<sup>97</sup> His dislike of federalism and preference for local, self-contained farms has been discussed.

This is also the theme, somewhat transcendentalized, of Emerson's essay on "Self Reliance," where he argued, among other things, that the reliance on property (or any material goods), "including the reliance on



governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance." 98

The most vigorous exponent of this theme, verging on the anarchic, is A. J. Nock. He quoted his idol thus: "Mr. Jefferson said that if a centralization of power were ever effected at Washington, the United States would have the most corrupt government on earth." 99 The purpose of the state is merely to "enable the continuous economic exploitation of one class by another." 100

Alexander Meiklejohn represents the essentialist view most in opposition to Nock's, as has been observed above, and he lamented that "we Protestant-capitalist democrats, in our zest for individual freedom, have been accustomed to think of political controls as hostile to that freedom." 101

Robert Hutchins has argued that education is the only challenge to statism, and that this traditional bulwark is in danger: "The greatest danger to education in America is the attempt, under the guise of patriotism, to suppress freedom of teaching, inquiry and discussion." Instead, he argued, "the only protection against government, visible or invisible, is in the professional tradition" of education. 102

Mortimer Smith quoted frequently from A. J. Nock; and Smith argued that the family is losing many of its functions, and thus its importance, to the state, 103 and that the best form of government is that which is "one step from anarchy." 104

B. I. Bell devoted a whole chapter to "Education and Statism," where he praised the founding fathers but criticized Nock for exaggeration, 105 and lamented "the high-minded gentleman who thinks as he pleases, says what he likes, goes his own gait, careful to let others do the same." 106

Walter Lippmann has applied this principle to private education:

"Harvard stands unqualifiedly for the principle that, unless they are independent of each other, the relation between universities and governments will not be healthy." 107 W. W. Brickman has applied the principle to two other similar concerns, namely to the relation of church and state, and to the funding of parochial schooling. 108

J. B. Conant has written of education that "federal control is potentially far more dangerous than state control." 109 Gilbert Highet has likewise fulminated against statism which is increasingly embraced as a faith "with a passionate enthusiasm inversely proportioned to the understanding of its dangers." 110 Philip Phenix has debated "political and economic absolutism" in a similar vein. 111

### Equality versus Quality

This debate is also clearly related to and thus much anticipated by those above; it is also for many essentialists grounded in Thomas Jefferson's compromise of a natural aristocracy and a meritocratic democracy. It is remarkable that only one essentialist has so much as mentioned the famous

satire on this theme, The Rise of the Meritocracy, by Michael Young.<sup>112</sup>

A. J. Nock, Ortega y Gasset and Matthew Arnold have been quoted for their similar view of society divided into the masses and the elite, but they differed little from the less emphatic Jefferson; the difference is largely one of terminology, and the idea of a "Saving Remnant," in Arnold's phrase, is not infrequently a left as well as a right wing idea.<sup>113</sup> Nock summarized thus: "We have found, then, three most serious errors in the theory upon which the mechanics of our educational system were designed. This theory contemplates a fantastic and impractical idea of equality, a fantastic and impractical idea of democracy, and a fantastically exaggerated idea of the importance of literacy in assuring the support of a sound and enlightened public order."<sup>114</sup> This enemy of quality is the levelling down process of populist democracy. Nock quoted Butler and Hutchins in the same breath and then concluded with the former: "That dreadful average which all laws and governments and statistics so dearly love and aim to exalt, is the mortal enemy of excellence."<sup>115</sup>

Bagley's views in this area have been sketched, for instance that standards in school must involve some failure, and that to molly-coddle a student "is a serious injustice both to him and the democratic group which, we repeat, has a fundamental stake in his effective education."<sup>116</sup>

Meiklejohn found that pragmatism, and Dewey's Democracy and Education in particular, "thrills with hatred" and "incites men against

aristocracy." <sup>117</sup> This was Mencken's fear, that democracy may rely too much on envy.

Michael Demiashkevich made the same point in warning against "the dangers concealed in an inflated, non-selective, conception of equality of educational opportunity." <sup>118</sup> He approved Jefferson's "natural aristocracy," <sup>119</sup> which invariably finds its way to the top in due course. These potential future leaders "should be democratically recruited, but should be trained 'aristocratically'." <sup>120</sup> They are the "future guardians of the state--to use the celebrated platonic term." <sup>121</sup>

Robert Ulich argued that this aristocratic education should go on alongside a shared curriculum where all children come together and "share the experience of communality. . . in physical activities, natural appetites and emotions." <sup>122</sup> The "sphere of differentiation" is the intellect. <sup>123</sup> He formalized the concept thus: "If we want to preserve in our high schools a generous degree of equality and communality together with quality, we have to use emotional education for the purpose of unification, and we have to differentiate where, after a certain age, people are incurably different: in the sphere of the intellect." <sup>124</sup>

The great works of literature have also been seen by essentialists as a natural aristocracy. Mark Van Doren made the point and quoted Thoreau on them that they "are a natural and irresistible aristocracy. . . with no cause of their own to plead." <sup>125</sup>

There is also a clear imbalance in essentialist literature between concern for the gifted and for the less able. Few have dealt with the latter, though Bestor is an honorable exception.<sup>126</sup> Most deal at some point with the former. J. D. Koerner and others of the Council for Basic Education, for instance, in their collection of essays on The Case for Basic Education, limit their remarks to the more able student.<sup>127</sup>

Admiral Rickover has applied the same principle to education and the arms race with Russia, and is frankly meritocratic: "Everyone who is in any way unusual suffers from the arrogance of mediocre people."<sup>128</sup> He has quoted Fromm that the only final equality is that all men are created in the image of God and that "no man must be the means for the ends of another."<sup>129</sup> The saving remnant is tiny: "It has been estimated that the efforts of less than one per cent of the total population move the world forward."<sup>130</sup> The comprehensive high school, of which he is skeptical, is "uniquely American. . . an outgrowth of the post-Jacksonian upsurge of democracy."<sup>131</sup>

#### Economic Theory--Communism versus Free Enterprise

Essentialists again occupy central ground. Brameld has vigorously denied this, of course, and has labelled as "the single most graphic example of essentialist support of traditional patterns of belief" the fact that they hold a "belief in freedom of competition and profit making founded upon the traditional system of economic relations."<sup>132</sup> However, so to damn them with the epithet "traditional" twice in one paragraph does not prove anything,

any more than two swallows make a summer. Indeed, John Dewey himself is currently being arraigned for capitalist tendencies by the economic left and the revisionist historians.<sup>133</sup>

The essentialist least ashamedly capitalist is Mortimer Adler. His Capitalist Manifesto, written with economist Louis Kelso, was a pungent statement of the American free enterprise theory updated: "Democracy requires an economic system which supports the political ideals of liberty and equality for all."<sup>134</sup> Of the many critics of nineteenth century capitalism, including Horace Mann, Henry George, Woodrow Wilson, Hilaire Belloc, Jacques Maritain and Karl Polanyi, "only Marx, Engels and their followers proposed communism" ran his argument. Yet man is as economically unfree under state owned as under private industry. Thus it is socialism, when it has crept in unheralded, "not capitalism, which is essentially incompatible with democracy."<sup>135</sup>

At the other end of the continuum might be placed Meiklejohn. His objections to capitalism were "from moral rather than from economic grounds," for capitalism "is revolting as a form of human behavior. . . .It does not make men free. It makes them slaves." His argument was that totally free capitalism was incompatible with human dignity and thus with democracy, and his alternative was to "experiment with one of the new forms of socialization, of co-operation."<sup>136</sup> This helps to explain his especial rejection of Locke's position, namely the "duplicity" of 'Christian capitalism, the culture which could

follow two gospels at once. . . God and Mammon." Locke was "a good member of a bad society."<sup>137</sup>

However, most essentialists remain less absolute in their views, as one might expect. They range from radical capitalists to moderate socialists.

Thomas Jefferson's own moderate position is the model. A great entrepreneur himself, and a critic of centralization of any kind, yet concerned to alleviate the lot of those less fortunate than himself, he took an undogmatic central line. Horace Mann was characteristically both a traditionalist and a radical critic. He accepted the need for industry and automation: "Had God intended that the work of the world should be done by human bones and sinews, He would have given us an arm as solid and strong as the shaft of a steam engine."<sup>138</sup> At the same time, he could write of the working man: "It is by the toil of that people, that the instruments of prosperity have been brought into being. In looking at the creative cause, their muscle bears a closer relation to the work, than our capital."<sup>139</sup> He also advanced an argument common amongst radicals today, namely that money spent on armaments would be better invested in education, and speculated how much could have been done with the seven hundred million dollars spent between 1789 and 1847 on military expenditure. Henry Barnard went further in such speculations in 1840: "Thus, the wars of Europe, for the brief period of one hundred and odd years, have cost an amount of money sufficient to establish popular schools, on the most liberal scale,

throughout the whole world, and to supply them with suitable instruction to the end of time!"<sup>140</sup>

A. J. Nock is likewise hard to pinpoint; he hated centralization and government, but also hated capitalism, especially where it was large scale and bureaucratic. It has been said that "in his opinion the instrumental nature of colleges and universities was simply a result of outside interest groups wishing a return on their investment."<sup>141</sup> He was disgusted by American economic imperialism in "the Spanish War and its consequences in the Caribbean, the mid-Pacific and the Far East,"<sup>142</sup> and attributed the First World War at least in part to British economic aggression.<sup>143</sup> For all his fear of capitalism, he was more fearful of statism, and preferred a "policy of economic individualism" which can not exist "where the state makes any positive interventions upon the individual in his economic capacity."<sup>144</sup> The state, he argued elsewhere, "originated in conquest and confiscation, as a device for maintaining the stratification of society permanently into two classes--an owning and exploiting class, relatively small, and a property-less dependent class."<sup>145</sup> Nock's analysis of Jefferson's economic theory is interesting. His criticism was that Jefferson did not take his own principle of non-interference far enough, and as an example he examined Jefferson's Embargo Act, where his government took responsibility for halting trade with Europe, "a measure wholly subversive of the principle of liberty."<sup>146</sup> Nock,



in short, shares the radical protest against capitalism but proposes, not socialism, but laissez-faire. The position is, arguably, not far from Adler's.

Home had a perhaps over optimistic picture of "democratic capitalism," which "provides for direct participation in control," and allied himself cautiously at this point with Dewey, who "aims at an industrial democracy."<sup>147</sup> J. B. Conant could not go as far as a total "hands off" policy, but nonetheless argued that "private ownership and the profit motive" are essential.<sup>148</sup> Walter Lippmann modified his belief in "private enterprise for private profit" with a concern for "non-commercial institutions."<sup>149</sup>

Admiral Rickover has argued for more "investment in human resources";<sup>150</sup> Bestor claimed that "good education is less costly to the nation in the long run than cheap and shoddy education,"<sup>151</sup> and explored the theme more fully in chapter 24 of The Restoration of Learning.

Barzun has said that the argument remains complex and insoluble,<sup>152</sup> but has presented a charming, complex and ultimately warm portrait of George, the realistic businessman, in his portrait of America.<sup>153</sup>

Robert Hutchins has used Keynesian economics to show how important education for leisure and for things worthwhile in themselves will eventually be in a "workless West."<sup>154</sup> Philip Phenix has used the identical argument, namely that the "Keynesian revolution" has demonstrated that man is "no longer seen as subject to ineluctable human forces but as himself responsible

for deliberately organizing his life-in-relation according to the requirements of social justice."<sup>155</sup> This view he further fleshed out in a chapter in Education and the Common Good, where he also argued that the West must stay with its mixed economy, and that "this implicit economic elevation of economic motives to the position of ultimate principles aligns the exponents of the democracy of desire with the communists," and implied that both communists and "ardent free enterprise capitalists" are alike undesirable absolutists, as they hold economic considerations "ultimate."<sup>156</sup> Phenix, like Bagley and most essentialists, seeks to remain open-minded and anti-absolutist.

### World Government

It appears paradoxical that the essentialist tradition, while harboring great fears of statism and interference with individual rights, should also harbor the ideal of world government. Such a government, however, would operate only at the most general level to assure world peace, international justice and ecological concern.

Demiashkevich scoffed at the League of Nations as a "pious hope, for we need better individuals first,"<sup>157</sup> but elsewhere he wrote that "we must concentrate upon the individual and seek to give him the right education for world co-operation."<sup>158</sup> His answer to this problem of balance was a "sound nationalism" which "seems to be the broadest form of altruism

to which men can normally attain," combined with a moderate view of internationalism which avoids the extreme kind "which preaches the abolition of all nation states." His quoted authority for this was Nicholas Murray Butler.<sup>159</sup>

Ortega y Gasset saw that to combat the power of communism "the building-up of Europe into a great national state is the one enterprise" that could help.<sup>160</sup> Meiklejohn saw that "as humanity becomes more widely and deeply reasonable, it becomes a world-state."<sup>161</sup> Ulich discussed international education;<sup>162</sup> W. W. Brickman has discussed related matters frequently in School and Society.<sup>163</sup> Philip Phenix has written a powerful chapter on the same theme, where he has argued for a world community, based on international law, inculcated through education, but one where national sovereignty is not eliminated.<sup>164</sup>

The most sophisticated examination of this, and in many ways the most idiosyncratic, is Robert Hutchins' St. Thomas and the World State, dedicated to Mortimer Adler. One can do no better than quote Hutchins' own summary:

In this lecture I propose to show how St. Thomas, beginning with the remark of Aristotle that the state is the perfect community, transmuted that remark into a political theory relevant in every age; and how this theory, together with the teachings of St. Thomas in the Treatise on Law, leads irresistibly in our day to world law, world government, and a world state.<sup>165</sup>

Thus, again, essentialists can be seen to take a moderate position on most political debates, perhaps with the exceptions of Meiklejohn on the mildly socialist left, Adler on the capitalist right, and Nock on the radical right. Meiklejohn and Nock are criticized by many of their essentialist peers.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VI

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- <sup>3</sup>Nock. On Dong the Thing Right, 1928, p. ix.
- <sup>4</sup>Bagley. The Educative Process, 1916, p. 265.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 266.
- <sup>6</sup>Barzun and others. The Written Word, 1971, frontispiece.
- <sup>7</sup>Meiklejohn. Education Between Two Worlds, 1966, p. 91.
- <sup>8</sup>Barzun. Of Human Freedom, 1939, p. 15.
- <sup>9</sup>Barzun. God's Country and Mine, 1954, p. 15.
- <sup>10</sup>Bestor. Restoration of Learning, 1956, p. 32.
- <sup>11</sup>Harris. Psychological Foundations of Education, 1910, p. viii.
- <sup>12</sup>Barzun. "Where the Educational Nonsense Comes From," Intellectual Digest, October 1971.
- <sup>13</sup>Adler. The Revolution in Education, 1958, p. 119.
- <sup>14</sup>Bell. Crisis in Education, 1949, p. 166.
- <sup>15</sup>Ortega y Gasset. The Revolt of the Masses, 1930, p. 40.
- <sup>16</sup>Kandel. The Cult of Uncertainty, 1943, p. 118.
- <sup>17</sup>Phenix. Man and His Becoming, 1964, p. 58-9.
- <sup>18</sup>Nock. Jefferson, 1926.  
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- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 51.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 84.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 94.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 96.
- <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 162.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 152.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 136.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 105.
- <sup>28</sup>Bestor and others, 3 Presidents and Their Books, 1955, p. 27.
- <sup>29</sup>Hutchins. University of Utopia, 1953, p. 102.
- <sup>30</sup>Hook. Education for Modern Man, 1946, p. 46.
- <sup>31</sup>Meiklejohn. Education Between Two Worlds, 1966, p. 221 & 266.
- <sup>32</sup>Nock. Theory of Education, 1932, p. 48.
- <sup>33</sup>Bagley. "The Essentialist Platform in the Advancement of American Education" in Educational Administration and Supervision, XXIV, April 1938, p. 241.
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- <sup>35</sup>Conant. Education in a Divided World, 1948, p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup>Griswold. Essays on Education, 1954, p. 134.
- <sup>37</sup>Hutchins. The Learning Society, 1968, p. 67.
- <sup>38</sup>Barzun. Of Human Freedom, 1939, p. 3.
- <sup>39</sup>Rickover. Education and Freedom, 1959, p. 59.

- <sup>40</sup> Brameld. Philosophies of Education, 1955, p. 257 & 365.
- <sup>41</sup> Mumford Jones (ed.). Emerson on Education, 1966, p. 19.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 23.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 158.
- <sup>44</sup> Krutch. A Krutch Omnibus, 1970, p. 164.
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- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>47</sup> Mumford Jones, et al The University and the New World, 1962, p. 14.
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- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 97.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 70.
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- <sup>59</sup> Phenix. Education and the Common Good, 1961, p. 14.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

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- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 66.
- <sup>69</sup>Bestor. Restoration of Learning, 1956, p. 3.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>71</sup>Lynd. Quackery in the Public Schools, 1950, p. 210.
- <sup>72</sup>Rickover. Swiss Schools and Ours, 1962, p. 151.
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- <sup>82</sup>Ortega y Gasset. Revolt of the Masses, op. cit., p. 58.



- <sup>83</sup>Kirk. Enemies of the Permanent Things, 1969, p. 166.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 192.
- <sup>85</sup>Brameld. *op. cit.*, p. 274.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 167.
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- <sup>93</sup>Demiashkevich. An Introduction to Philosophy of Education, *op. cit.*, p. 383.
- <sup>94</sup>Van Doren. *op. cit.*, p. 40.
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- <sup>96</sup>Riesman. The Lonely Crowd, 1950, p. 63.
- <sup>97</sup>Nock. Jefferson, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
- <sup>98</sup>Jones (ed.). Emerson on Education, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- <sup>99</sup>Nock. On Doing the Thing Right, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- <sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 150.
- <sup>101</sup>Meiklejohn. Education Between Two Worlds, p. 8.
- <sup>102</sup>Hutchins. No Friendly Voice, pp. 121 & 103.
- <sup>103</sup>Smith. And Madly Teach, p. 36.
- <sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

- <sup>105</sup>Bell. Crisis in Education, p. 186.
- <sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 183.
- <sup>107</sup>Lippmann. op. cit., p. 425.
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- <sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 418.
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- <sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 56.
- <sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 58.
- <sup>125</sup>Van Doren. op. cit., p. 156.
- <sup>126</sup>Bestor. The Restoration of Learning, Chapters 19-21.

- 127 Koerner (ed.). Case for Basic Education, p. xi.
- 128 Rickover. Education and Freedom, p. 33.
- 129 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 130 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
- 131 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- 132 Brameld. Philosophies of Education, p. 275.
- 133 Bowles, Katz, Spring, et al.
- 134 Adler. The Capitalist Manifesto, 1958, p. x.
- 135 *Ibid.*, p. xv.
- 136 Meiklejohn. What Does America Mean. op. cit., p. 242.
- 137 Meiklejohn. Education Between Two Worlds, op. cit., p. 57.
- 138 Mann. op. cit., p. 182.
- 139 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 140 Brubacher (ed.). Henry Barnard on Education, 1965, p. 67.
- 141 Harris. op. cit., p. 81.
- 142 Nock. Memoirs, p. 102.
- 143 Nock. The Myth of a Guilty Nation, p. 1.
- 144 Nock. Free Speech, p. 291.
- 145 Nock. On Doing the Right Thing, p. 150 and Our Enemy the State,  
passim.
- 146 Nock. Jefferson, p. 161.
- 147 Horne. The Democratic Philosophy of Education, p. 358.
- 148 Conant. Education in a Divided World, p. 31.

- 149 Lippmann. *op. cit.*, p. 413.
- 150 Rickover. Education and Freedom, Chap. VI.
- 151 Bestor. Restoration of Learning, p. 358.
- 152 Barzun. Of Human Freedom, p. 17.
- 153 Barzun. God's Country, p. 77.
- 154 Hutchins. Learning Society, p. 152, and University of Utopia,  
p. ix.
- 155 Phenix. Man and His Becoming, p. 66.
- 156 Phenix. Education and Common Good, p. 193.
- 157 Demiashkevich. Activity School, p. 144.
- 158 Demiashkevich. Introduction to Philosophy of Education, p. 383.
- 159 *Ibid.*, p. 390.
- 160 Ortega y Gasset. *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- 161 Meiklejohn. Education Between Two Worlds, p. 261.
- 162 Ulich. History of Educational Thought, p. 349.
- 163 Brickman. School and Society, Vol. 97, p. 474.
- 164 Phenix. Education and The Common Good, p. 218.
- 165 Hutchins. St. Thomas and the World State, p. 1.

## CHAPTER VII

## PSYCHOLOGY

In so far as well established facts and laws were concerned, mankind knew vastly more about the raising of pigs than about the minds of children. (W. C. Bagley)

Bagley was unusual among essentialists in having a scientific background, and even more so in having a training in experimental psychology. The quotation above reveals his early optimism and his assumption that the then new science would supply answers to philosophical and educational problems. His eventual disillusionment with the science of psychology has been described above, and chronicled more fully by Johanningmeier.<sup>1</sup> In this respect he is paradigmatic; essentialists generally prefer first principles to experimental data.

There are a number of psychological issues that essentialists have been quick to debate, generally in a philosophical manner, such as the nature of psychology, determinism, heredity and environment, intelligence and creativity, motivation and developmental theory.

Their psychological views are not only allied to their philosophical views but also to their political views. As Barzun has argued, "all political theories begin with a psychology, explicit or assumed, for the same reason that all revolutions want to control the mind."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the philosophical,

political and psychological areas are ultimately inextricable. It is inevitable, therefore, that the following arguments have been anticipated, at least in part, in earlier chapters. The central thesis is thus again that essentialists seek to steer the middle course between the Scylla and Charybdis of opposing, siren absolutes.

### The Nature of Psychology

W. T. Harris was somewhat on the psychological right wing; he was cautious of the "new psychology", stood for authority and discipline, and was roundly condemned by Dewey; yet, as Merle Curti has pointed out, he was a moderate in some respects: "The discipline and authority for which he stood was intended to be rational in character and to enable the individual freely to subscribe to the law of the social whole in order fully to realize his true, spiritual self." Rather it was "in the hands of the average teacher" that these ideas might lead to simple authoritarianism.<sup>3</sup>

Dewey's criticisms of Harris' Psychologic Foundations of Education of 1898 have already been examined, namely that Harris was too little experimental and too purely mental. Dewey's conclusion may be seen as the brave words of a new world which has not even yet come to pass:

I am willing to venture the prophecy that in the long run the concerns of a spiritual philosophy may be entrusted most safely to the hands of psychological science as it is now developing itself; that this will be the great means of translating the chief points of view and results of the former into specific, clearly recognizable forms, capable of being set forth in the terms of our common language without recourse to the technical terminology of transcendentalists; and that, excepting as the idealistic philosophy does re-enforce

and vivify itself in this way, it will become more and more scholastic and arbitrary, degenerating into the barren explication of certain formal general categories.<sup>4</sup>

That Dewey's prophecy remains but a prophecy most would agree, certainly every essentialist. Indeed, Bagley's own progress is an implicit denial of Dewey. Starting from a Hegelian position derived at least in part from Harris, Bagley then sought desperately to be fully experimental, but found finally that experimental psychology was not enough. The chief essentialist criticism of Dewey has always been that he has forfeited the language of philosophy and ideals. Bagley sought to compromise with his concept of a natural "emergent idealism."

At much the same time, Nicholas Murray Butler was addressing the question: "Is There a New Education?" He invoked Royce as his witness, using the latter's article "Is There a Science of Education?" in The Educational Review of 1891, which periodical printed Dewey's review of Harris seven years later. Butler decided, with Royce, that "what the teacher has to gain from the study of psychology is not rules of procedure, but the psychological spirit." The teacher should be "a naturalist and cultivate the habit of observing the mental life of his pupils for its own sake."<sup>5</sup>

This is the same moderate attitude adopted by William James in his Talks to Teachers on Psychology in 1899. He began with an attempt to

dispel the mystification. So I say at once that in my humble opinion there is no 'new psychology' worthy of the name. There is nothing but the old

psychology which began in Locke's time, plus a little physiology of the brain and senses and theory of evolution, and a few refinements of introspective detail, for the most part without adaptation to the teacher's use.<sup>6</sup>

The answer, as for Royce and Butler, is for the teacher to learn to observe his pupils and come to know them.<sup>7</sup> A similar general moderation prevails, for instance, with Brickman, Krutch, Barzun and Phenix, and a little less with Kirk and Mortimer Smith.

Brickman has written regularly on the need for moderation; an example might be his stand on freedom and conformity in patterns of child rearing.<sup>8</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch has agreed that psychology bears some useful fruits "but it has not made it any easier to write a 'Hamlet'."<sup>9</sup> Barzun concluded that "in sum, the behavior of apes, insects, and barnyard fowl can only cast a vaguely suggestive light on the human scene." This seems especially true, he went on, "when we reflect that those who know most about animals have been forced by their specialization to neglect the study of man in history."<sup>10</sup> Phenix best represents the essentialist conclusion that it seems doubtful that the demand for complete objectivity in psychology can be justified.<sup>11</sup>

Some essentialists are themselves less objective and get very angry on this question. Kirk accused American thinkers of a new ideology, "the academic cult called Behaviorism."<sup>12</sup> Mortimer Smith argued that this "new" science was being overemphasized.<sup>13</sup>



### Determinism, Heredity and Environment

This is the central psychological issue on which all essentialists join hands. They are vigorously opposed to all forms of determinism, especially to the mock-scientism of misunderstood Freudianism or behaviorism. On the related heredity-versus-environment argument they take a compromise position.

Typical is Jefferson's view that ability is randomly distributed and that the answer lies in simple but selective public education. Nicholas Murray Butler castigated the "time-honored illusion that all boys and girls are born equal," but compromised by agreeing that through education "this obstacle to progress will be steadily diminished." <sup>14</sup> It has already been argued that Bagley's position on this issue was strongly and subtly anti-deterministic, notably in his collection of essays in 1925, Determinism in Education. He was optimistic about the effects of learning, or experience, on the environment: "The contributions of experience become so numerous and so influential that it is the height of absurdity to contend that it is a native and unmodified fact that is being measured." <sup>15</sup> He saw mind as of a different order from matter and therefore less susceptible to the natural laws: "Mentality, among all the variable biological traits, seems to be the only one that distills its own corrective." <sup>16</sup>

This was the sort of optimism that the more extreme A. J. Nock roundly condemned, of course. Jefferson was misguided, he argued, for "our system was founded in all good faith that universal elementary education would

make a citizenry more intelligent; whereas most obviously it has done nothing of the kind." Nock took a position on the essentialist right wing, that "education can regulate what intelligence one has, but it cannot give one any more."<sup>17</sup>

H. H. Horne's argument was close to Bagley's, namely that the purpose of education was to initiate the child into the environment of the race-experience; "This sharing of the race's life is education as viewed by sociology. In the language of President Butler, who first described education in these terms, 'education. . . must mean gradual adjustment to the spiritual possessions of the race'."<sup>18</sup> Horne also allied himself in the same book with Harris and with James. Self-activity and consciousness are used as arguments against determinism: "To define this central notion of self-activity more closely as it discovers itself in consciousness, an illustration may be used. A billiard-ball moves mechanically according to an impact from the outside. A man's mind moves teleologically according to an idea on the inside. . . . To quote from Dr. Harris, 'self-activity itself we perceive in ourselves by introspection. When we look within, we become aware of free energy which acts as subject and object under the forms of feeling, thought and volition.'"<sup>19</sup> On the nature of free will he quoted James.<sup>20</sup>

There are many attacks on mechanistic psychology, for instance Bagley's or Kandel's. The latter wrote scornfully of "the stimulus-response theory of mechanistic psychology."<sup>21</sup> J. B. Conant attacked the comparable "Jacksonian tradition" which has "spread the idea that any American child can, if he wants, with the aid of proper education, become anything he desires."<sup>22</sup>

Mortimer Smith has repeatedly attacked this and all forms of mechanistic psychology,<sup>23</sup> just as Russell Kirk has repeatedly attacked behaviorism.<sup>24</sup>

As usual, one of the most penetrating analyses has been that of Phenix, and as usual he reaches a subtle compromise:

There are extremists on both sides of the question . . . . There was a time when the hereditists were dominant--this was, in effect, the classical view. Then, particularly under the influence of behaviorist and stimulus-response psychology, the balance turned in favor of the environmentalists. . . but a person is not just a mixture of heredity and environment. . . he is a heredity-environment complex just as a mixture of sodium and chlorine transcend themselves in the new compound. Heredity and environment therefore both operate both as limitation and as resource in education.<sup>25</sup>

The most powerful and persistent attack, however, belongs to Barzun, as argued above. He found that man's will had been vindicated once more in the late 19th century, after a period of false scientism spurred on by Darwin, Marx, and Wagner, with "the rehabilitation of the will by Nietzsche, Bergson and William James--the will which vindicated the artist by brushing aside determinism and supplying a principle of control in the complexity of altered sensations."<sup>26</sup> Of Thomas Hardy he has written that "while the enlightened opinion of his day saw man only as a physico-chemical compound, that is to say as a moving slice of his own environment, Hardy steadfastly held to the belief that life and consciousness are no mere illusions in a world of atoms."<sup>27</sup> His attack on behavioral science has already been discussed.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps most significant, however, is Barzun's great reliance on and reverence for William James as the great defender of the importance of the human will. James, for instance, argued that "we can never work the laws of association forward; starting from the present field as a cue, we can never cipher out in advance just what the person will be thinking of five minutes later. . . . But, although we cannot work the laws of association forward, we can always work them backwards."<sup>29</sup> This is the famous distinction between prediction and postdiction which has so long been associated with the Freudian debate.

In fact, essentialist views of Freud are both significant and predictable, though perhaps one should say postdictable. They deny any implications of prediction or determinism, while allowing that Freud teaches man to recognize the postdictive determinants of his thinking and emotions, which are thus not fully determined. There is, in fact, a modified acceptance of Freud.

Some, like Mencken, waxed satirical on the subject and argued the ad absurdum example: "One of the laudable by-products of the Freudian quackery is the discovery that lying, in most cases, is involuntary and inevitable," which transfers it "from the department of free will to that of determinism."<sup>30</sup>

Joseph Wood Krutch's first book, not counting a doctoral thesis, was a biographical-critical study of Edgar Allen Poe, who was "a perfect sitting duck for the amateur psychoanalyst." Krutch, in his early enthusiasm, argued that Poe's neuroses were his genius and that this was usually the case with

great imaginative writers; he later recanted much of this, argued that "great art is essentially sane," and compromised with the milder statement that such art "is the product of minds which seem to be more, rather than less, disturbed than those of ordinary men."<sup>31</sup> He remained firmly but not simplistically concerned with Freudian questions.

Gilbert Highet also objected that "the pupils of Freud have made the problem too simple."<sup>32</sup> Adler argued that they had made it too complex, in his four lectures to the Institute for Psychoanalysis in Chicago. In the fourth lecture, specifically concerned with psychoanalysis, he sought to differentiate in Freudian theory between "sound philosophical analysis" and the "bad philosophizing" of unsubstantiated guessing. Having done that he sought "in that part which is good analysis, to distinguish what is an original contribution from what is merely a translation of the Aristotelian tradition into the conceptual vocabulary of psychoanalysis."<sup>33</sup> He found that Freud had contributed little, and that that little was chiefly philosophical.

Philip Phenix was more generous and included psychoanalysis as one of the fields which "underscore the connection between being and the process of becoming, particularly emphasizing the fact that the later development of a person is largely a working out of patterns early established in the family."<sup>34</sup> Interpersonal psychology also demonstrates that emotions "have a profound effect on the life of reason."<sup>35</sup> A person then "becomes integral, or healthy, largely through relationships with other persons,"<sup>36</sup> Phenix argued, thus implicitly linking the contributions of Freud and of the theologian who was

most concerned with the "ground of being" and on whom Phenix much relied, namely Paul Tillich. Indeed, Phenix widened the argument to include all the social sciences, for they all "reveal the different ways humans are alike. Alike they must be, for a person cannot exist in isolation. Relation is essential to being."<sup>37</sup>

Barzun had a great deal to say about Freud. In 1943 he objected to the way "pseudo-psychoanalysis" had attacked the reputation of the romantic writers, namely that they "from Rousseau to Oscar Wilde, were contemptible lunatics whose ideas had no applicability to life."<sup>38</sup> In 1939 he had criticized those who tried to use Freud as an excuse to "act like maniacs," for Freud had proved rather that "the head and the heart, the flesh and the spirit, which have been looked upon for centuries as fighting an endless battle, must henceforth be looked upon as a team pulling in the same direction."<sup>39</sup> While thus generally approving Freud, Barzun resented his analysis of art, for "Freud has overlooked two facts. He fails to see, first, that in psychoanalyzing art he has far less evidence to work with than in two or three years of daily sessions with a patient; and, second, he is led by this scarcity to attach a single meaning to each symbol."<sup>40</sup> The reason for this error was that Freud "wishes above all things to have his work recognized as science. Having been cruelly mistreated by fellow scientists in his early career, he wishes recognition to come from the same quarter where he was first condemned."<sup>41</sup> This is to treat Freud with his own medicine with a vengeance. He went on approvingly to quote Freud's almost essentialist attack on the uncertainties of a fully fledged

pragmatism where, in Freud's own words, "according to this anarchistic doctrine there is no such thing as truth, no assured knowledge of the external world."<sup>42</sup> Freud was also fully discussed in Barzun's Darwin, Marx and Wagner in 1941. Barzun there saw Freud as an antidote to 19th century mechanism and moral fatalism.<sup>43</sup> He commended "the work of Nietzsche and Freud upon the will."<sup>44</sup> He argued that "for Freud the human soul is not a mechanism, even though one side of psychoanalysis appears to continue materialistic science."<sup>45</sup> In the closing chapter of that book, among the welcome creations of the "reign of relativity" he listed Freud, together with William James and others. Freud's work was "devoted to freeing man from thralldom through the use of intelligence" but it has "been blindly misinterpreted as proving the necessary slavery of man to 'unconscious urges'. . . and his intent has been turned by ignorant popularization into its contrary absolute, and led a whole generation to believe that sex was the new devil or divinity, cause of all its ills and salvation as well, explanation of all of life, art, biography and human character."<sup>46</sup> Freud showed "that reason and feeling are not at war" and that man "has no need to have complete freedom in order to have some freedom;"<sup>47</sup> and this last quotation represents a highly characteristic essentialist compromise.

In general, therefore, there is fear that Freud has been misused; at the same time there is much agreement that Freud makes man more, not less, responsible.

### Intelligence, Creativity and Learning

Essentialist views of intelligence, creativity and learning are so intimately concerned with their philosophical and political beliefs that most of this area has already been, in effect, discussed above. Learning is seen as deeply concerned with acquiring the culture or race experience, just as there are things objectively worth knowing and indeed essential. These essentials are absorbed by intelligent, that is receptive but critical, concentration and hard work. Creativity, because ultimately there is "nothing new under the sun," plays a correspondingly smaller part. That is, knowledge exists in the scholarly traditions, and does not need to be constantly rediscovered.

This interdependence of psychological and philosophical views was well argued by Adler, who claimed that "the controversy between the modernist and the traditionalist" arose from their "flatly opposed views of the nature of inquiry, an opposition which, in turn, arises from differing concepts of the nature of reality and the nature of intelligence."<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the most significant difference involves that between the essentialist view of mind as "a faculty for knowing the features of an independent reality" and the pragmatist view of mind as a biological instrument which, like other vital organs of the body, functions to maintain and advance the living process."<sup>49</sup>

This leads inevitably to a greater concern for the so-called higher faculties of the mind. The rejection of mechanistic views of intelligence, especially in stimulus-response learning theory and behaviorism, for a concept



of self-directed mind leading to a self-conscious culture, has therefore been a continuous strand in essentialist thinking. The evidence for this has appeared above in one form or another, but one may simply recall, for example, W. T. Harris' insistence on self-activity, or William James' insistence on will, or Bagley's analysis of mind on three levels, which is a paradigm of much essentialist argument. Bagley distinguished the primitive level of behaviorist conditioning, the conceptual or insightful learning which transcends the specific habit level, and thirdly the social-moral level, where "I should find a place for the unfettered operation of ideas. . . . This is distinctly the plane of the moral judgment."<sup>50</sup>

Phenix also argued for the interdependence of, for example, intelligence and philosophical and political theory. His Realms of Meaning was a monumental analysis of education in terms of the realms of meaning to be acquired. The life of reason involved the "decision in favor of worth rather than desire," which "takes the form of a commitment to truth;"<sup>51</sup> and the intellectual life of reason supports and is supported by the ideal of democracy, for four reasons. It is intellect that "sets mankind off into a separate species." Second, intellectual life "is crucial to democracy because it is the source of the human community." Third, it is "the source of human freedom;" and "fourth, intelligence is the foundation of individuality, which is another central idea of democracy."<sup>52</sup> The result is that "accordingly, the proper uses of educated intelligence are to discover the truth and to advance the realization of

other forms of excellence. In short, reason should be devoted to serving whatever is of worth."<sup>53</sup> Intelligence cannot therefore be defined without recourse to philosophy and politics.

If the chief distinction of essentialist views of intelligence is this concept of it as something concerned with truth and value rather than mere adjustment to the environment, the second distinction is the essentialist view of its distribution. The founthead here is again Jefferson; intelligence is not equally distributed, but it must be given the proper, meritocratic rather than aristocratic, chance to flourish. This has been argued above, but one may recall, for example, Arthur Bestor's very Jeffersonian argument that what poor students lacked was often cultural rather than innate: "Until the people as a whole have enjoyed real educational opportunity and until they have assimilated its results, a diminished cultural background in the student body of a non-selective school is to be expected. To remedy this cultural poverty, indeed, is precisely the purpose of the free public-school system."<sup>54</sup> This is a popular essentialist theme, of which there are many further examples.

On the subject of creativity essentialists are, at least apparently, a little ambiguous. They scorn the popular overemphasis on creativity if at the expense of standards, but conversely they view intelligence as more concerned with creation and imagination than with mere response to stimuli. That Bagley represented this latter view has been argued. Demiashkevich used the authority of Bergson to argue that "all true understanding is creative," and contrasted

this view with what he took to be the "progressive doctrine" of "undirected activity, however erratic, and self-nourished thinking, however meagre."<sup>55</sup> Instead, his argument was that book learning could be highly creative, that "whatever we understand in the thought or work of others, we create, as it were, over again for ourselves."<sup>56</sup> This again is a popular essentialist argument, often repeated, as in the case of Barzun, where for example he argued the superiority of imagination even over accuracy in the writing of history.<sup>57</sup> He has, however, forcefully condemned the baneful influence of mock research techniques and demands for creativity in areas improper for them, in a chapter entitled "The Cult of Research and Creativity,"<sup>58</sup> where he found that, for example, creative writing has come to express "individuality instead of common form."<sup>59</sup> The consequences of such a reversal were explored in Barzun's House of Intellect, where he berated "the awe-struck acceptance of the pupil's ways and opinions as if these were the symptom or promise of genius." The teacher has become "so respectful that it generally excludes criticism. . . hence in the school the perpetual adoration of the Magi before the infant expression of 'original views' on everything but the multiplication table."<sup>60</sup>

Probably the most wide-ranging analysis of creativity is that of Phenix. The shift from the idea of intelligence to that of creativity is that "from man

the knower to man the maker, from the abstractions of rational discourse to the concrete products of his handiwork."<sup>61</sup> As with intelligence, there are "standards of worth by which these products can be evaluated." This involves an analysis of aesthetic excellence, manners, work, and recreation. The creative aspect of work is that "broadly speaking it is an art."<sup>62</sup> Even so humble a human activity as eating should be conducted "so as to show mastery over appetite rather than subservience to appetite;"<sup>63</sup> thus discipline leads to creative behavior in the simplest places.

### Motivation

Again the essentialist takes a central view. He believes that motivation and interest are important, but that man also has a duty or obligation to learn, to discipline himself, and that certain things are worth learning regardless of one's motivation. Both work and play are important. Not everything can be best learned through the doctrine of needs' satisfaction.

Nicholas Murray Butler, for instance, though a hard-liner in many respects, epitomized the moderate line on motivation. He declared himself indebted to Herbart for the doctrine of interest;<sup>64</sup> and said that "we have still to learn what interest means, how it is changed from indirect to direct" and how "it is built up into a permanent element of character."<sup>65</sup> The compromise is that "a boy ought to know a great deal of literature" but "this does not mean Homer, or Dante or Shakespeare,"<sup>66</sup> and "the fetish of thoroughness is another form of the pedagogue's paganism."<sup>67</sup> His model

was Dr. Johnson who, when asked what he would teach any children he might have, replied: "I hope I should have willingly lived on bread and water to obtain instruction for them; but I would not have set their future friendship to hazard, for the sake of thrusting into their heads knowledge of things for which they might not perhaps have either taste or necessity. You teach your daughters the diameters of the planets, and wonder when you have done that they do not delight in your company."<sup>68</sup>

Bagley's view was likewise a compromise; he was against the simple doctrine of interest unless it included "the desire for satisfaction of acquired needs."<sup>69</sup>

Horne turned the progressive dictum upside down by deciding that "one is interested in that concerning which one knows something"<sup>70</sup> not vice versa. "Effort thus leads to interest."<sup>71</sup> He quoted James to the effect that the teacher should start with the child's interests and then draw in by careful association those things the teacher wishes to instil.<sup>72</sup> The secret of interesting the mind "is to present it with a variety in unity."<sup>73</sup>

An extreme view, where the interest of immediacy appears to be denied, is Hutchins' contention that "it is hard to master the intellectual content of a profession while one is practicing it,"<sup>74</sup> but this is a comparatively extreme view.

William James' compromise was typical. At one moment he could write: "Soft pedagogies have taken the place of the old steep and rocky

path to learning. But from this lukewarm air the bracing oxygen of effort is left out."<sup>75</sup> At the same time the teacher must use a child's interest "when the native impulse is most acutely present."<sup>76</sup> The fact is that some teachers are interesting and some are not, and "psychology and general pedagogy here confess their failure, and hand things over to the deeper springs of human personality to conduct the task."<sup>77</sup> James is an exemplary essentialist in this area.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, extreme interpretations of the interest doctrine were equally repugnant even to Bode and Dewey. The former claimed that "it is just as impossible to find educational objectives by inspecting the individual child as it is by looking for them in a transcendental realm."<sup>79</sup> His conclusion is almost startling: "It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the purpose of sound education is precisely to emancipate the pupil from dependence on immediate interests."<sup>80</sup> Dewey wrote in disgust of extremes he may unwittingly have generated: "I have heard of cases in which children are surrounded with objects and materials and then left entirely to themselves, the teacher being loath to suggest even what might be done with the materials lest freedom be infringed upon."<sup>81</sup>

Phenix found this problem of central importance, and proposed that imagination was the answer. He took the "unprogressive" line that "the principle of appeal to imagination calls for the selection of materials that are drawn from the extraordinary rather than from the experience of everyday life."<sup>82</sup>

Bernard Iddings Bell sounded like a modern Machiavelli in his mixture of the old and new, of progressive and essentialist; of the different ways of motivating a child he wrote: "None of them is as effective as that which capitalizes love. . . obviously the manifestations of affection must be withheld as long as and to the degree that the child ceases to exert himself in constructive endeavor. . . . that love is to be won is what the child must learn, and that that which wins it is the child's own desire to understand and to attain."<sup>83</sup>

Again, therefore, with a few exceptions, it can be said that essentialists take a moderate view, and that they seek to balance the twin truths of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, or of desire and duty.

### Developmental Psychology

Bell is typical of the essentialist compromise position on developmental psychology and the concept of readiness. He saw two common mistakes, namely that of regarding children as "little men and little women" and that of "regarding fairly developed children in the light of discoveries once made in the nursery."<sup>84</sup>

This characteristic compromise on the matter is typical of essentialist analysis, though it does not, of course, reveal how infrequent such analysis is in that area. Essentialists are perhaps weakest at this point. For instance, there is scarcely one reference to Piaget in the entire essentialist literature, although it is fair to say that Piaget was long ignored by educationalists in general. A rare exception to this is the discussion of Piaget's developmental theories in the Council for Basic Education's Consumer Guide to Educational

Innovations of 1972. The attitude to him resembles the essentialist attitude to Dewey, that he talks good though common sense, but is taken too far or out of context by his more enthusiastic devotees. He is applauded for "implying that learning is most satisfactory when its pace is neither too slow nor too fast" but he is also "unquestionably the inspiration for many of the more bizarre and permissive of the practices now going on in informal, 'open-classroom' schools."<sup>85</sup>

As the authors of this consumer guide point out, Piaget's theories are refinements upon, indeed a natural development, of earlier developmental theories; they cite Gessell and Montessori. It is for similar reasons that Rousseau proved so controversial among essentialists, as the one who first argued the extreme case for awaiting a child's readiness before teaching. It is not therefore surprising that essentialist opinion of Rousseau has been so varied.

Even Jefferson, however, held some rudimentary developmental theories, and he too took a moderate position: "There is a certain period of life, say from eight to fifteen or sixteen years of age, when the mind like the body is not yet firm enough for laborious and close operations. If applied to such, it falls an early victim to premature exertion; exhibiting, indeed, at first, in these young and tender subjects, the flattering appearance of their being men while they are yet children, but ending in reducing them to be children when they should be men. The memory is then most susceptible and tenacious of impressions; and the learning of languages being chiefly a work of memory,



it seems precisely fitted to the powers of this period, which is long enough too for acquiring the more useful languages, ancient and modern. . . that time is not lost which is employed in providing tools for future operation. . . If this period is suffered to pass in idleness, the mind becomes lethargic and impotent, as would the body it inhabits if unexercised during the same time."<sup>86</sup> A progressive critic of this passage might reasonably argue that it was a pity that Jefferson, starting from such an appreciation of child development, chose to buttress such an old-fashioned view of education with it.

William James, writing as early as 1899, might almost be mistaken for Piaget: "Theoretic curiosity, curiosity about the rational relation between things, can hardly be said to awake at all until adolescence is reached. . . when the theoretic instinct is once alive in the pupil, an entirely new order of pedagogic relations begins for him. Reasons, causes, abstract conceptions, suddenly grow full of zest, a fact with which all teachers are familiar."<sup>87</sup>

If James can sound like Piaget, Horne can sound surprisingly like an emergent Erikson: "If childhood is the individualizing epoch, youth must be called the relating epoch."<sup>88</sup> The concepts are contemporary: "Each later stage in mental development is but the blossoming of powers that were budding earlier. . . the youth's feelings still centre in self, but they reach out in fond attachments and friendship for others." The language, however, marks Horne off as though from a different era: "The brook of delightful promise empties itself into the river of service. Out of the ear grows the full corn. The

blossoming of youth becomes the fruitage of maturity. This period covers the work done by the colleges and the universities." 89

More typical, however, is Bestor's argument that the teacher must push the child along as fast as possible. While he admitted that "children begin to think in terms of concrete objects and situations rather than abstractions," his advice was: "Let the first-grader, then, find out all he can about the local fire department and the choo-choo. But this process is not to be repeated indefinitely. . . . Studies of the local community are all very well to start with, but they are a dead-end street unless they lead on into the disciplined study of economics, political science, history, and ultimately philosophy." 90 The contempt is obvious in his tone, and indeed the tenor of the essentialist argument is here best portrayed. Such implied accusations abound in the literature.

Ulich was more gentle. While admitting that "after a certain age, people are incurably different, and in the sphere of the intellect," 91 he also advocated as proper pedagogy "beginning with the simple but unadulterated, however, and thence ascending to higher levels," whereby the "pupils and teachers might find out that the very greatest art and thought contain elements of depth accessible to everyone who is willing to understand," 92 a remark worthy of Bruner at his boldest.

As so often, Phenix has a discussion of this issue which is essentialist, moderate, and penetrating. His analysis of the consequences of developmental

theories, notably of Erikson and Piaget, leads to a typical compromise stance, that "if some experience comes too early, it cannot be grasped at all or only at the price of excessive strain and frustration. If it comes too late, other learning dependent upon it will be postponed and the whole development of the person will be retarded."<sup>93</sup> Developmental schemes, however, are only approximations, and "in reality every person is different, and in principle a different curriculum is needed for every person to take account of the way he uniquely develops."<sup>94</sup> Developmental study may suggest what is possible, "but it does not follow from the fact that a person can learn something at a given stage in his growth that he ought to learn it then."<sup>95</sup> Further, the hypothetical stages are not discrete, but rather "continuous with each other, interrelated, and overlapping."<sup>96</sup> Studies of the growth of mathematical ideas in children suggest both that some ideas precede others, and that "on the other hand. . . with proper methods of instruction many important mathematical ideas can successfully be taught much earlier than was once thought possible or desirable."<sup>97</sup> Phenix's especial interest in Erikson's psychoanalytic work in human development can be understood from the use he makes of it as a springboard to such, almost theological, conclusions as:

Every linguistic attainment, every empirical insight, every esthetic perception, every moral judgment, every integrative perspective belongs to a developing person and is colored by the quality of his relations to himself and others. Since a meaning in any realm is a meaning to a person, the value of that meaning depends on personal well-being. In more familiar terms, though one speak many tongues, know all the secrets of nature,

create things of beauty, perform deeds of the highest virtue, and have the combined wisdom of Socrates and Solomon, if he has no love, these profit him nothing.<sup>98</sup>

The general essentialist does not concern himself at great length with developmental theory; if he does so, he takes a modest but skeptical view of its value; only Phenix among essentialists sees it as identical with growth through human relationships and thus identical with being and thence with the ultimate.

Essentialists tend to be more concerned with a mental rather than experiential approach; their psychological views reflect and parallel their views elsewhere, especially in philosophy, and they take a central view on most psychological issues.

## FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER VII

- <sup>1</sup>Johanningmeier. "W. C. Bagley's Changing Views on the Relationship Between Psychology and Education," in History of Education Quarterly, Spring, 1969.
- <sup>2</sup>Barzun. Classic, Romantic and Modern, 1943, p. xxii.
- <sup>3</sup>Curti. The Social Ideas of American Educators, 1959, p. 336.
- <sup>4</sup>Dewey. Review of W. T. Harris', Psychologic Foundation of Education, in Educational Review, June 1898, Vol. XVI.
- <sup>5</sup>Butler. The Meaning of Education, 1915, p. 82.
- <sup>6</sup>James. Talks to Teachers, 1899, p. 3.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>8</sup>Brickman. "Child Rearing and Child Behavior," in School and Society, Vol. LXXXII, 1955, p. 28.
- <sup>9</sup>Krutch (ed.). A Krutch Omnibus, 1970, p. 64.
- <sup>10</sup>Barzun. Of Human Freedom, 1939, p. 123.
- <sup>11</sup>Phenix. Man and His Becoming, 1964, p. 35.
- <sup>12</sup>Kirk. Enemies of the Permanent Things, 1969, p. 211.
- <sup>13</sup>Smith. And Madly Teach, 1949, p. 66.
- <sup>14</sup>Butler. The Meaning of Education, p. 160.
- <sup>15</sup>Bagley. Determinism in Education, 1925, p. 18.
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37.
- <sup>17</sup>Nock. Memoirs of a Superfluous Man, 1943, p. 261.
- <sup>18</sup>Horne. The Philosophy of Education, 1904, p. 98.

- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 171.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 279.
- <sup>21</sup>Kandel. The Cult of Uncertainty, 1943, p. 70.
- <sup>22</sup>Conant. Education in a Divided World, 1948, p. 207.
- <sup>23</sup>Smith. And Madly Teach, 1949, p. 100.
- <sup>24</sup>Kirk. Enemies of the Permanent Things, 1969, p. 211.
- <sup>25</sup>Phenix. Philosophy of Education, 1958, p. 61.
- <sup>26</sup>Barzun. Classic, Romantic and Modern, 1943, p. 152.
- <sup>27</sup>Barzun. Energies of Art, 1956, p. 195.
- <sup>28</sup>Barzun. Science the Glorious Entertainment, 1964, Chapters 8 and 9.
- <sup>29</sup>James.. Talks to Teachers, 1899, p. 43.
- <sup>30</sup>Cooke (ed.). The Vintage Mencken, op. cit., p. 71.
- <sup>31</sup>Krutch. op. cit., p. 262.
- <sup>32</sup>Highet. Man's Unconquerable Mind, 1954, p. 36.
- <sup>33</sup>Adler. What Man Has Made of Man, 1937, p. 103.
- <sup>34</sup>Phenix. Man and His Becoming, p. 73.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 75.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 76.
- <sup>38</sup>Barzun. Romanticism and the Modern Ego, 1943, p. 127.
- <sup>39</sup>Barzun. Of Human Freedom, p. 90.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 92.
- <sup>43</sup>Barzun. Darwin, Marx and Wagner, 1941, p. 5.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 44.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 87.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 354.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 357.
- <sup>48</sup>Adler. The Revolution in Education, p. 157.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 162.
- <sup>50</sup>Bagley. Education and Emergent Man, 1934, p. 92.
- <sup>51</sup>Phenix. Education and the Common Good, p. 35.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 34.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>54</sup>Bestor. Restoration of Learning, p. 113.
- <sup>55</sup>Demiashkevich. Introduction to Philosophy of Education, p. 155.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 192.
- <sup>57</sup>Strange (ed.). The Interpretation of History, 1943, p. 54.
- <sup>58</sup>Barzun. Science the Glorious Entertainment, Ch. VI.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 140.
- <sup>60</sup>Barzun. House of Intellect, p. 98.
- <sup>61</sup>Phenix. Education and the Common Good, p. 61.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 92

- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 86.
- <sup>64</sup>Butler. The Meaning of Education, p. 83.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 86.
- <sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 155.
- <sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 157.
- <sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 99.
- <sup>69</sup>Bagley. op. cit., p. 102.
- <sup>70</sup>Horne. The Philosophy of Education, p. 196.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 205.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 196.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 195.
- <sup>74</sup>Hutchins. The University of Utopia, p. 39.
- <sup>75</sup>James. Talks to Teachers, p. 29.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 53.
- <sup>78</sup>Ibid., pp. 55, 62, 74, etc.
- <sup>79</sup>Bode. Progressive Education at the Crossroads, 1938, p. 39.
- <sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 58.
- <sup>81</sup>Dewey. Experience and Education, 1938, p. 71.
- <sup>82</sup>Phenix. Realms of Meaning, p. 346.
- <sup>83</sup>Bell. Common Sense in Education, p. 66.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 71.



- <sup>85</sup>Smith, et al. A Consumers Guide, p. 80.
- <sup>86</sup>Jefferson. op. cit., p. 95.
- <sup>87</sup>James. Talks to Teachers, p. 25.
- <sup>88</sup>Horne. Philosophy of Education, p. 215.
- <sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 218.
- <sup>90</sup>Bestor. Restoration of Learning, p. 108.
- <sup>91</sup>Ulich. Crisis and Hope, p. 59.
- <sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 98.
- <sup>93</sup>Phenix. Realms of Meaning, p. 291.
- <sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 293.
- <sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 293.
- <sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 295.
- <sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 298.
- <sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 297.

## CHAPTER VIII

## PEDAGOGY

These pairings of assumed opposites are misleading, for each member of each pair represents a legitimate--indeed a needed--factor in the education process. (W. C. Bagley)

Bagley's constant compromise between apparent opposites is typical of the essentialists' position at every point, not least in their analysis of the curriculum. This contention could be maintained for every area of the curriculum but, for the sake of brevity, it may be adequate to sample simply one area of essentialist pedagogy, namely the teaching of language and literature, especially Latin and English.

One might expect that the essentialist would die hard for the retention of the classics; but that is the kind of loose assumption that helps to highlight, upon examination, the essentially open-minded nature of these moderates.

To be sure, there are some essentialists who clamorously defend the classics. One might expect it in Jefferson's case for, moderate though he was, the time of radical questioning of the classics was then far off. He remarked that, although the study of Latin and Greek was even then going into disuse amongst Europeans, "I know not what their manners and occupation may call for: but it would be very ill-judged in us to follow their example in

this instance."<sup>1</sup> That his was no elitist hankering after a prestigious tradition, however, has been argued above; this is clear from his contemptuous rejection of Plato, and Hutchins has argued the point forcefully that Jefferson was less interested in learning for its own sake than to "make his people prosperous and civilized."<sup>2</sup> Arthur Bestor took up this point, and argued that Jefferson's respect for the classics was a selective and critical one, for Jefferson recommended their study for statesmen but not for merchants: "For the merchant I should not say that the classical languages are a necessity. . . to them they are but ornament and comfort."<sup>3</sup>

W. T. Harris was a staunch defender of faith in the classics, "believing that Latin and Greek vocabularies and syntax provided students with the most effective insight into the embryonic period of Western civilization and enabled them better to understand the forms and usages of their intellectual and moral being."<sup>4</sup>

The staunchest defender, however, though his tone is rather more than defensive, was Albert Jay Nock, who stands as the extreme in this respect. Nock was educated partly at home in a clergyman's family and, in due course, at St. Stephen's, now known as Bard College. In 1890 it had a faculty of eight and eighty-one students.<sup>5</sup> He described this education fondly on a number of occasions,<sup>6</sup> and modeled his ideal college on his own experience.<sup>7</sup> His argument is an extreme example of the great books ideal: "The literatures of Greece and Rome comprise the longest, most

complete and most nearly continuous record we have of what the strange creature known as *Homo sapiens* has been busy about in virtually every department of spiritual, intellectual and social activity. . . . Hence the mind which has attentively canvassed this record is much more than a disciplined mind, it is an experienced mind."<sup>8</sup> Even current politics would be thus illuminated, for "reincarnate any first-class 'Realpolitiker' of the ancient world, from 3800 B. C. to 1500 A. D., put him in charge of the foreign office in any modern imperialist capital, and he would have hard work to convince himself that he was not still doing business at the old stand."<sup>9</sup> His only standard for entry to his ideal college was the ability to read and write Latin and Greek, and some elementary mathematics.<sup>10</sup> Study thereafter would be literary and intellectual only, for the grasp of language would already have been acquired. He was skeptical about classics in translation, but "I suppose it may be better to read Latin and Greek in translation than not to read them at all."<sup>11</sup> There would be no student activities of any kind, and no representation of either students or alumni on the college government. However, he does allow that the classics were "as a rule administered poorly and, which is worse, indiscriminately. . . . Too often a routine of elementary Greek and Latin was forced upon ineducable children."<sup>12</sup>

A more moderate version of this, more a defense this time than an attack, appeared in a volume sponsored by the Council for Basic Education

in 1959, designed modestly to show that Latin "has basic educational value today."<sup>13</sup> Little attempt was made to include Greek in this defense, as it was clearly a lost cause. The two main arguments were that "to the linguistic virtues and capabilities of Latin for basic education we must add its cultural values."<sup>14</sup> The third was the special literary and aesthetic value of Latin, where "their quality has to be savored in the original."<sup>15</sup>

Gilbert Highet took an uncompromising stand on this issue, claiming for the classical literature that nowhere else is there "such a rich, varied and deeply thoughtful collection of books" and that they had to be studied in the original" partly because there are so few good translators and partly because English is a poorer, weaker language than Greek and has so far been less subtly developed than Latin."<sup>16</sup>

Strong though these arguments are, today no less than in Nock's time, they are as effectively countered from within the essentialist ranks as from without. A few examples must represent the general attitude.

Even Emerson "took a sceptical view of the classics. . . lamenting that young men grow up in libraries."<sup>17</sup> Bagley's, however, was perhaps the best early analysis of the problem. He sensibly accepted most of the claims made for the classical education and questioned only the efficiency or uniqueness of such a process. The argument for the transfer of training, (and he is one of the few to consider this topic), he deals with at some length,<sup>18</sup> and the rest is worth quoting in full:

The period of time that must elapse before a pupil can appreciate classic literature in a degree sufficient to permit a realization of its unique values is inordinately long and the requisite effort is inordinately severe. The question is really not one of the absolute worth of classical study; it is rather one of relative worth. If the intrinsic values of the classics--that is, the values accruing to the instructional and inspirational functions of the thought-content itself--can be gained in some measure through translations as well as through the originals, the unique disciplinary function will be left as the last support of extended classical study. Place this discipline as high as one will, it still seems quite impossible to make it justify any extended study of the classics in their original form as a necessary part of general education.<sup>19</sup>

The footnote at this point indicated that one authority he was challenging was his own mentor, W. T. Harris.

Nicholas Murray Butler at much the same time was arguing a similarly moderate line, that the chief value of the classics was cultural not linguistic. He condemned "the waste of time they have involved" but concluded that "it seems quite safe to predict that no culture will ever be considered broad and deep unless it rests upon an understanding and appreciation of the civilization of Greece and Rome."<sup>20</sup> This generally mild emphasis is continued throughout the more recent literature, as for instance with W. W. Brickman, the editor of School and Society who concluded inconclusively that "there is a likelihood that some stress on Latin will enhance the cultural and educational values held dear by the American people."<sup>21</sup>

Mark Van Doren was surprisingly iconoclastic and claimed that a classical education, while it ought "to be a great thing", for centuries "has been less than that;" and went on to quote Alfred North Whitehead who claimed that "of all types of man today existing, classical scholars are the most remote from the Greeks of the Periclean times."<sup>22</sup>

Even Robert Hutchins, often reviled for his defense of the great books program, was sufficiently distant from Nock to say that "I do not suggest that learning the languages or the grammar in which the ancient classics were written is necessary to general education." Translations now exist, and "unless it can be shown that the study of Greek and Latin grammar is essential to the study of English grammar or that the mastery of the Greek and Latin languages is essential to mastery of our own," they too can be ignored as part of "general education."<sup>23</sup>

In short, even in that area where one might expect to find essentialists most intransigent, one finds them tractable.

The teaching of English language and literature is the natural successor to the teaching of classics; and the history of its comparatively recent growth as this alternative needs more documentation than this work allows. There are those even today who maintain that a study of the classics is a prerequisite to that of English, or any other, literature; the schools of English at, for instance, Oxford and Cambridge still rely heavily on classical and pseudo-classical scholarship to support their respectability; some English private

high schools still harbour a mild suspicion of English departments as unrigorous and culturally subversive.

The best essentialist example of this extreme view, and it is a rare one, is the case of A. J. Nock. He wrote of his own classical education that it fitted him naturally with the critical apparatus for analyzing English literature, that "no one dreamed of teaching English literature; indeed, I do not see how it can be effectively taught in any formal fashion, how a really competent acquaintance with it can be brought about in any other way than the way by which it was brought about in us;" he went on to argue that the then new popularity of English studies in American universities was on account of their easiness, and that for the new students, whom he despised, "something has to be found for them to do that they can do."<sup>24</sup> He produced at this point, as essentialists have often done to bolster similar arguments, a collection of examples of poor English usage to prove his point, and went on to recall a visit he made to a friend teaching English in "a huge swollen institution that went by the name of a State university. . . I found him engaged on a kind of thing that by the very handsomest concession was only eighth-grade work."<sup>25</sup> He seems not to have imagined what would have been the result if these same students had been taught the classics.

In general, however, in spite of Jefferson's desire to the contrary, American education appears to have forsaken the classics faster and farther than has the European, and correspondingly to have accepted the normality



of English studies with less suspicion. Indeed, if there is any one area where essentialists are mostly clearly concerned, it is in the analysis of culture through literature. There is not one who does not rely on literature for evidence at some point, and a large number rely regularly on their study of literature, for example Barzun, Bagley, Bestor, Brickman, Briggs, Conant, Demiashkevich, Fadiman, Hight, Horne, Hutchins, Kirk, Krutch, Mumford Jones, Nock, Phenix, Riesman, Smith, Ulich, and Van Doren; of the earlier figures nearly all were also deeply concerned, Jefferson, Mann, Harris, Emerson, Thoreau and William James.

One can only therefore sample the evidence; and much of it has been reviewed above. The following discussion is designed to show the general agreement, together with some minor disagreements.

Thomas Jefferson, writing as late as 1818, betrayed a lamentable lack of concern for contemporary literature, surprisingly. His view was a stolidly eighteenth century view, that reading matter should be "reason and fact, plain and unadorned." He feared the "inordinate passion prevalent for novels," and suggested that "much poetry should not be indulged," for the "mass of trash" resulted, he would argue, in "a bloated imagination, sickly judgment, and disgust towards all the real businesses of life."<sup>26</sup> He admitted the value of Shakespeare and a few seventeenth and eighteenth century English and French classics. On the other hand, such a view was not uncommon at the time, and he was correspondingly insistent on general

literacy as a safeguard of democracy, and proposed a public library in his Notes on the State of Virginia.<sup>27</sup> This concern for the literacy of the electorate became a popular theme, as did the concern for public libraries to a lesser extent. Jefferson's own collections of books and his generosity with them to the nation is legendary.

Horace Mann likewise suffered from what today would be considered literary myopia. He inveighed against what he called "bubble literature," which concerned itself with "mere amusement, as contradistinguished from instruction in the practical concern of life. . . and reflection upon the great realities of existence."<sup>28</sup> Walter Scott and others had caused an "epidemic" in the reading of novels. Such reading was dangerous because people "have no touchstone whereby they can distinguish between what is extravagant, marvellous and supernatural, and what, from its accordance to the standard of nature, is simple, instructive, and elevating."<sup>29</sup> It is dangerous to "neglect the wonderful works of the Creator, in order to become familiar with the fables of men. . . . It is impossible to polish vacuity, or give a lustre to the surface of emptiness."<sup>30</sup> His answer also was Jefferson's, namely an insistence on public literacy and suitably stocked libraries; for "every book which a child reads with intelligence is like a cast of the weaver's shuttle, adding another thread to the indestructible web of existence."<sup>31</sup> He therefore analyzed the distribution of public libraries in Massachusetts and proposed to remedy the inadequacies.<sup>32</sup>

Henry Barnard's analysis and his vision were similar to Mann's. He computed that in 1844 there were "but three libraries, containing twelve hundred volumes, in the agricultural districts" of Rhode Island. His hope was that "whatever else may be taught, or omitted, the ability, and the taste for reading, should be communicated in the school, and the means of continuing the habit at home, through the long winter evenings by convenient access to district or town school libraries, should be furnished."<sup>33</sup> It is hard not to be moved, and a little chastened, by the optimistic vision of such pioneers as Jefferson, Mann and Barnard, as when the last of these planned that "there shall not be a rural district which is not animated with true intellectual and moral life."<sup>34</sup> It may have represented a patronizing Christianity, but it was well meaning and powerful. Barnard planned a library in every village, not only with books of "useful knowledge" but also "a good supply of judiciously chosen works of fiction."<sup>35</sup> The proper inoculation against "the dens of iniquity, which abound in all large villages," would be the "contemplation of God's works, and the perusal of good books."<sup>36</sup>

Of course, each of these three also had a hearty disrespect for the scholar who was out of touch with life, and books were but an instrument. Barnard claimed, for instance, that education "should deal less with books and more with real objects in nature around."<sup>37</sup>

Emerson held the same caution of book learning, and wrote that "books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the

hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts." <sup>38</sup> However, he had more time than many for literature in the education of the child, for imagination can bring books more alive for him paradoxically than real people. "Culture makes his books realities to him, their characters more brilliant, more effective on his mind, than his actual mates. Do not spare to put novels into the hands of young people as an occasional holiday and experiment; but, above all, good poetry in all kinds, epic, tragedy, lyric. If we can touch the imagination, we serve them, they will never forget it. Let him read Tom Brown at Rugby, read Tom Brown at Oxford." <sup>39</sup> Indeed, children naturally embody the best characteristics of literature in themselves, for "in their fun and extreme freak they hit on the topmost sense of Horace."<sup>40</sup> This attitude, so typical of later essentialists, is altogether less stern and moralizing than that of Jefferson, Mann or Barnard. Nonetheless, literature maintains its didactic purpose, though in a more subtle guise: "The production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity. A work of art is an abstract or epitome of the world."<sup>41</sup>

A. J. Nock was more cautious of mere literacy, and argued that it was "not an absolute good in itself. . . . To prove this, one has but to look at what our literates mostly read."<sup>42</sup> His own life was consumed by literature, and his autobiography is a treasure trove of literary asides. There is detailed description of his earliest reading, his self-taught Latin, his sampling of more modern classics in periodicals, and his later more select

passions like that for Rabelais. His taste is vigorous and clear cut, if sometimes a little simplistic. His loves are "work done in the great progressive eras--the work of the Augustan and Periclean periods. The work of the Elizabethans, of Erasmus, Rabelais, Cervantes, Montaigne--one accepts them as classics, not at all because they are old, but because they are objective and therefore strong, sound, joyous, healthy."<sup>43</sup> His hates are such as "the Rimbauds, Verlaines and Gauguins . of the last century. Revolting as they are, they are nevertheless precisely the forms of organic life which one must expect to see, and does see, if one insists on turning over the social plank which has so long lain rotting in the muck of economism."<sup>44</sup> Literature for Nock is as it was for Arnold, whom he invokes on this issue, namely "keeping good company" which is "spiritually dynamogenous, elevating, bracing. It makes one better."<sup>45</sup> It is a theory of literary criticism not far removed from Jefferson's.

Nicholas Murray Butler has already been quoted to the effect that "a boy ought to know a good deal of literature, to love it, and to have caught a bit of the literary spirit,"<sup>46</sup> and he was also intensely concerned, like all essentialists, that education should provide the child with "correctness and precision in the use of the mother tongue."<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, he chose Abraham Lincoln, "the greatest personality that ever lived on this continent," to represent his ideal prose style, where its "very simple and direct nature reflected without guile and without complexity the impressions and convictions that he had."<sup>48</sup>

This is highly representative of the essentialist ideal for prose style, though not all achieve it themselves. Nock's ideal formula was that "you must have a point. Second, you must make it out. Thirdly you must make it out in eighteen-carat, impeccable, idiomatic English."<sup>49</sup> Most essentialists achieve this style, some almost outdo it. Reading Barzun, Hutchins, Adler, Nock or Phenix can be a powerful literary experience in its own right. Others can be a little ponderous, like Demiashkevich or even Bagley.

Perhaps the finest stylist is Mencken, and it is chiefly for his pungent style that essentialists love him. He too cites Abraham Lincoln, who "in middle life purged his style of ornament and it became almost baldly simple." Of the Gettysburg speech Mencken wrote "nothing else precisely like it is to be found in the whole range of oratory." However, Mencken then argued perversely that this address was "beauty, not sense," for in spite of the rhetoric of freedom, "the Union soldiers in that battle actually fought against self-determination; it was the Confederates who fought for the right of their people to govern themselves."<sup>50</sup>

The third essentialist to analyze Lincoln's style was Barzun, in a little limited edition called Lincoln, the Literary Genius,<sup>1</sup> in 1960. He described that style as "unique in English prose and doubly astonishing in the history of English Literature, for nothing led up to it."<sup>51</sup> The style is as though designed by Nock; Barzun describes it as "order first, and then a lightning-like brevity."<sup>52</sup> In a fascinatingly complex paragraph Barzun

seeks to establish a tradition of style:

Lincoln's example, plainly, helped to break the monopoly of the dealers in literary plush. After Lincoln comes Mark Twain, and out of Mark Twain come contemporaries of ours as diverse as Sherwood Anderson, H. L. Mencken, and Ernest Hemingway, remote from New England gentility, in the midst of which Emerson and Thoreau rise like rugged and inaccessible islands; a reproof to Johnsonese and journalese. . . not even touched by the clean and dry generalizing of Jefferson and the 'Federalist papers', which he so aptly studied. The style Lincoln fashioned for his uses--epistolary, argumentative, and exalted--is his alone.<sup>53</sup>

Alistair Cooke has characterized Mencken's style similarly as "a style flexible, fancy-free, ribald, and always beautifully lucid: a native product unlike any other style in the language;" and has said of him, with a surreptitious glance at Ben Jonson's dictum on Shakespeare, that Mencken "need hardly have blotted a sentence."<sup>54</sup>

This form of covert quotation is one of the most significant essentialist stylistic tricks. It belies the simple lucidity of their best stylists by its almost snobbish assumption that the reader will pick up the unacknowledged allusion and, if he does not, that it is his loss. Some examples, suitably unexplained, might be Mortimer Smith's title And Madly Teach; or perhaps Russell Kirk's subtitle, "Observations of Abnormality in Literature and Politics," or any one of many examples from Barzun, for example the phrase describing Swift as "wounded by his own aggression;"<sup>55</sup> or Barnard's "curses not loud

but deep;"<sup>56</sup> or Horne's educational "still, small voice."<sup>57</sup> Sometimes one is left wondering whether the trick was intentional, as with Barzun's phrase above or another of his, where he writes of genealogies: "It's a thriving industry to dig them out of churchyards with the aid of a vaulting imagination."<sup>58</sup> The most popular sources of such echoes are, of course, Shakespeare and the Bible.

Mencken's literary criteria exclude an undue concern for moral judgments, unlike most essentialists. He said of Babbitt and others that "you will spend a long while going through their works. . . before even you encounter a purely aesthetic judgment upon an aesthetic question. It is almost as if a man estimating daffodils should do it in terms of artichokes."<sup>59</sup> Such as Babbitt can never, he claimed, do justice to "the whole, gross, glittering, excessively dynamic, infinitely grotesque, infinitely stupendous drama of American life."<sup>60</sup>

Babbitt and Mencken both contributed essays to the collection Criticism in America. Babbitt's is a late example of the older, more puritan criticism. He spoke longingly of the "two great traditions," where the Christian tradition promoted humility, and the classical tradition promoted decorum or a sense of proportion: "To repudiate the traditional Christian and classical checks, and at the same time fail to work out some new and more vital control upon impulse and temperament, is to be guilty of high treason to civilization."<sup>61</sup> Babbitt characteristically lamented "sheer imagination and emotional unrestraint in the name of expression," for "Dr. Johnson was right in



condemning the whole primitivistic notion of genius and the lazy drifting with temperament that it encouraged."<sup>62</sup> His essay "The Limits of Naturalism" in his *The New Laokoon, An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* of 1910, is interesting to compare with Barzun's more moderate and more perceptive arguments on the difference between classic and romantic. Babbitt's conclusion was that "the neo-classic school had converted the ideas of unity and measure and purpose and of law itself into mere formalism; the romanticists in getting rid of formalism were for getting rid at the same time of the ideas of unity and measure and purpose and law itself. They would be aimless and lawless and live in a perpetual paradox."<sup>63</sup> He attacked Rousseau for his "horror of every constraint upon his emotional impulse."<sup>64</sup> Such lawbreakers deserved his neologistic charge of "eleutheromania. . . the instinct to throw off not simply outer and artificial limitations, but all limitations whatsoever."<sup>65</sup> It is interesting that he shares Barzun's distaste for Wagner, while Barzun later criticized Babbitt for his intemperate views in general and especially on the subject of Rousseau.<sup>66</sup>

Barzun's views on language have been hinted at in his eulogy of Lincoln. It is a typically essentialist and simple view, like Nock's. It needs no further definition than that hinted by his remark about the language of advertisements: "Side by side with florid nonsense, one finds in our ads some of the best, tersest prose now written."<sup>67</sup>

His views on literature were more complex, and more subtle than his expressed view that "all books are good and consequently a child should be allowed to read everything he lays his hands on. Trash is excellent."<sup>68</sup> It may be convenient to rely at this point only on his collection of essays, The Energies of Art. His critical philosophy rested, like all his views, on an anti-absolutism, for "the one certainty is that men do not act from single motives, from which it follows that no product of human hands is pure."<sup>69</sup> From this he derived the view that no one critical view or theory could ever be enough to account for literature. His was the historical view which "in criticism, can always turn up instances to bend or bulge whatever is too rigid or narrow."<sup>70</sup> He would prefer "several lines of criticism, which may at any time cross and combine," which is the "only price at which I can momentarily endure the newer critical games of counting tropes and reducing the finished work to a set of symbols, like a boy dismantling his construction toy and putting the pieces away."<sup>71</sup> The reason for this is that critics "ape the impersonality of science,"<sup>72</sup> another theme of Barzun's. The collection of essays is full, not surprisingly therefore, of illuminative and varied literary criticism.

For instance, Barzun scoffs at the different Shakespeare that successive schools of criticism have created: "Just as in the previous, purely poetic analysis Shakespeare is made out a virtuoso of sounding words and tinkling symbols, so here he plays us a toccata of social precepts."<sup>73</sup>

It is a fine point and wittily made, with another concealed quotation to keep the reader chuckling. There is an excellent analysis of Swift's prose style:

"His prose is transparent, certainly, but what we see through it is what he put there." <sup>74</sup> His analysis of Shaw's prose is a similar, minor masterpiece.<sup>75</sup>

To do the work justice, one would be obliged to quote it in full. Suffice to remember one powerful judgment: "With Shakespeare, with the Romantics, one must not remain abstract or stay a specialist. One must be capable of thought and disposed to learn, which is a different thing." <sup>76</sup>

Mark Van Doren, a friend of Barzun's, grappled with similar problems in his Liberal Education. The concept was Barzun's, namely that the discipline of literature must not ape that of science; but the style was unmistakably that of Emerson, whom Van Doren edited and eulogized.

The passage must be quoted at length to catch the comparison:

The humanist makes claims for his books which nobody is bound to recognize. He may shame us occasionally with the thought that we are not "fine" enough, but we observe that he is only fine, and we know that to be only fine is to be less than a man can be. The humanist suffers most in our estimation when he fails to convince us that he has a discipline. The discipline of science may be narrow, but it is real. The study of literature is not rigorous enough to be real. Criticism has its victories no less than investigation. But the laws by which they are won are hard laws; they are the rules of an art, or a set of arts, which the humanist has forgotten. His worst enemy is not the chemist or the engineer, it is himself if he has forgotten that knowledge in his domain can be as exact as it is anywhere. Perhaps more exact, though if he knew what that meant he would be a philosopher. He is too literary because he is not

philosophical enough. But even the philosophers of the time maintain a solitude which assists us little in the game of understanding. It has been claimed that education will recover its full human stature when the humanities, meaning literature and philosophy, once more are dominant. If the humanities are nothing but humanism, as we have known it, their dominance will be no better than that of the ribboned hat which mistakes itself for the head. Education prefers to be dominated by humanity. Man is in the same breath a metaphysician, philosopher, scientist, and poet. If he is also numbskull and genius, education has to admit that it cannot cope with those.<sup>77</sup>

Van Doren might almost have been parodying Emerson; there is the same pretentious yet unfinished logic; the same admixture of vocabulary that is both *Latinate* and very simple; the same breathless sentences poured out on top of one another. As Van Doren said of Emerson, the unit of construction is the sentence. They are not always clearly linked, but lie alongside each other, excitedly.

Bagley had argued earlier for the primacy of language in the development of culture and social evolution.<sup>78</sup> Demiashevich took the splendid view that "we are elastic creatures. A sentence in a book. . . can set our fancy free, and instantly our heads are bathed in galaxies."<sup>79</sup> He made great use of language and literature in his analysis of England, France and Germany in his The National Mind. He described the English language as "best adapted, in the very brevity of its Anglo-Saxon words, for brief, clear orders or directions. The Englishman is a mature man of action who rarely, if ever, yields to those outbursts of primitive passion which in other countries

so often undo the results of the methodical labor of generations of men."<sup>80</sup> Whether this conflicts with his later statement about the Englishman and his speech is a moot point, where he talked of "a curious form of intellectual hypocrisy, the circumlocution so typical of English speech. The fear of the direct and appropriate term creates a sort of no-man's land around one's thought."<sup>81</sup> Demiashkevich revealed an artistic conservatism that was reminiscent of Babbitt when, writing of the Germans, he declaimed: "Futurist and cubist works are always the sign of racial disintegration which expresses itself in fondness of picturing corporal deformities."<sup>82</sup> His view of the function of language as "the verbal embodiment of experience"<sup>83</sup> is, of course, similar to his colleague Bagley's. Indeed, language is at the very basis of politics, for "the printing press is among the most important safeguards of sound democracy,"<sup>84</sup> and "democracy. . . is government by discussion, by talk, by persuasion."<sup>85</sup>

There is always great concern among essentialists about functional illiteracy in America. W. W. Brickman wrote regularly about it in School and Society.<sup>86</sup> One of many complaints was Hutchins that "in the high school of the University of Chicago, which has a highly selected student body, not less than ten percent of the pupils are functionally illiterate."<sup>87</sup> He blamed the contemporary teaching of English, which placed emphasis "either on the most trivial details or on what is called self-expression."<sup>88</sup>

Some essentialists have even resorted to a form of statistical analysis in relating the state of culture to the amount of literature "consumed." Mann and Barnard counted books available. Bagley computed books "consumed per capita." Adler used the same technique: "In England, where education is still far from universal, 55 per cent of the adults can be found reading a book at any time; in the United States, the land of universal education, only 17 per cent are reading a book, any book. Of the books written, published, and purchased between 1945 and 1955, the top ten each sold more than three million copies apiece. What were they? Numbers one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven were titles by Micky Spillane."<sup>89</sup>

The recent Consumer's Guide to Educational Innovations, published by the Council for Basic Education, was vigorously opposed to "Black English," cautious of the application of linguistics to the teaching of English, hostile to "The New English," hostile to teaching reading by the "whole-word" method and in favor of "the phonic" method, and cautious about "Sesame Street."

This guide quoted with great approval Rudolph Flesch's book, Why Johnny Can't Read, which reappears often in the literature to bolster the phonics case. J. D. Koerner, for instance, used it,<sup>90</sup> and his The Miseducation of American Teachers devoted a chapter to "English or Educanto?" He wrote that "in the hands of an experienced man, who I suppose must be called an "Educantoid", the language of Education can be practically

incomprehensible. It can also induce severe nausea." 91

One of the more sophisticated in this area was Joseph Wood Krutch, at one point professor of dramatic literature at Columbia University. His view reminds one of Barzun's claim for the artist as eternal pragmatist; for Krutch, literature concerns itself with important truths that the organized disciplines have failed to take account of: "It is from literature that we get the reassuring conviction that the meaning of life has not been exhausted by the statement of any principles or laws."<sup>92</sup> A great deal of his published work is about literature, and very good reading it makes in its own right. Like Barzun, he scoffs at the more solemn schools of literary criticism.<sup>93</sup> Like Bagley, he claims to have avoided all bids for popularity in the pursuit of the unfashionable truth.<sup>94</sup> Like Nock, he abhors the superabundance of works that are "beatnik, sadistic, existential or sexually perverse. . . guideposts to perdition."<sup>95</sup> His early enthusiasm for psychoanalytic literary criticism waned to a great caution thereof: "Personally I have never heard of a child who confessed to being dangerously terrified by Alice or of an adult who attributed his downfall to a trauma received from a book in infancy. No doubt that proves nothing. The fears inspired are subconscious also."<sup>96</sup> If Freudian literary analysis is one form of false scientism, so is Marxist literary theory, which is too simply concerned with reality and social theory: "Valid art was now destined by the communist theoreticians to be a literally accurate picture of reality as Marxism perceived it."<sup>97</sup>

There are many other critiques of Marxist literary theory, of which one of the more interesting was Russell Kirk's. For him, the four principal themes which had inspired Western literature were religion, love, heroism, and private fortune: "Now none of these themes or sources of inspiration is available to the Marxist writer. Religion has become the opiate of the masses: it is forbidden. Love has become the gratification of physical impulse: it is tolerated only. Heroism has become service to the production-consumption state: it is servile. Private fortune, with the abolition of class and order and social diversity, has grown subversive: it is anathema."<sup>98</sup>

Kirk's view of the value of literature is characteristically high. His analysis of the "common patrimony" of western civilization was that it rested on, first, Christianity; second, on "our theory and practice of ordered liberty and

yet the third article. . . is more enduring, perhaps, than even political usage. Great works of literature join us in an intellectual community. And the ethical cast of enduring humane letters, working upon the imagination, is as normative as is religious doctrine or political principle. Humane literature teaches us what it is to be a man. Homer and Hesiod; Herodotus and Thucydides; Sophocles and Plato; Virgil and Horace; Livy and Tacitus; Cicero and Seneca; Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius; Dante, Petrarch, Erasmus, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe, and all the rest-- these have formed the mind and character of Americans as well as Europeans. The best of American literature is part and parcel of the normative continuity of literature extending back beyond the dawn of history.<sup>99</sup>



This is a magnificently essentialist passage. Perhaps only Phenix can provide a better conclusion. His analysis of "the phenomenon of language" nicely " illustrates the synthesis of physical, mental, and spiritual aspects in human nature."<sup>100</sup> His analysis, both in Man and his Becoming and in Realms of Meaning, of both language and literature is thoroughly essentialist, while also being entirely modern and tolerant. To sample this powerful stuff one passage may suffice to suggest the rest:

The two essentials of poetry are rhythm and metaphor. Both have the same basic function of establishing unity-in-difference--an achievement (as already pointed out) that is close to the ultimate secret of being itself. In rhythm change is given intelligible order. Metaphor discloses likenesses in different things and thus provides a common bond between what would otherwise be disparate entities. A successful poem penetrates the darkness of temporal succession. It reveals that the apparently haphazard order of unrelated human experience need not be the only or final answer to the question of life's meaning.<sup>101</sup>

Phenix, as so often, is not simply representative of the essentialist tradition, but consummates and transcends it.

## FOOTNOTES --CHAPTER VIII

- <sup>1</sup>Lee (ed.). Crusade Against Ignorance, 1961, p. 95.
- <sup>2</sup>Hutchins. No Friendly Voice, 1936, p. 66.
- <sup>3</sup>Bestor. Restoration of Learning, 1956, p. 47.
- <sup>4</sup>Curti. The Social Ideas of American Educators, 1959, p. 317.
- <sup>5</sup>Harris. Five Counterrevolutionists in Higher Education, 1970, p. 83.
- <sup>6</sup>Nock. On Doing the Right Thing, 1928, p. 116.  
Memoirs of a Superflous Man, 1943, pp. 81, 92, 108.
- <sup>7</sup>Nock. On Doing the Right Thing, pp. 116-120.
- <sup>8</sup>Nock. Memoirs, p. 81.
- <sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 108.
- <sup>10</sup>Nock. On Doing the Right Thing, p. 116.
- <sup>11</sup>Nock. Memoirs, p. 93.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92.
- <sup>13</sup>Koerner (ed.). The Case for Basic Education, 1959, p. 125.
- <sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 131.
- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 133.
- <sup>16</sup>Highet. Man's Unconquerable Mind, 1954, p. 19.
- <sup>17</sup>Mumford Jones (ed.). Emerson on Education, 1966, p. 1.
- <sup>18</sup>Bagley. Educational Values, 1911, p. 211.
- <sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 212.
- <sup>20</sup>Butler. Meaning of Education, p. 248.

- <sup>21</sup>Brickman. "Latin and the Curriculum" in School and Society, Vol. 92, 1964, p. 346.
- <sup>22</sup>Van Doren. Liberal Education, 1943, p. 42.
- <sup>23</sup>Hutchins. The Higher Learning in America, 1936, p. 82.
- <sup>24</sup>Nock. Theory of Education, p. 91.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 93.
- <sup>26</sup>Lee (ed.). Crusade, p. 154.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 97.
- <sup>28</sup>Filler (ed.). Mann, op. cit., p. 51.
- <sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 56.
- <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 47.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 48.
- <sup>33</sup>Brubacher (ed.). Henry Barnard on Education, 1965, p. 44.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 53.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 55.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 44.
- <sup>38</sup>Mumford Jones (ed.). Emerson on Education, 1966, p. 84.
- <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 216.
- <sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 214.
- <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>42</sup>Nock. The Book of Journeyman, p. 18.

- <sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 184.
- <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 185.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 194.
- <sup>46</sup>Butler. Meaning of Education, p. 155.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 103.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 140.
- <sup>49</sup>Nock. Memoirs, p. 172.
- <sup>50</sup>Cooke (ed.). The Vintage Mencken, op. cit., p. 80.
- <sup>51</sup>Barzun. Lincoln, the Literary Genius, 1960, p. 3.
- <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 17.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 49.
- <sup>54</sup>Cooke (ed.). Mencken, op. cit., p. x.
- <sup>55</sup>Barzun. Energies of Art, p. 85.
- <sup>56</sup>Brubacher (ed.). Barnard, op. cit., p. 56.
- <sup>57</sup>Horne. Philosophy of Education, p. viii.
- <sup>58</sup>Barzun. God's Country, p. 9.
- <sup>59</sup>Cooke (ed.). Mencken, op. cit., p. 93.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 95.
- <sup>61</sup>Babbitt. "Genius and Taste" in Criticism in America, op. cit., p. 165.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 168.
- <sup>63</sup>Babbitt. The New Laokoon, 1910, p. 194.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 196.
- <sup>66</sup>Barzun. Classic, Romantic and Modern, p. xvi.
- <sup>67</sup>Barzun. God's Country, p. 266.
- <sup>68</sup>Barzun. Teacher in America, p. 60.
- <sup>69</sup>Barzun. Energies of Art, p. xi.
- <sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. x.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. x.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. xi.
- <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 139.
- <sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 95.
- <sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 257.
- <sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 162.
- <sup>77</sup>Van Doren. Liberal Education, p. 57.
- <sup>78</sup>Bagley. An Introduction to Teaching, chapter 3.
- <sup>79</sup>Demiashkevich. The Activity School, p. 138.
- <sup>80</sup>Demiashkevich. National Mind, p. 73.
- <sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 114.
- <sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 389.
- <sup>83</sup>Demiashkevich. Introduction to Philosophy of Education, p. 275.
- <sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 191.
- <sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 276.
- <sup>86</sup>Brickman. "Literacy is Not Enough," in School and Society, Vol. LXXVIII, 1953, p. 171.

- 87 Hutchins. No Friendly Voice, p. 119.
- 88 Hutchins. Higher Learning, p. 83.
- 89 Adler. Revolution in Education, p. 118.
- 90 Koerner. Who Controls American Education, p. 158.
- 91 Koerner. This Education of American Teachers, p. 282.
- 92 Krutch. "Literature in the Good Life," in A Symposium On General and Liberal Education, bulletin no. 1 of the Association for General and Liberal Education, 1945.
- 93 Krutch. Omnibus, p. 243.
- 94 Ibid., p. 244.
- 95 Ibid., p. 145.
- 96 Ibid., p. 188.
- 97 Ibid., p. 113.
- 98 Kirck. Enemies of the Permanent Things, p. 94.
- 99 Ibid., p. 33.
- 100 Phenix. Man and Becoming, p. 44.
- 101 Ibid., p. 97.

## C H A P T E R I X

## SUMMARY

In conclusion, it can be said that, although few people have more than an intuitive understanding of what is generally called "traditional" education, a clear tradition does exist. This study has sought to present the theories behind the traditional practice. It has sought to present a conceptual analysis of the many individual statements of the traditional case, written chiefly in the twentieth century by those Americans who saw progressive educational ideas as a threat to excellence.

The question of nomenclature has been left unresolved. Instead, it has been argued that there is a real identity of views among twentieth century essentialists, and a sense of agreement between them and the classical tradition of education stretching back through the major nineteenth century American educators to the perennial classics of Europe and of the Graeco-Roman world.

It has been argued that this tradition regularly opposes the more recent progressive educational philosophy, but that this opposition is best seen in terms of emphasis; a useful model has been that of a continuum, from progressive to conservative, and that this continuum pertains to every

conceptual area. This model is based on W. C. Bagley's model of what he called "assumed opposites."

It has then been argued that essentialists are not extremists on this continuum; that they are rather, and see themselves, as moderates fighting the excesses of progressivism or of any absolutism or totalitarianism; and that they maintain a position central on this continuum, though skewed slightly in general, extremely in a few cases, to the right or traditionalist end of the scale.

There is a genuine tradition, although there are, of course, divergences within it; it is not only an identity of views, but also an historical tradition. This has been described in detail to prove with what assiduity essentialists read and rely on each other. The degree of quotation reflects this. Each essentialist is found to rely heavily on those who went before. The result is something of a covert club, membership of which comes by way of an identity of views and of mutual quotation. Each essentialist tends to read and quote a few special favorites. This thesis attempts to see **this** in broader terms and to collate all the favorites into a greater or perennial tradition. An appropriate metaphor used is that of the "saints" of the tradition and the "heretics" outside it. Bagley and Barzun are treated in greater detail as exemplary "saints." Dewey is examined as a source of great "heresy."

The review of literature finds that there has been little appreciation of this tradition. The general histories or philosophies of education mention



but do not adequately analyze the essentialists. The doctoral dissertations and periodical literature, although scholarly and detailed, seldom generalize at all.

Philosophically, the central concept of the essentialist is anti-absolutism or, more simply, moderation. This concept of a central position is thereafter seen to permeate essentialist thinking on all issues, philosophical, political, psychological, and pedagogical. They see themselves as moderates opposed to progressive extremism in all these areas.

The conventional view of essentialists as conservative extremists or hard-liners is belied by their moderation on such epistemological issues as the nature of science, and on such continua as those of the disciplines versus integrated study, sequential versus incidental learning, liberal versus vocational education, abstract versus concrete learning, work versus play, ends versus means; and on such metaphysical continua as those of idealism versus realism, naturalism versus supernaturalism, and of value systems versus nihilism.

Politically, this same anti-absolutism obtains. Starting from a view of society as based on the accumulated culture of mankind, though limited largely to the Graeco-Roman and European culture, they proceed to a vision of liberal democracy that is highly Jeffersonian or meritocratic. They take an appropriately central stand on such issues as elitism versus

populism, anarchy versus statism, the value of the individual versus the supremacy of society, and communism versus capitalism. They hate the totalitarian extremes represented by either fascism or communism.

Psychologically, they again strive for middle ground; they seek for moderate positions, opposed to progressive extremes, on such issues as those of the nature of psychology, on determinism, heredity versus environment, intelligence, creativity, learning theory, developmental theory, and motivation. Freud, in particular, is reclaimed to the fold as one who promoted a relativistic view of man, not deterministic.

Pedagogically, they are surprisingly moderate. Their moderate views on the curriculum stem from their moderation elsewhere, rather than vice versa. Language and literature are chosen in this study for special discussion, as generally these are seen by essentialists to be central to the culture of mankind. Essentialists are not die-hards for the study of Greek and Latin (with a few exceptions). Rather, the study of culture best continues with a scholarly pursuit of English language and literature, they would argue, together with scholarship in all the other disciplines.

In sum, there is a real tradition of essentialist thinking; it is generally self consistent, it differs clearly from the progressive view, it is self-consciously moderate rather than extreme. This moderation is perhaps most apparent in the more recent and sophisticated essentialists, especially Jacques Barzun and Philip Phenix. The tradition is more conservationist than conservative.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ESSENTIALIST LITERATURE EXAMINED

FOR FIGURES 1 and 2

ESSENTIALIST LITERATURE EXAMINED FOR FIGURES 1 AND 2

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APPENDIX B  
CURRICULUM OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, MARYLAND:  
Excerpt from Mark Van Doren, Liberal Education

But there is one contemporary college whose entire effort is concentrated upon the reading, uniformly by all of its students through four years, of a list of great books which is so long and so excellent, and at the same time so arduous, that it might appear to exhaust the category. It scarcely does that, nor would anyone be wrong who supposed that this or any other list should be challenged and revised; the college in question does in fact continually revise it. But the heart of the tradition is there with its essential chambers, and it is kept working for all of the students all of the time. It is the end of every other activity in this college; languages are learned so that these books may be read, and among the languages are those of mathematics and the laboratory. There are no textbooks to which the great books are supplementary; the great books are the textbooks of this college, as in a sense they are its teachers. For the faculty reads them too, in preparation for seminars where they will be discussed. And since there are no departments or divisions, all of the faculty must do what all of the students do: read all of the books.

The curriculum of St. John's College in Maryland, to be specific, is as follows:

Homer: *Iliad and Odyssey*  
 Aeschylus: *Oresteia*  
 Herodotus: *History*  
 Sophocles: *Oedipus Rex*  
 Hippocrates: *Ancient Medicine and Airs, Waters, and Places*  
 Euripides: *Medea*  
 Thucydides: *History of the Peloponnesian War*  
 Aristophanes: *Frogs, Clouds, Birds*  
 Aristarchus: *On the Sizes and Distances of the Sun and Moon*  
 Plato: *Dialogues*  
 Aristotle: *Organon, Poetics, Physics, Politics*  
 Archimedes: *Selected Works*  
 Euclid: *Elements*  
 Apollonius: *Conics*  
 Cicero: *On Duties*  
 Lucretius: *On the Nature of Things*  
 Virgil: *Aeneid*  
*The Bible*  
 Epictetus: *Moral Discourses*  
 Nicomachus: *Introduction to Arithmetic*  
 Plutarch: *Lives*  
 Tacitus: *The Histories*  
 Ptolemy: *Mathematical Composition*  
 Lucian: *True History*  
 Galen: *On the Natural Faculties*  
 Plotinus: *Enneads*  
 Augustine: *Confessions, On Music, Concerning the Teacher*  
 Justinian: *Institutes*  
*Song of Roland*  
*Saga of Burnt Njal*  
 Grosseteste: *On Light*  
 Bonaventure: *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*  
 Aquinas: *On Being and Essence, Treatise on God, Treatise on Man*  
 Dante: *Divine Comedy*  
 Chaucer: *Canterbury Tales*  
 Oresme: *On the Breadths of Forms*

Pico della Mirandola: *On the Dignity of Man*  
 Leonardo: *Note Books*  
 Machiavelli: *The Prince*  
 Erasmus: *In Praise of Folly*  
 Rabelais: *Gargantua*  
 Copernicus: *On the Revolutions of the Spheres*  
 Calvin: *Institutes*  
 Montaigne: *Essays*  
 Gilbert: *On the Loadstone*  
 Cervantes: *Don Quixote*  
 Shakespeare: *Henry IV, Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Tempest*  
 Francis Bacon: *Novum Organum*  
 Kepler: *Epitome of Astronomy*  
 Harvey: *On the Motion of the Heart*  
 Corneille: *Le Cid*  
 Galileo: *Two New Sciences*  
 Descartes: *Geometry, Discourse on Method, Meditations*  
 Hobbes: *Leviathan*  
 Boyle: *Sceptical Chymist*  
 Molière: *Tartuffe*  
 Pascal: *Pensées*  
 Milton: *Paradise Lost*  
 Racine: *Phèdre*  
 Grotius: *Law of War and Peace*  
 Spinoza: *Ethics, Theological-Political Treatise*  
 Newton: *Principia Mathematica*  
 Locke: *Second Treatise on Civil Government*  
 Huygens: *Treatise on Light*  
 Berkeley: *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*  
 Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics, Monadology*  
 Vico: *Scienza Nuova*  
 Swift: *Gulliver's Travels*  
 Hume: *Treatise of Human Nature*  
 Montesquieu: *Spirit of Laws*  
 Fielding: *Tom Jones*  
 Voltaire: *Candide, Micromegas*  
 Rousseau: *Social Contract*  
 Gibbon: *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*  
 Smith: *Wealth of Nations*  
 Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*  
*Constitution of the United States*  
*Federalist Papers*  
 Bentham: *Principles of Morals and Legislation*  
 Lavoisier: *Treatise on Chemistry*



Malthus: *Principles of Population*  
 Dalton: *A New System of Chemical Philosophy*  
 Hegel: *Philosophy of History*  
 Fourier: *Analytical Theory of Heat*  
 Goethe: *Faust*  
 Lobachevski: *Theory of Parallels*  
 Faraday: *Experimental Researches in Electricity*  
 Peacock: *Treatise on Algebra*  
 Boole: *Laws of Thought*  
 Virchow: *Cellular Pathology*  
 Mill: *On Liberty*  
 Darwin: *Origin of Species*  
 Bernard: *Introduction to Experimental Medicine*  
 Mendel: *Experiments in Plant Hybridization*  
 Riemann: *Hypotheses of Geometry*  
 Dostoevski: *The Possessed*  
 Marx: *Capital*  
 Tolstoy: *War and Peace*  
 Dedekind: *Essays on Numbers*  
 Maxwell: *Electricity and Magnetism*  
 Flaubert: *Bouvard and Pécuchet*  
 Ibsen: *Ghosts, Rosmersholm*  
 Joule: *Scientific Papers*  
 James: *Principles of Psychology*  
 Freud: *Studies in Hysteria*  
 Cantor: *Transfinite Numbers*  
 Hilbert: *Foundations of Geometry*  
 Poincaré: *Science and Hypothesis*  
 Russell: *Principles of Mathematics*  
 Veblen and Young: *Projective Geometry*

If such a curriculum seems formidable, education is formidable. If it seems bare, that is because the beholder does not know the books. For one who knows them the mere list of their titles is a curriculum bursting with content, and a content with which no other can compare. Descriptions in college catalogues of courses "about" things do not compare; they only suggest a cushion of history or exposition between the student and some "subject," a cushion which textbooks neatly cut and stuff, and which the teacher adjusts to every learner's comfort. The curriculum of St.

John's College is not trimmed, padded, labeled, or adjustable. It makes inexorable demands which are the same for all. Nor are they impossible demands; they are indeed more practicable than any others, because more rewarding. It is assumed by those who avoid great books that such books are especially difficult. The contrary is true. Most of them were written for everybody, in "a basic language about everything." A classic is always fresh, vernacular, sensible, and responsible. Even the mathematical and scientific classics were written in a tradition which made them intelligible; if we have lost contact with that tradition, the thing to do is to regain it—by mastering its classics—so that we may cease to be the gapers at abstraction which half of us now are.

If the list is imperfect, it can be improved by those who have the learning and the will to do so. Its present relevance to liberal education is immense in any case, for it represents the first serious effort in contemporary America to build a single and rational curriculum suited to the needs of minds which have work to do, and which someday should be unwilling to forgive any system of education that had required of them less discipline than this. Education is honored when it is hard, but it is most honored when it is hard and good. The human mind naturally delights in exercise. Any student is to be envied who has passed this much through his mind, and any teacher who does so annually.

The great books of the West are in several languages, and the flawless situation would be one in which the student read them as Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, German, or Russian originals. Such a situation will never be; translations are necessary. But the necessity is not lamentable. The better a book the more meaning it keeps in trans-

APPENDIX C

TEXT OF W. C. BAGLEY

"An Essentialist's Platform for the Advancement of American  
Education"

# EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION INCLUDING TEACHER TRAINING

Vol. XXIV

April, 1938

No. 4

## AN ESSENTIALIST'S PLATFORM FOR THE ADVANCE- MENT OF AMERICAN EDUCATION

WILLIAM C. BAGLEY

### PREFATORY NOTE

The first three sections of this paper were prepared by the writer for discussion by a small group which met at Atlantic City on February 26, 1938, and which adopted the name, The Essentialist Committee for the Advancement of American Education. An unauthorized release to the press including a few statements from this paper gave rise to rather wide publicity and led to somewhat fiery denunciations by prominent leaders in American educational theory. For this reason the first three sections are here published essentially as they were first presented. The article is published on the sole responsibility of the writer, and not as an official pronouncement of the Committee, although the members of the Committee are in substantial agreement with the position here taken and have suggested only minor changes, almost all of which have been made in revising the original draft. The Managing Editor of *EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION* has kindly agreed to publish further articles dealing with the same problem. It is hoped that other members of the Committee will make contributions. The Committee includes in addition to the writer: Dr. M. Demiashkevich; Dr. Walter H. Ryle; Dr. M. L. Shane; Mr. F. Alden Shaw, *Chairman and Organizer*; Dr. Louis Shores; Dr. Guy M. Whipple.

### I. THE SITUATION

In spite of its vast extent and its heavy cost to society, public education in the United States is in many ways appallingly weak and ineffective. For the sake of brevity only a few outstanding evidences of this weakness will be set forth here:

1. Age for age, the average pupil of our elementary schools does not meet the standards of achievement in the fundamentals of education that are attained in the elementary schools of many other countries. In so far as English-speaking countries are concerned, this statement can be and has been substantiated by the scores made in the elementary schools of these countries on American achievement tests, the norms of which represent the average scores of large, unselected

groups of American pupils. In the most extended investigation<sup>1</sup> of this type, the differences revealed are so wide as to justify no other inference than that American elementary-school achievement is far below what it could be and what it should be.

2. Similar comparisons relative to secondary education cannot be made because the secondary schools of practically all other countries are not intended for "all the children of all the people" as are our high schools. It is generally agreed among competent students of the problem that our average 18-year-old high-school graduate is scholastically far behind the average 18-year-old graduates of the secondary schools of many other countries. This difference has been recognized in the practice of admitting the latter to junior-year standing in many American colleges. But even granting that secondary education elsewhere is in general selective, there is abundant evidence that in our laudable efforts to send everyone to and through high school standards have been unnecessarily lowered. Both the bright and the slow pupils are handicapped by weaknesses in the fundamentals that all except those hopelessly subnormal are able to master. Within the past decade the effectiveness of high-school instruction has been weakened by increasing disabilities in so basic an accomplishment as reading. It is scarcely too much to say, indeed, that increasing proportions of pupils in the junior and senior high schools are essentially illiterate. Failures in such high-school studies as mathematics and natural science are in many cases traceable to the fact that pupils cannot read effectively. Classes in "remedial" reading are now necessary on the secondary level to bring pupils to a standard of literacy that primary- and intermediate-grade instruction could and should have insured. Equally lamentable weaknesses in basic arithmetic

<sup>1</sup> The study here referred to was published by the University of London Press in 1934 for the Scottish Council for Research in Education. (MacGregor, G.: *Achievement Tests in the Primary Schools: A Comparative Study with American Tests in Fife*.) A battery of American achievement tests was given to every eleven-year-old child in the County of Fife—about seven thousand in all. Even mentally defective children were included. While the findings are somewhat difficult to evaluate because Scottish children enter school at five rather than six, the conclusion stated in the text is clearly justified. The use of achievement tests in Canadian schools tells a similar story, for example in the province-wide survey of the schools of British Columbia conducted by Professor Peter Sandiford. One of the writer's colleagues who has constructed many tests reports that when he has included significant numbers of Canadian pupils in "standardizing" the tests, the norms have been raised to a point where the tests could not be used equitably with American pupils.

are reported. And it is now taken for granted by high-school teachers of Latin and modern languages that one of their chief duties is to teach their pupils the rudiments of English grammar.

3. In other and not at all exclusively scholastic accomplishments, American education is relatively ineffective. A recent study suggests that juvenile delinquency may be correlated in many cases with these reading disabilities which we contend are almost always unnecessary and easily avoidable by appropriate elementary education. And while no causal relationship is claimed, it is well to know that during the one hundred years in which universal elementary education has been increasingly the policy of all civilized countries, ours is apparently the only country in which the expansion of the universal school has not been paralleled by a significant and in some cases a remarkable decrease in the ratios of serious crime.

#### II. THE CAUSES: A. GENERAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL FACTORS

4. American education has been confronted with uniquely difficult and complicated problems which have arisen from a rapid growth in population; from a constantly advancing frontier; from the increase in national wealth; from the arrival year after year and decade after decade of millions of immigrants of widely diverse national origins; from the complex social and political situations involved in racial differences; from the profound changes brought about by the transition from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial civilization; from the growth of cities; from an ever-increasing mobility of the population; and from a multitude of other factors which have operated here with a force unprecedented in history and unparalleled in any other part of the world.

The American public school has met some of these problems with a notable measure of success. Of outstanding significance is the fact that among the states which by any test would be rated as the most advanced in civilization are those which have had the heaviest burden of immigration from backward countries to assimilate. And it should be said that, in general, the states that have had the most substantial (but not necessarily the most "Progressive") school systems have by far the lowest ratios of serious crime. In a notable degree, too, these same states, many of which do not rank high in *per capita* wealth, are those that have been least dependent upon the federal government for "relief" during the depression years. Beyond all this, the schools can claim a very high degree of definitely measurable success for their programs of physical development and health education.

5. The upward expansion of mass-education first to the secondary and now to the college level, which is probably the chief cause of our educational ineffectiveness, has been an outcome, not alone of a pervasive faith in education, to the realization of which the material wealth of the country was fairly adequate, but also and perhaps more fundamentally of economic factors. Power-driven machinery, while in many cases reducing occupational opportunities on the purely routine levels, quite as markedly opened new occupational opportunities in types of work that could not be done by machinery; work that involved deliberation and judgment; work for which a broad foundation in general education as well as specialized technical and vocational training was advantageous and often essential. That increasing numbers of young persons should seek the advantages of an extended education has been inevitable. Fortunately the wealth of the country has enabled the people of many sections to meet this demand. In opening the high schools and colleges to ever-increasing numbers, however, it was just as inevitable that scholastic standards should be relaxed, and when such a need arises it is only natural that those responsible for the administration of education should welcome any theory or philosophy which justifies or rationalizes such a policy—any theory of education which can make a virtue of necessity. Under such a condition, it is easy to understand why the relaxation of standards has been carried far beyond the actual needs of the case.

### III. THE CAUSES: B. EDUCATIONAL THEORIES THAT ARE ESSENTIALLY ENFEEBLING

6. Throughout the long history of education—and organized education is practically as old as civilization—two opposing theories have been in evidence. Although over-simplification is always dangerous, one with this caution may contrast these two theories of education by certain conflicting concepts summed up in pairing such opposites as “individual *vs.* society,” “freedom *vs.* discipline,” “interest *vs.* effort,” “play *vs.* work,”—or to use more recently current expressions, “immediate needs *vs.* remote goals,” “personal experience *vs.* race experience,” “psychological organization *vs.* logical organization,” “pupil-initiative *vs.* teacher-initiative.” The fundamental dualism suggested by these terms has persisted over the centuries. It came out sharply in Greek education during the Age of the Sophists. It was reflected in the educational changes brought about by the Italian Renaissance. It appeared in the 17th Century in a definite school of educational theory the adherents of which even at that time styled themselves the

"Progressives." It was explicit in the successive educational reforms proposed by Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Herbart. In American education it was reflected in the theories advocated and practiced by Bronson Alcott, in the work of Horace Mann, and later in the work of E. A. Sheldon and Francis W. Parker; while the present outstanding leader, John Dewey, first came into prominence during the last decade of the 19th Century in an effort to resolve the dualism through an integration expressed in the title of his classic essay, now called "Interest and Effort in Education."

7. Under the necessity which confronted American education of rationalizing the loosening of standards and the relaxation of rigor if mass-education were to be expanded upward, the theories which emphasized interest, freedom, immediate needs, personal experience, psychological organization, and pupil-initiative, and which in so doing tended to discredit and even condemn their opposites—effort, discipline, remote goals, race-experience, logical sequence, and teacher-initiative—naturally made a powerful appeal. Over more than a generation these theories have increasingly influenced the lower schools.<sup>1</sup> They find specific expression today in a variety of definite movements so numerous that even the more outstanding can here be listed.

(a) *The complete abandonment in many school systems of rigorous standards of scholastic achievement as a condition of promotion from grade to grade, and the passing of all pupils "on schedule."* This policy which found a strong initial support thirty years ago in the studies of "retardation and elimination" has of late been given even a wider appeal by the teachings of mental hygiene regarding the possible

<sup>1</sup> Dr. H. C. Morrison (*School and Commonwealth*, Chicago, 1937, p. 11) states that an educational philosophy embodying such theories has been gradually taking form in American education during the past fifty or sixty years. The present writer has publicly called attention for more than thirty years to manifestations of this influence, and to its weakening tendencies. His charges, with evidence supporting them, are matters of published record, duly documented. They have been frequently denounced, but never answered. In addition to published articles, the following books by the present writer make references to the problem: *The Educative Process*, 1905; *Classroom Management*, 1907; *School Discipline*, 1914; *Determinism in Education*, 1925; *Education, Crime, and Social Progress*, 1932; *Education and Emergent Man*, 1934. The theories were influencing the schools long before the terms "activity program," "integrated curriculum," "child-centered school," and the like came into vogue or had even been coined. It should be noted, too, that these theories have had no comparable recognition in the school systems of other countries except the Soviet Union, where after twelve years of consistent application they were abandoned in 1933 as hopelessly weak and ineffective.



effects of failure in disintegrating personality. The problem is extremely complicated as a later reference to it will show, but the movement has already resulted in at least one very important change. Instead of having "overage" pupils piling up in the intermediate grades, we now have "overgraded" pupils handicapped in the work of the junior and senior high schools by their lack of thorough training in the fundamentals already referred to.

(b) *The disparagement of system and sequence in learning and a dogmatic denial of any value in, even of any possibility of learning through, the logical, chronological, and causal relationships of learning materials.* This has led to an enthronement of the doctrine of incidental learning. Only as one becomes acquainted with facts and principles through applying them to vital problems that appeal to one as worth solving at the moment (so the theory holds) can one truly learn such facts and principles. And on the side of skills—such as the fundamental arts of language, measurement, and computation—mastery as far as possible should await an occasion when one of them is needed. As someone has said in effect, "These things are only tools, and when a workman needs a tool he goes to the shop and gets it." And yet this theory that "mind will not learn what is alien to its fundamental vital purposes," Thorndike has pronounced on the basis of extended experimentation, "to be attractive and plausible but definitely false."<sup>1</sup> The disparagement of systematic and sequential learning has also been criticized in no uncertain terms by John Dewey.<sup>2</sup>

(c) *The wide vogue of the so-called "activity movement."* This is an outgrowth of the so-called "project-method" which in its turn was an effort to find, or to encourage the learner to find, problems or vital purposes in the solution of which desirable learnings could be effected. The activity movement and the resulting "activity programs" and "activity curricula," like the project-method, have an important place—a central function in the primary school, and a very useful supplementary function on all educational levels. The tendency to make them a substitute for systematic and sequential learning and to go even further and regard activity as a sufficient end in itself irrespective of whether or not anything is learned through the activity is another matter. It is, however, an intriguing proposal. As one enthusiastic activist said, "Let us not use activities as pegs on which to hang subject-matter." If the schools only provide an abun-

<sup>1</sup> Thorndike, E. L.: *Adult Interests*. New York, 1935, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Especially in an article in *The New Era* referred to below.

dance of "rich experiences" for the learner, it seems, other things will miraculously take care of themselves. This is not at all absurd if one accepts the premises; it is a thoroughly consistent result of the theory of incidental learning carried to its logical conclusion.

(d) *The discrediting of the exact and exacting studies.* The most significant barrier to opening the high schools to the masses was at the outset the practically universal requirement of Latin, algebra, and geometry in the secondary program. Perhaps inherently and certainly as commonly taught, the difficulties in mastering these subjects were quite beyond a large proportion of pupils. At the same time the practical value of the subjects was difficult to defend. Their central place in the curriculum, however, was believed to be justified in a high degree by the mental discipline that their mastery involved. Anything that would tend to discredit this justification was seized upon by those responsible for the upward expansion of mass-education. Most fortunately for their purposes there appeared just at the turn of the century the report of the first careful psychological experiments testing the validity of the theory of mental discipline. These really classic experiments of Thorndike and Woodworth were followed by a long series of similar investigations that aimed to determine in how far learnings acquired in one subject were, or could be, applied in other situations. The results in general indicated that such a "transfer" was far from inevitable and in some cases either quite negative or so slight as to bring the whole theory into question.

The proponents of the universal high school and of other educational movements that were impeded by the requirement of subjects inherently difficult to the average mind were not slow to capitalize these experimental findings. As is natural under conditions of this sort, the evidence was generalized to a far greater extent than the experiments warranted, and with far-reaching results in school practice. Although the absolute number enrolled in Latin classes has increased, only a small proportion of pupils graduating from the high schools during the past ten years have even been exposed to Latin. Increasing proportions, too, are quite innocent of any training in elementary mathematics beyond the increasingly ineffective modicum of arithmetic acquired in the elementary schools. But the important fact is that there has been a growing practice of discouraging even competent learners from undertaking the studies that are exact though exacting; hence the upward expansion of mass-education, while sincerely a democratic movement, is not guarding itself against the potentially most fatal pitfall of democracy. It has deliberately

adopted the easy policy of leveling-down rather than facing resolutely the difficult task of leveling-up—and upon the possibility of leveling-up the future of democracy indisputably depends. As John Dewey has contended, the older curriculum of classics and mathematics does have a unique value to those competent to its mastery—a value for which the so-called reform movements have not as yet, in his judgment, provided a substitute.<sup>1</sup>

(e) *An increasingly heavy emphasis upon the "social studies."* While the exact and exacting studies were in effect being discredited, the primrose-path of least resistance was opened ever wider in the field known as the social studies. The argument here is plausible and appealing. "Education for citizenship" is a ringing slogan with limitless potentialities, especially in an age when high-sounding shibboleths, easily formulated, can masquerade as fundamental premises and postulates wrought through the agony of hard thinking.

Obviously no fundamental premise in educational thinking could fail to recognize the importance of a firm foundation in the history of human institutions, or of an acquaintance with present and pressing social problems especially in the light of their genesis; or of an acquaintance with such principles of economics, sociology, and political science as have been well established.

But just as obviously the social sciences, so called, are not in the same class with the natural sciences. Their generalizations permit trustworthy predictions only in a few cases and then only in a slight degree. When the human element enters, uncertainty enters—else the world could have anticipated and adjusted itself to Hitler and Mussolini and Stalin and the military oligarchy of Japan and would not be standing dazed and impotent as it stands today. And while to expect an educational pabulum of social studies in the lower schools essentially to overcome this inherent limitation of the social sciences is an alluring prospect, it is to expect nothing less than a miracle. It is, indeed, just as sensible as would be a brave and desperate effort to incite immature minds to square the circle.

(f) *Using the lower schools to establish a new social order.* The proposal definitely and deliberately to indoctrinate immature learners

<sup>1</sup> "Development . . . is a continuous process, and continuity signifies consecutiveness of action. Here was the strong point of traditional education at its best. . . . The subject-matter of the classics and mathematics involved of necessity, for those who mastered it, a consecutive and orderly development along definite lines. Here lies, perhaps, the greatest problem of the newer efforts in education." Dewey, J.: "The Need of a Philosophy of Education." *The New Era*, London, November, 1934, pp. 214f.

in the interest of a specific social order and one that involves wide departures from that which prevails in our country is to be questioned, if for no other reasons, upon the grounds set forth in the preceding paragraphs. With the growing ineffectiveness of the lower schools in failing to lay adequate foundations in fundamental and established learnings of unquestioned permanence and value, such efforts would necessarily be superficial in the last degree. It would be an extreme case of building what may be characterized for the sake of argument as a perfectly splendid edifice on shifting sands—in this case, quicksands would be the more appropriate metaphor. And here we might well study certain peoples that have actually achieved a social order which is pointed to by our idealists as exemplifying in many ways the realization of their dreams. Reference is made, of course, to such countries as Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and New Zealand. An outstanding fact of fundamental significance is that these countries have *not* achieved these laudable results by emasculating their educational systems. Their peoples indeed would stand aghast at the very suggestion.

(g) *The "curriculum-revision" movement and its vagaries.* The various reform proposals just discussed have culminated in the general movement known as curriculum-revision which has dominated the lower schools for nearly twenty years. A primary emphasis has been the alleged need of building the programs of instruction around the local community. As long ago as 1933 more than 30,000 different curricula were on file in the curriculum-laboratory of Teachers College, Columbia University. Most of these had been prepared during the preceding decade by committees of teachers in local school systems throughout the country. Sometimes the committees were personally directed by a "curriculum-expert"; in practically all cases a rapidly developing theory evolved by these specialists guided the work. In so far as we can learn, this theory has never explicitly recognized that the state or the nation has a stake in the content of school instruction. The need of common elements in the basic culture of all people, especially in a democracy, has in effect been denied. Furthermore, with the American people the most mobile in the world, with stability of residence over the period of school attendance the exception and not the rule in many sections of the country, and with a significantly higher average of school failure among pupils whose parents move from place to place than among those who remain in the same community, the curriculum theorists have been totally insensitive to the need of a certain measure of uniformity in school requirements and

in the grade-placement of crucial topics. In addition to all this, the clear tendency of the curriculum-revision movement has been to minimize basic learnings, to magnify the superficial, to belittle sequence and system, and otherwise to aggravate the weakness and ineffectiveness of the lower schools.

#### IV. THE PROBLEM AND THE PLATFORM

8. It is particularly unfortunate that American education should be unnecessarily weak at a time when the situation both at home and abroad is critical in the last degree.

The American people are facing an economic problem which both in nature and in magnitude is without an even remotely similar precedent in all history. In the richest country in the world, two thirds of the world's unemployment is now concentrated. In the midst of potential abundance, the cogs in the wheels of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption have lamentably failed to mesh.

It is the indicated and imminent task of the present dominant generation to solve this problem under whatever expert guidance at the hands of the economist and the social engineer it may find and accept. The student of education must coöperate with all other citizens in this task. It is his own specific duty, however, to consider the problems in his field that are bound to arise in the changes that seem now to be inevitable, regardless of the form which the solution of the present desperate economic situation may take—this with one exception, for if in desperation the American people discard democracy and yield to a dictator the sincere student of education will have no function and consequently no duty. The yes-man and the rubber-stamp will take his place. He will be a luxury without a purpose; and the dictators have standardized a simple but effective technique for liquidating luxuries of this sort.

9. We shall assume, however, that "it can't happen here" and that, whatever may be the new economic and social order, the political order based upon representative government and the Bill of Rights will persist. Hence a primary function of American education will be to safeguard and strengthen these ideals of American democracy, with especial emphasis upon freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion. It is clear enough now that whenever any one of these is permitted to collapse, the whole democratic structure will topple like a house of cards. These, then, are among the first essentials in the platform of the Essentialist.

10. Democracy is now distinctly on trial. It is under criticism and suspicion. Every weakness will be watched for and welcomed by

its enemies. Inevitably the future will bring competition if not clashes and conflicts with the now militantly anti-democratic peoples. Democratic societies cannot survive either competition or conflict with totalitarian states unless there is a democratic discipline that will give strength and solidarity to the democratic purpose and ideal. If the theory of democracy finds no place for discipline, then, the theory will have before long only historical significance. French education, much closer to the danger, has recognized this imperative need. Still unswerving in fidelity to the ideals of democracy, and still giving its first emphasis to clarity of thought and independence in individual thinking as the time-honored objectives of French education, it recognizes no less the fundamental importance of social solidarity in the defense of democracy.<sup>1</sup>

American educational theory long since dropped the term "discipline" from its vocabulary. Today its most vocal and influential spokesmen enthrone the right even of the immature learner to choose what he shall learn. They condemn as "authoritarian" all learning tasks that are imposed by the teacher. They deny any value in the systematic and sequential mastery of the lessons that the race has learned at so great a cost. They condone and rationalize the refusal of the learner to attack a task that does not interest him. In effect they open wide the lines of least resistance and least effort. Obedience they stigmatize as a sign of weakness. All this they advocate in the magic names of "democracy" and "freedom."

Now, obviously, the freedom of the immature to choose what they shall learn is of negligible consequence compared with their later freedom from the want, fear, fraud, superstition, and error which may fetter the ignorant as cruelly as the chains of the slave-driver—and the price of this freedom is systematic and sustained effort often devoted to the mastery of materials the significance of which must at the time be taken on faith.

11. This problem is far more than merely personal or individual in its reference. A democratic society has a vital, collective stake in the informed intelligence of every individual citizen. That a literate electorate is absolutely indispensable not only to its welfare but to its very survival is clearly demonstrated by the sorry fate that so speedily overtook every unschooled and illiterate democracy founded as a result of the War that was to "Make the world safe for democracy."

<sup>1</sup> See the concluding paragraphs of Bouglé, C.: "The French Conception of 'Culture Générale,'" a series of lectures at Teachers College, Columbia University, April, 1938. To be published by the Teachers College Bureau of Publications.

And literacy in this sense means, of course, far more than the mere ability to translate printed letters into spoken words; it means the development and expansion of ideas; it means the basis for intelligent understanding and for the collective thought and judgment which are the essence of democratic institutions. These needs are so fundamental to an effective democracy that it would be folly to leave them to the whim or caprice of either learner or teacher.

Among the essentials of the Essentialist, then, is a recognition of the right of the immature learner to guidance and direction when these are needed either for his individual welfare or for the welfare and progress of the democratic group. The responsibility of the mature for the instruction and control of the immature is the biological meaning of the extended period of human immaturity and necessary dependence. It took the human race untold ages to recognize this responsibility. It is literally true that until this recognition dawned man remained a savage. Primitive societies, as numerous students have observed (and their testimony seems to be unanimous), pamper and indulge their young. Freedom of children from control, guidance, and discipline is with them a rule so nearly universal that its only brief but significant exception during the nearly universal savage ceremonies marking the adolescent onset of maturity is regarded as the first faint beginning of consciously directed human education.

It would be futile to deny that control and discipline may be stupid and brutal and used for unworthy ends. It would be futile to deny the need for the development of self-discipline and for the relaxation of external discipline with the growth of volitional maturity. But all this does not alter the fundamental truth that freedom must go hand in hand with responsibility, and that responsible freedom is always a conquest, never a gift.

12. An effective democracy demands a community of culture. Educationally this means that each generation be placed in possession of a common core of ideas, meanings, understandings, and ideals representing the most precious elements of the human heritage.

There can be little question as to the essentials. It is by no means a mere accident that the arts of recording, computing, and measuring have been among the first concerns of organized education. They are basic social arts. Every civilized society has been founded upon these arts, and when these arts have been lost, civilization has invariably and inevitably collapsed. Egypt, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia are strewn with the ruins of civilizations that forgot how to read and write. Contemporary civilization, for the first time in history has attempted

to insure its continuance by making these arts in so far as possible the prerogative of all.

Nor is it at all accidental that a knowledge of the world that lies beyond one's immediate experience has been among the recognized essentials of universal education, and that at least a speaking acquaintance with man's past and especially with the story of one's own country was early provided for in the program of the universal school. Widening the space horizon and extending the time perspective are essential if the citizen is to be protected from the fallacies of the local and the immediate.

Investigation, invention, and creative art have added to the heritage and the list of recognized essentials has been extended and will be further extended. Health instruction and the inculcation of health practices are now basic phases of the work of the lower schools. The elements of natural science have their place. Neither the fine arts nor the industrial arts are neglected.

We repeat that there can be little question as to the essentials of universal education. As Charles A. Beard has so well said: "While education constantly touches the practical affairs of the hour and day, and responds to political and economic exigencies, it has its own treasures heavy with the thought and sacrifice of the centuries. It possesses a heritage of knowledge and heroic examples—accepted values stamped with the seal of permanence."<sup>1</sup>

13. A specific program of studies including these essentials should be the heart of a democratic system of education. In a country like ours with its highly mobile population there should be an agreement as to the order and grade-placement of subjects and especially of crucial topics.<sup>2</sup> There is no valid reason for the extreme localism that has come to characterize American education. There is no valid reason for the failure of the American elementary school to lay as firm a foundation in the fundamentals of education as do the elementary schools of other democracies. It is especially regrettable that contemporary educational theory should in effect condone and rationalize scamped work by ridiculing such traits as thoroughness, accuracy, persistence, and the ideal of good workmanship for its own sake. One may be very sure that democracy schooled to the easy way will have

<sup>1</sup> *The Unique Function of Education in American Democracy*. Washington: The Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association, 1937, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Fortunately the National Society for the Study of Education is sponsoring a *Yearbook* dealing with this problem. This will be published in 1939.



short shrift in competition or conflict with any social order dominated by objectives which, however reprehensible, are clear-cut and appealing, and are consequently embraced even by disfranchised masses.

14. Generally speaking, the recognized essentials should be taught as such through a systematic program of studies and activities for the carrying out of which the teachers should be responsible. Informal learning through experiences initiated by the learners is important, and abundant opportunities should be provided for such experiences throughout the range of organized education. Beyond the primary grades, however, where as we have said it may well predominate, informal learning should be regarded as supplementary rather than central.

15. Failure in school is unpleasant and the repetition of a grade is costly and often not very effective. On the other hand, the lack of a stimulus that will keep the learner to his task is a serious injustice both to him and to the democratic group which, we repeat, has a fundamental stake in his effective education. Too severe a stigma has undoubtedly been placed upon school failure by implying that it is symptomatic of permanent weakness. By no means is this always the case. No less a genius than Pasteur did so poorly in his first year at the Higher Normal School of Paris that he had to go home for further preparation. One of the outstanding scientists of the present century had a hard time in meeting the requirements of the secondary school, failing, it is said, in the most elementary work of the field in which he later became world-famous. The list could be extended almost indefinitely.

Obviously not all learners can progress at the same rate. Some will go very, very slowly. Others will have trouble in getting started but will progress rapidly when they overcome the initial handicaps. Let us not stigmatize failure as we have done in the past. On the other hand, if education abandons rigorous standards and consequently provides no effective stimulus to the effort that learning requires, many persons will pass through twelve years of schooling only to find themselves in a world in which ignorance and lack of fundamental training are increasingly heavy handicaps. This in an all too literal sense is to throw the baby out with the bath.

16. The transition from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban life has laid increasing burdens upon American education. For four decades or more we have been told that the school must provide opportunities for types of education that the normal bringing-up of chil-

children once provided on the farm and in the home. Manual training and the household arts were among the first responses to this demand. The parallel development of physical training with its later ramifications into various forms of health education are traceable in part to the same causes. Playgrounds, gymnasiums, and swimming pools are material expressions of the effort to meet these recognized needs. School and college athletics are lusty by-products representing in a very real sense the importance of finding a substitute for the vigorous physical work that once devolved of necessity upon the great majority of young people.

With the profound changes in the conditions of life already in progress, and with their clearly predictable extension and intensification in the immediate future, analogous substitutes must be sought for other educative experiences which the simpler conditions of life naturally and normally provided. Bread-winning employment is now postponed for vast numbers of young people. Willy-nilly they must remain dependent upon society, whether in attendance at school or college, or in such highly important educational enterprises as the Civilian Conservation Corps, or in "made work" of one variety or another.

The analogy of our civilization with the older civilizations based upon slavery is in no sense far-fetched. It has, indeed, a profound significance. Our slaves, it is true, are mechanical and not human. They are power-driven and increasingly they are being automatically controlled. They can do much more economically than human slaves the heavy work and the routine work. In some tasks they can perceive distinctions far too fine to be detected by the human senses, and they can respond far more quickly and far more accurately and dependably than can human nerves and muscles. Fortunately they can neither feel nor suffer, and so the grossest evils of the old slave civilizations are avoided. The fact remains, however, that the perils to those who are the supposed beneficiaries of a slave civilization are in no significant degree changed, whether the slaves be men or robots. Every slave civilization has within it the seeds of degeneration, decay, and ultimate extinction. Struggle and competition, selection and rejection, have often been cruel, but in both biological and social evolution they have been primary factors of progress. In societies that have lifted themselves above the plane of the brute and the savage, a most powerful steady-going and civilizing force has been the ideal of personal economic responsibility for one's own survival and for one's old age and the care of one's dependents.

Generally speaking, then, "social security," like responsibility and freedom, has been a conquest, not a gift. Making it a gift involves some definite dangers. In our own country, few families have long survived the social security that comes through inherited wealth. "Three generations from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves" has usually told the story. But this rule has had its exceptions. Here, as in some other countries, social security has, with occasional families, remained secure over a much longer time—but under the conditions that each generation has been rigorously disciplined to its responsibilities and made clearly aware of the pitfalls that await the spendthrift and the idler. These exceptions, and especially those among them that have exemplified the development in each generation of a vigorous and highly sensitized social conscience, warrant the hope that an economy of abundance with social security for all may be so organized that our machine-slave civilization can escape that fate of the slave civilizations that have gone before. Herein lies an educational problem of the first magnitude which our educational theorists seem not even dimly to have sensed—so busy have they been in condemning out of hand the economic system which has made possible an economy of abundance based upon a machine-slave civilization.

A clear and primary duty of organized education at the present time is to recognize the fundamental character of the changes that are already taking place, and to search diligently for means of counteracting their dangers. Let us repeat that an educational theory meet to these needs must be strong, virile, and positive not feeble, effeminate, and vague. The theories that have increasingly dominated American education during the past generation are at basis distinctly of the latter type. The Essentialists have recognized and still recognize the contributions of real value that these theories have made to educational practice. They believe, however, that these positive elements can be preserved in an educational theory which finds its basis in the necessary dependence of the immature upon the mature for guidance, instruction, and discipline. This dependence is inherent in human nature. "What has been ordained among the prehistoric protozoa," said Huxley, "cannot be altered by act of Parliament"—nor, we may add, by the wishful thinking of educational theorists, however sincere their motives. "Authoritarianism" is an ugly word. But when those who detest it carry their laudable rebellion against certain of its implications so far as to reject the authority of plain facts, their arguments, while well adapted perhaps to the generation of heat, become lamentably lacking in light.



