

shared or common activities" (*DE*, 130). As two recent historians of the Gary Plan observe, Wirt "wanted an educated populace, but educated to take orders cheerfully and positively; above all he desired order, voluntary or otherwise." Thus the Gary schools showed that some of the innovative pedagogical methods that emerged from Dewey's laboratory could be put to social uses quite other than those he intended.<sup>34</sup>

More often than not, however, the differences between Dewey and the administrative progressives were not obscured. [Reviewing *Democracy and Education* in 1918, one hard-boiled sociologist remarked critically that "while it is true that citizens of a democracy need to be taught to think, it is even more important, especially in the present crisis, that they be trained to revere and to obey." He took comfort in the fact that Dewey's book would be "greatly handicapt" because it was too hard for the average educator to read.]

#### A NEW REPUBLIC

As the foregoing discussion suggests, the task of placing Dewey's thought in this period in the larger context of "progressivism" is rendered difficult by the utter lack of consensus among historians of the reform initiatives of the early twentieth century about what exactly progressivism was. Some have argued it was a movement of "old middle class" reformers suffering from "status-anxiety" who sought to use state power to curb the threat both of the growing power of big business and of an immigrant working class which had them caught in an uncomfortable squeeze. Others have contended that it was a movement of confident, technocratic, "new middle class" professionals eager to seize power in state and society in the name of expertise and efficiency. Still others have argued that progressive reform was a conservative movement led by big business, rationalized by "corporate liberal" intellectuals, and designed to create a "political capitalism" friendly to the giant corporation. Not all of these historians can be right, and thus an assessment of Dewey's "progressivism" requires a bit of the sort of historiographical discussion I have otherwise tried to confine to my notes.<sup>36</sup>

34. Cohen and Mohl, *Paradox of Progressive Education*, p. 17. For a typical example of the response of administrative progressives to the Gary Plan see the 1918 report by Abraham Flexner and Frank P. Bachman republished in the reprint edition of Bourne's *Gary Schools*, pp. 217-313.

35. Ross Finney as quoted in Krug, *Shaping of the American High School*, p. 422.

36. The classic versions of these arguments are (1) Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage, 1955), chaps. 4-7; (2) Samuel Hays, *The Response to Industrial-*

Of late, there seems to be general agreement among historians that the obituary Peter Filene offered in 1970 for progressivism as a *movement*—a self-conscious collective group with a clear membership and consistent and shared goals—was appropriate, but no clear alternative has emerged. Although this is not the place to argue fully the case for any such alternative, I would like to offer a sketch of the terrain of American reform in the period between 1890 and World War I in order to give some sense of where I think Dewey belongs among his contemporaries.<sup>37</sup>

[First of all, I think one should look at reform in this period as the product of not one but three efforts to reshape the contours of American society: the reconstruction of American capitalism by the leaders of the nation's large corporations and their allies; a wide variety of middle-class reform initiatives for which we might reserve the term "progressivism"; and the attempt of American labor organizations ranging from American Federation of Labor trade unions to the syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World to preserve the traditional prerogatives of labor and, in some cases, to establish new forms of workers' control. Each of these reform efforts was marked by internal divisions and by complicated relationships of opposition and cooperation with the other two. They did share in what Martin Sklar has termed the "anti-competitive consensus," a belief in the need to curb the effects of an unregulated competitive market; the only real "conservatives" in this era were the defenders of proprietary, competitive capitalism, and even they made considerable concessions to the critique of the market.]<sup>38</sup>

ism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), and Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); and (3) Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism* (New York: Free Press, 1963), and James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968). There are also useful, if conflicting, essays on the historiography of progressivism. See Robert Wiebe, "The Progressive Years, 1900-1917," in William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Watson, Jr., eds., *The Reinterpretation of American History and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: National Council for Social Studies, 1973), pp. 425-442; David M. Kennedy, "Overview: The Progressive Era," *Historian* 37 (1975): 453-468; John D. Buenker, John C. Burnham, and Robert M. Crunden, *Progressivism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1977); Daniel T. Rodgers, "In Search of Progressivism," *Reviews in American History* 10 (1982): 113-132; and Richard L. McCormick, "Progressivism: A Contemporary Reassessment," in McCormick, *The Party Period and Public Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 263-288.

37. Peter Filene, "An Obituary for the 'Progressive Movement,'" *American Quarterly* 22 (1970): 20-34.

38. Martin J. Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 17. Although Sklar focuses exclusively on the first of these reform efforts, this sketch owes a great deal to his argument—a sophisticated rethinking of the "corporate liberal" view of progressivism. I have also found Michael McGerr's unpublished paper sketching out

Within the loose constraints of this anticompetitive consensus, ideological differences within each reform camp were substantial, and nowhere more substantial than among the middle-class progressives, as is evident in the unsuccessful efforts of historians to characterize progressivism as an ideology grounded simply in either old middle-class Protestant moralism or the new middle-class scientific gospel of efficiency. Some progressives spoke one of these "languages of social vision and discontent" and some the other—and many spoke both simultaneously. Moreover, each of these languages and its combinations was loose enough to allow for the articulation of decidedly different social ideals. This looseness of progressive language has contributed to the shortcomings of efforts to categorize Dewey.<sup>39</sup>

[Robert Crunden, for example, has seen Dewey as exemplifying the "displaced Protestantism" he finds at the heart of progressivism. Dewey was one of "a group of people who had internalized Protestant moral norms, but who often could not find psychological satisfaction within the ministry, or even within religious institutions generally" and consequently "displaced" this moral concern in social reform.] Much can be said for this argument. As we have seen, there is a great deal of continuity in Dewey's ethical thought despite his break with institutional religion. It is not, I think, too extreme to say with [Crunden that for Dewey the school replaced the church in the 1890s as "the key institution in the saving of souls for democracy."<sup>40</sup>

some of the arguments of a forthcoming book on the period quite helpful, though his characterization of middle-class progressivism as an "intentionally conservative program" leaves no place for the likes of Dewey ("Confinement, Liberation, and Social Class: Synthesizing Early Twentieth-Century American History," paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, December 1986). On labor activism in the period see David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

39. The phrase "languages of social vision and discontent" is Daniel Rodgers's ("In Search of Progressivism," p. 123). On the progressives as Protestant moralists see Robert M. Crunden, *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives' Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* (New York: Basic Books, 1982). On them as proponents of science and bureaucratic thought see Wiebe, *Search for Reform*, chap. 6; Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); and R. Jeffrey Lustig, *Corporate Liberalism: The Origins of Modern American Political Theory, 1890-1920* (Berkeley: University of California, 1982). A recent survey that sharply divides progressives into these two groups, yet often admits the artificiality of the division, is David Danbom, *"The World of Hope": Progressives and the Struggle for an Ethical Public Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987). Danbom's book is marked by a refreshing absence of contempt for the moral concern of his favored progressives.

40. Robert M. Crunden, "Essay," in Buenker, Burnham, and Crunden, *Progressivism*, pp. 75-76, 96.

On the other hand, as I have indicated, Dewey's break with conventional Protestant notions of progress and the absolute ethical authority of God had important consequences for his thought. Most important, perhaps, this break sharpened his critique of the sort of paternalistic benevolence that clothed itself in this authority and was prominent among many Protestant progressive reformers, displaced or not, whose biographical trajectory from religion to reform was similar to his own. This criticism, which he had voiced even as a Protestant, was powerfully restated in the *Ethics*:

The vice of the social leader, of the reformer, of the philanthropist and the specialist in every worthy cause of science, or art, or politics, is to seek ends which promote the social welfare in ways which fail to engage the active interest and cooperation of others. The conception of conferring the good upon others, or at least attaining it for them, which is our inheritance from the aristocratic civilization of the past, is so deeply embodied in religious, political, and charitable institutions and in moral teachings, that it dies hard. Many a man, feeling himself justified by the social character of his ultimate aim (it may be economic, or educational, or political), is genuinely confused or exasperated by the increasing antagonism and resentment which he evokes, because he has not enlisted in his pursuit of the "common" end the freely cooperative activities of others. This cooperation must be the root principle of the morals of democracy. (*E*, 276)

[As Dewey perceived, the language of middle-class benevolence often betrayed a view of the masses as inert material on which reformers might work their will, and he called instead for a reconstructed conception of helping others which enlisted their full and willing participation in the provision of social welfare.]

Efforts to tie Dewey tightly to the gospel of efficiency are even more questionable. On this view, his advocacy of "scientific intelligence" is seen to have provided, either knowingly or unknowingly, a philosophical underpinning for the ambitions of new-middle-class experts. Pragmatism pointed toward an antipolitics in which, according to R. Jeffrey Lustig, "scientists would constitute a neutral bar before whom people of differing outlooks could bring their conflicts, and by whose verdicts they would willingly be bound." Dewey's philosophy, in brief, was a "bureaucratic epistemology" that "dovetailed" with the thinking of the father of scientific management, Frederick W. Taylor. In even more extreme fashion, Clarence Karier has declared that Dewey offered a "philosophic justification for the dominant economic organization of

the period" and "never seriously challenged the power sources within American society." Committed to "expert knowledge over populist opinion," Dewey advocated the "use of unchecked state power to control the future through shaping the thought, action, and character of its citizens." Pragmatism "provided the moral dexterity so necessary for the intellectuals who became servants of power within the liberal state," offering a philosophy that translated questions of moral value into "problems of strategy" and defined principles as "the expedient within a given set of social circumstances."<sup>41</sup>

Most interpretations of this sort attempt to derive sustenance from the remark of a disillusioned Randolph Bourne in 1917 that World War I had

revealed a younger intelligentsia, trained up in the pragmatic dispensation, immensely ready for the executive ordering of events, pitifully unprepared for the intellectual interpretation or the idealistic focusing

41. Lustig, *Corporate Liberalism*, pp. 153, 173, 155; Clarence Karier, "Liberal Ideology and the Quest for Orderly Change," in Karier, Paul Violas, and Joel Spring, *Roots of Crisis: American Education in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Rand McNally, 1973), pp. 85, 86, 87, 93, and "Making the World Safe for Democracy: An Historical Critique of John Dewey's Pragmatic Liberal Philosophy in the Warfare State," *Educational Theory* 27 (1977): 25-26. Many of Lustig's criticisms of Dewey's thought are apt and similar to my own. Yet his efforts to establish that Dewey was not really a democrat and that pragmatism was a philosophy of administrative reason are based on what I find to be extremely tendentious readings. Ironically, it seems to me that Dewey's political vision is, in important respects, quite similar to the democratic alternative to corporate liberalism Lustig offers at the end of his book. Karier's readings are not merely tendentious but often just plain wrong. He seems to have an almost visceral dislike for Dewey, reflected in arguments that build on a crude kind of social determinism to suggest that because Dewey was a member of the bourgeois class (he owned stock!) his reform proposals were necessarily bourgeois. Karier is a leader of what might be called the "Illinois school" of revisionist educational historians, which is distinguished by its attacks on Dewey, Jane Addams, and other democratic progressives. (See e.g. Paul Violas's contribution to *Roots of Crisis*; Walter Feinberg, *Reason and Rhetoric: The Intellectual Foundations of Twentieth Century Liberal Educational Policy* [New York: John Wiley, 1975]; and Walter Feinberg and Henry Rosemont, Jr., eds., *Work, Technology, and Education: Dissenting Essays in the Intellectual Foundation of American Education* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975].) My criticisms here apply only to this particular wing of revisionist history of American education. Much revisionist scholarship is quite persuasive, and some revisionists have taken a view of Dewey quite similar to mine. See, for example, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), pp. 20-26 (Karier takes them to task for this in a review of this book, "The Odd Couple: Radical Economics and Liberal History," *Educational Studies* 7 [1976]: 185-193). David J. Hogan, a one-time student of Karier's and the other Illinois revisionists, has advanced a penetrating critique of their perspective and offered a far more sophisticated radical interpretation of progressive educational reform (Hogan, *Class and Reform*, p. 230). For a taste of the sort of nasty polemics this revisionist historiography has generated with liberal and neoconservative historians see Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revised: A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), and Michael Katz, *Reconstructing American Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), chap. 5.

of ends. . . . The formulation of values and ideals, the production of articulate and suggestive thinking, had not, in their education, kept pace, to any extent whatever, with their technical aptitude. . . . It is true, Dewey calls for a more attentive formulation of war-purposes and ideas, but he calls largely to deaf ears. His disciples have learned all too literally the instrumental attitude toward life, and being immensely intelligent and energetic, they are making themselves efficient instruments of the war-technique, accepting with little question the ends as announced from above.

Often overlooking Bourne's exemption of Dewey himself from many of his strictures, some historians have blamed him for the sins of his disciples and linked the corruption of reason Bourne identified to his conception of "scientific intelligence" and this in turn to a rationale for the power of amoral technocrats. But Dewey's notion of scientific thinking cannot be construed as a commitment to purely technical rationality. Indeed, he valued scientific thinking most because of the support he believed it provided for the consideration of competing ends, of clashing values. At the same time, he did not construe science as "substantive reason" that could simply determine value choices as if this were a matter of identifying some brute (or transcendental) existence. Dewey did not believe such substantive reason existed; this was the burden of his attack on the epistemology industry. "The good can never be demonstrated to the senses," he said. "It involves a radical venture of the will in the interest of what is unseen and prudentially incalculable" (*E*, 371). In the moral life, to use Aristotle's terms, science was neither *sophia* nor *techne* but *phronesis*, practical reason.<sup>42</sup>

Dewey's call for scientific intelligence was not a call for the rule of intelligent scientists but for the egalitarian distribution of the capacity for scientific thinking and its incorporation into democratic decision making in the polity, workplace, and elsewhere. He continued to be wary of centralized state power and though he firmly believed that ex-

42. Randolph Bourne, "Twilight of Idols" (1917), *Radical Will*, pp. 342-343. A similar reading of Dewey's philosophy, free of Bourne's qualifications, which seems to have had some influence on the interpretation I criticize here is that of Max Horkheimer in *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974, originally published in 1947). Like the rest of the first generation of the Frankfurt School, Horkheimer did not know what he was talking about when it came to pragmatism. This is not true of the leading figure in the next generation of the school, Jürgen Habermas (see e.g. "The Scientization of Politics and Public Opinion," in Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1970], pp. 62-80). One would have thought Dewey's controversial and proto-postpositivist treatment of *natural science* as a "practical" community would have drawn more attention from historians, but it has not because most have wrongly assumed that his philosophy of science as well as his ethics was a species of positivism.

perts performed indispensable functions in complex societies, he explicitly consigned them to an advisory role and advocated the subordination of expert administration to fully participatory, deliberative, democratic publics. Although he said relatively little about political democracy in this period, Dewey did nonetheless argue in the *Ethics* that the political "function" common to all citizens in a democracy was of particular importance because it stood for "direct and active participation in the regulation of the terms upon which associated life shall be sustained, and the pursuit of the good carried on. Political freedom and responsibility express an individual's power and obligation to make effective all his other capacities by fixing the social conditions of their exercise" (*E*, 424). This argument suggested at once a commitment to an active state that would oversee the provision of the conditions of effective freedom and to a state in which every citizen had the opportunity to take part in that oversight, "an organ by which people associated in pursuit of common ends can most effectively cooperate for the realization of their own aims" (*E*, 425). The principal task of progressive politics, as Dewey saw it, was not that of enhancing the power of experts but of "safeguarding the democratic ideal against the influences which are always at work to undermine it, and with building up for it a more complete and extensive embodiment" (*E*, 424).<sup>43</sup>

This analysis suggests that historians should be attentive to the way particular progressives defined a widely shared set of terms. Although Dewey spoke of the need for "social control," he, like many progressives, meant by the term only a generic "capacity of a society to regulate itself according to desired principles and values" and he distinguished democratic social control from other forms of control. Although he used the term "social efficiency" occasionally, his meaning, as we have seen, was something quite different from that of the administrative progressives. Although he, like nearly everyone else at the time, celebrated science, there were many different celebrations going on of which his was but one. Although he assumed a functionally differentiated division of labor, he carefully distinguished functions from classes and argued for the compatibility of functional differentiation and shared democratic authority. Although he called for equality of opportunity, this was not for him a matter of a well-run race for riches, and he stressed the unique ways in which each individual in an egalitarian

43. Those who charge Dewey with commitment to the antidemocratic power of experts are never able to cite a direct statement from him to this effect, always overlook an abundance of direct evidence to the contrary, and consistently rely on an indirect approach grounded in a misreading of his conception of scientific thinking.

society would make use of the opportunities afforded him or her. Most important, at a time when the meaning of "democracy" was beginning to be constricted by many to describe government for the people by benevolent elites or, at best, a negative popular check on the extensive powers of such elites, Dewey called for a radical extension of the power of the common man and woman in the polity and the workplace.<sup>44</sup>

I would then place Dewey in the radical wing of progressivism. Among middle-class intellectuals of the era he was, I believe, one of the most, if not the most, thoroughly democratic. He opposed the administrative progressives and *ipso facto* the masters of the corporate reconstruction of American capitalism with whom they often aligned. His own alliances were formed in the other direction, with labor, especially with those elements of the labor movement committed to workers' control. He flirted with socialism, but because many socialists were no more democratic than corporate liberals (and, indeed, might be said to constitute an anticapitalist wing of administrative progressivism), he was wary of identifying himself with them.<sup>45</sup>

44. The quotation about social control is from Chicago sociologist George Vincent in 1896, quoted in Morris Janowitz, *The Last Half-Century: Societal Change and Politics in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 28. See also JD, "Education and Social Direction" (1918), *Middle Works* 11:54-57. As Janowitz says, "social control" in this period signified opposition to laissez-faire market controls; thus its use was a badge of membership in the "anti-competitive consensus," which, as I have suggested, tells us little about where any particular reformer stood. On the use and abuse of the concept of social control by historians see William A. Muraskin, "The Social Control Theory in American History: A Critique," *Journal of Social History* 9 (1976): 559-569. A useful discussion of some of the differences between the pragmatists' conception of science and that of their contemporaries is David Hollinger, "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," *Journal of American History* 67 (1980): 88-107. Martin Schiesl offers a solid discussion of the constriction of "democracy" in one setting in the period in *The Politics of Efficiency: Municipal Administration and Reform in America, 1800-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), chap. 10.

45. I am sure Dewey was not, like Roger Williams, a church of one, but I am not entirely sure who I would place with him on the radical wing of progressivism, though his friends Jane Addams, Randolph Bourne, and George Herbert Mead seem to me to belong there. (On the largely unfamiliar story of Mead's politics see Dmitri N. Shalin, "G. H. Mead, Socialism, and the Progressive Agenda," *American Journal of Sociology* 93 [1988]: 913-951 and Andrew Feffer, "Sociability and Social Conflict in George Herbert Mead's Interactionism, 1900-1919," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 51 [1990]: 233-254.) Elsewhere I have linked Dewey's vision of "moral democracy" with that of the great progressive photographer Lewis Hine ("Lewis Hine and the Ethics of Progressive Camerawork," *Tikkun*, May 1987: 24-29). Herbert Croly is an especially interesting figure because within the space of a few years he argued at length for a more constricted (*The Promise of American Life*) and a more expansive (*Progressive Democracy*) view of democracy, and the latter volume seems to me one of the most important documents of what I am calling radical progressivism. For a view of progressive social thought close to my own see David Price, "Community and Control: Critical Democratic Theory in the Progressive Period," *American Political Science Review* 68 (1974): 1663-1678.