

and Education, which opened with a discussion of the way in which all societies utilized the education of children as a means of "social control" by which adults consciously shaped the dispositions of children, but went on to argue that "the conception of education as a social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind" (DE, 4-45, 103). Dewey's concern, and he presumed the concern of his fellow Americans, was with "the ideas implied in a democratic society" and the application of these to the problems of education (DE, 3). Democratic societies sought to cultivate democratic dispositions in children, to make them good democrats. As in the case of teaching children how to think, the goal not to force "a line of action contrary to natural inclinations" but to configure these inclinations one way rather than another (DE, 41). The best way to do this was to initiate school children from the beginning in the form of social life, the "mode of associated living" characteristic of a democracy: a community of full participation and "conjoint communicated experience" in which social sympathy and deliberative moral reason would develop (DE, 93). Thus classrooms in a democracy had to be not only communities of inquiry but *democratic* communities of inquiry.²²

The principal obstacle to democratic education, Dewey argued, was the powerful alliance of class privilege with philosophies of education (beginning with Plato) which sharply divided mind and body, theory

22. Dewey's conception of democratic education as a variant of a generic process of "social control" grounded in the shaping of children's character by adults may seem commonplace, but it is the source of charges by some historians that he was endorsing an insidious and subtle form of "indoctrination" or "manipulation." Christopher Lasch, for example, observes of Dewey and other progressive intellectuals that "the manipulative note was rarely absent from their writings: the insistence that men could best be controlled and directed not by the old crude method of force but by 'education' in its broadest sense." The progressives' faith in education, he says, often served as a rationalization for "a crude will to power on the part of the intellectuals themselves" (Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America* [New York: Vintage, 1965], pp. 146, 169). This argument is flawed in two fundamental respects. First, it reflects a misunderstanding of the meaning of "social control" in the early twentieth century by treating it as a phrase that necessarily implied coercion and manipulation. Second, it fails to distinguish between education that withholds from children (or other adults) full knowledge of what teachers are trying to do to them and education that, as Dewey advocated, is explicit about its ends and openly attempts to enlist the "participating disposition" of children (or other adults) in the pursuit of those ends. I would not, by any means, deny that there were progressive intellectuals who were partisans of manipulation, only that Dewey was among them. There is no doubt that Dewey did what he could to secure schools (and other institutions) as sites for the testing of his moral vision, but because of his belief that for one to promote the good of others one must do so *with* rather than *for* them, he usually sought democratic means to this democratic end—the notable exception here being his activism in World War I (see Chapter 7, especially the discussion of the Polish-American project), and the grounds for criticism of manipulative power are to be found in his ethics.

and practice, culture and utility. To a considerable degree, prevailing educational practice was the institutionalization of the philosophy of profoundly antidemocratic thinkers. Especially pernicious among educators was the distinction between culture and utility, a dualism "itself imbedded in a social dualism: the distinction between the working class and the leisure class." On the basis of this distinction, two separate and disparate types of education emerged: one—rarely termed "education"—for those who worked with their hands and one for those who worked with their minds or did not work at all. This alliance of privilege and philosophy which equated "the educated class and the ruling class" required that democrats must recognize that "the reconstruction of philosophy, of education, and of social ideas and methods thus go hand in hand" (DE, 341): "The price that democratic societies will have to pay for their continuing health is the elimination of an oligarchy—the most exclusive and dangerous of all—that attempts to monopolize the benefits of intelligence and of the best methods for the profit of a few privileged ones, while practical labor, requiring less spiritual effort and less initiative remains the lot of the great majority. These distinctions will ultimately disappear the day that, under the influence of education, science and practical activity are joined together forever." Here Dewey took note of the battles he himself was waging on two fronts and the relationship between them. [In the pages of the philosophical journals, he advanced the argument that all knowledge was, in a broad sense, practical; man was "thinking desire."] In education, the arena of philosophical praxis, he called for the extension to all children of the tools of social intelligence. The results of these campaigns, if successful, he said, would "not involve a superficial adaptation of the existing system but a radical change in foundation and aim: a revolution."²³

LEARNING TO EARN

Just how radical Dewey's program for democratic education was became apparent in the arguments he advanced in the debate over vocational education which occupied American educators in the decade before World War I. This debate was touched off in 1906 by the report of the Massachusetts Commission on Industrial and Technical Education which found that thousands of the state's young adolescents did

23. "Education from a Social Perspective," pp. 115-116, 127, 120.

not attend school and were stuck in dead-end industrial jobs without hope of advancement because they lacked the necessary skills. Many of those interviewed indicated that they had left school not because of pressure to contribute to the income of their families but because they were alienated by a school curriculum that had little to offer them. The report concluded that schools were not equipping children with "industrial intelligence" and called for a shift in the orientation of secondary schools from "cultural" to vocational education. This study galvanized critics of the schools, many of whom had cast an admiring glance at Germany, where those deemed unsuited for university study were channeled into vocational and technical education. In its wake an aggressive campaign developed for vocational training programs, headed by a powerful and effective lobbying organization, the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, and supported by a diverse range of interest groups including not only educators but the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the American Federation of Labor, major farm organizations, and settlement workers. This campaign culminated in the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, which provided federal support for vocational education. As an important part of a broader effort to address the educational needs of a corporate industrial society, the movement for vocational education helped work a remarkable transformation of the American high school from an elite institution closely tied to the nation's leading colleges and enrolling a mere 6.7 percent of those fourteen to seventeen years of age to an institution of mass education enrolling 32.3 percent of that population and committed to fostering the social efficiency of the children of the nation's working class.²⁴

24. *Report of the Massachusetts Commission on Industrial and Technical Education* (1906) quoted in Edward A. Krug, *The Shaping of the American High School, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 220; Robert L. Church and Michael Sedlak, *Education in the United States: An Interpretive History* (New York: Free Press, 1976), pp. 304-305, 289. The industrial education movement has attracted a great of attention from historians. See Sol Cohen, "The Industrial Education Movement, 1906-1917," *American Quarterly* 20 (1968): 95-110; Berenice M. Fisher, *Industrial Education: American Ideals and Institutions* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967); James B. Gilbert, *Work without Salvation: America's Intellectuals and Industrial Alienation, 1880-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), chap. 10; W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, eds., *American Education and Vocationalism: Documents in Vocational Education, 1870-1970* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974); David J. Hogan, *Class and Reform: School and Society in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), chap. 4; Harvey Kantor, *Learning to Earn: School, Work, and Reform in California, 1880-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Harvey Kantor and David Tyack, eds., *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Indus-*

Although vocational education won wide support, the supporters profoundly disagreed about the direction such industrial training should take. The most prominent issue was whether industrial education should be integrated into the existing public school system or made a separate system under separate control. Business and labor split cleanly on this issue, with businessmen acting as the strongest advocates of a dual system.

Dewey was one of the most vocal opponents of the dual system. He feared, above all, that the kind of vocational education favored by businessmen and their allies was a form of class education which would make the schools a more efficient agency for the reproduction of an undemocratic society. The issue of industrial education, he said, was of great importance for the future of democracy. "Its right development will do more to make public education truly democratic than any other agency now under consideration. Its wrong treatment will as surely accentuate all undemocratic tendencies in our present situation, by fostering and strengthening class divisions in school and out." He noted that "those who believe in the continued existence of what they are pleased to call the 'lower classes' or the 'laboring classes' would naturally rejoice to have schools in which these 'classes' would be segregated. And some employers of labor would doubtless rejoice to have schools, supported by public taxation, supply them with additional food for their mills." Everyone else, however, "should be united against every proposition, in whatever form advanced, to separate training of employees from training for citizenship, training of intelligence and character from training for narrow, industrial efficiency."²⁵

trial America, 1850-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 81-87; Selwyn K. Troen, "The Discovery of the Adolescent by American Educational Reformers, 1900-1920: An Economic Perspective," in Lawrence Stone, ed., *Schooling and Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 239-251; David Tyack, *The One Best System* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 182-198; and Arthur G. Wirth, *Education in the Technological Society: The Vocational-Liberal Studies Controversy in the Early Twentieth Century* (Scranton, Pa.: Intertext, 1972).

25. "Some Dangers in the Present Movement for Industrial Education" (1913), *Middle Works* 7:99, 102. See also "Should Michigan Have Vocational Education under 'Unit' or 'Dual' Control?" (1913), *Middle Works* 7:85-92; "A Policy of Industrial Education (1914), *Middle Works* 7:93-97; "Industrial Education and Democracy" (1913), *Middle Works* 7:104-105; "Industrial Education—A Wrong Kind" (1915), *Middle Works* 8:117-122; "Splitting Up the School System" (1915), *Middle Works* 8:123-127; "The Need of an Industrial Education in an Industrial Democracy" (1916), *Middle Works* 10:137-143; "Learning to Earn: The Place of Vocational Education in a Comprehensive Scheme of Public Education" (1917), *Middle Works* 10:144-150; "Vocational Education" (1916), *Middle Works* 10:303-304. See also Randolph Bourne, "In the Mind of the Worker," *Atlantic*, March 1914: 375-382.

Dewey's criticisms brought a wounded response from the Commissioner of Education in Massachusetts, David Snedden, a leading proponent of a dual system of industrial education and a hard-nosed preacher of the gospel of efficiency. Those who had been seeking to promote "the development of sound vocational education," he said, were used to attacks from highbrow academic defenders of Culture but "to find Dr. Dewey apparently giving aid and comfort to the opponents of a broader, richer and more effective program of education, and apparently misapprehending the motives of many of those who advocate the extension of vocational schools designed for that purpose is discouraging."²⁶

Dewey responded that Snedden had misunderstood his criticisms and overlooked the "profoundly political and social" differences that separated them: "The kind of vocational education in which I am interested is not one which will adapt workers to the existing industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that. It seems to me that the business of all who would not be educational timeservers is to resist every move in this direction, and to strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial system, and ultimately transform it."²⁷

As these comments suggest, beneath Dewey's opposition to the proposal for dual control lay a deeper antagonism to the dominant perspective on vocational education and a radical vision of industrial democracy. "I object," he told Snedden, "to regarding as vocational education any training which does not have as its supreme regard the development of such intelligent initiative, ingenuity, and executive capacity as shall make workers, as far as they may be, the masters of their own industrial fate." Most American workers, Dewey observed, had no direct interest in their work and were merely the tools of their employers, appendages of the machines they tended. He told a gathering of teachers that "for some years I preserved a little piece of cast iron taken from a typical American factory, one of our large agricultural machinery works. I preserved it as a

26. David Snedden, "Vocational Education," *New Republic*, 15 May 1915: 40. Walter Drost, *David Snedden and Education for Social Efficiency* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), is an excellent biography. See also Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), chap. 4.

27. "Education vs. Trade-Training: Reply to David Snedden" (1915), *Middle Works* 8:412. A good discussion of the Dewey-Snedden debate is Arthur G. Wirth, "Philosophical Issues in the Vocational-Liberal Studies Controversy (1900-1917): John Dewey vs. the Social Efficiency Philosophers," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 8 (1974): 169-182. Dewey and other advocates of a single system won a Pyrrhic victory in this controversy. Vocational education was incorporated into the existing public school system, but the result, as many have noted, was the development of class education within this system.

sort of Exhibit A of our social and educational status. The iron came out of the casting with a little roughness upon it which had to be smoothed before it could become part of the belt for which it was designed. A boy of fifteen or sixteen spent his working day in grinding off this slight roughness—grinding at a rate of one a minute for every minute of his day." The "stupefying monotony," routine, and total lack of intellectual and imaginative content of such work was, Dewey contended, endemic to a class society.²⁸ Such workers "do what they do, not freely and intelligently, but for the sake of the wage earned." Their activity was "not free because not freely participated in." Industrial education designed to train children for such work was "illiberal and immoral" (DE, 269).

Dewey had, of course, been a long-standing proponent of the integration of manual training into the curriculum; "occupations" were at the center of life in the Dewey School. But manual training was not, for him, trade training but rather a key component of a pedagogy that "psychologized" the curriculum by tying together a body of knowledge and the interests of the child—a task often best served by such activities as carpentry, cooking, and weaving which conjoined hand and mind. The sort of vocational education advocated by Snedden and other "administrative progressives" would continue to divide the education of hand and mind and perpetuate the class divisions it reflected. This was "to treat the schools as an agency for transferring the older division of labor and leisure, culture and service, mind and body, directed and directive class, into a society nominally democratic" (DE, 328). Administrative progressives were in a sense the unknowing and third-rate descendants of Plato, who had argued that individuals fell into three fixed social classes (laborers and merchants, citizen subjects, and philosopher kings) by virtue of the particular faculties and dispositions that predominated in their nature (appetites, courage, reason) and had devised a distinct education for each (DE, 127, 96).²⁹

The sort of "vocational" education Dewey had in mind would prepare children for rewarding work in which they would be more than factors of production and, in so doing, "help on such a reorganization of industry as will change it from a feudalistic to a democratic social order." He contended that "an education which acknowledges the full intellectual and social meaning of a vocation would include instruction

28. "Education vs. Trade-Training," p. 411; "Culture and Industry in Education" (1906), *Middle Works* 3:288.

29. I borrow the term "administrative progressives" from David Tyack. See *The One Best System*, pp. 126-133, 177-198, and Tyack and Elisabeth Hansot, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), pt. 2.

in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with material and agencies of production; and study of economics, civics, and politics, to bring the future worker in touch with the problems of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement. Above all, it would train power of readaptation to changing conditions so that future workers would not become blindly subject to a fate imposed upon them" (DE, 328). Such an education would prepare children not only for their work in life but for the other functions and vocations required of them in a democratic society, including citizenship. It would obliterate distinctions between culture and utility by providing all children with an education that integrated the two. Nothing drew Dewey's contempt more than the claims of businessmen and technocratic reformers in the vocational movement that their plans were more democratic than existing educational practice because they made no effort to force "culture" down the throats of the working class and provided children of that class with "no-frills" schooling suited to their station in life. "Nothing in the history of education is more touching," he commented, "than to hear some successful leaders denounce as undemocratic the attempts to give all the children at public expense the fuller education which their own children enjoy as a matter of course."³⁰

Dewey's writings on vocational education did signal an important shift in emphasis in his thinking about industrial democracy. In the 1890s, despite the critique of wage labor implicit in the "vocations" of the Laboratory School, he had suggested that all that was required to enable industrial workers to have morally satisfying work was to "socialize" the perspective of employers and employees and thereby give each a full sense of how the work they did fit into the larger productive and social relations of their society. "The world in which most of us live," he wrote in *School and Society* (1899), "is a world in which everyone has a calling and occupation, something to do. Some are managers and others are subordinates. But the great thing for one as for the other is that each shall have had the education which enables him to see within his daily work all there is in it of large and human significance."³¹ In *Democracy and Education* he still maintained that it was important for workers to have this sense of significance, but now he argued further that they must also have *control* of their work if this work was to contribute to their self-realization, an argument posing a more fundamen-

30. "Learning to Earn," pp. 150, 146.

31. *School and Society* (1899), *Middle Works* 1:16.

tal challenge to the social relations of capitalist production, especially as these had been "rationalized" by scientific management since the 1890s by a process that, as radical labor leader Bill Haywood put it, took the brains out from under the workman's cap. "The great majority of workers," Dewey observed, "have no insight into the social aims of their pursuits and no direct personal interest in them. The results actually achieved are not the ends of *their* actions, but only of their employers." The work could not be free until they had "direct participation in control" (DE, 268-269). That Dewey believed that the kind of participation essential to workers' freedom was not possible in a capitalist society was suggested by his remark that the intellectual and emotional limitation on the work of both employers and workers was "inevitable" when the "animating motive is desire for private profit or personal power" (DE, 327-328).

What remained absent in the treatment of industrial work in *Democracy and Education* and thereby limited its radicalism was anything resembling a *political* strategy for the redistribution of power Dewey proposed. He remained wedded to moral exhortation as the sole means to ends that required democratic politics. He advanced impeccable arguments about the ways in which industrial capitalism directed the intelligence not only of workers but also of capitalists and managers into "non-humane, non-liberal channels," yet relied all too heavily on the force of such arguments to overcome the appeal of the tangible, if morally shortsighted benefits employers derived from exploitation (DE, 327). Thus, though he now argued that industrial democracy necessitated structural changes in the distribution of power in the workplace, he had yet to envision a politics commensurate with this radical vision.

The differences between Dewey and the "administrative progressives" were not always as clear as they were in the debate with Snedden. Because he employed—with different definitions—many of the same terms, like "social efficiency," superficial observers (and some subsequent historians), could see him as their ally rather than their deadly enemy. More important, some of the pedagogical reforms he advocated were, when removed from the context of his larger democratic philosophy, adaptable to quite different purposes, including those of the administrative progressives. Consequently, some of the "schools of tomorrow" he saw springing up in the antebellum decade were, despite their adoption of some Deweyan reforms, very much "schools of today."

The best case in point was the school system of Gary, Indiana, which Dewey and his daughter Evelyn applauded in *Schools of Tomorrow* (1915)