**EDU 6120: Foundations of American Education**  
**Session 10: Summary of Key Figures and Ideas**

**Socrates (468-399 B.C.)** is most famous for using a series of penetrating questions, the "Socratic technique," to show people through active demonstration that their minds possessed the power arrive at deeper understandings. (Socrates left no writings.)

**Plato (427-347 B.C.)** was the first to rigorously formalize education in the West through his Academy which was essentially the first university. His Republic gives the first coherent sketch of an educational system involving aspects of tracking, the notion that good ideas bring about useful change, and that knowledge should promote virtue (wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice).

*"Just as the eye is unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instruction of knowledge can only by the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming to that of being, …and the highest and best of being...."*

The Cave

**Aristotle (384-382 B.C.)** expanded the investigation of knowledge beyond the moral realm to include learning through "sense realism," or the observation and classifying of natural phenomenon. These ideas laid the groundwork for the scientific method though Aristotle was equally interested in physical and moral education.

*"It is a mark of one who knows that one can teach."*

**Jesus (3 B.C.-30 A.D.)** used parables, or short narratives with common situations, to illustrate eternal moral truths and taught that the recognition of God's sovereignty is the beginning of wisdom.

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill."

The Beatitudes

**Quintillion (c. 35-95)** championed the study of classical literature in order to fashion proper morality and deportment and provide the basis of understanding, good taste, and moderation in rhetoric and public service.

*"Eloquence depends... on the state of the mind, which must be moved, conceive images, and adapt itself to suit the nature of the subject.... The loftier and more elevated the mind, the more powerful will be the forces which move it."*

The Institutes of Oratory

**Francis Petrarch (1304-1374)** breathed new vigor into the nearly lost heritage of the classical world and taught that virtue and mature knowledge could best come through understanding the three great literary studies--history, philosophy, and poetry.

*"I am as if on the frontiers of two people, looking forward and backward."*

**Martin Luther (1483-1546)** advocated universal education in classical and biblical studies at public expense in vernacular language to establish a personal and civil piety knowledgeable of divine truth.

*"Without an expert training in literary studies no true theology can establish and maintain itself."*
Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670) has been called the "father of modern education" for using new methodologies (e.g., textbooks, visual aids) to promote fuller learning by investigations through human reason, the natural world, and biblical revelation.

"...get accustomed to penetrating to the real roots of things and take in their true meaning and usage, rather than read, perceive, memorize, and relate other people's opinions."

The Great Didactic

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) believed that feeling and conscience should characterize schooling to a greater degree than reason and science, that in his view had contributed more liabilities than benefits to humanity. Education should avoid unnatural competition as its goal should be learning, not winning.

"By doing good we become good.... Keep your pupils occupied with all the good deeds within their power. Let them help poor people with money and service, and get justice for the oppressed.... In addition to academic lore they will acquire the still more important ability of applying knowledge to the purposes of life."

Emile

Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841) believed that meaningful instruction expanding student interest must emphasize the clear presentation of new concepts to be learned, associate those concepts with what is already understood and the cultural heritage, arrange the concepts into relationships, and apply the relationships to new knowledge.

The ultimate purpose of instruction is contained in the notion of virtue. To realize this final aim, a nearer one must be set up--many-sidedness of interest.... or that kind of mental activity which instruction is to incite. Mere information does not suffice.... but the reaching out for more."

The Aim of Instruction

Horace Mann (1796-1859) championed the cause of universal public education to provide a national identity and unity of purpose. Such a citizenry would have the capacity to govern themselves through critical thinking and active involvement in the democratic process.

"Education is to inspire the love of truth as the supreme good, and to clarify the vision of the intellect in order to discern it."

On Education

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) sought meaning for life through harmony with nature, agrarian labor, and Christianity devoid of ecclesiastical dogma and "stupefying culture," and best expressed in the ethical teachings of Jesus, Socrates, and Confucius. School life should reflect the dynamic "phenomena of life" through panorama, theatre, and conversation.

"The foundation of all pedagogues... tends to this one thing: the liberation of the school from the fetters that weigh heavily upon it."

Charlotte Mason (1842-1923) understood education as a sacred task in which teachers and students join together as partners to foster understandings, creativity, and curiosity through coherent interdisciplinary studies, time for inquiry and expression in nature study and illustrated writing, and the knowledge of God through Bible study.

"All education is divine, every good gift of knowledge and insight comes from above; the culmination of all education is that personal knowledge of and intimacy with God in which our being finds its fullest perfection."

A Complete Education
Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) formulated a system of ultimate and universal ideas that could be understood through observable experience. These could best be taught by promoting instruction that illustrated connections among the academic disciplines and promoted students' joy of discovery. Education is the art of knowing.

"...Eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum. There is only one subject-matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations."

The Aims of Education

John Dewey (1859-1952) taught that the learner should be in constant active interaction with the environment. Fullest knowledge is based on vibrant experience and such knowledge becomes the instrument for improving the world.

"School is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be the most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends."

My Pedagogic Creed

E. D. Hirsch, Jr. contends the chief purposes of education are intellectual and academic, not social and emotional. Instruction should present essential knowledge by subject and grade level in an environment that is challenging and disciplined.

"Every classroom is a little society of its own, and its effectiveness and fairness depend on the full participation by all its members, just as in the larger society. Such universal participation by students cannot occur unless they all share a core of relevant background knowledge."

Failed Theories, Famished Minds