EDU 6120: Foundations  
Session 8: Progressivism and Intellectual Development

A. Origins of child-centered approaches: Rousseau and Tolstoy
   -- *Emile*
   -- Tolstoy’s “Peasant School” and monthly review *Yasnaya Polyana*: “The pupil brings nothing to the classroom but a rational mind and the certainty that school will be as much fun today as it was yesterday.”
   -- Spelling, arithmetic, religious history, geography, history, drawing, and composition taught “all mixed up together” (8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.; 3-6 p.m.); cross-age, non-graded groupings, a weekly botanical hike in the forest. School as “home,” class as “family,” teacher as “parent-guardian”

B. John Dewey (1859-1952) and “Student-Centered” Progressivism
   1. Early life and career
      -- born in Burlington, Vermont the same year Horace Mann died, Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* published, *Codex Sinaiticus* discovered, Leo Tolstoy’s Peasant School opened, and Herbert Spencer asked “What Knowledge is of Most Worth?”
      -- became America’s most prominent educational philosopher of the 20th century; influenced in his early intellectual studies at UVermont where his classes in politics, religion, philosophy, and economics introduced him to the broad themes common to all
      -- witnessed firsthand America’s great transformation from an agrarian to an industrial and to a world superpower; sought throughout his life to develop a universal philosophy of education to adapt schools to the evolving democratic and social order
      -- University of Michigan (1880s), University of Chicago (1894-1904), where he founded the famous “Lab School,” and Columbia University (1904-1951)
   2. Guiding principles of progressivism (aka pragmatism, utilitarianism): student as center of the school experience; the organized presentation of knowledge deemphasized (Progressive Education Association est. 1919)
      a. Education ought to be about the lifelong means of intellectual development by active inquiry; not the shorter-term ends of acquiring information and knowledge.
      b. The child’s interests should guide instruction (“student-centered” vs. subject matter curriculum); draw lessons from students’ relevant, contemporary environment and unleash the power of their innate curiosity.
      c. Learning results in actual performance (“experiential learning,” “authentic assessment”).
      d. Individual pupil differences should influence instruction.
      e. As society is ever changing in problems and people are more important than abstractions, education should not be preoccupied with absolutes and
ideals but focus on practical instruments and scientific approaches to solve problems. Implications:

(1). loosen school formalities and rigidity to become more active and “real,” schools as “miniature society”
(2). downplay corporal punishment and the authority (not the role) of the teacher
(3). inspire optimism regarding society’s future

f. Technological benefits would also bring social conflict and the undermining of individual creativity and virtue. So educators should seek to mediate these conflicts and actively participate in promoting the best from the technological, philosophic, and religious realms, and seek to resolve or defeat their negative influences (active progressive agenda, e.g., teacher unions, integrations, urban social welfare)

C. George Counts (1889-1988) and “Society-centered” Social Reconstruction
--shifts the educational emphasis from the interests of the student to the teacher-mediated interests of society; schools as the instruments of social change
--with progressives shares an ultimate concern for civilization’s wellbeing
--a principal means for promoting society’s progress and social conformity is citizenship education
--critics like Bertrand Russell viewed “society’s interests” being less than honorable because of special interests that promote class and nationalistic prejudice above international understanding, passive acquiescence of social injustice, and ruthless competition over cooperation to advance the general good

D. Arthur Bestor and the Knowledge-centered “Back to Basics” Movement
--In Educational Wastelands (1953) and The Restoration of Learning (1955), Bestor argues that academic excellence is damaged when child-centered progressive influences erode academic knowledge-oriented standards.
--Bestor’s eight-point “Resolutions Concerning Public Education” (1953) presented his analysis of educational purposes for America:

1. School should primarily serve as “an agency of intellectual training” in the “fundamental way of thinking” in each discipline,” promoting cultural understanding, responsible citizenship, and moral conduct.
2. Complex ideas should be handled, applied, and expressed in each content area. (Any vocational training must include “a conscious intellectual component.”)
3. Programs that prepare a minority of students for college and the professions are anti-intellectual and anti-democratic.
4. “Scholars, scientists, and other professionals must assume responsibility for advising the public clearly” concerning school curriculum (vs. “a narrow group of secondary school administrators and professional educators”).
5. Curriculum ought to promote understandings of “the ordered relationships that exist, and the methods of investigation that are employed, within each of the basic fields of knowledge” (vs. “the learning of facts”).
6. Teacher training and certification programs “must certify competence in the subject to be taught… [The] greatest need is to acquire a more thorough and advanced knowledge of the disciplines [to be taught].”

7. Opportunity for instructional freedom must demand that teachers of history and social studies (“where practically all topics are controversial”) are held to “rigorous standards of competence.”

8. Schools should resist impositions from anti-intellectualism within the profession and from outside “pressure groups—whether reactionary or radical” to force conformity to preconceived ideas and “any narrow dogma in politics, economics, religion, or science.”

So how could your classroom practice resolve this tension in student-centered vs. knowledge/society-oriented education?

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Session 8 Readings: Tolstoy and Dewey

“On Popular Education”
by Leo Tolstoy (from Yasnaya Polyana, 1860)

The need of education lies in everyone and we love and seek education as we love and seek the air for breathing. The government and society burn with the desire to educate the masses, and yet, notwithstanding all the force of cunning and the persistency of governments and societies, the masses constantly manifest their dissatisfaction with the education which is offered to them, and step by step submit only to force. As at every conflict, so also here, it has been necessary to solve the question: What is more lawful, the resistance, or the action itself? Must the resistance be broken, or the action be changed?

So far, as may be seen from history, the question has been solved in favor of the state and the educating society. The resistance has been acknowledged to be unlawful, men seeing in it the principle of evil inherent in man, and so, without receding from its mode of action, that is, without receding from that form and from those contents of education, which society already possessed, the state has made use of force and cunning in order to annihilate the people’s resistance.

It must be supposed that the educated society had some reasons to know that the education which it possessed in a certain form was beneficial for a certain people at a certain historical epoch. What were these reasons? What reasons has the school of our day to teach this, and not that, thus, and not otherwise?

Always and in all ages humanity has endeavored to give and has given more or less satisfactory answers to these questions, and in our time this answer is even more necessary than ever. A Chinese mandarin who never leaves Peking may be compelled to learn by rote the sayings of Confucius, and these saws may be beaten into children with sticks; it was possible to do that in the Middle Ages, but where are we to get in our time that strong faith in the indubitableness of our knowledge, which would give us the right of forcibly educating the masses?

Let us take any school, before and after Luther; let us take all the learned literature of the Middle Ages—what strength of faith and of firm, indubitable knowledge of what is true and what false, is to be seen in those people? It was easy for them to know that the Greek language was the only
necessary condition of an education, because Aristotle was written in that language, the truth of whose propositions no one doubted for several centuries afterward. How could the monks keep demanding the study of Holy Writ which stood on a firm foundation? It was natural for Luther peremptorily to demand the study of Hebrew, for he knew full well that God Himself had in that language revealed the truth to men. Of course, so long as the critical sense of humanity was still dormant, the school had to be dogmatic, and it was natural for students to learn by heart the truths which had been revealed by God and by Aristotle, and the poetic beauties of Vergil and Cicero. For several centuries afterward no one could even imagine a truer truth or a more beautiful beauty.

But what is the position of the school in our day, which has persevered in the same dogmatic principles, when, side by side with the class where the scholar learns by heart the truth about the immortality of the soul, they try to make it clear to him that the nerves, which are common to man and to a frog, are that which anciently used to be called a soul? And when, after the story of Joshua, the son of Nun, which is transmitted to him without explanations, he finds out that the sun had never turned around the earth; when, after the beauties of Vergil have been explained to him, he finds the beauties in Alexander Dumas, sold to him for five cents, much greater; when the only faith of the teacher consists in the conviction that there is no truth, that everything existing is sensible, that progress is good and backwardness bad; when nobody knows in what this universal faith in progress consists?

After all this, compare the dogmatic school of the Middle Ages, where truths were indubitable, with schools today, where nobody knows what truth is, and to which the children are nevertheless forced to go and the parents to send their children. More than that: It was an easy matter for the medieval school to know what ought to be taught, what first, and what later, and how it was all to be taught, so long as there was but one method and so long as all science centered in the Bible, in the books of St. Augustine, and in Aristotle.

But how are we, in this endless variety of methods of instruction, proposed to us on all sides, in this immense mass of sciences and their subdivisions, which have been evolved in our time, — how are we to select one of the many proposed methods, one certain branch of the sciences, and, which is most difficult, how are we to select that sequence in the instruction of these sciences which would be sensible and just? More than that. The discovery of these principles is the more difficult in our time, in comparison with the medieval school, for the reason that then education was confined to one definite class which prepared itself to live in certain well-defined conditions, while in our time, when the whole people has declared its right to be educated, it appears much more difficult and much more necessary for us to know what is needed for all these heterogeneous classes.

What are these principles? Ask any pedagogue you please why he teaches this and not that, and this first and not later. If he will understand you, he will say that he knows the God-revealed truth, and that he considers it his duty to transmit it to the younger generation and to educate it in those principles which are unquestionably true; but he will give you no answer in regard to the subjects which do not refer to religious education. Another pedagogue will explain to you the foundation of his school by the eternal laws of reason, as expounded by Fichte, Kant, and Hegel. A third will base his right of compulsion on the fact that the schools have always been compulsory and that, in spite of this, the result of these schools has been real education. Finally, a fourth, uniting all these principles, will tell you that the school has to be such as it is, because religion, philosophy, and experience have evolved it as such, and that that which is historical is sensible. All these proofs may be, it seems to me, divided into four classes: religious, philosophic, experimental, and historical.
Education which has for its basis religion, that is, divine revelation, the truth and legality of which nobody may doubt, must indisputably be inculcated on the people, and in this only in this case is violence legal. Even thus missionaries do at the present time in Africa and in China. Thus they have proceeded up till now in the schools of the whole world as regards religious instruction, Catholic, Protestant, Hebrew, Mohammedan, and so forth. But in our time, when religious education forms but a small part of education, the question what ground the school has to compel the young generation to receive religious instruction in a certain fashion remains unanswered from the religious point of view.

Maybe the answer will be found in philosophy. Has philosophy as firm a foundation as religion? What are these principles? By whom, how, and when have these principles been enunciated? We do not know them. All the philosophers search for the laws of good and evil; having discovered these laws, they, coming to pedagogy (they could none of them help touching upon that subject), compel the human race to be educated in conformity with these laws. But each of these theories, in a series of other theories, appears incomplete and furnishes only a new link in the perception of good and evil inherent in humanity. Every thinker expresses only that which has been consciously perceived by his epoch, consequently the education of the younger generation in the sense of this consciousness is quite superfluous: this consciousness is already inherent in the living generation.

All the pedagogical-philosophical theories have for their aim and problem the bringing up of virtuous men. However, the conception of virtue either remains the same or develops infinitely, and, notwithstanding all the theories, the decadence and bloom of virtue do not depend on education. A virtuous Chinese, a virtuous Greek, Roman, or Frenchman of our time, are either equally virtuous, or equally remote from virtue.

The philosophical theories of pedagogics solve the question of how to bring up the best persons according to a given theory of ethics, which has been evolved at one time or other, and which is accepted as indisputable. Plato does not doubt the truth of his own ethics, and on its basis he builds up education, and on that education he constructs the state. Schleiermacher says that ethics is not yet an accomplished science, and therefore the bringing up and the education must have for their aim the preparation of men who should be able to enter upon such conditions as they find in life, and who should at the same time be able to work vigorously upon their future improvement. Education in general, says Schleiermacher, has for its aim the presentation of a member all prepared to the state, church, public life, and science. Ethics alone, though it is not a finished science, gives us an answer to the question what kind of a member of these four elements of life an educated man shall be.

Like Plato, so all the philosophical pedagogues look to ethics for the problem and aim of education, some regarding this ethics as well-known, and others regarding it as an eternally evolving consciousness of humanity; but not one theory gives a positive answer to the question of what and how to teach the masses. One says one thing, another another, and the farther we proceed, the more their propositions become at variance. There arise at one and the same time various contradictory theories. The theological tendency struggles with the scholastic, the scholastic with the classical, the classical with the real, and at the present time all these directions exist, without contending with each other, and nobody knows what is true and what false. There arise thousands of various, strangest theories, based on nothing; there appear side by side all the existing schools: the real, the classical, and the theological establishments. Everybody is dissatisfied with what is, and nobody knows that something new is needed and possible.

If you follow out the course of the history of the philosophy of pedagogics, you will find in it, not a criterion of education, but, on the contrary, one common idea, which unconsciously lies at the foundation of all the pedagogues, in spite of their frequent divergence of opinion,—an idea which convinces us of the absence of that criterion. All of them, beginning with Plato and ending with
Kant, tend to this one thing, to the liberation of the school from the historical fetters which weigh heavily upon it. They wish to guess what it is that man needs, and on these more or less correctly divined needs they build up their new school.

Luther wants people to study Holy Writ in the original, and not according to the commentaries of the holy fathers. Bacon enjoins the study of Nature from Nature, and not from the books of Aristotle. Rousseau wants to teach life from life itself, as he understands it, and not from previously instituted experiments. Every step forward taken by the philosophy of history consists only in freeing the school from the idea of instructing the younger generations in that which the elder generations considered to be science, in favor of the idea of instructing it in what are the needs of the younger generations. This one common and, at the same time, self-contradictory idea is felt in the whole history of pedagogy: it is common, because all demand a greater measure of freedom for the school; contradictory, because everybody prescribes laws based on his own theory, and by that very act that freedom is curtailed.

The interest in knowing anything whatever and the questions which it is the problem of the school to answer are created only by these home conditions. Every instruction ought to be only an answer to the question put by life, whereas school not only does not call forth questions, but does not even answer those that are called forth by life. It eternally answers the same questions which had been put by humanity several centuries back, and not by the intellect of the child, and which he is not interested in. Such questions are: How was the world created? Who was the first man? What happened two thousand years ago? What kind of countries are in Asia? What is the shape of the earth? How do you multiply hundreds by thousands? What will happen after death? and so forth.

But to the questions which life presents to him he receives no reply, the more so since, according to the police regulation of the school, he has no right to open his mouth even to ask to be allowed to go out, which he must do by signs in order not to break the silence and not to disturb the teacher. School is one of those organic parts of the state which cannot be viewed and valued separately, because its worth consists only in a greater or lesser correspondence to the remaining parts of the state. School is good only when it has taken cognizance of the fundamental laws by which the people live. A beautiful school for a Russian village of the steppe, which satisfies all the wants of its pupils, will be a very poor school for a Parisian; and the best school of the seventeenth century will be an exceedingly bad school in our time. On the other hand, the very worst school of the Middle Ages was in its time better than the best in our time, because it better corresponded to its time, and at least stood on a level with the general education, if not in advance of it, while our school stands behind it.

If the problem of the school, admitting the most general definition, consists in transmitting everything which the people have worked out and have become cognizant of, and in answering those questions which life puts to man, then there is no doubt but that in the medieval school the traditions were more limited and the questions which presented themselves in life were easier of solution, and this problem of the school was more easily satisfied. It was much easier to transmit the traditions of Greece and Rome from insufficient and improperly worked out sources, the religious dogmas, the grammar, and that part of mathematics which was then known, than to impart all those traditions which we have lived through since, and which have removed so far the traditions of antiquity, and all that knowledge of the natural sciences, which are necessary in our day as answers to the everyday phenomena of life. At the same time the manner of imparting this has remained the same, and therefore the school has had to fall behind and get, not better, but worse. In order to maintain the school in the form in which it has been, and not to fall behind the educational movement, it has been necessary to be more consistent: it not only became incumbent to make education compulsory, but also to keep this education from moving forward by any other path,—to prohibit machines, roads of communication, and the art of printing.
What are we Russians to do at the present moment? Shall we all come to some agreement and take as our basis the English, French, German, or North American view of education and any one of their methods? Or, shall we, by closely examining philosophy and psychology, discover what in general is necessary for the development of a human soul and for making out of the younger generation the best men possible according to our conception? Or, shall we make use of the experience of history,—not in the sense of imitating those forms which history has evolved, but in the sense of comprehending those laws which humanity has worked out through suffering,—shall we say frankly and honestly to ourselves that we do not know and cannot know what the future generations may need, but that we feel ourselves obliged to study these wants and that we wish to do so?—that we do not wish to accuse the people of ignorance for not accepting our education, but that we shall accuse ourselves of ignorance and haughtiness if we persist in educating the people according to our ideas?

Let us cease looking upon the people’s resistance to our education as upon a hostile element of pedagogics, but, on the contrary, let us see in it an expression of the people’s will which alone ought to guide our activities. Let us finally profess that law which so plainly tells us, both from the history of pedagogics and from the whole history of education, that for the educating class to know what is good and what bad, the classes which receive the education must have the power to express their dissatisfaction, or, at least, to swerve from the education which instinctively does not satisfy them,—that the criterion of pedagogics is only liberty.

We have chosen this latter path in our pedagogical activity. At the basis of our activity lies the conviction that we not only do not know, but we cannot know, wherein the education of the people is to consist; that not only does there not exist a science of education,—pedagogics—but that the first foundation of it has not yet been laid. The definition of pedagogy and of its aims in a philosophical sense is impossible, useless, and injurious.

We do not know what education is to be like, and we do not acknowledge the whole philosophy of pedagogy because we do not acknowledge the possibility of someone knowing what it is he ought to know. Education and culture present themselves to us as historical facts of one set of people acting upon another; therefore, the problem of the science of education, in our opinion, is only the discovery of the laws of this action of one set of people upon another. We not on do not acknowledge in our generation the knowledge, nor even the right of a knowledge of what is necessary for the perfecting of man, but are also convinced that if humanity were possessed of that knowledge, it would not be in its power to transmit, or not to transmit such knowledge. We are convinced that the cognition of good and evil, independently of man’s will, lies in humanity at large and is developed unconsciously, together with history, and that it is impossible to inculcate upon the younger generation our cognition, just as it is impossible to deprive it of this our cognition and of that degree of a higher cognition to which the next step of history will take it. Our putative knowledge of the laws of good and evil, and our activity in regard to the younger generation on the basis of these laws, are for the greater part a counteraction to the development of a new cognition, which is not yet worked out by our generation, but which is being worked out in the younger generation—it is an impediment, and not an aid to education.

We are convinced that education is history, and therefore has no final end. Education, in its widest sense, including the bringing up, is, in our opinion, that activity which has for its base the need of equality, and the invariable law of educational progress. Thus the science of education, on the one hand, becomes easier to us in that it no longer puts the questions: what is the final aim of education, and for what must we prepare the younger generation, and so forth; on the other, it is immeasurably more difficult. We are compelled to study all the conditions which have aided in the coincidence of the tendencies of him who educates, and of him who is being educated. We must define what that freedom is, the absence of which impedes the coincidence of both the tendencies, and which alone serves as our criterion of the whole science of education. We must
move step by step, away from an endless number of facts, to the solution of the questions of the science of education.

We know that our arguments will not convince many. We know that our fundamental convictions that the only method of education is experiment, and its only criterion freedom, will sound to some like trite commonplace, to some like an indistinct abstraction, to others again like a visionary dream. We should not have dared to violate the quiet of the theoretical pedagogues and to express these convictions, which are contrary to all experience, if we had to confine ourselves to the reflections of this article; but we feel our ability to prove, step after step, and fact after fact, the applicability and legality of our own wild convictions.

“My Pedagogic Creed”

by John Dewey (from The School Journal, 1897)

Article I: What Education Is

I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual’s powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions. Through this unconscious education the individual gradually comes to share in the intellectual and moral resources which humanity has succeeded in getting together. He becomes an inheritor of the funded capital of civilization. The most formal and technical education in the world cannot safely depart from this general process. It can only organize it or differentiate it in some particular direction.

I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. Through the responses which other make to his own activities he comes to know what these mean in social terms. The value which they have is reflected back into them. For instance, through the response which is made to the child’s instinctive babblings the child comes to know what those babblings mean; they are transformed into articulate language and thus the child is introduced into the consolidated wealth of ideas and emotions which are now summed up in language.

I believe that this educational process has two sides—one psychological and one sociological; and that neither can be subordinated to the other or neglected without evil results following. Of these two sides, the psychological is the basis. The child’s own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting point for all education. Save as the efforts of the educator connect with some activity which the child is carrying on of his own initiative independent of the educator, education becomes reduced to a pressure from without. It may, indeed, give certain external results, but cannot truly be called educative. Without insight into the psychological structure and activities of the individual, the educative process will, therefore, be haphazard and arbitrary. If it chances to coincide with the child’s activity it will get a leverage; if it does not, it will result in friction, or disintegration, or arrest of the child nature....

I believe that the psychological and social sides are organically related and that education cannot be regarded as a compromise between the two, or a superimposition of one upon the other. We are told that the psychological definition of education is barren and formal—that it gives us only the idea of a development of all the mental powers without giving us any idea of the use to which
these powers are put. On the other hand, it is urged that the social definition of education, as getting adjusted to civilization, makes of it a forced and external process, and results in subordinating the freedom of the individual to a preconceived social and political status.

I believe that each of these objections is true when urged against one side isolated from the other. In order to know what a power really is we must know what its end, use, or function is; and this we cannot know save as we conceive of the individual as active in social relationships. But, on the other hand, the only possible adjustment which we can give to the child under existing conditions, is that which arises through putting him in complete possession of all his powers. With the advent of democracy and modern industrial conditions, it is impossible to foretell definitely just what civilization will be twenty years from now. Hence it is impossible to prepare the child for any set of conditions. To prepare him for future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities; that his eye and ear and hand may be able of grasping the conditions under which it has to work, and the executive forces be trained to act economically and efficiently. It is impossible to reach this sort of adjustment save as constant regard is had to the individual’s own powers, tastes, and interests--say, that is, as education is continually converted into psychological terms.

In sum, I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child’s capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interest, and habits must be continually interpreted--we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents--into terms of what they are capable of in any way of social service.

Article II: What the School Is

I believe that the 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 most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends.

I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living an not a preparation for future living. I believe that the school must represent present life--life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground. I believe that education which does not occur through forms of life, or that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden... 

I believe that as simplified social life, the school life should grow gradually out of the home life; that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home. I believe that it should exhibit these activities of the child, and reproduce them in such ways that the child will gradually learn the meaning of them, and be capable of playing his own part in relation to them. I believe that this is a psychological necessity, because it is the only way of securing continuity in the child's growth, the only way of giving background of past experience to the new ideas given in school.

I believe that it is also a social necessity because the home is the form of social life in which the child has been nurtured and in connection with which he has had his moral training. It is the business of the school to deepen and extend his sense of the values bound up in his home life.
I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparation. As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative.

I believe that the moral education centers upon this conception of the school as a mode of social life, that the best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought. The present educational systems, so far as they destroy or neglect this unity, render it difficult or impossible to get any genuine, regular moral training.

Article III: The Subject-Matter of Education

I believe that the social life of the child is the basis of concentration, or correlation, in all his training or growth. The social life gives the unconscious unity and the background of all his efforts and of all his attainments. I believe that the subject-matter of the school curriculum should mark a gradual differentiation out of the primitive unconscious unity of social life.

I believe that we violate the child’s nature and render difficult the best ethical results, by introducing the child too abruptly to a number of special studies, of reading, writing, geography, etc. out of relation to this social life. I believe, therefore, that the true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child’s own social activities.

I believe that education cannot be unified in the study of science, or so called nature study, because apart from human activity, nature itself is not a unity; nature in itself is a number of diverse objects in space and time, and to attempt to make it the center of work by itself, is to introduce a principle of radiation rather than concentration.

I believe that literature is the reflex expression and interpretation of social experience; that hence it must follow upon and not precede such experience. It, therefore, cannot be made the basis, although it may be made the summary of unification. I believe once more that history is of educative value in so far as it presents phases of social life and growth. It must be controlled by reference to social life. When taken simply as history it is thrown into the distant past and becomes dead and inert. Taken as the record of man’s social life and progress it becomes full of meaning. I believe, however, that it cannot be so taken excepting as the child is also introduced directly into social life. ...

I believe that the only way to make the child conscious of his social heritage is to enable him to perform those fundamental types of activity which make civilization what it is. I believe, therefore, in the so-called expressive or constructive activities as the center of correlation. I believe that this gives the standard for the place of cooking, sewing, manual training, etc., in the school.

I believe that they are not special studies which are to be introduced over and above a lot of others in the way of relaxation or relief, or as additional accomplishments. I believe rather that they represent as types, fundamental forms of social activity; and that it is possible and desirable that the child’s introduction to more formal subjects of the curriculum be through the medium of these activities.

Article V: The School and Social Progress
...I believe that in the ideal school we have the reconciliation of the individualistic and the institutional ideals. I believe that the community’s duty to education, therefore, is its paramount moral duty. By law and punishment, by social agitation and discussion, society can regulate and form itself in more or less haphazard and chance way. But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move.

I believe that it is the business of every one interested in education to insist upon the school as the primary and most effective interest of social progress and reform in order that society may be awakened to realize what the school stands for, and aroused to the necessity of endowing the educator with sufficient equipment properly to perform his task.

I believe that education thus conceived marks the most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience. ... I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth.