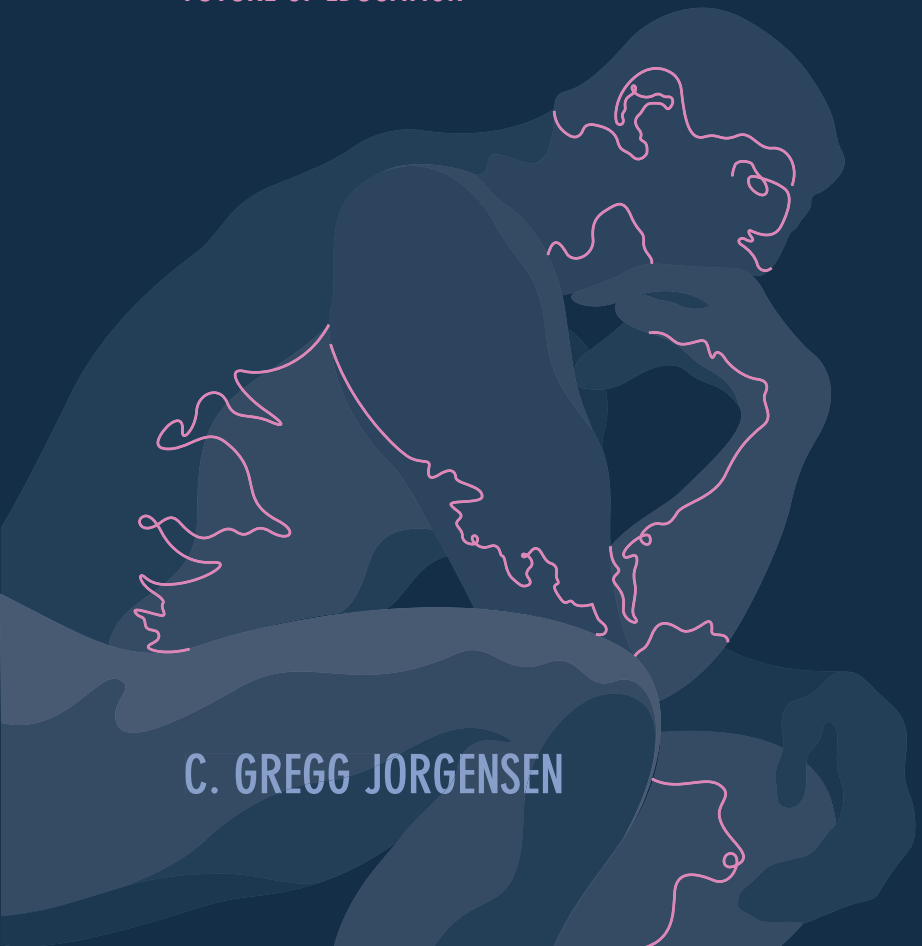
DISCOVERING JOHN DEWEY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

DIALOGUES ON THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF EDUCATION



C. GREGG JORGENSEN

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Dialogues on the Present and Future of Education

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To Diane

Acknowledgements

I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the 14 scholars who readily and graciously provided their time and enthusiasm for a personal interview. All 14 spoke openly and candidly about their thoughts about John Dewey and his potential role in twenty-first-century education.

It is also important to acknowledge two people who provided guidance, advice, and encouragement along the way during this scholar interview book project—a special thank-you to Jay Heffron at Soka University of America and Anne E. Gregory at Northern Illinois University. And I want to include a very special thank-you to Richard and Eileen Arndt for providing ongoing family reinforcement.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Open-mindedness.... It includes an active desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to facts from whatever source they come; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us.
—John Dewey, How We Think, 1933[1]

Gathered together in this book are personal interviews with 14 notable scholars conducted for the purpose of bringing together their opinions and observations about John Dewey, a renowned educational philosopher of the twentieth century. The reader will hear 14 different voices and 14 individual views about John Dewey, his philosophy, and his educational theory. Volumes have been written critiquing, analyzing, and documenting John Dewey's theories on education; a considerable number of these writings have been authored by these very scholars. In this book, however, the primary aim behind acquiring these 14 personal conversations is to determine whether John Dewey and his educational philosophy have a definitive and viable role to play in this new, twenty-first century.

It is almost too simplistic to state that John Dewey was an internationally known, prominent educational philosopher. His career stretched from the 1890s well into the mid-twentieth century. Throughout those decades, he was a prolific writer and authored what seems to be countless works—books, articles, and published lectures. College and university classes often discuss in-depth John Dewey's *My Pedagogic Creed* as a stepping-stone to educational theory. His books *The School and Society* and *The Child and the Curriculum* are widely considered to contain the most

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well known of Dewey's tenets. Dewey's seminal *Democracy and Education* is regarded as a teaching textbook for all time and all generations. Notably, there are also *How We Think* and *Art as Experience* as well as *Experience and Education*—and the list of his works goes on and on. The laboratory school he founded at the University of Chicago in the early 1900s is still considered to have established a noteworthy and extraordinary school format that exemplifies inclusive teaching and learning.

Throughout Dewey's extended career, he was identified innumerable times as a pragmatist, a socialist, a communist, a progressive, and a social democrat, among other assorted descriptive terms. These labels, generally affixed during Dewey's era by a variety of public figures, the public at large, and other scholars, both directly and indirectly precipitated misinterpretations of Dewey's educational philosophy. As a result, Dewey was often misunderstood or misinterpreted by many readers and researchers. These typical labels, together with a multitude of historical and contemporary social, political, and economic societal impacts, are discussed and scrutinized in the interviews collected in this volume.

Dewey had a penchant for redefining, or rather reassigning, common terms or words to describe his philosophical views. His usage of certain terminology has been discussed and debated, as well as misinterpreted, by many. These 14 scholar interviews revisit in-depth Dewey's terms, such as *occupations, experience, community, efficiency, savage, experimentation,* and *democracy.* I consider his use of the term *occupations* as a primary exemplar of what has led to the various misinterpretations of Dewey. His critics seized upon his use of the term *occupations* to incorrectly identify Dewey as an advocate of the social efficiency concept of vocational education versus college-bound education—or to mischaracterize what they argue was Dewey's acceptance of the proposed dualism in public school education as an outgrowth of the industrialist era. However, these scholar interviews reveal the reality of Dewey's stance, namely his consistent support of inclusive education for all students.

As an educational philosopher, Dewey did not provide specific or distinct blueprints for curriculum. That was not his forte, and in fact, he opposed the concept of one-size-fits-all education. Instead, Dewey was experimental in honing his reflective thinking pedagogy. John Dewey is not noted for attempting to make a name for himself in the sense of aspiring to run a statewide or national educational program, consulting with members of a state legislature or Congress regarding educational

reform, advocating for particular legislation, and such. He remained very satisfied to be "Professor Dewey."

He believed in the importance of content knowledge and critical thinking—and demonstrated that understanding at every turn. This posture allowed Dewey to enter into conversations on a wide variety of topics pertaining to democracy, education, philosophy, history, educational psychology, sociology, politics, and so on. With his extensive knowledge base, he arguably approached education from the perspective of an "expert" in those various fields, while at the same time not taking on that designation nor adopting a top-down structural approach to disseminate his beliefs and ideas for teaching and learning to support democratic ideals.

At the time of writing, it has been more than a hundred years since the publication of Dewey's pivotal and inspiring work *Democracy and Education*. This span of time is particularly noteworthy now that educators and all of the society have turned the page to the twenty-first century. The significance of this book project is critically highlighted by the acknowledgment of all 14 scholars interviewed that continuing a discussion about John Dewey is of vital interest and importance in advocating democratic education for all. These interviews reveal positive, sometimes negative, occasionally surprising, and consistently insightful comments that ideally will provide answers or food for thought to enable the reader to reflect on the primary question: Does John Dewey's consequential educational philosophy have an important role in twenty-first-century education and in nurturing and sustaining democratic ideals?

Note

1. Southern Illinois University Press. Used by permission.

CHAPTER 2

Consummate Dewey Intellectual: Larry Hickman

Prologue

Scholar Introduction

Larry A. Hickman is Professor Emeritus, Southern Illinois University, where he served as director of the Center for Dewey Studies and as professor of philosophy from 1993 through 2015. He is the author of numerous books and articles on Dewey, pragmatism, and philosophy, including *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology*, *Philosophical Tools for Technological Culture*, *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism, and Living as Learning: John Dewey in the Twenty-First Century*, with *Daisaku Ikeda and Jim Garrison*. Also, he is the editor or coeditor of more than a dozen volumes. He has served as president of the Society for Philosophy and Technology, the Southwestern Philosophical Society, the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, and the John Dewey Society. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin. He also holds honorary doctorates from Soka University of Japan and the University of Cologne (Germany).

In light of his extensive research focused on Dewey, philosophy, and his experiences directing the Center for Dewey Studies, Hickman was the first contact to whom I introduced my project to collect scholars' individual views and opinions about John Dewey. He readily agreed to an interview time. I traveled to the center, located at that time in a vintage home on the fringe of the Southern Illinois University campus that was

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very much like a Dewey-era residence. This dwelling housed a treasure trove of Dewey's legacy of writings and countless other writings and artifacts about Dewey and his educational philosophy. We met in the Dewey Center surrounded by an atmosphere that was all about John Dewey and began our dialogue on Hickman's thoughts and ideas about Dewey.

Dialogue Overview

This first Dewey scholar interview surrounds several broad-brush inquiries that allow room for topic expansion. In response to my inquiry about his view of the American educational system, Hickman states that US public schools do not present a centralized education. He attributes this circumstance to a disparity in economic resources and cultural differences. However, he believes that "there are places where Dewey's ideas have been tried and they have done very well." By Hickman's observation, US public school education in general maintains four fundamental elements that represent Dewey's ideas—theme-based learning; peer-based learning; the teacher as a coach, not an influential expert; and the concept that the student is not to be viewed as an empty filing cabinet for information or facts. Dewey believed that schooling needs to create a place for the socialization of all students. This point leads to considering Dewey's ideas for education versus today's view of homeschooling. Again, Hickman indicates that Dewey promoted schools as a facility to group and socialize students in a learning environment. Hickman believes Dewey could have had more influence if the four fundamental elements that represent Dewey's ideas had been universally adopted in schools. In his opinion, the result would have been a humanist curriculum. According to Hickman, this type of curriculum would "provide a broad-based liberal arts education that will allow its graduates to continue to learn as they go through life and to contribute to society."

Dewey and Democracy

At the time of our conversation, Hickman was intensely involved in the continuing development of existing and new Dewey Centers worldwide. I took the opportunity to inquire into his views about the overall acceptance of the Dewy Centers in other countries: Were they seeking to determine democracy? What kind of democracy? Hickman turned to US students with the observation that they "do not question whether this is the greatest country in the world. They assume it. To my mind, that's a

very dangerous thing because it means that the students are closed down with respect to important information." So the watchword becomes "do not assume." In Hickman's mind, students need to critically reflect on and discuss democracy. Educators need to "encourage our students to think about those kinds of things, not in any kind of dogmatic, ideological, hypercritical way, but by asking certain questions about who we are as a nation, what our values are." This leads to Hickman's statement that "we have to question those values; we have not only to find the ones that we want to continue to hold because they are important and good but also to find out those that we need to replace. That is a very Deweyan idea."

Education and Culture

Hickman strongly stresses that education is not an ideology. Instead, it inherently needs to be critical, perhaps acutely analytical, of ideology. Hickman observes an overlap of ideas between Dewey and Paulo Freire to some extent, but certainly there were individual, national, and societal differences. One should also consider cultural differences as potentially impacting education. From this perspective, Hickman notes, for instance, that "Dewey was influential in some aspects of education in Mexico; he traveled to Mexico, went out into the boondocks and talked to people about the schooling and so on. There is considerable interest in Dewey in Latin America."

Dewey: Pragmatist and Philosopher

When I inquire about his thoughts on which individual or individuals may have influenced Dewey, Hickman readily responds, "Francis Parker did." He shares that Parker, besides serving in education in Chicago, was about 20 years older. Hickman observes that Parker "had already established a career as superintendent of schools in Boston before he went to Chicago. It seems clear to me that Dewey took some important ideas from Parker." According to Hickman, John Dewey was also extremely influenced by William James, who is considered a prominent pragmatist of Dewey's era.

Hickman imparts that it is also critical "to see how Dewey's technical philosophy and his educational philosophy" evolved into a singular philosophy. Importantly, Hickman says, "If you look at some of Dewey's early essays, like 'The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology' in 1896 and 'The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism' in 1905, you see

a lot of James, who had a technical psychology and philosophy that worked its way over into what it means to have an organic philosophy of education."

On the issue of pragmatism, Hickman acknowledges that Dewey is a pragmatist. This leads to a discussion on what pragmatism is according to Dewey and where Dewey stood in the realm of pragmatists. According to Hickman, "Dewey gave up on the word late in his career because he thought it had been so badly misunderstood." But Dewey did refer to it in his works to some extent. Hickman proceeds to explain this observation from a triangulation of Charles Peirce versus William James versus John Dewey as various interpretations of pragmatism. According to Hickman, Peirce's view was involved with scientific inquiry, whereas James leaned toward individualist psychology. Dewey, on the other hand, reached an interpretation "in terms of social consequences of ideas, which gives him a lot more to say about the current situation of religion in America…. For Dewey it means that religious organizations are publics along with other publics." Thus, Hickman clarifies that in Dewey's view, all publics, as such, "have the responsibility to say why what they are doing is good or important."

Religion and Values

In regard to my inquiry about Dewey and religion, Hickman asserts that Dewey had a traditional view and directs attention to a paper he authored titled "John Dewey's Spiritual Values" as well as to several other points. The key to Hickman's thoughts is that Dewey subscribed to spiritual values and certainly would not attempt to influence anyone away from their religious faith. Hickman proceeds to indicate that from Dewey's perspective, "the name 'fundamentalism' is not really properly applied to those who hold dogmatic views. Fundamentalism should be a search for fundamental values and not just an assertion about what they are."

A Perspective of Dewey

In response to my question about what Hickman would say, what words he would employ, to describe John Dewey, he stated his important belief that Dewey was "moderate in disposition"—definitely not extreme. According to Hickman, Dewey believed in compromise to reach solutions and solve differences. In essence, Dewey tried to develop a third position between two opposing ideas. It stands to reason, then, that

Dewey avoided ideological positions. Indeed, in his pragmatist mode, according to Hickman, Dewey's stance was based on scientific ideas as well as Dewey's penchant to pursue new inquiry and experimentation to find tangible solutions to problems.

In discussing whether Dewey was underestimated or misunderstood in his twentieth-century era, Hickman states that he was both seriously underrated and also not understood by many, including some of his own students. Early on, Dewey did find success with the general public who read his journal articles and, I might add, perhaps listened to his periodic radio addresses. Hickman believes that Dewey fell out of favor in academic circles in the mid- to late twentieth century. But importantly, Hickman states, "It has only been most recently that his views have come back to the forefront of studies in the areas in which he was writing and with which he was concerned."

Dewey's Ideas on Teaching and Learning

A central consideration at this point of our discussion is twofold: whether Dewey influenced the American curriculum and whether he is relevant to our twenty-first-century teaching and learning. Despite the fact that Dewey-oriented schools were dispersed throughout the USA during Dewey's career, Hickman believes that Dewey was not an influence on the school curriculum. When pressed for reasons for this opinion, Hickman shares that at the heart of the structure of education in the USA is the lack of a centralized school system—instead, the system is a multiplicity of diverse local school boards and school administrations located throughout the nation. Hickman also points out that Dewey did believe in the promise of the school as community and its related values, but for Dewey, "it needed to be balanced with serious concern for questioning those values and determining to what extent they were valid and productive." Larry Hickman is in a unique position to ascertain John Dewey's relevancy in the twenty-first century. He interacts with the Dewey Centers in 11 foreign nations and in Carbondale, Illinois, on which he notes, "There is a great deal of interest not only in Dewey's educational philosophy but also among political scientists, public planners, economists, and a variety of people in various fields."

Does this translate into interest today in Dewey's theory of reflective thinking? Hickman's positive outlook is that it does and that reflective thinking can be implemented in the schools. He believes in some cases that it already has been. However, Hickman is convinced that the schools

need to bolster science understanding. He emphasizes that other countries have done so, but not the USA. Hickman believes that No Child Left Behind, still in place together with Common Core, exemplifies the opposite position from other countries.

Social Efficiency Concepts

US public education's continuing emphasis on standardized testing, under the guise of documenting teaching and learning improvement and progress, results in a reflection of social efficiency ideology that was born in the early twentieth century. This concept has continued to evolve, undergoing several iterations, into its present place in the twenty-first century. Dewey has not necessarily been clearly identified as an opponent of social efficiency; however, as Hickman points out, Dewey's view of social efficiency was much broader—well beyond basic economic theory. According to Hickman, "what Dewey thought was that social efficiency—in its valid forms—has to do with making sure that every person who is in school and every person who is an adult has the possibility to engage in lifelong learning and is able to develop themselves to their full capacity. Of course that requires educational investment."

Social Justice

Regarding the question of whether Dewey's educational philosophy has links to today's social justice issues, Hickman first highlights Dewey's activities with social justice-oriented initiatives and thus identifies Dewey as a founding member of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), among other similar organizations. To his point, Hickman states that Dewey "believed that the resources of the nation need to be dedicated to supporting people in ways that help them develop their potentials."

The Legacy

Hickman considers Dewey's legacy to be Dewey's brand of philosophy, which Hickman interprets as circumventing the analytical approach dominating the field for more than 50 years into a "more biological adaptive approach associated with some aspects of process philosophy." As such, the philosophical education lessons presented in Dewey's major articles and other writings have not, in Hickman's opinion, been completely comprehended. Hickman further observes, in particular, that he

"would include in that his 1896 'Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology' article, which was groundbreaking and still has not been fully appreciated, I think, by many people in academic fields." He also points out that Dewey's legacy is that he reaches beyond academics to "teachers, who can still find ways of addressing issues in the classroom, I think, through careful readings of his work, especially his great book *Democracy and Education*."

On an ongoing basis, Hickman connects with Dewey scholars, which gives him plenty of opportunities to discuss Dewey and his colleagues. However, he singles out Dewey's political affiliation as one area still under discussion and debated during his scholarly visits. Hickman notes two different versions—one by Robert Westbrook, who sees Dewey's view of socialism as industrial socialism, and another by Alan Ryan, who places Dewey in the context of guild socialism, one that focuses on trade unions, according to Hickman.

Dewey Centers for the Pursuit of Deweyan Knowledge

Then our dialogue takes an almost natural turn back to Hickman's longtime role in directing the Dewey Center. As the former director of the globally oriented Center for Dewey Studies, Hickman observes that a broad spectrum of people come to learn from Dewey's writings. In regard to teachers in particular, Hickman notes that many are Dewey knowledgeable, even though they may have actually acquired their Deweyan teaching ideas indirectly from people who were their teachers in the past. In fact, he perceives that teachers develop alternative teaching workarounds, for instance, by "actually teaching geography in chemistry classes because they felt that the social sciences had been so badly shortchanged."

Hickman's appointment to the Dewey Center in 1993 followed Jo Ann Boydston, the first director, who retired after 30 years. During Boydston's tenure, the center staff completed the monumental task of preserving the 37 printed volumes of John Dewey's works. Hickman calls the preservation of Dewey's works "a massive and extremely important undertaking that was done with exquisite care; it really is like a gold standard of an edition." Through his own efforts, the center has founded many different approaches to the research and study of John Dewey at the international centers. He reflects that the interest in Dewey ranges from Dewey's relationship to neo-pragmatism to his ideas about religion to his educational philosophy, while for one center,

the main interest is in aesthetics. He concludes on the note that each of the centers and its resource materials are readily available and open to all who are seeking "to seriously read Dewey's work from whatever angle."

Our dialogue concludes on this very positive note for the enduring pursuit of knowledge and understanding of John Dewey. Our dialogue came to a conclusion. As I left the Center for Dewey Studies's vintage house, I took with me reflections of the vast thoughts and ideas of John Dewey that lived there.

Epilogue

This dialogue with Larry Hickman runs the gamut of aspects of John Dewey's educational philosophy, including the various scholarly and societal interpretations and misinterpretations of Dewey throughout the decades. In this dialogue, Hickman steadfastly maintains that Dewey's philosophy remains a formidable and positive influence on twenty-first-century education. Hickman advocates that Dewey's educational theory is designed to open possibilities for all children, all students, indeed, all individuals, to develop their ability to comprehend and unpack wide-ranging situations and be able to respond creatively in a consistent manner as they strive toward Dewey's democratic ideals.

Hickman's intensely acquired knowledge base on John Dewey's philosophy expands beyond his research and writings to include ongoing contacts with those who travel to the various Centers for Dewey Studies—the US home base and the other centers in 11 countries—to learn about and study Dewey's ideas and ideals for education. The appeal of and interest in the centers are explained by Hickman's remark that "Dewey was not the radical that he is often presented as being.… He had some wonderful ideas for education that had to do with the growth of the individual student—child, student, whatever level—according to ways that would open up their possibilities." I find this to be a profound opinion that portrays a positive outlook for extending John Dewey's educational philosophy into today's schools in the USA and worldwide.

Author note: All quotations in the Prologue and Epilogue are from the Larry Hickman dialogue transcript.

Larry Hickman Dialogue

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH LARRY HICKMAN

Carbondale, IL, September 2012 (Edited)

GREGG JORGENSEN (GJ): *I am addressing readers who may only have a passing acquaintance with John Dewey, or not know him at all. What would you say about Dewey himself?*

LARRY HICKMAN (LH): Dewey was born in 1859 in Burlington, Vermont, and died in 1952 in New York City. He was a philosopher, an educator, and one of the most important public intellectuals of the twentieth century. In terms of his work, I would say that Dewey was not the radical that he is often presented as being, and that he had some wonderful ideas for education that had to do with the growth of the individual student—child, student, whatever level—according to ways that would open up their possibilities and this meant striking a balance between the preservation and transferal of received values on one side and the radical dismantling of them on the other side. So, I think perhaps in terms of the general American public of his time, they understood that he was an important educational theorist who had ideas about the central questions of education, which, to his mind, involved opening up possibilities for individuals who were children, individuals who were students, and in fact finding ways of creating more individuality in them because of their abilities to comprehend situations and respond to them creatively. As for his personal traits, Dewey was moderate in disposition, and rather "laid back" as we would say today. He disliked extreme views, and loved finding solutions that involved compromise between extremes. From early in his career he knew who he was and what he wanted to do. He was also an early supporter of equal rights for women and he was there at the founding of the NAACP.

GJ: *Was he oblivious, so to speak, to the criticism that went on or did he stop to think about it and try to respond?*

LH: He did not take offense easily, and tended to be generous to his critics. I've read his voluminous correspondence fairly carefully and can say that there were very few people whom he disliked.

GJ: *Care to identify names?*

LH: I am not talking about their ideas, or their philosophy in this context, but people that he thought had treated him, his family, or his colleagues badly. One was Mortimer Adler. Another was William Rainey Harper, a president of the University of Chicago. He did not like Hugo Munsterberg. But in general Dewey possessed a bright, sunny character. His response to criticism was just to attempt to respond in ways that were positive. At times, however, in exchanges in the professional journals, he just gives up because it is clear that the conversation is not going anywhere. In one of the more interesting exchanges, the conversation was taken up by surrogates. The exchange began between Dewey and Robert Maynard Hutchins [president of the University of Chicago] but continued as a conversation between Dewey's disciple Sidney Hook and Hutchins' defender Alexander Meiklejohn. Dewey finally closed the exchange by just claiming that he had been so badly misunderstood that there was not much point in continuing.

Despite his gentle nature, however, Dewey could be a bit acerbic at times. When heard that Adler and Walter Lippmann were working on some sort of joint project he wrote to one of his correspondents something like "Well, it's amusing but it would seem to contravene a good Biblical prohibition against yoking an ox with an ass." Which was the ox and which the ass? We don't know.

GJ: *Can you name people who truly influenced Dewey?*

LH: Yes, Francis Parker did. Parker was, I guess, about twenty years older and had already established a career as superintendent of schools in Boston before he went to Chicago. It seems clear to me that Dewey took some important ideas from Parker. In addition, Dewey was doing a lot of background work in education while at the University of Michigan and then at the University of Chicago. He was corresponding with all sorts of people and picking up ideas here and there.

But I think one of his most important influences was William James, who published his monumental *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. By 1891 Dewey was already offering a two-semester course on that book at the University of Michigan. If you look at some of Dewey's early essays, like "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology" in 1896 and "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" in 1905, you see a lot of James, who had a technical psychology and philosophy that worked its way over into what it means to have an organic philosophy of education. Darwin also was an important influence.

GJ: *Do you believe Dewey ever really influenced American education and specifically the American curriculum?*

LH: That is a complex question because the American educational system is very complex thing. In fact, the more I think about it the less I think that it is possible to generalize American education. I know that there have been attempts to do this—*A Nation at Risk*, published in 1983, was one of those attempts—but at this point we have too many influences in education to get a coherent picture. We have public schools that differ greatly in terms of their tax base. As you know, the American system provides for local school districts, run by local school boards, paid for by local tax bases, and that means that you have a considerable disparity in terms of economic resources. Jonathan Kozol in his very famous book *Savage Inequalities* pointed this out and I was particularly interested in that book because I went to one of the high schools in San Antonio that he mentions. So, you have these enormous disparities nationwide and even some of my most progressive friends complain bitterly about having to pay taxes for equalization of funds for school districts. So, you have that disparity. You have another disparity in terms of cultural traditions. There are cultural traditions in especially places like the South where you have communities that are almost all of one particular religious persuasion and they want certain aspects of their religion taught in their schools. You have other places where that is not an issue. Again, we have charter schools and even in the charter schools—which are public schools because they are funded and chartered by the public—even there you have a mixed bag. In terms of approach and effectiveness, charter schools are all over the place. So it is difficult to say anything in general.

What we can say, however, is that there are places where Dewey's ideas have been tried and they have done very well. I think the second thing we can say is that the extent of Dewey's influence depends on what time frame we are looking at. Are most schools better now than when Dewey started his work? Yes. Dewey consolidated and became a kind of spokesperson for many of the most progressive educational ideas of his time. Dewey was the person who was more often identified with those progressive trends.

Dewey emphasized four basic educational ideas that are now practiced in many schools, both here in the United States and in Europe. The first is theme-based learning. Southern Illinois University Medical School, for example, has had a theme-based alternative to the traditional lecture format. Students worked in teams on sets of problems prescribed by the usual curriculum, but

they did their own research and presented it to one another. They had a conference room available to them open 24 h a day and focused on solving the problems, not memorizing the lectures. That approach can work all the way from K-12 education up to the university and professional level.

The second is peer-based learning. Students learn from one another in any case, so the idea is to provide some structure that enhances those processes. I have seen this approach work for classes of remedial reading. Those are two of the ideas of the Deweyan educational system. A third idea is the concept of the teacher as coach rather than teacher as authority figure. I think we are seeing more of that in terms of the way the Internet is used in the classroom and the ways that teachers utilize educational technology. There is something of that in the "inverted classroom [flipped classroom]," where the teacher's lectures are available to students at home on the Internet and they do their "homework" at the school where they can get individual coaching by the teacher. So, you have peer-based learning, theme-based learning, and the teacher as coach. In addition, you have the idea of service learning. That means learning that takes place outside the school room in the community. Dewey struggled against the "file cabinet" model of education, that is, that the student is a kind of file cabinet into which you put ideas. For Dewey, students are living organisms who have their own individual interests and needs, their own contexts.

Now, one of the things that I think is a little bit disturbing in terms of a Deweyan approach to education is some aspects of home schooling. Of course, there are many kids who emerge from home schooling with an enormous ability to manage information. But what I worry about is socialization, which is also an important component of education. Dewey argued that a public school is a place of great importance for socialization. But home schooling tends to isolate students, or when socialization does occur, to put students into contexts where they meet only people who agree with their particular cultural or religious biases. That seems to be a recipe for further splintering of the American society.

Has Dewey had an influence on education in the United States? Yes. Has the influence gone as far as it would have gone if we had taken Dewey more seriously? Certainly, not. We would have better-funded schools; we would have an overarching national curriculum, I think, that respects regional and cultural differences; and we would have more respect and better training for teachers if Dewey's ideas were put into effect. We would not have the kind of standardized testing we have in the schools, and we would not have situations where there is teaching to the test.

So, the answer to your question is that there have been some schools where Dewey's ideas were taken seriously. There have been other schools where they were not accepted. And there have been still other schools where practices have evolved in the direction of Dewey's ideas, but with scant recognition of where those ideas came from.

GJ: *Why do you believe Dewey's ideas were never consistently implemented in the schools?*

LH: Well, I think in part because they were not understood. I think there has been an effort among certain segments of the population that has led to misunderstanding. We still have absolutists in terms of moral values, people who have historically been opposed to the kinds of liberal progressive trends in education and in society that Dewey's educational policies represented, and who believe that education is not examination of values but transmission of values. I think you can see why such people would not only misunderstand Dewey but also would oppose his project, often misrepresenting his ideas. He was misunderstood in the Soviet Union, for example. During the 1950s the article on Dewey in the *Soviet Encyclopedia* made up "quotations" from his work out of whole cloth. First, what they claim Dewey said is simply out of character with his wider project. Second, if you do a character-string search in the electronic edition of Dewey's work you find nothing even similar to what they claimed he said. That is one thing. Some Christian fundamentalists do more of less the same thing. I have found Dewey "quotations" in the works of some of those authors that Dewey never said. And some of those "quotations" have even found their way into legitimate educational journals. It is a case of someone quoting something that they got from somebody else that that person got from somebody else that started on a website run by a fundamentalist Christian. I had a case recently where a professor in educational theory wrote me to ask about a Dewey "quotation" in an article by a fairly well-known educational theorist that was just outrageous. Her question was, is this really Dewey? Of course, the answer was no, but where did it come from? So, I traced it back to its source. In Europe there were serious attempts to keep Dewey's ideas out of the public sphere; in Germany and Italy, for example. In Italy, Catholics and Marxists both worked very hard to keep Dewey's ideas out of the schools.

Another thing that creates misunderstanding is that despite the very simple vocabulary that you find in Dewey's publications, his

ideas are really very sophisticated. Sometimes his ideas are quite radical. So some people are misled. If we took Dewey's ideas seriously they would change not only our educational system but also our wider culture.

Dewey's ideas were not tried in part because we do not have or at least have not had a centralized school system in this country. As I said, we have lots of local school boards, and what that means is to a great extent, local school boards are interested in the transmission of received values; they want to make sure that their values—the values of the community—get instilled into the students in the school system. Dewey thought that was a very fine idea but it needed to be balanced with serious concern for questioning those values and determining to what extent they were valid and productive. And so there have been places where school boards did not want to have such questions raised. So, it is still the case that Dewey's idea have not had much acceptance in some school systems in the United States.

GJ: *However, there are some schools identified as Deweyan schools that are using his ideas…*

LH: Actually, there is a university in California—Soka University of America—that is very, very Deweyan. His ideas are right there in the forefront: peer-based learning; theme-based learning; the teacher as coach; and service learning. Even though the university is funded in large part by Buddhist resources, it is not in any way a religious university. There is no religious curriculum at all. It is a humanist university that attempts to produce the future leaders of the Pacific Rim and beyond.

GJ: *Would you explain how they promote themselves to perspective students?*

LH: Soka University of America promotes itself as a high quality university with excellent resources for teaching and learning. It is a humanist university that focuses on environmental issues, on peace studies, that is, on the kinds of concerns that the founder, the management, and the faculty believe will be important in a globalizing world in the twenty-first century. Although Soka University of America has only been in existence a bit more than a decade, it has national rankings in terms of faculty/student ratio, study abroad, diversity, and so on.

GJ: *What is the background of the people who founded the school based on humanistic concepts?*

LH: Their background is Nichiren Buddhism. They are lay Buddhists, not monks, and their organization is called Soka Gakkai. The founder of the organization, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was a teacher and peace

activist in Japan in the 1930s. He was arrested, imprisoned, and eventually actually died of starvation in prison in 1944. After the war, his disciple, Josei Toda started to build an organization through community meetings. His successor, Daisaku Ikeda, has built that organization to a membership of about 13 million worldwide. I have heard Mr. Ikeda say that religion is important but education is equally important. He founded Soka University of Japan, as well as K-12 schools in Tokyo, Singapore, Brazil, and other places as well, as well as Soka University of America in Southern California. He believes the future needs leaders who will understand environmental and sustainability issues, who will work for world peace, and who will create value for themselves and those around them. And that is the mission of the university: to provide a broad-based liberal arts education that will allow its graduates to continue to learn as they go through life and to contribute to society.

GJ: *Do you think ideas like that could be expanded and funded for public schools of that type in the United States?*

LH: That is the big question. As you know, there is an enormous debate in this country about what a university is and should be. There is more and more emphasis on getting students in and out as quickly as possible at the least possible cost. In Florida and Texas, you have some studies that propose to take universities in a very different direction, very different from what they have been. The Brits are also doing this. The study there is called the Browne Report. In Britain, the universities will be defined in terms of their ability to operate as an economic engine for the nation, and students will be charged for courses on the basis of how much potential income they are liable to produce.

GJ: *Really?*

LH: Yes. Take a look at the Browne Report. I think you will find it very interesting. A good introduction, about a two-page introduction to it was written by Stefan Collini in the *London Review of Books* about six months ago, and you could probably find it on line easily enough. The proposal is a remarkable thing. Historically, we have conceived of students attending the university as seventeen, eighteen years of age in order to read, learn, and discover their place as citizens of a republic of letters, to engage in the kind of analysis of their own values that will set them up for lifelong learning.

There's nothing about that in the Texas report, in the Florida report. There is nothing, as far as I could tell, about developing the virtues of citizenship. The students are defined as consumers