
Democracy & Education

Reading Democracy and Education in the Context of World War I

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Abstract

In this historical study, the author offers a reading of Dewey's *Democracy and Education* in the context of the two other books Dewey published the year before, *German Philosophy and Politics* and his coauthored *Schools of To-morrow*. Having published three books in two years, *Democracy and Education* arrived at the end of one of Dewey's most prolific periods. Through these three texts, Dewey offered a pointed critique of authoritarian German politics, philosophy, and schooling and crafted an innovative pedagogy grounded in progressive democratic ideals as contrast. Using Germany as a clear and present foil, Dewey clarified his ideas on American democratic and pedagogical ideals in the context of World War I.

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, Dewey (1916a) published *Democracy and Education* to glowing reviews. One reader insisted that any educator who failed to read the text “will be little short of criminally negligent professionally” (Anonymous, 1916, p. 518), and another concluded that “it would be difficult to overstate [the book’s] import and value for all students of education, philosophy, and society” (Moore, 1916, p. 547). As Dewey revealed to a friend, *Democracy and Education* was “the closest attempt I have made to sum up my entire philosophy” (quoted in Hickman, 2005, rec. 03236). Dewey’s famous work summarized the philosophical and pedagogical ideas he had been addressing for the past 20 years. For this reason, *Democracy and Education* has become the one-stop read for many students and scholars looking for insight, not only into Dewey’s philosophy and pedagogy, but also into the broader reform movement known as progressive education. As a result, readings of *Democracy and*

Education have tended to be conceptual and ahistorical. That is, scholars have tended to focus on the text’s enduring aspects and broad insights into American society and democracy, while ignoring many of its dated and contingent elements. Indeed, Dewey’s positions on the comprehensive high school, student-centered instruction, inquiry, interdisciplinary study, and vocational education and his groundbreaking vision for cultural pluralism are as relevant today as they were 100 years ago. However,

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such ahistorical readings marginalize some of the specific contexts to which Dewey was responding in 1916. In this essay, I focus on what I consider to be the most overlooked context for understanding *Democracy and Education*, anti-German sentiment among intellectuals in the years around World War I (1914–1918). Further, I offer a reading of *Democracy and Education* in the context of the two other books Dewey published the year before, *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915a) and his coauthored *Schools of To-morrow* (Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

Biographers of Dewey have tended to read *German Philosophy and Politics* in isolation from Dewey's works on education. For example, Westbrook (1991) addressed *Democracy and Education* and *Schools of To-morrow* in a thematic chapter on education and then addressed *German Philosophy and Politics* in a separate chapter on Dewey's response to World War I.¹ Educational historians have tended to ignore *German Philosophy and Politics* altogether, viewing it as irrelevant to Dewey's educational views (e.g., Cremin, 1961; Kliebard, 2004; Ravitch, 2001; Zilversmit, 1993). As a result, historians have overlooked how the theme of anti-German authoritarianism connected Dewey's three works authored in 1915–1916 to one another. In this historical study, I argue that through these three texts Dewey offered a pointed critique of authoritarian German politics, philosophy, and schooling and crafted an innovative pedagogy grounded in progressive democratic ideals as contrast. Although Dewey had long-standing reservations about German philosophy and pedagogy, he used anti-German sentiment as a dialectical tool to communicate his ideas on democratic education to a highly receptive audience. Thus, I demonstrate how Dewey authored *Democracy and Education* in the midst of a broader repudiation of German ideas in pedagogy and culture brought on by World War I.

German Influence on U.S. Education

As one scholar explained in 1918: “For the past seventy-five years America has knelt quite submissively before Germany, as the most educationally efficient nation in the world” (McConaughy, 1918, p. 31). Since the founding of the common school, American educators have looked to Prussia and Germany for inspiration and ideas. In the 1830s, the state of Ohio sent Calvin Stowe, Harriet Beecher Stowe's husband, to Europe to learn what he could from the Prussian schools. Stowe was impressed with the organization of the Prussian curriculum and how the Prussian teachers moved beyond mere rote learning to engage the students' higher faculties such as imagination and judgment. Stowe (1839) emphatically concluded: “If it can be done in Prussia, I know it can be done in Ohio” (p. 57). Horace Mann (1844), Massachusetts Secretary of Education, likewise traveled to Prussia to study its schools. He too admired how the Prussian teachers helped students gain “precision in the expression of ideas” and encouraged them to “exercise their intellect” (p. 119). Mann concluded that, if Prussia could effectively

construct a school system to support “arbitrary power,” then “we surely can employ them for the support of republican institutions” (p. 73). The earliest proponents of the common school admired the German system of public schooling and praised many of its pedagogical and administrative innovations. Yet they also recognized that Prussia was not a democracy, and therefore, the German ideas would need to be tweaked for American schools.

Nevertheless, by midcentury, William Torrey Harris—the most important U.S. educational figure between Mann and Dewey—maintained U.S. educators' admiration for German ideas through his espousal of Hegelian idealism. Harris was a founding editor of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, superintendent of public schools in St. Louis between 1868 and 1880, U.S. Commissioner of Education between 1889 and 1906, and member of the influential National Education Association's (NEA) Committee of Ten. In St. Louis, a community with 80% German ancestry, Harris implemented many German-inspired innovations, such as the kindergarten. He also supported the teaching of the German language nationally and in St. Louis schools (Reese, 2000). Harris viewed Euro-American culture as the pinnacle of civilization and sought to draw upon German ideals and pedagogy to raise the cultural level of all Americans. Throughout his career, he sought to move American schools closer to their German counterparts.

Harris was an early mentor to Dewey. Harris published Dewey's first essay in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, and the two shared an admiration for Hegel. Dewey even admitted privately to Harris in 1894, “It may interest you to know—that I shouldn't like to give away to the public—that I started first by trying to turn Hegel's logic over into psychology and then that into pedagogy” (quoted in Hickman, 2005, rec. 00943). However, when Harris (1898) authored a text that likewise tried to translate Hegel's logic into psychology and pedagogy, *Psychologic Foundations of Education*, Dewey (1898) published a respectful but critical review of Harris's text in the *Educational Review*, demonstrating that Dewey had moved beyond Hegelianism by the end of the decade. In fact, since the mid-1890s, Dewey had approached both Hegelianism and German pedagogy with a good deal of skepticism. However, Dewey's critical stance on German philosophy, politics, and schooling put him in the minority among leading intellectuals until around 1914.

In fact, Dewey crafted his philosophy and pedagogy during the high tide of interest in German pedagogy because the biggest influence on American educators in the 1880s and 1890s was German philosopher Johann Frederich Herbart. In fact, before Dewey arrived at the University of Chicago in 1894, he explained in a letter to his wife that he had received a request “from 9 schoolmaams in some West side ward asking me to please form a class and then teach them Herbartian pedagogy.” The request by these teachers demonstrated how popular Herbartian theory had become among reform-minded teachers. “But,” Dewey explained to his wife, “I shan't indulge in that cruelty” (quoted in Hickman 2005, rec. 00188). As Dewey (1895) later explained, he lacked enthusiasm for Herbartian pedagogy because it did not adequately account for biological impulse and instinct—it overemphasized the dualistic and formal presentation of content and objects

1 Ryan (1995) does recognize some connections between *German Philosophy and Politics* and *Democracy and Education* by addressing both texts in the chapter “Pragmatism at War.” However, he addressed *Schools of To-morrow* in the previous chapter, “The Pedagogy as Prophet.”

independent of the contexts that engendered them, and it failed to create an organic “unity among ideas” (p. 297). Nevertheless, Dewey was an early member of the National Herbart Society for the Scientific Study of Teaching, founded by a number of influential American pedagogues including Charles DeGarmo, Charles and Frank McMurry, and C. C. Van Liew. These scholars had studied the pedagogical and philosophical theories of Herbart in Germany, and when they returned to the United States, they began disseminating Herbart’s ideas in educational journals, lectures, and textbooks such as DeGarmo’s (1889) *Essentials of Methods* and Dodd’s (1898) *Introduction to the Herbartian Principles of Teaching*. Thus, Dewey’s critique of Herbartian pedagogy was subtle, and it emerged from an insider perspective, because Dewey agreed with the Herbartians that a shift toward a more student-centered pedagogy was warranted, even if he disagreed with many of Herbart’s philosophical assumptions.

Drawing upon their own experiences studying in Germany, American historians furthered the effort to adapt German ideas to American schools. In fact, the leading theory of historical development during the final decades of the 19th century was the institutional germ theory—the idea that American democracy originated with the Teutonic-Anglo-Saxon race (Novick, 1987). In an influential article, “The German Origin of New England Towns,” Herbart Baxter Adams (1883) of Johns Hopkins University—where Dewey had received his PhD—traced the idea of democracy to the “old English and Germanic ideas, brought over by Pilgrims and Puritans, . . . ready to take root in the free soil of America” (p. 8). The Teutonic germ theory not only affirmed the exceptionality of the United States, but it also suggested that the nation represented the perfection of latent potentials that originated in Germany.

Leading scholars imported their view of Anglo-German cultural superiority to the United States directly from its universities. In the latter half of the 19th century, German universities were considered the most advanced in the world, and thousands of American scholars studied there (Herbst, 1965; Novick, 1987; Rogers, 1998). Most historians and social scientists concerned about teaching of civics and history in the United States in the 1890s had studied at German universities, including historians Herbart Baxter Adams, John W. Burgess, Albert Bushnell Hart, and Charles Kendall Adams. Influential historians who studied in the United States, such as Lucy Maynard Salmon and Woodrow Wilson, had done so under the mentorship of German-trained historians. Furthermore, pedagogical innovator Col. Francis W. Parker, civil rights advocate W. E. B. Du Bois, and psychologists William James and G. Stanley Hall had also studied in Germany (Cremin, 1961; Richardson, 2007; Ross, 1972; Schafer, 2001). These scholars lauded German schools and sought to import many of German’s pedagogical innovations to the United States. Since the publication of German educator Wilhelm Diesterweg’s *Instruction in History*, Salmon (1891) asserted, discussions about the teaching of history were characterized by “recognition of the advantages of comparing of different methods of instruction” and “the predominant influence of German ideas” (p.438). Hall (1883) likewise suggested that American teachers had much to learn from the wisdom of German history instructors like Diesterweg, who had transcended the

“purely colorless presentation of facts” that characterized the teaching of the topic in the United States (p. xi). Adams insisted, “In Germany, history is a constituent part of the regular intellectual nourishment of the pupil during the whole of his preparatory work,” and he criticized schools in the United States for their failure to address the subject adequately (quoted in McMurry, 1946, p. 13).

However, when World War I erupted in the summer of 1914, scholars quickly abandoned their admiration for German education because Germany was now viewed as an enemy and international threat to democracy. Educators who had once found much to emulate in German pedagogy and schooling now viewed the nation as narrow-minded, imperialistic, and excessively technocratic. For example, in 1909, education professor William Bagley admired how in a single century education had transformed Germany “from the weakest to the strongest power on the continent of Europe” (quoted in Null & Ravitch, 2006, p. 71). Yet in 1918, Bagley considered Prussianism “a disease, a moral lesion which has cut away every sentiment of decency and humanity, which has eaten from the social mind the spiritual and moral values of life, which has glorified the material and left the brute supreme” (quoted in Null & Ravitch, 2006, p. 117). J. H. Phillips (1914), superintendent of schools for Birmingham, Alabama, contrasted German education, which focused on “the national protection and expansion under national authority,” with American education, which “does not seek to exploit the individual through the educational extension of the power and prestige of the State” (p. 484). When the United States entered the war in spring 1917, the anti-German rhetoric escalated. “No schools in the world are such absolute failures as Germany’s,” one professor of education complained. “Instead of developing character her education debases and destroys it” (McConaughy, 1918, p. 32). Paul Hanus, the German-born dean of education at Harvard University, had even harsher critiques for German education. “The school system in Germany is planned to keep the masses of the people in dependence on the classes,” Hanus (1918) observed during his visits to the county. “The masses of the German people are stolid, doltish, and they are kept in that condition in the interest of the relatively small, selfish governing class” (p. 451). Books published during the war, such as Friedel’s *The German School as War Nursery* (1918) and Alexander’s *The Prussian Elementary Schools* (1919), blamed Prussian schoolteachers for creating a population hungry for subservience, efficiency, and war. American scholars disavowed their earlier praise for the German education system and viewed the war as a direct result of Germany’s authoritarian schools. In fact, during the years leading up to World War I, educators in the United States self-consciously aimed at defining itself against the Prussian system of militarism, forced assimilation, and economic efficiency.

The issue was made more urgent by the flood of immigrants, including Germans, who entered the United States from Europe during the decades leading up to World War I. As nativists and patriots aimed their ire at unassimilated Germans, many schools cancelled and banned their German language instruction (Kennedy, 1980; Mirel, 2010). However, cooler heads prevailed among policy-makers, and liberal educators took the lead in the effort to Americanize immigrant children and adults, and they explicitly

contrasted their approach with Prussia's. As P. P. Claxton (1918), head of the U.S. Bureau of Education, asserted: "Americanization can come only through teaching. We must win the mind and heart of the people for the country and its institutions and ideals. This can be not be done by force or compulsion. Americanism can never be obtained through the process of Prussianism" (p. 61). Likewise, Royal Dixon, vice president of the League of Foreign-Born Citizens, warned against emulating the German system. "In the terrible name of efficiency, the thing for which Germany lost her soul," Dixon (1916) complained, many Americans were also catering "to the crass demands of the business world" (p. 179). Dewey and his like-minded contemporaries recognized that, in the United States, assimilation needed to transcend mere indoctrination and economic socialization like what was taking place in Germany; assimilation needed to be based upon more egalitarian and interactional understanding. Dewey also insisted that assimilating foreign-born workers from across the globe in a democratic manner represented a historically unique effort—it would need to be done thoughtfully and deliberately. To do so, Dewey clarified his post-European, post-German cosmopolitanism to guide this pedagogical work.

German Philosophy and Politics and Schools of To-morrow

Dewey reconsidered the significance of culture during the war because the conflict had thrust the issues of assimilation, nationalism, and Americanization to the forefront of the minds of most American scholars and policy-makers. In particular, Dewey expressed three related themes. First, the war underscored a break from the intellectual roots of German thought in America. Dewey viewed the militarism of the Germans as a direct consequence of their cultural, philosophical, and pedagogical background. For Dewey, America's pluralistic culture stood in stark contrast to German monoculturalism. The second theme was that, although the war necessitated the rapid acculturation of immigrants, the process should not emulate the Prussian model of forced assimilation to a single cultural type. Rather, the American process of acculturation had to reflect the exceptionality of the American experience. Dewey and other pluralists such as Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne insisted that the cultures of the different immigrant groups had to be assimilated to one another rather than to one generic type (Hollinger, 1985; Menand, 2001). The third theme was that Adams's Teutonic germ theory narrative of institutional development, which posited that American institutions were carried by the Teutons to the Anglo-Saxons to the Americans, had to be replaced by a pluralistic narrative of cultural adjustment and exchange. Dewey and his like-minded colleagues argued that all immigrant groups had something to offer the transracial democratic culture, not just those with Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic roots.

The most significant critiques of the formerly-admired German system were Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915a) and economist Thorstein Veblen's (1915) *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution*. Both works, published in 1915, criticized the Germans' excessive emphasis upon veneration of

state and considered German imperialism as a natural outgrowth of its idealistic philosophy and bureaucratic efficiency. As intellectual historian Morton White (1947) explained, "Both Veblen and Dewey had been trained in German philosophy and both were products of the generation which had looked with scorn upon British empiricism. For this reason their critical comments on German thought in 1915 . . . mark an important turn in twentieth-century American thought" (p. 147). In *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution*, Veblen traced the emergence of German imperialism to an unnatural and vast disconnect between its rapid industrialization and its political and social ideals. Using English industrialization as a contrast, Veblen (1915) concluded: "The case of Germany is unexampled among Western nations both as regards the abruptness, thoroughness, and amplitude of its appropriation of . . . technology, and as regards the archaism of its cultural furniture" (p. 86). Veblen and Dewey agreed that the rapid industrialization of the German state had distorted its culture by substituting idealism and efficiency for pluralistic evolution and democratic reform.

In *German Philosophy and Politics*, Dewey (1915a) extended Veblen's cultural and economic critique to philosophy and education. Dewey traced the roots of contemporaneous German thought to Fichte, Hegel, and especially Kant. From these philosophers, Dewey argued, Germans inherited their dualistic allegiance to an internal idealistic life, and an externally ordered life characterized by "obedience, discipline, and subordination" as the "necessities of successful organization" (p. 37). Germans manifested these ideals, not only in militarism and business efficiency, but also in education. Dewey pointed out how "high schools and universities in Germany are . . . under the control of the state and part of state life," and "philosophy both directly and indirectly, plays an unusually large role in the training" (p. 15). Further, Dewey insisted that in Germany, "Education is *the* means of the advancement of humanity toward realization of its divine perfection. Education is the work of the State" [italics in original] (p. 73). Thus, in Germany, the state is cast as "an essential moral Being charged with an indispensable moral function," of preparing students to be citizens defined by their duty to the state (p. 130). Dewey concluded the *German Philosophy and Politics* by contrasting Germany with the United States, characterizing the latter as "interracial and international" (p. 132). He challenged Americans to embrace "the efficacy of human intercourse, irrespective of class, racial, geographic, and national limits" (p. 132). Dewey would flesh out these ideas with greater clarity in *Schools of To-morrow*, a text he coauthored with his daughter Evelyn (Dewey & Dewey, 1915).

In *Schools of To-morrow*, Dewey outlined what an American-style democratic education should look like through case studies of over a dozen schools. In particular, he and his daughter were making a case for a unified as opposed to a dual system of schooling, which separated students into vocational and academic tracks at an early age. Dewey had been in an ongoing debate with Massachusetts Commissioner of Education David Snedden over the issue. Snedden supported the dual system of schooling that separated students into academic and vocational tracks like in Germany. The vocational education movement in the United States

had grown in self-conscious emulation of the German system (see Kliebard, 2004, pp. 116–117). In *Schools of To-morrow*, Dewey wanted to document what unified systems of schooling looked like in areas such as Chicago, Gary, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis because these schools did not track their students (although they were racially segregated), and they approached industrial and academic learning as coterminous, not antagonistic. Dewey's enthusiastic support for the unified system was underscored by the growing aggression of Germany, whose dual school system he attacked in his writing leading up to and during World War I. Perhaps this explains why Herbart, whose ideas exerted a large influence on American pedagogy in the 1890s, was conspicuously missing from *Schools of To-morrow*, while other European influences, such as Montessori (Italy) and Rousseau (France), were openly discussed in the book.

Dewey first voiced his opposition to the adoption of the dual system in Illinois in an essay originally entitled "An Undemocratic Proposal." Dewey (1913) considered the introduction of industrial education as a means of keeping students in school a "mischievous enterprise" and "a blind alley both industrially and economically" (p. 99). He worried that the dual system would "paralyze one of the most vital movements now operating for the improvement of existing general education" (p. 100). That is, the dual system would undermine the adoption of the ideas Dewey had outlined and that many of his followers were now implementing across the country. And, Dewey explained, the segregation of the dual system "will work disastrously for the true interests of the pupils who attend the so-called vocational schools," because they would be ill-equipped to question and improve their social role (p. 101). Dewey recognized the influence of European education on the issue, particularly the dual schooling system in Germany. However, he insisted that basing the US system on a nation with such deep "class distinctions" was harmful to the democratic ideals of the country (p. 101).

This short essay on the dual system marked Dewey's continued discontentment not only with the German style of education but also with Germany's philosophical and social ideas, an antagonism that grew as the onset of World War I approached. "In a word," Dewey (1914) concluded, "the problem in this country is primarily an educational one and not a business and technical one as in Germany" (p. 97). In an essay for the *New Republic*, Dewey (1915b) insisted that splitting up the high schools into different tracks was "designed to divide the children of the more well-to-do and cultured families of the community from those children who will presumably earn their living by working for wages in manual and commercial employments" (p. 123). According to Dewey, the dual system threatened to undermine the assimilation process, and more significantly, it threatened to arrest the social development of the democratic way of life. The comprehensive high school needed to be defended, if democracy was to flourish. "Under unified control," Dewey (1915b) argued, "the pupils are kept in constant personal association with youth not going into manual pursuits" (p. 126). Dewey (1914) specified the "efforts already put forth in adopting industry to educational ends . . . in Chicago, Gary and Cincinnati" (p. 96). Appropriately, Dewey and his daughter depicted the innovative schools in Chicago, Gary, and Cincinnati

in *Schools of To-morrow*. Through these examples, Dewey maintained that industrial and academic education needed to be conceptualized, not as opposites, but as different ways of approaching the same content. Just as the working-class students had much to learn from what had traditionally been considered academic content, the middle-class students had much to learn from what had traditionally been considered industrial content. Both aspects could be combined if they were approached in holistic and democratic way. "There is grave danger that holding up as a model the educational methods by which Germany has made its policy effective," Dewey (1914) admonished, "will serve as a cloak, conscious or unconscious, for measures calculated to promote the interests of the employing class" (p. 95). Dewey insisted that democratic schools must work in tandem with the continual formation of democratic culture. Dewey's criticism of education in Germany predated the anti-German sentiment cited above. However, when American scholars turned against German militarism in 1914, Dewey found a sympathetic audience for his innovative pedagogical vision.

Democracy and Education

In addition to endorsing the unified system, Dewey wrote a series of essays on culture and immigrants during the war. Although Dewey had always rejected Adams's Teutonic germ theory narrative because it implied a static Germanic form of culture that contained a latent potential that could only be actualized from within by a certain race, he still insisted on American exceptionalism, which he attributed to its international and interracial roots. Dewey's definition of culture was contingent and transcended specific races and nations, yet he still placed American-European intellectual culture at the forefront of an exceptional international movement. American exceptionalism was based on the three assumptions outlined above: that American intellectual history had moved beyond its German roots; that the voluntary and slow cultural assimilation of immigrants was necessary; and that American culture should be grounded in its transracial and international cosmopolitanism.

In 1916, Dewey (1916b) maintained that democracy would "fall to pieces," if schools did not do their part to assuage inherited "divisions of interests, class, and sectional ideas" (p. 203). Dewey outlined two forms of nationalism he thought should be fostered in the United States, by carefully distinguishing his American brand of nationalism from the German. The American form of culture, he explained, "was interracial and international in its makeup" and constituted a "unity created by drawing out and composing into a harmonious whole the best, the most characteristic which each contributing race and people has to offer" (p. 205). Dewey encouraged the mixing of cultures, but only so that the best traits from each could contribute to the greater, transracial fund of progress. Dewey explained:

The way to deal with hyphenism [German-American, Jewish-American, and so on] . . . is to welcome it, but, to welcome it in the sense of extracting from each people its special good, so that it shall surrender into a common fund of wisdom and experience what it

especially has to contribute. All of these surrenders and contributions taken together create the national spirit of America. (p. 205)

Dewey's accommodating position must be read in the context of President Wilson's direct attack on hyphenated Americans. "There are citizens of the United States, born under other flags," Wilson insisted, "who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the arteries of our national life" (quoted in Kennedy, 1980, p. 24). In contrast, Dewey (1916b) reinforced his notion that the hyphen should "connect" rather than "separate" Americans from one another (p. 205).

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey reiterated his support for the unified system of schooling, the coterminous nature of vocational and academic learning, and his vision for cultural pluralism. All three issues were housed in a critique of Germany philosophy and pedagogy. Dewey had the raw materials for these positions since the 1890s, but World War I pushed the issues to the forefront of his thinking and found a receptive audience. As Dewey (1916a) explained the next year in *Democracy and Education*:

Under the influence of German thought in particular, education became a civic function and the civic function was identified with the realization of the ideal of the national state. The state was substituted for humanity; cosmopolitanism gave way to nationalism. To form the citizen, not the 'man' became the aim of education. (p. 93)

This quotation, more or less, summarized the argument Dewey had presented in *German Philosophy and Politics*. Dewey continued, since "a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority," such as the kind of state authoritarian education system in Germany, "it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest" (p. 87). This voluntary disposition can only be developed through a democratic education that deliberately put students of different classes, religions, races, and ethnicities in the same school and classroom. Thus, Dewey clarified his own definition of democracy in relation to what it was not, as expressed in one of his most popular, influential, and enduring passages: "A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoined communicated experience" (p. 87).

In the section on social efficiency in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey reiterated his position on the role of vocational education in the curriculum. He again prefaced his discussion by contrasting the culture and society of the US with Germany. "In Europe . . . the new idea of the importance of education for human welfare and progress was captured by national interests and harnessed to do work whose social aim was definitely narrow and exclusive," Dewey (1916a) explained, ". . . and the result was a marked obscuring of the meaning of a social aim" (p. 97). In Europe, Dewey averred, the schools reflected the belief that students ought to be socialized to the needs of the state, instead of being aimed towards the creation of a robust and vibrant society. Germany's educational misdirection and inversion of values had led to the conflict in Europe, because at "the present time" nationalism had inspired the nation to be in "incipient war with its

neighbors" (p. 97). In other words, Dewey suggested, the narrow kind of nationalism and the educational systems that engendered it had contributed to the outbreak of war. In contrast to what he was observing in Europe, Dewey offered a democratic vision for education in the United States that favored "participation in its good of all its members on equal terms" and fostered "interaction of the different forms of associated life" (p. 99). Such a vision would not only reflect the values of democratic life, Dewey hoped, but it would also nurture and create an enduring democratic prototype to serve as an example to all nations.

Conclusion

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey fleshed out several arguments he had been working out for decades, and they emerged from his long-standing aversion to German idealism. These arguments converged in his support for the comprehensive high school that offered the same curriculum to all students regardless of their class and/or ethnic background, created and nurtured an embryonic democratic community that valued all cultural contributions, and transcended the unnatural divide between vocational and academic content. Dewey's vision represented a divorce from European, and specifically German ideas, because it broke down false dualisms and put the needs of society above the needs of the state. Dewey articulated a clear and persuasive vision for the Americanization of the curriculum, which placed the United States at the forefront of an international cosmopolitan movement. More important, in *German Philosophy and Politics*, *Schools of Tomorrow*, and *Democracy and Education*, Dewey outlined an educational vision that transcended German nationalism and its focus on social order, and he offered an alternative based on interracial cooperation.

However, there has been a tendency, perhaps, to overemphasize the originality of Dewey's thought by contrasting his ideas to those scholars with which Dewey engaged, such as Snedden and Harris (see Kliebard, 2004). However, the pedagogical vision Dewey outlined in *Democracy and Education* during World War I voiced sentiments and encouraged reforms supported by many, if not, most of his peers. As the superintendent of New York expressed in an address to teachers in 1918:

As our schools are the most potent instrument in the development of national ideals, it would be strange indeed if this world crisis did not compel changes in our conception as to the value and function of education as a phase of industrial life. We are called upon to scrutinize anew our work in terms of our underlying theories, our methods of instruction, and our discipline, in order that through reflection we may acquire that freshness of vision that truthfulness of aim, and that purpose necessary to ensure the salvation of our democracy through the proper training of our future citizens. (Ettinger, 1918, p. 453)

Except for the vague reference to "truthfulness of aim," Dewey could have authored this passage himself. The fact that the speech was delivered by a lesser-known educator underscores the importance of the crisis of World War I to creating an environment conducive to the positive reception of Dewey's ideas on

student-centered instruction, reflective inquiry, cultural pluralism, and his focus on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of citizens in a democratic society. Like Dewey, theorists of American education clarified what it meant to educate citizens in a democracy in contrast to what it was not: German authoritarianism. Consequently, *Democracy and Education* was the right book, published at exactly the right time, and it found an audience eager for educational experimentation in name of democracy and cosmopolitanism.

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