



American Education: Beyond Frankfurt and Dewey

Next year marks the 90th anniversary of the devastating flu epidemic of 1918-19, which killed several million people in Europe, India and the United States. It was called the *Spanish flu* because it was first discovered in Spain. Many called it *the Plague of the Spanish Lady*, a veiled reference to an 18th century Irish ballad. A *Spanish Lady* was considered a woman of *dubious virtue*. To *dance* with the *Spanish Lady* was to catch the flu and maybe die. Oddly, this flu struck a disproportionate number of young adults.

LITTLE ANIMALS

Like the Spanish flu, deadly ideas can also spread their virulent effects across oceans. The 19th century was a boiling cauldron of nefarious ideas that went under a host of different names, including Darwinism, Positivism, and Pragmatism. Their common denominator was the dehumanization of man and the denial of transcendent truth.

Most of the discussion of alien intellectual forces that have impacted American culture has focused on the cultural Marxism of the Frankfurt School. According to historian Dr. Dennis Cuddy the Leipzig School, its older German sister, is *equally important*. As an incubator for some of the most harmful educational ideas in the history of American education, the Leipzig School would do to the American school system what the Frankfurt sibling would do to American morality. To dance with the *German Lady* from Leipzig was to be infected with a deadly flu of intellectual bacilli that would prove to be as lethal to young people as it was to her Spanish kinsman.

In 1879 the Leipzig School's leading scientist, Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) established his experimental laboratory at Leipzig University. Years before at Heidelberg University Wundt had first applied experimental scientific methods to the human mind. His detailed pioneer experiments in human emotions, ideas, sensations, and feelings, appeared in his 1874 book *Principles of Physiological Psychology*. Wundt's iconoclastic approach to science transferred psychology from the domain of philosophy to that of the natural sciences. As the *Father of Social and Experimental Psychology*, he applied Charles Darwin's godless science to the schools. Just as

Darwin had produced a philosophical basis for a godless worldview, Wundt created the psychological basis for not only denying God's existence, but also transforming society.

Wundt believed that man was an animal who could be put under a microscope and reprogrammed for the good of society. Relationships were no longer based on mutual respect for a fellow-child of God but on pragmatic exploitation. Children were mere *little animals*, who needed to be conditioned into good workers for the state. Along with Darwin and later Kinsey, Wundt reduced man to the status of a lab rodent.

Wundt's first prodigy was Granville Stanley Hall (1844-1924). After receiving his Ph.D under philosopher William James at Harvard University, Hall studied under Wundt in Leipzig. He was a former preacher, but *Darwinian psychology* became Hall's new religion. His interests in child development invariably led him to educational issues and child psychology. After a brief stint at Harvard, he taught at Baltimore's Johns Hopkins University where his most apt pupil was John Dewey.

THE AMERICAN FUTURE

In 1884 the Vermont-born Dewey, (1859-1952) destined to become the *Father of Progressive Education*, received his doctorate from Hopkins. In 1894 he became the chairman of the Rockefeller-funded education department at the University of Chicago. Here Dewey established a laboratory where he tested his empirically based theories of knowledge. A pioneer in Behavior Psychology, Dewey published his first major work in 1899 *The School and Society*. In 1904 after a series of disagreements with the Chicago University administration, he transferred to Columbia Teachers College, part of the prestigious Columbia University system in New York City. At Columbia his influence was unparalleled in the history of American education. By the early 1950s Columbia was producing a third of the nation's largest school systems' principals and superintendents.

A confirmed socialist, Dewey experienced the *Soviet future* during the 1920s. He was mesmerized by the Soviet ideal of a world without capitalists, traditional families, and religion. In 1933 his Russian sojourn inspired him to contribute to the Humanist Manifesto which promised to do to society what the Communist

Manifesto had done to economics. Dewey's Manifesto called for a New World religion that would be *a synthesizing and dynamic force for today that must be shaped for the needs of this age*.

Dewey's thinking was an eclectic blend of Plato, Rousseau, and Darwin. He rejected the concept of God and denied the existence of all immutable truth, especially fixed moral laws. Man was a mere biological organism, devoid of a human soul. Individual freedom reduced a person's meaningful contributions to society.

Dewey had set the stage for the decline of traditional education as early as 1897 with his book *My Pedagogic Creed*. In the book he opined 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.* Personal experience, the key to all learning, replaced rote memory in Dewey's hierarchy of educational values. His reformist ideas created several generations of feelers, not thinkers given to analytical thought and moral understanding. All activities were to be evaluated only according to their contributions to society. Dewey's education philosophy advanced the progressive education movement and fostered a swarm of experimental education programs.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Progressive education's early history in the United States promised to educate the *whole child*. In doing so, progressive educators developed a student-based system that stifled bright students and favored slower-minded children. Its legacy includes such unfeasible principles of pedagogy as open classrooms, cooperative learning, whole language, and alternate schooling, such as non-graded classrooms and schools without walls. Failure was unacceptable because of its long-term damage to the student's self-esteem. *Social promotions* became the rule of the day. Moral absolutes disappeared in favor of moral relativism, values clarification, and situation ethics.

Dewey did much to adapt progressive education to what he had learned from Hall and experienced in Soviet Russia. According to the reliable educator Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfield, Dewey was the first to shift the emphasis from language-based learning to *a hands-on basket-weaving curriculum of progressive education*. In his book, *The Marketing of Evil*, internet editor David Kupelian warns that the public school system *has been cultivated to indoctrinate, to mold, and to socialize children*.

The public schools have become the new Marxist laboratories for social engineering. The average public school is mired in a sociological swamp of pornographic sex education, declining test scores, violence, and speech codes. They have created what Kupelian calls an *Alice in Wonderland environment*, where small boys are dosed with Ritalin to contain their natural restlessness while others are suspended for playing Cowboys and Indians.

One of the great casualties of progressive education has been

literacy. The progressives abandoned traditional phonics, the sounding out of phonetically structured words for *whole language*, which ironically necessitated the memorization of each individual word. Using this method, according to Rudolf Flesch's 1955 seminal study *Why Johnny Can't Read*, it is akin to teaching the Chinese language, which does not have an alphabet and must rely on the memorization of individual ideographs or word pictures. Whole language is a tool designed to make students intellectually dysfunctional. An illiterate society cannot recognize nor defend itself against an intrusive government.

WITH A CAPITAL T

One of the leading spokesmen for an updated version of Dewey's socialistic pedagogy has been Marc Tucker, a former education *apparatchik* during the George H. W. Bush administration in the early 1990s. In his celebrated *Dear Hillary Letter* of November 11, 1992 Tucker outlined his plan for the federal take-over of all public schools. As he wrote the First Lady-elect, *what is essential is that we create a seamless web of opportunities to develop one's skills that literally extend from cradle to grave and is the same system for everyone*.

Noted authority Samuel Blumenfield accurately described Tucker's letter as a plan for *the take-over of American public schools by behavioral scientists and psychologists*. Tucker wants to eliminate the traditional education model *root and branch*. To accomplish this will require a disastrous change in the prevailing American culture. He wants to put all 4-year olds and 3-year olds into universal public preschool, operated by independent contractors and run by teachers. Tucker wants the Federal Government to create regional economic development authorities that would develop goals and strategies for their regions. Tucker is also a strong advocate of *systems education*, known by many names, most notably *outcome-based education*. In place of educating independent thinking students, Tucker wants the government to direct students to the needs of the state.

Political science professor Allen Quist has been monitoring Tucker's career for many years. In the January 2007 issue of the Education Reporter he warned that there is a sinister agenda, hidden behind the exaggerated promises, detailed in Tucker's 2006 education initiative *Tough Choices or Tough Times*. If the U.S. adopts his plans he boasts *no one will fail and we can send almost everyone to college*. This is a utopian fantasy that might just seal the fate of the American public school system.

Tucker's philosophy has laid the basis for the Goals 2000 and the School-To-Work Acts passed by Congress in 2000. This legislation effectively usurped decision-making away from the local school boards, damaging its local control. Tucker's contagious ideas provided the drive for the 2002 No Child Left Behind, which has prompted most teachers to teach just the testS, leaving little time for education.

It is quite possible Tucker is pinning his hopes on Senator Clinton's chances for the presidency in 2008. Choosing Tucker to run her Department of Education where he can implement his dangerous plans for America's school children would be entirely consistent with Mrs. Clinton's views on education. However, Tucker may not be satisfied with the DOE. His is a global vision that spells trouble with a capital T.

A LIFELONG EPIDEMIC

Mark Tucker wants to take the plague of Dewey's ideas globally. He has reapplied Dewey's ideas to the ephemeral world of global capitalism. His ambitious program includes the idea of *lifelong education*, where all facets of human life—school, work, health, leisure and religion will be monitored from cradle to grave through a comprehensive system. To effect the *global village*, he plans to use the United Nation's education wing, UNESCO, the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization.

According to Tucker, in order to compete in the world economy, the United States *must adopt internationally benchmarked standards for education and its students and workers*. UNESCO would establish these educational standards to be used around the world. It would determine what is taught in all schools, not just those in the United States.

Tucker holds that all education should be vocational. That means he plans to adapt his out-come-based education to the global economy. All around the world, students will have to pass a national standards test, established by the UN that would determine their future. The tests, taken in the 10th grade, will be based on the UN's secular humanist worldview.

BRICKS AND MORTAR

Catholic schools have not been immune to John Dewey and Marc Tucker's leveling philosophy. Since no school can keep its windows permanently closed, it has been impossible to keep the progressive virus from infecting the Catholic school system.

With the mass exodus of teaching nuns in the 1960s, Catholic schools filled their ranks with lay teachers, many of whom did not have the same religious fervor and dedication to the faith that the Sisters had. Like spiritual mothers who rocked the student cradle

with their starched habits of love and discipline, the religious Sisterhood had stood watch over generations of Catholic moral development. Also their financial cost was negligible. In replacing the Sisters, parishes have been morally obliged to pay their teachers a living wage. To do this the Catholic schools had to charge increased tuition. This has put a severe financial strain on their parishioners, who could send their children to their public schools for free. Many of these lay teachers were also educated in teachers colleges or university schools of education that taught the secular humanism of Dewey and his behaviorists.

Catholic demographics have also changed. Many Catholics have left the inner cities for the suburbs, leaving their old parishes with nearly empty brick and mortar schools. Due to a declining population and financial base, many parishes have had to close their schools and others had to consolidate, moving Dewey and Tucker that closer to victory.

THE NEW GOLDEN RULE

Some see school vouchers as a means to strengthen their schools enrollment. They see vouchers as an antidote to the Catholic schools financial crunch. Others who stress tax credits, instead of vouchers, fear these tuition tax grants will become a Trojan Horse of government largesse with strings attached.

The primary purpose of Catholic schools according to journalist Joseph Sobran is to *teach Catholicism*. Anything else defeats their essential role. Catholic education is an *instrument of salvation*. Catholic schools must teach the habits of faith, prayer, the sacraments and works of charity. Their mission is not to replace failed public schools, but to teach the faith. Success should not be measured in test scores but in the degree of fidelity to Church teachings. If its students lose their faith, no matter what their scores, the system has failed. That is the only report card that counts.



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The Mindszenty Report is published monthly by the
Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation,
7800 Bonhomme Ave.
P. O. Box 11321
St. Louis, MO 63105
314-727-6279
Fax 314-727-5897

Subscription rate: \$20.00/year, \$36.00/two years.
Outside the U.S.A. \$28.00

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Contributions to the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation
are tax deductible as allowed by law.

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On May 28 we will commemorate Memorial Day. The custom of decorating graves and honoring the fallen military originated after the Civil War when southern women scattered flowers over the graves of southern and northern soldiers. TAPS is often played. Following is one of the verses to TAPS:

*Go to sleep, peaceful sleep
May the soldier or sailor God keep
On the land or the deep
Safe in sleep*

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—Pope John Paul II

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