



## Success Unexpected in Common Hours

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The only talent I exhibited growing up in Brooklyn was irritating people. In my teens, I discovered that philosophers like Bertrand Russell and Jean Paul Sartre also irritated people so I decided to become a philosopher. I thought this was like being a poet: you had to get a day job to pay the bills. My father, a school principal, supported my decision, though he had a question: “What’s a philosopher?” I admitted that I wasn’t quite sure. He suggested that we read the article about philosophy in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. When that didn’t clear things up, we went to the bookstore. I selected Marjorie Grene’s *Dreadful Freedom: A Critique of Existentialism* because of its appealing title and its cover art—a man having a panic attack. Grene began by explaining the philosophy of existentialism—existence

precedes essence. We pored over the text with a dictionary for hours before admitting defeat.

In school I did not take well to classroom learning and did not connect well socially. It felt like there was something fraudulent about the whole affair. In the early 1950s, we were shown movies of the devastation in Nagasaki and Hiroshima: “Duck and Cover!” under the desk. I refused. How would a school desk protect me from the bomb? No answer. I wouldn’t budge!

In high school, math and science were easy and straightforward, but the experience as a whole was baffling. Why were we forced to read Dickens’s *Great Expectations* twice, first in the eighth grade and again in the 11th grade, when everything I read on my own —Kerouac’s *On the Road*, Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*—had so much more to say? Why, in a community surrounded by Spanish language speakers, were we taught Spanish by a teacher who could not speak Spanish? Why, when I asked these simple questions, did the people in charge get so irritated?

Music and poetry made more sense. Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Thelonious Monk, to name a few of the jazz giants, played often in the New York clubs in the late 1950s. I could sit in the designated non-drinking areas listening until the wee hours. I read Allen Ginsberg and other beat poets as well as the poetry of William Carlos Williams. The environment was rich. The schools, not so much.

Things became clearer when I entered Queens College, CUNY. In a freshman course, *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West*, we read among other things Book Six of Plato's *Republic*. The image of the prisoners of the cave and the ascent to reality hit me like a bolt of lightning! School was the cave! Monk's music and beat poetry were glimpses into Reality—the true, good, and beautiful.

## Studying Philosophy

I transferred to the University of Wisconsin in Madison to study philosophy in my sophomore year, 1961. The first semester I took Ethics with Marcus Singer, Aesthetics with Eugene Kaelin, and elementary logic. Singer devoted most of his lectures to the ethical theories of Kant and Mill, and to his own theory, in which the generalization argument (“What if everyone did that?”) was central. Singer lectured and discouraged questions. Kaelin's approach was quite different. His style was to “do philosophy” together. We covered a few classic aesthetic concepts and theories at first, but his lectures focused on analyzing arguments and vocabulary for talking about art. In a class of more than 100 students, he encouraged give and take. The second half of the course was given over to students' philosophical analyses of art works, styles, and movements. I gave a presentation on the aesthetics of modern jazz, donning a T-shirt proclaiming “Bird Lives” for the occasion.

After Kaelin won the teacher of the year award, all the courses he had been teaching were unexpectedly assigned to others. He decamped for Florida State in 1963. After that, the Wisconsin philosophy department was dominated by analytic philosophers, and I adopted that style of philosophical writing. One of my favorite teachers was Fred Dretske, who, like Kaelin, conducted all his classes as cooperative inquiries. His own articles and book chapters were included as

texts along with other contemporary works, and he encouraged students to criticize his formulations mercilessly. I took his classes in philosophy of language and philosophy of perception; for the latter I wrote a term paper on “unconscious perception,” in which I argued that the standard cases were instances of neither unconsciousness nor perception. In addition to philosophy I minored in history, studying with several of Wisconsin's famous cultural historians. This came in handy later on, as I found that viewing philosophers in their historical contexts was useful in both teaching and research.

As an undergraduate, I had taken a course in philosophy of education from Don Arnstine. The textbook, Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, struck me as hopelessly opaque according to my analytic philosophy view. Nonetheless, I was impressed by Dewey's effort to develop ideas about education specific to his era and situate them in the history of thought. I considered that this might be a worthwhile template for a lifetime project, though at the time I had neither a clear definition of an emerging set of problems nor a set of ideas relevant to them. I filed the idea away for future reference.

## Graduate School

I entered graduate school in philosophy at Wisconsin in January, 1964. I joined an endless grad student discussion about just what philosophy was and about how to conduct oneself as a professional philosopher. The consensus view was that one should read the main journals, find problems of interest, apprentice oneself to a professor working on them, and learn to join the discussion. I held quite a different view. The Vietnam War was building up. I felt philosophers should take on contemporary “real world” troubling problems, think very hard about them in ways guided by the

philosophical tradition, and contribute to their resolution by writing and speaking to professional and public audiences. One of my grad school friends said that if that's what I thought, I should drop out and run for office. But I had no desire for a career in politics. For me, philosophy had an important place in public affairs.

I read a lot of William James, John Dewey, Josiah Royce, Bernard Bosanquet, C. I. Lewis, R. G. Collingwood, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Willard van Orman Quine, whose 1950 paper "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" undermined the prevailing logical empiricism and put pragmatism back on the philosophical map. The creative sides of pragmatism and idealism attracted me. I liked the idea that just reading and thinking were in a small way making a difference in my world. I also devoured the essays in Antony Flew's two volume *Logic and Language* series as well as those in the, now neglected, two volume *Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements* (1930) edited by George Adams and William Pepperell Montague. I felt that someday I would emulate that series, and I did, with my series on *Leaders in Educational Studies: Intellectual Self-Portraits* for Brill. The series now contains volumes, covering philosophy, history, and sociology of education, curriculum studies, critical pedagogy, social education, language and literature education, and more.

Looking for a way to combine analytic and pragmatist traditions, I turned to Morton White's *Toward Reunion in Philosophy* but was disappointed as it neglected much of what John E. Smith called the "spirit" of American philosophy. Later Richard Rorty, Hillary Putnam and others have succeeded at that, and I regard myself as also being in the same "analytic pragmatism" club. But I am no neo-pragmatist. Both Rorty and Putnam left behind something essential in pragmatism that I have been working to

recover by going back to the roots of pragmatism and especially to Dewey's earliest pragmatist works.

New educational visions and projects were brewing when I entered university in 1960. Paul Goodman's (1960) *Growing Up Absurd* and A.S. Neill's (1960) *Summerhill* both appeared that year, as did Israel Scheffler's (1960) *The Language of Education*, an analytic pragmatism classic that established philosophy of education as a sub-discipline of analytic philosophy. In grad school, I adopted "education and society" as my research territory. Little did I know that there was an entire education field called "social foundations of education." I was reinventing the wheel. All of my teachers strongly discouraged that choice.

I was a teaching assistant every semester during grad school for courses in logic, ethics, and introduction to philosophy. Ethics and Social Philosophy were the focus of my doctoral program though I also took courses in contemporary epistemology and logic. I also continued to read a lot on my own about 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, including most of the available volumes in the Library of Living Philosophers series edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp—the much-awaited volume on Carnap appeared in 1963—and the Paul Carus lectures. All the grad students skimmed each new issue of such leading journals as *Ethics* and *The Philosophical Review*. My favorite philosophers at that time were Clarence I. Lewis (*Mind and the World Order*), who had died during my first semester in graduate school, and Georg Henrick von Wright (*Norm and Action, The Varieties of Goodness*). Wittgenstein influenced all of us. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* had recently been published and its institutional, historically grounded, view of knowledge, which owed much to Wittgenstein, was bolstering the challenge to empiricism.

## First Ventures in Educational Research

I greatly admired all of this work but did not find in it specific models for what I wanted to do. Analytic philosophy did not meet all of my expressive needs, nor even the strongest of them. I got my first glimpse of something I *did* want to do shortly after entering graduate school. I needed a minor field and chose Educational Policy Studies, in part because I could amass the necessary credits in philosophy and history of education, subjects I had already developed a taste for as an undergraduate.

When I signed up for my minor, the historian Merle Borrowman, who had supervised an undergraduate project I had undertaken on the history of the Wisconsin philosophy department, asked what I wanted to do in educational studies. I had read some philosophy of education in journals like *Educational Theory*. They struck me as being genuinely awful. I had read the aforementioned Scheffler *The Language of Education* and the collection of essays on analytic philosophy of education edited by B. Othanel Smith and Bob Ennis. I considered that work valuable, but I knew I didn't want to do anything quite like it. I told Borrowman that I might someday try to construct some pertinent educational notions for our time. He asked whether this work would have "an empirical reference point." The Wisconsin education faculty, he explained, expected educational research to have one. Perhaps the word had not yet reached the education school that the dogmas of empiricism were under attack. Ideas for educational practice, he said, should be considered as hypotheses about means to empirically measurable ends. I suppose he was offering guidance about how to find a dissertation topic. I flashed on those deadening school drills I had suffered, and, comparing them with philosophy classes where arguments were followed

wherever they led, I immediately thought that this business of specific measurable ends for education was the stupidest idea I had ever heard. The objective of my work became clear: such technicist thinking must be challenged!

I wrote a doctoral dissertation: *Understanding as an Educational Aim*. The overall gist was that while "understanding X" as an aim was not typically considered a measurable objective, it was nonetheless a perfectly good move in the actual language game of stating aims. I included a naïve chapter on Dewey's means-ends continuum and his theory of educational aims as discussed in *Democracy and Education*. Much later I wrote a more definitive essay on that topic: "Knowledge and Understanding as Educational Aims" in a special issue of *The Monist* on philosophy of education, arguing that the familiar distinction between knowledge and understanding as educational aims was problematic because standard analyses of knowledge included a condition (e.g., *justified belief*) that *implied* understanding.

Ken Strike and Hugh Petrie had recently prepared dissertations on similar topics. The crusade against measurable objectives was just getting started. Strike (1974) was soon to publish his article on the limits of behavioral language in specifying educational ends. My line was somewhat different. For me the problem was not limits in the *language* of measurable ends, but the very *conception* of educational action (and many other forms of human action) as the taking of means to specific ends. Behaviorism simply added a second set of fallacies on top of those inherent in technicism, a view I later developed in "Educational Objectives and Existential Heroes" (Waks, in Smith, 1975).

I had by then convinced myself that the standard *argument* in support of technicist means-ends reasoning in education, though

persuasive in practice, was deeply flawed. The standard rationale proceeded thus: “If you don’t state your ends in measurable terms, you will know neither what you are aiming at nor whether or not you have succeeded. Thus, failure to state your ends in this way is irrational.” I called this the “two defect argument.” In “Non-Behavioral Goals: Assessing the Two Defect Argument” *Curriculum Theory Network*, 1974), I showed that this line of reasoning only retains plausibility if “knowing what you are aiming at” is taken tacitly to *mean* “having a measurable objective” and if “knowing you have succeeded” is taken to *mean* “measuring your results.” But as there were perfectly good non-technicist ways of making sense of the language of aims and evaluation, as I had argued in my dissertation, the two-defect argument simply begged the question.

## Becoming a Professor

Kaelin got me my first job, Purdue. I was at the annual meeting of the Eastern American Philosophical Association. My doctoral committee members were not doing much to introduce me around; but when I ran into Kaelin, he asked if I was looking for a job. When I said I was, he just reached out his arm to the next guy passing in the hallway and ordered him to hire me. It turned out that that guy was Kaelin’s friend and was teaching at Purdue. The Purdue philosophy department was hiring, and after a brief chat I was invited to West Lafayette for an interview and was hired.

At Purdue, I combined social philosophy and American philosophy. Part of my teaching assignment was in American Studies. I also developed a course on philosophies of revolution, responding to the student protests breaking out on university campuses. After two years, I received a phone call from Stanford offering me a job as a joint appointment in philosophy and the

school of education. There was no interviewing process, no “job talk,” just a flat out offer. They said they had been looking for someone who could work comfortably in both philosophy and education and that all paths had led them to me.

Stanford’s Graduate School of Education at that moment was going through a wrenching transition from a typical teacher training college to a research powerhouse. In a very short period Dean Thomas James had hired almost 20 new faculty members, most directly from liberal arts departments. Economists Henry Levin and Martin Carnoy were among those in my cohort and historian David Tyack joined us the following year. Elliot Eisner and Lee Cronbach had preceded us and many leading education researchers like Nate Gage and Richard Snow were also leading the transition.

My teaching responsibilities at Stanford were much like they were at Purdue. I taught the undergraduate ethics and social philosophy courses as well as a graduate seminar on the theory of value, and I introduced the course on philosophies of revolution. At that time, I was an American, a philosopher, and a teacher of American philosophy and American Studies. But it was only in the 1980s that I realized that I was an *American philosopher*, that my work was solidly in the distinctive American tradition.

## Moving from Philosophy to Educational Studies

In the 1970s, I moved from Stanford to Temple University’s College of Education. This was a pragmatist move that got me closer to the action. But not much closer, since the “foundations of education” department at Temple was theoretically oriented and far removed from practical educational work. Dewey’s work at Chicago

was an inspiration for that career move, and other pragmatist philosophers—notably Boyd Bode, whose work I regarded then and now as a model—had made the same shift. At the time, a number of others were also leaving philosophy departments for education schools, including Walter Feinberg, Hugh Petrie, and Ken Strike.

Temple in the early 1970s was analytic philosophy of education central. Jim McClellan, Paul Komisar and Robert Holtzman, the three senior faculty members, had all studied philosophy of education at the University of Illinois under B. Othanel “Bunny” Smith. Peter Goldstone, my grad student colleague at Wisconsin, had just arrived at Temple. I became the fifth full-time philosopher in an unusually bookish department. We waited eagerly for each issue of *The New York Review of Books*, discussed the reviews in the hallways with our grad students, and even read many of the reviewed books together.

Three new influences were at play when I started at Temple. First, Ivan Illich had just published his article on deschooling in the *New York Review of Books* (Illich, 1970). As he developed the idea in *Deschooling Society* (Illich, 1971), he was no foe of teaching, learning, or even schools. His target was *schooling*, the compulsory subjection of young people to endless years of age-graded, pre-sequenced curricula. Tyack later dubbed what Illich was writing about the *grammar* of schooling. Illich saw this as a straightjacket for learning that conditioned learners for life-long dependence on pre-packaged experiences. In his view, this made other learning opportunities scarce and left people not more but less intelligent. His argument to this effect in *Deschooling Society* and *Tools for Conviviality* still strikes me as entirely convincing, as I argued in “A Re-evaluation of Illich's *Deschooling Society*” (Waks, 1990).



Second, my loathing for technicist means-ends reasoning led naturally to an interest in ideas of spontaneity and self-organization. I found these in Asian philosophy, especially Zen Buddhism. I was too conventional at the time to see this kind of thinking fitting into my research, but every so often I stocked up on Zen books, called in sick, and retired to my bed. I particularly admired D. T. Suzuki's *The Field of Zen and Herrigel's Zen in the Art of Archery*, though later I discovered that the latter was something of a fraud.

Third, I did see some ways to incorporate the spirit of Zen into my teaching. I started designing educational projects based on anti-technicist principles. Artists, I reasoned, learn through their creative acts, but what they learn depends on their unique creative trajectories. *That* they learn in significant ways through their art is predictable, but *what* they learn is neither predictable nor generalizable. I set out to design and lead courses of structured encounters with the arts that were rich with this sort of *non-specific* and *unpredictable* learning potential. A book that was very helpful in guiding this work was Kenneth Maue's (1979) *Water in the Lake: Real Events for Imagination*. These courses soon became very popular with Temple education students.

In my research, I started to explore the idea that the specious rationality of technical logic and the specious freedom of

Summerhill were related. My thinking, no doubt influenced by Wittgenstein, went something like this: First, suppose that in considering teaching and learning you bracket out or hide from view the background of social and educational institutions that inform them. You would then be considering a different and greatly impoverished form of life. Someone undertaking to teach in that world would start off without the normative direction inherent in the institutions that had been bracketed out, and so would indeed need some specific objective at every step to know what he was aiming at. In reality, of course, any 8-year-old can, without any specific aims, do a plausible imitation of teachers. Only the trick of hiding the background institutions made it seem necessary to have specific aims in order to know what you were doing.

Now, suppose someone like Neill, blinded by this trick, believed that only specific learning objectives could get *teaching* going, but rightly believed that this sort of teaching would be lifeless and would nullify the agency of learners. That person might then say that there was something else in such a world that could at least get some *learning* started, the *basic, institutionally unconditioned needs and wants* of learners, such as desires for sex in explicit or sublimated forms. From this starting point the Summerhill philosophy could be derived. Remember that in such a picture the very natural desires of students to be initiated into institutionalized practices of their society are hidden; the background institutions and their practices had been bracketed out. Once we bring them back to light, however, initiation into them can be seen as the most *obvious* candidate for what students want, and the idea that by providing attractive pathways into these practices we are deflecting learners from what they *really* want loses all plausibility.

## Reduction in Force

In 1983, I was “riffed” at Temple along with some 300 others because of financial exigency due to the typical failure of Temple’s administrative leaders to plan for the future. The rapid drop in the college student cohort had been accurately predicted 18 years earlier. I had seen it coming at least five years prior to my pink slip and prepared by attaining another doctorate, this one in educational psychology, specializing in psycho-educational processes. I figured that when I had to leave Temple, I would support myself as a consultant and seminar producer. While losing my cushy tenured full professorship was painful, it turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me.

My initial seminar as a freelancer was called “The Love of Wisdom: A Seminar on Personal Practical Philosophy.” I offered this seminar both through Temple’s continuing education program and through my free-standing “institute.” This course attracted adult students: a bus driver here, a receptionist or librarian there. Some of these people were experiencing existential crises and seeking guidance from philosophy. Several sought personal counseling. As I completed my doctorate in psycho-educational processes in 1984, I also completed Albert Ellis’s training program in Rational Emotive Therapy and became among the first contemporary philosophical counselors, a field that has now developed into a recognized profession.

In 1985, Madhu Prakah, then an assistant professor of philosophy of education at The Pennsylvania State University, introduced me to the materials scientist Rustum Roy, who was looking for someone with academic credentials who could organize a national conference with funding from the National Science Foundation. Penn State hired me on contract as a professor, and the conference, the first Technological Literacy

Conference, was awarded first prize for creative programming by the Council of University Continuing Education. Offers soon followed to contribute to other meetings on Science and Technology Studies. I soon directed the South American Technological Literacy Conference in Brazil. This new specialty brought me many other consulting opportunities as well as experience in the grants economy. I subsequently have received research and training grants from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities for a 1994 summer institute for college teachers on philosophy of technology since 1945, the Spencer Foundation for a 2016 conference on democratic education to celebrate the centennial of Dewey's *Democracy and Education*, among others. My work with the National Science Foundation eventually led to offering NSF "Chautauqua" short courses for college science teachers on how to introduce issues of technology and value into their college science courses. NSF also recommended me to applicants for science education projects as a consultant, leading to interesting roles in K-12, community college, and university projects.

Madhu also strongly encouraged me to attend conferences regularly, and since that time I have missed the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association and the John Dewey Society only once. An important lesson I learned at that time is that by organizing research for publication around annual conference deadlines, you can maintain a steady track record. Many of my publications during this time focused on high-tech mediated learning and technological literacy. These include "A Technological Literacy Credo" (*Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 1987); "The New World of Technology in American Education: A Case Study of

Policy Formation and Succession," (*Technology in Society*, 1991; and "Four Basic Questions about High-Tech Education," (*Technology in Society*, 1998). As will be seen below, I have kept my eyes open to new and troubling developments regarding technology in education.

## An American Philosopher in Education

I eventually worked my way into many teacher training and curriculum development projects. As suggested above, I saw my work in these fields as a form of applied American philosophy. But what does it mean to be an American philosopher? I see American philosophy as the development of the philosophical tradition on American soil. This project has porous boundaries and is continuous with broader cultural influences that enrich our public philosophy, our sense of our highest distinct cultural values. Emerson's "The American Scholar" address is its manifesto. I would also include the standard items on the American philosophy syllabus plus, at the periphery, Emerson's *Essays*, Thoreau's *Walden*, Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," Lincoln's Gettysburg and Second Inaugural Addresses, Emma Lazarus's "New Colossus," Jane Addams's *Forty Years at Hull-House*, Dewey's "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land," and Richard Rorty's *Achieving Our Country*—all wrapped up with Frederick Douglass, John Muir, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jane Jacobs, Paul Goodman, Martin Luther King Jr., Rachel Carson, James Baldwin, and Aldo Leopold.

Given today's acute awareness of our national flaws—slavery and Jim Crow, the internment of Japanese citizens, the atomic bomb, today's flirtation with fascism—some will say that the very idea of an American public philosophy is a dangerous delusion. I do not think so. Our national sins and

tragedies spawn new visions of the common good and new ameliorative projects which, like Jane Addams's Hull House, also contribute to our public philosophy. In "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," written in 1939, John Dewey argues that democracy is a project that has to be reconstructed in every generation. We have our work cut out for us today, but our American tradition is pregnant with resources.

## Re-Reading Dewey and Pragmatism

Since 1990, I have been turning back to my early intuition about developing a pragmatist philosophy addressing the pressing problems in our contemporary global society. I have followed Dewey's template in *School and Society*, first raising sociological questions about contemporary trends in society and education, and following these with philosophical reflections about how best to respond to and modulate these trends.

On the theoretical side, I have critiqued the "new scholarship on Dewey" and the re-appropriation of Dewey's legacy by Richard Rorty. In "Post-experimentalist Pragmatism," I argued that Rorty's reformulation of Dewey's pragmatism as no closer to science than to art was inconsistent with experimentalism and was also incapable of generating coherent answers to the questions Dewey addressed. On the practical side, in "John Dewey and Progressive Education 1900-2000: School and Society Revisited in the Global Network Era," first presented to a meeting of a nascent European Dewey Society in Cosenza, Calabria, in 2001 (Waks, 2009). I identified educational problems addressed by Dewey that arose in new ways in the global network era and hence required fresh solutions. In the next set of papers, I addressed some of those specific issues.

"Experience and (Computer-Mediated) Education" (*Educational Theory*, 2001) concerns the application of Dewey's ideas in the computer age. It starts by noting Dewey's insistence, in *The School and Society* on the primacy for learning of immediate experience with the natural world. It then raises the question whether his theory provides grounds for rejecting computer simulations of natural events. It argues that his four criteria of mis-educative experiences in *Experience and Education* provide such grounds. "Re-reading Democracy and Education Today: Dewey on Globalization and Multicultural Education" (*Education and Culture*, 2007a), concerns the contemporary relevance of Dewey's educational framework in today's multicultural metropolis. I start by situating *Democracy and Education* in the context of the nationalism that generated WWI, and explain that work as laying out the design of a program to promote inter-ethnic peace and cosmopolitan cooperation through carefully structured learning activities. This approach requires that representative members of different subgroups are in school under the same roof, a condition that is rapidly disappearing in our current situation of school resegregation.

Three other works fit into this reconsideration of pragmatism. In a paper mentioned earlier, "The Means-Ends Continuum and the Reconciliation of Science and Art in the Later Philosophy of Dewey" (*Transactions of the Peirce Society*, 1999b), I explained how the continuum is central to Dewey's novel account of the complementary relationship between science and art. In "The Project Method in Post-Industrial Education" (*Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1997) I review the critical literature on the project method, including Boyd Bode's classic critique, concluding that Kilpatrick's formulations had been refuted and a new model of

project-based learning, linked to project activities in contemporary knowledge work, was needed. In “Reflective Practice in the Design Studio and Teacher Education” (*Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 1999a) I compare Donald Schon’s model of reflection to Dewey’s, and argue that whatever the strengths of Schon’s model, it does not fit the contexts or demands of teachers or teacher educators.

I have recently been digging into Dewey’s ideas. Dewey’s philosophy of higher education has been neglected and my chapter on this topic in Steve Fesmire’s handbook on John Dewey (Waks, 2018) has broken new ground. I have been especially concerned with Dewey’s neglected work from his University of Chicago years, when he was leading the philosophy and psychology department and directing the famous Laboratory school. This work has so far produced a number of papers including “Dewey on Art and Aesthetic Education” (*Education and Culture*, 2024); “Dewey’s Theory of Play” (*American Journal of Play*, 2024); and “Dewey’s Theory of Teacher Education” (*The Journal of School and Society*, 2023), among others.

## Globalization and the New Problematic Situation in Education

Turning to globalization and its educational impacts, I started with sociological questions: did the age of global information networks represent a fundamental break from the industrial age? Would new models of rational action, new formats for teaching and learning, and new models for educational organization, replace the dominant forms of the industrial age? What would be the role of the state and non-governmental organizations in operating education agencies and why might the state be willing to devolve operational

responsibility to non-state actors? In “Citizenship in Transition: Globalization, Technology and Education” (*Journal of Technology and Design Education*), I argue that if new learning formats and organizational models emerged in the era of global networks, we should expect them to reflect the models of rational action of the information age in the same way that the technical means-ends reasoning model reflected the logic of the age of industrial production.

In “How Globalization Can Cause Fundamental Curriculum Change” (*The Journal of Change*, 2003) I noted that institutional theorists such as Larry Cuban and Robert Dreeben identified specific barriers to fundamental change, but that new global distribution of labor undermined each of them, making fundamental change beyond industrial era models possible. In particular, I argued that we should anticipate a change from a state system to a network of public and non-government providers. In “The Concept of Fundamental Educational Change” (*Educational Theory*, 2007)b, I critique the understanding of incremental vs fundamental change offered by Cuban and then offer an account based on a contrast between organizational and institutional change, that is, change in the basic norms structuring a practice. Only institutional change, I argue, is fundamental. In “Globalization, State Transformation and Education” (*Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 2006) I considered why the state would be willing to cede operational control of education to non-government providers. I argued that while the modern nation state had traditionally relied on state education systems to shore up its power bases, such systems actually *weaken* the administrative, symbolic, and economic power bases of the transformed nation-state of our global era, because such systems cannot fulfil their inherent promise to students or their families

of providing access to *advantageous* social and economic positions; in the era of mass higher education *everyone* would have such advantages (*Transactions of the Peirce Society*, 1999b), which is a self-contradiction like the Lake Wobegon effect where everyone is above average. Rather than bearing the responsibility for this failure, I argued, state actors will be only too happy to pass it on to non-state actors appealing to students and families on the basis of post-material ethnic and value identities rather than economic advantages.

The second, more philosophical, set of questions about the post-globalization era arise concerning ways of making educational provisions in the emerging network fair and beneficial. In “The Concept of the Networked Common School” (*E-Learning and Digital Media*, 2004). I put forth a new normative model for metropolitan education, specifying important new roles for regional education agencies.

## Marriage

I first married in 1963 at the age of 20. My wife and I did not have children and the marriage turned sour by the time I began teaching at Purdue. We separated while I was at Stanford and soon divorced. For some years thereafter, I went through one unsatisfying relationship after another with women who were divorced, with kids, careers, fully owned houses and cars, and even ...tenure!! They wanted a boyfriend to take them out to dinner and a movie and then take them to bed on weekends until they got bored and moved on. The last thing they wanted was a husband.

In 1996, realizing that I wanted to give marriage another try, it dawned on me that if I wanted to remarry I had to find a partner who also *wanted to marry!* I sent a postcard to a Russian bride service. A catalog arrived in the mail with a picture of my future wife,

Dr. Veronica Gennidevna Kostianaya on the inside front cover and more than 500 other personal ads for Russian women. Veronica is thus a true “Russian Bride.”



As was well-reported in the news, after perestroika Russian doctors were in bad shape; the public clinics were without budgets. There were no drugs, nor even hot water or heat in the visiting rooms. Doctors hadn't been paid in a year. Private medical clinics and practices had yet to be established. This led Veronica to sign up with a Russian bride service. I sent her a postcard; and her mother Zoya, a college teacher, said "that would be a good guy." They invited me to Russia. Mom approved, so Veronica and her son Sjoma soon joined me in the US—Veronica to marry a fellow she didn't know (in 1997) with whom she spoke no common language, and Sjoma, whom I adopted, to have a new dad. Twenty-eight years later we are still enjoying each other in semi-retirement in Portugal.

## Retirement

I retired from Temple in 2005, giving me the time to draw out my ideas on a larger canvas and to travel more widely. Since then, I have written two books on the philosophy of educational technology: *Education 2.0* (2014) and *The Evolution and Evaluation of Massive Online Courses* (2017) and numerous articles. Prior to these books, I had published a critique of the Obama

administration's technology-in-education policy, "Transforming American education: Revolution or counter-revolution?" (*E-Learning and Digital Media*, 2011a) where I accused the administration of drifting back to the worst excesses of technicist thinking. Raymond Rose had offered a similar critique in the same issue of *e-Learning*. These drew a sharp rebuke from the policy's leaders (Atkins et al., 2011), which Rose and I sharply rebutted (Rose & Waks, 2012).

I also joined Sophie Haroutunian Gordon in 2005 in a working group on listening in education that included Nicholas Burbules, Jim Garrison, Megan Laverty, Stanton Wortham, Kathy Schultz, Andrea English, and others. This group was established after Sophie's presidential address to the Philosophy of Education Society in 2003, "Listening—in a Democratic Society" (Haroutunian-Gordon, 2003). The collaborative work of the group over the next 15 years established listening as a key topic for research, producing and stimulating many conference panels, three journal special issues (*Learning Inquiry*, 2007; *Teachers College Record*, 2011b; *Educational Theory*, 2012), and a book I edited, *Listening to Teach* (SUNY Press, 2015). My own work on listening, emphasizing the distinction between categorial listening (i.e., listening through concepts) and open listening where categories are set aside, was introduced in "Two Types of Interpersonal Listening," (*Teachers College Record*, 2011b) and had considerable influence in the subsequent philosophical discussion of listening (see, for example, Andrew Dobson's [2014] *Listening for Democracy: Recognition, Representation, Reconciliation*, Oxford University Press).

In 2018, I accepted a distinguished professorship at Hangzhou Normal University in China, where I established a Center for East-West Studies in Education—



finally connecting my early but bi-furcated interests in Anglo-American and Chinese philosophy. Since then, I have been organizing seminars bringing Western and Chinese thinkers together, interacting with fellow pragmatist philosophers including Roger Ames and Chen Yajun, director of The Dewey Center at Fudan University, and lecturing throughout China on Dewey and Democratic education. I have also been experimenting with bringing insights from Chinese philosophy into American philosophical projects. One recent paper, "Democratic Self-Cultivation" (2019), draws on Confucian ideas to enhance the Deweyan vision of democratic education. Another, "Perception, Reason, and Intuition in the Development of Expertise" (*Educational Theory*, 2024), draws on the Chinese classic *Zhuangzi* to augment Hubert Dreyfus's phenomenological account of expertise.

I continue to consider Gene Kaelin as my *primary* teacher. After retirement I set out to find him. I had read something that said "honor your teachers," and I wanted to let him know how much he had contributed to my life. The philosophy department at Florida State found his phone number for me, and my wife and I visited him regularly

until he died. We always brought him apple pies that he liked from a nearby bakery.

## Such Uncommon Hours

My early impulse, to be a philosopher in the American tradition working on problems in education, has proven fortuitous. My teachers were well-meaning but not wise in thinking I could not make a meaningful career following the path I set out to follow. Sanity is putting one foot in front of another, not in doing the done thing or making the smooth move. As one of my American

heroes, Henry Miller, wrote somewhere, people think they need a lifejacket, but it is the lifejacket that will sink them. As another American hero, Henry David Thoreau, put it in the final chapter of *Walden*, “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer,” and “If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

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