

Many currents of educational thought are pervaded with utopian themes. Often, these themes actually influence real policy decisions. The effects of such influences are frequently unfortunate, since it is usually undesirable to apply utopian principles in the lives of real human beings, especially children and adolescents, who are unequipped to evaluate such principles. The article expands on the implications of these issues, and proposes alternative principles to govern educational criticism and reconstruction.

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Utopianism and Education

Useful decisions about social policy must rest on a vision of where society is, and should be tending. Without such a vision, policy becomes a congerie of ad hoc determinations, with each action undermining the other. Despite this need for vision, it is still desirable to consider the term utopian as a pejorative word. The word means establishing impossibly high standards of attainment. And impossible standards are not necessarily a spur to achievements. They can also be the source of disillusionment and cynicism, and stimulate unrealistic and unhistorical planning. In other words, applying utopian visions to the solution of real problems can be destructive.

Education needs planning animated by a sense of vision. Unfortunately, educational policy-making has vacillated between the bandishments of utopianism¹ or restricted its vision to demographic, vocational and financial issues². For instance, the discipline called "educational planning" has deliberately avoided serious concern with the quality of the societies or schools which educators must plan for. Obviously, neither utopianism nor the limited combination of demography, vocational skills and finance are adequate foundations for genuine educational planning. Indeed, the narrow vision of modern educational planning is one cause for the resurgence of utopian perspectives in education: we understand that more things will be different in the future than just demography, the occupational mix, and dollars; and since many policy-makers fail to treat these other differences seriously, we give shallow utopian proposals serious attention.

And so, to improve our planning, we must appreciate the significance of contemporary utopianism for education policy and derive general, but unutopian principles to facilitate productive planning and forecasting. This paper will attempt to derive such principles. It will then suggest some of the characteristics of schools dedicated to preparing students to live in the most probable future.

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¹Ronald Gross and Beatrice Gross, *Radical School Reform* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970); E. G. Hack *et al.*, *Educational Futurism* (Berkeley, Cal.: McCutchan, 1971); Alvin Toffler, ed., *Learning for Tomorrow* (New York: Random House, 1974); and Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

²James N. Johnstone, "Mathematical Models Developed for Use in Educational Planning," *Review of Educational Research*, 1974, 44, pp. 177-202; James F. McNamara, "Mathematical Program Models in Educational Planning," *Review of Educational Research*, 1971, 41, pp. 419-446; and Richard H. P. Kraft, "Manpower Planning and its Role in the Age of Automation," *Review of Educational Research*, 1970, 40, pp. 495-510.

Susceptibility to Utopianism

First, we must understand why education is particularly susceptible to utopianism. Some of the reasons are structural. Thus, education is especially dependent on long range forecasts to determine its current policies. Contemporary school children will attain maturity in ten to fifteen years, and will live for forty years afterwards — constantly drawing on the information, attitudes and values inculcated in them in school. In addition, their decisions about marriage and careers, often made shortly after the conclusion of their schooling, will tend to shape their lives. Inevitably, educators must have some vision of what the world will or should be like during the adulthood of these students. That image will permit them to make coherent decisions about their students' schooling. Of course, vision is necessary in all areas of planning, but the vision required of education is peculiarly long range, and the relationship between day-to-day conduct (i.e., teaching) and the ultimate attainment of the vision (i.e., effective adulthood) is extremely remote. As a result educators may be especially liable to project visions that become increasingly remote from future realities.

Another pertinent structural element is the fact that educators deal with comparatively powerless and unsophisticated subjects: students, who are children or adolescents. The considerable authority teachers must hold over students permits them to carry out utopian "treatments" without the students offering serious protests. For instance, if some utopian grading system is adopted, dissatisfied students usually cannot quit school or transfer in protest. Students also are ill-equipped to evaluate critically utopian philosophies applied in their education. Indeed the students may even acquire a sense of pride, and release the latent aggression so widespread in adolescents, by perceiving themselves as a significantly moral segment of the society (as a result of their acceptance of the utopian ideals proffered by teachers).

Educational utopianism is also facilitated by the obscurity of the "product" of education. At lower levels of education, traditional cognitive skills are regarded as essential outcomes, and this focus generates some purposeful discipline among educators. However, at higher levels product definition becomes more difficult. This lack of definition (especially in the humanities and social sciences) intensifies the temptation of educators to guide their conduct and curriculum by utopian perspectives.

The isolation of colleges of education and their students from other academic disciplines fosters utopian thinking by shielding them from a serious exposure to history and philosophy. This is not to contend that all teachers should be deeply steeped in such fields. However, even most holders of graduate degrees in education have had little exposure to the central writings relevant to assessing utopian thought. This isolation is abetted by the specialization endemic to American academic life. This specialization frustrates effective social forecasting, since such forecasting is inevitably an interdisciplinary activity. A fair amount of speculative academic writing is done, but because it tends to be intra-discipline, it is not informed by the perspectives of divergent disciplines³. As a result, such speculation often dissolves into tractarian polemics.

³Peter Cleack, *Radical Paradoxes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Charles Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1970); and Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wastelands Ends* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972).

Perhaps the last major structural cause of educational utopianism is the slight relationship (i.e., relevance) between the modern school and the problems that typically confront adults in their day-to-day lives. The irrelevance is exemplified by the socio-economic homogeneity in the student and professional populations of typical schools, the age-grading applied to students, and the limited responsibilities given students and faculty in the school'. This makes it difficult for students or school staff to assess utopian proposals in the light of typical real-life activities. As a result, utopian approaches may receive more tolerance than is intellectually justified.

Beyond the preceding structural characteristics of formal education, there are modern forces stimulating utopian thinking in education. One such critical force has been the persistent historic vitality that pervades American society. The vitality sustains a strong current of optimism in American approaches to all forms of problems. This vitality may grow even more intense as the "zones of change" in the economic and geographic sectors of our society approach their potential apogees: the psychic energy that has driven American generations across the continent, into the acceptance of worldwide responsibilities and on to the attainment of record levels of economic wealth may increasingly be transferred into social experimentation and change.

Such patterns of change have always placed special burdens on education systems, as they strive to shape cohorts to live in a different future. The critical issue is whether the patterns of social relations now being proposed for the young (as we prepare them for a new future) will be founded on tentative, but realistic, visions of the future, or on utopian aspirations that create cohorts unable to effectively participate in public life. Such disabled cohorts will inevitably blame (with some truth) "the system" for their ineptitude. Only their criticism will not be of the irrelevance of their education, but of the failure of society to satisfy the utopian standards inculcated by their education.

There are also other factors in contemporary society intensifying educators' interest in utopian themes. Essentially, the desire to bring utopian doctrines to fruition is founded on a hostility of existing modes of life⁵. Indeed the concept that utopias should be brought into fruition — rather than being perceived as intellectual models — has developed apace with the growth of modern science and individualism. As observed, pre-sixteenth century utopian writings were exercises in political and philosophical model building. Either they were not designed for application, or were founded on a comparatively realistic vision of human nature⁶. The tendency to design utopians for implementation, and to stimulate the radical reconstruction of human character, did not occur until the decline of the Roman Church. In other words, modern utopian doctrines dramatically conflict with typical human conduct. This "unreality" does not automatically extinguish the appeal of utopian thought, since significant proportions of youths and adults (often from upper-middle class families, and educated in the humanities

⁵James S. Coleman *et al.*, *Youth: Transition to Adulthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Frank Newman, *et al.*, *Report on Higher Education* (Washington: Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1971); and Edward Wynne, "Adolescent Alienation and Social Policy," *Teachers College Record*, September, 1976.

⁶Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) and Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961).

⁷Irving Kristol, "Utopianism, Ancient and Modern," *The Alternative* (June-September, 1974), pp. 5-9.

and social and behavioral sciences) are becoming increasingly alienated from contemporary society — and educated, alienated persons are naturally prone to offer proposals to restructure radically the society that they dislike.

This class of comparatively young persons is especially capable of drafting utopian proposals. It is understandable that such persons, with little experience in non-school affairs, and with academic credentials, will turn towards education as an arena for testing their utopian aspirations. Few of these utopians attain administrative positions in school systems. But education policy in America is affected by an array of forces. Thus, the treatment of education in the media and popular literature, and the values of staff members of government agencies and foundations, all help to shape the education policy. Many widely-read writings about education reflect utopian approaches⁷. And so the expression of utopian attitudes in groups peripheral to education can have an important impact on school operations.

Unfortunately, utopian approaches in education are applied in artificial environments, shielded from serious intellectual analysis, and treated with undeservedly high tolerance. We are all familiar with the education innovators who rise to higher and higher levels of attainment, leaping from one muted failure to another, but moving fast enough to insure that their next step is up. The outcome is sometimes the attainment of such a high position of responsibility — with obscure and ambiguous goals — that it is impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of the officeholder's conduct. At that point, the innovator may repose, and pontificate on the basis of his achievements. A similar tolerance is exercised towards many popular and semi-academic writers about educational issues, whose approaches would frustrate the effective administration of Cub-Scout troop. Many educators treat such utopian exercises with whimsical cynicism. They assume a certain degree of idiocy is permissible, and that, in general, students still attend schools, budgets are passed, and serious research and administration are still underway. These healthy cynics then plan budgets, do positivistic research, and teach classes. Efforts to describe the quality of life in the world of 2000 and to translate that description into policy decisions can be left to the romantics. However, the cynics fail to realize that speculative, long range analysis is essential to education. Due to this short-sightedness, the field of social forecasting may remain in the captivity of the utopians — more by default than by the level of their intellectual talents.

Unutopian Planning

Can we learn lessons from the recent outburst of educational utopianism that will help us to engage in better unutopian planning? Yes. The first step is to evolve an intellectual framework for forecasting: a set of explicit values and assumptions about the nature of individual man, and of human relations in groups. Those assumptions will enable us to make useful forecasts about how humans will react to the technological progress that seems to lie before us. In other words, forecasts about technological change — which are typical of modern "hard" forecasting — can only serve as a backdrop for other forecasts about how human

⁷James Herndon, *How to Survive in Your Native Land* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971); Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York, Harper & Row, 1970); George Leonard, *Education and Ecstasy* (New York: Delacorte, 1968); A. S. Neill, *Summerhill* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1960); and Satoro Repo, ed. *The Book is About Schools* (New York: Pantheon, 1970).

beings will live in such change environments. And such a "human oriented" forecast needs a sociology and psychology. Edmund Burke and Sigmund Freud provide a foundation for this framework⁸. These thinkers articulate a sociology and psychology congruent with the acceptance of change, but that warns against assumptions about the heedless reconstruction of persisting institutions or the pervasive goodness of man. Such assumptions may wrench citizens from the symbols that give meaning to their lives and lead society to violent disorder.

This acceptance of Burke and Freud as exemplars is in conflict with a number of modern futurists, who see the future as the infinite expansion of technology, and who assume that (somehow or other) humans will change their styles and values and accept the social tensions engendered by this process. Zurcher observed that:

The literature rather consistently characterizes twenty-first century society and its components in terms of impermanences, transiency, ephemerality, instability, novelty and value conflict . . . the individual will have increasingly become challenged to organize his life around transience, to endure discontinuities and disjunctions, and to withstand ego-flooding from an environment explosive with sensory stimulation. His personality will have begun to become change oriented, and he will be evolving a *mutable self*.

In other words, the proposition is that in two or three generations — 40 to 60 years — most infants born in America will be a type of human mutant that has never existed on a large-scale before in history. Or, alternatively, these future generations — though they possess the inherent drives common to all other humans — will be educated to develop attitudes and values never attained by large numbers of persons before. Such aspirations are a classic example of a utopian approach to social and educational problems.

Burke and Freud would have far less optimism about human mutability. They would say that it is the task of society to adapt itself to what is innate in man, rather than demanding that man change his innate temper to satisfy technology. And so their parameters for unutopian forecasts are easily established. Man will require that his life be surrounded with a significant degree of structure and order. Any society that consistently deprives him of that satisfaction will be rejected, since that society will expose him to uncontrollable tensions.

Educators should assume that a substantial degree of continuity between past, present and future should and will persist in our society, and that constraint as well as choice will be essential to social life. These expectations should be applied in designing school activities.

Another important principle is that "racing" into the future is not wise. Our foresight is limited, and (in the area of social forecasting) we are prone to substitute the most desired future in place of the most likely future. As a result, cohorts socialized to one future, and who must live in another, will be subject to enormous stress. And so accelerated social change should be discouraged regardless of its intended direction since it just makes it more difficult to perceive how to raise children to prepare them for the future.

Education policy-makers can have some effect on the rate towards which we go into the future. They are not the only persons with authority over the engine and

⁸Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1966) and Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957).

⁹Louis A. Zurcher, "The Poor and the Hip: Some Manifestations of Cultural Lead," *Social Science Quarterly*, 53 (1972), p. 360.

the controls that drive us. But their power is not insignificant. Contentions that education can costlessly "shape" children so they can adjust to a vast body of unforeseen contingencies flatter educators. But their blandishments must be resisted.

Thinkers such as Burke and Freud, our own common sense understanding of human development, and the implications from cross-cultural and historical studies, all indicate that children need to acquire stable and tangible identities. And identities demand some acceptance of limitation — without limits or boundaries, identities cannot take hold¹⁰. And so identities naturally impinge on the child's later choices as an adult, since the identities are founded on a focused vision of the child's later adult life. That vision *must* limit the child's capability of adult adaptation or the child will lack the boundaries necessary to establish a firm identity. Thus, if we socialize children to the idea that their adult identities will be in persistent flux, it will be difficult to produce effective adults. In effect, the concept of an infinitely fluid future is foolish. We should make this clear.

Another constructive proposition is that planning must be done by worldly, ambitious persons with broad intellectual perspective — which does not necessarily mean they should, or should not, be academics. It does mean they have read books, and been responsible for getting complex, prolonged and tangible tasks successfully completed. In a society dedicated to specialization, such men are uncommon, and they are probably particularly uncommon in education policy-making. Some steps can help to remedy these deficiencies. Salaries can be raised. Credential-oriented criteria can be put aside. Training programs for administrators can be broadened. And hopefully, growing proportions of able non-educators can accept persisting responsibilities for education policy-shaping. And these responsibilities must go beyond who gets how much money.

The anti-historicism of the utopians also points out a moral. When people must react to a complex change proposal, inevitably they will consider the historical precedents bearing on that issue. Such consideration may not assume the shape of a formal analysis; but the values a society has defended in the past are a critical clue to the values it should defend in the future. Thus, precedent is a precious tool in complex forecasting, and just because the past is a clue to the future, insensitive criticisms of honored traditions, and the degradation of patriotic symbols, are dangerous devices for fostering changes. Such conduct weakens our roots, but does not necessarily lead us to constructive action. True, rootless men may be driven in new directions; however, there is an instability in their conduct that can forebode dramatic and violent reactions. The unutopian must learn from instructive historic parallels, sustain public confidence by generally approving of the policies and conduct of our forefathers, and facilitate the adaptations of old policies to new circumstances by constructive flexibility. These principles have important implications for the development of school curriculums, and for an understanding of the role of the school in developing patriotic attitudes among students.

¹⁰Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1967); Eric Erickson, "Fidelity and Diversity," in Erickson, ed., *Youth: Change and Challenge* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1959); and Orin Klapp, *The Collective Search for Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969).

Steps must also be taken to protect students from indoctrination into utopian attitudes. Of course students and educators should aim for the promotion of an improved society. Perhaps, without such striving, society will not be able to stay in place. However, there is a contrast between (a) an acceptance of the achievements of the past and recognition that present and future cohorts, with the assistance and counsel of their predecessors, must face and surmount further challenges; and (b) the fostering of millennial aspirations among youthful cohorts, which stimulates egocentric and parochial values in such youths.

This student vulnerability towards utopianism can best be corrected through a restructuring of the school and college into a more proximate copy of adult life. The restructuring should diminish age and socio-economic homogeneity, and enlarge the variety of responsibilities held by students, increase the power students exercise over one another, and diversify the services students render to each other and to the school and extra-school community. Teachers and school administrators should be responsible for producing a greater variety of recognizable accomplishments in students (e.g., generosity, tact, persistence). And student responsibilities, in the restructured school, should frequently provide occasions for the display of such accomplishments. As a result of such displays, teachers, students and parents will receive more immediate feedback about the outcomes of the education process. Obviously, these recommendations are consonant with equivalent proposals for educational reform made by other contemporary writers¹¹.

Of course, today, teachers sometimes contend they are responsible for student character development. However, when character is recognized as a pedagogical objective, it is often conceived of as a trait to be eventually revealed to adulthood. I recall visiting a free school where the walls were covered with rude and unpleasant graffiti (written by students) and the student lounge was littered with lunch bags, soda cans and newspapers. The teachers were distressed at the disorder. Many students were also unhappy with their ugly, filthy environment. However, the faculty admitted effective clean-up was impossible, unless uniform rules were imposed. But the staff was opposed to clean-up rules; that would have been repressive. Still, the staff contended that one of their major aims was the development of socially responsible adults. Apparently, they assumed that students could pass their formative years in an environment where heedless irresponsibility was the norm — and at the end of this process the students would become adults with a commitment to the collective welfare of society. This is a typical example of applied utopian thought — the use of a remote, grand goal to justify conduct that flies in the face of logic.

The educational restructuring proposed should give students and staff many occasions to deliver community services. As a result, they will develop respect for the practical wisdom of persons outside of education, and appreciate individuals who promote small, concrete, social improvement, as opposed to persons who deliver grand criticisms, but who cannot get the lounge clean. The outcome of their process should be a heightened sense of community dedication by students (as opposed to the growth of disabling cynicism and selfishness), and sympathy for adults who solve problems in the out-of school world.

¹¹Urie Bronfenbrenner, *Two Worlds of Childhood* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970); Newman, et al., *Report on Higher Education*; Wynne, *Teachers College Record*, September, 1976; and Coleman et al., *Youth: Transition to Adulthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

While the proposed school restructuring will generate more immediate feedback about outcomes in the area of affective learning, another element of the restructuring should also make us more conscious of the relationship between school processes and learning outcomes. In other words, school processes, to attain the recommended ends, should make interactive demands on students, weld them into a community, and offer students helpful role models (e.g., teachers and older students). Processes of the sort are not typical of the modern school. The adoption of such an approach will stimulate the school to give greater weight to the role of symbols, myths and ceremonies in the school, since these systems are central to the maintenance of community. The systems of symbols, myths and ceremonies used for this purpose in diverse schools may have elements of variety, but school environments that sustain and use such systems to advance community probably create strong dispositions in students to identify and support equivalent systems in other areas of their lives. For, if the school's system of symbols, myths and ceremonies gave the students fulfillment, then the extra-school systems may produce equivalent effect for the students in other environments.

This focus on new forms of process, and the application of mythopedic systems may supply us with a new set of criteria for school evaluation. In the future, we may not only ask, "Are pupils learning cognitive skills?", or even, "Are they *displaying* specific desirable character traits?", but "Does the school *ask* students to display good character traits?", and finally, "Does the school use mythopedic systems to generate community, so we can expect students to want to display good character in the interactions with other students and teachers?"

Such a focus on process and behavioral outcomes conflict with other proposals by some developmental psychologists for teaching ethical judgments¹². The proposals aim to encourage students to make progressively more abstract moral decisions. However, no serious effort is made to compel students to put their conclusions into practice. Indeed, because of the hypothetical nature of the moral decisions students are often asked to consider, it is impossible for such decisions to be applied by the subjects in their school life¹³. Furthermore, the proponents of this training process often rebuke the school for making demands on students for moral conduct. Such rebukes are shot through with inconsistencies. The fact is that the school *must* make moral demands on students: it must prohibit stealing, cheating, lying, bullying, certain forms of racist conduct, and extreme rudeness, compel obedience to teachers, etc. And these demands inevitably raise questions of conflicts between individual and collective rights. Furthermore, most students of learning theory concede that practice and application are far more important elements of learning than talk and theorizing. And so a process of ethical instruction that ignores the inevitable demands for ethical conduct that the school community must make every day, and focuses on improbable, remote and artificial problems is a typical, irrelevant, utopian approach. It may increase students' vocabularies and their skills at manipulating abstract issues; it is unlikely that it will cause them to conduct themselves more ethically on a day-to-day level — which is where we live our lives.

Another outcome of the proposed restructuring could be to change the process of teacher training, recruitment, and certification. Assume character development,

¹²James Rest, "Developmental Psychology as a Guide to Value Education: A Review of 'Kohlbergian' Programs," *Review of Educational Research*, 44 (1974), pp. 241-259.

¹³Rest, p. 250.

and the maintenance of mythopedic systems become major school responsibilities. Then it will be important that teachers be persons who have occasions to test and refine their own character; and that teachers have sympathetic, understanding attitudes towards mythopedic systems. These experiences and attitudes do not naturally arise in the typical process of acquiring a bachelor's degree in education, so programs in colleges of education need to be redesigned.

In effect, colleges of education should make demands on their students akin to the new demands to be made on students in elementary and high schools. This process will produce changes in the attitudes and values of graduates of colleges of education, and it may also change the nature of students they attract. Essentially, the revised college of education may appear unattractive to utopian oriented students, but quite attractive to students who desire to assist incremental change and become engaged in concretely shaping the character of real youths. And such students, in their later teaching work, may be far more resistant to utopian blandishments, precisely because their aspirations are directed towards plausible and constructive futures.

Unutopian Education: Past and Future

The unutopian arrangements proposed above have many elements in common with earlier patterns of education practices, and with the proposals of education reformers such as John Dewey¹⁴ and perhaps even Paul Goodman¹⁵.

The arrangements have roots in the past, since poorer, less mobile societies naturally had less utopian education systems. Students in one room schools were given diversified responsibilities, and had richer variety in their away-from-school lives. And, as a result, they were less susceptible to utopian preachings by teachers; conversely, the teachers themselves restrained their potential utopian tendencies because of the variety of their responsibilities (such as keeping the building warm, maintaining physical control over the unruly older pupils). Also, because the teachers were often raised in comparatively limited circumstances, they were less likely to adopt attitudes which assumed the existence of unlimited resources — and this assumption is central to utopian thinking.

The arrangements have parallels with the proposals of persons such as Dewey and Goodman because these reformers felt that the isolation of the modern school from the community was harmful to the development of well-rounded adults. And so they contended that the school should either give students more diversified experiences or increase the accessibility of out-of-school diversity to the young. Some of the proposals of earlier reformers have been reiterated in recent reports and writings¹⁶.

It is evident that, by-and-large, the earlier reform proposals have little practical impact on school operations — though they have had considerable impact on the vocabularies and public ideology of educators¹⁷. A major cause for this failure

¹⁴John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1916).

¹⁵Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Random House, 1960).

¹⁶Bronfenbrenner, *Two Worlds of Childhood*; Coleman et al., *Youth: Transition to Adulthood*; Newman et al., *Report on Higher Education*; and Wynne, *Teachers College Record*, September, 1976.

¹⁷Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).

has probably been the utopian climate that surrounds so many school reforms¹⁸. Indeed, in his later life, Dewey charged many of his followers with distorting and misapplying his proposals¹⁹. In other words, Dewey's proposals attracted the support of many utopian reformers. Thus, the proposals were misapplied, carried out with unseemly haste, or otherwise distorted beyond their original intent. (Although this process was abetted by the ambiguity of much of Dewey's prose). And when the proposals failed or aborted, the failure was seen as a defeat for Dewey's essentially correct ideas, rather than just a defeat for their utopian implementers.

But, as we have seen, Dewey was dealing with an educational issue critical to the management of a modern democratic society. The failure to bring his proposals to fruition should demonstrate the dangers of approaching school reform from a utopian point of view. However, if we approach the challenge before us from an unutopian — and thus historical — perspective, we can learn from those past mistakes, and take practical, incremental steps to create a true learning community in the school. Such a community must aim to help its students to grow into, and live in, a world inhabited by fallible human beings. If we carry forward appropriate reforms in that fashion, we will help bring Dewey's powerful ideas to fruition.

RESUME

Des thèmes utopiques animent une grande partie de la pensée pédagogique. Très souvent, ces thèmes influencent même les décisions politiques. Les effets de cette influence souvent sont malheureux, étant donné que l'application des principes utopiques chez les êtres vivants et réels, surtout chez les enfants et les jeunes gens, qui ne peuvent pas évaluer ces principes, n'est pas à souhaiter. Cet article développe la suite de ces questions et propose d'autres principes qui serviront de guide à la critique éducative et à la formation de nouveaux projets.

¹⁸Patricia A. Graham, *Progressive Education: From Arcady to Academe* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967).

¹⁹John Dewey, *Democracy and Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1963).