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ON (NOT) DEFINING EDUCATION
Questions about Historical Life and What Educates Therein

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Among animals, the human species allots a disproportionate span of life to childhood and youth and an extraordinary portion of body-mass and metabolism to the brain and nervous system. These characteristics endow humans with distinctive potentialities. Relative to other species, humans are Lamarkian, for they manifest the ability to acquire characteristics and to pass them to their progeny. Among the animals, humans made themselves unique by using their extended minority and large mental capacities to educate and cultivate themselves. Hence, humans have used their distinctive educative potentials to make their history and to create their culture. Unlike other species, humans do not simply evolve; they educate themselves.

Educative effort and experience is essential to everything in human life. It is pervasive throughout human life, yet explicit discussion of education has become obsessively specialist, reduced to the work of schools and within them to the formal processes of teaching and learning a codified, narrow set of subjects. Educative development occurs in the experience of persons, each his own embodiment of human life, distinct in time and place, in need and aspiration. Yet educators concentrate, not on persons, but on ciphers and fictions; they

[1] This essay introduces work-in-progress, more fully reported at http://www.studyplace.org/wiki/Defining_education.

act on aggregates, on classes and cohorts, as if the will and intelligence of each person had neither integrity nor character. They abstract persons into groups and think of education as action upon the extrinsic characteristics that define these fictional aggregates – test scores, reading levels, achievement norms, and on. This incapacity to treasure, to nurture the particular humanity of each person, has become the awful failing of our time, steadily constricting the human spirit into the few fake forms, requisite to make us all perfectly accountable to the abstract nullity of authority.

Breaking the constricting abstractions will not be easy, but trying to do so is important. Towards that end, let us work on a full critique of educational thought, one dedicated to understanding the possibility of educative action in its actual, historical complexity. What follows is only a beginning, falling far short of that goal. I try to marshal useful resources for such a critique by exploring questions that have impressed me as important over an extended period of reflection. I put these questions forward because they have emerged from my intellectual experience, concrete and real. In the community of inquiry, questions rooted in the particularity of personal experience serve as invitations to more general reflection when they overlap with questioning by others, disclosing both similarities and differences, further stimulating diverse reflections by a variety of persons. Such cycles drive the endless work of thought and action.

I start by asking questions about work that initiated me into the historical study of education. From there I try to form and follow further questions, as one leads to another. I end at a stopping point, not a conclusion, and all along the way I do not feel bound by disciplinary limits. History is a field of academic study but history is also, and more importantly, a vast domain of lived human experience. My allegiance is to reflection on that domain of experience, not to the disciplinary field. If I must have an academic specialty, let it be what used to be called *the historical school*, which pertained to a range of human concerns — the religious, the institutional, the social, the political, the literary and artistic, the legal, the economic, and, yes, the educational. The historical school grounded diverse empirical studies of human experience on historical particulars, not on arbitrary axioms. For instance, the historical school in economics sought to explain closely observed documented economic behaviors, not to model actions deduced from an axiomatic abstraction of "economic man." My wider claim in this essay and in other work, sometimes stated as claims about the history of education, are

really calls for resuscitating the historical school as far as the mind can reach.

Beginning in the history of education, let the questions lead where they will. Of course, a composed text must lose much of the fluidity and immediacy of a life as one lives it. In life, questions come backwards, forwards, and some all at once, and work moves ahead here and there, not in linear sequence. In life, understanding fills out as a complex jigsaw puzzle does with pieces finding a place at apparent corners and fortuitous points of clarity. And in life, the puzzle is never finished, for life just starts, and goes on until it stops. With a little forced sequencing, here is my sense of where some questions important to me seem to be leading.

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In history and education, Lawrence Cremin mentored and taught me. His persona charmed me, the reach of his ready recall awed me, his embodiment of prudent judgment joined to a demauding vision won my allegiance. Over the years, I felt humbled, a bit shamed, by his extraordinary ability to get his work done — so many books well crafted, so many students well taught, so many initiatives well directed. I came into his circle at the age of 21 with an educational purpose of my own, which closely converged with his. He helped me thread my way into academic life and promoted my prospects. During the rest of his life, and since his death, I have remained within his circle, content to probe its boundaries at points of special interest. But eventually, one must move on.

Cremin was a prolific historian of American education, intelligent, disciplined, ambitious, well-situated to have transformative effects through his work.[2] Yet his labors changed little. Hence I ask, "What did Cremin miss?" What did the three volumes of Cremin's magisterial *American Education* lack that might account for their subsiding quickly out of print? I think his texts have not held the interest of an audience because he was unwilling, in describing many forms of educational activity, to explain how and why the activities functioned educationally. I postulate further that Cremin's preference for description and avoidance of explanation were not idiosyncrasies unique to him, but were characteristics of the peer-group of professional historians within

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[2] For brief biographies of Cremin, see Ellen Condliffe Lagemann and Patricia Albjerg Graham (1991) and Diane Ravitch (1991).

which Cremin sought recognition. American historians prefer to describe, not to explain.

Throughout his career, Cremin worked to nurture and strengthen the common school and the common weal by broadening and deepening the controlling meaning of education. Historically, as nation-states have been building systems of universal education, the meaning of education for most persons has come to signify the work of those institutions, especially the work of their most universal component, the system of elementary and secondary schools. This conflation of education with schooling leads to a portentous reification, to overlooking the real recipient of education: education ceases to be an experience of persons, and becomes a characteristic of cohorts, statistical groups whose tested attributes augur success or failure for society, nation, class, creed, or culture. All of this is the rank superstition of our putatively enlightened age. *Écrasez l'infâme!* Cremin tried to counter the superstition by addressing the definition of education head on: "education is the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, skills, values, or sensibilities, and any learning that results from the effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended" (Cremin, c. 1975)

This definition was implicit in his history of progressive schooling and explicit in most of the many books that followed, three large and several small. Peers responded on both sides of the conjunction of *history* with *education*. From the side of history, they awarded him both the Bancroft and the Pulitzer, and from that of education, they appointed him to the presidencies of Teachers College and the Spencer Foundation, influential roles he filled with distinction. But his ascendancy with living peers has not translated well into lasting change. On one side, his books went quickly out of print, and historians have reverted back to dealing with education overwhelmingly as the work of schools, while on another, some institutional arrangements that he put in place persist nominally, although they now serve purposes contrary to his own, and others have been dismantled, their parts strewn, languishing in uncertain use.

All together, Cremin's work, especially the trilogy on *American Education*, presents a great kaleidescope of pedagogical activity with thousands of people and groups twisting over time in endlessly different configurations producing a churn of distinctive results. In three lectures at Harvard in 1989, Cremin presented as a coda to *American Education* the themes that stood out, in his judgment, from the whole of his survey:

> First, *popularization*, the tendency to make education widely available in forms that are increasingly accessible to diverse peoples; second, *multitudinousness*, the proliferation and multiplication of institutions to provide that wide availability and that increasing accessibility; and third, *politicization*, the effort to solve certain social problems indirectly through education instead of directly through politics. (Cremin, 1990, pp. vii-viii)

Almost as if he knew they would be his final words, these lectures, published as *Popular Education*, convey the implications of his life work for the practice of education. Here he made the case for the value of defining education the way he did: first, it allowed educators to situate schooling in a more realistic pedagogical context; second, it enabled public leaders to appreciate the full scope of concerns that needed to be brought within the purview of educational policy; and lastly, it indicated the scholarly imperative to inform the pervasive, public urge to politicize educational issues with more knowledge, sound and comprehensive, about the human import of educational action in all its forms. These are big implications to a work fully achieved.

To those of us who knew the man, it has been astonishing how quickly after his death his work has lost influence. Its burden continues to become all the more timely as schools operate as if in a pedagogical vacuum. Cremin argued against the stupidity of concentrating public attention exclusively on formal educators while paying little attention to informal educators in the press, media, government, corporations, and community life, despite their growing educational influence. Yet the makers of public policy now bear more imperiously on formal educators, while they blithely ignore the educational role of informal educators as the custodians of commerce and the moguls of media, uncaring and indiscriminate, hunger after more power and wealth. Cremin argued that education was something happening pervasively in the lived experience of each and every person. Yet the establishment of educational researchers swells steadily with scholars pretending, ever more exclusively, to achieve universal findings valid for all teachers and all students, independent of their time, of their place, and of their condition. Something was missing in Cremin's very timely work to weaken and shorten its effect.

Consider the key terms in Cremin's definition of education: *deliberate, systematic, sustained, transmit, evoke, acquire, knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensibilities, learning, effort, direct, indirect, intended,* and *unintended.*

None of these are univocal. Whether, when, where, how, and why an interpreter might apply each of these terms to characterize a specific human action requires the interpreter to make a nuanced judgment, about which different interpreters might undoubtedly disagree. To become operative, Cremin's definition required complex criteria controlling its application to historical experience. The criteria that he applied remain hidden in his work, however. Of course, a scholar cannot make explicit in the formal statement of a carefully crafted definition all the criteria of judgment that he might use in applying it. But surely, in the course of its voluminous use, readers can expect those criteria to become increasingly clear. Yet with Cremin's work they do not.

Some 2,000 pages, rich in detail, convey little sense of Cremin's deliberations as he applied his definition within his vast scope of awareness. He describes much; he explains little. Why, given all the inclusions, did he exclude some things? We do not learn, for instance, how something, which he might have excluded because it was deliberate and sustained but not systematic (social criticism?), or because it was systematic and sustained but not deliberate (technological innovation?), differed in his view from something like the influence of mass media, which he seems to have held to have been sufficiently deliberate, systematic, and sustained to merit extended treatment as an important 20th-century educative agent. Cremin chose to minimize notes that might have illuminated such judgments, and his bibliographies, mentioning nearly everything that he possibly could mention as remotely relevant to anything he included, discussed little of the literature in depth and do not illuminate the why and the wherefore of his judgments at all.

Characteristically, in *American Education* Cremin described, but did not explain. He depicted numerous educators acting in complex configurations occasioning a complexity of results. He rarely sought to explain their actions or deeply interpret their meaning. At the end of *Traditions of American Education,* Cremin concluded his "Note on Problematics and Sources," declaring the importance of "a clear, consistent, and precise theory of education." This declaration merits close attention. Alluding to the authority of the philosopher, John Herman Randall, Cremin observed that "any history is always the history of something in particular, and the explanatory categories the historian uses in writing about that something in particular are almost invariably drawn from other domains — from politics or philosophy or economics, or from ordinary common sense." Cremin then, perhaps unwittingly,

declared that the source of truth and meaning in any account of historical experience would derive from sources external to the historical, lived experiences that people suffer and enjoy.

> As soon as the historian attempts to go beyond mere chronicle, as soon as he seeks not only to arrange events in the order in which they occurred, as soon as he tries to view events in their multifarious relations, he must perforce reach beyond the events themselves to some set of laws, principles, or generalizations that will help make sense of them. And those laws, principles, or generalizations almost always come from outside the discipline of history.[3] (Cremin, 1977, p. 162)

Here is a basic problem in the philosophy of history.

- Is the meaning of lived experience something immanent in the experience that the interpreter has to draw out of it, making explicit what is immanent? Or is the meaning something external to the historical experience that the historian finds elsewhere and applies to it?

In general, Cremin was very reticent about such questions, but in his note on problematics he seemed to declare that historians should primarily use theories of education developed through other modes of inquiry to investigate educational experience historically. They would not find grounds for theoretical explanation of educational experience immanent in it. This conviction puts a significant constraint on what is possible in the history of education, namely the correct and fruitful understanding of education cannot emerge from the study of historical experience, but must be brought to the historical experience from disciplines that pursue a timeless, universal validity in their results. In this view, the history of education will illustrate an understanding of

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[3] Cremin did not give a source for what he attributes to Randall, and it reads a bit as if he was recalling it from some prior time. It clearly derives from the introductory section of Chapter 1 in John Herman Randall, Jr., *Nature and Historical Experience: Essays in Naturalism and the Theory of History* (1958, pp. 23-8). Randall did write (p. 26), "for it is clearly not history that enables us to understand history, but science — anthropology, psychology, economics, and the rest of the social sciences." But this statement was part of a slightly tongue-in-cheek introduction dismissing "Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin, and other speculative positivists." Randall's whole examination of historical experience (pp. 23-117) was much more complex and subtle than the implications Cremin seems to have drawn from it.

education generated through modes of reflection and inquiry other than the historical.

Note that Cremin's work harbors here something of an irony. He rose to prominence as a revisionist closely allied to the educational historiography laid out by Bernard Bailyn in his influential essay, *Education in the Forming of American Society*. Bailyn argued against educational history that tracked the development of current pedagogical practices and concerns. Cremin seemed to illustrate throughout his work how such a history that transcended the parochial concerns of professional educators could be written. But in actuality, he simply change one parish for another. Like the histories he sought to revise, his served to illustrate ideas about education that he found ready at hand, fashioned by a more academic, less professional, assembly. It amounted precisely to a variation on the procedure that Bailyn had identified as the source of the missionary enthusiasm characteristic of educational history in early 20th-century schools of education. To me, this proposition is unexpected, and it provokes a further question.[4]

- Does historical scholarship secure its proper place in the study of education by relying on ideas about education from sources outside itself and using them to guide its study of past educational experience?

To develop this question, I turn to the educational historiography of Bernard Bailyn.

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Bernard Bailyn wrote *Education in the Forming of American Society* in response to a call by the Committee on the Role of Education in American History. We can probe its strengths and weaknesses is by asking how well it delivered the historical insight sought by its sponsor.

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[4] Here I have suggested that Cremin's style of educational history lost currency surprisingly quickly. Alternatively, one might suggest that Cremin really stood for making the methods and findings of the social and human sciences predominant in the professional preparation of educators, relative to the clinical development of professional practice. In this context, contemplating the burgeoning output of the American Educational Research Association and related organizations dedicated to educational research and its application to educational policy, one might judge Cremin's continuing influence to have been extraordinary, although probably quite different in its human import from what he wanted it to be.

I suggest that Bailyn's essay did not deliver what the Committee ostensibly sought.

An effort to interest academic historians in an educational interpretation of the American past began in mid December, 1954, when Clarence Faust, president of the Fund for the Advancement of Education hosted a small, high-powered group of American historians and educators in New York. Paul H. Buck, winner of a Pulitzer in 1937 and second in command at Harvard from 1942 through 1953, chaired the meeting. The group included five other senior members, each then a pillar of academe: Arthur M. Schlesinger, a powerful professor at Harvard and leader in the historical profession; Mere Curti, an intellectual historian from Wisconsin, who was about to deliver his presidential address to the American Historical Association; Ralph H. Gabriel a leading intellectual historian from Yale; Edward Chase Kirkland, a widely recognized economic historian at Bowdoin; and Ralph W. Tyler, then starting as the founding director of the Palo Alto Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, having previously been Dean of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. Four more scholars, a generation younger, yet highly accomplished, completed the group: Francis Keppel, who had become Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education at the age of thirty-two in 1948; Bernard Bailyn, an up and coming instructor, whom Keppel had recruited to strengthen the history of education at Harvard; and two young historians from Columbia, Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, both of whom were already well-published, Hofstadter especially so, and who were about to publish their timely history of academic freedom in American higher education.

From its beginning, the group spoke as leaders among academic historians, calling on the profession to change the writing of American history by examining how educational processes could serve as causal factors indicating and explaining the salient characteristics of American experience. They began with a broad understanding of education, which Cremin's definition would later elaborate, soliciting proposals for "studying the role of education, not in its institutional forms alone, but in terms of all the influences that have helped shape the mind and character of the rising generation." A deficiency in the work of the history profession, not in schools of education, motivated the group, which "was unanimous in its conviction that, relative to its importance in the development of American society, the history of education in this country, both in the schoolroom and outside, has been shamefully

neglected by American historians" Buck, Faust, Hofstadter, Schlesinger, & Storr, 1957).

Over the next ten years the Committee used its influence and funds to promote attention to the effects of education in its many forms on the core historical developments in American experience: to the building of new communities on the frontier, to the transformation of the immigrant into an American, to the fulfillment of the promise of American life, to the growth of distinctively American political institutions, to the transformation of American society, to the utilization of the immensely rich material resources of the nation, to the adjustment of the foreign policy of the United States to its growing responsibilities as a world power, and to the growth of a distinctive American culture over a vast continental area (Buck et al., 1957, p. 10-15). In effect, the Committee called for an educational interpretation of American history and it supported scholarship about key topics and sponsored a series of high-level invitational conferences, all to draw leading historians into studying the historical role of education in American experience. Of these meetings, the second, held in October 1959, had the most evident effect.

A select group of twenty colonial historians gathered for a meeting on "Needs and Opportunities", sponsored by the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, to consider two papers presented by Bernard Bailyn (1960/1972) about the historiography of colonial education. His first essay sketched a hypothetical history interpreting how less predictable, more expansive conditions in the colonies elicited changes in the English educational heritage. Bailyn finessed the difficult task of showing how pedagogical tendencies actually took hold in the character formation of individuals and then spread to a sufficient proportion of a people to mark their collective character. He concentrated on how colonial conditions shaped the educational practices imported from England. Distance from the homeland and rigors of subsisting in a primeval place did the shaping and education was what they shaped. Yet the Committee on the Role of Education in American History had wanted clarification of how educational activities served as agencies determining American history, something Bailyn would later do eminently well in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967/1992), in which he showed how pamphleteering between 1730 and 1770 developed the revolutionary consciousness in the colonies. But *Education in the Forming of American Society* (1960/1972) was not primarily about the educative dynamics determin-

ing historical experience in the colonies, for it concentrated on the reverse determining process in which colonial conditions of life changed educational practices. Taken by itself, Bailyn's discussion of educational agencies in colonial America would have appeared merely as a highly competent specialist work, one indicating some opportunities for research exploring how conditions in a sparsely settled land shaped educational practices adapted originally to very different conditions of life. But Bailyn could write, and he gave a short, dry book a powerful, attention-getting hook, which made it reach far beyond the circle of specialists it ostensibly addressed.

Education in the Forming of American Society opened with a devastating critique of the existing literature in the history of education as it had been developed and used in schools of education. Bailyn decried the cardinal sin according to the mores of professional history: presentism. He lamented that his topic had become part of "the patristic literature of a powerful academic ecclesia," which had become securely ensconced in schools of education since the 1890s. Bailyn showed how the histories of education written in the formative period for use in university-based schools of education boosted compulsory mass schooling. They assumed a timeless, universal validity for current ideas about education and scoured the past for harbingers of them. The resultant history was inbred, isolated, and anachronistic. As educational missionaries, the authors condescended to the past, seeing it as the present writ small, blinding themselves and their readers to the unexpected. Obsessed with the development of public school systems, their purposes caused thought to short-circuit; they could see in the past only primitive intimations of the present and as a result they could only chronicle continuities, unable to perceive, let alone explain interesting change.

In ensuing years, Bailyn's critique helped to raise the visibility and quality of historical scholarship in schools of education. But it did so by deflecting effort away from what the Committee on the Role of Education in American History had sought to support, namely an effort by the historical profession to develop an educational interpretation of American history. For a time this displacement of the Committee's purpose did not seem very significant, for it seemed as if the mind-set of professional history might flourish in major schools of education. There, leaders such as Cremin, who wanted to regulate research in education by applying academic, disciplinary norms rather than those of professional, field-oriented practice, were gaining power. They welcomed Bailyn's critique; of the eight reviews of it that JSTOR retrieves, half of

them, all highly positive, were by Cremin and his colleagues at Teachers College (Cremin 1961a; Bereday 1961; Kershner 1961; Lord 1961). It hastened the decline of the social foundations movement, large boostering courses for all students in schools of education, which had flourished from the 1930s into the 50s. Bailyn's book, followed closely by Cremin's *Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1956* (1961b), consolidated the prestige of disciplinary based scholarship at Teachers College and other schools of education.

Within schools of education, the enhanced academic prestige won by the new historians was largely cosmetic, however. There, historical accidents made high disciplinary repute useful in the early 60s, for the perennial pressure on schools of education to raise academic standards for the better students had been particularly acute in the aftermath of Sputnik. Thanks to the post-war expansion of educational access, reinforced by the baby boom, enrollments and research funding were relatively high, lowering the pressures on elite academic units in schools of education to justify their costs against income. In these circumstances, power came easily to those with academic prestige. But they did not develop strategies for keeping that power should the favorable circumstances change. Consequently, no one observed that Bailyn's critique did little to change the role and function that historical inquiry might serve in schools of education. He criticized the old schoolmen as bad historians, saying nothing about their knowledge of education.

In effect, Bailyn made a key assumption, plausible but not tested: faculty members in schools of education would naturally write history and other social inquiry in ways adapted to serve the missionary, cheerleading needs of the teaching profession, as they had done during the formative period from 1890 to 1920 or so. He objected to the way this boosterism led to poor history, as such, but he did not dispute the role within the context of the professional school, which did not fall within the purview of his interest. He did not speak to the role that history could or should play in the professional education of educators. He seemed to think it natural that in schools of education historians should look outside of history for their knowledge about education, and then adapt the history they wrote to impart those ideas to their audience.

Hence, the question that arose in reflecting on Cremin's work remains open:

- What is the relationship between historical inquiry and a sound causal interpretation of what educates?
- Does the study of historical experience, which is necessarily concrete and particular, yield knowledge relevant and important for the practice of education?
- What can historical inquiry contribute to the stock of knowledge and skill useful to professional educators and their public?

To develop these concerns further, it is important to query something Bailyn passed over in silence. In his study of educational experience in the American colonies, Bailyn began with careful attention to the heritage of British educational experience that the colonists brought with them. His method was to observe closely how that heritage changed under new world conditions. The founding of graduate schools of education at the turn of the 20th century in the United States derived important institutional forms and scholarly substance from German predecessors. His critique of the results of this later transfer was a mere means to engage readers, not his subject, no matter how influential it became. Hence, acknowledging its German source, Bailyn nevertheless treated American historical scholarship as if it sprang *de novo*, with neither a past nor a prior rationale. This procedure mystified deficiencies in historical work by cloaking them in a seeming natural inevitability.[5] Bailyn's critique cries out the question he did not ask:

- Is there a historical explanation why the historians of education at the turn of the 20th century wrote the sorts of foreshortened, anachronistic histories that they chose to write? Might they have done otherwise and if so why did they do what they did?

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In the United States, educational scholarship took shape around 1900, heavily influenced by examples from Germany where advanced study of education had already developed a strong institutional base in the universities. To explain why early American practices took the shape

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[5] Interviewing Bailyn in 1994, Edward Connery Lathem asked Bailyn whether he thought professionals could write good history about their profession and Bailyn hearkened back to *Education in the Forming of American Society* and suggested that the temptation to foreshorten history in a search for the antecedents of the present was nearly irresistible (Bailyn 1994 pp. 87-9).

they did and to explore whether alternatives were possible, it is important to examine the German roots of those practices. These were diverse, extensive, and difficult, and here I can touch on them only briefly. One can probe the character and limits of the transfer by looking for differences in histories of educational thought written for German and for American educators.

Pick up a German *Geschichte der Pädagogik* and peruse the contents. The cast of characters will largely be familiar from most any *History of Educational Thought*, except for the chapter on Friedrich Schleiermacher, prominent in the German histories and absent in the American. Despite many similarities in coverage, German histories of pedagogy have regularly devoted significant attention to Schleiermacher as an educational thinker, while American historians have said virtually nothing about him. Chances are, unless interested in Protestant theology, an American educator will have no inkling about Schleiermacher, which should lead us to ask quickly, "Who was Schleiermacher?"[6]

- Did the absence of Schleiermacher in American histories of educational thought have any significance and might it help explain whether the history of education can have a role in schools of education other than missionary boosterism?

To describe Schleiermacher as a key founder of liberal Protestant theology is accurate but unsatisfactory, for that description leaves much out. He absorbed, integrated, and advanced the powerful thinking of his time, acting as a many-sided public intellectual, sometimes in official favor and sometimes not. He won a diverse audience as a writer and preacher who proved inwardly meaningful to many persons with diverse casts of mind. He secured important advances in the theory of interpretation and translation and applied his ideas about these in practice, not only to religious texts, but to the classics as well, translating almost all of Plato's dialogs into German versions that still stand as among the best. Schleiermacher was a great translator of Plato because he brought to

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[6] Gunter R. Schmidt, a specialist in the foundations of education and religious education at the University of Hamburg, made this point (1972, pp. 450-459). Unfortunately, Schmidt wrote with too little sense of how best to bring out Schleiermacher's relevance for educational thought in the United States to awaken real attention to him. Typically, for the founding of educational scholarship in the United States, a work such as *The History of Pedagogy* by Gabriel Compayré (1905) passed as good history of education. It had a useless two sentences on Schleiermacher and a page and a half on the German educational thought and practice in the decades before and after 1800.

fruition in himself a deep and profound interpretation of the difficult, important understandings of life and education embedded in Plato's thought and work.[7] With such understanding, he collaborated in effecting major educational reforms in both secondary and higher education. For many years a prominent professor at the most innovative university of his time, he taught engaged students in tension with the likes of Fichte and Hegel across a repertoire of big subjects — the major branches of theology (philosophical, historical, and practical), dialectics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, ethics, pedagogy, and on. If his ideas did not make his time, they did move his time in a humane, constructive direction, helping people to find and nourish meaning in their lives.

Schleiermacher advanced culture and pedagogy as an important figure in the movement of *Neuhumanismus*, which broadly understood comprised the work of numerous thinkers of major stature, e.g., Kant, Lessing, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, the Humboldt brothers, Hegel, Schleiermacher, and so on. Historical life, sustained by groups and experienced by individuals, preoccupied them all, especially Schleiermacher. In living a historical life, the basic challenge was interpretive, hermeneutical, to find oneself having to make sense within an immense and powerful otherness, having in endless ways to determine the indeterminate and to suffer the consequences. Each person faced the vital imperative inherent in the condition of finding oneself alive in a complex world: develop some understanding with which to act, to endure, perhaps to flourish. This imperative was not an external ought, but an immanent necessity. As interpretation was essential in writing history and in reading texts, it was even more omnipresent and inescapable in living life.[8]

Within philosophy, Schleiermacher gave hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, greater importance relative to epistemology, the

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[7] Suhrkamp Verlag, one of the most prominent publishers in Germany bases its ten volume paperback edition of Plato's work on Schleiermacher's translations, Platon *Sämtliche Werke in zehn Bänden. Griechisch und deutsch.* "The Art of Interpreting Plato." Julia A. Lamm's contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Mariña 2005), is an excellent discussion of Schleiermacher on Plato.

[8] In addition to *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, see Wilhelm Dilthey's *Leben Schleiermachers* (vol. XIII in Dilthey's *Gesammelte Schriften* 1957) and Kurt Nowak's *Schleiermacher: Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (2001). My reading of Schleiermacher is still very much a work in progress, and I explain how I now understand his work with as much clarity and vigor as I can muster, but it should be understood as a provisional interpretation, offered as a starting point for further inquiry by myself and others, not as a set of conclusions based on exhaustive study.

theory of knowledge. In theology, revealed doctrine did not define a church; a church, understood as a historical, social interaction of living persons, revealed its doctrines through the meanings its members manifested in the historical experiencing of their lives. These lives incarnated their interpretation of their religiosity, of their feeling of contingency within the mysterious givenness of their lives and the world in which they live them.[9] A historical theology emerged into history through the cumulative experience of the members of an historical church. This vital situation was circular, as it must be, for interpretation works on and through reciprocal interactions, which were what the given life consisted in: to live is to cope continuously with all the circumstantial reactions to every action that one takes. Fulfillment and decline come, not through direct progressions, but through spirals of interaction that prove virtuous or vicious in their cumulative effects.[10]

This primacy of historical life and the concomitant centrality of interpretation in it led to a distinctive understanding of educational relationships between persons, who constituted in their sphere of shared life a commonality of differences, each the source of an increment of pedagogical potential. Schleiermacher found that what educated came from within the living person through their continuous acts of interpretation by means of which the person contended with others, who were like but different, and in doing so disclosed and brought his or her potentialities into actuality. Through formative interaction with specific circumstances, a person could actualize himself only through a bounded set of possibilities suited to those circumstances, but the actualizing was immanent, from within, for the drive and impetus to make sense of those possibilities came not from those circumstances, but from within each living person.

In a vocabulary suited to thinking about lived experience, substituting gerunds for abstract nouns leads to greater clarity, for meaning inheres in the acting. Thus, educating happened in experiences lived by active, thinking persons engaging in forming themselves by pursuing fulfillment, by developing skills, and by construing intentions within all

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[9] For Schleiermacher's theology, the place to start is *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1988). *Das Leben Jesu* was a nascent genre that Schleiermacher greatly advanced in his lectures, at which David Friedrich Strauss was a close auditor.

[10] See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (1998). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Palmer 1969) is a widely read secondary source setting Schleiermacher in his philosophical context.

the key domains of life — familial, social, political, and intellectual. What educated was participating in a common, shared life that arose as persons of different ages, capacities, and characteristics interacted across all their differences. Engaging in all the constituent elements of life was what educated, a process by which each differentiates and incarnates his or her unique personhood. Educating would take place pervasively through all the main components of the common life — family, language, community, civic association, the state, religion, thought and knowledge.

For Schleiermacher, each person lived a pedagogical drama by striving towards a human fulfillment through an interpretative interaction between *Fertigkeit*, realized skill, capacity, accomplishment, and *Gesinnung*, motivating disposition, intention, sentiment, conviction. One had some skill and acted with it according to some motivation and the experienced results gave clues about what might follow, with it all orienting itself by a longing for a fulfillment that was always a real feeling, however variable and subject to reinterpretation its object would always be. Educating was an ongoing, ubiquitous hermeneutic activity, continuously interpreting oneself and the world, through which persons living in a given world formed their capacities to anticipate and act within it. A protean intention would lead to a tentative forming of a skill and the new skill would enable intention to differentiate and concretize in a drama of pedagogical contingencies. *Geist* or spirit — living intelligence and thought — must pervade all instruction: beware method lest it become mechanical, for "the mechanical is death."[11] In scant outline, these concerns typified the educational views that the founders of the study of education in the United States did not incorporate into the repertoire of educational ideas they derived from their European heritage. These views lead to three complex questions:

- First, was Schleiermacher representative of anything of substance and importance and does it have potential intrinsic interest to those of us concerned with education?
- Second, how and why did it happen that Schleiermacher's work, and the movement of thought and experience that it might

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[11] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Texte zur Pädagogik: Kommentierte Studienausgabe*, Band 2: *Grundzüge der Erziehungskunst (Vorlesungen 1826)*, (Winkler and Brachmann 2000), passim, quotation from p. 292. The text of these lectures is a full, 400 page work on the art of education, which was first published posthumously in 1849 from notes by Schleiermacher and his students about his 1826 lectures on pedagogy.

represent, did not get incorporated into the American study of education and does that have anything to do with the sort of histories that American educators wrote?

- Third, what agenda of scholarship might lead to our recovering the possibilities, which the work of Schleiermacher and his peers might bring to us, and would the benefits of recovering it be commensurate with the scale of effort the recovery would entail?

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Schleiermacher lived and worked as an integral part of a great cultural flourishing in which educative experience was the central concern. In the second half of the 18th century, currents of advanced thought coursing through Europe, particularly Hume's skeptical arguments about causality, awakened not only Kant from dogmatic slumber, but others as well, undercutting the assurance that mankind generally and oneself specifically enjoyed a secure place in a providential chain of being. Early 18th-century German rationalists had held that human reason, for some by itself and for others with the aid of divine revelation, attained certain knowledge that redemption and salvation in a transcendent eternity was a real prospect, open to each, regardless of his or her present station in life. This assurance came into general doubt, forcing even those who decided like Kant's colleague, Johann Georg Hamann, to believe nonetheless, to entertain deep uncertainties about the powers of human reason.

Such an awakening had been taking place all over Europe and to some degree it came a bit late to German areas, but when it came there the conditions were both somewhat peculiar and ripe. In German courts and cities, a new reading public, supported through a salaried economic base and confined with little prospect for autonomous political influence, channeled its awakening awareness into directions more cultural and pedagogical than political or entrepreneurial. It did so at a time when a quickening of communications invigorated life in towns and the many small cities dotting the German lands and a stronger trade in books, journals, pamphlets, and diverse associations for cultural and pedagogical action, were emerging as significant means for realizing human aspiration. The upshot was a bright florescence of intellectual and cultural striving that took as a point of departure the recognition that to be human entailed living as a self-directing, indeterminate actor in a big, recalcitrant world. Finding ourselves in this situation, can we

understand what makes it possible for us to do what we seem able to do? And with that critical self-awareness, can we soundly select from among all the possibilities which ones are the ones that we should rightly pursue? Thinkers, poets, writers, critics, teachers, preachers, scholars: all faced up to these problems of human freedom, no longer assured that a benevolent deity would providentially succor and guide them. The movement of thought, which we can call *Neuhumanismus*, drew together one of those unusual concentrations of concern and capacity that occasionally arise in history. To appreciate its achievements, consider a historical hypothesis: like its great predecessor in Classical Athens, where an unusual concentration of good thinkers joined to worry the question whether virtue, *arete*, human excellence could be taught, here an unusual grouping of good minds gathered over several generations to argue out what would best educate, recognizing, as J. G. Herder put it, that "each can contribute to the betterment of humanity only what he himself makes of what he can and should become." Singly and together, what can and should human persons make of themselves? Here was a shared search for the educative capacities that were immanent in human persons, singly and collectively. Here was the living source of critical philosophy and its follow through in critical idealism (Kant, Fichte, etc.), of the poetic and artistic celebrations of self-constituting selves (Goethe, Schiller, etc.), of fast-spreading historical inquiry into the manysided human capacity for creative self-differentiation (Lessing, Herder, etc.), of the deep probing about how the human uses of language in their different varieties and forms generate cultural traditions flourishing across time and space (Hamann, Wilhelm von Humboldt, etc.), of the phenomenological reflection on the unfolding of human possibility through the self-creation of *Geist*, that is, spirited thinking by persons alive in a world (Hegel).[12]

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[12] An authoritative handbook on the *Bildungsgeschichte* of the period has recently been published (Hammerstein and Herrmann 2005). Theodor Ballauff and Klaus Schaller give a thorough survey of major contributions in the 3rd and 4th parts of *Pädagogik: Eine Geschichte der Bildung und Erziehung – Band II: vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (1970, esp., pp.338-567). For good interpretations of the pedagogical development of *Neuhumanismus*, see *Die Geschichte der Pädagogik: Von der Aufklärung bis zur Gegenwart* by Herwig Blankertz (1982) and *Theorie und Geschichte der Reformpädagogik, Teil 1: Die pädagogische Bewegung von der Aufklärung bis zum Neuhumanismus* (Benner and Kemper 2003). *Neuhumanismus* makes sense within what is sometimes called *Problemgeschichte* in German. It groups work and activity that shared a common starting point, a perceived problem that motivated diverse people to address it with both similar and divergent results. We might translate the endeavor into English by saying that one is writing about a 'historical problematic', or perhaps even better a 'historic problematic' — both are better than the self-defeating 'problematic history' but neither is entirely satisfactory.

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At first, the influence of *Neuhumanismus* dominated the emerging study of education in German universities. Many contributors to this movement of thought, among them Basedow, Kant, Herder, Salzmann, Trapp, Campe, Villaume, Pestalozzi, Niemeyer, Wolf, Fichte, Niethammer, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Hegel, and Schleiermacher, participated in concrete, practical efforts towards developing the educational profession. Early in the 19th century, August Hermann Niemeyer and Friedrich H. C. Schwarz drew many of these ideas together in a conception of historical pedagogy that formed the intellectual foundations for the study of education in German universities. Adolph Diesterweg, the influential Prussian educator, called Schwarz and Niemeyer, "the Nestors of German pedagogy," and of the two, Diesterweg thought Niemeyer the more practical, but Schwarz the more important one, "deeper, many-sided."[13] Both thought that education took place in the historical, cultural experience of persons and held that the way to advance sound, applicable educational knowledge was through historical inquiry and reflection.

Educators had to nurture the full diversity of human possibility as it unfolded in the complex actualities of countless persons' lives. To grasp concrete possibilities while respecting the multiplicity of particulars, people needed to engage the idea of education historically, to reflect on the sum of activity that had been guided by it. People could learn to think "as educators" by thinking about past educational experience, not to find in it repeatable methods, but to develop the insight and skill to interpret educational possibilities in the complicated, concrete situations of life. The history of education did more than illustrate sound and

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For examples of the use in educational history of the pedagogical problem, see Fritz März, *Problemgeschichte der Pädagogik* (1978, 1980), and Dietrich Benner, *Die Pädagogik Herbarts: Eine problemgeschichtliche Einführung in die Systematik neuzeitlicher Pädagogik* (1993). An older survey provides a good example as well, *Das Pädagogische Problem in der Geistesgeschichte der Neuzeit* by Hermann Leser (1925 & 1928), the second volume of which is very useful with respect to contributors to *Neuhumanismus*.

[13] See "Leben und Werk: Friedrich Heinrich Christian Schwarz" by *anon.* in F. H. C. Schwarz, *Lehrbuch der Erziehungs- und Unterrichtslehre* (1968, pp. 373-394, p. 374 for the quotation). Theodor Ballauff and Klaus Schaller (1969) present Schwarz's pedagogical work in the context of his times well in Vol. 2 of their *Pädagogik*, (pp. 552-563), as they do for Niemeyer (pp. 530-535).

unsound methods; it did more than inspire educators with professional pride. The history of education empowered people to think and act educationally; it enabled people to grasp the range of educational possibilities that had been given life in past experience and to realize that any further possibilities to be achieved would be done as historical extensions of their own educative activity. Educating took place in history and was to be studied through history and the educator had to be careful not to impose ideas external to the historical experience of each person in trying to trying to nurture his or her development. Such impositions were the great temptation, leading educators then and now who believe they possess universally valid knowledge of what works, to arrogate control over the life of others.[14]

Slightly younger, Johann Friedrich Herbart developed a different conception of pedagogical study (1894). Most of Herbart's peers started with the assumption of an inalienable autonomy in each person from birth on, with education consisting then in efforts to respond constructively to the student's willed actions and reactions. Schleiermacher and most contributors to *Neuhumanismus* thought that will, a force to act with some intention, inhered in life, integrally autonomous. Rather exceptionally among his peers, Herbart held that initially the will was absent until it was instilled in each person through external instruction. For most, the autonomous will was the condition, enabling the teacher to respond constructively to the pupil's intent and effort. For Herbart, an autonomous will was the key fruit of the teachers work, something to be molded with ethical insight and imparted to the pupil through psychologically astute action. In his view, educational influence used instruction to shape each new born human, helpless without a will, but plastic, receptive to external, forming influence, through it becoming an autonomous person in the mold of his upbringing. Two systematic disciplines were helpful in constructing a sound pedagogy for this task: ethics would give authoritative guidance concerning valid educational ends, and psychology would enable educators to determine what educative means would be sound and effective. Herbart advanced his ideas leaving a lot of room for later interpreters to fill them out, which they eventually did, and since those who filled them out were less many-sided thinkers, they did so by elaborating Herbart's reflections

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[14] For Niemeyer's work, see his "Überblick der allgemeinen Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts" (1884, pp. 311-434, quotation, p. 357). In addition, in 1813, he published a compilation of sources on Greek and Roman educational theory, *Originalstellen griechischer und römischer Klassiker über die Theorie der Erziehung und des Unterrichts.*

(1894) into a far more systematized set of methods by which teachers could deliver a Herbartian program of instruction, often with more fidelity than understanding.[15]

Through the 1830s, the historical pedagogy of Niemeyer, Schwarz, and others held sway, but from the 40s on Herbart's posthumous influence slowly but steadily grew through the work of his followers. Late in his career, Herbart had tried to start a *Methodenstreit* with Schwarz, arguing that the respect for historical particularities was misguided and that sound pedagogy had to use scientific methods to arrive at generally valid pedagogical principles (Herbart, 1843, pp. 744-755). This view was not forgotten by Herbart's followers. In their view, an expanding corps of teachers delivering standard curricula as functionaries in well-organized schools, needed tested, dependable methods, applicable routines, not elaborate powers of pedagogical interpretation. For them, history should illustrate those methods, rather than cultivate educational insight and understanding.

Late in the century, the last and most influential of the German Herbartians, Wilhelm Rein, gave a clear, pointed statement of the relation of historical and systematic pedagogy. Rein systematized the tradition of Herbartian pedagogy, edited the *Encyklopädisches Handbuch der Pädagogik* and wrote a three-volume *Pädagogik in systematischer Darstellung* among many other works, all of it a fulfillment of late 19th-century German educational science. Rein took Herbart's complaints about the work of Schwarz to their logical conclusion, and his views had substantial influence on the structure of educational scholarship founded in the United States and England.

Rein divided pedagogy into two parts, the systematic and the historical. He organized all positive knowledge pertinent to education under the heading of systematic pedagogy; he left historical pedagogy, an equivalent division, completely empty, for he held that however informative it may be, it yielded no positive knowledge. In explaining his conception of pedagogy, Rein quoted Schwarz, who put "the history of education first for the simple reason that we first must see what has happened up to now and how we have been brought to our present *Bildung* before we can know what we have to do in order to form and educate our children well." Rein commented unequivocally: "We hold

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[15] For an overview of Herbart's educational ideas and their slow rise to prominence, see Harold B. Dunkel (1969, 1970).

this sequence to be false."[16] For Rein exactly the opposite was true. To write history well, the historian had to master systematic, scientific pedagogy first, before looking at the past, for only then could the historian judge rightly what he found in the past, for only then would the historian have the knowledge needed to discriminate soundly between what was right and wrong in past practice. In language not unlike Cremin's, Rein declared that "one must first have acquired through speculation [ethics] and experience [psychology] a solid, all-around theory before the history of previous efforts can be studied with success." Without such a theory grounded in the systematic study of education and a rigorous ethics and psychology, the student will lack "the standard by which previous efforts can be judged."[17] Here, all laid out, explained and schematized for ready adoption elsewhere, was the presentist agenda of historical work, the fruits of which so offended Bailyn's historiographical sensitivity.

By the late 19th century, American educators were in the habit of looking to Germany for educational scholarship. The process of borrowing is fraught with difficulty. Already, the precursors of American educational scholarship — Henry Barnard, Horace Mann, William Torrey Harris — had laid the foundation for imperfectly incorporating European educational scholarship into the emerging university in late 19th-century America. For instance, Henry Barnard's decision to publish a translation of Karl von Raumer's *Geschichte der Pädagogik* in the *American Journal of Education* had been a singularly poor choice for the study of European pedagogy, for it was riddled with Lutheran fundamentalism characteristic of the reaction against the theological liberalism and

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[16] Compare Schwarz (1829, p. xiii) to Wilhelm Rein, *Pädagogik in systematischer Darstellung* (1927, p. 70).

[17] Rein, *Pädagogik in systematischer Darstellung*, vol. 1, pp. 70-72. These quotations come from the 3rd. edition of 1927, which I use at this point for convenience as I happen to own it. The first edition was 1902. Rein held these views of historical pedagogy throughout his work from the 1880s on. Another clear statement of them is from his article on "Philosophical Pedagogy" in the *Encyklopädisches Handbuch der Pädagogik*, of which he was the general editor (Vol. VI, pp. 488-493). "Historical pedagogy views existing education as having had a becoming and follows the conditions of its development. It sketches a picture of past educational conditions and follows the development of educational ideas from their origin up to the present in relation to economic and intellectual movements of culture. In this manner, historical pedagogy can be a source of instruction for systematic [pedagogy]; by the same token the latter, in addition to seeking solid norms for the present and future, also sharpens the eye for what happened in the past." (pp. 492-3)

humanism of *Neuhumanismus*.[18] American 19th-century school reformers have generally won praise for their efforts to make use of European educational scholarship, but however meritorious for well-meant effort, they were usually wobbly at best. Hurried, groping, long-distance attempts by reformers to appropriate intellectual well-springs often provided little of actual substance, for they indiscriminately grabbed the first accessible appearance.

American educators borrowed from the German Herbartians in two overlapping ways. First, doctrines about teaching practice became popular as Herbartianism. Herbart's followers developed a highly rationalized system of instructional method, which won a wide international following, initially dominating in American graduate schools of education. Tied to a fading psychology, however, it soon receded into obscurity, its doctrine of apperception devastatingly mocked by William James and others (James 1992, pp. 800-807). But American educators also borrowed a second far more lasting influence, for they imported an academic organization that the Herbartians had successfully institutionalized as a university program of studies for the field of education. This second form of Herbartianism, its program of university studies, restricted positive knowledge about education to a systematic pedagogy generated through ethics and psychology. It was separable from the first, Herbartianism as a teaching practice. If Herbartian teaching methods lost favor among practitioners, the Herbartian program for the university study of education could nevertheless persist and even thrive. That happened. The program endured: American educators institutionalized the graduate study of education in the United States largely according to it and this institutional structure has long outlived the hegemony of Herbartianism in educational practice.

To this day, the Herbartian program of studies is familiar. Psychologists will find universal truths about human learning and ethicists the universal good of human action. Diverse instructional methodologists will translate these findings into a correct curriculum and effective methods for teaching it. Experts on policy and administration will prepare administrators to implement a system of educational institutions that will impart a sound education to all. Historians of education will show how this hard won state capped the progress of the nation and its contribution to mankind. The Herbartian institutional program

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[18] See Karl von Raumer (1846; 1847; 1854) These, along with later reprints, can be accessed through Google Books.

explicitly charged educational history with a specific role that led to its anachronistic cheerleading, which Bailyn found so objectionable — in this program, all actionable knowledge about education would come from other sources and historians of education were charged with crafting a narrative that would enthuse and edify the professional educator about systematic pedagogy and the institutions through which they would put it into practice.

- Was the dominance of this program in schools of education fated? Were alternatives to the role assigned to the history of education possible?

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Antecedents existed for the historical practices that Bailyn stigmatized. They did not spring forth spontaneously, for American scholars writing educational history in newly founded professional schools were conforming to a professional role and norm, then held to be authoritative, which derived from the Herbartian program in the German universities. In Germany, this idea of how to use history had neither been the only alternative nor had it always been in force. From that, we might conclude that the uses of educational history within the professional preparation of educators could have been different, opening the possibility that they are susceptible to change. But are we not believers in progress, *malgré nous?* Does not the waxing of Herbartianism in the 19th century, accompanied by the waning of an outworn humanistic alternative, indicate that indeed the Herbartian role for educational history is in the end a necessary professional reflex? An affirmative response to that question faces one problem, however. Precisely at the time that the Herbartian model was crossing the Atlantic, German educators were resuscitating an historically grounded pedagogy, something again largely missed by American visitors to the German world of academe.

For instance, in 1888, Wilhelm Dilthey, one of the leading German thinkers of the time, published an important article "On the Possibility of a Universally Valid Pedagogical Science" in the *Proceedings of the Prussian Academy of Science* (1962, pp. 56-82). Dilthey addressed the Herbartian program for the development of sound pedagogy directly. He noted, and accepted, the general practice of basing pedagogy on ethics and psychology, contesting instead the intellectual character of

both fields: for Dilthey, all ethical purposes were historically conditioned, as was all psychological analysis. Although Herbart correctly began with the pupil's *Bildsamkeit*, his plasticity, for Dilthey this susceptibility to formative influence was not something that arose from the absence, at the origin, of any will. *Bildsamkeit* came instead from the teleological character of all life, which from its first origins differentiated life from inert matter. As an active, teleological being, the pupil, however inchoate, would act adaptively upon every external and internal stimulus, exercising an autonomous will in collaboration with which, under concrete circumstances, the educator had to work. In short, Dilthey reasserted the view, so predominant in *Neuhumanismus*, that all educating worked through the self-educating efforts of persons and groups to fulfill their capacities for self-determination within the constraints of their lived experiential conditions. In doing so, Dilthey made a powerful case for the importance of historical reflection in the development of pedagogical thinking on the part of would-be educators. His understanding of pedagogical knowledge had extensive influence in German educational scholarship and practice through the Weimar period, and it is regaining much strength after having been seriously weakened in the Hitler era.[19]

Dilthey was a great, difficult source of reflection on the human awareness of life. For him, humans were many-sided; they were purposeful, thinking actors in the world. Observers had to take both the specificity and the complexity of life into full account. In living life, persons elaborated active mind, *Geist*, from and in their experience. Dilthey's significance for the human enterprise, especially for education, is still far from fully realized. Like John Dewey, Dilthey charted a course between those who believe in the possibility of objective certainty and those resigned to a relativism without rigor. Both Dewey and Dilthey attended closely to concrete experience, to lived life. Dewey took experience as a given and concentrated on what attending to it could mean for different forms of activity — for education, art, science, public life. He did not, however, have much to say about experience, as such, except that it was the starting point. Consequently, he presumed a generous collaboration by his readers, who needed to agree with him

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[19] An excellent study of Dilthey's pedagogy by a leading present-day scholar is *Die Pädagogik Wilhelm Diltheys: Ihr wissenschaftstheoretischer Ansatz in Diltheys Theorie der Geisteswissenschaften* by Ulrich Herrmann (1971). For the current ramifications of Dilthey's influence among German educators, see the Festschrift for Wiufried Böhm, edited by Wilhelm Brinkmann, *Freiheit - Geschichte - Vernunft: Grundlinien geisteswissenschaftlicher Pädagogik* (1997).

spontaneously that indeed the way to consider these topics was in the light of experience. In contrast, Dilthey spent more effort developing a phenomenology of lived life, interpreting through his conceptual grasp what humans concretely did in experiencing their experience. Dilthey actively appropriated experience, showing the necessity of taking it to be the ground for the whole edifice of human culture. Dilthey took on the more difficult task and consequently never had the popularity of Dewey, but Dilthey provided a stronger foundation upon which others could build.[20]

Much of 20th-century thought in Europe has been deeply informed by this recognition that historical life is a primary ground of thought and action, renewed by Dilthey, Nietzsche, Marx, and others and then developed to the present by a wide range of major thinkers. Elements of these developments hover at the pedagogical periphery in the work of various critical theorists. Some are lamely mobilized in current American educational research under the heading of *qualitative methodology*, but to reduce this work to a method is to kill it, as Schleiermacher said. It is not a matter of defining *education* more soundly — education is not a topic to be defined; it is a constituent element of all human life as each lives it. Educators must attend to people educating themselves, respecting the autonomy and integrity of each. Teachers must treasure lived actualities and recognize, observe, explain, interpret, value, respond, assist, criticize, exhort other persons as they struggle to form themselves in constructive fashion throughout their lives, be those great or small. In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Loman's wife rebukes their son for a callous remark about Willy, who was losing the sense that his life had worth and meaning.

> I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must finally be paid to such a person. (Arthur Miller 2006, p 195).

Persons everywhere, young and old, notorious and obscure, struggle to form themselves in the face of circumstances, some favorable and many

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[20] James Kloppenberg gives a good discussion of Dilthey in relation to Dewey and James in *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920* (1986), esp. pp. 72-80.

adverse. *Attention, attention must be paid to each person:* that is the educator's imperative and it is through the historical study of educative life that educators build their capacities to pay that attention and to assist in the formative efforts they can observe, recognize, and value.

To interpret experience educationally, the historian needs to mobilize three sources of interpretative leverage that Niemeyer identified — pedagogical introspection into his own educational experience, pedagogical reflection on educational experience in the historical record, and study of what others have had to say based on both their own experience and the historical experience of others (Niemeyer 1884, pp. 429-430). What can an educator learn from historians who do these three things well? He will develop his capacity to pay attention to another's educational effort, to recognize how she is trying to form and develop herself, to perceive what may be helping and hindering her efforts, and to understand how to proffer assistance with tact and insight enabling her to move herself ahead.

In addition, study of educative experience in the concreteness of lived life should more deeply inform public understanding and expectation about education. Most educational controversies, and many educational reforms, get their energy and direction from historical arguments. The Herbartian assumptions that no meaning is immanent in historical experience and that historical inquiry can yield no pedagogical knowledge sidelines historical understanding in these controversies. More attention must be paid to the pedagogical lives that children, persons young and old, experience across the gamut of life circumstances — children and *youths* and *adults* and even the *aged*. Each is a human being. Both terrible and wonderful things happen to each. Attention must be paid. The good educator needs to strengthen and deepen her capacity to pay attention, to recognize the inner strivings of persons very different from herself, to help others with insight and understanding in their effort to develop meaning and value in their lives.

Rarely does systematic pedagogy help; it glosses over differences, homogenizing what it should concretize. Research methods are upside down. The educating professions need to attend with much greater empathy and imagination, much fuller understanding, to the inner experience of living persons in all conditions of life. Close observers like Jonathan Kozol and Robert Coles and many more, who voice strong positions interpreting the lived experience of specific children coping with real circumstances, have too little intellectual standing in the

profession and in public deliberations on educational policy. If attended to at all, they are attended to as prophetic voices, speaking from the wilderness.[21]

When educational scholarship discounts knowledge and understanding of lived, historical experience, it leaves historical argumentation open to the most artful and unscrupulous ideologues. The movement towards making the work of schools accountable to an explicit set of instructional standards and to steady improvement in test scores exemplifies the resulting collapse of historical intelligence. The movement amalgamates two historical expectations that people want schooling for all to further: the expectation that good schooling will enable the society to achieve its egalitarian ideals and the expectation that good schooling will extend the relative strength of the American economy as it undergoes the challenges of globalization. These are fine generalities, but what do they mean in the lived experience of different children, across the full spectrum of differences incarnated in the lives of children? Neither historians of education, nor historically grounded social science, has clarified the pedagogical experience relevant to these aspirations. In the lived lives of real persons, what actual educational experience will enhance their specific capacities and dispositions to make a polity more or less egalitarian? What specific personal achievements will enable José and Sujata, and each child, to each meet the economic challenges and opportunities that each concretely faces as his or her particular incarnation of the great global generality? Each is a human being. Who will pay the attention that must be paid?[22] These are very difficult questions the difficulty of which can only be made publicly

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[21] Michael Harrington's *Other America* (1962) receives credit for putting poverty on the national policy agenda early in the Kennedy administration, but that was long ago and we have learned anew not to see and think about the lives of the poor among our midst. What political leader will step forward to say that we must devise policy to enable each specific child, caught in the concrete situations that observers such as Kozol document (1990, 1992), to achieve his or her full human potential?; See also Robert Coles' *Children of Crisis* (2003). In addition to the human difficulties Kozol has documented in his books, one of the disturbing elements in the historical situation is the degree to which he has had to repeat himself over and over again, throughout a long career.

[22] Relative to the specific lives that Catherine Boo has been documenting during the past few years in the *New Yorker*, the educational policies based on abstract diagnoses of the economic challenges from *The Nation at Risk* through *Tough Choices or Tough Times* seem mindlessly abstract. Somehow we need to recover a shared conviction that each and every child, no matter how adverse his or her circumstances, has a real potential of real, positive value, such that each and all of us have a positive interest in providing the conditions requisite for his or her fulfillment.

evident as thoughtful scholars entertain them in reflecting on the lived educational experience of persons as they engage the concrete circumstances of their lives.

As we stand on the sideline and historical arguments about what is educative in the world ricochet about us with little clear attention to their substance, vacuities gain a purchase on policy and practice. Studies based on the historical reality of concrete educational experience cannot quickly intervene with definitive answers in these matters. Over time, with greater attention to historical pedagogy, our recourse to it, both within the profession and within our culture at large, may become more intelligent and effective, more varied and appropriate to the lived realities. Over time, we can embrace historical pedagogy and take some responsibility for determining what the role of educative thought and action in American life can and should be.

- What can and should the role of educative thought and action be in a historical situation where each person, like it or not, seeks self-realization under circumstances where space and time, and all that happens therein, are so compacted and foreshortened?
- What ideas, skills, and values will a person actually find helpful in coping with the particular configuration of circumstance that he or she will experience?

Let us put the real, the difficult questions at the center of sustained inquiry and work.

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