Although most people in the West, particularly in the United States, know that John Dewey is one of the best philosophers and educators our century has produced, very few know that his two-year stay in China was significant as far as Chinese education is concerned.

Dubbed as "Yankee Confucius," Dewey received a thunderous welcome in China in 1919. He gave a series of lectures whose most characteristic aspect seemed to be his emphasis on the importance of incorporating science into education. He especially stressed testing hypotheses with verifying evidence and the implications of the Darwinian theory of evolution. Moreover, he believed that the school should be the basic unit in the reconstruction of a new China.

Because of the opposition of many Confucian scholars and Marxists, Dewey only achieved limited success in the reform of Modern Chinese education. However, a lot of his terms such as "school as a miniature society," "Life is education" and so forth have become common slogans and taken for granted.

Although he was the third of eleven children and went to Lake Champaign, Green Mountain and the University of Chicago, he was not a cooperative and realist. He attended Lake Champaign High School in 1884. Two years later (two died in the Panama Canal disaster) he resigned from the University of Chicago, became a philosophy assistant, and attended the University of Michigan. He attended the University of Michigan, and in 1884, he became an assistant professor of philosophy. In 1885, he resigned from the University of Michigan and went to the University of Chicago, where he served as a philosophy professor. In December 1919 to 1921, he went to Turkey in the newly established educational institution, and died in New York City in 1952.
Although most people in the West, particularly in the United States of America, know that John Dewey (1859-1952) is one of the best philosophers and educators the twentieth century has produced, very few know that his two-year stay in China was significant as far as Chinese education is concerned. It is worthwhile and interesting to examine his educational theories as they apply to and effect the Chinese educational system. Thus, this paper will focus on John Dewey essentially as an educator and evaluate his influence on education in modern China.

Dewey was born on October 20, 1959 in Burlington, Vermont. He was the third of four sons of his parents. His hometown was, at that time, a small city of 14,000 people, located on the eastern shore of Lake Champlain in the great valley between the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains. He praised this small city for the round of cooperative household and agricultural activities when he grew up. As a result, when he designed curriculum for urban schools, he particularly stressed gardening and handicraft projects so that city children might have experiences similar to those of rural children.\(^1\) He attended the university of Vermont in Burlington where he learned about Huxley, Darwinism and the philosophical traditions of Scotch Realism and German Idealism. He graduated in 1879 and taught in a high school in Pennsylvania. In 1882 he entered the graduate school of philosophy at Johns Hopkins University and received his doctorate in 1884. Two years later, he married Alice Chipman and had six children (two died in early childhood). Except for a year spent at the University of Minnesota, he taught at the University of Michigan--Ann Arbor from 1884 to 1894 and then moved to the University of Chicago, becoming Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy. He established the famous University Elementary School (better known as "Laboratory School"). In 1904 he resigned from his post because President Harper of the University canceled his program without even consulting him. In 1905 he went to New York and became Professor of Philosophy at Columbia. From 1919 to 1921 he stayed in China. Besides his time in China, he traveled to Turkey in 1924, to Mexico in 1926 and to Russia in 1928. His first wife died in 1927 and in 1946 he married Mrs. Robert L. Grant. He died in New York City on June 1, 1952.


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Before 1904, his works such as The _Story of Ethics: A Syllabus_ (1894) and _Studies in Logical Theory_ (1903), were concerned about the problems both of the theory and the practice of education. During this period the influence of the so-called "Dewey School" was widespread and books like _The Child and the Curriculum_ (1902) became fairly popular. From 1904 to 1930 he made his most significant contributions to the philosophy of education. His most important books include _How We Think_ (1910), _The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought_ (1910), _Schools of Tomorrow_ (1915), _Democracy and Education_ (1916), _Reconstruction in Philosophy_ (1920), _Human Nature and Conduct_ (1922), _Experience and Nature_ (1925) and _Individualism, Old and New_ (1930). His works during the 1930s dealt largely with formal philosophical questions rather than explicit educational issues. These include such works as: _New Republic, Philosophy and Civilization_ (1931), _Art as Experience_ (1934), _Liberalism and Social Action_ (1935), _Experience and Education_ (1938), and _Theory of Valuation_ (1939). His last significant work was _Knowing and the Known_ (1949).

Dewey wrote so many important works dealing with educational philosophy that it is impossible to summarize all of his educational theories in this short paper. However, four of his major theories are listed and discussed as follows:

(1) **THE NATURE OF EXPERIENCE.** Dewey believed that experience is of and in nature. In other words, experience and nature are inseparable. Additionally, he insisted that nature includes not only physical entities but also relationships. His discussion of experience and nature can be found in works such as _Experience and Nature, Arts as Experience and Experience and Education._

(2) **INSTRUMENTALISM.** Dewey's attitude toward education is a practical one. He looked upon ideas as "instruments" in solving human problems. More often than not, he liked the word "instrumentalism" in preference to "pragmatism" when he talked about his philosophy of education. In short, he regarded concrete methods as essential to solving real problems rather than abstract answers because ideas are useless and can be tested in real-life experiences. In _How We Think_ this view was clearly expounded upon.

(3) **INDIVIDUALS VS SOCIETY.** Dewey believed that individuals are interdependent, free, humane beings. His most famous work is _Moral Principles of Education_ (1923). The passage reveals.

(4) **MORAL PRINCIPLES.** Dewey believed that each action should be moral. The passage reveals.

2 The above reference is from _Encyclopedia of Philosophy_ (1986, pp. 82-4, 219).
3 Dewey typed his manuscripts in China, where he received a doctorate.
4 Dewey began his academic year...
individuals and their social conditions were interrelated and interdependent. Without a democratic society there would never be free, humane and educative individuals. This idea is repeated in many of his books such as Democracy and Education and Individualism, Old and New.

(4) MORAL DEVELOPMENT. Dewey held that in education each action should be judged good or bad in terms of its outcome. He believed that an individual's moral development is acquired through his or her active participation in the social group. In other words, an individual learns about morality not through books but through living and personal growth in society. In Human Nature and Conduct and Moral Principles in Education his views on morality were fully revealed.2

Dewey was on sabbatical leave during the academic year 1918-19. Late in 1919 he was invited to lecture at the Tokyo Imperial University (The content of these lectures became the basis for Reconstruction in Philosophy). From Japan he went to China, at the invitation of his former Columbia students Dr. Hu Shih and Dr. Chiang Meng-lin. He taught philosophy at the foremost academic center in China, National Peking University. He stayed there for two years and two months. Besides teaching, he gave numerous lectures at the more prestigious universities throughout the country.3

When Dewey first arrived in China, the Republic of China, the first republic in Asia, was less than eight years old. Although the old education system was generally abolished, the new system had yet to be set up. Thus, with the whole-hearted support of his students, Dewey received a thunderous welcome in China.4 On his sixtieth birthday


3 Dewey typed brief notes of what he intended to say and gave them to his interpreters to study before each lecture. In the lecture Dewey gave about a paragraph in English and then the interpreter translated it into Chinese. If he was in doubt on certain points, the interpreter would stop and ask Dewey to clarify these points before the lecture was resumed.

4 Dewey began teaching courses at Columbia's Teachers College during the 1904-1905 academic year, which happened to be the first year a Chinese student enrolled at that
on October 20, he was told that, according to the Chinese lunar calendar, it happened to be the birth date of Confucius. Ts'ai Yuan-P'ei, the President of National Peking University, pointed out that some of Confucius' teachings were quite similar to Dewey's pragmatic theories. He cited Confucius' caution against philosophizing without consideration of practical experience in the Analects: "Learning [Chinese classics] without thinking is a loss; thinking without learning is perilous." Since then Dewey was nicknamed "Yankee Confucius."5

Fundamentally, Dewey's lectures in China on education were based upon his educational theories as revealed in his books. However, to help his Chinese audience and followers more easily accept his educational theories, he sometimes had to use different but more understandable terms. Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of Dewey's lectures in China was his emphasis on the importance of incorporating science into education. He particularly stressed testing hypotheses with verifying evidence and the implications of the Darwinian theory of evolution. He defined the scientific method as the experimental method and believed that the scientific revolution was closely related to the democratizing of a society. It's very interesting that in his lectures Dewey seldom directly used the term "pragmatism:" instead, he preferred "experimentalism" and other terms such as "optimism," "new honesty," and "life experience." Understandably, he wanted his theories to be well-received by his Chinese audience.

Dewey often spoke on educational reform. In attacking imperial Confucianism which had long been the basis of traditional Chinese education, he pointed out that "The number one problem of society in the world today is how to use the 'Authority' of Science to replace the Authority of Tradition."6 He urged his audience to keep away from passive learning by looking upon knowledge not as an end in itself, but as an instrument for wisely guiding and conducting human activities. During his two-year stay in China, Dewey was actively involved in the Peiping conference which resulted in the Peking Declaration. Chiang Miao also attended the conference ("The New Education: The Core of History" in Dewey's Elucidations).

However, the Chinese educators gave little attention to their reform zeal.

In attacking imperial Confucianism, Dewey stressed the child-centeredness of a child's instigation in the classroom. He assigned priority to the type of a child's environment which tends to socialize the child.

Functions of the school unit in the Deweyian society in general and the school environment in particular to meet the need of the child's instincts must be distinctly known.

In regard to the Chinese educational system, the Chinese educational system has to be shown to be inferior to the type of Dewey's educational system.

7 "Chung-hu-hui i, Laws of the House of the Chao-yu (The New Education: The Core of History"
8 Cited by Keenan, p. 35.
involved in its educational reform program. In 1919 The Society for the Promotion of New Education was established with his student Dr. Chiang Meng-lin as Editor-in-Chief of its monthly Hsin Chiao-ju ("The New Education"). The Deweyan educator nationwide formed a core of Hsin Chiao-ju contributors. Later on, Wang Mou-tsu noted Dewey's contribution to Chinese educational reform:

There were several famous men who rejected political careers and turned their full energy to the academic and educational worlds. It was then that Dr. Dewey came to our country propagating his theories, informing us what the new education was, and what the way to the new education should be. Then educational thought in the entire country underwent a change, and this was the New Education movement. 7

However, these educational reformer met with a lot of resistance to their reform aims, which will be discussed later.

In his China lectures he repeated his life-long emphasis on the child-centered curriculum. In other words, he believed that the growth of a child was far more important than the subject matter taught in the classroom. He urged his Chinese audience to give their number are priority to child-centered education and reject authoritarian education which tended to condition the child.

Furthermore, he thought that the school should be the basic unit in the reconstruction of a new China. Therefore, he believed that the school was actually a "miniature society." 8 Thus the school environment should be adjusted in such a way that it is roughly like society in general.

In the final analysis, Dewey's China lectures were given to meet the needs of China at that time. The topics ranged from the child's instincts, individual development, the child-centered curriculum to the type of progressive education that was intended to create a

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8 Cited by Keenan, pp. 42-43.
democratic China. He rarely talked about morality in China, probably because he believed China had had too many didactic moral teachings and too little democracy.

Although every person is subject to change, change sometimes is intolerable to certain people. Despite the fact that Dewey was enthusiastically accepted by his former students and many other educators, he probably had more critics than supporters at that time.

First of all, Confucian scholars opposed him because he advocated change and change meant to these traditionalists the total undoing of long-standing Chinese cultural tradition. The traditional educational system and Imperial Examination system was abolished only recently (in 1905) and the Republic of China was just established in 1912. Many of these Confucianists had been members of the privileged class and they resented this foreigner's lecturing them.

Second, some "new" scholars objected to Dewey's Pragmatism because they embraced the new currents of Western philosophy, mainly those proposed by Hegel and Bergson. For example, Carsun Chang, a young professor who had studied in Japan and Germany, had an understanding of reality radically different from Dewey's thought based on empirical science. His support came from Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Liang Shu-ming, and Chang T'ung-sun, who supported Carsun Chang mainly from an ethical and humanist standpoint.9

Third, there were Marxists whose opposition to Dewey proved to be much more influential than the above-mentioned Confucianists and Idealists. Dewey's Chinese disciples such as Hu Shih and Chinag Meng-lin were the elite of Chinese society at that time and of course they were influential in the educational circle. However, the great majority of people in China then were poor. That is why Communism (Marxism) could awake in the Chinese public an enthusiastic response. Though in the 1920s, Dewey's liberalism and empiricism were fairly popular among the educated, Communists, surprisingly, gradually appealed to many Chinese people between 1920 and 1927, when the "groundwork for the later facile acceptance of Marxist-Leninist premises among the Chinese intelligentsia was laid."10 Eventually,


Chinese Communists were to take over the China Mainland in 1949 and in the 1950s launched a massive campaign against John Dewey and his followers headed by Hu Shih.\footnote{Harward, 1951, p. 85.}

As noted above, Dewey's influence on Chinese education was most prominent during the 1920s. During that decade, the aims, methods, and materials of American education were dominant. For example, the Educational Conference in 1922 outlined several Chinese educational aims which were influenced by Dewey: "(1) To adapt itself to a new and changing society; (2) To promote the spirit of democracy; (3) To develop individuality; (4) To take into special consideration the economic status of the average citizen; (5) To adjust education to the needs of life; (6) To facilitate the spread of universal education; (7) To make itself flexible enough to allow for local variation."\footnote{Cited by Berry, p. 216.} In 1920 C. F. Remer, an economist who taught at St. John's University in Shanghai, had this to say:

Professor Dewey, by means of his lectures which are interpreted as they are given, has reached thousands of Chinese. These lectures are translated into Chinese and are published in the leading magazines and newspapers of the country. These printed lectures are carefully studied by many. It may be guessed that by means of the spoken and the written, or printed, word Professor Dewey has said his say to several hundred thousand Chinese.\footnote{"John Dewey in China," Millard's Review, XIII, 5 (July 3, 1920), p. 267.}

But, in a country with a population of at least four hundred million, "several hundred thousand Chinese" were not many. In 1925 and again in 1928, different educational aims were listed, putting much more emphasis on society than on the individual. Yet Dewey's influence remained because his theories of education for living, child-centered instruction, and the school as a miniature society had universal appeal and validity. Although after 1949 Communists began to incorporate Marxist ideas into the Chinese educational system on the Mainland and attached Dewey and Hu Shih in the 1950s, they still could not
completely uproot Dewey's influence. During the so-called "Great Leap Forward" of 1958, two of Dewey's books were reprinted in Chinese translations, and another systematic critique on Dewey's pragmatism and epistemology appeared in 1963. This critique was revised and used as a standard textbook in the schools during the 1940s.\textsuperscript{14} Because Dewey's pragmatism was incompatible with Maoist Communism, the above mentioned Dewey's books and critique on Dewey were basically used as negative examples. In other words, his reformism was considered to be reactionary.

In Taiwan, however, Dewey's books have been popular and generally accepted since 1949, both because Dewey's followers such as Hu Shih and Chiang Meng-lin retreated to Taiwan in 1949 and has since exerted a great influence there and because Taiwan has been America's ally and friend. Still, some scholars such as Wu Chun-sheng blamed Dewey for his liberalism and even went so far as to hold him responsible for the loss of the Mainland to the Communists in 1949.\textsuperscript{15}

I personally believe that John Dewey's limited success in the reform of modern Chinese education was due to the following two reasons: (1) His students represented by Hu Shih and Chiang Meng-lin were basically gentlemen, professors and scholars. They were too optimistic and naive to know the crude and complicated realities of Chinese society at that time and thereafter; (2) On the other hand, Communism offered an integral body of dogma concerning man and society and a doctrine of the necessity of reconstructing Chinese society. Thus, it appealed to more people.

Unfortunately seventy years have passed since Dewey first stepped off the ship in China and advocated democracy, scientific method, etc. China is still not a democratic country and Chinese education on the Mainland is still a failure.\textsuperscript{16} In contrast, we in Taiwan, Republic of China, are much more fortunate because we are pro-America and benefit from Dewey's ideas and the effective exertion of them.\textsuperscript{17} If Dewey's influence had been greater, China today would be different.

\textsuperscript{14} See Keenan, pp. 4, 244, for a detailed discussion.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp. 4-5, 244.
\textsuperscript{16} At least one fourth of the Mainland Chinese are illiterate.
\textsuperscript{17} Symbolically Dewey was the United States incarnated and Communists were representatives of Russians. In this way, the loss of China in 1949 was metaphorically the failure of Americans and success of Russians. However, in the long run Americans have won and Russians have lost because its influence on Mainland China has resulted in poverty in every aspect, while Taiwan, America's friend, is prosperous.
led "Great Critique" was first printed in China in 1949. Dewey's ideas on critique were popular during the tumultuous years with Maoist "Great Critique" on words, his words, his words such as "school as a miniature society," "Life is education," and so forth. Of course, in Taiwan today Dewey is a household name and probably still remains the best known and the most influential American educator.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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