A COMPARISON OF THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES OF
PRAGMATISM AND ESSENTIALISM AND THEIR
EFFECTS ON EDUCATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to make an appraisal of the educational philosophies, pragmatism and essentialism, and their effects upon the aims, methods, and curriculum of education. No effective effort was made to branch off into the many philosophical ramifications of the question, but the practical aspects of each philosophy were studied in order to determine how it has influenced education.

The source of the data was a multiplicity of reports, philosophical discussions, books, magazines, and articles. An attempt was made to get the viewpoint of men who are considered authorities in this particular field of education.

The method of procedure followed was simplified as much as possible. Chapter I presents the introduction, which gives the purpose of the study, the source of data, and the method of procedure. A definition of pragmatism, some aspects causing criticism, its development, and its influence on educational philosophy are discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III presents the fundamental claims of the essentialists and the effects they have had on education.
In Chapter IV an effort is made to present concrete examples of how pragmatism has influenced the aims, practices, methods, and curriculum of education. Chapter V presents concrete examples of the influence essentialism has had upon the aims, methods, and curriculum of education. A comparison of the two philosophies and of the resulting effects upon education is presented in Chapter VI. The conclusions gained from the study complete the work in the final chapter.
CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY OF PRAGMATISM AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Pragmatism," like many other words, may be explained by a study of its etymology. The term is derived from the Greek word which means action, from which our words, "practice" and "practical," come. This word was first introduced into philosophy by Charles Peirce in 1878 in an article, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in the Popular Science Monthly for January of that year.¹ In this article Peirce asserted that our beliefs are really rules for action, and that to develop a thought's meaning, we need only determine what conduct the action will produce. This conduct, he maintained, is the most important angle of the entire situation. Furthermore, he stated, conduct is, after all, only a matter of difference in practices. One person may have an attack of hysterics on the receipt of some abrupt, disconcerting news; another may react in an entirely different manner. The thing is that both reactions are, in reality, practices. According to Peirce, our conceptions of these effects, whether immediate or remote, constitute the whole

¹William James, Pragmatism, p. 46.
value of the practices. James' comment on this article of Peirce's is significant:

This is the principle of Peirce, the principle of pragmatism. It lay entirely unnoticed by anyone for twenty years until I, in an address before Professor Howison's philosophical union at the University of California, brought it forward again and made a special application of it to religion. By that date (1898) the times seemed ripe for its reception. The word "pragmatism" spread, and at present it fairly spits the pages of the philosophic journals. On all hands we find the "pragmatic movement" spoken of, sometimes with respect, sometimes with contempt, seldom with clear understanding.²

In undertaking the present study, it has been the experience of the writer to learn that James' last statement in the above excerpt is particularly true. Very few people, it has been learned, have a clear understanding of what is meant by pragmatism; and a great many have a very active dislike and antipathy for any movement bearing that name or one even remotely akin to it in any form. Perhaps a study of what James meant by pragmatism and the application that he made of it will, to some degree, explain wherein and how much opprobrium has been directed against it.

² Pragmatism, according to James, does not stand for any accepted group of facts or for any great philosophical truth. On the contrary, pragmatism is a method. Pragmatism asks the questions: What will the result of some particular action be? Will it be of benefit to the person who is the recipient of the action, or will it be non-beneficial? The

²Ibid., p. 47.
result, not the worth of the action, is the thing of most consequence. James says:

A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns toward concreteness and adequacy, toward facts, toward action and toward power.³

In other words, pragmatism does not accept a truth as absolute but questions it to determine the effects the belief in this truth will have upon the human mind. James, in his discussion of this phase of pragmatism, was unfortunate in using religion as a basis of discussion. The word "unfortunate" is used here advisedly. Man's religion has ever been his most cherished possession. It is rooted in the very innermost recesses of his nature. Often this religion takes the form of fixed beliefs which are narrow and dogmatic. The Christian's Bible is accepted by millions of people as the divine word of God and the absolute authority in life. In the last book of the Bible, the statement is made that its words are sacred and binding and that if any man shall "add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book."⁴ With a large number of people, any questioning of any religious principle outlined in the Bible is sacrilege. Yet, religion was the thing

that James used to illustrate the workings of pragmatism.
An explanation of his theories along this line will be illuminating in the study and in the reactions of the people toward pragmatism.

James said that he, as a pragmatist, had no a priori prejudices against theology. Interested in no conclusions except those which his mind and his experiences worked out together, he thought that if theological ideas proved to have a value for concrete life, they were good for so much. The remainder of their value depended entirely upon their relationships to the other truths that also had to be acknowledged.

James then illustrated what he meant by discussing the idea of the Absolute, or transcendental idealism. Inasmuch as a belief in an Absolute gave comfort to a great number of people, he held that it was of value. However, this value was handicapped by the belief that in the Absolute, finite evil is "overruled." If this were true, James asserted, man could forget about sin and its satellites, secure in the feeling that in the end they would be overcome without the persuasion or help of man. In this respect, man would have a moral holiday, and James did not think this reacted ultimately to the good of man. To put the illustration a little more concretely, the old principle of "predestination"

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5 James, op. cit., p. 73.
may be used. Certain faiths hold that God has predetermined certain things to happen, and that these things will happen regardless of man's actions or efforts. If this be true, then the question might be asked: Why struggle against the forces of evil or why try to accomplish worthwhile things in life? If God has preordained that such and such a thing will happen, it is useless for man to put up a fight or a struggle against it.

James evidently felt very strongly along these lines. In a last lecture he spoke at length on pragmatism and religion. Since the discussion is not pertinent to this study except as background material for understanding much of the opposition to pragmatism, the argument in this lecture will not be followed, but James' conclusion is of interest:

On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true. Now whatever its residual difficulties may be, experience shows that it certainly does work, and that the problem is to build it out and determine it so that it will combine satisfactorily with all the other working truths.\textsuperscript{6}

James' contribution to education was mostly in the psychological field. Previous to his lectures on pragmatism, he had published his two-volume \textit{Principles of Psychology}. Later he wrote and published \textit{Psychology: Briefer Course} and a simpler \textit{Talks to Teachers on Psychology}. In these writings his thesis was that "education is for behavior and

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., p. 299.
habits are the stuff of which behavior consists." Since action dominated his theory of learning, the following statement illustrates his feeling:

Experience is never yours merely as it comes to you; facts are never mere data, they are data to which you respond; your experience is constantly transformed by your deeds. . . . The simplest process, the most elaborate scientific theory, illustrates how man never really finds, he always cooperates in creating his world.7

Unable himself to formulate any satisfactory world-view, James inspired others to experiment and carry on his adventures into the world of thinking. The pragmatic movement, under this inspiration, exhibited a vigorous life for a time, showing many variations, and producing a considerable literature. Dresser says:

Taking its clue from James, this movement was in the main anti-intellectual; opposed to any sort of static universe, to absolutism of any type, or any monism or singularism which assumed either one Substance or one Self, in the light of a theory of knowledge. Pragmatism also stood for naturalism, for "pure experience" of the type which, discounting consciousness, finds a clue in the behavior of the organism. Here too James had taken the lead by describing consciousness in terms of biology, also by raising the question whether consciousness even exists, namely, as an entity. Behaviorism as a movement in psychology is indebted to James at this point, also the "new realism" of American writers who have sought a description of objects as present in the world of space and time apart from the cognitive relation.8

Naturally, no two pragmatists agreed on thought and principle. A. W. Moore gave a popular exposition of the

7Quoted from Harold J. Rugg, American Life and the School Curriculum, p. 229.

philosophy of pragmatism and its methods in his *Pragmatism* and *Its Critics*, published in 1910. He found it difficult to explain pragmatism in terms understandable by the masses, and passed over into the field of idealism. Lovejoy, in examining pragmatism from the point of view of knowledge of the past, was unwilling to class retrospection as true knowledge; and he was also unwilling to accept indirect verification. His viewpoint was that pragmatism was confusing and not to be depended upon for revealing the truth in all situations.  

Dewey, however, took the principles of the pragmatic method and applied them to education. He believed that experimentation could profitably be used in logic, in education, and in the general conduct of life. Knowledge, according to him, was secondary, as a functional activity within experience. In the following quotation, he summarizes his philosophy of education:

> Philosophy is defined as the generalized theory of education. Philosophy is . . . a form of thinking which, like all thinking, finds its origin in what is uncertain in the subject matter of experience, which aims to locate the nature of the perplexity and to frame hypotheses for its clearing up to be tested in action. Philosophic thinking has for its differentia the fact that the uncertainties with which it deals are found in widespread social conditions and aims, consisting in a conflict of organized interests and institutional claims. Since the only way of bringing about a harmonious readjustment of the opposed tendencies is through a modification of emotional and

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intellectual disposition, philosophy is at once an explicit formulation of the various interests of life and a propounding of points of view and methods through which a better balance of interests may be effected. Since education is the process through which the needed transformation may be accomplished and not remain a mere hypothesis as to what is desirable, we reach a justification of the statement that philosophy is the theory of education as a deliberately conducted practice.

Dewey held, too, that education is growth, not a process of learning a mass of facts and figures. Life, he said, is development; and development and growth are life. Translated into its educational meaning, this statement means that Dewey considered that the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end; and that the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, and transforming. In other words, education is pragmatic; it is an active, dynamic process continually changing through action and practice.

Dewey's philosophy has had an important influence on the aims of teaching, the methods employed, and the curriculum. A brief study of each will show when and how this influence became operative.

According to Dewey, values are instrumental. They help a person to gain ends. Progress occurs if these ends are achieved. But the value of the ends has not yet been determined. Are the ends worthy of good, or are they

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11 Ibid., p. 59.
deleterious in nature? Suppose a boy had started out to commit a burglary. He accomplished the deed. What then? Certainly, he achieved his aim, and certainly this was not a worthy one for the boy. The end, then, taken alone, could not be taken as a criterion of value, but must be judged against yet other ends.

This theory of value is significant in studying the aims of education. Brubacher says:

... the progressive has no fixed aims or values in advance. Educational aims, no matter how well authenticated by the past, are not to be projected indefinitely into the future. In a world rendered precarious and contingent by a compounding of the novel and the customary, educational aims must be held subject to revision as one advances into the future. If education has any general aim in the light of which these successive revisions can take place, it is only that of pupil growth. But growth itself has no end beyond further growth. In other words, education is its own end. Progressive education is not progressive because it is making steady advance toward some definite goal but because it is growing in whatever direction a novelly emerging future renders most feasible.

From the foregoing it must further be evident that educational ends are not termini to the road of education, but ... are employed to serve as means or instruments for finding the way... No way to education is the true way... What turns out to be true will depend, at least in part, on the aims or values with which one started... The truth the child learns will inescapably be affected by his purposes or aims.12

Dewey asserts that the aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education, and that the object or reward of learning is continued capacity for growth. In

the search for education, he says, we are not concerned with finding an end outside of the educative process, but from within the process itself. Aims should arise from the free growth of experience.13

However, the aims of education which have been formulated since the introduction of pragmatism do not show any great change, actually, in general aims from the traditional ways of thinking, but they do show that there have been changes in emphasis in various subjects. For example, ethical character and moral conduct have been either an implied or stated aim of education for generations, but the methods used in an endeavor to achieve them have changed. Where once the direct method of moral lectures and didactic stories was used, a more or less indirect one of teaching through wholesome activities and literature is now favored.

Citizenship, too, has been the aim of education in the schools of all countries. This may be taught in many different ways, which are conditioned by the type of citizenship desired. A social-studies course consisting of political history and civil government has been replaced by a greatly changed social-studies curriculum. Citizenship is not merely a matter of making patriotic speeches, cheering, and waving flags, but it must be lived and practiced. The aims of education in this respect have not changed, but

13 Dewey, op. cit., p. 129.
there has been a decided change in the methods of achieving the aims.

The worthy use of leisure time and the development of vocational efficiency show other shifts in aims. The increased amount of leisure time afforded by the use of machines has presented a problem to society. How to use this time so that it would be beneficial to individuals and to the social group instead of detrimental has occupied much thought. Then, too, the increased number of vocations, the number of vocational misfits, and the changing industrial world have made it imperative that the school modify its curriculum to give more vocational training, more exploration and guidance, and more skills. In every field, even though there was no change in the general aims of education, important changes in methods have given new bent to old objectives.

The pragmatist, like the idealist, turns away from the realistic view of factual knowledge as received from lectures or stereotyped textbooks. He bases his work upon experience, the trial-and-error method. The problems that he has to face are primarily of a biological or social nature and are not solved merely by theorizing but mainly by doing something and seeing what the result is. In this respect, interest in the thing to be done has been brought prominently forward by educators. Brubacher says:
What interests the individual is made the basis for the motivation of instruction. This interest, however, is not whimsical but definitely guided by the pupil's own purposes. The fact that his purposes in and out of school are constantly being balked by the uncertainties of everyday living affords an excellent point of departure for the work of the school. Herein lies the challenge to learn, to apply one's intelligence to the control of the precarious factors of his environment. Out of this will come a felt need for the aid of the social heritage and help or instruction from the teacher. Restoration of the continuity of the interrupted purpose will need to be tested in appropriate activities. These will be selected with a view to the development of the whole child. Emotional as well as intellectual activities will be borne in mind. The outcome of these activities will be measured or evaluated by the extent to which they accomplish the purposes entertained.\textsuperscript{14}

Youth is constantly being confronted with life-adjustment problems. The only criteria or guiding principles for the solution of these problems are derived from goals or purposes in life. The achievement of these goals brings satisfaction, a feeling of well-being. When conflicts occur, the youth has to adjust himself to changing conditions. Life-adjustment problems do not come in little subject-matter packages that may be handed out in books. It is impossible for teachers or textbook writers to foresee what problems will confront a child, or what the specific remedy or answer for the problems will be. No two problems will be the same. But if the child is taught to solve problems, they must be presented in an organized and unified manner.

\textsuperscript{14}Brubacher, op. cit., p. 326.
The knowledge of how to solve a problem can be transferred from one problem to another, whereas a knowledge of only one specific problem would be inapplicable, probably, to another problem.

The pragmatist wants to know whether or not youths are learning to solve their social, personal, and economic problems, and whether they understand life as a whole. In his efforts to aid youth, the pragmatist is shifting emphasis in the curriculum from the past to the present and the future. The textbook is receiving less emphasis, and is being replaced by many books and pamphlets used as references. Subjects, especially "tool" subjects, are no longer being taught as ends in themselves but as a means of gaining understanding, appreciations, and attitudes. There is a definite need which is being met by a perceptible trend to integrate the curriculum through cooperative or unifying methods. Creative expression, pupil initiative, and rational freedom are being introduced in contrast to teacher-dominated situations in which pupils follow set patterns and initiative is discouraged. Guidance programs are being made an inseparable part of the regular teaching process.

Under this new conception of education, the curriculum has become the most vital part of a school. The trial-and-error method of learning has called for, if not new subject matter, at least new presentations of subject matter. Rugg characterizes the curriculum as "everything that the students
and their teachers do."\textsuperscript{15} The last word, "do," in this quotation distinguishes the new curriculum from the traditional with its emphasis on reason instead of activities. Rugg continues:

On the side of activities the curriculum is the very life of the school. It includes the activities of clubs and other organizations, the assemblies and other group meetings, the work of class committees and student councils, the carrying on of newspapers, magazines, and "annuals," the sports and plays. It encompasses, furthermore, the researches and excursions in both school and community, the reading and study, the discussions and dramatizations, the aesthetic appreciation and creative expression, as well as the practice of innumerable techniques. The curriculum is, in short, everything the young people and their teachers do.

But the curriculum is more than this; it is also the materials which are used in these activities—books, the drama of both stage and screen, painting, sculpture, architecture, lectures, music, the physical equipment of laboratory and shop, of studio and lecture room. Thus the curriculum is not only everything that is done but also the vast range of materials employed in the doing.\textsuperscript{16}

Such a concept of the curriculum did not grow overnight. Dewey became Director of the School of Education of the University of Chicago in 1902. He established a Laboratory School which he operated especially for the purpose of scientific investigation and research into the problems connected with the psychology and the sociology of education. Curriculum study was one of the phases of education that were given attention in this laboratory school.

In the essay, The School and Society, Dewey had stated

\textsuperscript{15}Rugg, op. cit., p.18. \textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
that he was guided by children's "full spontaneous interests and attentions." He urged that school subjects, like reading, writing, and arithmetic, should develop out of children's "life activities" and methods of living and learning, not out of "distinct studies." As early as 1900 Dewey had maintained that the life of the school was to be active, not passive; that the children were to work, not merely to listen. The curriculum was to be organized around four chief impulses: the social instinct of the children; the instinct of making -- the constructive impulse; the expressive instinct -- the art instinct; and the impulse toward inquiry, or finding out things.

In 1904 Dewey left the University of Chicago to become professor of philosophy at Columbia University. Various educators followed Dewey as director at Chicago, and in 1909 the School of Education was reorganized with Charles H. Judd as director. Under his direction, the school gave more attention to child activities and the learning process. Stimulus was given the movement for a revision of the school curriculum.

Another laboratory school was the Francis W. Parker School of Chicago. From the beginning the curriculum of this school was outlined in accordance with the conventional school subjects -- history, geography, mathematics, English,

18Ibid. 19Rugg, op. cit., p. 245. 20Ibid., p. 246.
and the like. In the elementary school, though, concrete activities, chosen in terms of pupils' needs and aimed at cultivating their personal development, were utilized in the teaching. Progress was made on integrating these subjects in many instances. In this way integration did not add to the curriculum, but influenced school practice in the presentation of the subject matter.

The Horace Mann School at Teachers College, Columbia University, was another active force in the reconstruction of the curriculum. 21 From the beginning, this group aimed at the improvement of education through the existing subjects of study -- history, geography, arithmetic, and reading. Other reformers had proposed to abolish these subjects and organize new activities, but the Horace Mann group tried to vitalize the content of the school subjects and to encourage a large amount of spontaneous activity on the part of the children.

Under the leadership of outstanding educators connected with progressive schools and colleges, new practices in education were developed. While some of the educators might object to having the term "pragmatist" applied to them, the fact remains that the new developments in the aims, the methods, and the curriculum of education worked out by these educators were all based on the activity movement.

21 Ibid., p. 249.
the trial-and-error method. They used "practices" to determine the worth of anything, and these "practices" were the basis of James' pragmatic philosophy. It seems fair to assume that modern education, with its stress on the activity movement, has been materially influenced by the philosophy of pragmatism. In a subsequent chapter an effort will be made to present concrete examples in education of the degree to which this pragmatic influence has been felt in education.
CHAPTER III

ESSENTIALISM AS AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY,
AND ITS INFLUENCE ON EDUCATION

Once again the etymology of a word somewhat explains its meaning. "Essentialism" comes from the word "essence," which is French in origin, and is a part of the verb "esse," meaning "to be." The words "to be" alone would indicate something that is unalterable and permanent. This is borne out in the philosophical definition of the word: "that in being which underlies all outward manifestations and is permanent and unchangeable." Essentialism, in the sense in which it is used in this study, represents something that is unalterable and permanent; an educational philosophy which has for its prime thesis the fact that there are some truths which are absolute and which nothing can change. Brubacher significantly defines this educational philosophy of essentialism in the following way:

In the midst of the welter of change and diversity, the essentialist believes that there are some points of the educational compass which are relatively fixed. He will recognize that there are many educational values by which one might steer but that there are some by which he must steer.

1Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 341.
Convinced of what are the essentials of education, he firmly and resolutely insists that the child experience them. If he does not believe that the whole curriculum should be prescribed, he at least believes that a considerable part of it should be. In the traditional curriculum he finds certain classics in literature, mathematics, religion, history, science, and others whose value is independent of the time and place they are studied. These, educated men must know. They are essentials. They must be learned even though their significance is not made clear in the fulfillment of some present purpose. Till such occasion arises they are to be learned and stored away.  

This type of educational philosophy dates as far back as the beginnings of education itself. Primitive people were deeply religious. They lived mostly an outdoor life, and in this way came into daily contact with the laws of nature. These laws, although people might have no conception of what they were nor the rules governing them, were apparent to even the most illiterate. The sun rose in the east in the morning and set in the west each afternoon. The moon did not have the regular sequence of the sun, but rose at different intervals and went down the same way. These intervals, though, were regular and followed a set pattern. Men were born and lived; some of them lived to an advanced age and others died while they were young. But sooner or later they all died. Plants came up in the spring, grew, blossomed, formed seed, and died down in the fall of the year. At every turn, primitive man was confronted with

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2Frubacher, op. cit., p. 336.
the unalterable laws of nature. He accepted these laws and quite naturally formed his other concepts around them.

The rites which initiated adolescent boys and girls into the mysteries and intricacies of grown-up conduct were the first educational attempts made by the primitive people. These ceremonies resolved themselves into procedures for acquainting the young people, approaching the status of adult life, with the customs, rules, and mores of the tribes to which they belonged. These tribal customs, it should be emphasized here, were not experimented with by the adolescents nor sought to be improved upon, but they were presented as rules of the tribe which were to be obeyed without questioning. Up until this time, there had been little need for the youths to understand much about the mores of their people, but on entering into adult life, there was need for this knowledge.

As man progressed in the arts of civilization, he gradually established schools for the training of the youth of the country. The youths, although they were sent to school at an early age, were trained for adult life. They would need to read, write, spell, and figure in order to carry on their business after they entered adult life. For this reason, then, these subjects were taught in the school. They represented absolute truths that must and should be mastered. In the case of girls, little schooling was offered them for a long time. Since the duties of the girls
were to be those of housewives and mothers, it was thought that there was little necessity for any kind of training except in the domestic arts. These the girls could acquire at home; therefore, it was felt that there was little necessity for educating the girls in school. Then, too, the subjects taught at school were mastered by the exercise of the mind; there was no provision for any activities in school save those within the process of reasoning and memorizing.

The early Greeks did not train their young for youth activities, but for the duties of adult life. Socrates believed that virtue is knowledge and is teachable, and that the knowledge man needs is that of himself. Plato, Socrates’ pupil and follower, believed also that virtue is knowledge and that the exalted virtues, wisdom and justice, were not acquired by exercise, but by reflection. Plato believed that practical arts were not so valuable as a study of mathematics, music, and dialectics, which were accounted the noblest of human activities. It will be noticed, in this respect, that education was abstract and partook in no way of the activities of life, but laid strong emphasis upon the exercise of the mind and of the reason.

The Romans were more practical in their youth education than were the Greeks, but preparation for adult life was

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3Frederick Eby and Charles F. Arrowwood, The Development of Modern Education, pp. 6-8.
especially stressed, rather than any benefit which might accrue to the youth. Narrow intellectual and moral training was emphasized.\textsuperscript{4}

In medieval Europe, the schools were influenced by the Greek and Roman traditions and by Christianity. Eby and Arrowood say:

The early Christians had little sympathy with pagan schools and believed that education was an essential function of the Christian home and church. The aims of their school, which have changed only in emphasis, were concerned with morality, religion, knowledge of the scriptures, together with certain attitudes and doctrines to further the beliefs of various groups.\textsuperscript{5}

The Renaissance brought a new emphasis to bear upon subject matter in the schools. The Renaissance was a revival of interest in the Greek and Roman classics. This literature was written in the Greek and Latin languages, and in order to read the old manuscripts it was necessary that one have a knowledge of these languages. Latin was a practical, not a cultural, subject at this time, but by the end of the sixteenth century the ability to express one's self clearly and forcefully in Latin became the primary end. Emphasis was placed on grammar as a foundation for Latin. Liberal education became an end in itself, unrelated to life, while form and mechanics were stressed in a superficial manner.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 24. \hfill \textsuperscript{5}Ibid., pp. 14-15. \hfill \textsuperscript{6}Rudyard K. Rant and Henry H. Kronenberg, Principles of Secondary Education, p. 52.
For one hundred years after the establishment of schools in the United States, the efforts of American schoolmasters were devoted primarily to the perfection of skills. Rugg says:

Up to the second quarter of the nineteenth century practically all the time of the younger children was devoted to the techniques of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In the years of the 1830's and 1840's, when geography, history, and other subjects were injected into the program, the time allotted to the three R's was reduced a little; but even at the middle of the century the vast preponderance of time was still devoted to the basic skills. In the next half-century somewhat more practical subjects made their way into the program, and these also reduced the allotment of time to the three R's. But even then more than half of the educational career of an elementary school child was devoted to these so-called "fundamentals."7

Education in the United States, however, took a different turn from that of the European countries. Whereas European nations provided for educating only a select few for various occupations and professions, the United States early began to provide education for the masses; all the children of all the people. This new conception of education brought new problems which made a cleavage between the essentialists and the more progressive thinkers in the field of education. Bagley very strongly takes the side of the essentialists in an article published in 1938. He says:

Public education in the United States is appallingly weak and ineffective in many ways. The average pupil of our elementary school does not meet

7Rugg, op. cit., p. 141.
the standards of achievement in the fundamentals of education that are attained in the elementary schools of many other countries.

Bagley ascribes this situation to educational theories that have sprung up in the country. Under the necessity which confronted America in educating the masses, there was a loosening of standards and a relaxation of discipline in teaching. The theories which emphasized interest, freedom, immediate needs, personal experience, psychological organization, and pupil initiative took root and tended to discredit and even condemn their opposites -- effort, discipline, remote goals, race experience, logical sequence, and teacher initiative.

There has been, he says, a complete abandonment in many school systems of rigorous standards of scholastic achievement as a condition of promotion from grade to grade. There has been a disparagement of the system and sequence of learning and a dogmatic denial of any value in the logical, chronological, and casual relationships of learning materials.

Bagley also condemned the "activity movement" as applied to all of the grades in school. He said that the activity movement is an outgrowth of the so-called "project method," which in its turn was an effort to find problems or

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9Ibid.
vital purposes in the solution of which desirable learning could be effected. This movement, Bagley stated, has an important place and a central function in a primary school, and a very useful supplementary function on all educational levels.\textsuperscript{10}

Bagley also decried the increasingly heavy emphasis upon the "social studies." He said that there must be a firm foundation of human institutions, or of an acquaintance with present and pressing social problems, especially in the light of their genesis, or of an acquaintance with such principles of economics, sociology, and political sciences as had been established.\textsuperscript{11}

The word "established" is symbolic of the creed of the essentialists. Bagley speaks of "principles" as established facts, and he thinks these should be the basis of education. In other words, there are educational values which must be used to steer by, regardless of their immediate interest or value to the pupil. With these things in mind, it is now possible to survey education under the guidance of the essentialist's philosophy and determine some facts about the aims, methods, and the curricula of the traditional or essentialist school.

The aims of the essentialists have not varied to any great extent from those of the pragmatists or progressives.\textsuperscript{10,11}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 246. \hfill \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 248.
The main differences have been found in the ultimate ends of education to be achieved; that is, in the time element involved. In the main, the essentialist's viewpoint has been that education is preparation for adult life. Rugg very forcefully stated this view when he was discussing the conception of education prevalent in the first schools of this country:

1. Education is what takes place in a schoolhouse, five hours a day, aloof from the community and national life which created it; that is, being educated and going to school are synonymous.
2. Education is something you do before you enter your lifework. It is preparation for life. For some children this preparation will last only six or eight years; for others, twelve; for the select few, from sixteen to eighteen or more. But for all it is a getting ready, not a doing now.12

As stated before in this study, this idea of education as a preparation for adult life had been passed on from primitive days. There are certain ideals, certain objectives, that need to be attained or reached, but they are to be used in adult life. These ideals and objectives are already formulated and can be presented in the schoolroom without any concrete activities with which to work them out. The essentialist holds that there are certain laws, certain fundamental principles, and certain knowledge that are necessary for adult activities. This knowledge must be imparted to the growing child regardless of its interests or aptitudes and the degree to which the knowledge will enter into the

12Rugg, op. cit., p. 125.
child's own life scheme. If the educative process is rigorous and demanding, the results will be better. Children need discipline, and the labor involved in the learning process is valuable as a disciplinary factor.

Under the essentialist philosophy of education, the main aims of education might be summed up as follows:

1. The child should be trained for adult activities.
2. There are certain "musts" that must be taught regardless of their interest or value to the child.
3. Children need mental discipline; the studies in school should help provide this discipline.
4. Children should be trained for the duties of citizenship.

The discipline theory of education and the necessity for teaching certain "must" subjects have colored teaching methods in the schools. Working on the theory that mental discipline is a character builder and that skills learned in one operation may be transferred to another, the early schools put a great deal of stress on memory work and difficult analytical problems. Mathematics was taught as a pure abstract science, writing as a disciplinary analytic process, and reading as an art of acquiring skill and mastery over words. Few activities were engaged in by the pupils in the schoolroom, and the mind or reason was the chief medium exploited. Study was confined mostly to lectures and to the information contained between the covers of textbooks.
It is only fair to add that the many changes that have taken place in education within the last few decades have materially affected the methods of teaching. Although the essentialist still holds to his fundamental principles, the new activity program has had its influence on teaching methods. Shields, one of the foremost of the essentialist philosophers of today, makes this comment on the changes that have occurred:

The recognition of the reign of law has brought into existence in our own day a large varied group of sciences, and it has profoundly modified many of the older sciences. But nowhere else does the recognition of the reign of law demand so complete a change of attitude as in the school. Every subject taught must be presented in a new way and be clothed with new interest. In fact, the very meaning of the term education has undergone a profound change. The teacher has ceased to be a mere purveyor of facts; his function is to minister to the growing mind, to guide the complex forces of development that are taking place in the minds and hearts of the pupils. He has come to realize that the process of education as it takes place in the minds of the pupils is a vital process which is governed in all its phases by the laws of life and mind. The recognition of the reign of law in the realm of mental life has brought home to the educator the realization that his power over the processes of development in the minds and hearts of his pupils must always remain in direct proportion to his knowledge of the laws of life and mind that govern these processes.13

In this statement Shields recognizes the changes that have taken place in the essentialist's conception of education. Interest instead of discipline comes to the fore as the motivating influence; the teacher takes on a new function

instead of being a "purveyor of facts"; and there is a de-
mand for trained teachers who know the laws of life and
mind as well as the facts assembled in textbooks. But it is
strongly apparent that there is no surrender on the part of
Shields as to the fundamentals of education: in his dis-
cussion, he puts particular emphasis on the "reign of law."

Another development in the changes that have occurred
in the essentialist's early conception of education is that
of scholastic dualism. This philosophy is fundamentally
dualistic. Brubacher defines it in this way:

Time and change characterize the order of na-
ture. God himself is changeless and eternal.
Novelty, so evident in the natural order, turns
out to be only apparent when viewed from the stand-
point of an immutable eternity. Individuality,
likewise, is accidental and merely an instance of
an entirely complete reality. Indeed God could not
be omniscient and omnipotent if He were to grow or
learn, if He did not both antedate and postdate
time, and if there were anything that could be novel
to Him.

With such premises granted, it is easy to under-
stand why many educators insist on essentialism.
What is fixed and unalterable through all time is un-
deniably essential. It justifies any educator in
holding to certain unwavering educational objectives.
Furthermore, it is sufficient warrant for a pre-
scribed curriculum. Educational values which partake
of an immutable character remove any difficulty from
selecting a program of minimum essentials.14

Brubacher, in this instance, touches upon one of the
strong principles of the essentialists -- a prescribed cur-
riculum. From the early days, when the three R's were the
"must" subjects, down the present trend to today, when a

wide variety of subject matter has been introduced, the essentialist has thought it necessary to prescribe a certain course of study or certain subjects. Since these subjects were the presentation of truths or principles already discovered, classified, and catalogued, it is possible to outline a definite course of study embracing the things needed to be taught. The course of study may not even be remotely connected with the child's daily activities or the problems of his own region, but the essentialist feels that it should be prescribed nevertheless. This philosophy of education furnishes the basis for the training of teachers to carry out the prescribed curriculum. Shields says:

The teacher seeks for the meaning of the educative process as it takes place in the mind of the pupil and for the goal toward which it should be directed. He must turn to the same source for the fundamental principles which should guide in the selection and arrangement of the materials for the curriculum in the various stages of the educative process and for the educative values of the different disciplines to be employed.15

Shields' use of the phrase, "the meaning of the educative process as it takes place in the mind of the pupil," is of especial significance. It clearly enunciates the premises on which the essentialist bases his philosophy in spite of the changes that have been made.

In a subsequent chapter an effort will be made to present some concrete evidence of the essentialist's educational

15Shields, op. cit., p. 21.
viewpoint as it has affected education. Aims, methods of teaching, and the curriculum will be illustrated, and an attempt will be made to show how these things stemmed from the original philosophy found in this statement: There are some subjects that are essential for the truths they present. They must be learned regardless of the interest they hold, or do not hold, for the pupil or the relationship that they bear to his community and daily activities.
CHAPTER IV

CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF THE INFLUENCE OF PRAGMATISM ON THE AIMS, METHODS, AND CURRICULA OF THE SCHOOLS

In Chapter II of this study it was stated that it was believed that pragmatism had materially affected the aims, methods, and content of the curriculum since its introduction by James in 1898. Believing this, the writer has made a study of the aims, of the methods of teaching, and of the content of the curriculum during the last few decades. The results of this study are presented in this chapter. It is thought that they are significant in this study.

(The aims of educators, as expressed in books and educational publications, reflect, to some extent, the prevalent educational philosophy of any time.) An analysis of educational aims since 1900 should give some indication of the educational philosophy of the period.

In 1918 Inglis formulated three objectives for secondary education. The three are:

1. The Social-Civic Aim, or the preparation of the individual as a prospective citizen and cooperating member of society.
2. The Economic-Vocational Aim, or the preparation of the individual as a prospective worker and producer.
3. The Individualistic-Avocational Aim, or the preparation of the individual for those activities
which, while primarily involving individual action, the utilization of leisure, and the development of personality, are of great importance to society.¹

These aims, it will be noticed, are still directed primarily at preparation for adult life. However, they list specific objectives, such as the wise use of leisure time, and they include practical training for the worker and the producer. They are not "hard-and-fast" or "cut-and-dried" aims, but constitute broad aims involving growth and the continued development of the individual. As a social unit, each worker is at the same time a citizen, a worker, and a relatively independent personality.²

In 1924 a committee appointed by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools presented in its report the following aims of education:

1. To maintain health and fitness.
2. To use leisure time in right ways.
3. To engage successfully in vocational activities.
4. To sustain successfully certain definite relationships such as domestic, community, civic, and the like.

The above aims indicate not only a concept of education as growth, but also an increasing emphasis on additional subject matter besides the fundamental tool subjects. It is apparent, also, that there is not so much stress placed on education for some future use, but the aims are expressed in the present; in other words, the aim of physical health

¹Alexander Inglis, Principles of Secondary Education, p. 368.
and fitness is not deferred until the child reaches adult stages, but is directed toward his childhood state as well.

Bobbitt stresses the activity phase of education in his stated aims. He says the objectives of education are all the activities which ought to make up the totality of human life from birth to death. His aims are:

1. Language activities; social intercommunication.
2. Health activities.
3. Citizenship activities.
4. General social activities -- meeting and mingling with others.
5. Spare-time activities, amusements and recreation.
6. Keeping one's self mentally fit -- analogous to the health activities for keeping one's self physically fit.
7. Religious activities.
8. Parental activities, the upbringing of children, the maintenance of a proper home life.
9. Unspecialized or non-vocational practical activities.
10. The labors of one's calling. 3

In this summation, Bobbitt shows that education should be a continual process of growth, of readjustment to changing conditions. Education is not only for adult life; it is for the child's needs and benefits and extends on beyond the school into life. The activities comprising education, it may be seen, are not limited, but comprise all those which ought to make up the whole scale of human existence.

Based on the analysis of purposes proposed by twenty-five leaders in education, Koos in 1927 formulated four aims

3Franklin Bobbitt, How to Make a Curriculum, pp. 8-9.
of secondary education. They are:

1. The civic-social-moral responsibility.
2. Physical efficiency.
3. Recreational and aesthetic participation and appreciation.

These aims are broad, but they cover a wide field of activities. The civic-social-moral responsibility would necessitate training in the fundamental skills, and the remaining three aims are additional activities not given much stress in the traditional schools.

Touton, in collaboration with graduate students, stated the aims of secondary schools in terms of the activities in which pupils should be directed, for the purpose of:

1. Developing physical fitness.
2. Applying fundamental processes to scientific and social phenomena.
3. Discovering interests and aptitudes.
4. Using native capacities to the maximum.
5. Preparing for economic independence and advanced training.
6. Participating in diversified aesthetic and recreational activities.
7. Evolving high standards of conduct in personal and group life.
8. Contributing to worthy home life.

Two of the above aims are worthy of especial attention: "using native capacities to the maximum" and "discovering interests and aptitudes." These indicate a reaching out beyond the traditional school subjects to a large degree and a wide range of activities.

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The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in 1918 made a comprehensive survey of the aims of education at that time, and formulated the following seven, which have become known as the "seven cardinal principles in education":

2. Command of fundamental processes.
3. Vocation.
4. Worthy home membership.
5. Citizenship.
7. Ethical character.\(^6\)

These aims, it will be seen, are about the same as all the others which have been listed. While they do not include any which the traditional educator would not have advocated, they do show that subjects centered upon the realization of these aims have been included in the regular school curriculum. The essentialist held these objectives as general aims, but the methods of achieving them were far different and much less specific than those favored by the progressives today.

The methods used by progressive educators indicate some of the changes that have been made. The teaching of English is a good example of the new type of methods. Specifically, the main aims of the teaching of English are to acquire ability to think, to read, to speak, and to write. Weeks analyzes three main divisions of English, as follows:

I. Speaking:
   Informal conversation.
   Giving directions.
   Making explanations.
   Telephoning.
   Speaking before an audience.
   Formal and informal debating.
   Declamation of memorized material.
   Speaking as a character in a drama.

II. Reading:
   Oral:
      Reading aloud to others (informally).
      Formal reading to an audience.
   Silent:
      To gain information.
      For entertainment.

III. Writing:
   Friendly letter.
   Business letter.
   Description, narration of an event, persuasion,
   and conviction.
   Creative writing, free writing, or experimental
   writing.\(^7\)

An analysis of the above elements of the English sub-
ject shows that activities and practices dominate the pro-
gram. There is but little of the purely mental element
involved. The pupils engage in activities that give them
actual practice in the use of English.

These activities in English are not confined to the Eng-
lish class alone. English is used as a medium of expres-
sion in all school activities; therefore, English is co-
ordinated with the other subjects in the curriculum. It is
not taught as a separate entity, far removed from all other
subjects, but as an active part of all subjects. Bent and
Kronenberg show in the following outline how English can

\(^7\)Ruth Mary Weeks, "A Correlated Curriculum," Report
of the Committee on Correlation of the National Council
of Teachers of English, p. 81.
be coordinated with a study of man's basic needs:

1 and 2. Food and shelter:
   a. The utility of language in barter, trade, commerce.
   b. Reading and writing various types of agreements and contracts.

3 and 4. Transportation and communication:
   a. Origin and nature of language.
   b. Development of language.
   c. Function of language.
   d. Language difficulties in migration.
   e. Skill in writing various types of messages: telegraph, letters.
   f. Oral communication: social, telephone calls, public speaking.
   g. Reading various types of records: bills, notes, bonds.
   h. Makeup and organization of a book.
   i. The library and its use.
   j. Development of vocabulary.

5. Cooperation:
   a. Reading newspapers and periodicals, especially articles concerning political parties, international relationships, and cooperation between groups.

6. Passing on our heritage:
   a. Literature of various types: history, biography, historical novel, old records, and documents.
   b. Ballads, legends, folklore.

7. Mental, spiritual, and cultural life:
   a. Appreciation of literature and the drama as arts and creation.
   b. Contributions to literature through religious motives.
   c. Literature for recreation and leisure.  

This outline merely indicates some of the possibilities in the use of English. It is apparent that the one subject closely touches every other subject, and that activities or practices of varying kinds are used to give the pupils skill in reading, writing, and speaking English.

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Methods of teaching the social studies have also materially changed. In fact, the lists of subjects included in "social studies" have radically changed. History is the oldest of the subjects so listed, and as late as 1907 was the only subject taught to any extent in this classification. Although there is much variation and a wide range in the social studies, the most common ones taught today, together with their usual grade placement, are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Early American history, geography, civics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recent American history, civics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Civics, ancient and medieval history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>World history, modern history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>American history, economics, social problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>American history, problems of democracy, economics, sociology, American government.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Sexson, the major functions of society, upon which the social-studies program must be based, are:

2. Production and consumption of food, shelter, and clothing.
3. Transportation of goods, services, people, and ideas.
4. Recreation.
5. Expression of aesthetic impulses, such as art, music, and literature.
6. Religion.

These things, of course, will differ somewhat from place to place. Bent and Kronenberg say:

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9Edgar Bruce Wesley, Teaching the Social Studies, p. 136.

The objectives of all education and the more specific objectives of the social studies should be the major basis; but certain conditioning factors as the ability, maturity, and past experiences of the pupils, the limitations of the school calendar, library and equipment, and the local social setting and conditions in international relations will modify and influence the selection of the social-studies content.\textsuperscript{11}

Under this conception of education, it would be impossible to formulate a cut-and-dried curriculum for all the schools in the country. Nations change, geographical and political conditions vary, and physical items of school plants differ. The present-day social-studies curriculum is planned to carry out activities based on different needs and capacities.

Science is becoming increasingly important in the field of education today. Because of the great advances in scientific knowledge and the industrial changes resulting, science is influencing more and more the life of the average individual. If education is to consist of all the activities that ought to make up life, then science should certainly have a large part in the classroom activities. According to Bent and Kronenberg, science makes a contribution to health, worthy home membership, worthy use of leisure time, command of fundamental processes, vocational efficiency, and citizenship. Health is improved through a knowledge of the laws of sanitation, hygiene, and some knowledge of the

\textsuperscript{11}Bent and Kronenberg, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 245.
human body; purchasing, consuming, getting and preparing a pure food supply contribute to worthy home membership; and wise use of leisure time is made possible by scientific diversions such as photography, radio, amateur chemistry laboratories, or small telescopes. Vocationally, there are hundreds of fields requiring some scientific background: mechanics, machinery, aviation, radio, photography, and electricity, to name a few. These things cannot be taught by the textbook method, but must be translated into activity in order for them to become a part of the working knowledge of the people. Again Bent and Kronenberg are quoted:

The content of the general science course should be built around problems with a social background without regard for subject-matter divisions in science. . . . Biology should stress health and sanitation, not by teaching the names of parts of the body as was done in former courses of physiology, but by developing health habits, and creating attitudes and respects for a sound mind and body.

The next step in advance is to have more than one year of general science and to abolish biology as a separate course. Science should begin in the elementary school and be a continuous, articulated course through the ninth grade required of all pupils. This plan would call for three years of science extending through the junior high school. The broad general topics should be built around transportation, communication, food, shelter, clothing, fuels, machines in the home, safety on the highways, sanitation, preventive medicine, plant and animal life, and the physical world in which we live. The course should be made functional and practical by developing concepts, by helping pupils make applications, and by relating the content of the curriculum to the present life of the pupils. 12

12 Ibid., pp. 251-252.
This conception of the teaching of science necessarily takes into consideration individual communities and needs. Once again it is apparent that there could be no cut-and-dried curriculum for all of the schools in this subject.

Mathematics is one of the original three R's stressed so strongly in the traditional schools. With the exception of the fundamental skills and operations of arithmetic, mathematics was formerly regarded as a pure abstract science separated from its natural setting. The subject was formal and was studied only by those who enjoyed abstract relationships. Later, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry were added to the mathematics curriculum. In recent years, many educators have challenged the continued teaching of algebra and geometry to students who will never have occasion to use the sciences outside of the classroom. Several attempts have been made to reorganize mathematics in order to make it more interesting, and to give it greater utilitarian value. These are based on a number of guiding principles, which are:

1. The fundamental skills can be learned in the first six years of the elementary school. In the junior high school pupils need practice and use of the skills learned, plus the addition of new skills.
2. Mathematics should be as informal as possible.
3. Mathematics should not be taught as an end in itself, but as a means to an understanding of present environment. It should not be considered as a tool.
4. A wide variety of mathematics should be introduced to each pupil for social utility and exploratory value.
5. Continuity should be maintained and stressed. Subject matter begun in one year should extend through several years with varied applications.

6. In large schools more than one kind of mathematics should be offered.

7. Intuitive geometry with a few formal demonstrations should be taught in the lower grades and the demonstrative retained until the senior high school.

8. College preparatory mathematics should be eliminated from the ninth grade, and offered only in the senior high school -- grades 10 to 12.

9. More arithmetic should be taught in the high school.

10. Vertical, or conventional, organization of subject matter should not be held sacred.13

From this discussion, it is apparent that the content of the mathematics courses should be functional, practical, and centered about the needs and interests of the pupils. The content should be selected from the actual environment of the pupils and should be based as much as possible on their interests. Actual situations involving the problems to be learned should be presented. If these things are done, it is clear that a "hard-and-fast" curriculum for all the schools cannot be made for mathematics.

There has been little discussion in this study of the part of the teacher in the new conception of education. Bent and Kronenberg give a very pertinent discussion of a mathematics teacher, and this is added here, for it sheds light on the aims of the teaching of mathematics:

One of the first attributes of a well-qualified teacher is a knowledge of subject matter. One cannot teach what he does not know, but knowledge of subject matter alone is not sufficient. Teachers of mathematics

should have a broad training involving all the subjects in which applications will be made. They should have the right attitude toward the place of mathematics in the secondary school. They should view it, not as a body of rules, formulas, tables, graphs, and principles to be learned, but as a language, a method of thinking, a medium through which social and economic institutions and our physical world can be better understood. They should have a knowledge of the functional concepts as a method of thinking, and have a storehouse of applications involving relationships. Their knowledge of social and economic institutions, science, music, and art should be sufficient to show the interrelationship and contributions mathematics has made in these fields and teachers should be able to apply mathematics to problems in them.14

Mathematics, conceived in the light expressed in the above quotation, has both cultural and utilitarian values. It is a part of the social background. The formal skills and discipline of mathematics will be treated as means to an end, and not an end in themselves. Likewise, mathematics will not be considered as a tool, but as a medium for understanding relationships. Through meeting expressed needs, pupils will realize mathematical values; where there is no felt need, there will be no sense of value.

These examples of the aims, methods, practices, and content of the curriculum of the more progressive school of educational philosophy reveal that a great many changes have taken place in education since James made his speech on pragmatism. There is no intention on the part of the writer to ascribe all the changes that have been made to pragmatism, but it is felt that an unprejudiced survey of

14 Ibid., p. 266.
the present-day curricula with their many activities will show that a major part of these activities are "practices" designed to aid the growth and development of the pupils in a concrete way. There is a feeling that the new education has turned away, to a large extent, from verbal solutions toward concreteness and adequacy and facts. No definite information has been discovered showing that education has turned away from fixed principles, such as natural laws, but there is a marked tendency toward investigation and "practices" leading toward the formation of individual opinions along these lines. In other words, under the influence of the pragmatists of the progressives, education has become an attempt to adjust the child to his environment and to enable him to live a more complete life from youth to old age.
CHAPTER V

CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF THE INFLUENCES OF ESSENTIALISM ON THE AIMS, METHODS, AND CURRICULA OF THE SCHOOLS

An examination of the aims of some of the early educators and some of the modern ones who hold to the essentialist's view of education should be significant in this study. Through them a more complete understanding may be gained of the formal-discipline method of teaching.

Socrates, the earliest of the educational philosophers, believed that virtue is knowledge and can be taught.\(^1\) The main knowledge that man needs is of himself. Socrates' method of teaching, however, was by lectures. He did not suggest any activities for learning the nature of virtue or the composition of man's nature; instead, he presented abstract truths already formulated which were to be accepted as such.

Plato believed that virtue is knowledge and that the exalted virtues, wisdom and justice, were not acquired by exercise, but by reflection. Practical arts were not as valuable as a study of mathematics, music, and dialectics. Activities, though, had no place in Plato's scheme of

education; reflection, or the use of the mind, was the only element involved.\(^2\)

The educational aims of the early Christians were to prepare the people for a life after death; in this respect, the mind was again the most important element involved. Emphasis was placed on morality and knowledge of the scriptures, together with certain attitudes and doctrines to further the beliefs of various groups.\(^3\) There was no effort to discover new truths or to engage in practical athletics; the truths that men needed to know were already established and laid down in the scriptures. What education there was was exceedingly formal. Later, educational aims included the preparation of the clergy for their work. Cathedral schools were established in which the chief study was grammar as a preparation for Latin, the language used in the church and in the practice of law. While the aim was utilitarian in this respect, the methods used to obtain results did not include practical activities, but the exercise of the mind. This education, too, was not intended to function for the masses, but only for a select few of the upper classes of the people who normally entered the professions.

The Latin-grammar school was one of the sixteenth-century institutions. Although it was often spoken of as a single-subject school, since Latin was the chief subject,

\(^2\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 16.}\)
\(^3\text{Eby and Arrowood, op. cit., pp. 14-15.}\)
such other subjects as ethics, history, and literature were taught through the medium of Latin. Pupils were also expected to read the Bible, attend church, and report on the sermons. Writing was sometimes taught in the grammar schools, as well as Greek, Hebrew, and English. Instruction was given by lectures, and there were few activities except exercising the mind.

By the close of the sixteenth century, the Latin schools had begun to decline in Europe, but they were among the earliest schools established in the United States. College-entrance examinations at Harvard, one of the first American colleges, required that the prospective student be able to read classical Latin at sight, speak true Latin in verse and prose, and decline nouns in Greek. Latin was essential in the secondary schools if the pupils were to continue their studies in college. English was not considered very important, for the classics, the chief item of study, were written in Latin, and the vernacular in any country was considered vulgar.

The aims of education, it is apparent, influenced the type of schools, the methods of instruction, and the curricula. Education was a training ground for adult life; the facts that adults show know had already been established, and there was naught for the pupil to do except learn what

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had already been laid down. Under these circumstances, it was possible for the educators to determine a set course of study, and then to work out a system of instruction that would apply to all.

In the early elementary school, the three R's were the fundamental studies required. In the secondary schools, English, history, mathematics, and geography were the principal subjects. A survey of some of the methods used in the early schools will be pertinent here. Rugg says:

English grammar consisted of "analysis" and "parsing." The disciplinary conception of education showed itself in the implied assumption that if children knew the rules of correct speech they would speak correctly. Instead of being surrounded with an atmosphere of correct speech and being permitted to talk much and write much about many things, they were taught the "parts of speech." They learned to recognize these parts, and they mastered the intricacies of form; they studied day in and day out how number and tense should agree, and how the various ways of writing should measure up to practice forms. But most of their normal speech was untaught and uncriticised. 5

Under this conception of instruction, the children did not engage in any activities to any extent except those of a mental nature. Writing, of necessity, was a part of this instruction, but this was incidental; where writing could have been integrated with the English, each study was regarded as a separate, distinct division. In this connection, Swett makes some pertinent remarks:

Bear in mind that the main object of the study of grammar is not so much to enable pupils to write

5Rugg, op. cit., p. 142.
and speak correctly as to enable them better to understand what they read. A knowledge of grammar is essential to a right appreciation of the masterpieces of literature. With more advanced pupils, the right study of grammar is a means of mental discipline fully equal to that of mathematics. 6

Being able to understand the printed word, then, was the main end of teaching grammar. The child, seemingly, had no practical use for the written word in daily activities, but needed it to understand the classical masterpieces. A very interesting comment is made by Tynhall concerning the methods of instruction in language. He says:

I hold that the proper study of language is an intellectual discipline of the highest kind. The piercing through the involved and inverted sentences of Paradise Lost; the linking of the verb to its often distant nominative, of the relative to its distant antecedent, of the agent to the object of the transitive verb, of the preposition to the noun or pronoun which it governed; the study of variations in mood and tense; the transformations often necessary to bring out the true grammatical structure of a sentence -- all this to my mind is a discipline of the highest value, and, indeed, a source of unflagging delight. 7

These illustrations show that the early school had little recognition of the utilitarian as well as the cultural values of English grammar and English literature.

Similarly, arithmetic consisted almost altogether of the perfection of skill in adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing integers and fractions. Practice was given to the manipulation of elaborate and complicated sets of numbers and fractions that no child would ever encounter

6 John Swett, Methods of Teaching, p. 154.

7 Quoted from Swett, op. cit., p. 154.
after leaving the arithmetic class. For example, Swett, in his directions to teachers for teaching arithmetic (1880), suggests the following examples:

1. How many geographical miles in 180 degrees of longitude on the equator?
2. From the north to the south pole the distance is 180 degrees. How many statute miles?
3. How many statute miles in length is the equator?
4. London is 50 degrees N. L.; how many statute miles from the equator?

These problems were not in any way related to the lives of the pupils. The emphasis was on mechanics rather than upon interpretation and understanding. It was assumed that skill in the use of numerical techniques could be abstracted from "life situations" and developed apart. By some mysterious process the children were supposed to be able to transfer their skill in figuring the length of the equator to some necessary measurement in their everyday lives.

History is the oldest of the separate subjects now forming the composite known as the social studies. It has been taught in the schools since the sixteenth century. Bunt and Kronenberg give the following report on the teaching of history and how it has developed:

In the Latin grammar school history was taught incidentally through the medium of Latin, but it was a separate subject in the academies. In Franklin's academy the curriculum included "history, universal and national with chronology, ancient customs, morality, religion, and politics." The Massachusetts law of 1827 prescribed United States

\[\text{Swett, op. cit., p. 228.}\]
history for all high schools, and history other than United States for all larger cities. . . . In the report of the Committee of Ten, N. E. A. (1893), a committee appointed in 1896 by the American Historical Association, and the Committee of Five, 1907, the social studies other than history were almost neglected.  

The content of the history subject matter, though, was encyclopedic and consisted of the military history of the Old World with a little supplementary material concerning American history. Political history was dominated by the recital of names of rulers and other officials, dates of battles, legislative statutes, and constitutional provisions. When civics was added to the history material, it consisted mostly of naming various forms of government and government officials and of learning the rights and duties of departments and officials. Little or no attention was given to the way the government actually worked. The curriculum-makers wanted youth to understand the American ideal of government, but they thought that memorization of the structure of political government would bring the desired understanding and participation. Rugg has this comment:

It is not an exaggeration to say that learning, even in the social studies, was of the same memoriter nature as in the so-called skills. Children learned map locations by repetitiously placing location facts on blank maps. They learned the chronology of American civilization by memorizing verbatim the connection between a political event and the year in which it happened. There was no rich experimental contact with the location of cities, regions, lines of trade, markets, crucial deposits of fuel, and the like. Nor was there even an introduction to social trends and movements.  

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9Bent and Kronenberg, op. cit., p. 238.
10Rugg, op. cit., p. 147.
A number of new subjects were added to the curriculum in the 1870's and the 1880's. All sorts of interests -- mostly practical -- clamored for a place and were gradually added to the curriculum. These subjects were manual arts, homemaking, social studies (economics and government), and vocational studies.\footnote{11} The strongest subject to be admitted was that of science. Prior to 1890 physiology and physical geography, chemistry, and botany, had made a place for themselves in the senior high school.

But did these new subjects contribute to a dynamic understanding of the physical environment and of how people live? Rugg says no.\footnote{12} Zoology abounded in technical terms and classifications of animals. Botany dealt with the anatomical structure of plant life. Knowledge of anatomical structure was valued above that of comprehension of the functioning of life. Physical geography, like botany and zoology, was an encyclopedic compendium of the features of the earth, rivers, oceans, mountains, and valleys.\footnote{13} Little was said or taught about local geography and its effects upon the lives of the pupils. In spite of the fact that the curriculum had been enriched by many additional subjects, the methods of teaching still stressed skill and memorizing ahead of any practical activities relating the new subjects to the lives or needs of the pupils.

\footnotesize\item[11] Ibid. \item[12] Ibid., pp. 148-149. \item[13] Ibid., p. 149.
A contributing factor of great importance to the stereotyped method of teaching has been the use of the textbook. Noah Webster's American Spelling Book in 1783 provided compact and organized material for two subjects, reading and spelling. Its popularity brought forth an epidemic of textbooks -- readers and primers, arithmetics, spellers, grammars, geographies, and histories. These textbooks, written by people of prominence in the field of education, presented the facts and skills which both teachers and pupils needed to know. For these reasons the books were readily adopted, and were followed closely in school practices. The teacher assigned so many pages in a textbook for the lesson; it was the duty of the child to learn the assigned material and report back to class on it.

Gradually, under the impetus of private textbook companies and energetic writers, the curriculum of the school expanded until in many places it became a bewildering mosaic of academic subjects. For more than a century the curricula of the American schools evolved by adding new subjects of study.

If these new subjects had been presented in a new way or integrated into the lives of the pupils, the development might have been worthwhile for education. But, as previously shown in this study, there was little change in the methods of teaching the new subjects: skills and memory work were

14 Ibid., p. 126.
stressed at the expense of creative learning. The curriculum was a body of facts and principles which man has discovered and which his children learn in the formal school.

The last sentence particularly stresses the part that the essentialist played in this scheme of education. Essentially conservative, he adhered to the theory of established truths or laws which might be taught by memory work or lectures; he eschewed activities as a part of the school program; and he adhered very closely to the textbooks in each particular study. Even with the remarkable changes that have ensued in the practices and theories of education since 1900, the essentialist today has not changed a great deal from the one of half a century ago. Bagley in his platform for essentialism in the schools of today asserts that the schools are weak; a condition that he attributes to a relaxation of discipline and to the inclusion of an activity program which has no central function except in the primary grades. Bagley still thinks that there are "must" educational values which should be given the children regardless of their interests or needs.\footnote{Bagley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 246.} The essentialist's creed still is "the reign of law." And there are few educators of today who will deny that the essentialists still wield a mighty influence upon the schools of the land. Too often the addition of subjects intended to broaden and enrich the curriculum and the lives of the people have been
so much added material and nothing more. Any teacher can relate the large extent to which textbooks are depended upon today. States prescribe by law the amount and number of subjects to be taught in the schools and then set up state courses of study. Some discretion is allowed the teachers, but more and more the states have tried to standardize the educational product that comes from their schools. Elaborate programs of activities have been outlined and definite goals set, but too often the teacher follows a set routine already established in some textbook. Essentialism is far from being an "extinct dodo" in the schools of today.

One final notation on the essentialist schools must be added. This concerns the teachers. Swett, writing in 1880, said that there seemed to be a popular opinion at that time that anybody who had been "educated" could teach school. There was no art of teaching, no science underlying the practice of teaching, and therefore no profession of teaching. In most parts of the country, the impression prevailed that anybody who could pass an examination and get a certificate was a duly qualified teacher and that no specific preparation was necessary other than personal experience derived from actual work in the schoolroom. Swett estimated that, at that time, there were about 300,000 teachers in the United States, of which not more than one
in ten was a graduate of a normal school. This condition has materially changed today, and regardless of the attitude of teachers -- essentialists or pragmatists -- the training of teachers has become a profession. Once again, however, the same criticism may be given the teacher-training institutions as that given the schools -- broad outlines of study with many activities are mapped and then the actual instruction follows closely the essentialist's philosophy of the reign of law and the subservience to a set method of procedure.

The aims, methods of teaching, and the curricula of the essentialist all reflect the underlying philosophy. The passage of time and the natural development have made many changes, but the essential doctrine still stands.

\[16\] Swett, op. cit., p. 1.
CHAPTER VI

COMPARISON OF THE PRAGMATIC EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY WITH
THE ESSENTIALIST EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Pragmatism is a comparatively recent conception of education. Its basic tenet is the efficacy of activities or "practices" in the field of education. For the pragmatist, knowledge is something which is learned from action. Truths are not already established, but are acknowledged as life teaches them. A problem arises. It is surveyed, and a possible hypothesis proposed. This hypothesis is then put to the test through action of some nature. Other activities are then undertaken in order to test the generality of the results of the first. If these activities yield satisfactory results and are in harmony with the social heritage, the problem has been satisfactorily solved. The participant has derived knowledge through trial and error.

The cardinal educational principle growing out of this method of solving problems is that the problem stem from the child's activities, his environment, and his interests. In this way the child will take an interest in what he is trying to do; he will feel the actual need for solving the problem; and he can understand and apply the knowledge that he works out for himself.
The pragmatist, then, does not accept cut-and-dried formulas for instilling facts and skills into the pupils. Instead, he roots his studies in the child's environment, interests, and aptitudes and examines the problems in the light of the information he has about them. Knowledge does not antedate learning, but develops as the project or problem unfolds. Because such a program implies change, it is called progressive.

On the other hand, essentialism is as old as the idea of education. It implies stability, conservatism, absolute established truths, and the idea of discipline through mental effort. There are some things, some truths in the universe which are fixed and unalterable. There are many educational values that are not so important as others, but there are some that are absolutely necessary. There are some essentials of education that the child must experience. If a curriculum is not prescribed altogether, at least a considerable part of it should be. The essential material may not concern life as it touches the child, it may not be drawn from his environment, it may not interest him, and it may never be utilized in his life; but he needs to know it. The discipline offered by and involved in the learning process will be character-building. Activities which increase the interest of the pupil in the learning process are necessary and permissible in the primary grades, but they are only valuable supplementary activities in the upper grades.
Under this conception of education, the essentialist has held that the curriculum of the school should be prescribed to a certain extent. There are certain materials that must be included within it. These materials must be learned, not so much through activities, but through study and mental work. The wholes are already set up, and the parts have only to be determined out of these wholes. Education is not so much a process of growth, but a period of preparation for adult life. Education is a process of acquiring skill and mastery over words, mathematical signs, and so on.

Different as these conceptions of education are, it is strange that the aims of the two schools of thought do not vary more. But the aims are not far different. The old Greeks stressed the development of good citizenship, good health, and high morals. These aims are still the aims of the most modern progressive educators. The main differences have been in the practices used to accomplish these aims.

The pragmatist, or the progressive educator, has favored the problem method of achieving educational aims. He has held that knowledge of how to solve one problem may be transferred to any number of other problems. In other words, if a child learns to isolate a problem, secures information about its different angles, and then initiates activities tending to prove or disprove his theory of how to solve it,
he can do the same with any other problem. He will have a specific method of seeking knowledge. He will not take it for granted that two plus two equal four, but he will lay down two apples in a group and two in another group beside the first and then count to see if the entire group equals four. In other words, he learns through "practices." Education, then, is growth; the child learns how to live, not for the future alone but also for the present as it develops into the future.

The essentialist has depended a great deal upon the exercise of the mental powers so as to achieve the aims of education. Since he believes that there is essential material that the child should learn, it has been comparatively an easy process to set up a curriculum embracing this material and then require the child to learn it. A course of study for a school in Georgia will serve a school in Texas as well. The material must be learned and certain skills must be developed. Since the truths are already established, the child can read about them and memorize them without initiating any activities to verify or disprove the claims. Learning can be reduced to stereotyped methodical routine wherein the laws of exercise and repetition hold full sway. The method used was itself of educational value because of the mental discipline involved.

The differences in methods of teaching have resulted in wide differences in the curriculum and in the materials
of instruction. The pragmatist views the curriculum as all the activities of life engaged in by the individual from the cradle to the grave. In this respect, anything that concerns the life of the child is a part of the curriculum. All phases of the paraphernalia -- newspapers, magazines, radio talks, and programs -- that enter into the daily activities are utilized.

On the other hand, the curriculum, with the essentialist, has been a body of facts and principles which man has discovered and which his children learn in the formal school. These facts and principles are encompassed within the pages of textbooks and may be picked up or laid down at will. The material is not drawn from the local environment, the needs of the child or the community, but may be taken from a civilization thousands of years old. Where new subject matter has been added to the curriculum, the methods of teaching have consisted of memorizing dates and studying structures. Too often the new material has been so much more added material for memory work and analysis.

Fundamental differences, then, may be found in the educational philosophy of the pragmatist school of thought and of the essentialist school. These differences in philosophy have resulted in material differences in the methods of teaching and in the materials and curriculum of instruction.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

There could be but one conclusion to this study from the viewpoint of the teacher who conscientiously seeks to learn in order that she may better serve the children of the land: the two theories of educational philosophy, pragmatism and essentialism, differing widely as they do, are both essential in the scheme of education.

Without the progressives, there could be no progress. Without the conservatives, there would be no check to change, no safeguard against radical new ideas or practices. Merely because a thing is new does not mean that it is educationally valuable. At the same time the things that are old are not always void of value. Many practices of the past which have been tried and accepted are excellent, and should be kept; likewise, many are obsolete and should be discarded. Many progressive practices may be traced back to ancient times; they have merely been given new emphasis in recent years.

It is clear to educators— at least, the writer is disposed to feel that way—that there must be a beginning point from which a pragmatist begins his work. Some values
seem to have a very substantial degree of stability that might be relatively permanent. These should not be cast aside without sufficient evidence that they are no longer useful. There must be logical sequence in the presentation of subject matter, some point at which to aim. There must be some limits or ends that do not appear subject to further evolution. However, a pragmatist should possess an open mind at all times. Without some point by which to measure, the educator would find himself without any means by which to calculate progress. For example, the writing of a thesis involves a great many of these points. A problem is selected by a student involving the evaluation of the school in which he teaches. Unless the student sets up some criteria or finds some standard of measurement, he will not know how to evaluate his school or whether its educational practices are good or deleterious. In other words, he must have a standard of measurement of some kind -- a standard that will not shift and change as his study progresses. On the other hand, the student will be careful, by all means, to preserve an open mind, and be quick to utilize the trial-and-error method of investigation. It is not enough to reason about the whys and wherefores found in the situation, but concrete evidence should be presented, showing why a statement is or is not true.

Schools cannot be closed while they are being Remodeled. The instruction of youth must continue. Pragmatism, or the
use of practices to determine the truth of information, must proceed slowly and cautiously. Practice will lag behind theory, but this is as it should be. The study has shown that the essentialist’s theory of education has changed materially within the last half century. Interest is being advocated as a basis of learning, new methods of presentation have gradually been adopted, and a whole host of new material has been added to the curriculum. If the activity program has appeared to be slow in being taken up, there are signs, nevertheless, that progress is being made along these lines. If the progress that has been made in education within the last few years is any indication of that to come in the future, the people of the land may feel that the interests of the children will be in safe hands. With the pragmatists to point the way, and the essentialists to warn against too rapid progress or radical departures, the new education looms ahead as an alluring promise to those who have toiled to increase the educational opportunities of the children and to make it possible for them to have complete living.
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