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„Modernity” in Education around 1900\*)

In 1876 Harper & Brothers of New York published an anthology entitled *The First Century of the Republic*. The subtitle read: „A Review of American Progress.” The editor was the publicist Theodore Dwight Woolsey,<sup>1</sup> president of Yale University for many years and educated in Germany as a classical philologist. The publication’s title was also its agenda; it sought to review the first one hundred years of the first modern republic. This represented an opportunity that was too good for any publisher to miss, especially this one.<sup>2</sup> James and John Harper established their publishing house in 1817 and their first book was John Locke’s *Essay on Human Understanding*.

Not only is it a bold title, but many aspects of the book on the American progress are unusual. It does not open with a preface by the editor, but with a note entitled „publishers’ advertisement.” The note is not signed in the name of the Harper brothers, but with a reference to the publisher’s office, „Franklin Square, New York.” The editor, Woolsey, is not identified as such; his name simply appears as the first in the list of contributors on the frontispiece. His role as editor has thus been assumed.<sup>3</sup> The individual pages of the book are printed in two columns of closely spaced lines; the volume appears very dense and contains 506 pages, which does not suggest an easy reading.

In their introductory note, the Harper brothers wrote that the book was intended as a national „supplement” to the International Exhibition in Philadelphia. The book’s first sentence outlines its concern: „History, as it is usually written, touches only the state” (The First Century 1876, p. 7). The concept underlying the „supplement” was to be opposite. It was envisaged as a document of the social experience *of progress*, as recorded by a „thoughtful publicist.”

„His inquiries would relate rather to the part taken by the American people in the remarkable material progress of the last hundred years, - to their inventions, their manufactures, their development of the resources of the soil - agricultural and mineral, - their economical activity, their increase in population, their educational institutions,

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Dwight Woolsey (1809-1889) originated from New York and graduated from Yale University in 1820. Thereafter he studied law in Philadelphia and theology in Princeton. Between 1827 and 1830 he spent several semesters in Germany, studying Greek at the universities of Leipzig, Bonn and Berlin. In 1831 he was appointed professor of Greek by Yale University. Woolsey was elected the university’s president in 1846 and remained in office until 1871.

<sup>2</sup> In 1840 Harper & Brothers already reprinted a book on the first half of the century: *Georgia Scenes. Characters, Incidents &c. in the First Half of the Republic* That book by Augustus Baldwin Longstreet was first published in Augusta in 1835.

<sup>3</sup> In the reprint of *The First Century of the Republic* (Kissinger Publishing, October 2007), Woolsey even appears as the author.

their advancement in science and art, their literature, their humane enterprises, and their moral and religious culture; while in such a review he could not ignore the important political experiment undertaken by this people in the formation and maintenance of the union of states under a federal constitution” (ibid., p. 7/8).

Almost all of the papers of the book had earlier appeared in Harper’s Magazine. The International Exhibition in Philadelphia opened after a long delay on 10 May 1876. Prior to the opening, Harper’s Magazine published a series of articles that were guided by the concept indicated in the introductory note by the Harper Brothers, namely the experience of the American people, not of the state. Every area of social and technological development was understood to reflect progress; a *theory* of progress, as championed by positivism, was not necessary - only the American experience was relevant. The volume published in autumn 1876 contained papers by no fewer than 17 authors, each one of them male and evidently subscribing to the notion of „progress.”

The list of authors is impressive. Edward Knight, an engineer who had made himself a name as the author of technical books, wrote on the subject of „mechanical progress.” A paper on „progress in manufacture” was written by David Wells, an economist and journalist made popular by his textbooks. William Brewer, the first professor of agriculture at Yale University, wrote on „agricultural progress.” Among the other names are Austin Flint, the co-founder of Bellevue Medical College in New York; Theodore Gill, professor of zoology at George Washington University; and William Sumner, like Woolsey a Yale professor, who was a co-founder of American sociology and one of the foremost publicists of the time.

„Educational progress” was another of the book’s topics. The article was written by Eugene Lawrence, a journalist and illustrator employed by Harper’s Weekly, who worked mainly on pedagogic stories. In the seventies he became prominent with a series of polemic articles against the Catholic schools of New York (McAfee 1998). His article marking the centenary in 1876 refers to what he called the „American Plan of Education” (The First Century 1876, p. 280). This „plan” based on the federal structure of the educational system and the two principles of local organisation and self-government.

According to Lawrence, progress in education originated in Massachusetts, which he contrasts with the city of New York, where development had been very slow and was still faced with considerable resistance (ibid., p. 281). The same was true, but to a much greater extent, in the Union’s southern states, where progress was scant despite the era of Reconstruction (ibid., p. 287). But these differences, claimed Lawrence, merely reflected the state of the nation and „the spontaneous impulse of the people” (ibid., p. 288). It was beyond question that progress was being made and „with little direction from the general government” (ibid.).

Lawrence supported his claim with figures from the census of 1870: some 6 million pupils were enrolled in public schools and being educated by around 200,000 teachers, one-half of them women. There were 125,000 schools throughout the nation, in which 58 million dollars of taxes alone had been invested. The aggregate expenditure on schools was 64 million dollars, an amount that was proudly described by Lawrence as „nearly as great as the annual cost of a European army” (ibid.). „Progress” was simply the continuous increase in these figures.

Lawrence realized in a footnote that public spending on education had probably exceeded 70 million dollars a year at the time of writing his article - in 1875. Although the

expectation of permanent growth is naïve in terms of economy, the long-term education statistics show precisely that: expansion in every area. So the positivism of „progress” did not arise by chance, and constant progress provided the foundation of society’s acceptance of the public educational system. It *must* be „progressive.” What Lawrence claimed to be the goal, „a free and public education for all classes of the people” (ibid., p. 283), was pure Utopia in 1876 or, expressed more friendly, a promise of modernity. But, in a sense, school-development was driven by exactly that promise (Burke/Grosvernor 2008).

So my following observations begin by supporting the experience of progress. If „progress” is understood as a visible and well documented improvement, then the 19th century was the century of „educational progress.” World Fairs symbolized it (1). But figures give no indication of cause. „Progress” is not driven by a historical law, as assumed by positivists and disciples of Hegel, from Marx to Spencer. „Progress” in education is, first of all, wholly singular and tied to specific places. I will illustrate this thesis in my second step by two very distant examples (2). Another question is what was to be considered „modern” in education. I will thirdly discuss schools that called themselves „modern.” They were not of one kind, sometimes part of movements and mostly short-lived (3).

### 1. *World Fairs, School Quality and Progress in Education*

Thirty seven nations took part in the first international exhibition to take place on American soil. President Ulysses Grant opened the event in Philadelphia. The exhibits were displayed in more than 200 buildings of various size. Over 10 million visitors attended the exhibition at a time when the United States’ population totalled 46 million. Telephones, the first typewriter and an enormous steam engine, all of which were perceived by the public as sensations, were on show in the Machinery Hall. The architect and chief organiser of the exhibition was Hermann Joseph Schwarzmann, a German military officer from Munich,<sup>4</sup> who had been living in Philadelphia for nine years and had been involved earlier in designing Fairmount Park.<sup>5</sup>

Schwarzmann was sent to Vienna by the Centennial Commission to study the design of the international exhibition held there in 1873. After the Great Exhibition in London in 1850, which was the first World Fair, these events had presented not only works of industry, but also innovations in education. An international public was thus acquainted with the progress being made in various fields of education. In Vienna, the school garden was regarded as a special pedagogical innovation, which had a lasting influence on the discussion of reform. The exhibition in Vienna put on view a rural school garden together with an „Austrian model school,” both conceived by Erasmus Schwab, a *Gymnasium* school teacher and later

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<sup>4</sup> Hermann Joseph Schwarzmann (1846-1891) was the son of the royalist painter, Joseph Anton Schwarzmann (1806-1890) of Munich. Hermann entered the Bavarian Military Academy at the age of 14, where he was educated in engineering science. After Bavaria’s defeat at the hands of Prussia, he attended Munich University and, in 1868, emigrated to the United States. He was recruited to assist with the development of Fairmount Park in Philadelphia and became the project’s chief gardener. In 1874 he took charge of planning the exhibition. Although not a formally educated architect, he designed two of the principal buildings, the Memorial Hall and the Horticultural Hall.

<sup>5</sup> The development of the municipal park began with its foundation in 1855.

school inspector from Bohemia.<sup>6</sup> The first public school garden was created in 1856 in Schwäbisch-Hall as part of the *Arbeitsschulbewegung* in Germany.<sup>7</sup> The didactic proposition was that regular work in the garden, apart from providing food, would foster students' manual skills and their ability to accept responsibility.

Educational innovation also formed part of the exhibition programme in Philadelphia, including the kindergarten and the work school or *Arbeitsschule*, each plainly rooted in Europe. The still young kindergarten movement had its own pavilion, called the Kindergarten Cottage, which presented the first public model kindergarten on a stage. Visitors were able to see how a group of boys and girls, sitting in a circle, were being taught by two kindergarten teachers. Leading the presentation was Ruth Burritt, who had been engaged by the Froebel Society of Boston for three days a week to illuminate the new principles of education in a kindergarten. A group of orphans demonstrated how they played, sang and engaged in physical activity, and how Froebel's gifts or *Spielgaben* were applied in the kindergarten.<sup>8</sup>

The second innovation concerned the work school, or the principle of practice-based learning at school. The concept of the work school was extended to the High School by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Its founder and second president, John Runkle,<sup>9</sup> modified the engineering curriculum in favour of practice-based learning or manual training. The International Exhibition in Philadelphia provided evidence. One of the workshops showed that manual training can be applied in higher education as well. The Russian manual training educationalist, Victor Karlovich Della-Vos,<sup>10</sup> showed examples from the Polytechnical Institute in Moscow to demonstrate how general education and vocational training could be integrated to the advantage of both. Runkle attended the demonstration and from then on became a proponent of the „Russian system” of polytechnical education.

As director of the Imperial Technical School in Moscow, Della-Vos had developed a method that allowed the integration of theoretical content and practical experience in the laboratory. The notion of instruction in the workshop also originated from Della-Vos. His „sequential method” was based on the principle that the students' work on tasks should become steadily more difficult. The practical value of each achieved solution also had to increase successively. Students could therefore observe and monitor their own learning progression in respect of both theoretical knowledge and practical ability. „Work” thus

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<sup>6</sup> Erasmus Schwab (1831-1917) was a scholar of German and a *Gymnasium* teacher in Olmütz and later at the Catholic State *Gymnasium* in Kaschau (now Kosice) in eastern Slovakia. In Vienna, he was appointed headteacher of Mariahilf, a municipal *Gymnasium*. Among his students was the actor Joseph Kainz. Schwab ended his career as an elementary school inspector in the Austrian Ministry of Education in Vienna.

<sup>7</sup> The plan of the garden appeared in 1856 in the *Agronomische Zeitung*, a periodical that had been published since 1847 by Wilhelm Ritter von Hamm (1820-1880).

<sup>8</sup> The eighteen orphans were being brought up in the Home of Friendless Children in Pennsylvania. Ruth R. Burritt was originally a primary school teacher in Wisconsin, where she learnt about the principles of the kindergarten. At the time of the international exhibition, she was the principal of the Kindergarten Training School in Philadelphia (cf. Vandewalker 1924, p. 134ff.). In 1872 she was appointed to lecture at the Whitewater Normal School in Wisconsin and in 1877 she founded her own kindergarten in Philadelphia, which she directed for two years.

<sup>9</sup> The mathematician John Daniel Runkle (1822-1902) was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree by Harvard University in 1851. He became the first secretary of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1862 and served as its president from 1870 until 1878.

<sup>10</sup> Victor Karlovich Della-Vos (1829-1890) studied physics and mathematics in Moscow. After completing his degree in 1853, he became a teacher. From 1860 to 1864 he studied in Paris and London. He then became a professor of mechanics at the Petrovsky Academy. In 1867 he took over directorship of the vocational school in Moscow, and a year later became director of the Imperial Technical School.

became an integrated learning principle that was set apart from paid work and had nothing at all in common with the manual skills instruction of the 19th century.

But in what sense was it an innovation? And how could concepts as different as the kindergarten and work school equally be regarded as elements of educational progress? These questions have to be addressed against the background of the historical situation. „Progress” is not, as some of today’s critics of the exhibition in Philadelphia claim, simply a myth of enlightenment (Giberti 2002, p. 24ff.), but concerns actual experience that is recorded and capable of being documented. This applies at least to progress in education which, in 1876, was a field that had changed radically in the preceding fifty years.

My first document is a poem, but not a fiction. It was written by Bronson Alcott, the famous transcendentalist, who was a teacher and what we today call an „educational entrepreneur.” Bronson Alcott was raised in Wolcott, Connecticut, in the so-called New Haven County. The community was founded in 1796, three years before Bronson was born. A school maintained by tax revenues had existed since 1770 in the First Farmington Society, a land settlement association that gave rise to Wolcott. Several small schoolhouses existed around 1800, one of them was attended by Bronson Alcott.

He described his school in *New Connecticut. An Autobiographical Poem*, which he wrote towards the end of his life. The poem was composed in 1881 and published privately in 1886. In 1887, Alcott’s friend, pupil and first biographer, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, edited a volume that was published in Boston by Roberts Bros. The poem represents the memories of an old man reviewing his experiences as a child. His school on Spindle Hill was a detached building which, without the protection of trees or other houses, was exposed to the cold and heat in equal measure. The schoolhouse had a narrow entrance, which led to its only room. In the centre stood the teacher’s desk, upon which the rod and ferule were clearly visible.

The school was not segregated according to sex. Girls and boys were seated in rows with their backs to the wall and in order of height. The room had five windows, but no ventilation. Wood burnt on an open fireplace in the middle of the room provided heat in the winter, but an adequate supply was not always available. The floor was dirty, and the school was cleaned only once every three weeks. There were summer and winter terms. Winter term started on December 1st and ran for 12 to 16 weeks. Summer term began on May 1st and ran for an indefinite period because many pupils did not attend. Women taught in the summer and men in the winter; the women were paid around 60 cents a week, and the men between seven and eleven dollars a month (Alcott 1887, p. 23ff.).

Alcott’s memories can be compared with inspectors’ reports, which were produced in large numbers and regularly from the beginning of public education. All of the advanced educational systems maintained school inspectors, who reported on the condition of the schools and the progress that was or was not being made. One such report was written by Henry Barnard,<sup>11</sup> a lawyer, who was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives in 1837. One year later he got a bill through creating a board of commissioners to supervise the

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Barnard (1811-1900) studied law at Yale University and was admitted to the bar in Connecticut in 1835. He was secretary of the Board of Commissioners until 1842. One year later, he became the first school commissioner of Rhode Island, where he founded the state’s first teacher training establishment, the Smithville Institute. From 1851 Barnard served as superintendent of the Common Schools of Connecticut, and principal of the Connecticut State Normal School in New Britain. After working in several academic posts, he held the office of United States Commissioner of Education until 1870. From 1855 until 1882 Barnard was editor of the *American Journal of Education*.

state's schools. Barnard was one of the most influential American educationalists of the 19th century. In 1867 he was appointed the first United States Commissioner of Education.

The 1838 bill heralded the establishment of a board of commissioners of common schools, which lasted until 1842. Barnard was appointed its secretary. His description of Connecticut's schools is based on inspection visits conducted on behalf of the board. The report appeared in 1839 and revealed shocking findings, many of which mirrored the conditions experienced and qualified by Bronson Alcott. The empirical basis of Alcott's poem can thus be validated. Numerous inspection reports indicate that his recollections of school life must have been accurate.

Henry Barnard visited 104 school districts, whose boundaries were largely identical to those of the communities. According to the census of 1840, Connecticut had a little more than 300,000 inhabitants and, thanks to its early industrialisation, was relatively wealthy. The constitution of 1818 separated the State and Church for the first time. However, neither fact was yet affecting the quality of the schools. Thirty one of the schoolhouses inspected by Barnard were in a good structural condition, and 73 had been more or less neglected. Only seven of all the schoolhouses were equipped in such a way that they could be regarded as comfortable and convenient. Most of the buildings were cheaply built without giving any consideration to school architecture, which was to become a central theme of Barnard's own writings.

In only three schoolhouses, all the children could see the teacher at once, and in seven others they were seated facing the centre of the room. In all the others, the desks were arranged against the wall and in rows. The students were allocated seats by height. The older ones sat on larger desks with their backs to the teacher, except when they were required to read and spell. Alongside „silent work,“ these were the only exercises the children were asked to perform. The desks for the elder pupils did not have backrests. The younger ones sat on smaller desks in the middle of the room, and in many cases they were without backrests too. The uncomfortable and strenuous position adopted during lessons alone indicates the strong discipline that was necessary if any teaching at all was to take place.

In 96 districts, the school consisted of just one classroom; only eight schools disposed of two rooms. The average dimensions of the rooms were 20 feet wide by 8 feet tall. 75 schools had a stove, but none had any provision for ventilation. In 39 schools there were blinds for the windows; the others had no means of regulating the daylight. Doormats were not available in any of the schools, so that the floors were accordingly dirty. 100 of the schools were not endowed with a playground - the children had to play on the street. In only 40 districts there were trees and thus shade provided in the vicinity of the schoolhouse. 89 of the buildings were built directly near the road; there was no secure way to school for the children.

Barnard found just one school that already used a globe and had scientific instruments for teaching purposes. Twenty nine schools had blackboards and three had maps as well, but Barnard saw a clock in only one school. Not a single school had its own library, thermometer or recitation room. There was no standard of what teaching resources should be, the teachers often used old textbooks, if there were any. The basic experience of the pupils was narrowness and a school of cramped conditions. In the rural districts, a small wood room served as entrance, which is where the children hung their hats and coats. In the larger districts, as many as 50 pupils were crowded into a room intended for only 20 or 25 (First Annual Report 1839; Barnard 1851, p. 12-22).

Of the 67,000 or so schoolchildren who should theoretically have been enrolled in Connecticut around 1840, an estimated 17,000 were permanently absent. Many others attended school only irregularly because they were required to work, or their families considered education a superfluous luxury. A teacher's salary averaged about 14 dollars a month for men and less than 6 dollars for women. School taxes were not collected in Connecticut until 1854, before that only various local community funds existed. The imposition of taxes indicates the increasing power of the state. Furthermore, if school taxes are paid regularly, public schooling is evidently being accepted.

So it is understandable that the term „progress in education” was used in the second half of the 19th century as a matter of fact due to its association with actual experience. School conditions changed differently at different places, improvement was not visible the same time at all places, but in all industrial societies a new and better system of schooling evolved. In the end improvement of education was at once visible and irreversible. This one can call a process of „modernization,” the adjustment of education to modern society at all levels.

Today we know that linear progress is impossible and that innovation can later give rise to subsequent costs. So we don't believe in any philosophy of progress. At least nobody today claims the existence of „laws” of progress which, for Herbert Spencer, were the foundation of social evolution. And we also do not expect „progress” as a result of Hegelian dialectics. On the other hand, the improvements made in education in the 19th century are indisputable. But how did they arise if not fostered by either a law of evolution or a global historical trend or, in other words, if the beliefs of neither Auguste Comte nor Herbert Spencer are convincing any longer?

Regarding the question of „modernisation,” education has to be considered a special case because schools and families are not newly invented, but develop over generations. A radical break with the past never occurs. Education overcame its past in steps, at different places and in a speed that was very slow in the beginning. Pioneers like Bronson Alcott in his famous Temple School in Boston acted against a wall of resistance and distrust, and of course there were doubters who don't believe that „progress in education” is a good thing or even possible at all.

In her Bremen lecture of 1958, Hannah Arendt delivered a polemic attack against American progressive education and the philosophy of pragmatism. In contrast, she wished to strengthen the tradition of *Bildung*, which was instrumental in shaping the rhetoric of the German *Gymnasium*. According to this logic, there is no innovation in education at all, only the rule of tradition; but schools *are* subject to continuous change and obvious to progress. The question is how and for what reasons. I will discuss this issue in my second part with two stories: one from Hamburg and the other from New York.

## 2. Two reform projects from Hamburg and New York

The *Israelitische Stiftungsschule* (Israelite Charity School) was founded in Hamburg in 1815. It served Jewish children who had previously been excluded from general education. A Talmud school had existed since 1805. The Jewish community in Hamburg had around

7,000 members. For a long time the children received only religious instruction, in cheder classes held in the teacher's home. In 1805 a large *Lehrhaus für Kinder* (house of learning for children) was built, which was in size and equipment unprecedented. But Talmud and elementary education alone did not satisfy the Jewish desire for emancipation, which called for equal education.

The *Stiftungsschule*, whose official name was the *Israelitische Freischule* (Israelite Free School),<sup>12</sup> was founded for this purpose. The children of the Jewish families should have equal opportunities and this goal required more than just religious instruction. The school was situated on the *Hopfenmarkt* (Hop Market)<sup>13</sup> in the centre of the city, thus being visible for everybody. A Jewish ghetto, as in Frankfurt for example, never existed in Hamburg,<sup>14</sup> and as a symbol the city ramparts were being dismantled at the same time.<sup>15</sup> But school development never follows the signs of progress.

The senior teacher and first principal of the *Stiftungsschule* was Eduard Kley,<sup>16</sup> who came from Berlin and was appointed in 1817. The school initially consisted of only two classes and developed only slowly. Kley, who called himself a *Volkslehrer* (teacher of the people) (Lässig 2004, p. 145), advocated the complete assimilation of the Jews and regarded school as a suitable means to this end. The school's concept was guided not by religion, but by the concept of *Volksbildung* (education for the people), even though in Hamburg, as elsewhere, the masses still had little interest in education (Kley 1841). The Jewish Free Schools, for a long time overlooked by research, were a driving force in the development of schooling and served not only the Jewish middle class (Lässig, 2004, p. 249ff.).

On 1 July 1838 24-year-old philosopher Anton Rée<sup>17</sup> took up a post as teacher at the *Stiftungsschule*. Rée came from a wealthy Hamburg family. He was the son of the Jewish businessman, B.J. Rée, who was also court banker to the Danish king for a time. His father suffered large financial losses, however, and the Rée bank was declared bankrupt.<sup>18</sup> Anton Rée therefore had to support himself and became a teacher. He transformed the small Jewish *Stiftungsschule* into a progressive school that attracted attention throughout Germany and was regarded as unique.

In 1848 Rée became the school's principal. In 1852 he overcame official permission to introduce common teaching for Jewish *and* Christian children, which has to be regarded as an outrageous step. One year earlier the school had six classes and a total of 219 students. Its

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<sup>12</sup> The first Free School was established in 1778 in Berlin, so that models for this type of schooling already existed.

<sup>13</sup> The first documentary evidence of the Hop Market is dated 1345.

<sup>14</sup> The Jews living in Hamburg were barred from owning houses and land by contracts of 1650 and 1697. The regulations were often circumvented, which gave rise to ownership being acquired on a trust basis. This practice was repeatedly opposed, however, by the city's orthodox Lutherans. Not until 1 December 1842 did the Hamburg *Bürgerschaft* (City-State Parliament) decide to lift all restrictions (Büttner 2003, p. 70ff.).

<sup>15</sup> The medieval city walls had already been removed and replaced with extensive city ramparts in the 15th century. This system was demolished between 1820 and 1837.

<sup>16</sup> Israel Kley (1789-1857), who adopted the name Eduard Kley, had been working in Berlin as a private tutor and was summoned to Hamburg to serve there as a preacher at the Israelite Temple. Kley was a student of the famous Berlin philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte.

<sup>17</sup> Anton Rée (1815-1891) was initially educated by private tutors before attending the *Johanneum*, a humanistic school, and an academic *Gymnasium*, both in Hamburg. Thereafter he studied philosophy in Kiel under Heinrich Ritter (1791-1869), a student of Schleiermacher, and received his doctor's degree there in 1837 with the distinction *cum laude*. (Information on Rée after Schlie 1891; see also Müller-Holm 1915.)

<sup>18</sup> As late as 1834, the state archive recorded trading activity by the bank of B.J. Rée with Danish securities (Feller 1834, p. 29).



development was fostered by its increasing quality, which made it attractive to Christian parents as well. In 1852 Rée admitted the school's first three Christian children, however the board of the German-Jewish community objected to the students' receiving inter-denominational education for formal reasons. The ban on the admittance of Christian children was not lifted until 1858, after Rée had turned down an offer to join another school.<sup>19</sup> In the course of the next years the number of Christian children grew sharply.

Rée's school in Hamburg was the first in Germany to apply principles of equal schooling, namely a coeducational and inter-denominational curriculum, the compensation of social disadvantage, teaching of mixed social classes, and a transition to secondary schools based on achievement and not on privilege. None of these principles was applied in other schools, at least not in this assortment. And also the funding was different. In the *Stiftungsschule* the annual school fee was graduated according to the parents' income, and ranged between 72 and 144 marks. Gifted children from poorer families were awarded scholarships and did not have to pay the whole fee. They were called „Freischüler.“

The *Stiftungsschule* was, in other words, a modern school *avant la lettre*. This claim is validated by the educational policy background. Rée ranked among the most influential and was one of the few liberal politicians with a special interest in education in Germany before and after the German Empire was founded.<sup>20</sup> He advocated the abolition of class-based schools and called for general and equal education for all, without primarily seeking to place elementary schooling under state control. The rigorous state regime that is the hallmark of the German educational system until today could barely have been foreseen in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and certainly was not an option for Rée. Nonetheless he was one of the fathers of full-time compulsory schooling in Germany, which was introduced in 1871.<sup>21</sup>

In 1889, with some 732 students on its roll, his Free School on the Hop Market was one of the largest and, for many, the best school in Hamburg. It was developed as a model of a general *Volksschule*. This type of school in fact dominated the German school development until World War One and not Hannah Arendt's *Gymnasium*. Anton Rée died in 1891, his school was named after him<sup>22</sup> and remained progressive throughout the Weimar Republic. The school was closed as a Jewish school in 1933, today it is a school for vocational training, its history is marked only by a small plaque at the outside wall.

Rée's home town, Hamburg, is a good example how progress in education took place. Hamburg wasn't a poor city, on the contrary; but for centuries the city did nothing for the education of the poor apart from services of the churches. According to school statistics, there were only twenty state schools in Hamburg in February 1872, including the two upper

<sup>19</sup> The *Jacobsonsche Erziehungsanstalt* in Seesen, which was founded in 1801 by Israel Jacobson (1768-1828) as a „religious and industrial school.“ It did not become a state school until 1926.

<sup>20</sup> In 1848 Anton Rée was a member of the constituent assembly of the Free State of Hamburg and was already championing an equal and general *Volksschule* for all. After the rejection of the draft constitution of 1850, Rée continued to play an active role in education policy and, in 1863, briefly served as a member of the constituent Reichstag of the North German Confederation. From 1881 until 1884 he represented Hamburg's 8th electoral district in the German Reichstag, and from 1859 until 1871 he was a member of the Hamburg City-State Parliament.

<sup>21</sup> Of course there had been other reform schools in the German speaking countries, even before Rée. To name a few: Karl Froebel's *Erziehungsanstalt* in Zürich, founded in 1845, the *Realschule* in Leipzig, a workschool founded by Ernst Barth in 1863 or - also in Leipzig - the private *Modern Gymnasium* founded by Ernst Hauschild in 1849 and the first German school with a direct transition between Elementary and Secondary school. But these schools did not have a political mission and were closed or reorganized after some years.

<sup>22</sup> I owe the comments on the *Rée-Schule* to a lecture by Joist Grolle, delivered on 27 June 2008 at Hamburg University.

secondary schools (*höhere Schulen*).<sup>23</sup> 19 of the city's schools were church schools and 202 were private schools, including 24 for the poor. Of the city's 27,693 students, 15,531 went to private schools, only 6,135 attended public *Volksschulen*, and 635 were enrolled at state upper secondary schools (Blinckmann 1930, p. 82/83).

In 1870 a compulsory schooling bill was finally passed. It was one of the latest school laws in Germany. Before that the state of Hamburg did not invest significantly in a system of public education system. After the bill the state took over control. Within five years, between 1872 and 1877, spending on the elementary school system doubled and the cost of running the upper secondary schools climbed even more sharply (*ibid.*, p. 89). This disparity still exists in Germany today, the privileges for the *Gymnasien* have never been given up and also not the German notion of *Bildung*.

Anton Rée supported the notion of equal education for all in a system that he wished to see displace separate schooling for the poor on the one hand, and education for the higher classes on the other. In mid-19th century Germany, this was not a realistic proposition even among progressive *Volksschule* teachers because of frustrating factors on many fronts. In 1866 Rée discussed reasons that were being cited in opposition to the general *Volksschule* which means at least six years of common schooling without separation. He identified four principal arguments. Opponents of the general *Volksschule* claimed:

„1) Such a school is entirely impracticable. 2) Children from wealthy families cannot possibly share a desk with children who, for lack of suitable clothing, cannot even appear outwardly decent. 3) The poor do not dispose of the same ability to learn, so that the greater cost expended on them will be ineffectual. At the same time, giving consideration to the poor will hamper the progress of the wealthy. 4) The moral influence of such dissimilar elements on each other cannot be a good one” (Rée 1866, S. 18).

Rée aspired to the opposite, a public school for all. To illustrate this Rée refers to examples from abroad<sup>24</sup> that demonstrate the practicability of a general elementary school, which was not, therefore, Utopian. One example is the „Volksschule” of the Swiss Canton of Zurich, that maybe served Rée as a role-model. Another example was the *folkeskole* in Norway that was founded in 1827.

His own school, Rée argued, provided evidence that social and denominational integration can succeed and be implemented without too much costs (*ibid.*, p. 19ff.). Common education, according to Rée, can equalise social handicaps (*ibid.*, p. 25f.), and heterogeneity is not a „disadvantage” (*ibid.*, p. 28) provided that fair opportunity to make progress is granted. The argument of social aptitude, he said, prevented such equal opportunity from the outset. Rée's objections against separate schooling should have been capable of resolving one of the key issues of the time (Schramm 1874), but that never happened in Germany.

The story in New York dates from 1876 and was originally intended to establish a school especially for children from working-class families. Such a venture, in that

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<sup>23</sup> One of these was the Johanneum, which was founded in 1529. An upper secondary school for girls was not established until 1872.

<sup>24</sup> The *Volksschule* in the Swiss canton of Zurich (see: Sammlung 1839) and public education in the city of New York (Rée 1866, p. 18ff.).

environment and at that time, was also unique,<sup>25</sup> which even Eugene Lawrence probably would have accepted. Education devoted to the working class was only in its infancy. The City of New York offered evening classes, which were attended by more than 18,000 people in 1864 (Documents 1865, p. 3), but were not targeted at the poor in particular. If working-class children attended school at all, they were enrolled at neglected slum schools and learnt little more than spelling and rudimentary arithmetic (Ravitch 2000, p. 112). For these children it was more reasonable to work than to go to school.

Felix Adler, the son of Jewish immigrants from Germany,<sup>26</sup> was the man behind the school project for working-class children. After completing his studies in Heidelberg, Adler became professor of Oriental languages and Hebrew at Cornell University at the age of 23, but his „dangerous attitude“ caused him to leave. In a sermon entitled „The Judaism of the Future“ in the German-Jewish Temple Emanu-El on 5th Avenue in New York,<sup>27</sup> he had represented the view that all religions should be transformed into ethics, reasoning that their existence was no longer justified. The senior rabbi of the temple from 1857 until 1874 was Samuel Adler,<sup>28</sup> the father of Felix. It was here that Felix broke not only with Judaism, but also with the entire concept of religion (Guttchen 1974).

Felix Adler founded the New York Society for Ethical Culture, a humanistic association promoting social reform without religion that gave rise to an international movement. The society met for the first time on 15 May 1876 in the Standard Hall in New York. The opening address of the 25-year-old Felix Adler focused on the question of what would become of children if they were taught no more than „to repeat some scattered verses of the Bible.“ The answer called for an education that was at once holistic and of practical relevance to everyday life. He advocated an education that encompassed more than only the basic skills and could not be delivered by Sunday Schools. Rather, he argued, the Ethical Society needed to establish its own school (Adler 1876).

The first three projects pursued by the society defined its direction. A mobile nursery service was established, which visited people’s homes, it was the first social service that was not driven by missionary zeal. Next a kindergarten was founded that offered secular early education devoid of Froebelian Christian metaphysics. And finally an eight-year Elementary School was built up that, alongside progressive teaching methods, offered a new type of curriculum that far exceeded the scope of teaching in the state schools. It taught not only basic skills but, from the very first year, special subjects. Adler took charge of the school and remained its rector until his death in 1933.

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<sup>25</sup> The Free Academy of the City of New York was founded in 1847. It was open to the children of immigrants and provided an academic education. Places were offered not according to extraction or background, but solely on the basis of ability. In 1866 the Academy became the City College of New York. Education for the working class did not come about until the American trade unions emerged.

<sup>26</sup> Felix Adler (1851-1933) originated from Alzey in the northern Rhine rift. The town at that time formed part of the Grand Duchy of Hesse. Adler’s family emigrated to the United States when he was six years old. He obtained a doctor’s degree from Heidelberg University and was awarded a professorship by Cornell University in 1874. In 1902 Adler was given the chair of political and social ethics at Columbia University, which he held until his death. In 1904 he was appointed chairman of the National Child Labour Committee, which campaigned against child labour.

<sup>27</sup> Temple Emanu-El was established in 1845 at a gathering of 37 Jews from Germany. In 1868 the congregants built an edifice on Fifth Avenue. At the same time, a religious school building was erected on 66th Street.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Adler (1809-1891) originated from the Jewish community in Worms, a town also in the Great Duchy of Hesse. He studied in Bonn and Giessen, where he was awarded a doctor’s degree in philosophy in 1836. In 1842 he was appointed rabbi of the Jewish congregation in Alzey. In March 1857 he moved to New York to serve as rabbi of the Reform congregation of Temple Emanu-El, which held its services in German, rather than Hebrew. Adler remained in office until his retirement in 1874.

On the occasion of the society's fifth anniversary in May 1880, Adler described the establishment of a new type of school as an act of „practical benevolence.” He said, „Our ethical school is the nucleus of our strength; there is the cement that holds us together.” The notion of practical benevolence was directed against the teachings of Marx. The modern class struggle, argued Adler, originated from industrial working conditions but did not lead anywhere because it failed to contribute anything to resolving social problems. It was „aid,” not „struggle” that was required.

„It is not the tendency of our principles to array class against class, but rather to make class aid class" (New York Times 10 May 1880).

The school in New York was therefore initially called the „Workingman's School” and gave rise, in 1895, to the *Ethical Culture School*. School fees were not charged until this date and the school continued to be financed by the Ethical Cultural Society afterwards. The school remains in existence to this day.<sup>29</sup> In its early decades it was a much noted and often quoted „modern school” before the term exists. The school and its teaching soon adopted characteristics that were to become typical, namely

- experience-based learning,
- integration of manual training in the curriculum,
- strong emphasis on education in music and arts, and
- individualized teaching.

Everyday life in the school is described in the first school report, which appeared in 1891, four years before the school was renamed. Children could enter the school at the age of three and could remain there until their fourteenth or fifteenth year. A High School did not yet exist. The pupils received manual training in every class; the Ethical Culture School was the first school in America to make this subject a mandatory component of the curriculum. It also offered courses in child art and modelling, elementary science, vocal music and sport (gymnastics). Special attention was given to unsectarian moral teaching. The children did not receive any denominational instruction (Workingman's School 1891, cf. also Elliott 1911).

The school was based on the idea that practical work and inductive learning were better methods of education than conventional instruction steeped in recitation. This is also the idea behind the German *Arbeitsschule*, maybe Adler learned about it during his studies in Heidelberg. Conventional instruction, he wrote in March 1883 in the *North American Review*, makes learning difficult and even impossible because it suppresses children's natural curiosity and disregards the questions they ask (Adler 1883, p. 291). Fundamental change was possible if new teaching methods were applied in the classroom.

Adler speaks of the „rational method” and justifies it as follows:

„The great fact to be born in mind is that instruction becomes interesting as soon as the self-active reason of the pupil is appealed to, and he is taught to reach results by the exertion of his own thought, instead of receiving a bundle of facts, ready-made, from the hand of the instructor. There is absolutely no lesson - not the dry arithmetic lesson, not the reading lesson, not the history and geography lesson - that will fail to become

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<sup>29</sup> The Ethical Culture Fieldston School now charges an annual fee of \$30,440. It is attended by 1,200 students, who are taught by around 400 teachers. One-third of the students receive scholarships. The school is no longer associated with the Ethical Culture Society.

fascinating and delightful to the pupils, if the instruction given be fully saturated with the rational method” (ibid.).

Technical and practical knowledge was to be taught alongside academic subjects, such as arithmetic, history and geography. For the students, these elements would represent „a welcome change from the purely intellectual part of their instruction” (ibid., p. 292). A „school workshop” therefore formed part of the school’s organisation from the outset (ibid.). „Industrial education” was not understood as a means of preparing children for work in industry, but as an essential aspect of general education (ibid., p. 292/293). At around the same time, the *Arbeitsschule* was being discussed in similar terms in Germany.

According to Adler, the significance of manual training in general education is illustrated in particular by the success of children who have difficulty with academic subjects:

„In the Workingman's School we have seen astonishing instances of young children, who seemed hopelessly inapt in all the ordinary branches of instruction, easily taking the lead in the school workshop, and excelling their companions in the accuracy, finish, and beauty of their results. Is it not true that in any of the public schools such children would have been hopelessly lost?” (ibid., p. 293)

Further subjects, including nature study, drama, and arts and crafts were added subsequently. The Ethical Culture School also gave rise to the first school science laboratories and art studios, and an open-air school was later installed on the roof of the building. Parent study groups were soon established. In 1892 the school had already set up auxiliary classes in manual labour (New York Times 4 June 1892). From 1905, the school also maintained an educational psychology service, which concerned itself with new teaching and learning methods.<sup>30</sup>

Until 1904, the Ethical Culture School building was situated on 54th Street in mid-Manhattan, close to Broadway. In 1894 the New York Times referred to it as an „experimental school” attended by about 400 students ranging in age from three to thirty years.<sup>31</sup> Once a year the school was thrown open to the public for inspection. The occasion also attracted several hundred teachers from state schools, who wished to look over a model school, and exactly this was reported in the media (New York Times 23 February 1894). Similar interest was aroused again ten years later when, on 31 March 1904, the school’s new sports building was opened to the public for inspection. In his welcoming address, the superintendent of public schools of the city of New York, William Henry Maxwell,<sup>32</sup> called on the public schools to follow in the line of the „successful experiments” of the Ethical Culture School and thus learn from its work (New York Times 1 April 1904).

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<sup>30</sup> Anna Gillingham (1878-1964) was engaged by the Ethical Culture School as a school psychologist from 1905 until 1936. In conjunction with Samuel Torrey Orton (1879-1948), the neurologist, she developed a special method of reading instruction, known as the „Orton-Gillingham approach.” The technique is based on the postulation of multisensory learning processes and was published, after many years of trials, in 1946.

<sup>31</sup> The figure arises from the inclusion of the adult study classes.

<sup>32</sup> William Henry Maxwell (1852-1920) came from Ireland and was the son of a Presbyterian pastor. He studied classical languages at Queen’s College in Galway and arrived in New York in 1874. He initially worked as a journalist for various newspapers, and also published writings on pedagogic issues. In 1882 he was appointed associate superintendent of public instruction of the city of Brooklyn. Having discharged his duties well, he was advanced to the post of superintendent in 1887. When the five former boroughs were consolidated to form Greater New York in 1898, Maxwell became superintendent of all the New York schools and their 750,000 students. Maxwell remained in office until 1917.

One such curricular breakthrough occurred in 1904 from collaboration between the superintendent of the Ethical Culture School, Frank Manny,<sup>33</sup> and his teacher of geography and nature studies, Lewis Hine.<sup>34</sup> Since he started teaching at the school in 1901, Hine had been experimenting with the new medium of the camera. This interest spawned the first photography teaching programme at an American school. The camera represented an entirely new means of „learning by discovery,“ which had not previously been tried by any school. In 1907 Hine became the photographer of the National Child Labour Committee. His pictures had an unparalleled influence on the debate concerning the abolition of child labour.

By now, however, the school had ceased to be one for working-class children. When, on 11 June 1887, Felix Adler presented diplomas to the first class to graduate after eight years of study at the Workingman's School,<sup>35</sup> the students included Léonie Gilmour<sup>36</sup>, whose parents were working class. Adolph Groh<sup>37</sup> and others too were working-class students from the school's immediate neighbourhood. The composition of the school changed substantially in the following years. Many pupils were professors' children, including one of the sons of the anthropologist Franz Boas,<sup>38</sup> who took up a post at Columbia University in 1896 and was himself a member of the Society for Ethical Culture (Opler 1967, p. 741). Among the most famous graduates of the Ethical Culture School was J. Robert Oppenheimer, who was to become the scientific director of the Manhattan Project.<sup>39</sup> His father was a wealthy businessman.

Around 1900, however, the Ethical Culture School was regarded as „experimental“ and „modern.“ For decades, Rée's school was considered to be the best in Hamburg because it put new principles into practice and pushed through innovations. Both schools were „modern“ in several aspects.

- They were not created for a privileged group of society,
- they were co-educative and had both Elementary and later Secondary classes,
- the curriculum was broad and child-centered,
- new subjects were taught,
- both schools used scholarships for poor children,
- the one school was ecumenical, at least in a certain sense, the other was completely secular,
- and both schools served as role-models for state schools' development.

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<sup>33</sup> Frank A. Manny originated from Brown County in Illinois. He was professor of education at the State Normal School in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, before being appointed by the Ethical Culture School in 1901. Lewis Hine came from Oshkosh and trained as a teacher at the State Normal School in 1900/1901. For many years, Frank Manny was a friend of John Dewey, with whom he exchanged numerous letters.

<sup>34</sup> Lewis Hine (1874-1940) studied sociology at the University of Chicago and Columbia University in New York. Besides teaching at the Ethical Culture School (1901 to 1908), he worked as a freelance photographer for social reform journals, such as the *Survey*. In the twenties he also worked for the American Red Cross. His pictures of Ellis Island and the Empire State Building became well known.

<sup>35</sup> New York Times 12 June 1887.

<sup>36</sup> After graduating from the Ethical Culture School, Léonie Gilmour (1872-1933) studied at Bryn Mawr College before embarking on a career as a journalist and author.

<sup>37</sup> Adolph Groh (1871-1950) ran a grocery business, Adolph Groh & Co., on Lenox Avenue in Manhattan.

<sup>38</sup> Ernst Philip Boas (1891-1955) was a prominent physician and cardiologist. He left the Ethical Culture School in 1907.

<sup>39</sup> J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967) attended the Ethical Culture School from 1911 until 1921. His father, Julius S. Oppenheimer (1865-1948), was a member of the Ethical Culture Society and served on the Board of Trustees from 1907 until 1915.

Neither school knew from each other. But they became standards for what most educators until today call a „good” school. They might use the phrase „modern” because the basic inventions are more than a hundred years old.

As a term and a signal word „modern school” came into fashion before and after World War One. Ree’s school, even though a progressive school, never was mentioned in German *Reformpädagogik*, that started around 1880 in state schools. They became the focus of reform. Adler’s school remained well known, but it also was not part of the progressive education movement. The label „modern school” was attached to very different concepts of schooling. I will be looking at some of these in the last part of my lecture. The *Stiftungsschule* and the Ethical Culture School were unique and could not be copied. Around 1900 educational „plans” occurred, not meta plans like Eugene Lawrence’ „plan of American education,” but plans in the sense of special approaches of teaching and school development. One of these „plans” founded an educational movement that defined modernization in terms of „social efficiency.”

### 3. „Modern schools” around 1900

Neither Helen Parkhurst nor Carleton Washburne really made an impact on state schooling. The „Dalton-Plan” and the „Winnetka-Plan” were appreciated in the loosely coupled circles of progressive education, but hardly in the well organised brigades of superintendents and school administrators. For them the „Gary-Plan” was developed. Gary is a company town in the state of Indiana established in 1906 and built out of nothing for U.S. Steel. In the space of one year, more than one hundred million dollars were invested in a land that had formerly consisted of sand dunes and marshes, and was being used by Chicago’s elite for purposes of hunting. The American belief in doability, which Europeans often found suspect, is nowhere better illustrated than in Gary. Contemporaries spoke of the „magic city,” a new kind of industrial town that could not have been more „modern” (Flower 1909).

Conceived by William Wirt,<sup>40</sup> superintendent of the public schools in Gary, the Gary Plan was regarded as a „modern” school development. Wirt supported the regime in which not the teachers, but the children, move around the school. His idea promoted the efficient use of resources. The pupils, divided into groups, go from one classroom to the next for a succession of different lessons. The individual subjects are organised in departments, and the students change rooms according to a set timetable. Wirt believed that this method made much better use of the school buildings and facilitated more effective teaching. Since the teachers offered the same lesson to several classes, they did not have to prepare for each one individually (Wirt 1911).

Gary Schools were unofficially known as „platoon schools.” Others spoke of „school plants,” to indicate efficiency of industrial work. Wirt himself preferred the term „work-study-play school” to illustrate the orderly sequence of learning activities. In 1923, Time

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<sup>40</sup> William Albert Wirt (1874-1938) was born in the small community of Markle in northern Indiana, which had fewer than 700 inhabitants around 1900. Wirt attended primary school here, before going to the high school in nearby Bluffton. After graduation, he enrolled at the private DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. Wirt was awarded a degree in political science in 1898 and by then had already taught at various schools. He was superintendent of the schools in Bluffton from 1899 until 1907, when he moved to Gary. In 1934 Wirt published a pamphlet criticising Roosevelt’s „New Deal” which generated national interest and was regarded as a conservative manifesto.

Magazine called the Gary system „a type of cafeteria education, self service.” The children, explained the article, were their own timekeepers, worked longer than before and even attended school on Saturdays, but they were not learning more. The investment, therefore, was disproportionate to the return. The sole achievement of the system, according to the magazine, was the uninterrupted use of resources. „This plan keeps school equipment in continuous use” Time Magazine said, but no more than that (Time Magazine 24 September 1923).

„Social efficiency” was the key phrase. It was used by William Bagley in 1909<sup>41</sup> and gave rise to a pedagogic movement whose values differed radically from those of child-centred education. Both were considered to be „modern.” What the Chicago educationalist John Franklin Bobbitt<sup>42</sup> called *The Elimination of Waste in Education* in 1912 was a compelling argument for many school boards and administrators. According to Bobbitt, time for learning should be exactly allotted: one half of the day was to be devoted to „regular studies,” and the other half to „special interests.” Each of these activities was allocated teaching periods of ninety minutes every morning and afternoon. The students were divided into groups and changed classrooms for the lessons. The teaching of special interest, such as handicrafts, laboratory work and play, was to consist of two sessions of 45 minutes each because here the curriculum was to be more extensive (Bobbitt 1911/1912, p. 261ff.). Bobbitt also called for schools to be open at the weekends so that the rooms could be used for voluntary learning (ibid., p. 263).

Advocates of the Gary Plan adopted the language of progressive education. In 1916 the influential progressive publicist, Randolph Bourne,<sup>43</sup> who was known as the „American Socrates” (Beringause 1957, p. 594), described the schools of Gary with metaphors such as „holistic,” „natural” and „social.” The project of school reform, he argued, was embedded in a „community setting”; the concept of „work, study and play” presented the school itself as a community; and the notion of the „school plant” pursued the sole aim of „educating the whole child” (Bourne 1916). Indeed the big school houses in Gary bore the names of Emerson, Froebel and Pestalozzi to indicate the progressive roots. However, the term „holistic” referred more to measures that avoided duplication in the use of resources and thus saved money. One example for this is attaching the municipal playgrounds to the public schools (ibid., p. 20f.).

So Bourne wrote quite frankly that what distinguishes the schools in Gary from other schools was the contribution they made to school economy. The underlying concept was

„to treat the public schools as a public service, and apply to it all those principles of scientific direction which have been perfected for the public use of railroads, telephones, parks, and other ‘public utilities.’ The new city of Gary could create

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<sup>41</sup> *Education and Utility* was the title of a lecture delivered by Bagley on 15 October 1908 to the Eastern Illinois Teachers’ Association. It argued strongly in favour of efficiency in public schools. William Bagley (1874-1946) became professor of education at the University of Illinois the same year.

<sup>42</sup> John Franklin Bobbitt (1876-1956) came from English, a community in Crawford County (Indiana). His father was a teacher and superintendent of the schools in Crawford County. John Franklin Bobbitt became a teacher too, and was an instructor at the Philippine Normal School in Manila from 1903 until 1907. After receiving his doctorate at Clark University in 1909, he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago.

<sup>43</sup> Randolph Bourne (1886-1918) originated from Bloomfield in New Jersey. He studied at Columbia University and graduated in 1913. One of his teachers was John Dewey, but he fell out with him on the decision of the United States to enter into the First World War in 1917. Like Dewey, Bourne wrote for progressive journals, such as *The New Republic*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *The Seven Arts*. He died during the flu epidemic. Attention is still being paid today to some of the more than 300 articles he wrote during his brief career.



thoroughly modern, completely equipped school plants, and operate them as to get the maximum of service from them” (ibid., p. 58).

This notion of „modern” school plants was later interpreted as the „paradox” of progressive education (Cohen/Mohl 1979). But bringing together at least rhetorically social efficiency and a holistic child-centred approach, which today appeared to be an impossible match, represented one of the most influential attempts ever made to modernise the education system according to a plan, even though the Gary-School vanished in the thirties. But how would the „American Socrates” have commented on the current debate concerning education standards and high-stakes testing, whose roots clearly lie in the social efficiency movement?

The nationally most well-known and the „most modern” school in New York was the Lincoln School, which was proposed at the end of 1916 and established in 1917. A key element of the school was its close cooperation with the Teachers’ College of Columbia University. The two driving forces behind its foundation were Charles Eliot and Abraham Flexner. Eliot, president of Harvard University for many decades, was at that time a trustee of the Carnegie Foundation, where Flexner worked as a researcher. Flexner was initially a teacher of classical languages.<sup>44</sup> After working for some years in a public secondary school, he had established his own boys’ school, where he applied unorthodox methods. From 1917 Flexner served as secretary of the Rockefeller Foundation’s General Education Board, which enabled him to gain influence on progressive education.

The concept of the Lincoln School was based on Flexner’s book, *A Modern School*, which was published in 1917. One year later, Flexner distanced himself from the Gary method which, he acknowledged, had its own principles and was also favoured by the school administration but, he said, certainly did not achieve the goals communicated by Wirt and others (Flexner/Bachman 1918). Flexner had examined the schools in Gary in 1915, and his study, like others later, came to quite disillusioning conclusions (Bonner 2002, p. 125ff.). Flexner’s own „modern school” was based not on enhancing the efficiency of the timetable, but on changing the content of the curriculum. Progressive ideas, such as a core curriculum shaped by related subjects, and learning in projects, thus found their way into the high school.

The Lincoln School was funded by the Rockefeller foundation, and it was attended by several sons of John D. Rockefeller Jr.<sup>45</sup> Intended for the intellectual elite of New York, the school did not comply with the model of the „progressive” state schools and was similarly unlike the creative pre-schools and primary schools in the city and elsewhere. The Lincoln School at the same time represents a radical break with the tradition of elite education because the teaching no longer focused on the classical languages and the school was opened to new

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<sup>44</sup> Abraham Flexner (1866-1959) came from Louisville in Kentucky. He studied at the John Hopkins University and graduated in 1886. He then taught at the Louisville Male High School. Four years later he founded a progressive school that applied new methods of preparing students for college. The school remained in existence until 1904. Flexner thereafter studied at Harvard University and in Oxford and Berlin. In 1908 he published the pamphlet *The American College: A Criticism*, which staunchly condemned the traditional curriculum. One year later the Flexner Report on the state of medical education in America appeared, in which 168 medical schools were evaluated. It was the trigger for a major reform of the training system. From 1930 Flexner was director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, of which he was the founder. His first appointment, in 1933, was Albert Einstein.

<sup>45</sup> The youngest son, David Rockefeller (born 1915) attended the Lincoln School for twelve years. His elder brother, Winthrop Rockefeller (1912-1973), was not educated only there, but also attended the Loomis School in Windsor Connecticut. Nelson Rockefeller (1908-1979), who was to become governor of New York state, was also a Lincoln School pupil.

methods of learning. The students even had to contact the working class (Bonner 2002, p. 130ff.). This also was considered to be „modern” and „progressive.”

The first „modern school” to be called so was founded by an anarchist, Francisco Ferrer, in Barcelona. The *Escuela Moderna* opened on 8 September 1901 with 30 pupils - 12 girls and 18 boys (Ferrer 1913, p. 22). The first secular school of any kind in Spain was established in 1885 despite fierce opposition from the State and the Church. It is no coincidence that it too was situated in Catalonia. Fifteen years later, the public schools were still controlled almost entirely by the Catholic Church. The foundation of Ferrer’s school marked the beginning of an, although limited, democratic movement against the Church’s authority over schools and for the separation of the State and Church.

The principles of the „modern school” are largely attributable to Francisco Ferrer. The school was to be co-educative in a land where girls hardly got any education at all. The education was secular and „free from all prejudice,” especially those of the Catholic Church. And like Adler the teaching was to be based on the „rational method of the natural sciences” (ibid., p. 15). The curriculum was subject-based from the beginning and parents were part of the school community. But the existence of Ferrer’s „modern school” was hardly known outside the circles of anarchists. There were similar schools in France and Italy, and the *Escuela Modern* was closed after only five years of existence.

On 11 July 1909 the Spanish government issued a general mobilisation order for its war in Marocco. It prompted a spontaneous revolt in Barcelona, which was brutally crushed. The final barricades fell on 31 July 1909, the government proclaimed martial law, and more than 500 insurgents, including Ferrer, were arrested. He had not even been in Barcelona between March and June, and did not have any influence on the rebellion. Nonetheless he was adjudged as one of the five ringleaders and was court-martialled and shot. The episode was later referred to in Spain as the „Tragic Week”, but Ferrer’s execution was a judicial murder that scandalised opinion throughout Europe and overseas (Bookchin 1998, p. 137f.).

After Ferrer’s death, „modern schools” based on the concept of the *Escuela Moderna* were founded in several countries, including one in Lausanne. Historian Paul Avrich (1980/2006) puts the number at several hundred in the United States alone. New York was the centre of international anarchism. It was here that most groups were organised, here that several journals were published, and here that the most spectacular political actions took place. It was not by chance, therefore, that a group of free-thinking educationalists founded the Francisco Ferrer Association in New York on 10 June 1910. It gave rise to the Modern School of New York, which opened in January 1911 initially as a cultural centre and adult evening school. It later became a day school for children as well.

Among the founders of the Modern School were well-known activists, including Leonard Abbott, Harry Kelly,<sup>46</sup> Alexander Berkam and Emma Goldman.<sup>47</sup> Abbott was also

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<sup>46</sup> Harry Kelly (1895-1971) originated from St. Louis and arrived in New York before the First World War. In 1923 he established the Modern School on Lake Mohegan, NY, which lasted for more than two decades.

<sup>47</sup> Emma Goldman (1869-1940) was raised in a Jewish ghetto in Russia before moving to St. Petersburg with her family in 1883. At the age of fifteen she was sent to America after she had refused to accept the bridegroom chosen by her father. After the 1886 Haymarket Riot in Chicago, in the course of which four anarchists were hanged, Goldman came into contact with American anarchist circles. She moved to New York, where her talent as a speaker was recognised by Johann Most (1846-1906), the editor of a German paper for anarchists. After she fell out with Most, Goldman was influenced by the writings of Peter Kropotkins (1842-1921). Inspired by the philosophy of „direct action,” she took part in various attacks and was sentenced on several occasions, the final time being for her massive campaign against the First World War.

president of the Francisco Ferrer Association. Modern Schools were established, above all, in the environs of New York. They tested their own form of anarchist pedagogy, which is largely forgotten now but was associated with remarkable experiments in „new education.” Ferrer’s writings appeared in English translation in 1913,<sup>48</sup> but before that Emma Goldman had already described the central principle of the modern school as follows:

„The underlying principle of the Modern School is this: education is a process of drawing out, not of driving in; it aims at the possibility that the child should be left free to develop spontaneously, directing his own efforts and choosing the branches of knowledge which he desires to study”  
(Goldman 1972, p. 120).

The magazine entitled *The Modern School* was published in the period from 1912 to 1922. The subtitle described its purpose: *A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Advanced Ideas in Education*. Each issue contained a reading list referring to the principal authors of the „advanced ideas in education.” The names included Leo Tolstoy and John Dewey, the young Alexander Neill and numerous authors of the 19th century. Among the recommended works were writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Fourier, Bronson Alcott and many others. Supporters were recruited to the cause as well; the group of libertarians around Emma Goldman established contact with John Dewey, who also visited the school several times and commented on it in public. In 1916 and 1917 the magazine was printed by Joseph Ishill, who was a member of the Ferrer Colony and later founded the Oriole Press.

The day school on East 12th Street in Manhattan opened with nine pupils, one of whom was the son of Margaret Sanger, who had founded the American Birth Control League.<sup>49</sup> The first classes for adults were held in St. Mark’s Place on the Lower East Side, and the school’s principal was Bayard Boyeson,<sup>50</sup> previously an English instructor at Columbia University until he was dismissed for his activities in the Ferrer case (New York Times 18 March 1912). Boyeson was among the four authors who, in 1911, wrote the call for the establishment of the Modern School. He was asked to take charge of the school by Emma Goldman, but remained in the post for just a few months.

The second principal of the Modern School was the philosopher Will Durant,<sup>51</sup> who was to become a very influential figure in the United States. As a school principle he had to deal with a very diverse public and was constantly required to improvise. He recruited the painters Robert Henri and George Bellows as teachers, and engaged writers, including Jack London and Upton Sinclair, to deliver lectures and support the school. Among the students was the photographer and Surrealist Man Ray, who enrolled for a drawing course in autumn

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<sup>48</sup> The translator was the English author and free-thinker, Joseph McCabe (1867-1955).

<sup>49</sup> The league’s slogan was „No Gods and no Masters.” Margaret Sanger (1879-1966) was a nurse and later a journalist in New York. Her monthly newsletter, *The Woman Rebel*, coined the phrase „birth control.”

<sup>50</sup> Bayard Boyeson was the son of the Norwegian-American author, Hjalmar Hjorth Boyeson (1848-1893).

<sup>51</sup> William James Durant (1885-1981) came from a Catholic family and had a strictly religious upbringing. In 1900 he enrolled at the Jesuit school in Jersey City but, after graduating in 1907, first became a reporter for the New York Evening Journal and then a teacher at the Catholic Seton Hall College in South Orange, New Jersey. The college had been established in 1856 and was linked to a seminary, which Durant joined in 1909. In 1911 he left South Orange and arrived penniless in New York, where he became associated with the circle of anarchists and became the principal of the Modern School. Durant obtained his doctor’s degree in philosophy in 1917. His tutor was John Dewey. The hard cover version of his main work, *The Story of Philosophy*, was published in 1926 and sold more than two million copies. Durant never occupied an academic post and lived as an independent writer.

1911 and was able to work without conventional restraints. The Modern School magazine printed his poem, *Travail*, in autumn 1913.

Later the Modern School of New York moved to New Jersey and settled in Stelton near New Brunswick. The school existed until 1953 and was based on the principle of freedom in education. Harry Kelly characterised that principle like this:

„The child has as much right to itself as has the adult, and the personality of the child, during the sensitive and hazardous years of early youth, must be kept free from the intrusive hands of those who mould and fashion it according to preconceived models, who would thwart this quality ... in order to fit the child into the ideals of the teacher, that is, assuming the teacher has an ideal, which far too often he has not. Ambition he may have, but ideals are for the most part an obstacle in the path of material gain, and that is the aim and object of modern society” (Kelly 1920).

The school had no formal curriculum. Attendance during teaching lessons was optional, traditional forms of discipline and punishing had been abandoned, the children learned from books but also from their own activities, nature lessons and project teaching were common methods, and music, play and dance were regular offerings. In this the „modern schools” of the Anarchists do not differ from child-centered schools elsewhere. This also is true for the size: „Modern schools” usually were small, private and self-organized.

So these schools could not have been models for mass-schooling. Schools for all children were created as non-intimate organizations. These schools for the masses were hardly ever called „modern.” But in a sense their development had been much more a factor of improvement or modernization than small, progressive schools for special groups like the Anarchists or the new elite of urban academics. Big inner city High Schools were curriculum driven, not child-centered, and yet successful in more than one way. But that is a complete different story.

To make a conclusion: Hardly one of the „modern schools” survived, regardless if they were „anarchistic” or not, so their „modernity” was very ephemeral. What survived are their principles or their principal questions. „School efficiency,” invented by the Gary-Schools, is today a world-wide topic of educational policy as is the construction of ever new „modern” curricula; child-centered methods of teaching newly occurred with „modern” technologies of E-learning; and somehow even the questions of the Anarchists survived. How much freedom is necessary in education, when it is organized in an Audit-society? And what can we do against too much controlling in schools and classrooms? So „modernity in education” today may be the reinvention of principles that once were new.

Around 1900, „modernity” was an aspiration with strong aesthetic, technological and social undertones. It was expressed as a rallying cry. The old was to be displaced by radically new ideas. But intellectual discourse was also being shaped by contrary forces, namely the anticipation of degeneration - one has to think only of Max Nordau’s book *Entartung*, which appeared in 1892 and in its own way reflected the *fin de siècle*. „Modernity” for Nordau, was a disease and not an experience of emancipation. It is no chance that his book was devoted to Cesare Lombroso.

Development in education is clearly not on the side of degeneration, if „progress” is not to be taken as a historical „necessity.” The development of „modern schools” or whatever the term is to describe them had only one practical rule - namely the communication of good

examples. Behind them there is no „force” of modernization but only the ambivalent experience of modern society. Many good solutions of progressive education are now firmly established in the school structure, earlier „good solutions” have been lost. We don't teach with horn books anymore, we hardly use slates and we have learned to organise the classroom for individual teaching.

For this no general theory of „modernity” was necessary. What was needed were some overall ideas like democracy, self-government or social efficiency, a conception of what had to be changed, that became clear in the making, pioneer schools, public support and new solutions that stand the test of time. School development itself happened step by step with good intentions, limited action and corrections by experience, and thus pragmatic. So in the end I hope to have made a contribution to the subject of this conference.

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