Review

Reviewed Work(s): The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education 1876-1957 by Lawrence A. Cremin

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Her own excruciating, long decline, her utter loneliness in England, which she made her home after 1869 for reasons not quite clear, might be better understood if compared to similar experiences of her European counterparts. Her American co-workers remained in their environment and accepted the ups and downs of long-term social and political changes far more easily than the immigrant woman who had willingly cut all ties with her own past.

Despite great personal triumphs as the acclaimed "queen of the platform," the impression the history of Ernestine Rose leaves with the reader is not a happy one. Ernestine Rose gave all her brilliant gifts and enormous energies to a social and political cause but was left without depth and warmth as a person, as a Jewish woman.

Evanston, Ill. DORA EDINGER.

CREMIN, LAWRENCE A. *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education* 1876-1957. New York. Alfred A. Knopf. 1961. Pp. xxiv, 386.

The rise and decline of progressive education as a directing idea and as an organized movement is the major theme of Professor Cremin's comprehensive account of the American school. Progressive education is viewed by him not primarily as a pedagogical system but as an educational philosophy reflecting the creative social forces and intellectual trends that began to emerge in the latter half of the 19th century. *The Transformation of the School* is as much a record of developments in American culture under the impact of democracy, science and industrialism as it is of the educational conceptions which took shape in the era before the first world war. As Cremin states in the Preface: "Actually progressive education began as a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life. . . . The word *progressive* provides the clue to what it really was: the educational phase of American progressivism writ large."

Progressive education, Cremin makes clear, was a complex movement of diverse strains and interpretations. While the American version was affected by our own experience, it was an aspect of a worldwide response to modern forces, in his view, especially to democracy and industrialism. He avoids giving a "capsule definition" of progressive education but he summarizes several characteristic elements. It proposed broadening the program of the school to include a concern for health and vocational adjustment, for enriching the life of the individual and through him of the family and the community. It meant applying pedagogical principles derived from scientific research in psychology and social sciences. It required adapting instruction to individual differences among children and to various types of interest of youth. Underlying progressive education, moreover, was the democratic faith that everyone could benefit by a broad education in the sciences and the arts, that "culture could be democratized without being vulgarized." More than this, as Jane Addams said, "the good must be extended to all society before it can be held secure by any one person or any one class."

Part I, under the title, "the Progressive Impulse in Education," comprises an account of the personalities, the ideas, and the forces which influenced the development of American education from the last quarter of the 19th century to the period of the first world war. In the analysis of social factors, full consideration is given to the interplay of education with community culture as well as with industrial development. A notable feature is the attention accorded to the influence of mass immigration: of particular interest to readers of JEWISH SOCIAL STUDIES is the reference (p. 69) to Israel Friedlaender, as having anticipated the idea of "cultural

pluralism" (the view that ethnic minorities should be encouraged to preserve their cultural heritage within the main stream of American life), a conception that Horace M. Kallen has developed more explicitly and fully.

In Part II, in the opening chapter, under the suggestive title, "Scientists, Sentimentalists, and Radicals," Cremin describes the development of progressive education as an organized movement in its variegated versions moderate and extreme: its endeavor to apply educational psychology to the method of the school; its involvement in some instances with modern art and Freudianism; its concern, during the critical years of the 1930's, with social and economic reconstruction. In "The Crisis in Popular Education," the final chapter, analysis is made of the many-sided attack against progressive education from the liberal left as well as from the ultra-right, by those who advocate a return to classical education in the traditional humanities and by those who are concerned with Russia's advances in science and technology, and by academicians who challenge the authority of the professors of education to formulate the principles of the school curriculum and of the training of teachers.

Professor Cremin recognizes the important contributions made by progressive education in its broad and balanced forms for the advance of American education and culture. He believes that its demise has been unduly exaggerated and indicates a faith in it as a force still significant in maintaining school work on a high level of achievement and of social idealism. Among the major causes of its eclipse as an organized movement—despite the fact that many of its major ideas have been incorporated into school practice—he mentions, first, a number of internal causes: the development of cults and cliques within the movement which became the basis of caricature; its negativism as a dissenting movement, stronger against its attack against "the old education" than in its formulation of a new workable program. Although its principles properly understood produced superior results in the hands of first-rate teachers, the application of its clichés by those inadequately prepared, led to poorer results than could have been achieved by the older formal methods.

These pedagogical factors combined with social forces in the period after the second world war when the turn toward political and social conservatism set in. The failure of professional educators to cultivate lay support, Cremin maintains, was a crucial element in making progressive education vulnerable to the widespread criticism of its conceptions and practices. But most important, Cremin believes, was progressive education's failure to keep pace with the changing character in American life: Exponents of progressive education continued to reiterate old slogans when much of what was valid in its conceptions had already been generally accepted while they neglected to adjust its ideas to the extraordinary social transformation resulting from advances in technology, the expansion of mass communication media and of other out-of-school educational influences. Nevertheless, he affirms his belief that "the authentic progressive vision remained strangely pertinent to the problems of mid-century America." He concludes in a note of cautious optimism—that perhaps the revivication of progressive education only awaits "a larger resurgence of reform in American life and thought."

The *Transformation of the School* is an outstanding contribution, informed by much independent research and marked by carefully considered judgment. Its extensive annotated bibliographical section provides resources for study of American social thought as well as of concepts underlying American educational practice. This reviewer applauds the broad socially-oriented approach with its emphasis on the movement of ideas and concurs generally with the lines of criticism. However, there are differences of evaluation, in relative emphasis at least, with reference to the essential nature of the progressive educational movement and the major cause of its decline.

The character of progressive education is blurred by merging it with the general modern movement in education. However broadly conceived, it is a distinctive conception to be carefully differentiated from *Education for Life Adjustment* with which it is often confused. The latter has its source in the individualistic, sociological approach of Herbert Spencer's *Education for Complete Living*. The affilitions of progressive education as a distinctive movement are with naturalism, idealism, and romanticism; it is in the line of development from Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel and, in its American form, was affected by Emersonian transcendentalism. It is not a product of industrialism but rather a protest against it. Its key idea is self-realization, the growth of the free, self-determining personality. It is with the decline of personal, moral and intellectual freedom as a directive principle that the repudiation of progressive education as a philosophy of education is to be primarily related.

Although Professor Cremin recognizes the trend toward social conservatism as a factor, its crucial impact on the educational situation is not fully exposed. The failure to win lay support for progressive education cannot be attributed mainly to the remissness of the professional educator. Although Progressivism with its emphasis on intellectual and moral freedom is a genuine expression of American life, it was always a minority movement; we tend to overestimate the degree to which it was shared by the American public at large and the depth of its rootage in the local communities which control the schools. To-day, the fear of communism has constricted tolerance—the forces of the right are vocal and aggressive and deviant educational thought has been brow-beaten into quiescence. Progressive education had been undergoing reformulation in the period before the second world war in the light of informed criticism on the part of educators. Its recent rejection by the public at large is not due to its imperfections, whatever these may be. Its repudiation reflects a retreat from social liberalism.

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BOOK NOTES

BARON, SALO W. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*: Index to vols. I-VIII. New York. Columbia University Press, Pp. xi, 163.

Professor Baron's great work perhaps has its faults—it is one of the pastimes of specialized scholars to find minor lapses in one another's writings, as readers of this Journal must know only too well. But no scholar, however specialized, can have failed to find fresh information, literature, facts, and judgments in these majestic volumes, even on topics that he may have considered peculiarly his own. There was indeed a difficulty hitherto: owing to the organization of the work, as well as its bulk, it was not easy to track down and consult any specific topic. The provision of this superb analytical Index remedies this. Henceforth it will be easy for the student to find what he is looking for, and the scholar to parade the latest literature on the subject, with a minimum of labor and maximum effect. It is unfortunate that the accompanying, highly useful, chronological table ends with a slight error of date. It also records under the years 941-43 *'Jews of Tibet mentioned.'* A new point for me, to be verified from the Index s.v. Tibet. But it isn't there. Alas, that the first tasting should result in a disappointment.

London, England. CECIL ROTH.