

ACTION AND REACTION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

equals

LIFE AND VIGOR PULSING THROUGH THE SCHOOL*



Ella Flagg Young, 1909, in her office as superintendent of schools in Chicago

PHOTO: CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We are now face to face with the fact that a democracy whose school system lacks confidence in the ability of the teachers to be active participants in planning its aims and methods is a logical contradiction of itself.

Isolation in the School, 1900

The scientist does not pose as a reformer or a destroyer; neither does he conserve the past as an object of worship. He does not mistake crudity for originality; neither does he fail in responsiveness to intelligent means directed toward the attainment of noble ends.

Some Types of Modern Educational Theory, 1902

* In her introduction to *Some Types of Modern Educational Theory*, Young wrote of the five theorists under discussion that "The thought of each, as expressed, pulsates with that life and vigor which come from the action and reaction of theory and practice upon each other."

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SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION:

Theory and Practice in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago

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For further information see:

Goddard, Constance Heaton: "Ella Flagg Young's Intellectual Legacy: Theory and Practice in Chicago's Schools," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2005.

THE MEANING OF ISOLATION IN THE SCHOOL

isolation = negation

isolation ≠ cooperation

isolation ≠ development

“This essay endeavors to contribute something toward the illumination of some of those phases of the life of the school in which are made manifest *the difficulties involved in the maintenance of a continuous intellectual and moral advance throughout the system because of the influence of isolation*” [9].*

“[T]he level of **power in the educational system** is determined by the degree in which the principle of cooperation is made incarnate in developing and realizing the aim of the school” [10].

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“*Isolation in any social organization means more than separation in space. It means deprivation of the exercise of inherent powers, both originative and constructive – negation. Cooperation means more than spontaneity in following another’s lead; evolution of potential powers through a reaction, initiated by the self and terminating in creative intelligence, is always involved in its operation*” [44].

“A point in moral or intellectual theory *cannot form the subject of a judgment if it is kept isolated* from the practical situation that obtains, and is treated as unrelated to the past and present” [77].

“[S]hall the mental powers of the few be exercised according to law, and those of the many be isolated from that which evolves power – the initiative in action – *or shall all be active as organic part of the thinking world?*” [88].

* All of the following comments are taken from Young’s *Isolation in the School*. Unless otherwise indicated, the italics have been added; the numbers in brackets refer to page numbers in the University of Chicago Press 1901 edition. The ad for Contributions to Education appeared in a 1907 issue of *School Review*, also published by the University of Chicago Press.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR IN THE SCHOOL

“[T]he absence of that interaction between the workers and their work which should exist, *and which would keep alive the mental process in the individuals of the education force*, so that many of the best among the applicants for certificates would not become inefficient while actually engaged in teaching’ [23].

“[P]etty jealousy . . . is always evidence that the highest ranking officer is a person *in power* rather than a person *of power*” [32, italics in original].

“[T]he fetters that bind the thoughtful and progressive will be stricken off, when the work is based on an intelligent understanding of the truth that *freedom is an essential of that form of activity known as the teacher*” [33-34].

“[T]he development of personality [in both teacher and students] is *the fundamental upon which the theory and practice of education* must be constructed” [34].

“[M]ind develops in proportion to the degree in which it operates in accord with its inherent tendency to investigate and apply the results of investigation . . . ” [35].

“[Schooling should] make valid the right of each soul to a development of *the inborn power of self-determination*. . . [And] have for its object the direct contribution of elements *of strength to that organization* of which it is a component part. . . [T]hese aims are not in opposition; they are the two phases of the same unity. Neither can be seen in its entirety without a recognition of the other” [37- 38].

“[T]hese influences have not been more potent in keeping men out of the schools than have the mechanism, drudgery, and loss of individuality which the method of organization and administration has tended to make characteristic . . . ” [41].

“[U]ndeveloped teachers, principals, and members of the supervising force who exercise the right of dictation of method thus elevating it far above the material, who constitute the non-progressive section of the teaching force . . . ” [41-42].

“So closely associated with drudgery is the ideal of teaching the young, that trained minds and cultivated personalities shrink from entrance into the direct work” [42].

PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHICS IN THE SCHOOL

“The divine law is the universal toward which freedom tends. The aim and end of education should be the development of intellectual power that makes for order. Not through skepticism and anarchy, but through faith and freedom according to the law of being” [73].

“[I]ntellectual democracy [will grow with] faith in the latent tendency of the human mind to develop in accord with the divine mind” [75-76].

“Instead of an acceptance of simple apprehension as the type of judgment best suited for those not gifted with the strong individualistic tendencies which make for social right-living, the great must make themselves greater through urging forward to the exercise of judgment those who through youth or subordination may tend to accept an ideal of the superior in age or position as the unvarying standard” [76].

“[T]he individuality lies largely in the origination; the *cooperation is the interchange between the situation as it is presented and the full, fuller knowledge* of the objective realm in which the elements which aroused doubtful condition have their free play” [79].

“Knowledge, isolated from the cause which makes it a necessity to the learner, and from the effect which makes it valuable to him, is mere information which is rarely at command when called for” [82].

“Competition between myriads of human beings, all trained to a set end, is the result of the non-recognition of the life process with its minute differentiations which make the special talents; is the result of the isolation of the individual from . . . the unfolding of all his potentialities” [87].

THE FUNCTION OF THE SCHOOL IN A DEMOCRACY

“A survey of the past two hundred years shows the children of the poor and the rich, of the English-speaking and the non-English-speaking races, of the various religious faiths, all meeting on a common ground and with a common interest – the mastery of the printed page” [91].

“As the young have striven side by side in the common school, they have learned . . . through experience . . . that the soul is not classified according to its worldly possessions, the particular language spoken in the home, or the faith in which it is reared” [90-91].

“The highest type of unification would be that which would send out into the world boys and girls, young men and women, trained to clear thinking, active in their belief in a personal responsibility for the realization of the humanitarian idea underlying the form of government in which the American state is embodied” [92].

“The human mind . . . loses power, is arrested its development, if its effects are directed toward establishing unvarying conditions in its own environment and in that of others also” [93].

“The school cannot take up the question of the development of training for citizenship in a democracy while the *teachers are still segregated in two classes*, as are the citizens in an aristocracy” [106].

“No more un-American or dangerous solution . . . can be attempted than . . . ‘close supervision.’ Frequent visitations to the schools . . . develop a feeling of responsibility for matters of petty detail . . . [T]eachers must cease to occupy the position of initiators of the individual work of instruction and discipline, and must fall into a class of assistants, whose duty consists in carrying out instructions of a higher class which originates method for all” [106-107].

“The rights and obligations that inhere in members in different parts of the system must be subjected to careful analysis, and then the teaching corps must be unfettered in its activity in striving to realize those things which will evolve themselves in a free play of thought in the individual and the community” [107].

“To secure this freedom of thought, there must be, within the various parts of the school, organizations for the consideration of questions of legislation. . . . The voice of authority of position . . . must not dominate . . . [these teachers’ councils]. . . . Education would be a continuous process, based on theory; not mere experimentation, based on personal preferences” [107-109].

“In America today, more than leeway in individual opinion is needed; more than the recognition of the individual and his development. From the entrance upon the first year in the kindergarten till the close of the student life, if the school functions as an intrinsic part of this democracy, the child, the youth, and the teachers will each be an organic factor in an organization where rights and duties will be inseparable; where the free movement of thought will develop great personalities “[111].