



# LUND UNIVERSITY

## The Chinese Dewey : Friend, Fiend, and Flagship

Schulte, Barbara

*Published in:*

The Global Reception of John Dewey's Thought: Multiple Refractions through Time and Space

2011

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Schulte, B. (2011). The Chinese Dewey : Friend, Fiend, and Flagship. In R. Bruno-Jofre, & J. Schriewer (Eds.), *The Global Reception of John Dewey's Thought: Multiple Refractions through Time and Space* (pp. 83-115). Routledge.

*Total number of authors:*

1

### General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00

## **The Chinese Dewey: Friend, Fiend, and Flagship**

Barbara Schulte, Lund University, Sweden

### **Abstract:**

This article analyzes how Dewey was received, adapted, and transformed in four different time periods in China: during the Republican era (1912–1949), after the Communist take-over in 1949, after Deng Xiaoping's launch of the 'Four Modernizations' (in the 1980s), and in present-day China. Dewey is generally seen to have exerted an immense influence on Chinese education. The article scrutinizes how this influence unfolded both through Dewey himself and through his mediators, propagators, and critics between the time of his visit in 1919 and today. Particular attention is paid to how certain of his ideas were taken up – and others were ignored or twisted – to fit the intellectuals' agenda of each time period. By tracing the changes that central concepts like 'pragmatism' or 'child-centered pedagogy' underwent over the course of nine decades, the article reveals how the American philosopher and educator John Dewey was successfully transformed into the Chinese 'Duwei' – into a friend of the Chinese people, a fiend of China and Marxism, and a flagship of modernization.

**Key words:** John Dewey, educational transfer, reception processes, Chinese educational history.

## **Introduction: Dewey in Flux**

The topic 'John Dewey in China' looks like the prime example of West-East transfer in education with all the ambivalences that accompany transfer processes. Dewey's two-year visit to China between 1919 and 1921 was preceded by numerous Chinese articles on pragmatist education in general and on his educational ideas in particular. Barry Keenan, with his paramount study on *The Dewey Experiment in China*, has provided us with ample information about what happened during Dewey's visit to China, and how Dewey was integrated into the then current Chinese debates on educational reform and, more generally, on China's modernization.<sup>1</sup> In this contribution, I will not recount this story. Rather, I will look at how Dewey was re-contextualized in China over a period of nine decades – from around the time of his visit to China when he was welcomed as a friend of the Chinese people, to during the Stalinist era in the 1950s when he was demonized as the fiend of China and Marxism, and finally to during China's Open Door policy, which was launched in the late 1970s and in the course of which Dewey was construed as a flagship of modernization. In the concluding section, I will present a brief overview over the most recent debates on Dewey and education.

By focusing on the re-contextualization processes, I will show that Dewey was not simply 'misunderstood', as a scholar in Deweyan thought might intuitively feel when reading, for example, Chinese articles on Dewey in the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> Rather, Dewey – both in person and through his writings – offered a rich repertoire of ideas and ideologies which the Chinese intelligentsia took up eagerly or refuted vehemently to add spice to their arguments about what China should look like in the future. By drawing on either imagined affinities or perceived incompatibilities, Dewey was twisted and turned to

legitimize certain aims and to reject others. These affinities and incompatibilities were rooted both in past and contemporaneous discourses. Certain collective experiences which Chinese intellectuals had had during China's modernization process from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards paved the way for 'pragmatist ideas' to enter the debate on education and for the warm welcome which Dewey received upon his arrival in China. However, there were also experiences that made intellectuals wary of or even hostile to Dewey's ideas. These contrary experiences, which led to competing concepts of the educational mission that these intellectuals envisaged for China, were further complemented by the Chinese experiences with Marxism and Maoism. What makes these experiences so intriguing is, again, their ambivalence: Dewey's ideas could be interpreted both as in full concordance with Marxism and as its very antithesis.

However, Dewey did not only represent conceptual imageries. Through his function as a teacher and mentor to a great number of Chinese students, through his personal, long visit to China, and, later on, through his personal involvement in witnessing the Trotsky trial, he was not just the embodiment of some more or less abstract ideas and theories but a personality that could evoke admiration, distrust, or even hatred amongst Chinese intellectuals. Already before entering China, Dewey did not stand on neutral ground, but was embedded into pre-existing personal networks and ideological alliances within Chinese elite circles. He was so closely bonded to his Chinese friends and mediators that it is sometimes difficult to decide who was actually talking to the Chinese audience: John Dewey, through his Chinese translators, or his Chinese translators – who were all important figures in the educational field – through the prominent personality of John Dewey?<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Dewey's ideas were received through a prism of collective, old and new, experiences and through Dewey's personal alliances with specific Chinese agents of change. To this prism, another face was added: Dewey's ideas were not only 'transferred', nor was he just 'present' during the transfer processes; he was also convinced that his ideas were principally transferrable into other cultures,<sup>4</sup> although he was aware of the fact that social changes – like the democratic movement – had to "come from within."<sup>5</sup> To him, his ideas – and his mission – were linked to the very idea of America itself: "... we need to recover something of the militant faith of our forefathers that America is a great idea, and add to it an ardent faith in our capacity to lead the world to see what this idea means as a model for its own future well-being."<sup>6</sup> This faith of Dewey in the potential of the American (democratic) tradition coincided with his Chinese followers' willingness to believe in something that was decidedly different from their own tradition: above all, democracy and science. Dewey's visit in 1919 concurred with a movement that was to give voice to these beliefs: the May Fourth Movement.<sup>7</sup>

Later critics of Dewey – mainly during the ideologized Stalinist era – accused Dewey of turning his experimentalist approach into some kind of religion. ('Religion' was a swearword to staunch Marxists and Maoists.) Taking into account the ardent faith that Dewey's former student Hu Shi (1891–1962)<sup>8</sup> and others had in ideas such as 'pragmatism', such criticism is easier to decode. Enthusiasm for or criticism of John Dewey did not only deal with Deweyan ideas. At least beneath the surface, it also dealt with the Chinese concepts and ideologies that were associated with his philosophy and educational thought. The conflict arising from these competing ideologies often took the form of a dispute between those who argued for 'expert education' and those who called for a more encompassing education, often infused

with moral or even utopian concerns. After 1949, this was reframed as 'expert' versus 'red'. Chinese education vacillated back and forth between these two extremes, sometimes going through phases when educational policy makers attempted to reconcile the two notions.<sup>9</sup>

What makes the case of Dewey in China so interesting is the observation that it was, from the very beginning, not only the American philosopher of education John Dewey who was praised or detested. Rather, intellectuals writing on Dewey also always had in mind the Chinese 'Duwei' – Dewey as he had been appropriated within the Chinese context. When Dewey, for example, was reestablished in China in the 1980s, it was not only his writings that were reassessed, but also the Chinese ideologies and their representatives that lay behind them. However, this does not mean that Dewey unchangeably represented only one ideology or group within Chinese intelligentsia, say 'red' or 'expert'. On the contrary, his writings served both positions, and were sometimes even used to reconcile these apparently contradictory aims.

How did the initial Chinese appropriation of John Dewey take place, and how did it give rise to the harsh criticism of the 1950s?

### **Dewey and China: The Initial Encounter**

Chinese scholars today agree that Dewey exerted an exceptional influence on China. It was exceptional not only because it was particularly thorough, but also because Dewey is judged by these scholars to have had his greatest impact on China – greater than on any other country, including even the United States.<sup>10</sup> This status of exceptionality cannot be explained by the person of Dewey alone. Rather, it has to be

linked to two important factors: first, 'pragmatism', the key term in the Chinese debate on Dewey at the time of his visit, had been a hot topic in the modernization discourse for several decades. Second, John Dewey was connected to persons and associations that were exceptional themselves – actors, individual and collective, who, at least for a short time, seemed to decide the destiny of the country. In the following, I will elaborate on these two points and then discuss further reasons why Dewey could be integrated so successfully into the Chinese discourse on education at the time.

In August of 1913, the famous educator Huang Yanpei (1878–1965), then director of the Educational Office in the province of Jiangsu and later on the founder of the *Chinese Association of Vocational Education*, published his famous essay 'Discussion about Using Pragmatism in School Education' in a supplement to the *Educational Journal (Jiaoyu Zazhi)*.<sup>11</sup> In this essay, he criticized the traditional dichotomy between learning at school on the one side and, on the other, reality and the professional world. He called for a greater applicability of what was learned at school and also for a more child-centered approach in teaching. Every primary school should use pragmatist materials and methods, and teachers should take as their starting point real-life situations. Although this is one of the first times that the term 'pragmatism' is used, this thread goes back into the nineteenth century when modernizers discussed the 'usefulness' of education. (The Chinese term for 'pragmatism', *shiyongzhuyi*, contains the word 'useful'.)

Following the forced opening-up of China after the Opium Wars in the mid-nineteenth century, Chinese modernizers severely questioned the 'usefulness' of the Chinese tradition. By 'Chinese tradition', they had in mind mainly the Confucian tradition, with its exaggerated emphasis – according to these modernizers – on moral and aesthetical issues and its neglect of the practical needs of the population. As a

consequence, these actors began to look for approaches that put more stress on 'practical use' (*yong*), and found it in a Chinese tradition from the seventeenth century, the so-called 'concrete studies' (*shixue*). This practical outlook on the world was to help statesmen and elites to settle worldly matters pragmatically (*jingshi zhiyong*), and it was based on the assumption that any kind of knowledge should be useful for the community or the country.

The argument of 'practical use' served as a central thread in the discourse of the modernizers of the late nineteenth century. The emphasis on 'practical use', alongside the modernizers' growing awareness of the foreign powers, revealed the inherent problems of the Chinese educational and economical systems – and of their intimate relationship with each other. In a communiqué issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1864, the reformer Li Hongzhang (1823–1901) stated that "what is needed is not studied, and what is studied is not needed."<sup>12</sup> This phrase, which was reiterated numerous times by various reformers in the decades to follow, linked the idea of practical use to the problem of human resources, and to the potential exploitation of these resources through education. Through the argument of 'practical use', the outdated examination system was critically revised (and in 1905 abolished), and new ways in education were tested that had a stronger orientation towards 'application' and 'practical use'.

Thus, Huang's pamphlet of educational pragmatism in 1913 was no isolated phenomenon. Similarly, the above-mentioned writer Hu Shi, one of the most prominent students of Dewey, also drew on pre-existing, traditional concepts to arrive at his understanding of 'pragmatism'. In his memoirs, he remembers that Dewey helped him find parallels between Western and Chinese science:



He [Dewey; BS] helped me [understand; BS] the research methods of classical science and of the historians from the last one thousand years – in particular the last three-hundred years – such as '*kaojuxue*', '*kaozhengxue*' etc. I translate these into English as 'evidential investigation', since it is an investigation on the basis of evidence. There were at this time only very few people (virtually none) who noticed these commonalities between the principles of modern science and our classical *kaoju*, *kaozheng* method. I was the first to have expressed these statements. And the reason why I could do so was really thanks to Dewey's theories.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, Hu Shi used the term *shiyanzhuyi* (literally: 'experimentalism')<sup>14</sup> instead of the more common term for 'pragmatism'. Just like Huang Yanpei, however, he favored 'pragmatism' over classical learning which he saw as "much ado about nothing": abstract things were discussed that had no relevance; this could only be prevented if one started from looking at concrete things.<sup>15</sup> But unlike Dewey, Hu Shi had no motivation to be wary of an over-simplified view of science. In the Chinese context, he saw superstition, not scientism, as the real enemy of modern science. 'Pragmatism' was a weapon to fight superstition – *the* weapon.<sup>16</sup> As Sor-Hoon Tan points out, Hu Shi changed Dewey's statement to "regard pragmatism as primarily a method" into the claim that "Dewey, from beginning to end, only recognized pragmatism as a method."<sup>17</sup> Hu thus turned 'pragmatism' into an utterly extreme concept that allowed no compromise with more moderate reformers. To him, pragmatism was intrinsically linked to Western science, and with it to the superiority of the West as such:

I unreservedly condemn our Eastern civilization and warmly praise the modern civilization of the West. It has often been said that the Eastern civilization is idealistic while that of the West is materialistic. This is an untruth manufactured by people suffering from egotistical delusions... There are half-wits... who wish you to believe that the old Chinese culture and moral values are superior to all others. There are also fools who, having never been abroad, shouted: 'To the East! To the East! The Western trick no longer works now.' I want to say to you, don't be fooled. We must admit... that we are inferior to others not only in technology and political institutions but also in moral values, knowledge, literature, music, fine arts and body physique.<sup>18</sup>

Through his extreme interpretation of 'pragmatism', Hu Shi was steering towards a precarious situation. Not only were traditionalists – or, later on, neo-traditionalists like the philosopher Liang Shuming (1893–1988) – strongly opposed to what they regarded as cultural self-denial; also other intellectuals, irrespective of their political orientation, were critical of such readiness to worship Western values. Dewey himself was far from demanding such an attitude. Indeed, there were several occasions when Dewey cautioned against eradicating traditional structures, such as those of the family clan or the guilds, without equivalents to replace them.<sup>19</sup> Hu Shi's extreme (re-)presentation of Dewey might have made it particularly easy for Dewey's critics to attack him either from a traditionalist or Marxist perspective. Some accused Hu even of "'abducting' Dewey, of treating him like a 'puppet', and of using Dewey to 'increase his own fame' and to 'destroy traditional Chinese culture entirely.'"<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless – and now to the second point of Dewey's connectivity inside China – Hu Shi's personality was one of the reasons why Dewey could reach such a wide

audience. Hu Shi and Dewey's other mediators in China were all well-known for their intellectual wit and rhetorical talent. The educated population took much pleasure in listening to them and flocked to their lectures as if they were featuring a pop star.

The charisma of men like Hu Shih gave Dewey's lectures an effect which the near-sexagenarian would probably not otherwise have had with the students. [...] Dewey's lectures, like his books in English, were not clear to his Chinese audience – but Hu Shih was an excellent speaker, and his interpreted version was comprehensible to everyone.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, Dewey's China tour was meticulously orchestrated. Again, the comparison to the tour of a pop star does not seem too far-fetched. Dewey's mediators made sure that his lectures received extensive media coverage. Two journals, *New Youth* and *The Morning Post*, reported on every single event in connection with Dewey; they printed not only his lectures, but also reproduced short talks, photos, and the like.<sup>22</sup> The educational journal *New Education*, which was founded by another famous student of Dewey, Tao Xingzhi (1891–1946; then Dean of the Faculty of Education at Teachers College in Nanjing), was so devoted to Dewey's educational theories that Hu Shi called it a "Deweyan journal."<sup>23</sup> Since the journal was widely read amongst Chinese academia, Dewey's audience must have been familiar with what he had to say (or what his mediators translated). In addition to the media coverage of his activities and lectures – Dewey delivered some seventy-eight different lecture forums all over the country, with some of them consisting of fifteen to twenty lectures each – his translated lectures were published as books. By the time Dewey left China, a Beijing publishing house had already sold a dozen editions of his most

important lectures, each edition consisting of around 10,000 copies (and each copy containing about 500 pages!).<sup>24</sup> Many of his books that had been already translated – above all, *Democracy and Education* – were used as reading material at colleges and universities.

The craze about his person and lectures did not fail to impress Dewey, who felt to be "in the hands of young China... We ought to have a very good time. Quite unlike anything in Japan", which seemed like "a land of reserves and reticence."<sup>25</sup> Unlike in Japan, Dewey felt firmly integrated into the Chinese intellectual landscape. Furthermore, he was provided access to some of the most central associations of the country since his former students had all attained crucial positions not only at important institutions such as Beijing University and Nanjing Teachers College, but also within organizations that greatly shaped educational policy at the time, and often even politics itself. What the German Carl Heinrich Becker, who in 1931 was leading the League of Nations' Educational Commission to China, called a "devastating" influence of the Teachers College on China,<sup>26</sup> can be re-formulated positively as the vast potential for shaping policy that lay at the hands of the Chinese alumni of the Teachers College. Through his connections, Dewey was able to take part in the reform debates and proposals directly. He spoke at the national assemblies of several educational organizations who between 1915 and 1922 worked on the drafting of a new education system, which finally replaced the old system in 1922. (This system was later on criticized as too Americanized.) While Dewey was certainly given the impression that he could actually accentuate the reform process, his appearance at these assemblies – as well as at other institutions – can also be interpreted as attempts, on the part of his Chinese mediators, to use his prominence and popularity to pursue their own interests. Dewey served as a virtual seal of quality if he agreed with a

certain reform proposal or visited a certain school. And his approval – or simple presence – was particularly needed if it was a controversial proposal or institution. For example, his visit to a primary school where craftsmanship had been introduced as a subject was reported,<sup>27</sup> as was his acknowledgement of the achievements of the Chinese Vocational School in Shanghai.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Dewey's former students and then mediators had a vital interest in ensuring that Dewey kept his outstanding reputation and wide popularity. As Keenan notes, they may have even influenced the American opinion about the events in China, since Dewey's China analyses that were published in the American media relied heavily on his former students' views of, for example, the democracy movement in China. In these accounts, Dewey repeatedly stressed that he was indebted to a "close Chinese friend" when analyzing the Chinese situation – this friend, very probably, was Hu Shi.<sup>29</sup>

A further coincidence made the star of John Dewey rise even higher in China: his sixtieth birthday on October 20, 1919, co-occurred with the 2470<sup>th</sup> birthday of Confucius according to that year's lunar calendar date. The famous Cai Yuanpei (1868–1940), a former student at the University of Leipzig and Chinese Minister of Education upon the foundation of the Republic in 1912, did not fail to point out the similarities between the two figures by quoting from Confucius, stressing the importance of experience: "To learn without thinking is a disaster; but to think without learning is dangerous." However, he also pointed to the differences and thus elevated Dewey over Confucius:

Confucius said respect the emperor (*wang*), the learned doctor (*poshih*) advocates democracy; Confucius said females are a problem to raise, the learned doctor

advocates equal rights for men and women; Confucius said transmit not create, the learned doctor advocates creativity.<sup>30</sup>

Through such a flattering introduction by such a famous and well-respected person, John Dewey emerged not only as an alternative to Confucius, but almost as a sort of alternative Confucius himself: a wise but modern-minded master who was to be widely heard in China.

But which were the topics – besides the very general concept of 'pragmatism' – that were actually heard, and how were they linked to acute concerns among Chinese elites? Three groups of themes stand out as having received the greatest attention in the Dewey-inspired debate of Republican China: the debate on science and saving the nation, the argument against 'old-style education' and the discovery of the child, and the discussion of vocational and mass education.

To many Chinese, Dewey was a synonym for modern, 'Western', science. Western science again – or an educational system that was modeled after Western scientific standards – was deemed necessary for the country and its people to survive – 'education to save the country' (*jiaoyu jiuguo*). Just like the discourse on 'pragmatism', the save-the-country discourse reached back into the nineteenth century and drew some inspiration from Social Darwinism. It made Dewey's conviction that it was education – and not revolution – that would lead to improvement in China all the more acceptable. To this older discursive thread of science, education, and national survival came the scientification of education – or, in Carl Heinrich Becker's words, "the dissolution of all real knowledge into gibberish on the method and psychology of education."<sup>31</sup> With his views on child-centered pedagogy, his theories on human

intelligence, and his practical experiences through the laboratory schools, Dewey was the ideal representative of this new trend in education; the high positions that his former students attained after their return to China certainly strengthened this view. The role of education as a cure-all to the country's diseases seemed much more refined now: while in the traditional sense it mainly meant to train talents and educate morals, the newly introduced methods from psychology promised to provide much more efficient and scientific tools to understand and manipulate the human, and in particular the child's, mind.<sup>32</sup>

'Old-style' education, as has been noted above with regard to the debate on 'pragmatism', had been criticized already in the nineteenth century. Rote learning and learning only oriented towards examinations (in order to become an official) met with particularly harsh criticism. Naturally, Dewey's condemnation of an education that was completely detached from the reality of the child was greeted with enthusiasm by reform-minded Chinese intellectuals. What further vitalized the debate, however, was the Chinese discovery of the child, which coincided with the Chinese reception of child-centered pedagogy within the progressive education movement, of which Dewey was seen to be the most important representative. During the May Fourth Movement – which then evolved into the so-called New Culture Movement – the child was suddenly at the centre of attention: not only as an embodiment of the nation's future, but as a human being in its own right.<sup>33</sup> A number of writers attacked the traditional inhumane view of humans in general and of the child in particular, where the child was seen as some yet undeveloped form of the adult. One of the most famous modern Chinese writers, Lu Xun (1881–1936), attacked this traditional misconception of the child in his article "How We Are Going to Be Fathers Now."<sup>34</sup>

Educators inspired by Dewey's conception of the child started talking about the child's "innate" wish to construct, and how this could be developed into something useful in school education. Teachers were now expected to foster the students' "creative imagination" and build up their "constructive spirit", while before they had been entrusted with monitoring the students' progress in rote learning. Through the intake of Dewey's ideas, the concept of science was merged not only with its applicability, but also with the psychology of the child, the uniqueness of each product (of manufacturing during the learning process), and the freedom of expression when creating something new.<sup>35</sup>

The last thematic group – vocational and mass education – represents, like the topics discussed so far, also a juncture of older and newer discursive threads. The vocational education movement had its precedents already in the nineteenth century, when the need for trained personnel at the newly founded factories arose. Vocational education was then mainly conceptualized as 'expert education'. The reception of Dewey's views on vocational education coincided with a shift in focus within the Chinese vocational education movement. Vocational education was no longer just a solution to the country's problem of finding adequately trained manpower. Rather, it was to solve the country's most urgent problem: the problem of livelihood (*shengji wenti*). Vocational education was thus turned into a mass phenomenon and incorporated into movements to popularize education all over the country (*pingmin jiaoyu*). When Dewey, throughout his lectures, admonished not to forget the countryside, he hit a nerve among Chinese intellectuals, who had become aware of how the educational reform programs so far had been too focused on the urban areas. Chinese scholars today generally hold the opinion that Dewey's visit and lectures inspired Chinese intellectuals to extend their reform efforts to the rural areas.<sup>36</sup>



However, the attention of many reform-minded writers and educators had already been drawn to the Chinese countryside by the time of Dewey's visit – whether motivated by the search for bad habits and harmful superstition or alarmed by the results from educational surveys, which, in the course of the scientification of education, had become increasingly popular. Dewey's visit can be seen as reinforcing and adding legitimization to these intellectuals' efforts to educate the countryside.

With the merging of vocational and mass education, the *raison d'être* of general education began to be severely questioned. With his objection to separating general and vocational education, Dewey served as a point of reference. For example, the above-mentioned founder of the Chinese Association of Vocational Education, Huang Yanpei, viewed all education as permeated by vocational education. He underpinned this view by quoting from Dewey's China lectures. Dewey, Huang argued, saw it as the fundamental principle of education that the individual was enabled to make a living as well as serve society; these were, Huang asserted, exactly the aims of vocational education. In this sense, there was no general education: Every form of education touched upon some sort of profession, and every profession upon some sort of education.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Wang Maozu (1891–1949), propagator of mass education within the Association, pointed out that what was understood as 'vocational education' really should be an integral part of any type of education. If all those things that were deemed useful, practical, and relevant for the professional life were subsumed under 'vocational education', "then what is it that general education consists of? Does this mean that general education is constrained to an education where one handles a few void, abstruse characters?"<sup>38</sup> If it was the mission of education to prepare students for life, then any sort of education, in the end, was some kind of vocational education. Dewey's statement (made also during a lecture in Shanghai) that "education was life

itself", was very well taken. Profession, life, and education now seemed intricately linked to each other.<sup>39</sup>

As has been shown, Republican China was remarkably receptive to Dewey's ideas – again, quite unlike Japan, where the hegemonic reign of the German/traditional model was a hindrance to any serious intake of Dewey's ideas.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Dewey was able to satisfy the needs of both progressive and moderately conservative forces. His democratic convictions made him attractive for supporters of the May Fourth Movement, but at the same time his objections to revolution and to using violence rendered him digestible for those who wanted to reform and transform China through education. Many even interpreted Dewey's views on students and (future) workers as a guarantee of social stability: students were taught to be content with their situation and make the most of it, instead of turning it upside-down, as the more radical forces demanded. The basic message of Dewey's *Democracy and Education* was, according to this rationale, transformed into the tenet that "each should be in his proper place" and "each should be properly provided for."<sup>41</sup> Propagators in vocational education were particularly prone to following this line of argument, which was criticized by contemporaries such as the above-mentioned Dewey disciple Tao Xingzhi as the 'principle of clothing and feeding' (*yishizhuyi*). As we will see, this 'principle' was viciously attacked in the 1950s.

Dewey's friendship with China, however, was not without flaws, as his ideas did receive some criticism prior to 1949. John Dewey met with resistance both among the Marxists and among those who were wary of an extreme Westernization or 'copyism'. The latter group was ideologically undefined and comprised neo-traditionalists as well as moderate reformers and Marxists. Their basic argument was that China should not make the mistake of copying blindly from other countries – an argument that had

already surfaced at the beginning of the Republic<sup>42</sup> and that has been repeatedly brought forward also during Communist times (including the most recent reform debates). Borrowing from other countries should take place only with sound judgment to avoid the past mistake of "taking over the civilization of other countries in order to satisfy one's own needs"; "pumping up efficient results from abroad" would only lead to more "mistakes and disadvantages pouring down" upon China.<sup>43</sup> Educators warned that China should not deny its own history and society:

Since during the reforms those who were politically responsible sought only to strengthen [the country; BS], nobody asked why it was the case that Japan could copy Germany; people just wanted to destroy, in the shortest time possible, Chinese history, to destroy the social environment, and to turn a micro-structured agrarian society into a society defined by industry and commerce.<sup>44</sup>

Although, as has been noted, it was by no means Dewey's intention to 'de-culture' China, previous experiences with blind copyism made some reformers cautious to embrace his theory. Another reason might have been the mushrooming of Dewey-inspired 'laboratory schools' (*shiyan xuexiao*) which not all had the quality that educators desired them to have. In a critical article on these schools, Zhao Yichen sarcastically asks: "as far as the laboratory character is concerned, could it be that what is laboratory is the method of copying America?"<sup>45</sup>

One of the earliest criticisms from a Marxist point of view, according to Jessica Wang, was articulated in 1921 by the Communist Fei Juetian, who held that Dewey was too much engaged in abstract speculations and too little concerned with concrete facts.<sup>46</sup> Other Marxists maintained that Dewey's pragmatism just benefitted the

bourgeoisie. In education, the pedagogue Jiang Qi (1886–1951) attacked Dewey's attempt to dissolve the distinction between 'vocational education' and 'liberal education', or 'professional education' and 'cultural education'. Quoting extensively from both Marx and Sun Yat-sen, Jiang argued that vocational education, from a historical perspective, existed long before 'liberal education'; it fulfilled education's original task of developing the social production forces (*gesellschaftliche Produktivkräfte*), with which 'liberal education' had nothing to do. To deny the difference between these two types of education would not do justice to the fundamental importance of vocational education. However, Jiang agreed with Dewey to avoid the term 'vocational education' (and replace it by 'education for production' (*shengchan jiaoyu*)), since 'vocational education' could be easily understood as 'education for profit' (*yingli jiaoyu*). In a final move, Jiang conceded that Dewey's ideas might be of use to China as long as it had to go through the capitalist stage, since both Dewey and China were still "extremely conservative."<sup>47</sup> This criticism can be called almost tender compared with what was to follow in the 1950s.

### **A Swindler and Charlatan: Dewey in the Marxist Era**

The early communists had no fears of contact with Dewey. On the contrary, Dewey was on good terms with two of the founding fathers of Chinese communism, Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) and Zhou Enlai (1898–1976). Even Mao Zedong (1893–1976) went to two of Dewey's lectures in Shanghai and Changsha. In Changsha, in October 1920, Mao was even entrusted by the Hunan Newspaper *Da Gongbao* with taking notes of Dewey's lecture. According to Lu Guoqi, Mao explicitly referred to Dewey in his early thoughts on education and was clearly influenced by Dewey's ideas,

although he at the same time admitted his ignorance in recognizing the ideological divides: "To be honest, I still do not have a relatively clear idea of all these different -isms and theories."<sup>48</sup>

This peaceful co-existence of ideologies ended abruptly with the dawn of Stalinism. Dewey was now clearly identified as *persona non grata* and class enemy. His former student Chen Heqin (1895–1982) was forced to publicly engage in self-criticism (*renzuishu*) and denounce Dewey as "reactionary", as a representative of "subjective idealism", and as the "greatest hypocrite and swindler in the history of education."<sup>49</sup> Through his hypocrisy, so Dewey's critics argued, Dewey had been able to deceive a great number of upright Marxists, since he was disguised as 'progressive' and 'leftist'. This made his crime – of being a counter-revolutionary and reactionary capitalist – all the more serious. As the vanguard of capitalism, Dewey became the target of a series of ferocious attacks, or, as one of his prime critics, Cao Fu,<sup>50</sup> put it: "If one wants to shoot a man, one has to shoot the horse first." What exactly did this horse carry on his back to make his critics so upset?

As has been noted above, Dewey openly objected to revolution as a means of transforming China; he was strictly opposed to using violence. To replace revolution by education was at best naive, from a Marxist point of view. It was also considered unfair in two aspects: first, Dewey himself profited from former violent revolutions that had brought about liberalism – why should he not accept the same means to achieve socialism? Second, only on the battle ground, not in parliament could the ruling capitalist class be driven away, who, ironically enough, were themselves masters in using violence and repression: "It is not that the proletariat does not want to use the 'method of intelligence', but that the ruling class does not allow them to use the 'method of intelligence!'"<sup>51</sup> But, even worse, most critics did simply not believe in

Dewey's naivety when speaking against revolution. Dewey was presented as so cunning as to disguise his real aims by pretending to be a naive educator; in reality, he was part of a conspiracy that aimed to keep the workers ignorant and sheepish. How did his critics arrive at such a conclusion, and which ideological baggage was felt to be particularly incompatible with the Marxist way of seeing the world?

Clearly, Dewey's objection to revolution was just one reason – but not the main reason – why Marxists could not accept his thinking. At the bottom of what Chinese Marxists saw in Dewey's writings lay propositions that, taken seriously, would annihilate the Chinese-Marxist world picture. In the discussion on Dewey, three big topics surface again and again: 'naturalism', Dewey's purported stance of 'anti-science', and his proposition of 'uncertainty'.

Already in 1950, Dewey was accused of 'naturalism' or 'biologism' – of applying biological knowledge to the social world in a far too simplistic manner. His critics blamed this on his orientation towards Darwinism: progress and development were presented as an innate, biological phenomenon that could not and should not be manipulated or accelerated through social forces. In the early 1950s, this position was considered untenable, since Marx clearly demanded that education promote human development in a certain direction: "Very obviously, social change without a direction or aim means that society does not change!"<sup>52</sup> In the mid-1950s, this was rephrased more polemically: any assumption based on 'innate talent' was, firstly, wrong because the individual was a product of society. Secondly, terms like 'innate talent' were suspected to be used in order to justify why workers were subordinate to the capitalist class since they were considered to lack the 'innate talent'.<sup>53</sup> As with his stance against revolution, Dewey was presented as part of a greater conspiracy to maintain the capitalist system. Also, the tone of the argument became more offensive: Dewey's

writings were described as "mirroring the monopoly, rotten, moribund stage that capitalism has walked into"; his Chinese followers such as Hu Shi or Chen Heqin were named "running dogs" (*zougou*); Dewey was to be "purged" from China.<sup>54</sup>

Dewey's apparent 'anti-scientific' stance was another point of criticism. On the surface, this did not seem to threaten the foundations of the Marxist belief. However, it depends on how 'science' – or 'anti-science' – was defined. In a first step, Dewey's theory was deconstructed; it was described as being based solely on psychology, with an inexcusable neglect of scientific content and logic. Ironically, Cao Fu used the same quotation from Confucius that Cai Yuanpei had used when welcoming Dewey to China: "To learn without thinking is a disaster; but to think without learning is dangerous."<sup>55</sup> Dewey was accused of discarding all scientific knowledge that had been accumulated over the centuries, just to let the children be little 'discoverers' and 'inventors'; by replacing the discipline-oriented curriculum by project work, students would never acquire systematic knowledge of the various sciences. Even more shocking to his critics, the teachers were bereft of all authority: "the leading function of the teacher is negated."<sup>56</sup> Che Wenbo appealed dramatically to the reader not to forget the teacher as the "mankind's positive warrior in the battle against ignorance."<sup>57</sup> Cao Fu, citing Pedro T. Orata, voiced his fear that this kind of teaching method would only lead to chaos or even anarchism.<sup>58</sup> Regarding Dewey's child-centred pedagogy, he summarized the Chinese-Marxist standpoint concisely:

We do not need to use Deweyism as a weapon, because parts of the anti-formalism in Dewey's methodology are built on the wrong basis of the child-centered principle. The child-centered principle is individualist, and we are opposed to individualism. [...] We should adopt the advanced Soviet experience to build a

country and should from now on strengthen the arduous training in systematic scientific knowledge at the schools!<sup>59</sup>

The second step in the accusation of Dewey being anti-scientific went much further, establishing Dewey as a serious threat to the essential principle of Marxism: the principle that there was an objective truth that could be attained through scientific methods. Chinese Marxists were extremely critical of Dewey's relativization of truth. Zhong Chengzhang, in an article from 1963, launched an attack on 'pragmatism', which held that "what is useful is truth." He expressed his indignation at Hu Shi's statement that truth was just a product of humans. This idea was considered utmost selfish and lacking morality: the relativity of truth was thus connected to both 'individualism' and 'selfish', 'profit-making' capitalism.<sup>60</sup> This was a further step towards the inflationary and increasingly de-specialized use of the term 'pragmatism': 'pragmatism' turned more and more into a synonym for 'selfishness'.

This accusation of denying an objective truth leads directly to the third and last big topic in the Dewey discussion of the 1950s and 1960s: Dewey's proposition of 'uncertainty'. As with the preceding topic, the theorem of 'uncertainty' was attacked from two angles: on the one hand, Dewey's incompetence was to be proven from a scientific point of view; on the other, 'uncertainty' was seen as an existential threat to Marxism. From a scientific point of view, Dewey's claim that education was "aimless" was ridiculed as a failure to recognize the aim of education, which was, of course, to integrate the individual into the (socialist) society. A closely related reproach was that this kind of 'aimless education' had no ideology as a basis, and thus no standards of 'right' and 'wrong'. As Cao Fu points out, such an educational theory could serve both a socialist or fascist society; its vagueness in ideological terms would



eventually lead to the de-politicization of the school and, consequently, to the political ignorance of students.<sup>61</sup>

Again, critics of the mid-1950s and later were harsher in their judgment: Dewey's 'aimless education' was not just a wrong theory, but in fact was aimed deliberately at keeping the workers ignorant. By re-directing the children's attention to only the most basic things (so-called 'child-centred pedagogy'), they were prepared to become workers who could "provide for clothing and food." Through such a narrowly constricted education, students would not be given access to systematic theories and knowledge, which would enable them to emancipate themselves. Students were thus literally deprived of those instruments that could enlighten them, such as teachers and books: "If this is not cheating the people, then what is it?"<sup>62</sup> Dewey's 'theory of aimless education' was thus seen as "a fairy tale propagated by the capitalist class that education is apart from politics, it is a kind of vile intrigue in which they [the capitalists; BS] plan to cover up the reactionary aim of imperialist education."<sup>63</sup> Attacking Dewey on these grounds also meant attacking those educators, both past and contemporary, who considered it most important to enable workers to satisfy their basic needs: protection from hunger and cold. This rather technocratic idea of the educational mission had no place in the increasingly utopian world of the 1960s.

The accusation of 'uncertainty', however, did not just touch upon education being 'aimless'. To the Chinese-Marxist world view, it meant much more. In parallel with the enraged refutation that truth was subjective and relative, Dewey's theorem of 'uncertainty' met with similar resistance, because it entailed that the course of history as such – and therefore the future – was uncertain. This was in direct contradiction to the Marxist idea of inevitable historical stages, and it also dangerously threatened the designable constructability of the world. As Jin Yuelin reasoned, "we are able to

recognize objective, inevitable laws, moreover, through our correct recognition, we are able to reconstruct the world."<sup>64</sup> As if comforting himself and his readers, he then explained that the reason why Dewey conveyed the picture of an unstable, uncertain world was that the capitalist system itself was on the verge of collapse; to the capitalists, the world was indeed unstable and dangerous. Cao Fu, in his argument against Deweyan uncertainty, became almost pleading in tone: "Marxist and Leninist philosophy has given us a 'certain' aim, a correct direction. The Chinese people firmly believe in this objective and keeps to this direction, consequently, they have finally found salvation."<sup>65</sup> It suddenly seemed that there was much to lose by following Dewey.

During the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, Dewey was almost completely silenced. At first glance, this is no surprise: as a Western thinker of the wrong ideology he had no place in the Cultural Revolution discourse. At second glance, however, it *is* peculiar that Dewey is almost completely absent from the discourse, even as class enemy. There is one article from 1974 – "Who Says that Open-Door Education Is 'Pragmatism'?"<sup>66</sup> – which can give a very clear clue why this was the case: there were too many – if superficial – similarities between Dewey's educational practices and those of the Gang of Four. In his article, Juan did allude to the fact that "some people" had argued that the idea of 'open-door education' had some common points with Dewey's 'pragmatist education'. But he then went to great lengths to prove that one had nothing to do with the other: teachers in open-door education were farmers, workers, and soldiers; moreover, Dewey's 'project work' was far removed from the real world, while Cultural Revolutionists really went out into the real world. These were about the two most concrete reasons Juan could offer to establish 'pragmatist' and 'open-door' education as antidotes. The rest of his argument

dissolved into phrase-mongering: 'pragmatism' was a capitalist ideology, an instrument to turn education into something that was useful to the capitalist class; as "subjective idealist educational thought" it was clearly the very antithesis of Cultural Revolutionist ideology. His arguments were to be inversed after the end of the Cultural Revolution and at the beginning of China's Open Door policy.

### **Re-Opening the Bottle: Dewey's Come-Back in China**

The end of the Cultural Revolution did not yet see the reestablishment of Dewey. This had to wait until the beginning of the 1980s. In the meantime, articles on Dewey uncovered a curious alliance between the Gang of Four and Dewey: the Gang of Four were pragmatists! Due to the increasingly slippery usage of 'pragmatism', the Gang of Four could be called pragmatists because they did only what was of use to them to seize power – and everything that was of use to them was "the truth."<sup>67</sup> 'Pragmatist' had clearly become akin to profanity by the late 1970s, and was sometimes used interchangeably with 'fascist'. Also, the idea of conspiracy or intrigue was extended to include the Gang of Four: they were accused of repressing the working class and preventing them from obtaining the knowledge that would help them to overthrow the capitalist system; by keeping the students ignorant of real knowledge, they led them into "blind action."<sup>68</sup>

The Gang of Four had brought about exactly the chaos that the Dewey critics of the 1950s and 1960s had anticipated if his pedagogy of the child as the centre was put into practice: the de-centering of the teacher led to vulgar disrespect, the self-organization of the students led to boundless anarchism, and the idealization of ignorance led to the complete absence of any systematic knowledge. Even the

argument of 'biologism' was reiterated: just as Dewey maintained that the child was 'innately talented', the Gang of Four held that the youth was 'innately revolutionary' and just needed to grow – without any teacher. Writers from the late 1970s showed themselves deeply shaken by the Cultural Revolution's radical inversion of educational values, which led to vicious attacks both on teachers and on all 'book knowledge'. Fang Yan recounted, in a further comparison of Dewey and the Gang of Four,<sup>69</sup> a particularly representative and detestable event in which the student Zhang Tiesheng, who in 1973 sat for the college entrance examination and purportedly handed in a blank paper, was used by the Gang of Four to further radicalize their assault on 'traditional knowledge'. In their worship of ignorance, illiterates were compared to brave and strong wild oxen. (Students should grow horns on their heads and thorns on their bodies to fight heroically against the capitalists.)

Through their condemnation of a policy and an ideology that were directed against the acquisition of systematic knowledge, the writers of the late 1970s brought the notion of the 'expert' back into the discussion – the prerequisite for China's modernization. By placing the Cultural Revolutionaries and utopian Communists on the same level as Dewey – whose anti-scientific and unmoral stance was a well-established truth – writers could reveal the vulgarity and pointlessness of the hostile attitude towards knowledge.<sup>70</sup> Fang Yan, in a third article, cites Chen Boda (1905–1989), a former Communist chief ideologue, as saying: "You don't need that much theory, you can neither eat, nor can you drink [by theorizing; BS], if you can drive a tractor, that's sufficient", before emphasizing the importance of pursuing "both red and expert education" in order to achieve the aims of the "Four Modernizations." Finally playing the patriotic card, Fang Yan accused the Gang of Four of intending, with their anti-modernist policy, to drag China back into colonialism.<sup>71</sup>

Starting with Deng Xiaoping's Open Door policy, articles on Dewey were losing their emotional polemic. While some authors were still busy with comparing Dewey and the Gang of Four, others started – slowly and cautiously – to acknowledge his educational thought. This was also due to the fact that Western scholarship was begun to be read and reviewed again, in journals like *World Philosophy* (*Shijie Zhexue*), *Social Science Frontline* (*Shehui Kexue Zhanxian*), or *Comparative Education Research* (*Bijiao Jiaoyu Yanjiu*). From a political-ideological point of view, however, any similarities between Deweyism and Marxism were vehemently denied.<sup>72</sup> Dewey's slow reestablishment went about indirectly: through a re-appraisal of Tao Xingzhi's educational thought and his contributions to China, Dewey was re-evaluated quasi *en passant*. Thus, Tao served as Dewey's mediator for a second time – although both of them had passed on by the 1980s.<sup>73</sup> Authors on Tao Xingzhi in the early 1980s made it clear that Tao was neither capitalist nor pragmatist nor Deweyan; still, the reassessment of Tao's legacy paved the way for a more positive reception of Dewey's thought, since the discussion of Tao's educational thought initiated a debate on democracy and science.

In an article from 1981, Chen Hancui described how Tao "critically absorbed the contents of Dewey's educational theory that made sense, but threw away its scum", and "starting from the needs of the people's masses of our country, presented innovative educational contents."<sup>74</sup> Chen's article laid the groundwork for the Dewey discussion of the 1980s; almost all the big topics (except for vocational education) that were to characterize the discourse of the 1980s were at least broached: democracy and the 'masses', science and innovation, Marxism and revolution, and the 'Chineseness' of China's modernization and reform. Until 1982, Dewey's potential contributions to this discourse were acknowledged only reticently; while there might

have been some positive side-effects of Dewey's theory, the core of his thinking still had to be rejected on the grounds that it was 'capitalist' and full of 'subjective idealism'. The placement of these negative characterizations changed very clearly from 1983 onwards: they no longer pervaded the general argument of the articles, but were placed either at the beginning or at the end of an article, to please censorship and be on the safe side. This change might also have been due to the fact that in 1982, the Chinese Association for Research on the History of Education (*Zhongguo Jiaoyushi Yanjiuhui*) made 'Dewey' a special topic at their annual conference.<sup>75</sup>

### *Democracy and the Masses*

'Democracy' was a programmatic topic of the 1980s, albeit less tied to the right of each individual than to the well-being of the masses. Authors reminded readers that for the Dewey disciple Tao Xingzhi, democracy meant "penicillin for politics and vitamin for the mind."<sup>76</sup> At the same time, to be democratic meant to be a man of the people, like Tao: "When we seek knowledge, why are we doing it? To become officials and get rich? For the profit of our own little circle? No! ... The way of the great learning is: in enlightening the virtue of the people, in being close to the masses, until the happiness of the people [is achieved; BS]."<sup>77</sup> In the wake of China's Open Door policy, such an attitude was deemed essential for achieving the Four Modernizations; the Republican educator Tao Xingzhi was seen as suitable to embody the new program of modernizing the country and incorporating the masses at the same time. All of a sudden, he was transformed into a key figure of the 1980s. The fact that Dewey, with his educational program, targeted the masses (and not just a tiny group of a chosen few) and that he wanted to enlighten them, was now re-considered

positively. A further point of resurging interest was Dewey's stress on 'real life' and on what was really relevant to the people.

However, there were also seen to be drawbacks in Dewey's theory, which Tao Xingzhi, as his Chinese student but not imitator, managed to overcome: an "exaggerated democratization." The experience from the Cultural Revolution still vividly on their minds, Chinese scholars were more than reserved when it came to "let the child do what it wants to do." Tao Xingzhi, in contrast, was judged to have upheld a notion of "discipline" which was lacking in Dewey's thought – but which was thought essential for "socialist education."<sup>78</sup> Also, Tao's conception of the masses was felt to be different from Dewey's, which became clear through Tao's alteration of Dewey's 'education is life' into 'life is education'. Tao was presented as being really concerned to overcome the difficulties and hardships of the working class, while Dewey's main objective was described as making the working class adjust to the existing difficulties and hardships. Tao was reported to have criticized Dewey's view of education as a "bird's cage" where a few twigs were placed to simulate nature – students had contact only with a "fake society" at school.<sup>79</sup>

### **Science and Innovation**

Besides democracy, science was the other catchword of the 1980s – which rendered this period, also in the eyes of many intellectuals, strikingly similar to the times of the May Fourth Movement, in which 'Mr. Science' and 'Mr. Democracy' had taken the reins. How could Dewey be re-connected with the idea of science – only a few years after he had been established as the very antidote of science and was considered even as a threat to the acquisition of systematic scientific knowledge? Again, the transformation occurred via Tao Xingzhi, who regarded "the present world [as] a

world of science, the entire Chinese country has to receive the baptism of science..."<sup>80</sup>

Tao also brought the importance of expert education and book knowledge back into the discussion: while Dewey, in the early 1980s, was still described as discarding all book knowledge, Tao just wanted to erase the "deadly" attitude towards book knowledge. Instead of "reading dead books, reading books in a deadly manner, and reading books to die", students should "read living books, read books in a lively manner, and read books to live."<sup>81</sup>

However, starting in 1982 Dewey's contributions to science education could be recognized on their own terms, without Tao Xingzhi functioning as mediator. Now, Dewey could be called "progressive" again: even if there were some shortcomings to his theory, his thought, "on the great path of the spiritual and civilizational development of mankind, had some progressive effects amidst the transformation process of educational theory."<sup>82</sup> Authors began to attach great importance to Dewey's 'experience-based' approach, since they saw such an approach as perfectly suited to the times of modernization. The above-quoted Wang Tianyi, however, was still wary of too much emphasis on the child's individuality, thus echoing his colleagues from the 1950s and 1960s as well as the concerns right after the Cultural Revolution:

This emphasis [on the child's individuality and freedom; BS] does not only give freedom to the children, but it also sets them free to the extreme [...] An even more serious consequence of this emphasis is that it brings chaos to the normal order of the schools, so that the teachers are not able to teach anymore, the students are not able to study anymore, and the rules that a school should have dissolve into chaos [...] This is the real quality of Dewey's "revolution" or "transformation" in educational matters.<sup>83</sup>



His fears, however, were quickly allayed in subsequent articles. Qiao Youhua maintained that Dewey's purported stance of anti-science was a misunderstanding, just as his reported dissolution of all discipline into disrespect and chaos was.<sup>84</sup> Gradually, Dewey's image was transformed into a figure that highly respected science but wanted to connect it to the student's individual experience.<sup>85</sup> Finally, Dewey even served as a guarantee of order and stability and as a warning against going to the extremes (as had happened during the Cultural Revolution). Dewey, so these authors asserted, had not completely annihilated tradition and, even more importantly, he offered a new philosophy in exchange. To the educationists of the 1980s, this gave rise to the pressing question: what kind of philosophy did China's new education need?<sup>86</sup>

The idea of innovation was closely associated with how Chinese educators now interpreted Dewey's approach towards science. Considering that 'innovation' was to be one of the main pillars of Chinese modernization, Dewey seemed particularly promising in this search for innovation. Formerly demonized or at least derided, Dewey's insights into the psychology of the child suddenly began to attract attention. The notion of 'talent' (*rencai*) was back – not as a political entity, but as an inbuilt potential that could be extracted through the right kind of education. At the beginning of the 1980s, the idea of 'innate talent' was only cautiously accepted and counter-balanced by the idea of training. Thus, Wang Tianyi cautioned against a neglect of training by putting too much stress on the individual development: "there will be eight or nine out of ten who will not be able to become useful talents. A human being definitely needs to go through education, and also needs to go through patient and meticulous training." Otherwise, mankind would have to go back to "dwelling in

caves and living in the wilderness" again.<sup>87</sup> The end of the 1980s, on the eve of the Tiananmen Massacre, was witness to a full embracement of Dewey's emphasis on individuality and creativity; there was no other way towards becoming an innovative country:

Do the analysis and the criticism that Dewey presented with regard to the past educational theory and the then current educational practice in the West offer points which the present school education of our country should consider or can draw lessons from? I think they do. Remember how comrade Liu Fonian once pointed out with regard to postgraduate examinations that there were quite a few who memorized mechanically and learned by rote. Passing the examinations for middle school, for university, even for postgraduate programs, is all based on memorizing mechanically and learning by rote. These people have never paid attention to training their own creative thinking capability, they have never wanted to grasp true skill and genuine practical knowledge [...] In their future work they will inevitably teach their trammeling conventionalities to the students, how can we, with this method, train the students' active character, develop their cognitive skills?<sup>88</sup>

### **Marxism and Revolution**

Interestingly enough, the author just quoted closed his article with a paragraph on Marx – but not, as it had been usually the case, as a kind of corrective or at least complement to Dewey, but to underline the importance of human thinking. This is symptomatic of how the image of Marxism was polished in order to fit the new times.

But how were Marx and the idea of revolution reconciled with the American capitalist Dewey, who was outspokenly against revolution as a means to change society?

Again, Tao Xingzhi served as mediator in the initial phase of reestablishment. Through him, Dewey's thoughts could evolve into real dialectical thinking, by unifying teaching, learning, and doing. Moreover, Tao quickly recognized the necessity of revolution, and of education to serve the revolution. He was thus seen as having succeeded in transforming the 'education-for-survival' discourse (*jiaoyu jiuguo*), which Dewey was considered part of, into a 'revolution-for-survival' discourse (*geming jiuguo*).<sup>89</sup> Apart from that, the notion of 'revolution' (and its necessity) faded more and more into the background. Modern Marxism could increasingly do without revolution, and in this process, Dewey became decreasingly capitalist: the traditional school system against which Dewey crusaded had after all been a capitalist school system!<sup>90</sup> Also, Dewey's resistance against segregating students through education, by providing to one group a "preparation for a life of leisure", and to the other group a "preparation for a life of productive work", was now perceived as anti-capitalist.<sup>91</sup>

Others differentiated between Dewey as theorist and Dewey as practitioner: while his political attitude was "wrong in theory", his approach yielded useful results in practice.<sup>92</sup> But even the philosophers, who by their very nature were more concerned with Dewey's theory than their counterparts in education, began to see good points in Dewey. Dewey was praised for his dialectic method, and his criticism of Marxism was seen as mainly directed against the "false" Marxists (as well as the "right" Marxists who had made a mistake), who had proposed theories of economic determinism. The authors also acknowledged that in socialist societies, there could "happen" some "feudal" elements which were even worse than capitalism (such as

Stalinism), and Dewey had been right to criticize these "elements."<sup>93</sup> Put that way, Dewey was no more a threat to socialism as such, but merely – and justly so – to its deformations.

### **Modernization à la Chinoise**

Dewey was also re-discovered on the grounds of his – in Chinese eyes – balanced view of society and individual. While only years before he had been the ill-reputed representative of excessive individuality and selfishness, he went through an astounding metamorphosis in the 1980s and emerged as a wise compromise between the Rousseauian notion of a "too individualistic education" and the German or Japanese nationalist programs which aimed at subjecting the future citizens completely to the interests of the state.<sup>94</sup> Dewey was seen as reconciling the apparent contradiction and tension between individual and society, through an education that served the interests of both the individual and society. In the 1980s – as today – this was perceived to be one of the major challenges: how to individualize society without de-socializing the individual. Dewey seemed to provide useful answers in this regard. A similar reconciliatory tone began to pervade the simultaneity of 'old' and 'new' knowledge: Dewey was now perceived as having found the way how to transmit knowledge that had accumulated over the history of mankind in a manner that linked it to fresh, individual experience.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, Chinese authors increasingly identified with Dewey and the situation that he had faced during his lifetime: a situation "where we are facing a new breakthrough in industry, economy, and technology."<sup>96</sup> Dewey's historical situation was no more described as a stage where capitalism was about to collapse, but as a stage of utmost importance for technological development and innovation, as a time of great

challenges, to which education had to react and readjust. The portrayal of Deweyan education had thus been successfully readjusted as well, from an 'aimless' (and thus 'useless') education to one of the strongest and most influential instruments to change society.<sup>97</sup>

### **Vocational Education**

In the mid-1980s, one more part from Dewey's educational thought was recovered and re-activated in China: his ideas about vocational education. In the more ideologized phases of Chinese education, there was hardly any space for vocational education: if every worker could become a doctor and every farmer a professor, there was no need to submit anybody to vocational training. Moreover, as has been noted above, vocational education was, on the one hand, heavily criticized as an instrument to appease the masses and thus reproduce the ruling capitalist system: by making workers content, they would never emancipate themselves. On the other hand, the 'expert' interpretation of vocational education as 'technical training' was regarded by many as too narrowly defined and not suited to a socialist type of education. While Dewey, in the 1950s and 1960s, had clearly been seen as using the capitalist strategy of 'appeasement' in vocational education, authors of the mid-1980s and later revalued Dewey's holistic conception of vocational education, which was seen to permeate his entire educational outlook. What's more, with the help of Dewey, vocational education could represent much more than just some training in a special technology or skill. It was now life itself, and a tool to help each individual develop to its fullest.

This new kind of Dewey-inspired vocational education targeted two groups: workers and children. As Wang Peixiong pointed out, the new times were in need of an education that would "make the workers aware of the scientific and social basis of

their vocation, as well as of the meaning of their vocation."<sup>98</sup> Vocational education was now understood as a part of the cultivation process of each individual and not as the technical counterpart of general education. With regard to child education, vocational education was to attain moral functions. Referring to Dewey's notions of 'social empathy' and 'sense of responsibility', authors urged to engage in vocational education not just for economic reasons, but in order to develop the child's social competence and to make it understand the professions – and, consequently, real life – in a holistic, scientific manner.<sup>99</sup> In this line of argument, there was no more mentioning of Dewey's methods leading to chaos and anarchy. On the contrary, his educational thought was seen to provide guidelines for a society which, due to the changing conception of Marxism, was increasingly losing its ideological basis.<sup>100</sup>

In terms of published articles, the end of the 1980s saw a Dewey wave, followed by silence in the second half of 1989, just after the suppression of the democracy movement. As Beate Geist puts it:

June 4 brought the (pluralistic) debate on culture held in the 1980s to an end. It has been followed by a prescribed recollection of the long and glorious history and culture of China, with the unambiguously political goal of counteracting the anti-traditionalism and the national, historical, and cultural nihilism of the preceding years. Emphasis is put on the 'diffusion of the excellent national culture' (*hongyang minzu youxiu wenhua*). It was intended to strengthen national self-confidence and national unity – and social stability.<sup>101</sup>

In October 1989, Confucius was re-enthroned, the old master of social and state-individual relations. Intellectuals were busy with "Searching for Educational Values that Put Equal Stress on Society's Needs and Individual Development", as the title of one article from 1990 reads.<sup>102</sup> This article relapsed into previous arguments in which the United States served as a deterring example of a "self-service model" in education, leading to selfish individuality on the side of the students. The socialist society, in contrast, was presented as the ideal compromise where individual and societal interests were reconciled. Socialist education was to "adjust" to the needs of society, but also to pay full attention to each person's development. Further goals were to merge the best of Chinese and Western culture, revive the traditional culture, and build a new culture that would correspond to the current political and economic structure and promote the "evolution of the race and the progress of society."<sup>103</sup>

The reversion to Dewey criticism did not last long. Soon, Dewey was discovered as a way out of the Bermuda triangle of state, society, and individual. Dewey was seen as offering a solution to the conflict between individual and society through his proposition that one could not exist without the other. Individual development was to be emphasized, but for the sake of society, which again could only thrive if individuals were fully developed. This 'harmonization' of individual and societal interests was to be achieved through the school. Drawing on Dewey's writings on the school, the school was to be a small cooperative society of its own. Contrary to earlier criticism that Dewey's school was still too detached from reality, the modern school should not be confused with society but be turned in "a better kind of society."<sup>104</sup> In a neat move that topped the argument off, Dewey's ideal society – now no more under criticism – was judged to be feasible only in the communist system!

Also starting in the 1990s, there has been a resurging interest in Republican China. Both Republican China and the China of the 1990s were felt to be at crossroads. The (historical) topics in connection with Dewey that were broached within this research strand can be easily associated with more contemporary concerns. Drawing on quotations from Dewey, authors recounted instances of resistance against a too Western-oriented 'copyism' and against the erasure of tradition. They also recalled Dewey's emphasis on a strong state, which should entrust things of public interest (such as the railway system) into private hands.<sup>105</sup> Most recently, research on Republican China has made the ideological divides between Dewey, Mao, and Marx much more permeable: authors argue for a Marxian influence on Dewey<sup>106</sup> and a Deweyan influence on Mao.<sup>107</sup> In a time when fewer and fewer people are interested in Marxism, the discovery that the United States' most representative philosophy, pragmatism, was originally derived from Marxism can only raise the value of this ideology: "This expresses [...] what a strong power Marxism possesses, and makes us even more determined to use Marxism as our leading ideology and be consistent in following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>108</sup>

### **Dewey in Recent Chinese Debates – An Outlook**

In this last section, I will sketch out roughly the topics that have been dominating the most recent Chinese discussions of Dewey. The focus on individuality, creativity, and talent still figures prominently in the discourse<sup>109</sup> and has been integrated into the debate on 'quality education' (*suzhi jiaoyu*). 'Quality education' had emerged in the 1990s as a more holistically oriented education and as opponent of the traditional 'examination-oriented education' (*yingshi jiaoyu*);<sup>110</sup> it was condensed into educational programs launched at the beginning of the new millennium. Dewey and



'quality education' are judged to share the same views on the aims, the curriculum, and the methods of education. Dewey's emphasis that 'education is life', and his stress on experience and 'active development' are felt to be highly compatible with the orientation of 'quality education'. Both aim at "raising the quality of the citizen" and "making this new-born generation of citizens adjust even better to the changing social life, and, even more importantly, making them create an even better, more progressive society."<sup>111</sup>

Consequently, Dewey is used to justify educational reforms that should lead away from examination-oriented, 'useless' knowledge and from the Chinese "military"-style tradition of education.<sup>112</sup> A number of reform-minded authors see the conflict between traditional and quality education embodied in the two educators Herbart and Dewey: Herbart's view on education is reflected in the traditional Chinese teaching style, whereas Dewey's educational thought lies at the heart of the present-day reform. Noting that the guiding role that Dewey envisions for the modern teacher is a great challenge in the actual teaching process, Zhou Hailing argues for a dialectical approach: "Therefore we must learn useful, reliable knowledge and seek for the yet unknown knowledge, absorb what is already there and nurture the search for the unknown path."<sup>113</sup> However, the more authors argue for 'using' Dewey in the present-day reform of education, the blurrier this Dewey becomes. Some authors actually complain that Dewey raised "demands of a very general nature, but did not provide a clear, easy-to-use model to work with."<sup>114</sup> Other articles read outright bizarrely, for example when students are encouraged to develop "independent thinking" and "individuality", but at the same time follow "the correct world view, view on human life, and view on values."<sup>115</sup>

Probably due to this mantra-like stress on 'individuality', there are also warnings against an all too mechanical 'application' of Dewey's thought to 'quality education'. As Zhu Guohui and Luo Yaocheng remind their readers, a well-rounded individual – the aim of 'quality education' – cannot be achieved without real individuality:

For a long time, the higher education of our country has been aiming to train a standard adaptation to society, the main function of education was to promote the socialization of the individual. The quiet arrival of the knowledge economy urgently cries out to higher education to train a great number of innovative human talents, but the key to training innovative human talents lies in the development of a person's individuality, this has brought a new challenge to our country's higher education which has been traditionally "oriented towards society."<sup>116</sup>

Thus, Dewey is not only used to legitimize new educational programs such as 'quality education', but also to critically evaluate if these programs are being carried out in reality – or if they are just serving as rhetoric banners on the surface.

The conception of 'quality education' is tightly knit into the broader discussion of what should be the moral and ethical basis of present-day society. Articles from across the past decade still mirror the search for the right balance between individualization and socialization. Several authors use historical comparisons to stress the simultaneous importance of individuality and sociability. While Confucius<sup>117</sup> and the above-mentioned philosopher Liang Shuming<sup>118</sup> are used – alongside Dewey – as more traditional examples that can propagate the moralization of society, Mao Zedong serves (again together with Dewey) as a more recent legitimization that 'morals' are just as important as knowledge. Dewey is now seen to

have considered 'moral education' as the means to keep society stable and to promote the economy. Thus, the previous accusation that Dewey used education to manipulate and stupefy the working class has been conversed into a full appraisal of his purported instrumental use of education.<sup>119</sup>

Almost inevitably, these discursive tropes of 'quality education', 'individual and society', and 'moral education' are blended in the vision of the current president, Hu Jintao, to "build a socialist harmonious society."<sup>120</sup> Dewey's idea of placing the human in the centre is seen as the "basis for building a harmonious society",<sup>121</sup> which cannot afford to have students who "do not participate in the most basic activities of society" and therefore has to put more emphasis on moral education.<sup>122</sup> Also vocational education, in continuation of the Dewey exegesis that had started in the mid-1980s, is seen as an instrument to bring about this harmonious society – but only if not reduced to technical training. Harmony would be achieved in two ways: first, vocational education helps to find the proper occupation, from which one would gain satisfaction: "In general, occupational activity is the only means to let a person's specific talents and his service to society achieve a balance."<sup>123</sup> Second, transmitting profession-related ethics would train "persons in harmony" and "workers of a high quality", thus preventing them from becoming "useless machines."<sup>124</sup> Clearly, 'red' and 'expert' have been reconciled to produce the happy couple of 'harmony' and 'quality'.

However, Dewey is not just state ideology. His moral authority in Chinese scholarship is not exhausted in repetitive references to a 'harmonious society'. He is also used as a weapon against 'neo-liberalism' – as the true representative of a liberalism that has nothing to do with the Chinese neo-liberalism of the wild 1990s.<sup>125</sup> It is pointed out that Dewey would have never sacrificed 'equality' for the sake of

'freedom' – as some Chinese advocates of liberalism would today. Freedom should not be in possession of a small (capitalist) minority, but of the highest possible number of people, even if this meant for the state to restrict the freedom in some well-defined areas. Likewise, another article points to Dewey's emphasis on the steering capacity of the state – in contrast to the views of 'old' liberalists like Locke. Democracy, according to this view, was not a means to achieve liberalism, but the morally legitimate basis for a society to discuss its needs and interests.<sup>126</sup>

Interestingly, Dewey has replaced Marx in this discussion – who would have been the most natural reference in any argument against neo-liberalism, at least from a Western point of view. Thus, Dewey has successfully undergone three metamorphoses: from the very antithesis of science and knowledge, he changed into an emblem for innovative science; his deeply immoral, selfish, capitalist character was transformed into a symbol of the (almost apolitical) harmonization of individual and society; and, finally, from a victim of Marxist-*cum*-socialist criticism, he has turned into a stakeholder of Chinese state governance vis-à-vis Chinese neo-liberalism. John Dewey – or rather Duwei – has really become both 'red' and 'expert'.

---

1. Barry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China. Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1977).

2. Similarly, Jessica Wang argues that "[m]ost criticisms of Dewey were misunderstandings;" see Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China. To Teach and to Learn* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007).

3. Wang makes a similar argument in her sub-chapter "Whose Teaching? Or Hu's Teaching?," *ibid.*, 30-40.

4. This is also noted by Bong-Ki Kim, *Das Problem der interkulturellen Kommunikation am Beispiel der Rezeption Deweys in China* [*The Problem of Intercultural Communication Through the Example of the Reception of Dewey in China*], Duisburg Working Papers on East Asian Studies no. 19 (Duisburg: Institute for East Asian Studies, Gerhard-Mercator-Universität GH Duisburg, 1999).

5. See James Scott Johnston, "Can Democratic Inquiry Be Exported? Dewey and the Globalization of Education," *Democracy as Culture: Deweyan Pragmatism in a Globalizing World*, ed. Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), 69. Johnston quotes Dewey as saying that "*the problem is to extract the desirable traits of forms of community life which actually exist, and employ them to criticize undesirable features and suggest improvement;*" *ibid.*, 76.

6. Quoted in Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment*, 7.

7. In this patriotic-revolutionary movement, students and intellectuals not only protested against the loss of national sovereignty but also advocated a 'new culture' that rejected the Confucian tradition and that should be accessible for everyone both in terms of ideology and language.

8. Hu Shi was a famous writer and prominent figure in the May Fourth Movement. During his lifetime he fought for a new Chinese culture and language which would be intelligible to everyone (in contrast to Classical Chinese). After his studies at the Teachers College, he was a professor at Beijing University (later on its chancellor).

9. On this ideological pendulum in Chinese education, see e.g., Chan Hoiman, "Modernity and Revolution in Chinese Education: Towards an Analytical Agenda of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution," *Education and Modernization*.

*The Chinese Experience*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe and Zhu Weizheng (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992), 73-99.

10. See e.g., Zhou Ye, "'Xin Jiaoyu' yu Zhongguo jiaoyu jindaihua [The Journal *Progressive Education* and the Modernization of Chinese Education]," *Gaodeng Jiaoyu Yanjiu* 26, 1 (2005): 83-84. This claim is made despite the fact that by the late 1930s, more than five thousand progressive schools were in operation in the United States. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for this information.

11. Huang Yanpei, "Xuexiao jiaoyu caiyong shiyongzhuyi zhi shangque [Discussion about Using Pragmatism in School Education]," *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 5, 7 (1913) (supplement): 55-82.

12. Li Hongzhang, "Jiangsu xunfu Li Hongzhang yuanhan [The Original Letter by Li Hongzhang, Provincial Governor of Jiangsu]" [1864], *Chouban Yiwu Shimo: Tongzhichao [Chronicle of Barbarian Matters from the Beginning to the End [of the Qing-Dynasty]: Tongzhi-Period]*, vol. 5, section 25 (Taipei: Guofeng Chubanshe, 1963), (originally 4-12), 624.

13. Hu Shi, *Hu Shi Koushu Zichuan [Hu Shis Oral Autobiography]*, translated by Tang Degang (Beijing: Huawen Chubanshe, 1989), 107-08. This is the Chinese translation of audiotapes which have recorded Hu Shi's memoirs and are kept at Columbia University.

14. See Xia Jun, "Duwei shiyongzhuyi lilun yu Zhongguo xiangcun jianshe yundong [Dewey's Theory of Pragmatism and the Movement to Construct the Countryside in China]," *Minguo Dang'an* 3 (1998): 63.

15. See Yuan Qing, "Duwei de Zhongguo zhi xing jiqi yingxiang [Dewey in China and His Influence]," *Jindaishi Yanjiu* 2 (2001): 149.

16. Yuan Qing calls the newly introduced 'pragmatism' a weapon for Chinese intellectuals to fight traditional education; see Yuan, "Duwei de Zhongguo zhi xing."

17. Sor-Hoon Tan, "China's Pragmatist Experiment in Democracy: Hu Shih's Pragmatism and Dewey's Influence in China," *Metaphilosophy* 1/2 (2004): 51-52.

18. Quoted in Y. C. Wang, "Intellectuals and Society in China 1860-1949," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3, 4 (1961): 410.

19. See e.g., Yang Fengyin, "Duwei he Luosu de Zhongguo jindaihua fang'an [Dewey's and Russell's Programs for China's Modernization]," *Jianghuai Luntan* 4 (2002): 68-72.

20. Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 33 (see n. 2). According to Wang, Dewey was aware of being 'used': "Dewey knew that what he symbolized was more important than what he said;" *ibid.*, 39.

21. Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment*, 13 (see n. 1).

22. Yuan, "Duwei de Zhongguo zhi xing," 139ff. (see n. 15).

23. Zhou Ye, "'Xin Jiaoyu' yu Zhongguo jiaoyu jindaihua [The Journal *Progressive Education* and the Modernization of Chinese Education]," *Gaodeng Jiaoyu Yanjiu* 26, 1 (2005): 87-92.

24. Yuan, "Duwei de Zhongguo zhi xing," 142; Zhang Liangcai, "Duwei lai Hua dui Zhongguo jiaoyu de yingxiang [The Influence of Dewey's Visit to China on Chinese Education]," *Liaoning Gaodeng Jiaoyu Yanjiu* 89, 6 (1996): 97-102.

25. Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 4 (see n. 2). See the chapter on Japan by Jeremy Rappleye in this volume.

26. See his eighth letter in *Carl Heinrich Becker in China. Reisebriefe des ehemaligen preußischen Kultusministers 1931/32*, ed. Susanne Kuß, *Berliner China-Studien/Quellen und Dokumente* (Münster: LIT, 2004), 151.

27. Ni Zhuhua, "Xiaoxue gongyike jiaoxue he shebei de shangque [A Discussion of the Didactics and Facilities of Craftsmanship Instruction at Primary Schools]," *Jiaoyu yu Zhiye* 26 (1921): 1-6.

28. "Zhonghua Zhiye Xuexiao gaikuang [The General Situation of the Chinese Vocational School]," *Jiaoyu yu Zhiye* 20 (1920): 1-6.

29. See Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment*, 23. While Wang stresses the differences in opinion between Dewey and Hu Shi, she does not present convincing evidence that Dewey was able to obtain first-hand information without relying on his Chinese friends, given his limited knowledge of the Chinese language and society (as he himself admitted). In overall, Wang's account is pervaded by the underlying conviction that Dewey, by way of sympathy with the Chinese people and his far-sightedness, grasped the complexities of Chinese society; see chapter 4 in Wang, *John Dewey in China* (see n. 2).

30. Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment*, 10.

31. See his seventh letter in *Carl Heinrich Becker in China*, 133 (see n. 26).

32. Cf. Li Sanfu, "Shilun Duwei shiyongzhuyi jiaoyu sixiang yu Zhongguo jiaoyuxue kexuehua [A Tentative Discussion of Dewey's Pragmatist Educational Thought and the Scientification of Chinese Educational Science]," *Yunnan Shifan Daxue Xuebao* 4 (2001): 13-17.

33. This was paralleled by the discovery of the woman as a complete human being. It was no coincidence that Alice Dewey lectured on women's rights during the couple's stay in China.

34. Sun Jianjiang, "Duwei 'Ertong Benweilun' jiqi yu Zhongguo ertong wenxue de guanxi [Dewey's 'The Child as the Center' and Its Relationship with Chinese Children's Literature]," *Yunnan Shehui Kexue* (1995): 89-94.



35. Ni, "Xiaoxue gongyike jiaoxue" (see n. 27).
36. See e.g., Zhang, "Duwei lai Hua dui Zhongguo jiaoyu de yingxiang" (see n. 24).
37. Huang Yanpei, "Zhiye jiaoyu [Vocational Education]," *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 13, 11 (1921): 61-63.
38. Wang Maozu, "Jiaoyu shang shiyongzhuyi zhi weizhi [The Position of Pragmatism in Education]," *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 12, 7 (1920): 4.
39. See Gong Chushu, "Zai tan xiaoxue kecheng zhong de zhiye zhidao [Reconsidering Vocational Guidance in the Primary School Curriculum]," *Jiaoyu yu Zhiye* 98 (1928): 521-26.
40. On Japan, see Jeremy Rappleye's contribution to this volume.
41. Gong, "Zai tan xiaoxue kecheng zhong de zhiye zhidao," 525.
42. See e.g., Zhuang Yu, "Lun jiaoyu fangzhen [Discussing the Principles of Education]," *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 4, 1 (1912): 1-11.
43. Wang, "Jiaoyu shang shiyongzhuyi zhi weizhi," 3.
44. Shu Xincheng, "Zhongxue zhiye zhidao de xianjue wenti [Preconditions for Vocational Guidance at the Middle School]," *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 17, 1 (1925): 1-6.
45. Zhao Yichen, "Shiyan xiaoxue huo fushu xiaoxue yinggai zenmeyang [What Should Laboratory Primary Schools or Attached Primary Schools Be Like?]," *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 21, 5 (1929): 1-7.
46. See Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 50-51 (see n. 2).
47. Jiang Qi, "Zhiye jiaoyu de benzhi zhi yanjiu [An Investigation of the Basic Character of Vocational Education]," *Jiaoyu yu Zhiye* 136 (1932): 241-67.

48. Lu Guoqi, "Lun Duwei dui Mao Zedong zaoqi jiaoyu sixiang de yingxiang [Discussing Dewey's Influence on the Early Educational Thought of Mao Zedong]," *Xue Lilun* 5 (2009): 137.

49. Qi Xingui, "Duwei dui Zhongguo de yingxiang: yi zhong pipanxing pingjia [Dewey's Influence on China: A Critical Evaluation]," *Chongqing Shizhuan Xuebao (Shehui Kexueban)* 3 (1997): 17. Hu Shi would have met the same fate had he not emigrated to Taiwan.

50. Cao Fu, "Duwei pipan yinlun (shangpian) [An Introduction to the Criticism of Dewey (first part)]," *Renmin Jiaoyu* 1, 6 (1950): 21.

51. Cao Fu, "Duwei pipan yinlun (xiapian) [An Introduction to the Criticism of Dewey (last part)]," *Renmin Jiaoyu* 2, 1 (1950): 23.

52. Cao, "Duwei pipan yinlun (shangpian)," 22.

53. Che Wenbo, "Pipan Duwei shiyongzhuyi jiaoyuxue fan kexue fan geming de benzhi – Dui Duwei *Mingri zhi Xuexiao* yi shu de pipan [Criticizing the Anti-Science and Anti-Revolution Essence of Dewey's Pragmatist Pedagogy]," *Renwen Kexue Xuebao* 2 (1956): 105-28.

54. Ibid., 106.

55. Cao, "Duwei pipan yinlun (shangpian)," 26.

56. Cao, "Duwei pipan yinlun (xiapian)," 28.

57. Che, "Pipan Duwei shiyongzhuyi jiaoyuxue fan kexue fan geming de benzhi," 124.

58. Cao, "Duwei pipan yinlun (xiapian)," 29 (see n. 56).

59. Ibid., 29.

60. Zhong Chengzhang, "Fandui shiyongzhuyi guandian [Against the Pragmatist Perspective]," *Jianghuai Luntan* 5 (1963): 16-22.

61. Cao, "Duwei pipan yinlun (shangpian)" (see n. 55).
62. Che, "Pipan Duwei shiyongzhuyi jiaoyuxue fan kexue fan geming de benzhi," 119 (see n. 57).
63. Ibid., 114.
64. Jin Yuelin, "Pipan shiyongzhuyizhe Duwei de shijieguan [Criticizing the World View of the Pragmatist Dewey]," *Zhexue Yanjiu* 2 (1955): 13.
65. Cao, "Duwei pipan yinlun (shangpian)," 28 (see n. 50).
66. Juan Zhi, "Shei shuo kaimen banxue shi 'shiyongzhuyi' [Who Says that Open-Door Education Is 'Pragmatism']?," *Renmin Jiaoyu* 11 (1974): 41-42.
67. Liang Si, "'Si Ren Bang' weishenme haipa pouxi shiyongzhuyi [Why is the 'Gang of Four' Afraid of Analyzing Pragmatism]?" *Renmin Jiaoyu* 2 (1977): 5.
68. Fang Yan, "'Sirenbang' de 'xuesheng zhizhi' yu Duwei de 'ertong zhongxin' [The 'Students' Self-Organization' of the 'Gang of Four' and Dewey's 'Child as the Center']," *Shandong Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Renwen Shehui Kexueban)* Z1 (1977): 109-10.
69. Fang Yan, "'Sirenbang' de 'wenmang jia yeniu' yu Duwei de 'jiaoyu ji shenghuo' [The 'Gang of Four's' 'Illiterates Are Wild Oxen' and Dewey's 'Education Is Life']," *Shandong Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Renwen Shehui Kexueban)* 6 (1977): 11-13.
70. This was enhanced by the fact that language use during the Cultural Revolution was extremely vulgarized. On the demonization of the discourse from the 1950s to the 1970s, see Michael Schoenhals, "Demonising Discourse in Mao Zedong's China: People vs Non-People," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, 3-4 (2007): 465-82.
71. Fang Yan, "'Sirenbang' de 'renwu dai jiaoxue' yu Duwei de 'cong zuo zhong xue' [The 'Gang of Four's' 'Teaching Mission' and Dewey's 'Learning by Doing'],"

*Shandong Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Renwen Shehui Kexueban)* 4 (1977): 61-65. The 'Four Modernizations' were formulated by Zhou Enlai in January 1975 at the Fourth People's Congress and officially launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. They included modernization in agriculture, industry, technology, and defence.

72. See e.g., the article by Xu Chongwen, who was indignant about a book by George Novack, a veteran theoretician of the United States' Socialist Workers' Party, which compared parts of the pragmatist tradition with Marxist thought; Xu Chongwen, "Makesizhuyi he shiyongzhuyi: Duili haishi tiaohu? – Ping Nuofanke: 'Dui Duwei zhexue yi ge pingjia: shiyongzhuyi tong makesizhuyi de duili' [Marxism and Pragmatism: Opposition or Harmony? – Reviewing Novack: 'An Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy. Pragmatism versus Marxism']," *Guowai Shehui Kexue* 2 (1978): 90-93. The correct bibliographical title of Novack's book is as follows: George Novack, *Pragmatism Versus Marxism. An Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy* (New York: Pathfinder, 1975).

73. Hu Shi was reestablished somewhat later, starting in 1986, maybe even profiting from the then on-going, increasingly positive re-evaluation of Dewey's thought. Because of his decidedly liberal attitude and due to his emigration to Taiwan, Chinese debates on the mainland had to be open enough to concede any appreciable contributions to Hu.

74. Chen Hancui, "Qianxi Tao Xingzhi yu Duwei jiaoyu sixiang de benzhi qubie [A Shallow Analysis of the Qualitative Differences between the Educational Thought of Tao Xingzhi and Dewey]," *Huanan Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Shehui Kexueban)* 4 (1981): 44.

75. Pang Dan sees the turning point towards a more open reception of Dewey's thought much later, in 1987; this cannot be verified by the articles published prior to

that date. However, she is right to point out that the disciplinary focus of the Dewey reception was in education, not philosophy. In contrast to their more pragmatic colleagues in education, philosophers also had a much more deprecating attitude towards Dewey's philosophy. See Pang Dan, "Jin shi nian lai wo guo xuejie Duwei sixiang yanjiu pingshu [A Critical Account of my Country's Scholars' Research of the Past Ten Years on Dewey's Thought]," *Lilun Tanta* 1 (2008): 53-57.

76. Chen, "Qianxi Tao Xingzhi yu Duwei jiaoyu sixiang de benzhi qubie," 44.

77. Tao Xingzhi, quoted in *ibid.*, 46-47.

78. *Ibid.*, 44-45.

79. *Ibid.*, 49-50.

80. *Ibid.*, 45.

81. *Ibid.*, 51.

82. Wang Tianyi, "Duwei jiaoyu sixiang tanjiu [Exploring Dewey's Educational Thought]," *Beijing Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Shehui Kexueban)* 3 (1982): 74.

83. Wang, "Duwei jiaoyu sixiang tanjiu," 83.

84. Qiao Youhua, "Guanyu Duwei shiyongzhuyi jiaoyu sixiang zai pingjia de ji ge wenti [Some Questions Concerning the Re-Evaluation of Dewey's Pragmatist Educational Thought]," *Dongbei Shida Xuebao (Zhaxue Shehui Kexueban)* 3 (1983): 66-70.

85. Zhang Fakun, "Duwei 'Minzhuzhuyi yu Jiaoyu' zhong de pipan jicheng wenti [Critical Succeeding Questions in Dewey's 'Democracy and Education'],", *Jiaoyu Yanjiu yu Shiyan* 2 (1984): 89-95.

86. Wang Peixiong, "Duwei jiaoyu gaigeguan fawei [Some Small Points about Dewey's View on Educational Reform]," *Bijiao Jiaoyu Yanjiu* 5 (1986): 44-49.

87. Wang, "Duwei jiaoyu sixiang tanjiu," 78-79.

88. Li Yaling, "Duwei lun fazhan xuesheng de siwei nengli [Dewey Discusses Developing the Students' Capability to Think]," *Heilongjiang Gaojiao Yanjiu* 1 (1988): 71.

89. Chen, "Qianxi Tao Xingzhi yu Duwei jiaoyu sixiang de benzhi qubie." See also Liu Zhiju, "Tao Xingzhi jiaoyu sixiang bu tong yu Duwei sanlun [Three Points Where the Educational Thought of Tao Xingzhi Is Different from Dewey]," *Anhui Shifan Daxuebao (Zhexue Shehui Kexueban)* 4 (1981): 16-22; 29.

90. Wang, "Duwei jiaoyu sixiang tanjiu," 77.

91. Zhang, "Duwei 'Minzhuzhuyi yu Jiaoyu' zhong de pipan jicheng wenti," 89 (see n. 85).

92. Qiao, "Guanyu Duwei shiyongzhuyi jiaoyu sixiang zai pingjia de ji ge wenti" (see n. 84).

93. Sun Yuecai, "Duwei de duoyuanlun ziyouguan – Jian lun dui shiyongzhuyi de pingjia wenti [Dewey's View on Pluralistic Freedom – Discussing Critical Questions of Pragmatism]," *Shehui Kexue* 4 (1985): 52-54; 13.

94. Zhang, "Duwei 'Minzhuzhuyi yu Jiaoyu' zhong de pipan jicheng wenti."

95. Li Yaling, "Duwei lun fazhan xuesheng de siwei nengli" (see n. 88).

96. Wang Peixiong, "Duwei zhiye jiaoyu sixiang shuping [Comments on Dewey's Vocational Education Thinking]," *Bijiao Jiaoyu Yanjiu* 5 (1984): 45.

97. Cf. Wang, "Duwei jiaoyu gaigeguan fawei," 45 (see n. 86).

98. Wang, "Duwei zhiye jiaoyu sixiang shuping," 45.

99. Ibid., 47.

100. What vocational educationists did object to, however, was Dewey's call for abolishing vocational schools altogether. The differentiation of the school system was

deemed important, especially after the experience with a 'unitary' education during the Cultural Revolution.

101. Beate Geist, *Die Modernisierung der chinesischen Kultur: Kulturdebatte und kultureller Wandel im China der 80er Jahre* (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1996), 217.

102. Zhou Zhichao & Zhang Wenchao, "Xunqiu shehui xuyao yu ren de fazhan bingzhong de jiaoyu jiazhi guan [Searching for Educational Values that Put Equal Stress on Society's Needs and Individual Development]," *Jiaoyu Pinglun* 3 (1990): 28-29.

103. *Ibid.*, 29.

104. Xu Bangguan, "Lun Duwei de jiaoyu jiazhi quxiang [Discussing Dewey's Educational Value Orientation]," *Jiaoyu Yanjiu yu Shiyan* 2 (1990): 38.

105. See e.g., Yang Fengyin, "Duwei he Luosu de Zhongguo jindaihua fang'an" (see n. 19).

106. Huang Xiaoyan & Zhang Quanxin, "Makesizhuyi zhexue shi Duwei 'Minzhu gongtongti' de lilun lai yuan [Marxist Philosophy Is the Theoretical Source for Dewey's 'Democratic Community']," *Shandong Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Renwen Shehui Kexueban)* 1 (2009): 10-14.

107. Lu Guoqi, "Lun Duwei dui Mao Zedong zaoqi jiaoyu sixiang de yingxiang" (see n. 48).

108. Huang & Zhang, "Makesizhuyi zhexue shi Duwei 'Minzhu gongtongti' de lilun lai yuan," 13.

109. See e.g., Pei Changling, "Gexing yu chuangzaoxing – Duwei jiaoyu sixiang gei women de qishi [Individuality and Creativity – Insight from Dewey's Educational Thought]," *Qinghai Shizhuan Xuebao (Shehui Kexue)* 2 (2001): 86–87; or, on pre-

school education: Wei Cai, "Duwei bixia de 'jingyan' dui youeryuan jiaoxue de qishi [Inspiration from Dewey's 'Experience' for Kindergarten Pedagogy]," *Kejiao Wenhui (Zhongxunkan)* 1 (2009): 124-25.

110. On 'quality education', see e.g., Belinda Dello-Iacovo, "Curriculum Reform and 'Quality Education' in China: An Overview," *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (2009): 241-49.

111. Yu Kangping, "Duwei yu suzhi jiaoyu [Dewey and Quality Education]," *Wenjiao Ziliao* 3 (2008): 122–24.

112. Song Zhirun & Chen Xiaoping, "Cong Duwei de jiaoyu sixiang kan woguo de jiaoyu gaige [On the Reform of Education in China from the Angle of Dewey's Thought of Education]," *Chuangxin* 4 (2009): 13-15; 31.

113. Zhou Hailing, "Cong renshilun jiaodu kan Heerbate yu Duwei jiaoyu sixiang de fenqi [Looking at the Differences in Herbart's and Dewey's Educational Thought from an Epistemological Perspective]," *Huabei Shuili Shuidian Xueyuan Xuebao (Shekeban)* 2 (2006): 33.

114. Xia Dongjie and Guo Xu, "Shilun Duwei de jiaocaiguan jiqi dui xin kecheng gaige de qishi [A Tentative Discussion of Dewey's View on Teaching Material and Its Inspiration for the New Curriculum Reform]," *Nei Mengu Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Jiaoyu Kexueban)* 8 (2007): 63.

115. Yu Jie, "Duwei deyu sixiang dui wo guo xiandai deyu de qishi [An Inspiration from Dewey's Moral Education Thought for my Country's Present Moral Education]," *Kejiao Wenhui* 7 (2008): 279.

116. Zhu Guohui & Luo Yaocheng, "Duwei de 'Jiaoyu wu mudi lun' pingxi –jian tan woguo gaodeng jiaoyu mudi ying chuli hao de ji dui guanxi [A Critical Analysis of Dewey's 'Theory of Aimless Education' – Discussing Some Relationships with



How to Deal Well with Our Country's Higher Education Aims]," *Jilin Gongxueyuan Xuebao* 4 (2001): 8.

117. Zhang Wu, "Xunzhao xinyang de shuguang – Kongzi yu Duwei yishu shehuixue sixiang bijiao [Dawn in the Search for Belief – Comparing the Art and Social Science Thought of Confucius and Dewey]," *Kongzi Yanjiu* 4 (1998): 47–56.

118. Xia Jun, "Duwei shiyongzhuyi lilun yu Zhongguo xiangcun jianshe yundong [Dewey's Pragmatist Theory and China's Rural Construction Movement]," *Minguo Dang'an* 3 (1998): 63–68.

119. See Zhu Yingxue, "Mao Zedong yu Duwei deyu sixiang bijiao [A Comparison of the Ideas on Moral Education of Mao Zedong and Dewey]," *Sanxia Xueyuan Xuebao* 1 (2002): 94–97.

120. Zhang Wenhai explicitly refers to this programmatic agenda: Zhang Wenhai, "Duwei jiaoyu sixiang dui woguo dangdai hexie jiaoyu de qishi [The Implications of Dewey's Educational Ideas for China's Modern Harmony Education]," *Yancheng Gongxueyuan Xuebao (Shehui Kexueban)* 4 (2008): 57–59.

121. Yu, "Duwei deyu sixiang dui wo guo xiandai deyu de qishi," 279.

122. Yao Jun, "Qiantan Duwei de deyu fangfa [A Preliminary Investigation of Dewey's Moral Education Methods]," *Xiandai Jiaoyu Kexue* 1 (2009): 71.

123. Dan Zhonghui, "Lun Duwei de xin de zhiye jiaoyuguan [Discussing Dewey's New View on Vocational Education]," *Zhijiao Luntan* 7 (2002): 11.

124. Wei Xuefang, "Cong Duwei zhiye jiaoyu sixiang fansi wo guo dangqian zhiye jiaoyu [Reflecting on Our Country's Present Vocational Education through Dewey's Vocational Educational Thought]," *Guangxi Jiaoyu Xueyuan Xuebao* 6 (2007): 156.

125. See the critical article by Huang Lizhi, "Duwei: Ziyoushuyi zhi ming yu shi [Dewey: Name and Reality of Liberalism]," *Shuwu* 3 (2002): 44-46.

126. See Tong Dezhi, "Xin jiu ziyoushuyi –Duwei yu ziyoushuyi de lilun zhuanxing [Old and New Liberalism – Dewey and the Transformation of Liberalist Theory]," *Zhejiang Xuekan* 5 (2005): 116–20.