

Conceptions of Childhood in the Educational Philosophies of John Locke and John Dewey

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Abstract

This article compares progressive conceptions of childhood in the educational philosophies of John Locke and John Dewey. Although the lives of the two philosophers were separated by an ocean and two centuries of history, they had in common the following things: (1) a relatively high level of experience working with, and observing, children that is unusual among philosophers (Dewey started a progressive children's school and Locke worked as an educator of children and as an advisor to parents), (2) a high level of respect, grounded in observations and experiences of children, for children's intellectual powers, and for the influence of childhood intellectual experience on adult life and adult political institutions, (3) a respect for children's spontaneity and love of play, (4) a philosophical emphasis on the need for education that provides continuity (instead of abrupt and confusing ruptures) between childhood experience and adult experience, and (5) an impatience with traditional forms of education that force children into educational projects without regard for children's interests and desires. There are also interesting differences of emphasis between the two philosophers; Locke was particularly attentive to the need for educators to respond to the diverse temperaments of individual children, while Dewey emphasized the need for education that draws children into socially and technologically relevant projects

Studying Locke and Dewey together can provide today's childhood educators with a helpful and empowering sense of intellectual heritage to support educational practices that better respect the intellectual and experiential lives of young children. Further, examining the two philosophers' differences can stimulate us to illuminating debate on possible, varying approaches to childhood-intellect-respecting education that we might use today.

Introduction

In this article, I look at ideas about childhood that come from two socially progressive, educational philosophers – John Locke and John Dewey. Although Locke's and Dewey's lives were separated by an ocean and two centuries of history, they had some important things in common, and I will focus here on the commonalities and points of complementarity in their educational thought. Specifically, I will emphasize the enduringly significant contributions they made to still-current debates about the nature of childhood intellect and the relationship between childhood experience and adult experience as it may best be cultivated by educators. Unlike some highly influential educational thinkers of more recent years, Locke and Dewey saw children as being rational, and they saw childlike playfulness as having value not only in childhood, but also in adulthood. Their ways of developing these ideas are still of interest today, in a time when educators' continuing disagreements about children's reasoning capacity and the value of children's play have serious consequences for the way children are educated.¹

John Locke lived in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is best known as a political philosopher associated with England's relatively nonviolent Glorious Revolution of 1688, and as a philosopher who provided important conceptual background for the American Revolution of 1776. Locke

¹ In my work as a childhood educator, teacher educator, and student teacher supervisor in U.S. schools, I have often seen children's playfulness being regarded as undesirable and children being regarded as irrational.

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famously wrote of people's natural rights to life, liberty, and property,² and Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence that kicked off the American Revolution, was thinking along similar lines when he wrote about people's "inalienable rights" to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." A less widely known fact about Locke is that he was an influential educational thinker who was himself a teacher of children.³ He served as an educator and educational advisor for wealthy, privileged friends and patrons with whom he lived and corresponded, helping them to bring up their children.⁴ His *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which originated as letters of advice to parents, was a highly popular educational text in the eighteenth century.

John Dewey lived in the U.S. during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is sometimes thought of as the greatest American philosopher and the founder of educational philosophy. Dewey was also a childhood educator who encouraged teachers to engage with children's interests and experiences, and his ideas continue to inspire teachers, and education students, today. In particular, his famous work at the laboratory school at the University of Chicago in the 1890's and 1900's has been regarded by many as an educational model to emulate.

In what follows, I will look at five themes in the two philosophers' thought. First, I will look at both philosophers' substantial experience as educators of children. Second, I will focus on at their observation-based, high level of respect for childhood intellect. Third, I'll look at their respect for children's spontaneity and play. Fourth, I'll discuss how Locke and Dewey wanted education to provide a sense of continuity between childhood experience and adult experience, instead of giving a sense of a rupture, or a sharp and entire difference, between children's experience and the world of adult experience into which children mature. And fifth, I'll look at how Locke and Dewey advocated teaching that involves children's own interests and desires. As I discuss these themes, I will draw Locke's and Dewey's ideas into connection with present-day concerns, connecting their philosophies to current issues in childhood education.

Locke and Dewey as childhood educators

Among philosophers who are prominent in today's university syllabi, Locke and Dewey are unusual in that they both invested a lot of personal time, effort, and thought in childhood education.

In John Locke's writings one can see his careful attention to the children he knew in the homes of the wealthy friends and patrons with whom he lived.⁵ He discusses their unique characters, how children tend to differ from each other as a result of birth order, and how children's personality differences should influence teaching.⁶ He pays attention to many different childhood needs, discussing not only how it is best

² Locke wrote that man is born "with a title to perfect freedom" and that man "hath by nature a power...to preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty, and estate" (Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 46).

³ Relating to Locke's importance as an educational thinker, Peter Gay has written that "John Locke was the father of the Enlightenment in educational thought as in so much else. His *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the product of prolonged reflection and several drafts, appeared in 1690 and laid the psychological groundwork for modern educational theory. His *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, which took coherent shape while he was writing and rewriting the *Essay*, appeared three years later, in 1693, and applied his philosophy specifically to pedagogy" (Gay, "Introduction," 1). The connection between Locke's philosophical and pedagogical writings has also been noted by Hans Aarsleff, who noted that "Education for wise, rational, and happy living was one of Locke's deepest concerns, evident not only in the educational writings but also in the [*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*]" (Aarsleff, "Locke's Influence," 259).

⁴ John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton, "Introduction," in Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 7.

⁵ Someone observed of Locke that "you love to converse with children and see the natural productions of the mind, unassisted by art and unpossessed by others' notions" (E.S. de Beer, ed., *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols. (Oxford, U.K., Clarendon Press: 1976-89), 2315; as quoted in Woolhouse, *Locke: A Biography*, 204).

⁶ As a childhood educator who has often worked with children in groups of 20-35, I have to confess to feeling jealous while reading Locke's educational writings, which are largely rooted in his experiences focusing on the

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for children to study in the classroom, but also children's needs for good food, toilet training, and physical movement. He also thinks about what kinds of discipline children need at different ages, and he argues against excessive corporal punishment of children. Just as Locke's political philosophy emphasizes human dignity and respect for natural human rights, so also does his educational philosophy emphasize dignity in children, and the need for teaching that respects children's dignity.

John Dewey's progressive children's school at the University of Chicago drew children into a wide range of diverse experiences, instead of just focusing on book-learning. Children at the school went outdoors and made drawings from nature;⁷ and while studying the history of technology the children constructed working kilns in the school in order to simulate early human smelting practices.⁸ Dewey's experience as an educator moved him to author some of his most influential writings in which he argued that subject matter must be presented to children in ways that interest them and engage them in growth experiences, and in ways that are as direct and un-mediated as possible.⁹

Respect for childhood intellect

Locke believed that children "must be *treated as rational creatures*."¹⁰ Locke's view of children's reason differs from a view expressed by another eighteenth-century philosopher whose writings on education have

education of only one child at a time. I can only imagine how much more one could do to support a child's development and learning if one had more time and attention to devote to each individual child's temperament, habits, and interests.

⁷ John Dewey, "The School and Society," in *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*, 29-31.

⁸ In a first-hand account of Dewey's school, this was described as follows: "The finding of metals was developed differently each year. Each group discovered the various ores, worked out in their own way their smelting process and the way in which such discoveries reacted upon the lives of those concerned. Usually the discovery of iron was taken up in great detail. Much discussion disclosed the many uses for this metal and the fact of its frequent occurrence in many localities. The construction of miniature smelting places introduced the problems of air supply and fuel in small bulk and the difficulty of right application of heat. Other incidental problems were met and solved. The kindling point of different materials, which the children burned in small smelting places, was discovered. The latter were of necessity tiny kilns rather than the large pit smelting places of the early metal industry. As they worked, the children thought out the effect this new industry would have upon the social life of people, as requiring a division of labor, and attempted to carry out such an organization in their own efforts to work together on a single smelting place, under the leadership of one person. Great emphasis was laid upon the development of the metal industry. It was a dramatic picture of the effect upon civilization of invention and discovery which resulted in control of the material which is basic to all other industries. The organization on the social side necessary for its production gave the children a picture of the beginnings of our industrial society. The subject of the governmental development, which had entered incidentally into previous discussions, was now taken up as a subject by itself. The methods of transportation, necessitated by the beginning of commerce, and the barter of the new iron weapons, carried on by the more advanced tribes, were also discussed" (Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, *The Dewey School: The Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, 1896-1903*, (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1936), 46-47; this material is presented as retrieved on October 12, 2015 from an online version of the book at the following address:

http://www.archive.org/stream/deweyschoolthela008095mbp/deweyschoolthela008095mbp_djvu.txt). As can be seen in this example, Dewey's school, while respecting and involving individual children's interests, was centrally focused on involving children in group work and communal problem-solving in connection with the study of socially relevant subject matter.

⁹ Some writings in which Dewey emphasizes the need to link education to children's experience and children's intellectual processes include the following: John Dewey, *The School and Society & The Child and the Curriculum*; and John Dewey, *Experience and Education*.

¹⁰ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 142. Relating to Locke's view of children's minds and the minds of other people, Hans Aarsleff has noted that "Locke often spoke harshly of the dull minds of the common people, but he was just as severe in his opinion of scholars who, he found, were much given to narrow views and

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become more famous than Locke's – Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his book, *Emile or On Education*, Rousseau expressed his view that “childhood is reason's sleep”;¹¹ and the view of children as non-rational has been highly influential up to the present day. Locke, in contrast, wrote extensively in favor of the idea that children *are* rational – an idea rooted in his close observation of children during his work as a tutor of children. He wrote:

It will perhaps be wondered that I mention *Reasoning* with Children: And yet I cannot but think that the true Way of Dealing with them. They understand it as early as they do Language; and, if I mis-observe not, they love to be treated as Rational Creatures sooner than is imagined... But when I talk of *Reasoning*, I do not intend any other, but such as is suited to the Child's Capacity and Apprehension. No Body can think a Boy of Three or Seven Years old, should be argued with, as a grown Man. Long Discourses, and Philosophical Reasonings, at best, amaze and confound, but do not instruct Children. When I say, therefore, that they must be *treated as Rational Creatures*, I mean, that you should make them sensible by the Mildness of your Carriage, and the Composure even in your Correction of them, that what you do is reasonable in you, and useful and necessary for them...there is no Vertue they should be excited to, nor Fault they should be kept from, which I do not think they may be convinced of; but it must be by such *Reasons* as their Age and Understanding are capable of, and those proposed always *in very few and plain Words*... The *Reasons* that move them must be *obvious*, and level to their Thoughts, and such as may (if I may so say) be felt, and touched.¹²

Locke's argument in favor of children's rationality is relevant for understanding a major shift in child psychologists' view of children that has occurred during the past few decades. In the middle of the twentieth century, child psychologists tended to agree with Rousseau rather than Locke. Following the lead of Jean Piaget and others, top experts in child psychology saw childhood as “reason's sleep,” in Rousseau's words – a view that is still influential today. It was believed that children cannot understand cause-effect connections; that a small child cannot understand when another person has feelings and thoughts that differ from the child's own feelings and thoughts; and that children are narrowly egocentric, irrational, and illogical.¹³ In the comical but apt phrase of child psychologist Alison Gopnik, children were seen as being something like “carrots...with...reflexes.”¹⁴

In recent decades, however, there has been a revolution in child psychology. Using new methods of testing children's intellectual capacities, child psychologists have proven experimentally that, contrary to old views of childhood intellect, children actually are rational beings who can understand cause and effect and empathize with people whose desires and views differ from their own. It has been experimentally shown that children as young as 18 months old, rather than being radically egocentric, are capable of understanding when another person's desires differ from their own desires, and of helping someone with differing desires

sectarian reading that induced dangerous error and illusion. Children, by contrast, he found more rational than they were generally given credit for being” (Aarsleff, “Locke's Influence,” 259).

¹¹ Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, 107.

¹² Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 142.

¹³ One of the most influential child psychologists to propound this view of childhood intellect in the mid-1900's was Jean Piaget. According to Piaget, young children's self-instigated behavior is “totally devoid of any general direction,” characterized by “egocentrism,” and incapable of “that submission to something superior to the self which characterizes the appearance of any rule” (Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, 35).

¹⁴ Gopnik, *The Philosophical Baby*, 116. Gopnik writes: “In the bad old days, psychologists thought that babies could attend only in an entirely automatic and reflexive way, without even using their higher brain centers at all. This was part of what I think of as the myth of the brain-deficient baby, the idea that new-born babies were crying carrots, vegetables with a few reflexes” (116).

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to get what they want.¹⁵ Child psychologists also have experimentally proven that small children can engage in complex reasoning that involves conditional probability.¹⁶

How have these changes happened? What have child psychologists been doing differently that has led to these opposite conclusions?

One way of answering these questions is to say that child psychologists have begun to think more like John Locke, and less like Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Instead of seeing childhood as reason's sleep, they've started to see children as rational creatures, and they've begun designing their experiments accordingly. In their experiments, they are asking children child-appropriate questions. They are respectfully exploring children's thinking without expecting it to be like adult thinking.

An old-school child psychologist, when exploring children's ability to connect cause and effect, might ask a young child a question like: "Why does it get dark at night?" The child, predictably, would be likely to say something like, "It gets dark and night so I can go to sleep." The old-school child psychologist would then use this conversation as evidence that a child cannot make cause-effect connections, since the child failed to explain the true, astronomical cause of nighttime darkness.¹⁷ In contrast, a child psychologist using newer methods would ask a different question – an age-appropriate question. Today's child psychologist, in order to see whether a child can connect cause and effect, might say something like the following: "Margaret was sitting in the living room when she began to feel hungry. She got up and walked over to the refrigerator. Why do you think Margaret went to the refrigerator?" In response, the child would be likely to say something like, "Margaret went to the refrigerator to get some food." This conversation yields the opposite conclusion from the conversation about nighttime darkness; because the psychologist asked a child-appropriate question, the child could give an answer demonstrating her ability to connect cause and effect.

Child-appropriate language has also been useful for settling the question of whether a child can understand when another person has desires and thoughts that differ from the child's own desires and thoughts. In an experiment conducted on 18-month-old toddlers, a researcher sat across a table from a toddler, and two bowls of food were placed on the table between them. One bowl had cheesy goldfish crackers that toddlers love to eat, and the other bowl had raw broccoli that toddlers dislike. The researcher then put on a little performance for the toddler by eating food from both bowls and responding expressively to the taste, dramatically demonstrating her liking, or dislike, for the food. With some toddlers, the researcher expressed

¹⁵ See Repacholi and Gopnik, "Early Reasoning About Desires."

¹⁶ See Kushnir and Gopnik, "Young Children Infer Causal Strength from Probabilities and Interventions."

¹⁷ Alison Gopnik offers the following account of the difference between the old-school, mid-twentieth-century child psychology (the psychology of Piaget and others) and the new child psychology –

"Piaget...claimed that children were 'precausal' until they were well into the school-age years..."

"Piaget [explored children's capacity for causal thinking by asking] children about causal phenomena that they didn't know much about. He asked preschoolers interesting and hard causal questions like 'Why does it get dark at night?' or 'Why do the clouds move?' The children either simply got confused or produced answers that were deficient by adult standards though they sometimes had a logic of their own ('It gets dark so we can sleep' or 'The clouds move because I want them to')."

"More recently psychologists decided to try asking children questions about things they know a lot about, like 'Why did Johnny open the refrigerator when he was hungry?' or 'How does a tricycle work?' Children as young as two gave perfectly good, and sometimes even elaborate, causal explanations. 'He thought there was food in there and he wanted food so he opened the fridge so he could get the food.' Very young children are consumed with insatiable curiosity about causes, as their unstoppable 'why?' questions show" (Gopnik, *Philosophical Baby*, 35; Gopnik refers to Jean Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York: Basic Books, 1954)). For extensive documentation of preschool-age children using causal reasoning in everyday conversation, see Hickling and Wellman, "The Emergence of Children's Causal Explanations and Theories."

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dislike towards the broccoli and liking for the crackers, and with other toddlers this was reversed – the researcher expressed liking for the broccoli and dislike towards the crackers. Next, the researcher would put out her open hand to the child and say, “Can you give me some?” Consistently, 18-month-old toddlers would give her the food she apparently liked – the broccoli or the crackers, depending on which performance had been given. In contrast, when the same experiment was performed on 14-month-old babies, the babies always responded by giving the crackers because, at that age, they couldn’t embrace the idea that anyone would prefer broccoli over crackers. Thus, by constructing an experiment using simple, spare language that a toddler can understand, child psychology researchers have disproved the idea that children are radically ego-centric. They showed that even at 18 months, a child can understand and respond to other people’s desires even when they differ from the child’s own desires.¹⁸

Recent experiments even show that children can engage in complex reasoning that involves conditional probability. Using a “detector” (a toy box that lights up and plays music under proper circumstances), researchers did a series of experiments to see whether four-year-olds could engage in reasoning to determine which causal stimuli were most likely to produce certain desired outcomes. They showed that four-year-olds operate like experimental scientists when they are presented with the detector and told to “make it go.” They produce hypotheses, and they conduct experiments to see whether their hypotheses are correct. For example, a child might try putting one block on the box, putting two blocks on the box, putting different colored blocks on the box, etc., to try to make the box light up and play music. And when they figure out what works best, they realize they have found a solution, and they seek to replicate their success by doing the same thing again.¹⁹ Far from being irrational, these reasoning behaviors may also be observed in adult experimental scientists at work.

Today, we are still struggling with how to make sure we use age-appropriate language when evaluating children’s cognitive abilities. In mid-2015, New York State decided not to renew its contract with the London-based firm, Pearson, which had been tasked with preparing standardized tests for New York schoolchildren. One criticism of Pearson was that it failed to use age-appropriate questions in its standardized tests for children. Going forward, another firm is slated to take over New York’s standardized testing from Pearson.²⁰ This indicates the possibility that, in today’s educational environment, failure to use age-appropriate language when evaluating children can have serious repercussions for the implementation of educational policy.

John Dewey is in agreement with John Locke on the question of childhood intellect; Dewey also thought we should treat children as rational creatures. And Dewey even surpassed Locke in his regard for childhood intellect. He wrote not only that children are rational, but also that, in some situations, children can be good intellectual and moral role models for adults. In the following passage, Dewey presents a conception of childhood intellect that emerges from his conception of growth, which is an essential aspect of his educational philosophy -

...when we say that immaturity means the possibility of growth, we are not referring to absence of powers which may exist at a later time; we express a force positively present -- the ability to develop.

¹⁸ Repacholi and Gopnik, “Early Reasoning About Desires.”

¹⁹ Kushnir and Gopnik, “Young Children Infer Causal Strength from Probabilities and Interventions.” For a related study showing that even younger children (21- to 24-month-old toddlers) are also capable of understanding causal relationships, see Walker and Gopnik, “Toddlers Infer Higher-Order Relational Principles in Causal Learning.”

²⁰ John Campbell, “Pearson Loses Out on NY Testing Contract,” *Lohud: The Journal News*, July 9, 2015, accessed October 13, 2015, <http://www.lohud.com/story/news/education/2015/07/09/new-york-state-testing-contracts/29914359/>.

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there is excellent adult authority for the conviction that for certain moral and intellectual purposes adults must become as little children.

...immaturity designates a positive force or ability, -- the power to grow.²¹

Dewey's view of children as potentially being good intellectual and moral role models for adults is linked to his appreciation of the distinctive qualities of children's minds. Since adults may, with age, become more rigid, narrow-minded, and closed to new experience, a child's wide-open, flexible, creative attitude can be something adults can learn from both intellectually and morally.

As it turns out, the idea of children being intellectually superior to adults in some ways has been tested in recent psychology experiments. In a range of activities including solving problems with unusual solutions,²² devising novel uses for tools, and learning new language sounds, recent research has vindicated children's power as problem-solvers and intellectual initiators, proving that when given certain tasks, young children can perform better than adults.²³

The need to respect children's ability to solve problems and initiate intellectually has an important bearing on educational policy. Currently in the United States, there is a lot of controversy over the Common Core, which is a new set of teaching standards. It seems that some of the resistance to the Common Core may come from teachers who don't like the Common Core's requirement that students, rather than teachers, should often be generating themes for study and discussion in class. These teachers may be reluctant to give up some of their intellectual authority to their students.²⁴ However, both the recent research on childhood intellect and John Dewey's philosophical arguments strongly suggest that we need to find more ways of increasing children's intellectual responsibilities, instead of resisting policies that push us in that direction.

Respect for children's spontaneity and play

Another thing Locke and Dewey have in common is their respect for children's play, and their discussion of play in a manner that is in tension with thinking that seeks to make a distinction between work and play.²⁵ Here is what Locke had to say on the subject of children's play –

²¹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 42-43.

²² Lucas, Bridgers, Griffiths, and Gopnik, "When Children Are Better (Or At Least More Open-Minded) Learners Than Adults."

²³ Lucas, Bridgers, Griffiths, and Gopnik have offered the following summary of some relevant, recent research: "In cognitive neuroscience, researchers have suggested that young brains, with less top-down control, may be more flexible and plastic than older brains ([Thompson-Schill, Ramscar, and Chrysikou, "Cognition Without Control When a Little Frontal Lobe Goes a Long Way"]). Moreover, young children are able to learn a wider variety of language sounds more easily than adults ([Kuhl, "Early Language Acquisition: Cracking the Speech Code"]), are better than adults at discriminating between faces of non-human primates ([Pascalis, Scott, Kelly, Shannon, Nicholson, Coleman, and Nelson, "Plasticity of Face Processing in Infancy"]), and are more likely to look beyond the conventional uses of tools in order to solve problems ([German and Defeyter, "Immunity to Functional Fixedness in Young Children"]) (Lucas, Bridgers, Griffiths, and Gopnik, "When Children are Better (Or At Least More Open-Minded) Learners than Adults," 285-86).

²⁴ My source for this is discussion of the Common Core among K-12 educators to which I have been party. I have also seen enthusiastic support for the Common Core among K-12 educators whose work I respect. (I supervise student teachers and am often able to interact with K-12 educators and see what goes on in their classrooms.)

²⁵ For an argument in favor of the work/play distinction, see David Elkind, "Thinking About Children's Play: Play Is Not Work, Nor Is Work Play," *Child Care Information Exchange* n139 (2001): 27-28. A republication of this piece may be found online at <http://www.issa.nl/members/articles/pdf/5013927.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2015). Elkind aligns his conception of the work/play distinction with Sigmund Freud's distinction between the primary process (a process associated with sleep, the unconscious, the pleasure principle, hysteria, and play) and the secondary process (a process associated with wakefulness, the "unpleasure principle," logic, rationality, and work).

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...were Matters ordered right, Learning any thing, they should be taught, might be made as much a Recreation to their Play, as their Play is to their Learning...they want their Liberty[, so] Get them but to ask their Tutor to teach them, as they do often their Play-fellows, instead of his Calling upon them to learn; and they being satisfied that they act as freely in this, as they do in other Things, they will go on with as much Pleasure in it, and it will not differ from their other Sports and Play. By these Ways, carefully pursued, a Child may be brought to desire to be taught any Thing, you have a Mind he should learn.²⁶

Thus, for Locke, the ultimate goal is an experience of learning in which, for the child, play and work are one and the same – they do “not differ” in quality, from the child’s point of view.

Dewey also emphasizes the importance of play in his educational philosophy, although he focuses on how play operates in a social group context rather than on an individual level. The games children play especially interest him. What interests him about games is that when a game between children is going well there is a sense of un-coerced, shared activity; “the players do not feel that they are submitting to external imposition.” Further, “the control of individual actions is effected” not by autocratic control but “by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and of which they are co-operative or interacting parts.”²⁷ For Dewey childhood play as structured in games is a good example of how social control should operate in a harmonious and democratic society. Far from being frivolous activity that matters only to children, the playing of games is, for Dewey, a prototype for the best way of living with others in adult society.

Respect for children’s interests

Locke and Dewey also have in common a commitment to respect for children’s interests and experiences, although their points of emphasis are somewhat different. Locke emphasizes a child’s need for liberty, an experience of free choice, and respect for his individual temperament and his mood of the moment (an understandable emphasis from a man who, in a sometimes servile capacity, assisted in the education of British aristocrats’ eldest sons). Dewey’s democratically oriented philosophy focuses more on a child’s need to engage meaningfully and sociably with the great mass of technological and other societally relevant subject matter that makes up the complicated realm of adult competence and expertise in the present, post-industrial-revolution era.

On the subject of respecting a child’s mood and temperament, here are Locke’s thoughts:

[A] Change of Temper should be carefully observed in [a child], and the favourable *Seasons of Aptitude and Inclination* be heedfully laid hold of...This I think no hard matter for a discreet Tutor to do; who has studied his Pupil’s temper, and will be at little pains to fill his Head with suitable Idea’s [sic.], such as may make him in love with the present Business.²⁸

In Locke’s mind the free and sensitively well-supported personality of the individual child was paramount. This ideal may be hard to approach in a classroom with many children. However, it is still worth keeping in mind, at least to keep us aware of the limitations of our prevailing educational arrangements.

For Freud’s account of the primary and secondary processes, see Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 385-402 and especially 397-398.

²⁶ Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 135-136.

²⁷ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 53.

²⁸ Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 135.

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Dewey focuses on the kind of childhood experience that will best connect a child's knowledge to the development of better understanding of the complex and multi-faceted society into which she is maturing. In his ambition to connect grown-up expertise with a child's ordinary experience, Dewey wrote, "Anything which can be called a study, whether arithmetic, history, geography, or one of the natural sciences, must be derived from materials which at the outset fall within the scope of ordinary life-experience."²⁹

Thus, we can see Locke and Dewey looking at children's interests from two mutually complementary perspectives. Locke was interested in educational practice that responds to a child's temperament and the moment-to-moment changes in a child's mood, while Dewey focused on drawing the wider world of adult technological and societal expertise within the sphere of children's interest and activity (see Endnote vii).

Conclusion: Two philosophies of continuity

In addition to their shared interest in educational philosophy, John Locke and John Dewey also have some other things in common. Both men lived and flourished in historical periods immediately following civil wars in their respective countries. Further, today each is regarded as a pre-eminent philosopher of his nation and political era, and each reflected the needs and the spirit of his place and time.

Both in England in the years following the English Civil War of the 1640s and 50s and in the United States in the years following the U.S. Civil War of the 1860's, people were eager to establish new principles of continuity and continuity-supporting practices in order to prevent similar, traumatic conflicts from occurring again. In keeping with their times, both Locke and Dewey were vigorous and thorough-going philosophers of continuity;³⁰ and their philosophies of childhood emphasize continuity over of conflict and revolution. They want us to see, in new ways, how adulthood is a *continuation* of childhood, and how childhood and adulthood are similar – how reasoning occurs not only in adulthood, but also in childhood; how play and spontaneity are important not only in childhood, but also in adulthood; and how it is important to pay attention to what's interesting not only from an adult's perspective, but also from a child's perspective. In their commitment to developing educational philosophies of continuity, Locke and Dewey can be our enriching interlocutors, as it were, in the context of recent thinking and psychological research in the field of child development – thinking and research that excitingly calls into question, and disproves, prevailing mid-twentieth-century notions of childhood as being more deficient, and adulthood as being more superior, than is actually the case. Heard as an ensemble, the voices of Locke, Dewey, and recent child psychologists can summon us to discover ever-richer, wonderfully stranger, and unknowably vast new possibilities for child development, human development, human society, and education.

²⁹ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 73.

³⁰ An emphasis on continuity is evident throughout Dewey's philosophy. For example, in *Democracy and Education* Dewey famously stated that the best kind of society "must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (99). Continuity is also a principle Dewey elaborates on extensively in connection with a range of other topics including the relationship between body and mind and the relationship between intellectual and biological phenomena (see Johnson, "Cognitive Science and Dewey's Theory of Mind, Thought, and Language"). In Locke's philosophy, an emphasis on continuity emerges in the form of new conceptualizations of tolerance and the dignity of individual human beings – conceptualizations that supported England's relatively smooth, continuous (rather than rupturing or violently revolutionary) movement in Locke's own time, during and after the Glorious Revolution, to a new form of government in which power was transferred from the monarch to the Parliament.

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