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Rival readings of Hegel at the fin de siècle: the case of William Torrey Harris and John Dewey

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William Torrey Harris and John Dewey were the two most important philosophers of education in America at the fin de siècle. This paper discusses their rival idealisms through an examination of their philosophical and educational pronouncements. As I will show, both are indebted to, and align themselves with, Hegel. However, each manifests his Hegelian reading in a particular way, leading to very different consequences for education. What these manifestations are, and how two very different understandings can be drawn from a similar source, constitute the matter of the paper.

Keywords: biography; education; ideas; intellectuals; philosophy

Introduction
At the fin de siècle, William Torrey Harris was the leading philosopher of education in America.1 John Dewey, by contrast, was an up-and-coming thinker who had only seriously begun to write on philosophy of education (aside from the odd paper) beginning in 1895, with the publication of Interest in Relation to Training of the Will for the 1895 Herbart Society.2 At the time of Interest, it is thought, Dewey had begun to overthrow his Hegelianism in favour of instrumentalism, pragmatism and experimentalism.3 Of course, Dewey starts his philosophical career as a Hegelian Absolute idealist: yet, it is claimed, he quickly abandons Hegel in the 1890s in favour of pragmatist theories of truth, meaning, knowledge and logic. He was inspired to do so by the naturalistic writings of William James and Charles Darwin (the latter absorbed through reading Thomas Huxley while an undergraduate), and the pragmatism of Charles S. Peirce.4 With naturalism, evolutionary psychology and the pragmatic rendering of the

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community of scientific researchers, Dewey had enough armament to battle the dualisms he saw everywhere in contemporary philosophy and psychology without recourse to a Hegelian apparatus. Westbrook encapsulates this reading well. Of Dewey’s relationship with Hegelianism, for example, he says:

But if Dewey repudiated the philosophical method of absolute idealism early in the 1890s, it was not until late in the decade that he openly said farewell to the absolute. Absolute idealism had satisfied his intellectual and emotional craving for an organic and purposeful world and provided him with the foundation for a democratic social and political theory that reconciled individuality and community. He was unwilling to relinquish any of this, and he did not give up the Absolute until he convinced himself that he could do so without sacrificing the valuable theoretical and practical benefits it had bestowed. This, it seems to me, accounts for Dewey’s continuing touchiness about misreadings of Hegel long after he had given up the quest for the Absolute: he was anxious lest his critique of idealism throw the bathwater out with the baby.5

In the story of Harris’s and Dewey’s relationship to one another, Harris is the Hegelian, absolutistic philosopher of education, while Dewey is the burgeoning instrumentalist and Darwinian. This story is bolstered by contrasting positions each took on the question of curriculum as put forth by the Committee of Fifteen,6 the letters Harris and Dewey sent to one another, as well as the review Dewey conducted on Harris’s sole book, Psychologic Foundations of Education.7 It is a story which continues to judge by the existing biographical and educational literature on Dewey.8

This story is, however, seriously lacking. In terms of their respective thinking at the fin de siècle, it is better to see one understanding of Hegel (Harris’s) against another (Dewey’s). Both Harris and Dewey adopted readings of Hegel and incorporated them into their respective philosophies of education, as I shall show. Both Harris and Dewey committed themselves to Hegelian conceptual descriptions. However, what each drew from Hegel, why they did so, and how they interpreted their readings, differed. As with Harris, Dewey’s Hegelianism is, at the fin de siècle, at the centre of his theories of meaning, knowledge and reality, together with his philosophy and psychology of education. What we have when we juxtapose Harris and Dewey is not a Hegelian philosophy and psychology of education (Harris) pitted against a pragmatist, evolutionary, or instrumentalist one (Dewey); it is a metaphysical and transcendental/supernatural reading of Hegel against a non-metaphysical,

6The Committee of Fifteen, led by Harris, was struck in the aftermath of the Committee of Ten, led by Harvard president Charles Eliot, with the express purpose of examining higher education and the role of the high school therein. The Committee of Ten’s report, released in 1893, garnered so much controversy that the Committee of Fifteen was struck to examine the situation of elementary school education. See Herbert Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1898–1958, 3rd ed. (New York: RoutledgeFalmer Press, 2004), 14.
7I am referring chiefly to extant letters between Harris and Dewey, as well as Dewey’s review of Harris’s Psychologic Foundations of Education in 1898. I will discuss these letters as well as the review in more detail in part three.
8See Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey, 46–47; Burke, Dewey’s New Logic, 20–1; and Eames, ‘Introduction’, xi. See also Cremin, American Education: the Metropolitan Experience, 165.
naturalist and immanent one. This has significant bearing on our historical understanding of Dewey’s intellectual development; this reading not only better accounts for differences between their core projects in philosophy and psychology of education in the 1890s and early 1900s; it helps better situate the two thinkers with regard to their debates involving the curriculum.9

In part one of this paper, I will probe the Hegelian pedigree of, first, Harris, then Dewey, through a (very) brief examination of the metaphysical versus non-metaphysical readings of Hegel current in the philosophical literature. It was long thought that Hegel had a metaphysical programme of idealism, in which disparate elements of cognition, logic, nature, ethics and ethical theory, anthropology, psychology, and history were brought together in an all-unifying, all totalising monistic, metaphysical and divine Absolute. In recent years, this understanding of Hegel’s programme has been challenged and offset by Anglo-American readings of Hegel that deny an Absolute as metaphysical and as a totalising monism. How these readings help us shine new light on Harris and Dewey’s understandings of Hegel will be taken up at the end of this section. In part two, I will examine how reading Hegel metaphysically or non-metaphysically played out in terms of the educational writings of each. Where Hegelian themes and tropes emerge in Harris and Dewey’s respective claims for education will constitute the content of this section of the paper. In part three, I will discuss the disagreement(s) between Harris and Dewey. Harris and Dewey were at odds with each other in respect of the psychology of education and the practices they recommended. Why this is the case will be discussed, with particular attention to the role of their particular readings of Hegel. Though it is not my intention to argue that Dewey’s understanding of Hegel is correct and that Harris’s is wrong (though I do say that Dewey’s non-metaphysical reading comes closer to contemporary Anglo-American readings of Hegel than Harris’s), it is my aim to show that, in addition to historical circumstances already well articulated, the dispute over the philosophy and psychology of education between Harris and Dewey took place with regard to rival understandings of Hegel.

1. Probing the idealist pedigree: the metaphysical vs. non-metaphysical Hegel

Hegel’s brand or version of idealism is often said to be the quintessence of that particular school of thought, as well as its historical apex: subsequent to Hegel, his disciples fractured into ‘left’ and ‘right’, and, with Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx, overthrew the Hegelian system entirely.10 Then as now, the role of metaphysics and God in Hegel’s thought divided otherwise sympathetic readers.11 The revitalisation of Hegel in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, carried out on both English-speaking sides of the Atlantic, attempted to resurrect the transcendental divine from Hegel’s Absolute Spirit;12 indeed, this was the hallmark of the neo-idealist movement that

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9Note I am not saying that the traditional reading of Harris and Dewey is completely false, but that it needs to be reconstituted by a reading that demonstrates the Hegelian underpinnings of the debate. When this underpinning is demonstrated, the simplistic reading of Harris as a Hegelian opposed to Dewey the pragmatist and instrumentalist, no longer holds.


11Ibid., 7.

Harris participated in, and Dewey too, though the latter for only a short period of time in the 1880s and early 1890s. While Dewey did not follow the extant neo-idealists in their attention to the claims for Christian religion, divinity and Absolute Spirit beyond the early 1890s, he did continue to endorse Hegel, albeit a non-metaphysical Hegel shorn of the pretensions to Absolute as divine.

Recent Hegel scholarship has also divided itself on the issue of how best to read Hegel (and particularly, his Phenomenology of Spirit and Science of Logic): as endorsing an absolutism that is metaphysical (even transcendental) or as endorsing an absolutism that is non-metaphysical. While virtually no one endorses a thoroughly naturalised reading of Hegel, a coterie of Anglo-American scholars endorses a non-metaphysical one. James Good comes close to endorsing a naturalistic view of Hegel with his claim that the Absolute connotes complete, without any transcendental or supernatural implications. Terry Pinkard, in Hegel’s Phenomenology, claims ‘Spirit … denotes for Hegel not a metaphysical entity but a fundamental relation among persons that mediates their self-consciousness, a way in which people reflect on what they have come to take as authoritative for themselves’. And Robert Pippin, in ‘The “Logic of Experience” as “Absolute Knowledge”’ makes this claim on behalf of the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel: ‘Experiential manifestations are not “instances” of such content, or examples; such dimensions make up the concepts [of Absolute Knowing] content.’ There is of course confirmation of the non-metaphysical view of Hegel by Hegel himself. For example, in the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline, Hegel introduces the philosophy of mind, noting: ‘Spirit … is not an essence already finished prior to its appearances, an essence keeping itself back behind the mountains of its appearances but is only something actually true through the determinate forms of external relation to the body but something internally bound up with the body through the unity of the concept.’

A non-metaphysical reading of Hegel is one that not only stresses the dynamic, evolving, emergent nature of consciousness and self-consciousness (and Reason and Spirit), it disavows the insistence that the entire system ‘depends on a categorical

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14We see this most tellingly in his affirmation of Hegel in both the 1897 Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (which I will discuss) and the 1904 Notes on Commentary on Hegel – a set of notes of a course given to graduate students at the University of Chicago in 1904, and taken down verbatim.
base that lays claim to conceptual (or “logical”) necessity’, if this necessity is a priori, transcendental, or other-worldly. A non-metaphysical reading will juxtapose alternatives such as linguistic conventions, the giving and taking of reasons in discursive spaces, and historical, social and cultural phenomena, to necessary categories. Another way to put the point is to say that non-metaphysical readings of Hegel reject the Kantian transcendental and categorical base that Hegel presumably erects his systematic edifice upon: whatever vestiges of Kantian transcendentalism remain in Hegel are expunged in this reading. Hegel’s Absolute Spirit emerges as a thoroughly immanent, self-determined and self-determining whole in the final analysis. One of the chief claims in favour of the immanent reading of Hegel comes at the end of the chapter on Absolute Knowing in the Phenomenology of Spirit. There, Hegel claims, ‘The goal, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit, that knows itself as Spirit, has for its path the recollection of the Spirits as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organisation of their realm. Their preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History…’

The tensions manifest in contemporary metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings in Hegel scholarship resemble the disputes between metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings in late nineteenth-century understandings of Hegel. I believe it is helpful to see Harris and Dewey’s understandings of Hegel in light of the current understandings of Hegel (as metaphysical or non-metaphysical). While not wishing to anachronistically imply they understood Hegel through these contemporary understandings, I do suggest that taking Harris and Dewey’s readings of Hegel up in this way helps us to see how the differences between them can be illuminated. These differences we see in the debate between Harris and Dewey over the role of metaphysics in Hegel’s thought here and in part two. In Harris’s case, the categorical substrate is maintained; not only this, but the categorical substrate is tied closely to an Aristotelian sense of entelechy – a self-determining power or activity that, while not problematic in its own right, is further grounded in a notion of the divine that is transcendent, rather than immanent. This notion of the divine ultimately escapes humanity’s power to contemplate it. Harris claims the Absolute is ‘perfect form’, or perfection. The Absolute is also ‘perfect self-consciousness’, which ‘eternally knows itself and thus eternally makes itself an object, but recognizing therein itself, it elevates the object into self-activity and independence’. It thus forever ‘returns to itself from its other’. In Dewey’s case, the categorical substrate is lacking; rather, the entire movement and transformation of the categories constitutes the substrate. This holds for both the Phenomenology of Spirit (where Hegel

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20Horstmann, ‘Substance, Subject, and Infinity: A Case Study of the Role of Logic in Hegel’s System’, 83. This is how Horstmann understands non-metaphysical readings of Hegel. Horstmann is unconvinced by these readings, because he sees an unwavering categorical substrate laying claims for logical necessity within the system.


23Harris, Hegel’s Logic, 105.
unfolds the history of consciousness) and the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline* (including the lesser *Logic*). Dewey claims the Absolute Spirit is ‘the spirit which does not have to overcome an external material, but which is thoroughly conscious of itself in and through all material. In every thing which seems most foreign to it, it still finds its own presence and its own activity.’ Dewey further claims, ‘In philosophy which deals with absolute spirit, Hegel says, man is not dealing with a material external to himself’. For Dewey, Hegel’s absolute spirit is one that encompasses spirit and material; self and world.

2. Rival uses of Hegel in Harris and Dewey

In this section, I will discuss the rival uses Harris and Dewey made of Hegel in their respective philosophy and psychology of education programs. While it is easy to note the Hegelian tropes and themes in Harris’s philosophy and psychology of education, it is more difficult with Dewey, in part because a well-established reading of the development of his intellectual thought has him breaking from Hegel in the mid-to-late 1890s. Dewey also self-consciously abandons the use of Hegelian nomenclature by this time. Dewey’s own estimation of his intellectual development thus perpetuates the reading of his neglect of Hegel. As I have said, several scholars have sought to challenge this reading in the past decade or so. I will not attempt to cover these claims and arguments further, other than to note Dewey’s early claims for philosophy and psychology of education that are self-consciously Hegelian. What we should make of these claims for educational theory at the *fin de siècle* is the topic of part three.

Before I discuss these rival uses, it will do to set the debates between Harris and Dewey in the context of disputes over the curriculum in *fin de siècle* America. Here I draw from Herbert Kliebard’s account of these struggles. To begin with, rival curricular theories were extant in the mid- to late 1890s. The first, well epitomised by Harris, was what Kliebard has called the ‘humanist’ curriculum. This curricular theory emphasised classical learning and Western civilisation and saw itself in opposition to the Herbartian child-study movement – a movement of which Dewey was at the time a part. Herbartians, along with psychologist G. Stanley Hall, emphasised the ‘recapitulation’ of human biology and culture in the child’s schooling; schooling should be made to comport with the development of the biological and social species. Kliebard notes that Dewey characteristically favoured neither of these theories, preferring to develop his own, largely through the observations of the children at the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago, of which he was head. It was in the context of the response to the Herbartians that Harris drew out Dewey as a supporter for his cause, and it was in Dewey’s capacity as head of

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28Ibid.
the Laboratory School that he demurred, developing a theory of pedagogy that would embrace what was best of these, yet ultimately endorsing neither.29 And while Kliebard is certainly correct that Dewey’s pedagogy developed in large part through his observations of children at the Laboratory School, nevertheless elements of the philosophical framework he would use to construct this theory were available to him prior to this undertaking; elements that were Hegelian in letter and spirit, as I shall show.

**Harris’s Hegelian educational theory**

As I have mentioned, Harris comes down to us as a conservative apologist for the upper middle-class urbane bourgeois prominent in the latter half of the nineteenth century.30 His philosophy of education is seen as regressive rather than progressive, and (like Hegel) he is seen as a defender of the prevailing order. Doubtless, Harris was concerned with stability and nowhere more so than with regard to the curriculum of schools. However, Harris’s vehement rejection of rote methods and pedagogies, together with his championing of the new industrial order, make his a difficult conservatism to sustain. Harris’s involvement in education was both direct and genuine. From 1858 until his retirement in 1909, he had been involved directly in educational administration. All his intellectual life concerned education, and among the St Louis Hegelians, he was the most prolific writer.31 In addition to Hegel, Johann Karl Freidrich Rosenkranz, pedagogue and expositor of Hegel in his own right, was an influence on Harris’s philosophy of education.32 I will draw from two central sources here: ‘The Basis of Education as a Science’ (1877) and *Psychologic Foundations of Education* (1898).33

Harris was no critic of science or scientific inquiry in education. This is despite the (unwarranted) reputation he has garnered as fearful of scientific change.34 Harris did not fear science per se; he was, however, suspicious of applied science and technology and, particularly, thoughtless vocationalism: ‘the province of the

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31 Though not the only writer. Thomas Davidson, a sometimes-on and sometimes-off member of the group, also wrote on educational theory. He invoked Hegel in his writings as did Harris; however, Davidson was not self-consciously Hegelian in his claims, whereas Harris and the other two members of the triumvirate were. See Henry Pochmann, *German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957), 289.


33 Harris wrote no extended treatise on the philosophy of education; indeed, his writings are confined to scholarly articles, reports, lectures and addresses, and reviews. He published no book-length manuscripts in either philosophy or psychology of education beyond this. *Psychologic Foundations of Education* represents his fullest treatment of these latter topics.

34 Brian Holmes and W. T. Harris, ‘Some Writings of William Torrey Harris’, *British Journal of Educational Studies* 5, no. 1 (1956): 60.
common school must be defined to be that in which insight and discipline is given in what is general or common to all culture or vocations.\textsuperscript{35} He felt that the rapid industrialisation of industry and its consequent effect on school education would be to deny students an education in civilisation and classics. Harris of course denounced vocationalism in numerous places, and particularly in his reports to the Committee of Fifteen.\textsuperscript{36} It is true that Harris’s curriculum is time-honoured: Harris wished that children would leave school with the ideals of humanism, and this obviously meant education in the humanities, including the works of past civilisations. As with Hegel, an education in civilisation took precedence over manual, vocational or skills training.\textsuperscript{37}

Harris did not condone traditional pedagogic methods such as drill or rote memorisation.

A severe drill in mechanical habits of memorizing or calculating, any overcultivation of sense perception in tender years, may so arrest the development of the soul in a mechanical method of thinking as to prevent further growth into spiritual insight…. The absorption of the gaze upon adjustments within the machine prevents us from seeing the machine as a whole…. Too much counting and calculating may at a tender age set the mind in the mechanical habit of looking for mere numerical relations in whatever it sees.\textsuperscript{38}

Instead of rote, Harris famously drew on the culture epoch thesis which Herbart had popularised – that children passed through the stages of societies in their individual growth in developing an alternative curricular content and form. The aim was to develop culture in the child, which for Harris (as it was for Goethe’s \textit{Wilhelm Meister}) is \textit{Bildung} – cultural self-formation.\textsuperscript{39} This involves a constant pattern of settlement and upheaval.

True inner development or education should always proceed from the symbolic to the aesthetic or artistic, from art to science, and from science to philosophy; for true art (including also poetry) is a higher form of ‘inner connection’ than the merely symbolic, which constitutes the spiritual side of play. Again, science and philosophy are more advanced than art in the fact that they seize the inner connection directly and simply, while the symbolic form is only a suspicion or intimation of an inner connection, and art only a personification or an illustration of it.\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35}W. T. Harris, ‘The Basis of Education as a Science’, \textit{The Western}, 1877.
\item \textsuperscript{36}W. T. Harris. ‘How the Will Combines with the Intellect in the Higher Orders of Knowing’, \textit{Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the National Education Association}, 1896, 440–46, 442.
\item \textsuperscript{38}Harris, \textit{Psychologic Foundations of Education}, 142.
\item \textsuperscript{39}Harris therefore did not reject out of hand the ‘recapitulation’ thesis; indeed, he drew on a species of recapitulation in his turn to Goethe. Harris was concerned with the baleful influence of naturalistic pedagogies on education, not recapitulation \textit{per se}. A cultural recapitulation along the lines of Goethe’s \textit{Bildungsroman} was acceptable. Harris, \textit{Psychologic Foundations of Education}, 317.
\item \textsuperscript{40}Harris, \textit{Psychologic Foundations of Education}, 318.
\end{itemize}
Harris’s triadic formulation of education mimics Hegel’s movements from one-sided self-for-itself to the self-for-other, to the self that returns to itself as in-and-for itself — that is, as will.\(^\text{41}\) Harris has the child begin with extreme subjectivity (the symbolic); here, the infant is ‘for himself’ (or herself).\(^\text{42}\) He progresses to the aesthetic or artistic; here, the infant (and small child) reaches out to fashion, construct, pull apart, and reassemble. In so doing, he is personifying his nascent spirit. Finally, the child’s spirit reaches its apogee in philosophy and science. Here, spirit becomes self-conscious and the child becomes not only ‘for himself’, but ‘in and for himself’.\(^\text{43}\) In this, the child becomes his will, and as in Hegel, the nascent sense of freedom is garnered.\(^\text{44}\)

The development of the self is a social and cultural project that education facilitates. Central to this facilitation is the proper curriculum. Harris’s curriculum is meant to ‘open the five windows of the soul’.\(^\text{45}\) The branches of study in this curriculum correspond to the windows, and are also five in number. I quote Harris extensively:

The psychology of education should point out the categories involved in each of these studies, as well as show their objective scope and significance. First, the categories of quality and quantity are used in the [two] Nature studies, arithmetic and geography. In quantity, the first stage of the understanding is active … and abstract equality and difference are seized, but in quality the second stage is active; for quality (in the philosophic sense) means dependence on others, or relativity – thing as determined through its environment…. In grammar, introspection is the chief mental operation; one must go behind the form of the word to its meaning, and then go behind the particular meaning to the part of speech – that is to say, behind the content of the meaning to its form; and both content and form of meaning are objects of introspection alone; they are concepts and categories. While grammar deals with the category of self-activity as revealed in language, history deals with it as will, and especially as the will of the social aggregate. Literature and art also deal with the same category in its third phase – namely, its symbol making activity.\(^\text{46}\)

In all development of thought, the child moves from a symbol sense to a more formal, because meaningful, external sense. This first movement is made possible through relation with its environment. This in turn, leads to grasping of the form – the concept. This is an introspective movement; one which is self-determined and self-determining. Harris draws self-consciously from Hegel’s categories in the *Science of Logic*. Education should follow the categories of the mind in order to effectively facilitate self-formation. As our minds develop through the categories of simple Being (quality and quantity) to Essence (identity and relation) and Spirit (self-activity), so should education strive to cultivate the categories at the appropriate developmental juncture. All concepts are self-determined, as Harris claims in *Hegel’s Logic*; the movement of the self-determined concept is one in which ascension from the particular (content) to the universal (form) has been made.\(^\text{47}\)

\(^{42}\)Harris, *Psychologic Foundations of Education*, 318.  
\(^{43}\)Ibid., 321.  
\(^{44}\)Ibid., 321–22; Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, Section 482.  
\(^{45}\)Harris, *Psychologic Foundations of Education*, 324.  
\(^{46}\)Ibid., 324–25.  
The idea is the total of all the potentialities of a thing. This doctrine is the clew [sic] to Hegel’s use of Begriff as expressing the self-active cause. Hence Plato spoke of things in the real world of change as not being fully realized ideas but as only having participation in ideas. But to this thought of the complex of potentialities we must add that of self-activity…. Then the thought is clear. All things in the world are fragmentary manifestations of self-active individuals or ideas.48

This universal reconciles itself with the content (particulars), whose best expressions are such subject matters as art, history and literature.

**Dewey’s Hegelian educational theory**

In contrast to Harris, Dewey has come down to us as a progressivist; a socially conscious pragmatist; and an instrumentalist in matters of value and valuation. To be sure, these labels do not mislead, as Dewey himself and countless readers will testify. However, it is also the case that Dewey’s earlier educational theory is manifestly Hegelian.49 The prospect of understanding Dewey’s earlier educational theory as Hegelian is more difficult to see than Harris’s, as Dewey, unlike Harris, did not self-consciously point out his Hegelian roots in his educational writings. I will examine Dewey’s understanding of inquiry and the role of phenomenology on the issue of interest in regard to the training of the will.50

A central transformation that Hegel discusses in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that of a double movement or ‘doubling’ (Verdopplung). Hegel’s ‘doubling’ occurs at a crucial section: consciousness. The understanding of the relationship between pure concepts or notions (in this case, of Force) and their practical instances (appearances) form the context for his account. So-called ‘pure concepts’ only become actual when they ‘vanish’ into their others – in effect, their practical instances, or appearances. When the concept negates itself for its other, it becomes itself anew: it leaves itself only to return to itself as reconstructed and ‘whole’ (the term ‘doubling’ or ‘duplication’ [Verdopplung] occurs several times in Hegel’s explication of the tensions and contradictions in the consciousness of understanding).51

Dewey incorporated this ‘doubling’ or duplication in his account of the context in which children learn. Dewey understood the Hegelian impetus in Harris’s account of particular and universal differently from Harris; science begins not in particulars but ‘vague wholes’ (abstract concepts) and concludes in ‘systematized

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48Harris, *Hegel’s Logic*, 31.
49Johannes Bellmann has discussed certain passages in *Democracy and Education* with respect to self-knowledge, and has noted the convergence of Dewey and Hegel on this (and other) themes. See Bellmann, ‘Re-Interpretation in Historiography: John Dewey and the Neo-Humanist Tradition’, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 23 (2004): 476. Jim Garrison has made the claim that Dewey’s understanding of conceptions for inquiry is a reconstruction of Hegel’s understanding of universals. See Garrison, ‘The “Permanent Deposit” of Hegelian Thought in Dewey’s Theory of Inquiry’, 20.
50In a revealing letter to Harris, Dewey claims, ‘It may interest you to know – what I shouldn’t like to give way to the general public – that I started first by trying to turn Hegel’s logic of quantity over into psychology & then that into pedagogy’. John Dewey to William Torrey Harris, December 4, 1894, in John Dewey, *The Correspondence of John Dewey*, Vol. 1, ed. L. Hickman (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003).
51For example Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 85/141.
wholes’ (concrete universals). Children do not learn to grasp wholes through a movement from the particular to the universal. As Dewey claimed in his 1897 Lectures on Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit, thought is at first formal; it is abstract – merely a vague whole; it takes the material gleaned through perception and abstracts the universal from these; then, it reimposes the abstraction upon the material. In this ‘double movement’, the concrete universal of a fully mature concept arises. Whereas Harris seems to think we begin with particulars and move to wholes, Dewey claims we begin with formal thought and through a process of doubling, reimpose the thought upon our perceptions. In this way, we move from a vague whole to the material (particular) to a complete whole.

Dewey elsewhere incorporated this transformation of ‘doubling’ into his theory of educational inquiry. To give but one example, in How We Think, a text written for teachers in 1910, Dewey stresses the fundamental continuity, wholeness and processional natures of inquiry. Inquiry is a continuous affair; whether the context is ethics or education, inquiry begins with a problematic, unsettled or otherwise ambiguous situation which is discemned on the basis of observation. Inquiry ends with the resolution of this problematic or unsettled situation, also discerned on the basis of observation. What counts as an unsettled or problematic situation depends on the presence (or absence) of traits of experience (existence), which form the ontological conditions out of which all inquiry proceeds. Between unsettled and settled situations lie the functions of judging, including discriminating (analysing), relating (synthesising), and the formation of hypotheses which, if proven useful, become concepts, rules or principles. The formation of ideas is also a matter of imagination, as is the testing (deduction) of these. In any judgement, there are both inductive and deductive, and analytic and synthetic, activities. The net result of such activities is the formation of a unified whole in the form of sets of relations which portend meaning; meaningful relations that are pressed into service in the resolution of the original, unsettled situation. This is evident in the following passage;

Gradually and by processes that are more or less tortuous and originally unplanned, definite technical processes and instrumentalities are formed and transmitted. Information about things, their properties and behaviours, is amassed, independently of any particular immediate application. It becomes increasingly remote from the situations of use and enjoyment in which it originated. There is then a background of materials and operations available for the development of what we term science, although there is still no sharp dividing line between common sense and science.

In what is a characteristically Hegelian sentiment, Dewey notes ‘a double movement’ in reflection: ‘a movement from the given partial and confused data to a suggested comprehensive (or inclusive) entire situation; and back from this suggested whole ... to the particular facts, so as to connect these with one another and with additional facts to which the suggestion has directed attention’. This ‘double movement’ takes place from the standpoint of the observer/inquirer; she/he begins

53 Dewey, Lectures on Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit, 146.
55 Ibid., 242.
with a discernible (problematic) tension; facilitates through reflection and deliberation the possibility of a state in which the unsettled situation settles and returns again to her/himself (as inquirer) and attends to the facts that will lead to the settlement of the problematic situation. In so doing, ideas are formulated and tested; new conceptions are produced (and others discarded); meaning is given and taken; and a situation is transformed, along with the inquirer (indeed, Dewey at one point calls this double movement ‘to and from a meaning…’). This double movement results in the transformation of both the problematic situation (the earlier movement), and the inquirer-as-self, both of which become (in Hegel’s terms) ‘sublated’ in a higher unity of situation and self. Inquiry is thus a process that doubles upon itself; first in the identification of a problematic situation and the gathering of data (analysis); second, in the linkages of related ideas (syntheses) as hypotheses that are included or excluded on the basis of perceived and actual operational force. As elements of an unsettled situation are further isolated, they are eventually brought together in a unified whole that is both composed of, yet distinct from these. It is in this way we can talk of the Hegelian unity in difference that is the result of the logic of inquiry. Dewey stresses the essentially dynamic, doubling movement intrinsic to the logic of inquiry.

We see a decidedly naturalistic attempt at interpreting Hegel’s self-developing concept in the discussion of interest and its relationship to the training of the will. Taking the concepts of effort and interest in their customary senses, Dewey assails the dualism that prevails in discussions of these together: the dualism that either interest or effort manifests, but not both; at least, not in equivalent measure. Dewey strikes at the heart of the dualism when he claims:

A little reflection will convince one that the strong point in each argument is not so much what it says in its own behalf as in its attacks on the weak places of the opposite theory. Each theory is strong in its negations rather than in its position.

Dewey continues:

This identical assumption is the externality of the object or idea to be mastered, the end to be reached, the act to be performed, to the self. It is because the object or end is assumed to be outside self that it has to be made interesting, that it has to be surrounded with artificial stimuli and with fictitious inducements to attention. It is equally because the object lies outside the sphere of self that the sheer power of ‘will,’ the putting forth of effort without interest, has to be appealed to.

56Dewey, How We Think, 242.
57John Dewey, ‘Interest in Relation to Training of the Will’, in The Early Works of John Dewey Vol. 5, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972). This paper was presented in 1896 as a supplement to the Herbart Yearbook and subsequently reprinted, with additions, in 1899. Harris was present at the initial presentation of the paper at the Round Table meeting.
58I say customary, because Dewey is discussing the terms as they are used in the then contemporary educational discourse. What they will become in Dewey’s account is another matter.
59Dewey, Interest in Relation to Training of the Will, 117.
60Ibid.
In contrast to the (one-sided) positions of interest and effort as over against each other:

The genuine principle of interest is the principle of the recognized identity of the fact or proposed line of action with the self; that it lies in the direction of the agent’s own growth, and is, therefore, imperiously demanded, if the agent is to be himself.  

In Dewey’s estimation, interest begins with the self; an internal impulse is channelled to an external interest. In Hegel’s terms, the self alienates itself through the setting up of an aim or end or object desired: this process is negation. What Hegel calls negation in reference to the negation of Being in non-Being in the Encyclopedia Logic at section 87, Dewey calls ‘a break’. ‘Non-being enters when a break occurs; and the break itself is the motivation for stating the being. Recognition of the process of reconstruction gives the category of Becoming.’ The break is undoubtedly a break in action (experiencing). Recognition of the process is akin to reflection (thinking). To put this back into the context of self, this self, interesting itself in an outward aim, end or object, encompasses that aim, end or object. A greater unity of the self ultimately emerges, and this Dewey calls growth. Growth is self-expression and it has philosophical, cognitive-developmental, and emotional components. Dewey understands Hegel’s account of negation as growth. According to Dewey, Hegel claims at Section 94 of the Encyclopedia Logic that negation is both determinateness and limitation. Speaking of the limit as negation, Dewey says ‘This is the true Infinite – the power of growth. When you utilize the limit to make it a real power, then you get the true Infinite. The progression ad infinitum is alternating between being and non-being.’ Dewey attempts to (again) naturalise Hegel through positing the true infinite as the power of growth.

Dewey puts his own account of growth in decidedly naturalistic terms: ‘Genuine interest in education is the accompaniment of the identification, through action, of the self with some object or idea, because of the necessity of that object or idea for the maintenance of self-expression.’ Interest, which Dewey considers ‘active, projective, or propulsive’ in its initial expression, ‘does not end simply in itself as bare feelings may, but always has some object, end, or aim to which it attaches itself’.

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63Dewey, ‘Notes on Commentary on Hegel (1904)’, Section 87: ‘Non-Being or Nothing’ (emphasis in original).
65Hegel, *Logic*, Section 94.
66Dewey, ‘Notes on Commentary on Hegel (1904)’, Section 94 (emphasis in original).
68Ibid., 122
From this initial expression, ‘natural interest’ forms. The self, through its expression, attaches itself to an object. This is the self-expressive activity Dewey calls, here and elsewhere, ‘growth’:

An interest is primarily a form of self expressive activity – that is, of growth through acting upon nascent tendencies. If we take into account that it is self-expression, that self finds itself, is reflected back to itself, in this content, we get its emotional or feeling side. Any account of genuine interest must, therefore, grasp it as outgoing activity holding within its grasp an intellectual content, and reflecting itself in felt value.

Growth, as Dewey says, is the self finding itself reflected back into itself in the content of the interest that is expressed. The self expresses itself in the content of the interest and in so doing finds itself reflected back into itself, leading to an augmented self. This is Hegelian determination through negation; of the self negating itself to find itself reflected back into itself in the context of taking on (practical) interests.

3. Harris vs. Dewey and its educational significance

I have been arguing that, not only do Dewey and Harris draw on Hegel in their respective philosophies and psychologies of education, they draw on a different Hegel; or rather, different readings of Hegel. In the case of Harris, this is a metaphysical, even transcendental Hegel concerned with eternal verities. In the case of Dewey, this is a non-metaphysical, even naturalised Hegel, in which categorical substrates are self-determined products of method and Absolute Spirit is thoroughly immanent. We can see these respective readings of Hegel in the rival claims of their educational projects. Let us now move to discuss the nature of the disagreements between Harris and Dewey, and how these are the products of manifest differences in reading Hegel.

Dewey’s relationship with Harris famously begins with his submission of a paper entitled ‘the Metaphysical Assumptions of Materialism’ to the Journal of Speculative Philosophy (of which Harris was the editor) in 1882. At the time, Dewey was a schoolteacher in Oil City, Pennsylvania, attempting to decide whether graduate school and a career as a professional philosopher was on the cards. Harris, of course, responded positively, published the article, and Dewey attended Johns Hopkins University, with G. S. Morris as supervisor. Dewey kept up the correspondence with Harris, though there are breaks of several years in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

The initial correspondence suggests Dewey’s enthusiasm for Harris and his claims on behalf of Hegel. In 1890, upon hearing of Harris’s new text on Hegel’s logic, Dewey claimed he hoped it would be ready soon for his upcoming course on

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69 Dewey, Interest in Relation to Training of the Will, 124.
70 Ibid., 125.
Hegel’s logic in the winter term of 1891 at the University of Michigan. However, after the publication of Hegel’s Logic, and with regard to educational issues specifically, differences began to emerge. In a letter sent by Harris to John Williston Cook, a misreading regarding Dewey’s understanding of psychological matters was made manifest. Harris claimed to Cook:

I was very glad to see Prof. John Dewey’s article on the question, ‘How does the concept arise from the percept?’ I think that his answer to the question is substantially the right one, and I do not know of anything more important in psychology than this view of the question. The concept arises from the percept not by omission of certain traits and features which are not common to the special percepts – it does not arise from abstraction – but it arises by a deeper insight into the constructive nature of the process which creates or generates the particulars which form the objects of perception. Sense-perception furnishes us objects which are dead results. The conceptive faculty perceives the generative causes, the formative processes, and sees these, more or less adequately, when it uses general names. The conception thus, as Mr. Dewey tells us, perceives a deeper reality than sense-perception.

Dewey, however, was not pleased with Harris’s interpretation of his claims. Harris implies that percepts have no substantial bearing on the development of concepts, a view with which Dewey is disinclined to agree. Dewey makes it clear that he does not disfavour ‘physiological psychology’, in contrast to the turn Harris gives to his reading of Dewey’s paper. (Dewey as well defends William James from Harris’s attempt to brand him a mere ‘physiological psychologist.’) Harris tends towards understanding the role of percepts as inert; thoughtless. Thought (concepts) does the real work of forming, generating and naming, which nets us a deeper reality than that of sense-perception (percepts). This is in keeping with a view of Hegel in which concepts and percepts are both distinguished and distinctive; a view that subordinates percepts to concepts and considers concepts (thought) eminently higher. Concepts are clear; percepts are fragmentary. Physiological psychology has no bearing on concepts; as it deals solely with percepts it is therefore diminished.

Any such statements as you mention are erroneous & misleading. I have never at any time had any antagonism to physiological psychology – but have conceived it as delivering important methods & material. If I may venture to characterize my own book [Psychology] it was an attempt to interpret a vast mass of floating material of this character from the standpoint of what seemed to me the true idea of mind – a

72John Dewey to William Torrey Harris, September 12, 1890. In The Correspondence of John Dewey, Vol. 1. Dewey’s Michigan lecture on Hegel’s philosophy of spirit is to be found in Koch, ed., The Class Lectures of John Dewey, Vol. 1; it is in essentials similar to the recently published 1897 philosophy of spirit lecture. See Shook and Good, John Dewey’s Philosophy of Spirit with the 1897 Lecture on Hegel, viii.

73John Williston Cook was for many years the dean of arts at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. He was acquainted with both Harris and Dewey.


75Harris had long distrusted James’s empiricist tendencies, despite carrying on a cordial relationship with him. See Leidecker, Yankee Teacher, 413.

76See Harris, Hegel’s Logic, 31.
genetic active unity. By this method, it seemed to me new life might be given philosophic ideas which were becoming exhausted, while unity & meaning would be conveyed to a lot of facts which were isolated & specialistic.\textsuperscript{77}

Whereas for Harris percepts are dead and thoughtless, for Dewey they are alive and key ingredients in thinking. Dewey saw the implicit critique of physiological psychology in Harris, and furthermore felt the co-optation of his position on psychology for Harris’s own purposes. He retorted, claiming that in fact he had a picture of mind that embraced cognition (thought) and physiological psychology (with regard to percept or sense-perception). As Dewey’s non-metaphysical Hegel is not inimical to the unity of mind (thought) and world (percept; physiological psychology), neither is Dewey’s project for psychology.

Further differences had emerged by 1896. Writing to Cook, Harris makes mention of Dewey’s article, ‘Interpretation of the Culture-Epoch Theory’,\textsuperscript{78} and the perceived bias against literature he sees in Dewey’s account of stories for children.\textsuperscript{79} Harris perceived in Dewey’s critique of formal literature for young children a bias against literature in toto:

By the way, did you read John Dewey’s article in the ‘Common School Journal’? On reading the article the second time more carefully I find many heresies in it with regard to the value of literature. He seems to think that literature is as formal as the reading lessons in colloquial style placed in the First, Second and Third Readers. In this he is, I think, greatly mistaken. His article is more or less reactionary all through. But I am delighted to have him take a hand in these discussions because he has a mind of very large caliber and what is more important, a growing mind. He comes to the threshing of this old straw with a new flail which is a positive addition although his flail may not be so good as the flails that you and I have been using for these many years.\textsuperscript{80}

Dewey is condemnatory of using literature as something more than a story regarding the myths of past civilisations. Though not mentioning Harris directly, Dewey knew full well that Harris’s use of stories, particularly in the readers he designed for public school elementary students in 1877, crossed this line. Harris emphasised metaphysical aspects of Hegel – aspects including thought, conception, Idea and the religious understanding of the divine. These are manifest in the understanding of a formal nature that human beings possess by virtue of their humane-ness. They are revealed through instruction in a (classical) curriculum of myth and literature (among other subjects).\textsuperscript{81} Dewey characteristically eschews talk of the divine, and


\textsuperscript{79}These readers were supposedly the product of collaboration amongst many leading educators, including Andrew J. Rickoff, superintendent of the public schools of Cleveland, OH. However, the burden in writing the readers seems to have fallen to Harris. He completed the readers in a series, from primer to level six, by 1878. See Leidecker, Yankee Teacher, 333–9.


\textsuperscript{81}Harris, Psychologic Foundations of Education, 318.
sets his understanding of thought, conception and idea in a manifestly social context. For Dewey, myths and literature do not get at a metaphysical nature of the child; rather, they help constitute the child’s nature. Dewey claims:

The myth is a complete social product, reflecting in itself the intellectual, the economic and the political condition of a certain people. Most of the classic myths are still more complicated by containing in themselves records of the conflict of one form of civilization, one type of economic life, one political regime with another. Now these myths, the best of them, told as stories, are a very excellent thing; I have a great respect for the educative value of the right story at the right time, but it is self-deception to suppose that they have a value other than that of a story – that by some inner affinity to the child’s nature, he is being morally introduced into the civilization from which the myth sprung, and is receiving a sort of spiritual baptism through ‘literature.’

Dewey accuses those educators who pull the central message of literature and of myths from their historical contexts of creating an inert abstraction that will have little currency with the interests of a contemporary child. Literature, Dewey maintained, is not ‘an entity by itself’. It is expression: self-expression. As with his discussion of interest, the self (in Hegel’s terms) alienates itself through the setting up of an aim or end or object desired – in this case, literature or mythology as story. The self, interesting itself in an outward aim, end or object, encompasses literature or mythology as a story and becomes a greater self in so doing. This results in self-expression. The failure at bottom of the attempt to formalise literature, in Dewey’s estimation, is the rendering of literature and mythology an inert object while somehow thinking that a student will miraculously gravitate towards it on its own merits. To do so is to keep the self from alienating itself (Hegel’s determination through negation) and to thwart the development of a greater self.

Finally, we may note Dewey’s review of Harris’s *Psychologic Foundations of Education*, published in 1898. This was the first and only book-length manuscript Harris produced on education, and, to judge by its reaction, served to polarise the debate between idealists and empiricists further than it already was. Dewey generally praised the work; however, in a telling comment, Dewey accuses Harris of almost complete ignorance of the empirical findings of contemporary psychology, and the denigration of the contemporary industrial order. Harris’s attention to the formal, metaphysical aspects of psychology (mind; concepts; ideas) betrayed a less than charitable view of the natural world, including the social world in which children exist and learn. More tellingly, Dewey notes a dualism in an otherwise staunchly Hegelian set of claims: the dualism between the secular and the spiritual. Harris places the spiritual above and beyond the secular, whereas for Dewey these are brought together. Harris had claimed:

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83 Ibid.
84 Hegel, *Logic*, Section 94.
85 Leidecker, *Yankee Teacher*, 533.
86 Dewey, ‘Harris’s *Psychologic Foundations of Education*’, 376.
87 Ibid., 377.
While the secular institutions serve to provide man with food, clothing, and shelter, and to protect and defend him against physical violence and suffering, the spiritual combinations have for their end the evolution of man’s absolute ideal and the elevation of man’s natural individual into such participation into the life of the social whole that he achieves independence of the temporal and finite and comes to live a divine life.88

And further:

In the institution of the Church, man essays to actualize in himself a reconciliation of his being with the divine ideal. Worship and sacrifice constitute the two essential elements of religion. In devotion or worship the soul concentrates itself upon the infinite and eternal ideal – the Absolute Person – and refuses to occupy itself with the peculiar concerns of life. Whether it is joy or sorrow, success or misfortune, it is all the same; with its one privilege of communion with God, all finite, secular things are as naught.89

Commenting on Harris’s discussion of the Church, family, civil society and the state, Dewey notes (for Harris):

The spiritual have for their end the evolution of man’s absolute ideal and the elevation of the natural individual into participation in the life of the social whole, so that he achieves independence of the temporal and finite and comes to live a divine life. This distinction, both in terminology and in substance, seems to mark a somewhat unfortunate relapse into the dualism between the natural and the spiritual characteristic of the middle ages.... And while, superficially considered, industrial society might be regarded simply as a mechanism for contributing to the physical comfort and well-being of man; more deeply considered, invention and commerce are chief instrumentalties which spiritual culture has had to rely upon for its general propagation and diffusion.90

If Dewey is correct, then Harris’s dualism between the natural and spiritual is manifestly un-Hegelian; as the Absolute denoted the unity of erstwhile one-sided realms, so dualism denotes the absence of the Absolute. By treating nature and spirit in a dualistic manner, and the former as subordinate to the latter, the Hegelian aim of Harris – the aim of Absolute Unity of Mind – is thwarted.

Dewey then notes a tension between Harris’s attempt to place the spiritual above, over and against the secular, and the claims set for the ethical life:

He [Harris] tells us that the ethical element must be regarded as essential to all institutions; and that the forms of spiritual combination – art, religion, and science – are to be looked upon as underlying and conditioning even the secular institutions of man. If this thought were worked out, it seems to me the distinction made between the secular and the spiritual world would largely disappear.91

Again, Dewey seems to think that Harris is of two minds regarding the spiritual and the secular: on the one hand, Harris wants to disengage the spiritual from the

91Ibid.
secular in regard to ethical life. This has the unfortunate tendency to sever the ethical life from social institutions such as art, religion and science. However, Harris also wants to say that the ethical life permeates all institutions, including art, religion and science. If this is the case, then the unity of the ethical life with the social—what we might call the essential ‘normativity’ of ethics in all social pursuits—is maintained. Harris cannot have it both ways; he must either place the spiritual on a higher realm than the secular, which frustrates his avowed aim of Absolute unity, or he must see these as coming together, in which one’s subordination to the other gives way. It is clear that Dewey favours the latter reading.

In turning to educational matters, Dewey comments on Harris’s reading of the development of mind and chides him for mistaking this development as one from particular (species) to universal (genera). Drawing on his own reading of Hegel, Dewey notes:

I doubt very much if the psychological justification which Dr. Harris lays down for his doctrine, that of the three stages of knowledge, will hold as it is here applied.... As Dr. Harris himself frequently recognizes, the act of isolation is essentially one of abstraction.... It is the science, the situation, the story that attracts and holds.... Observation of particulars as particulars, the movement toward isolation and definition, is a counterpart of the movement of the mind toward the discovery of interrelation and mutual dependence [in contrast to Harris]....

Harris, according to Dewey, bifurcates particulars and universals, then brings them together (again) in a relationship in which universals are ascendant. Again, for Dewey Harris misses the Hegelian mark: when brought together, there is no ascendancy; there is unification. For Dewey, we do not merely grasp the particular as particular; we first grasp the whole in vagueness and then differentiate particulars as part of the task of relating. ‘Instead of going from particulars through interrelation up to wholes, the mind moves from the apprehension of vague wholes, through correlative specification and generalization, to systematized wholes.’ Dewey sees this bifurcation as endemic to an insidious, yet pervasive, educational practice: one in which there is over-specialisation regarding technical symbols (Dewey presumably has in mind here abstract symbols in areas of literature, science and maths) to the detriment of an inclusive education—an education more in keeping with the avowed aims of an Absolute unity of mind and world.

It is fortunate that the congruence between theory and right practice is so great; but if there were not this natural agreement, one might almost say that the purpose of the elementary school would be to counteract the tendency toward isolation and premature specialization upon technical symbols. It would be intolerable in a democratic country to have ninety-five percent of children shut off for the most part from ethical content and from the influences which tend to convert information into wisdom, reserving this latter just for the elite who are able to go to college.

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93 Ibid., 383.
94 Ibid., 383. Compare this with Dewey’s claim regarding Hegel: that thought begins with a formal concept. See Dewey, Lectures on Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit, 146. Note also the implication of elitism; this would continue to dog Harris well into the twentieth century.
It was very much the dichotomy between a classical education of formal symbols on the one side (epitomised in Harris’s curriculum) with a more grounded education in the life-world of children using vocational instances as points of departure (epitomised in Dewey’s emergent curriculum) that lay behind many of the early disagreements over curriculum between the humanist school and Dewey in the late 1890s. For both, the quest was for the Absolute; but what constituted the Absolute was different for each. Harris and Dewey evince distinctive understandings that are at odds with one another. Harris’s segregation of literature and mythology from mundane stories (as evidenced in his readers), and his dualism between the natural and the spiritual (with the spiritual accorded absolute and infinite status in contrast to the natural), speaks to the metaphysical – even transcendental – status imbued to Absolute Spirit and the corresponding subservience of the finite, the material and the natural.

Whereas Harris maintains the ultimate transcendence of spirit and the distinction of spirit (and thought) from nature in Hegel’s Absolutism, Dewey stresses the ultimate union of mind and world in the objectivity of thought. This is nowhere more evident than in Dewey’s comment on Hegel’s philosophical method:

I have dwelt on this ... at such length because we have in this strain of Hegel’s mind a simple and clear illustration of the main point in his philosophical methods – his insistence that all thought is objective, that relations of thought are forms of the objective world – that the process of thinking is simply following the movement of the subject matter itself. This is often interpreted as exactly the reverse of what Hegel meant. It is often considered as exactly the reverse of what Hegel meant. But his real meaning is that there is no such thing as a faculty of thought separate from things: that thinking is simply the translation of fact into its real meaning; it is subjection of reality subjecting.

Dewey’s insistence on the unpacking of dualisms (wherein one movement or moment is of higher, because metaphysical, status than others), together with the importance of self-expression (growth) and the union of thought and nature in Spirit, bespeaks its naturalistic and immanent status. This is in thoroughgoing agreement with Dewey’s naturalistic reading of Hegel; a Hegel who eschews the dualism of nature and Spirit, and in whom the union of thoughts and things is objective reality. It is this reading of Hegel that lies at the back of both education as inclusive and the understanding of curriculum as unified.

Conclusion
The overtly Hegelian emphasis of William Torrey Harris should not lead us to think that his was the only Hegelian or idealist account of philosophy and psychology of education in America at the fin de siècle. John Dewey’s otherwise naturalistic attempt at conceiving a philosophy and psychology of education bore enough of a Hegelian pedigree to compete as a Hegelian counterpart to Harris’s metaphysical

95 Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 23; 71. I am thinking of Dewey’s 1902 statement, ‘The Child and the Curriculum’, as discussed by Kliebard. Needless to say, not all Progressives were Deweyans, as Kliebard makes clear in his discussion of the Social Efficiency Progressives.

96 Dewey, Lectures on Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit, 96.
account. Whereas, for example, Harris emphasised eternal verities in a Christian, quasi-Platonic understanding of Hegel’s Idea and Spirit, Dewey emphasised the thoroughly immanent nature of the process of determination and overcoming in the movements and moments constituting Spirit. And whereas, for example, Harris emphasised the movement of a child’s thought from symbolic to intellectual as a movement from particular to universal, Dewey emphasised the same movement as one proceeding from a vague to a more focused whole in which particulars are united with the universal. The point being that the leading thinkers of philosophy of education at the fin de siècle in America were not of two distinct schools of thought; rather they were (doubtless among other things) Hegelian, though partaking of differing readings of Hegel.

To re-read Dewey as significantly Hegelian at the fin de siècle demands for a complete reconsideration of Dewey’s intellectual formation and its bearing on educational philosophy. (It also demands for a more complete consideration of the role of Hegel in late nineteenth-century American educational thought.) To see Dewey’s educational claims in the context of his reading of Hegel is more than simply seeing how Hegel had an influence on Dewey’s educational thought. It is to see that Dewey was Hegelian, even as he was distancing himself from a particular reading (a dominant reading, to judge by other Hegelians at the time) of Hegel at a time when his attention was turning more and more to education. We should therefore strongly resist consideration of Dewey’s educational thought at the fin de siècle as altogether the product of a Jamesian and Darwinian turn to biology and social psychology. We should insist on the importance of rival readings of Hegel to the intellectual backdrop of Progressivist educational thought during and after the fin de siècle. And we should see that a non-metaphysical, even naturalistic reading of Hegel was proposed and utilised almost a century before its (re-)emergence as a popular account of Hegel in Anglo-American scholarship.

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