

American philosophy of education and the discovery of childhood

Joseph Watras

University of Dayton

ABSTRACT

According to Philippe Ariès, people in the seventeenth century changed their conception of childhood, and this enabled parents to send the children to schools that prepared them for adulthood. In the United States, American educators disagreed from 1893 to 1912 about the nature of childhood and the appropriate curriculum for children. These exchanges show that the discovery of childhood changed notions of education in the United States; however, it did not encourage the spread of schools. Americans built schools before they thought about the nature of childhood. Nonetheless, the debates encouraged teachers to consider teaching methods that differed from the logical presentation of subject matter.

Introduction

The phrase, the discovery of childhood, implies that people at one time thought children were miniature adults, and, at some other time, they assumed that childhood was a unique stage of growth that operated by a set of laws distinct from those for adults. As a corollary, the discovery of childhood implies that the new ideas justified the spread of educational institutions that catered to children's development. Although authors, such as Phillippe Ariès, advanced such arguments, this paper will use the issue about the discovery of childhood and its relation to the development of formal schooling to show that the debate encouraged Americans to change their views of curriculum during the last years of the nineteenth century.

In this paper, readers will find three sections explaining that the development of mass education in the United States differed from the ways Ariès described the evolution of education in France. The first section explains Ariès's ideas and the controversies they provoked. The second part describes the rapid growth of elementary education during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This section focuses on the debates among American educators about the nature of childhood and the appropriate elementary school curriculum. Proponents of various curriculum theories argued that the rapid growth of American schools called attention to the need for the creation of curricula appropriate to the unique nature of children's development. The final part of the paper points out that American education did not spread in the manner Ariès described.

Ariès and the discovery of childhood in France

A controversy about the nature of childhood began in the 1960s when Phillippe Ariès (1962) asserted that the image of children had changed since the Middle Ages. Philip E. Veerman (1992)

claimed that Ariès's book, *Centuries of Childhood* introduced the idea that childhood was a modern concept. As a result, Veerman noted that Ariès had challenged the established view that concepts of child, youth, and adolescent had not changed over the course of history. In his book, Ariès (1962) claimed that the notion of childhood did not exist in medieval society. Although Ariès acknowledged that adults in the medieval era expressed affection for children, he claimed that they did not think the children thought or acted differently from adults. Consequently, Ariès asserted that children belonged to adult society as soon as they could live without the constant care of their mothers.

For Ariès (1962), the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries brought an important change. Disappointed with the anarchy of medieval society, moralists, such as Jean Gerson, tried to introduce orderly social arrangements. Ariès claimed that the Catholic Church had separated itself from the disarray of the pagan world; however, Gerson and other moralists portrayed many personal habits then current as evil, and they offered suggestions for improvement. The result was that people came to think that education would reform society. According to Ariès, religious societies, such as the Jesuits, turned to teaching, and their members pressed parents to take responsibility for the education of their children. It was easy to argue that parents should send the children to the schools rather than to apprenticeships, Ariès added, once people considered children in need of special treatment to prepare them for life. Thus, the discovery of childhood enabled the family and the school to separate children from society and place them into a system that prepared and disciplined them for adult life (Ariès, 1962: 411-415).

Many commentators challenged Ariès's assertions. They claimed that he ignored conventional methods of historical research, and lacked training in historical research methods. Writing nearly twenty years after the publication of *Centuries of Childhood*, Adrian Wilson (1980) summarised the critics' complaints. Wilson claimed that Ariès divided his argument into two parts. First, he tried to demonstrate that modern attitudes did not exist during the medieval period. Second, he tried to show how the old pattern of thought lapsed into the modern view. According to Wilson, three factors weakened Ariès's arguments. First, he used evidence from books that were readily available or from pictures found in famous museums. Second, the developments he described did not match themes developed by other historians. Third, Ariès gave vague indications of the relevant dates rather than relate the changes to specific events. Further, Wilson argued that Ariès fell into logical fallacies. For example, he wrote that Ariès pointed out how famous portraits by medieval artists portrayed children differently than did modern portraits. This was an important part of Ariès's argument because he claimed that artists changed their portrayals of children as people changed their conceptions of childhood. Wilson pointed out that Ariès ignored other possible causes for the shift in style. According to Wilson (1980), the medieval artists had copied the work of other artists while the modern artists drew from life. Thus, Wilson claimed the portraits may differ because the artists adopted different methods of artistic reproduction (1980: 132-153).

Although Ariès (1962) claimed the discovery of childhood led to the spread of mass education, this was not the case in the United States. Instead, Americans built schools in their communities and expected children to attend before they considered whether childhood was a unique stage of development. The discovery of childhood was important in American education, nonetheless. As philosophers of education discussed whether children had different needs than did adults, they used those insights to determine the appropriate curriculum in elementary schools.

The discovery of childhood and the spread of schools in the United States

According to Herbert Kliebard (1995), the National Educational Association [NEA] issued reports from 1893 to 1895 that set the main lines of curriculum reform in the United States. The first was the report of the Committee of Ten that discussed the proper curriculum for high schools. Two years later, the NEA charged the Committee of Fifteen to determine the curriculum for elementary

schools. In the course of these conferences, the prominent figures in the debates, William Torrey Harris, U.S. Commissioner of Education, and Charles De Garmo, president of Swarthmore College, published competing ideas about how children learn. Joined later by John Dewey, professor at Columbia University, they claimed that these views would justify their ideas about what type of curriculum would be appropriate for the newly popular elementary schools.

In the 1890s, Harris was the foremost educator in the United States, and he had maintained a consistent educational perspective from the close of the U.S. Civil War to the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, critics focused on his ideas of the proper education for children. Harris had formed his philosophy of education in the 1870s by adopting Hegel's view that social institutions enabled children to develop fully as human beings. Using this insight, Harris combined the desires of a philosopher with those of a practical school administrator. To advance philosophy, he founded the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* where he published articles about the ideas of Hegel, and in 1879, he went to work in the Concord Summer School of Philosophy. To serve practical school affairs, he served as superintendent of St. Louis public schools from 1869 until 1879, and in 1889, U.S. President Benjamin Harrison appointed Harris to be the fourth U.S. Commissioner of Education, an office Harris held until 1906. Some commentators point to Harris's accomplishments to show that he is an example of Hegel's ideal civil servant; he was continually involved in self-education, and he sought his own good by working for the good of other people (DeArme & Good, 2001).

To Harris, roles of school administrator and philosopher overlapped. In a brief autobiographical note, Harris (1970) explained how he found Hegel's ideas to be the most practical of all types of knowledge. In 1858, as a young man of twenty-three, Harris had met Henry C. Brokmeyer in St. Louis who introduced to him to Hegel's works. According to Harris, he and his friends used Hegel's philosophy to solve problems related to school teaching, politics, and literature. He continued to study Hegel and apply his ideas to practical issues throughout his life (1970). Harris may have found direction in Hegel's works because the dialectical methods of reasoning fit a country like the United States that had undergone vast changes in a short time. When the nineteenth century began, Americans tended to live in isolated towns surrounded by virgin forests. In part, a fear of government imposition led them to resist the creation of highways, canals, or railroads. By the end of the nineteenth century, roads, railroads, and canals linked small towns to flourishing cities, and people moved away from their farms attracted by the opportunities to work in large corporations. As a result, the national census of 1920 revealed for the first time that most Americans lived in cities (Hofstadter, 1955; Wiebe, 1967).

Compulsory education laws accompanied the rise of cities. In 1852, Massachusetts was the only state that required children to attend school. By 1875, twelve of the thirty-seven states then in the Union had adopted such laws. Finally, by 1918, compulsory education laws appeared in every state of the forty-eight states then in the Union (Guttek, 1999). It seemed that schools had exploded across the United States. Writing a monograph for the U.S. Commission to the Paris Exposition, William Torrey Harris (1900) claimed that the number of pupils attending public schools rose from 7,000,000 in 1870 to 15,000,000 in 1898. These figures accounted for about 90 percent of the school attendance in the United States. Further, in 1898, about 71 percent of the children between five and 18 years of age attended some sort of school. Despite these high averages, Harris calculated from his estimates that the average length of school attendance was about five years. Not surprisingly, Harris estimated that more than 95 percent of the pupils attending school in 1898 were pursuing elementary studies with less than four percent in high school and one percent in college (Harris, 1900: 3-5). Although Harris's figures were approximations, they indicated that elementary schools were the institutions most able to improve the citizenry, and this is the conclusion Harris drew from his information.

In February 1895, Harris had the opportunity to spread his ideas of a curriculum for elementary schools when he delivered the report of the National Education Association's Committee of Fifteen. The NEA formed this committee after the Committee of Ten had delivered its decision about the

proper secondary curriculum. In 1893, Francis W. Parker, a pioneer in progressive education, had urged the NEA to organise a committee to study correlation in the elementary school curriculum. Contending this idea could make curriculums coherent, Parker hoped that the committee would explain the ways that Johann Friedrich Herbart had developed the idea and the criticisms levelled against it. With Harris as the chair of the Committee of Fifteen, the report ignored Herbart and defined correlation as the need to arrange the course of study in such ways as to give the child insight into the world in which he lives. Furthermore, the report dismissed the idea that psychological studies could determine an appropriate curriculum. Instead, it restated the Hegelian view that the curriculum should include studies of those branches of knowledge that enabled the pupils to perform their duties in the institutions of family, civil society, state, and church. The bulk of the report explained how subjects such as literature, arithmetic, geography, history, and science enabled pupils to participate in human society. The authors left subordinate questions about school architecture, length of study hours, and bodily reactions against mental effort to scientific study (Harris, 1969a).

Although Harris (1969a) claimed that the subjects ultimately worked in combination, he wanted the students to learn them in a symmetrical fashion. For example, teachers should present each subject separately so the children could master the unique system of thinking that each subject required. Language served as the centre of instruction. The graded literary selections portrayed scenes of life that would serve the students as spiritual guides. Formal grammar would come after the child was acquainted with masterpieces of English literature and should serve as a means to grasp the unity of any written piece. In arithmetic, the students learned to calculate quantity and thereby correlated the student to nature. In secondary schools, this study led to higher mathematics such as geometry and calculus. Geography should show how factors in the physical world influenced the development of industry and commerce. Finally, history prepared students for citizenship by teaching them how the evolution of governments enabled citizens to increased participation in the government itself. Harris claimed that history would teach the students that true freedom was obedience to just laws enforced by a strong government (1969a).

When Harris finished delivering his report, several educators raised objections (as cited in Harris, 1969a: 134-148). Parker complained that the committee had ignored his recommendations. He said that this was a report on correlation with correlation left out. Frank McMurry, a professor of education at Teachers College, argued that the committee ignored the new education based on child study. Instead of following the current practices of determining the nature and interests of the child, this report wanted the curriculum to meet the demands of civilisation. In turn, De Garmo claimed the report distorted the then commonly used definition of correlation of studies. Herbartians thought of correlation as ways the different subjects could illuminate each other. De Garmo claimed that the committee offered a sequence of subjects with each separate from the others instead of considering plans for integrating them. In speaking about the importance of correlation for teachers to the NEA conference, De Garmo, McMurry, and Parker underlined the influence of Herbart on American educators. De Garmo and McMurry had studied in Germany in the 1880s, and they returned to spread the ideas of Herbart. For example, De Garmo published, in 1895, *Herbart and the Herbartians* claiming that the ideas of Herbartians, especially correlation, would offer school superintendents ways to improve instruction in schools and to invigorate teachers (De Garmo, 1985).

About five months after Harris read his committee's report, De Garmo introduced the first meeting of the Herbart Society for the Scientific Study of Teaching by drawing attention to the pioneering work that educators undertook in the previous forty years to turn public opinion in favour of teaching. They constructed the school buildings, and they trained the teachers. De Garmo added that during this period of expansion, educators thought that children should learn subject matters traditionally taught in schools. According to De Garmo (1969), the problem was that this curriculum was appropriate for a few professionals such as the clergy. Noting that most children attended schools in 1895, De Garmo claimed that important educators were considering what the

children should study that would make them worthy citizens of the world. Without referring to his disagreements, De Garmo pointed to the report of the Committee of Fifteen as an example of such an effort (1969).

Although Harris and De Garmo disagreed about the curriculum for elementary schools, they shared the view that curriculum was best understood through some form of the cultural epoch theory. John Dewey (1911) attributed the development of the culture epoch theory to three independent points of view. The first was a reaction against the complaints of French intellectuals, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who asserted that civilisation enslaved humankind. Against this radical individualistic view, philosophers, such as Hegel, claimed that social institutions brought children to the present level of civilisation. The second was an educational effort to expand the experiences of young children by leading them through the progression of stages through which society passed. The third was the discovery in embryology that individual growth seemed to follow the evolutionary pattern of the species. In its educational applications, Dewey recognised the relative newness of the culture epoch theory by calling it the first attempt to treat curriculum as something other than the logical presentation of subject matter (Dewey, 1911).

According to Harris's notion of the cultural epoch theory (1969b), social activities helped children develop the understandings necessary to participate in civilised life. This included courses of study and disciplines in the school as well as the institutions of family, industry, state, and church. Even art, religion, play, and work carried these educative influences because they carried the essence of the national life to the children. According to Harris, the institutions enabled a person's lower activities or faculties to evolve into higher ones (1969b).

Harris's conception of childhood was part of what he called the psychology of infancy. According to Harris, children began in their first year to recognise self-activity by noticing that they could grasp things, move their bodies, recognise the individuality of objects, and identify some smells and tastes. For Harris, the children followed specific steps as they acquired more skills, and with each achievement, such as putting a cover on a box, they recognised themselves as an energy that could adapt to the world (Harris, 1969b). Using terms common to cultural epoch theory, Harris claimed that young children lived in a symbolic stage wherein feelings and imagination dominated over clear perceptions and analyses of the external world. Thus, children delighted in myths of heroes that exerted power over nature that was similar to that found among savage societies. When the children possessed language, they could recognise ideals. It was at this point that the kindergarten could enter the children's lives (Harris, 1969b).

According to Harris, the kindergarten selected a series of objects, called gifts, to lead children to grasping all things in their inorganic aspects. The occupations, activities conducted with the gifts, showed how fundamental geometric shapes related to wider ideals. Although Harris did not explain these points, kindergarteners used objects to show universal interconnectedness (Harris, 1969b). For example, they twirled a wooden block on a string and it appeared to change into a cylinder. When they twirled a cylinder, it appeared to change into a sphere (Brosterman, 1997).

Despite his praise of Froebel's gifts and occupations, Harris claimed the plays and games were more important because they enabled the children to ascend from the world of nature where necessity, appetite, and passion rule human beings to the world of humanity where reason rules human beings. In those plays and games, Harris believed that the kindergarten enabled children to recognise their social selves. They could realise a higher ideal that human beings realised in social institutions and exceeded the particular individual. Thus, Harris retained his belief that children and adults followed similar laws of learning. He believed the kindergarten prepared children for primary schools through these activities and realisations. It was in the primary school that the children aged about seven years could use their newly acquired sense of culture to master the conventions of adult life by learning to read, write, and use numbers (Harris, 1969b).

Although Harris came to appreciate kindergartens, Susan Blow was the force that led to the establishment of kindergartens in St. Louis. Returning in 1871 from visits to kindergartens in

Germany, Blow worked as a substitute teacher in St. Louis schools where she demonstrated to Harris the value of kindergarten training (Beatty, 1995). Once converted to the kindergarten movement, Harris contended that kindergartens provided valuable training for many different sorts of people. Following his interpretation of the cultural epoch theory, that social institutions brought children to the present level of civilisation, Harris argued that kindergartens helped children in new urban settings move from the life in the family to the discipline of the school. He claimed that children of poverty gained industrial and intellectual training in the kindergartens while they developed good associations and friendships. He added that kindergartens saved children of wealth from the weak management and excessive indulgence that family servants gave them. Thus, Harris claimed that kindergartens served all young children by helping them develop their innate abilities. Finally, Harris believed that the experience of teaching kindergarten prepared young women for the duties of life as they moved from school to marriage. Thus, in Harris's eyes, the job as kindergarten teacher became a sort of finishing school for young women (Troen, 1972).

Controversies about the nature of childhood in the United States

According to Lawrence Cremin (1961), it was Harris who created the first American philosophy of education in the 1880s and 1890s as increasing numbers of children attended schools. Cremin claimed that Harris offered a philosophy to show that regular arrangements, supervised instruction, standardised textbooks, and the collection of statistics would aid the development of the country. According to Cremin, the view that Harris took was that students could become self-active individuals who could exercise their freedom within their civilisation if they undertook sequential lessons and regular examinations within a disciplined framework. Cremin (1961) added that when the nineteenth century ended, educational reformers believed that Harris was an apologist for grim factory style schools and they fought against his ideas.

While Cremin noted correctly that the reformers fought against Harris's views, the reformers disapproved of the method of thinking that Harris used as well. For example, when De Garmo introduced the Herbart Society in 1895, he accepted the characterisation that Harris had made about determining the appropriate course of study for elementary schools as the most pressing problem facing educators. At the same time, De Garmo wanted to approach the problem from a different direction than had Harris and the report of the NEA's Committee of Fifteen. Instead of following philosophy, De Garmo and his new organisation expected the answer to come from the scientific study of teaching (De Garmo, 1969).

In making the plea for science to overshadow philosophy, De Garmo followed the ways that American philosophers changed their orientations. In 1918, George Santayana tried to explain this shift to the British Academy. According to Santayana, the philosophers who taught in American universities during the previous generation used models of thinking similar to those that clerics used. That is, they followed a form of German idealism that referred to an ultimate reality similar to consciousness, and they claimed that all societies moved toward some universal form of improvement. With the arrival of the twentieth century, a new generation of philosophers who followed scientific methods took control of universities. This new generation of philosophers tended to think like engineers or social reformers. They ignored ultimate reality and everything about consciousness except experience. Because they considered the objects in the world to be the only reality, they conceived of truth as no more than a correct impression on the mind of an external object. Although he disapproved of the materialism implicit in the new philosophy, Santayana found its exponents to be idealistic. He said they wanted to arrange society in ways that conformed to nature and the divine forces that ruled it (Santayana, 1918).

American philosophers of education claimed to adopt science rather than philosophy; however, they changed their philosophical direction more than their methods of knowing. For example, when C.C. Van Liew (1969) wrote a history of the cultural epoch theory, he contended that

Hegel and Friedrich Froebel had decided that individual children develop in a manner parallel to the evolution of the race because they believed that all living things followed the same law of growth. This was the view Harris had adopted. Van Liew added that Herbart and his followers took their view from embryology and Darwin. They held that ontogeny, the development of the child, recapitulated phylogeny, a record of the stages through which the race had passed in its evolution. Thus, Herbart began instruction with Homer's *Odyssey* because it would appeal to the heroic impulses of childhood. He introduced Roman history next, and he gave modern history and its literature to older children (Van Liew, 1969).

In fairness, Herbart did not advance this view strongly. When Harold Dunkel compiled his history of Herbartianism in education, he found that Herbart had mentioned the use of cultural epochs because he saw value in a chronological sequence for some parts of education. On the other hand, Dunkel contended that Herbart's student, Tuiskon Ziller, used cultural epoch theory to correct a lack of organisation Ziller found in Herbart's plans. Ziller thought that cultural epochs could serve as concentration centres. This combination solved two practical problems for Ziller. The first was the transition from independent instruction such as tutoring or seminars to larger elementary schools. The second was that elementary schools in most German states were either Lutheran or Catholic, and Ziller wanted a model that appealed to both religious groups. Thus, Ziller suggested that the first year of elementary school should focus on some German folk tale. Next, the class would move to reading *Robinson Crusoe*. This novel represented a simple level of culture and Jean Jacques Rousseau had found it suitable for young children. Ziller designed cultural epochs from biblical history for the grade levels three through eight (Dunkel, 1969).

Ziller may have wanted the cultural epoch theory to attract Catholic educators to his views, but American Catholic educators rejected his notion. For example, in 1910, writing in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Thomas Edward Shields, a Jesuit priest sympathetic to progressive educational methods, contended that the cultural epoch theory violated Church teachings. Shields claimed that, on the one hand, the cultural epoch theory asked teachers to encourage children to recapitulate an early stage in the history of human evolution when it appeared in the children's development. The implication in cultural epoch theory was that children's own experiences would lead them to recognise the need to move to a later and higher phase; however, Shields argued that the Church wanted children to function at all times on the highest plane attained by adults. People are not free to choose this level, he added. God had revealed the standard of truth and goodness to human beings (Shields, 1910).

Secular educators, such as John Dewey, held ambivalent feelings about Ziller's notions. On the one hand, Dewey (1896) noted that advocates of the cultural epoch theory over simplified problems when they contended that cultural products from certain epochs interested children of specific ages. For example, he claimed the view that myths fascinate young children ignored the complicated situations that produced the myths and overlooked the variety of reasons children may find the stories attractive (Dewey, 1896). On the other hand, when Dewey (1990) described the ways teachers could build lessons on the interests of the children, he quoted anthropologists about the correspondence of the interests of children and primitive people's activities. This appeared, Dewey added, when young boys built huts and pretended to hunt with bows, arrows, and spears. According to Dewey (1990), the wise teacher would direct these immature impulses to more important studies such as the selection of stones for arrowheads based on their friability and from arrowheads to mineralogy.

If Dewey was ambivalent about the cultural epoch theory, it did not weaken his view that children learned or thought in the same ways as adults. As far as Dewey was concerned, the scientific method was the one effective means of thinking, and it was the method of learning as well. The first requirement was that a person feel confused about a situation in which they had an interest. The next steps involved trying to determine the best course of action to solve the problem. Thus, for Dewey, the most a teacher could do was to provoke thinking by entering into a conjoint experience

with a child. The problem had to be the child's, and the child had to discover the solution in the same way a research scientist might create a new theorem (Dewey, 1944).

Not surprisingly, Dewey took a different approach to the instruction of children than the one kindergarten teachers took although he was flattered when visitors mistook his laboratory school for a kindergarten because there was manual training, plays, and dramatisations. In fact, Dewey honoured kindergarten teachers by calling the lessons in his school, occupations. This is the term that kindergarten teachers used for the activities children did with Froebel's gifts. In part, Dewey approved of the ways kindergarten teachers helped children learn to cooperate with other children. He admired the facts that they built lessons on children's impulses and that they reproduced the activities of the adult society. Nonetheless, Dewey changed the occupations into opportunities for the students to experiment, to make plans, and to recreate the lines of historical development (Dewey, 1990).

For Dewey and Froebel, there were many occupations appropriate for classrooms. These included work with paper, clay, or yarn. They involved many different processes such as folding, cutting, or modelling, and they suggested actions such as outdoor excursions, gardening, or cooking. In addition, neither Dewey nor Froebel wanted the children to undertake the tasks for a utilitarian purpose. Most important, these classroom tasks invoked the spirit of play even though the word, occupation, implied the need to earn a living.

The difference was that Dewey wanted the occupations to teach children to think like scientists while Froebel wanted the occupations to help children recognise the unity of all things. On the one hand, Dewey thought gardening in the school opened the role agriculture played in human history for children. In addition, it made the facts of chemistry and biology come alive in ways that illuminated the ways to think intelligently (Dewey, 1944). On the other hand, when Froebel spoke about walking with a child, the teacher and the child began by observing the things closest to them such as a garden near the house. From these observations, the children saw that these different things had their own properties, yet they existed in relation to other things (Froebel, 2005).

Dewey did not follow Froebel's idealistic aims; however, Dewey was not crassly practical. For Dewey, the important quality of childhood was flexibility. In 1912, Dewey attributed to John Fiske the realisation of the importance of prolonged infancy. Fiske noted that children could not perform specialised tasks although young deer could run almost immediately after birth. For Fiske, this delayed maturation did not signal incompetence. It was a sign of the possibility of growth. According to Fiske, when animals perfected certain abilities early in life, they were unable to acquire new but unrelated talents. Thus, immaturity allowed children to learn many different functions because their responses were not predetermined. In a similar way, Dewey wanted the children to undertake the occupations with a disregard for the outcomes so that the children would not focus on acquiring skills they could repeat easily. Instead, they could utilise the occupations as means to learn more about the world (Dewey, 1912).

Conclusion

Ariès initiated a controversy when he claimed that the discovery of childhood encouraged the spread of formal schooling. In the United States, the energetic construction of schools preceded discussions about the nature of childhood in America. Nonetheless, when philosophers of education discovered childhood, they used those insights to engage in important debates about the nature of the appropriate curriculum for elementary schools.

In the United States, philosophers of education held different views about the nature of childhood because they held to unique interpretations of the cultural epoch theory. This theory held that children developed in the same general fashion that the human race evolved. One popular notion was that children developed in a manner parallel to the evolution of the race because living

things followed the same law of growth. Another view was that ontogeny, the development of the child, recapitulated phylogeny, a record of the stages through which the race had passed in its evolution.

Although both versions counterbalanced radical individualistic notions that children should develop freely, they offered different ways to help children utilise the acquired wisdom of humankind to attain the present level of civilisation. The first variation aided educators such as Harris and Froebel to develop approaches to help children use institutions such as family, home, and school to develop their human capacities. The second variation allowed educators following Herbart to design lists of topics and literature keyed to what they believed were the interests of students at certain ages. Dewey represented a mixture of both approaches because he thought children's interests derived from inherited instincts, and he wanted the school to imitate the well appointed home.

All three versions led to difficulties. Harris seemed to reinforce mechanical instruction. Froebel's inventions appeared fantastical. De Garmo threatened to allow children to express primitive impulses, and Dewey denied the aesthetic wholeness of traditional subject matters. Nonetheless, while this paper does not support Ariès's assertion that the discovery of childhood led to the spread of formal schooling, it suggests that the question of whether childhood was different from adulthood lead to the development of curricula that differed from the logical presentation of subject matters.

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