"Progressive education" is a phrase at least of contrast with an education predominantly static in subject-matter, authoritarian in methods, and mainly passive and receptive from the side of the young. But the philosophy of education must go beyond any method of education that is formed by way of contrast, reaction, and protest, as an attempt to discover what education is and how it takes place. Only as identified with schooling does a definition of actual education seem simple, though such definition gives the only criterion for judging and directing the work of schools. Dewey: Page lw.9.194

Some suppose that the philosophy of education should tell what education should be and set up ideals and norms for it. In a sense this proposition is true, but not in the sense usually implied. For the only way of deciding what education should be, and which does not take us too far away from actual conditions and from tangible processes, is discovery of what actually takes place when education really occurs. Any ideal that is a genuine help in carrying on activity must rest upon a prior knowledge of concrete actual occurrences. A metallurgist's ideal of the best possible steel must rest upon knowledge of actual ores and of natural processes. Otherwise his ideal is not a directive idea but a fantasy. Dewey: Page lw.9.194

So too with the ideal of education as affecting the philosophy of education we have to know how human nature is constituted in the concrete just as the steel-worker has to know about his raw material, to know about the working of actual social forces and about the operations through which basic raw materials are modified into things of greater value. The need for a philosophy of education is thus fundamentally the need for finding out what education really is. We have to take those cases in which we find there is a real development of desirable powers, find out how this development took place, and then project what has taken place as a guide for directing our other efforts. The need for this discovery and this projection is the need for a philosophy of education. Dewey: Page lw.9.195

What then is education when we find actual satisfactory specimens of it in existence? Firstly, it is a process of development—of growth, and the process, not merely the end result, is important. A truly healthy person is not something fixed and completed. He is one who through his processes and activities will continue to be healthy. He cannot say "I am healthy" and stop at that as if health were bound to continue automatically, otherwise he would soon find himself ill. Similarly, an educated person has the power to go on and get more education, to grow and to expand his development. Hence sometimes learned, erudite persons, as having parted with the capacity to grow, are not educated. Dewey: Page lw.9.195
What is growth? What is development? Early philosophers, like Rousseau and his followers, made much use of the analogy of the development of a seed into the full-grown plant, deducing the conclusion that in human beings there are latent capacities which, left to themselves, will ultimately flower and bear fruit. So they framed the notion of a natural development, as far as possible left alone, as opposed to a directed growth, direction here being an interference resulting in distortion and corruption of natural powers. Dewey: Page lw.9.195

This idea has two fallacies. In the first place seed-growth is limited as compared with human growth; its future is much more prescribed by its antecedent nature; its line of growth is comparatively fixed; it has not the capacities for growth in different directions toward different outcomes characteristic of the human young, which is also, if you please, a seed embodying germinal powers but may develop any of many forms. Dewey: Page lw.9.195

This fact suggests the second fallacy. Even the seed of a plant does not grow simply of itself without atmospheric aids. Its development is controlled by external conditions and forces. Native inherent forces must interact with external if there is to be life and development. In brief, development, even with a plant, [Page lw.9.196] depends on the kind of interaction between itself and its environment. A stunted oak, or a stalk of maize with few ears of scattered grains, exhibits natural development as truly as the noblest tree or the prize-winning ear of maize. The difference in result is due not only to native stock but also to environment; the finest native stock would come to an untimely end, or give a miserable product, if its own energies could not interact with favourable atmospheric conditions. Dewey: Page lw.9.196

There being two factors involved in any interaction (and hence in every kind of growth) the idea and ideal of education must take account of both. Native capacities of growth and inherent traits provide the raw material. What is lacking cannot interact with even the very best of conditions; there is then no leverage, nothing with which to cooperate. Traditional school methods and subject-matter fail in three ways to take this factor into account. In the first place, they ignore the diversity of capacities and needs of different human beings which constitute individuality. They virtually assume that, for purposes of education, all human beings are as much alike as peas in a pod, hence their provision of a uniform curriculum, the same lessons assigned for all, and the same conduct of the recitation. Dewey: Page lw.9.196

In the second place, they fail to recognize that the initiative in growth comes from the needs and powers of the pupil. The first step in the interaction for growth comes from the reaching out of the tentacles of the individual, from an effort, at first blind, to procure the materials that his potentialities
demand if they are to come into action and find satisfaction. With the body, hunger and power of taking and assimilating food are the first necessities. Without the inner demand and impetus the most nutritious food is offered in vain; repulsion and indigestion result. No proper system of education could tolerate the common assumption, that the mind of the individual is naturally averse to learning, and has to be either browbeaten or coaxed into action. Every mind, even of the youngest, is naturally seeking for those modes of active operation within the limits of its capacities. The problem is to discover what tendencies are especially seeking expression at a particular time and just what materials and methods will serve to evoke and direct a truly educative development. Dewey: Page lw.9.196

The practical counterpart of this failure to see the source of initiative lies in the method of imposition by the teacher and of reception by the pupil. The idea of drill is only too suggestive of drilling a hole into a hard and resistant rock by means of repeated monotonous blows. Unwillingness to learn naturally follows failure to take into account tendencies urgent in the existing make-up of an individual. All sorts of external devices then are needed to achieve absorption and retention of imposed subject-matter and skills. This method of teaching may be compared to inscribing records upon a passive phonograph disc to secure their return when the proper button is pressed. Or again the pupil's mind is treated as an empty cistern passively waiting to be filled, while teacher and text-book form the reservoir from which pipelines lead. Dewey: Page lw.9.197

The third failure is the result of the two already mentioned. Every teacher must observe that there are real differences among pupils. But, because these are not carried back to concrete differences of individuality in needs, in desires, in direction of native interest, they are too often generalized under two main heads. Some pupils are bright, others dull and stupid! Some are docile and obedient, others unruly and troublesome! Inability to fit into a cast-iron scheme of subject-matter or to meet the requirements of the set discipline is taken as a sign of either radical intrinsic incapacity or deliberate wilfulness. Conformity then becomes the criterion of judgment in spite of the value of initiative, originality and independence in life. Dewey: Page lw.9.197

While the raw material and the starting-point of growth are found in native capacities, the environing conditions to be furnished by the educator are the indispensable means of their development. They are not, and do not of themselves decide, the end. A gardener, a worker of metals, must observe and pay attention to the properties of his material. If he permits these properties in their original form to dictate his treatment, he will not get anywhere. If they decide his end, he will fixate raw materials in their primitive state. Development will be arrested, not promoted. He must bring to his consideration of his material an idea, an ideal, of possibilities not realized, which must be in line with the constitution of his plant or ore; it must not do violence to them; it must be their possibilities. Yet it cannot be extracted
from any study of their present form but from seeing them imaginatively, reflectively, and hence from another source. Dewey: Page lw.9.197

Similarly with the educator, save that the demand on him for imaginative insight into possibilities is greater. The gardener and worker in metals may take as their measures results already achieved with plants and ores, although originality and invention will introduce some variation. But the true educator while using results already accomplished cannot make them his final and complete standard. Like the artist he has the problem of creating something that is not the exact duplicate of some previous creation. Dewey: Page lw.9.198

In any case, development and growth involve change and modification in definite directions. A teacher, under the supposed sanction of the idea of cultivating individuality, may fixate a pupil more or less at his existing level, confusing respect for individual traits with a catering for their present estate. Respect for individuality is primarily the intellectual study of the individual to discover material. With this sympathetic understanding the practical work then begins of modification, of changing, of reconstruction continued without end. The change must at least be toward more effective techniques, greater self-reliance, a more thoughtful and inquiring disposition more capable of persistent effort in meeting obstacles. Dewey: Page lw.9.198

Some would-be progressive schools and teachers in their reaction from the method of external imposition stop short with the recognition of the importance of giving free scope to native capacities and interests. They do not examine closely or long enough what these may actually be; they judge too much from superficial and transitory reactions to accidental circumstances. In the second place, they are inclined to take the evident individual traits as finalities instead of as possibilities for suitable direction into something of greater significance. Under the alleged sanction of not violating freedom and individuality the responsibility for providing development conditions is overlooked. The idea persists that evolution and development are simply matters of automatic unfolding from within. Dewey: Page lw.9.198

This is a natural reaction from the manifest evils of external imposition. But there is a radically different alternative between thinking of the young as clay to be moulded into traditional patterns and thinking of existing capacities and present interests and desires as laying down the whole law of development. Existing likes and powers are to be treated as possibilities necessary for any healthy development. But development involves a point of direction as well as a starting-point with constant movement in that direction, and the direction-point, as the temporary goal, is reached only as the starting-point of further reconstruction. The great problem of the educator is to see intellectually,
and to feel deeply, the forces moving in the young as possibilities, as signs and promises, and to interpret them in the light of what they may become. Nor does the exacting task end there: it is bound up with the judging and devising of the conditions, the materials, the tools--physical, moral, and social--which will, once more by interaction with existing powers and preferences, bring about the desired transformation. Dewey: Page lw.9.199

The old education emphasised the necessity for provision of definite subject-matter and activities, which are necessities for right education. The weakness was that its imagination did not go beyond provision of a rigid environment of subject-matter drawn from sources remote from any concrete experiences of the taught. Its conception of techniques was derived from the conventions of the past. The New Education needs more attention, not less, to subject-matter and to progress in technique for getting satisfactory results. More does not, however, mean more in quantity of the same old kind but an imaginative vision, which sees that no prescribed and ready-made scheme can determine the exact subject-matter for the educative growth of each individual, since each sets a new problem and calls for at least a somewhat different emphasis in either subject-matter or angle of presentation. Only blindly obtuse convention supposes that the actual contents of text-books will further the educational development of all children, or of any one child, if they be regarded as the prescription of a doctor to be taken just as they are. As Louis Stevenson remarked, "the world is full of a number of things," and no teacher can know too much or have too ingenious an imagination in selecting and adapting this and that aspect of some of the many things in the world to meet the requirements that make for growth in this and that individual. Dewey: Page lw.9.199

In short, departure from the rigidity of the old curriculum is only the negative side. If we do not go on and go far in the positive direction of providing, through persistent intelligent study and experiment, a body of subject-matter much richer, more varied and flexible, and also more definite in terms of the experience of those being educated, we shall tend to leave an educational vacuum in which anything may happen. The old saying that "nature abhors a vacuum" embodies a definite truth. Complete isolation is impossible in nature. The young live in some environment constantly interacting with what the young bring to it, and the result is the shaping of their interests, minds and characters--either educatively or mis-educatively. If the professed educator abdicates his responsibility for judging and selecting the kind of environment conducive, in his best understanding, to growth, then the young are left at the mercy of all the unorganized and casual forces that inevitably play upon them throughout life. In the educative environment the knowledge, judgment, or experience of the teacher becomes a greater, not a smaller factor. He now operates not as a magistrate set on high and possessed of arbitrary authority but as a friendly co-partner and guide in a common enterprise. Dewey: Page lw.9.200
There is a further truism about education as development, difficult to carry out in practice and easily violated. Development is a *continuous* process and continually signifies consecutiveness of action—the strong point of the traditional education at its best. The subject-matter of the classics and mathematics involved a consecutive and orderly development along definite lines. In the newer education it is comparatively easy to improvise, to try a little of this to-day and something else to-morrow, on the basis of some immediate stimulus but without sufficient regard to its *objective* or whether or not something more difficult is led up to naturally, raising new questions and calling for acquisition of more adequate technique and for new modes of skill. There is genuine need for taking account of spontaneous interest and *activity* but, without care and thought, it readily results in a detached multiplicity of isolated brief-lived activities or projects, not in continuity of growth. Indeed, the new educational *processes* require much more planning ahead by the teachers, for whom the old planning was all effected in advance by the fixed curriculum, etc. Dewey: Page lw.9.200

But a sound philosophy of education also requires that the general term environment be specified as dominantly human with its values social. Through its influence each person becomes saturated with the customs, the beliefs, the purposes, skills, hopes and fears, of his own cultural group. The features of even [Page lw.9.201] his physical surroundings come to him through the eyes and ears of his community. His geographical, climatical, and atmospheric experiences are clothed with the memories and traditions, the characteristic associations, of his particular society. In the early stages, then, it is particularly important that subject-matter be presented in its human context and setting. Here the school often fails when, in proceeding from the concrete to the abstract, it forgets that to the child only that which has human value and function is concrete. In his nature study and geography, physical things are presented to him from the standpoint of the adult *specialist* as if independent and complete in themselves. But to the child these things have a meaning only as they enter into human life. Even those distinctively human products, reading and *writing*, whose purpose is the furthering of human communication and association, are treated as if they were subjects of and in themselves, not used as is friendly everyday speech, and so for the child they become abstract, a mystery belonging to the school but not to daily life. Dewey: Page lw.9.201

The same separation of school studies from social or human setting and function deadens the traditional recitation which, instead of being a scene of friendly intercourse as are the *conversations* of home and of ordinary life, clarified and organized by definite purpose, becomes an artificial exercise in repeating uniformly the identical material of some one text-book and a mere test of the faithfulness of the preparation. It thus becomes a first cause of the isolation of school from out-of-school life and experience. Dewey: Page lw.9.201
As the material of genuine development is that of human contacts and associations, so the end, the value that is the criterion and directing guide of educational work, is social. The acquisition however perfectly of skills is not an end in itself. They are things to be put to use as a contribution to a common and shared life. They are intended, indeed, to make an individual more capable of self-support and of self-respecting independence. But unless this end is placed in the context of services rendered to others, services which they need to the fulfilment also of their lives, skills gained will be put to an egoistic and selfish use as means of a trained shrewdness for personal advantage at the cost of others' claims and opportunities for the good life. Too often, indeed, the schools, through reliance upon the spur of competition and the bestowal of special honours and prizes as for those who excel in a competitive race or even battle, only build up and strengthen the disposition that in after-school life employs special talents and superior skill to outwit others and "get on" personally without respect for their welfare. Dewey: Page lw.9.202

And as with skills acquired in school so also with knowledge gained in school. The educational end and the ultimate test of the value of what is learned is its use and application in carrying on and improving the common life of all. The background of the traditional educational system is a class society, and opportunity for instruction in certain subjects, especially literary ones, and in mathematics beyond the rudiments of simple arithmetical subjects, was reserved for the well-born and the well-to-do, and thus knowledge of these subjects became a badge of cultural superiority and social status, which marked off those who had it from the vulgar herd and for many persons was a means of self-display. Useful knowledge, on the other hand, was necessary only for those compelled by their class status to work for a living. A class stigma attached to it, and the uselessness of knowledge, save for purely personal culture, was proof of its higher quality. Dewey: Page lw.9.202

Even after education in many countries was made universal for all, these standards of value persisted. There is no greater egotism than that of learning when treated simply as a mark of personal distinction to be cherished for its own sake. Yet to eliminate this quality of exclusiveness all conditions of the school environment must tend in actual practice to develop in individuals the realization that knowledge is a trust for the furthering of the well-being of all. Dewey: Page lw.9.202

Perhaps the greatest need of and for a philosophy of education to-day is the urgent need that exists for making clear in idea and effective in practice the social character of its end and that the criterion of value of school practices is social. Dewey: Page lw.9.202

The aim of education is development of individuals to the utmost of their potentialities. But this statement as such leaves unanswered the question of the measure of the development to be desired and worked for. A society of free individuals in which all, in doing each his own work, contribute to the
liberation and enrichment of the lives of others is the only environment for the normal growth to full stature. An environment in which some are limited will always in reaction create conditions that prevent the full development even of those who fancy they enjoy complete freedom for unhindered growth. Dewey: Page lw.9.203

There are two outstanding reasons why in existing world conditions a philosophy of education must make the social aim of education the central article in its creed. The world is being rapidly industrialized. Individual groups, tribes and races, once living completely untouched by the economic regime of modern capitalistic industry, now find almost every phase of their lives affected by its expansion. The principle of a report of the Geneva Commission based on a study of conditions of life of mine-Natives in South Africa holds good of peoples all over the world, "The investment of Western capital in African industries has made the Native dependent upon the demand of the world markets for the products of his labour and the resources of his continent." In a world that has so largely engaged in a mad, often brutal, race for material gain by means of ruthless competition the school must make ceaseless and intelligently organized effort to develop above all else the will for cooperation and the spirit which sees in every other individual an equal right to share in the cultural and material fruits of collective human invention, industry, skill and knowledge. The supremacy of this aim in mind and character is necessary, not merely as an offset to the spirit of inhumanity bred by economic competition and exploitation but to prepare the coming generation for an inevitable new and more just and humane society which, unless hearts and minds are prepared by education, is likely to come attended with all the evils of social changes by violence. Dewey: Page lw.9.203

The other especially urgent need is connected with the present unprecedented wave of nationalistic sentiment, of racial and national prejudice, of readiness to resort to force of arms. For this spirit to have arisen on such a scale the schools must have somehow failed grievously. Their best excuse is maybe that schools and educators were caught unawares. But that excuse is no longer available. We now know the enemy; it is out in the open. Unless the schools of the world can unite in effort to rebuild the spirit of common understanding, of mutual sympathy and goodwill among all peoples and races, to exorcise the demon of prejudice, isolation and hatred, they themselves are likely to be submerged by the general return to barbarism, the sure outcome of present tendencies if unchecked by the forces which education alone can evoke and fortify. Dewey: Page lw.9.204 It is to this great work that any ideal worthy of the name of education summons the educational forces of all countries. Dewey: Page lw.9.205