

CREATING A FOUNDATION: THE ORIGINS OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY STUDY AT LEHIGH UNIVERSITY (1900s-1930s)

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The first seeds of the study of education and psychology at Lehigh University were planted in the early 1900s. The university began to blossom during that period, enjoying growth, popularity, and support. In addition to expanding its physical space and curriculum offerings, the university was firmly committed to growing and diversifying the faculty through the creation of many new tiers of associate, assistant, and visiting professorships. For President Thomas Drown (1885-1904), one of the goals was to bring the brightest minds to Lehigh. He said in a public speech, “There is no use in getting second-rate men or mere bookworms” (cited in Bowen, p. 102). He was looking for faculty with visionary ideas and bold research agendas. And President Drown seemed to know “just where the finest professional material was mined, and how it could be brought to the Lehigh market” (Bowen, 1924, p. 102).

One such stellar professor who was strategically “mined” by President Drown was Lightner Witmer, who spent two years at Lehigh as a visiting professor (1903-1905), while on leave from the University of Pennsylvania. Witmer became a part of the psychology faculty, laying the foundations for the study of special education, school psychology, and counseling psychology as academic fields, not only at Lehigh University but also in higher-education institutions on a national scale. Widely known as “the father” of clinical and school psychology, Witmer founded the first clinical psychology laboratory, the first journal of clinical psychology, and the first child psychoeducational clinic in the early 1900s (Thomas, 2009; Shapiro, 2011). Together with John Dewey, G. Stanley Hall, and William James, Witmer was one of the four cofounders of the American Psychological Association (APA). Pushing the boundaries of the mainstream academic conventions of the early 1900s, he insisted that schools would tremendously benefit from the presence of psychological experts who would be well versed in the development of children’s capacity in relation to their complex environmental and socioeconomic contexts. Witmer was also critical of intelligence and IQ (common for “intelli-

gence quotient”) tests, which he believed measured the individual’s efficiency, not intelligence, erasing their participants’ individuality (Thomas, 2009). Instead, he argued for the importance of understanding the impact of children’s broader environments—including families, communities, and institutional structures—on their academic achievement and development.

While such a public health- and social justice-oriented approach rings true today, it was perhaps less congruent with the culture of the 1900s. Academically and professionally, Witmer was clearly ahead of his time. Witmer’s contributions to the field remained largely unrecognized during his lifetime, yet his short presence on Lehigh’s campus was instrumental in planting seeds for the future of education and psychology programs (Shapiro, 2011). The best testament to this is an impressive number of College of Education faculty and alumni who received the prestigious Lightner Witmer Award—the early-career award given by the Division of School Psychology of the American Psychological Association—including Professor Edward S. Shapiro (1987) and five graduates of the program, Drs. Chris Skinner (1989), John Hintze (1995), Tanya Eckert (1996), Jessica Hoffman (2001), and Nathan Clemens (2009). Clearly, Witmer introduced the spirit of going against the mainstream, while pushing both institutional and academic boundaries in the pursuit of knowledge and social justice.



Professor Lightner Witmer (1903-1905)



Professor Percy Hughes (1907-1942)

This spirit continued to flourish with the arrival of Percy Hughes, a professor of philosophy, psychology, and education at Lehigh University from 1907 until 1942. Although the relationship between Witmer and Hughes remains unknown, both worked closely with the famous American education philosopher and psychologist John Dewey, sharing the commitment to the principles of community engagement, research-to-practice oriented scholarship, social justice, and education. And while these principles were first introduced to Lehigh University culture and curriculum in the early 1900s, they remained central to the mission of its education programs and faculty over the decades ahead.

Percy Hughes' Era

Hughes arrived at Lehigh University in 1907 when the university “was caught up in the spirit of self-study and reform” (Yates, 1992, p. 121). Building on the community-oriented initiatives begun under former President Drown, President Henry Sturgis Drinker carried out the idea of public service by reiterating the call from the founder of Lehigh, Asa Packer, for a balance of scientific and classical education—what was called “progressive” and “liberal” education, respectively, in the early 1900s. In his speech to the Engineer’s Club of Northern Pennsylvania, Drinker explained that “the duties of our institutions of higher learning...should not be restricted to what is taught to students within our walls, but they should be leaders in thought, and particularly in the teaching of things that pertain to the well-being and betterment of men.” In 1906, Drinker invited the great astronomer John Alfred Brashear to speak at the Lehigh Founder’s Day exercises. His speech, which Drinker would eventually print and send to every alumnus of the university, echoed Drinker’s beliefs in the importance of public service in American universities. After Brashear eloquently praised Lehigh for its contribution to technical fields by preparing graduates in science and engineering, he went on to say,

It may be a hobby for your speaker, but he has been of the opinion for many years that not only is it of paramount importance that every student of technology should have enough of the so-called humanities in his curriculum to develop the higher manhood, and thus broaden out his vision, but, conversely, every student who may choose the humanities should get in touch with at least enough of science, or technics, to enable him to comprehend the marvelous advances in every line of human thought and industry that will surely come to pass during this day and generation. (cited in *The Bethlehem Globe*, 1906)

Drinker envisioned far-reaching university reforms, and “he found in Percy Hughes a person to supervise them” (Yates, 1992, p. 121). Hughes’ methods for reforming the university centered on his belief in critical inquiry. That is to say, to understand an issue, one needs more than reflection: Conceiving, exploring, observing, and appreciating are independently needed for complete understanding. In a short history of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education at Lehigh, Hughes (n.d.) stated, “Critical inquiry should take the place of indoctrination” (p. 7). Hughes (1939) separated his notion of understanding from the “stone fence which John Locke built across the field of understanding, to separate the ‘operations of the mind’ from the sensory medium in which alone they occur” (p. 647). Hughes’ belief in critical inquiry displayed the “natural contours [of understanding], which our furrows should follow, if we are to check those floods of ambiguity that now wash sterile gullies down the slopes of thought” (Hughes, 1939, p. 647). Critical inquiry into any issue requires great thought and focus, sometimes in lieu of action.

The search for complete understanding inevitably created tensions, a fact of which Hughes was acutely aware. He would write in a 1944 column for the Warren Journal, “Truth proves itself dangerous indeed, but not fatal.” He would persist, nonetheless. In 1937, Hughes was placed on a year-to-year contract at the decision of President Clement C. Williams. Upset at this provision, Hughes wrote a letter to one of his former students, Dr. William J. Rubbins, on the matter: “That genuine democracy and the highest exercise of intelligence are not only compatible but mutually favorable, [President Williams] has, I think, still to learn.”

More revealing than Hughes’ sharp, humorous commentary on Williams was Rubbins’ letter in support of Hughes. In it, Rubbins reveals how Hughes taught critical inquiry: Hughes was the only professor, Rubbins claimed, that taught him he “could think, in addition to [learn] to repeat intelligently what others had thought.” If there is anything we can attribute to Hughes, it is his never-ceasing effort to challenge Lehigh’s educational culture by wishing that every student receive what Rubbins had learned—that is, the wish that critical inquiry replace dogma in education. Reading Lehigh’s history from the macro-level similar to Yates (1992), Hughes, like Witmer before him, was part of the modernization of Lehigh from the “old” to the “new” in curriculum, pedagogy, and community precisely because of this hope.

Hughes brought to Lehigh a critical eye toward the university’s preferred pedagogy and antiquated policies. He revolutionized the teaching methods across all faculties and worked for 35 years to create equitable and just administrative policies. Over the course of his tenure, Hughes used the responsibility of scholarship to pursue social change and transform the Lehigh culture. By committing himself to interdisciplinary work and hu-

manistic principles, he balanced Lehigh's tradition of scientific and classical education, which was often filled with contradictions, tensions, and debate. From encouraging curriculum reform for engineers to campaigning against compulsory chapel attendance, Hughes worked tirelessly to transform Lehigh's academic culture and social environment. From women's rights to environmentalism, Hughes devoted his life to advancing historically progressive ideas. Perhaps more importantly, Hughes strengthened the foundation for the study of education and psychology at Lehigh University.

PERCY HUGHES

*Professor of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education at Lehigh University
(1907-1942)*

Percy Hughes' life spanned three continents—British India (present-day Pakistan), where he was born; England, where he spent his adolescence; and America, where he spent his adulthood. In British India, Hughes's family experienced human poverty and misery; in London, they enjoyed privilege; and in the United States, Hughes crystallized his commitment to advancing social justice and equity through higher-education reforms. These experiences profoundly impacted Hughes' beliefs and values he thought about, supported, and, eventually, fought for at Lehigh.

Hughes was born on January 23, 1872, to Eliza Lloyd and Thomas Patrick Hughes in Peshawar, British India. At the age of 3, Hughes moved to London, absent his parents at first, to receive a "proper" education, something his parents believed could not be earned on the northwest frontier of the British Empire. Once Percy Hughes was of school age, he entered Christ's Hospital, the so-called "Blue-Coat School" in London. Here Hughes learned historic values of community and the importance of equity from legacies of the school itself, which to this day provides liberal education—based on a well-rounded curriculum of classics—"especially to children of families in social, financial or other need" (Mission Statement). He withdrew from his last grade of schooling because his family experienced financial hardship. A few years later, in 1888, he moved to America, where his arrival coincided with an intellectual boom in educational thinking. He landed on the shores of New York City in time for some of the greatest minds in American educational thought to meet and work together at Teachers College, founded in 1887 but only officially part of Columbia University since 1898.

In 1895, Hughes enrolled in Teachers College to earn a certificate to teach primary and secondary school. Following his graduation, Hughes immediately enrolled in Columbia University as a junior in philosophy. However, he had to

finish his *Artium Baccalaureus* degree at Alfred University in 1899 because his sister, for whom he needed to care, became ill and was prescribed fresh air (typical medical advice of the time). Upon his graduation in 1899, Hughes was employed at Greenport High School in Long Island, New York City. William J. White said of Hughes, "In my judgment he is one of the best teachers in the state," adding, "Mr. Hughes impresses me with his conviction that he loves to teach, and is willing to pay the price of getting the best results obtainable from his pupils...he has won a high place in the esteem of our community because of his scholarship and painstaking work." Although he was able to become a valuable teacher at Greenport in only two years, he could not devote proper time to thinking about and studying education while caught up in the day-to-day demands of the practice of teaching. He needed to return to a university setting to fully think about what it meant to be educated and how education should function in society.

In 1901, Hughes returned to study at Columbia, this time under some of the greatest educational thinkers in American history. He began his graduate studies in philosophy, psychology, and education (graduating in 1902 with a *Artium Magister*). Between 1902 and 1904, he pursued a *Philosophiæ Doctor* in the Faculty of Philosophy at Columbia University. He was supervised by some of the most notable names in American educational studies: John Dewey (father of progressive education, who came to Columbia in 1900 but was only officially recognized as a faculty member in 1906); Frederick J.E. Woodbridge (father of American naturalism); James McKeen Cattell (a pioneer in American psychology and editor of *Science* for 50 years); Nicholas Murray Butler (founder of Teachers College in 1887, president of Columbia University from 1902 until 1945, and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931); Frank M. McMurry (philosopher of the theory and practice of teaching); Edward L. Thorndike (father of educational psychology); and Samuel T. Dutton (coauthor of the first school administration textbook in 1908)—all of whom were on his dissertation committee. Moving back to the neighborhood surrounding Columbia, Morningside Heights, Hughes witnessed and experienced immense change in how society thought about the university generally and the study of education specifically. He became one of the first students ever to study the field of education from a historical and philosophical perspective—not simply as professional training. American education would never again be the same.

Four years of graduate study at Columbia University impacted Hughes' later work at Lehigh University. He became an agent of change, filled with humanistic ideas and classical verses from Christ's Hospital and armed with progressive education learned at Columbia University and Teachers College. He carried on the vision and purpose of higher education so clearly articulated by Butler, president of Columbia University, who said in a 1905 *New York Times* article:

I think that more and more there comes to be a perception of the true work of education, namely, that it is to fit the young of both sexes for all the duties of citizenship, so that in the generations that are to come there may be men and women qualified to take inspiring and sufficient part in public life, in the life of society, and in all the various organizations by which civilization is expected to progress. (p. SM5)

It is this “service ideal” (Rudolph, 1990, p. 356) that formed the foundation for Hughes’ transformative initiatives at Lehigh University.

Reforming Curriculum

Percy Hughes came to Lehigh at first witnessing and observing, trying to understand the culture and practices at the university. What he witnessed was a school dominated by lectures, absent regular faculty office hours, and an overall feeling that students must adapt to a professor’s teaching method or else teach himself (there were no women on campus) the material. Hughes, armed with notions of child-centered learning, wanted to reform this culture by building a new community around scholarship and intellectual curiosity not stymied by faculty but embraced through student-professor collaboration. More importantly, he wanted to ensure that the study of education and psychology, which he came to teach at Lehigh University, became institutionalized as legitimate areas of study.

To achieve these goals, Hughes mobilized faculty both inside and outside of Lehigh. On numerous occasions, Hughes invited Professor John Dewey, his former advisor and then a close colleague, to lecture at Lehigh on various topics related to education and curriculum reform, pushing the thinking of Lehigh faculty and students about the possibilities and promises of curriculum reform. In the 1930-31 academic year, Dewey gave a convocation address at Lehigh University, entitled *Science and Society*, calling faculty and students to passionately engage in knowledge production in the area of social sciences, while at the same time pursuing knowledge application for the public good. In a way, his convocation address was a call for faculty and students to organize their academic work so that social science disciplines, including psychology and education, could be recognized as legitimate and valuable fields of study in their own right:

The idea that we can develop social science merely by collecting and ordering facts is as futile as was the older idea that natural science could be had without the experimental control of action. When we systematically use the knowledge and instrumentalities we already have to

achieve the ends of a secure and abundant life which we know to be desirable, we shall begin to build up social science just as men built up physical science when they actively used the technique of tools and numbers in physical discovery.

The greatest scientific revolution is therefore still to come. It will ensue when men collectively organize their knowledge for social application, and when they systematically use scientific procedures for the objective control of social relations. Great as have been the changes of the last century, those who are going forth from the colleges this year and next year will see changes with which those of the past are not to be compared, provided they go forth with faith in the possibility of dealing scientifically with social changes and with the stern and courageous determination to make that faith effective in works. (Dewey, 1931, p. 7; see image below.



Professor John Dewey at the Convocation at Lehigh University (June 9, 1931)

Hughes' eagerness to reform curricula at Lehigh became evident in faculty meetings. Once he voiced his opinion, debate among faculty members typically broke out. It is common to read in the minutes of faculty meetings comments like "great debate ensued" after Hughes had made a suggestion. His proposals were, in fact, paradigm shifting for many of the established disciplines and norms at Lehigh. In 1924, for example, Hughes together with Robert Hall and Myron Jacob Luch, criticized the new metallurgy curriculum for its "lack of sufficient cultural subjects" (faculty minutes, May 5, 1924). He even challenged lectures as the preferred style of teaching. In his first register announcement, Hughes stated how his classes would function differently: "all courses, he said, in this department are conducted through recitation, and require a term paper prepared in collaboration with the instructor" (Hughes, n.d.). He then added how his teaching style differed from other courses as "a departure from the former method of lecturing, with its trend towards sermonizing, in favor of a method that requires students to express and defend their own opinions and to face new problems with the use of their own resources."

Hughes' curricular critiques did not only center on the sciences and engineering disciplines. He criticized the humanities as well. In one case, he said, "It seems axiomatic that in the English department, at least, and in modern languages the written exercises should not only be returned marked, but also be again returned by the student to the instructor, corrected by him." He added, "Here seems to be a point where insistence upon something thoroughly done is more important than two or three things not quite done" (archive box, 111.01.09).

Hughes' critical inquiry of pedagogy in all fields upset the status quo at the university. This left Hughes at times with few allies and, subsequently, rarely voted onto various academic committees. In 1938, after many years unelected to the Faculty Education Club—the standing faculty committee he formed years earlier as the only faculty member then trained in education—he was asked to rejoin the committee. The first topic of discussion for the November meeting, to the dislike of many who voted him off the committee in years past but in typical Hughes fashion, was entitled "improving the engineering curriculum." This moment is representative of Hughes' time at Lehigh: He never stopped asking how education could be improved for all students regardless of the opinions of administrators or other faculty members.

Proposing Coeducation

Coeducation became one of Percy Hughes' most important initiatives throughout his tenure at Lehigh University. Historically, calls for coeducation in America were heard as early as the pre-Civil War years. Oberlin College first admitted women in 1837, and at the 1856 Women's Rights Convention, Lucy Stone stated the demand women would make for the next century:

Our demand that Harvard and Yale colleges should admit women, though not yet yielded, only waits for a little more time. And while they wait, numerous petty 'female colleges' have sprung into being, indicative of the justice of our claim that a college education should be granted to women. Not one of these female colleges...meets the demands of the age, and so will eventually perish. (cited in Rosenberg, 1988)

These "female colleges" did not perish, however, and economics and tradition became the two largest hurdles preventing nationwide coeducation. If a school was financially sound with only male enrollment, then there existed a lack of economic incentive to admit women. Many schools which suffered economic troubles, particularly in the South after the Civil War, admitted women much earlier than schools with little or no financial issues, mainly private, northern schools like Harvard and Yale. Additionally, if a school had traditions and legacies of male education like that of Harvard and Yale (and Lehigh), then it became even harder to heed the call for coeducation. As a result, female attendance in college only equaled that of men's enrollment by the 1980s.

Despite this troubling history of coeducation, there were individuals who worked tirelessly to fight the status quo at private schools in the North—the exact schools isolated from the pressure to support coeducation by having both historical and economic barriers. Hughes was one individual who fought for equity despite the hurdles. He learned the value of coeducation from his suffrage-fighting mother in the late 1800s and from the historical legacies of Christ's Hospital, which opened a coeducational school in 1552.

Hughes issued a resolution in 1918 for Lehigh to become coeducational, almost 60 years before the university widely adopted the practice. After consulting Dewey on the matter, Hughes received a reply from him that emphasized how women actually improve the standards of male education (dated February 11, 1918). Hughes' proposal for coeducation at Lehigh University, however, was denied outright.

Hughes did not stop there. He brought Dr. Clara Harrison Town to teach psychology summer courses at Lehigh, becoming the first woman to teach on campus. He also created extension and summer courses where women

were allowed to enroll. By September of 1918, a resolution from President Drinker, inspired by Hughes, reached the faculty: “that the degrees of M.A. and M.S. be granted to women on the same conditions as in the case of men, provided that no permission be thereby extended to women to attend undergraduate courses in the University other than extension courses.” It was a compromise most likely to appease Hughes’ persistence. In 1921, Bessie Edna Kast, Mary Alice Schwaninger, and Edna Grace Tatnal became the first women to receive M.A. degrees from Lehigh. The title of Ms. Kast’s thesis was “The Education of Women in Pennsylvania.” Not only did Ms. Kast exercise her right to successfully complete higher education, but she also used it to advocate for the rights of women to education more broadly. Miss Schwaninger, a teacher in Allentown High School, became the first woman member of Lehigh Alumni Association. Miss Tatnal was a career teacher of biology and zoology in Harrisburg High School.

But Hughes was not ready to stop there. In 1925, the Committee for Summer Sessions, which Hughes headed, recommended a teacher training program for both men and women. Hughes said, “That to further the success of such a program a certificate be issuable to both men and women students, for two years work” (faculty minutes, February 23, 1925). This proposal, which was eventually approved, was a way to give proper training to teachers in the local community, who were typically unwed women. In other words, Hughes was able to open a back door for women to pursue education at Lehigh University despite the historical and economic barriers preventing women from enrolling in undergraduate courses on equal terms to those of men until 1972.

Undergraduate coeducation was, however, Hughes’ cause célèbre. He did not rest until such a call was heard. Contrary to popular belief, coeducation did not begin at Lehigh in 1972. It was, rather, first experienced at Lehigh when, on May 6, 1929, Lehigh adopted two new rules for women: (1) women were now “admitted as graduate students on the same terms as men” and (2) “women admitted to summer sessions either as graduate [sic] or undergraduates” (faculty minutes; emphasis added). For the first time in Lehigh’s history, women were admitted as undergraduates, even if only during summer sessions and still under the 1918 rules that declared the education of women “should largely be limited to the late afternoon, and to Saturdays, so that the general character of campus life shall not be affected by this innovation” (faculty minutes, February 4, 1918)

February 11 1918

My dear Professor Hughes

My reply is far too late to be of any use to you. I took advantage of our examination recess here to take a trip of about ten days through the Middle West. Consequently I did not receive your letter until after your faculty meeting had been held. In case anything from me should have any value for you in the future I enclose, however, an answer to your three questions.

X A. I have never heard anyone who had had any experience with women in graduate courses intimate that their presence there tended to lower in any way the scholastic standard either in outside work or in class discussion. On the contrary, it is a very general belief that the thoroughness with which they to their work has had a tendency to improve the standards. I have heard some teachers say that they were inclined to be more facile and a little less independent than the men students, but there was no claim that this lowered the standard in any way. In philosophy, where it seems to me that independence of thought is at a premium, I have never noticed this difference as between men and women. It has seemed to me rather an individual difference found among both men and women.

X B. So far as I know that admission of women into the graduate schools has not affected the engineering work at all.

X C. At Columbia experience has finished and practically eliminated whatever opposition once existed. There are a few of the irreconcilables, but to the best of my knowledge only two or three, and they are of the very oldest men who had made it a point not to change the attitude which they assumed at the outset.

Yours sincerely

John Dewey
w.

Letter to Percy Hughes from John Dewey, February 11, 1918

Engaging with the Community

President Drinker inspired the Lehigh community to engage more directly with the community surrounding the university and beyond. His support for community engagement by faculty, staff, and students reflected a strong principle of public service (Yates, 1992). More specifically, he pursued the implementation of a national movement known as the Wisconsin Idea, which was originally advanced by President Charles Van Hise of the University of Wisconsin in 1904. The Wisconsin Idea was based on the basic principle that education should influence and improve people's lives beyond the university classroom. In one of his speeches, Drinker elaborated on this idea further:

...the duties of our institutions of higher learning, of our universities and colleges should not be restricted to what is taught to students within their walls, but they should be leaders of thought, and particularly in the teaching of things that pertain to the well-being and betterment of man. (cited in Yates, 1992, p. 116)

Under the leadership of President Drinker, Lehigh professors and students stepped outside the academic circle, exerting themselves in the interest of their immediate community. In 1907, for example, Lehigh students opened a Free Evening School for immigrants who were coming from southeast and central Europe to work in the steel mills. With the support of the faculty members, the students provided elementary education for mechanics and steelworkers to help them adjust to American culture and become employable. By 1916, nearly 300 people were reported to be attending the classes (Yates, 1992, p. 116). These classes were later extended to more than 1,400 employees of the Bethlehem Steel Company to help its workers complete English proficiency and naturalization requirements (Yates, 1992). Lehigh's engagement with the community was also reflected in smaller-scale activities. For example, Yates (1992) reported that in 1915, Lehigh students, as a part of the Lehigh YMCA, initiated a "big brother" movement for disadvantaged youth in South Bethlehem.

Behind these activities stood Lehigh's faculty. Percy Hughes was one of the most active faculty members pursuing the goals of public service. In *A History of Lehigh University* (1924), Bowen captured Hughes' spirit perfectly: "If there is a High School debate that needs a judge; if a new club is being formed, or a new educational idea needs inspiration, it seems as though the name of Professor of Philosophy and Psychology [Percy Hughes] was always called" (Bowen, p. 39). Indeed, Hughes found himself working in the community as actively as he was working on the Lehigh campus. Importantly,

Hughes was able to link some of the community engagement work directly to Lehigh curricula. In 1923, after eight years of developing a collaborative relationship with the Allentown State Hospital for the Insane, Hughes started a clinic at the hospital, where Lehigh students enrolled in his extension courses could directly observe, learn, research, and gain experience in the complex work of occupational therapeutics for children with learning disabilities. The news about the clinic made it into the *New York Times*, where Dr. Henry Klopp, a superintendent of the hospital, explained how the partnership with Lehigh University effectively extended the functions of the institution:

First, it is a hospital for observation, research, care and treatment of mental diseases. Secondly, it is a part of a general scheme for community service for the prevention of such disorders through public education upon the subject mental hygiene. It also serves as a place for holding of clinics, and is, in this connection, a teaching institution. (*New York Times*, 1923, p. E2)

Beyond higher education boundaries, Hughes carried the idea of public service by strongly supporting conservation efforts. As Hughes' daughter Elizabeth Clark (2006) recalled, Hughes had been a subject of several articles in the regional New Jersey press: "He had single-handedly made a name for reforestation of private property and had one of the largest stands of pine in private hands" (Clark, 2006, p. 52). Both his properties—the one on Long Island and Glory Hill in New Jersey—had become well known to environmentally minded people for the innovative work he was doing. Whether on campus or in his own home community, Hughes exhibited the spirit of public service well beyond the expectations of his times. His energy was contagious, leaving an enduring influence on his family, colleagues, and Lehigh's institutional culture.

Maintaining a True University Spirit

Hughes admired Robert W. Blake, who came to Lehigh in 1899 to teach Latin and head the School of General Literature (later called the College of Arts and Sciences) until his death on January 27, 1921. Not only was Blake the man credited for placing Hughes as the head of the newly formed Philosophy, Psychology, and Education Department in 1907, but he also was one of the only men with whom Hughes found camaraderie at Lehigh for his shared beliefs in liberal education based on the classics. During the early 1900s when the scientific method began to monopolize the humanities—eventually being labeled "social sciences"—the partnership between

Hughes and Blake was based on survival: survival of the belief that education was not about “the individual but the society of which the individual [was] a part” (Blake, 1925, pp. 67-68).

Blake’s convictions and beliefs in classical education became apparent in his 1912 Founder’s Day address. During this eloquent speech, he observed a difference between universities in 1912 and those of the mid-1800s: “The difference between the modern spirit of our Colleges and Universities and that of fifty years ago lies, not only in the extent to which the study of science has invaded the curriculum, but in the frank concessions to vocational training” (Blake, 1925). He would go on to rhetorically ask “whether higher education in its eagerness to respond to the material needs of an industrial age has not overshot the mark, and whether something that society very much needs has not been slighted.” Answering his own query, Blake affirmed, “men are not mere creatures of material wants, they do not live by bread alone. They live by the affections, by poetry, by music. They are concerned with art, with philosophy, with religion; they covet good health more than wealth, a good conscience more than success. Let it not be thought that young men find no interest in these things.” Hughes’ English education, philosophic orientation, and understanding of progressive education from Columbia University attracted Blake to Hughes. With a balance of liberal and progressive education, Hughes was exactly the type of faculty member needed at Lehigh to continue the charge Asa Packer first laid out in 1865 and yet had been easily overshadowed by the vocational and technical education of engineers.

After Blake’s death in 1921, the faculty passed a memorial to Blake during a faculty meeting held on January 28. It read in part, “The memory of Professor Blake will always be cherished and held as a precious tradition in the academic life of the Lehigh University, as a rare combination of scholarship, culture, and personal charm.” The February 11, 1921 *Brown and White* editorialized, “faculty and students owe much [to Blake] for the maintenance of the true university spirit.” The faculty and students eventually hung a bronze plaque commemorating Blake in Packer Chapel, which still proudly hangs to this day. It reads: “He loved great things. He won the devotion of men and was a power in their lives. He taught to many the greatness of learning and the man’s mind.”

We believe Hughes began to see his legacy at Lehigh starting in 1923 as tied to Blake’s. His participation and persistence at faculty meetings, for example, noticeably increased after Blake’s death in 1921. One must believe that Hughes felt he now carried the burden of classical education previously shared by Blake and Drinker. It was in the post-1921 years without Drinker or Blake that Hughes increased his demand for coeducation, started his campaign against compulsory chapel, and challenged the curriculum and grading standards of the university.

Another sign that Hughes attached his legacy to Blake's was the official creation of the R.W. Blake Society in 1924. This society was the only philosophical society on campus. It was Hughes' way to remember Blake and remind himself of the burden of spearheading continued support for classical education. For Hughes, this was the way to honor the man to whom he owed his entire career. More importantly, this society became the sole philosophical group on campus until 1944, when the demands of World War II eliminated many of the student activities and clubs on campus. The society was opened to ten seniors and five juniors "chosen on the basis of their qualifications and their interest in philosophy, psychology, and education" (Brown and White, November 13, 1923). This group of interdisciplinary men would meet monthly, typically at Hughes' home in Belvidere, New Jersey, and took annual trips to universities nearby. They would discuss important issues of the day, including "is war inevitable?" in the late 1930s, and many of Dewey's books.

The students involved in the Blake Society were unique at Lehigh. They were men who used philosophical inquiry in all of their studies. One man, Arthur Mickley (class of 1940), was an electrical engineer but was always drawn to philosophy. He enrolled in a no-credit program Hughes created in 1937 called General Education. The course, designed after the Great Books program at the University of Chicago, matched students with faculty to "do independent reading in literature" and "meet regularly with a faculty member to discuss the reading" (personal communication, September 23, 2009). Mickley claimed he "may have been the only [student] who" enrolled in this British-like program and studied under Professor Becker. In fact, almost three dozen enrolled during the first year, and mentoring faculty crossed disciplines, including engineering and philosophy professors alike. Even at the age of 90 when we interviewed him, Mickley continued to participate in a Great Books program.



Blake Society (Lehigh University Yearbook, 1942)

Another student, Judge Malcolm Muir, who graduated in 1935, came to Lehigh because of his cousins, the famous Stablers of the Lehigh Valley. He enrolled in philosophy because he did not understand the subject “and still doesn’t” (personal communication, January 13, 2010). Muir would eventually go on to Harvard Law School and begin a successful career in estate law. At the age of 95 when we interviewed him in 2009, Muir held senior status as a United States federal judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, still writing lengthy opinions. Muir died on July 22, 2011. Little did most of the students in the Blake Society know, but their involvement was a unique experiment at Lehigh. They were unlikely aware of the trials and tribulations of Witner, Blake, Hughes, or Drinker starting at the turn of the 20th century to maintain the firm balance of progressive and liberal education first outlined by Asa Packer in 1865 and renewed by Drinker in the early 1900s.

Conclusion

On June 23, 1939, Lehigh celebrated Percy Hughes’ 30th year of service (although technically two years late). At a large dinner held in the Masonic Temple in South Bethlehem, John Dewey spoke in front of Lehigh faculty, select students, and members of the community. Dewey, one of the most recognizable American philosophers of the 20th century, had known Hughes since his graduate studies at Columbia in 1901 and kept in close contact ever since. For Dewey to give the keynote address in honor of Hughes was a privilege for the whole Lehigh community. With Dewey and Hughes’ close friendship (for instance, he slept on Hughes’ couch in North Bethlehem on multiple occasions), the possibility of Dewey telling comical stories about the absent-minded professor lingered throughout the audience. Did Hughes actually leave his wife at the New York Opera after going to pick up his car? Did he, during a separate occasion, forget he parked his car at the Philadelphia train station when he took a train from New York City back to Bethlehem? Had he on multiple occasions walked across the Hill-to-Hill Bridge on his way to South Bethlehem, turned his back to block the northwardly blowing wind while lighting a cigarette, and then—upon successful ignition—walked straight back home and missed class entirely?

Instead of validating the many myths of the absent-minded professor concocted by students, Dewey explored the history of education and placed Hughes in the middle of the great transformations of American higher education in the 20th century. He went further and explained what he saw happening in the world of education. He told the crowd that education and psychology have “suffered in this country through their divorce from philosophy.” He reminded the audience that people like Hughes believed philosophy pervaded every part of life; divorcing philosophy from any subject was

an injustice to academic pursuits. This was nothing short of a reaffirmation of Asa Packer's dream, the perfect balance between classical and scientific education. Dewey believed that to instill philosophic thought in every subject, in every discipline, and in every field required people like Hughes in American universities. It was not that progressive education should dominate liberal education or vice versa in any one university, but rather that the two must learn to coexist to meet the practical needs of society while still asking philosophic questions about society.

The night Dewey spoke showed how Lehigh's history like all history is continuous; even if we do not directly understand from where we came, those who came before us still ultimately have influenced us. What Lehigh's first president, Henry Coppee, represented as a man of letters at the founding of the university and Robert Blake at the turn of the 20th century, Percy Hughes continued through two wars and into the mid-20th century. Hughes stated in 1904, "History is that past process which has brought about a present fact, known as the evidence. The historian searches for the thing that has effected that present, for the agent, that is, whose action, then, is that past reality, the content of history." It has become clear that agents do exist through history, and Hughes was influential in meeting Lehigh's original purpose laid out by Packer in 1865. He was a visionary and an education practitioner who could work within the system by creating courses for Lehigh undergraduates, offering education opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers through extension courses, and pioneering a graduate program, which included males and females.

Uncovering this small yet important piece of history highlights a legacy of reform and reminds us of the essence of what the university should champion: understanding and coping with an uncertain world, wherever that may lead, by advancing new intellectual values, challenging the traditional culture of established institutions, and pushing universities, faculty, and students in new directions (Barnett, 2003). Understanding the tension Hughes lived with for 35 years at Lehigh, and his tenacity to persevere, moves us toward Hughes' dream of students "express[ing] and defend[ing] their own opinions and [facing] new problems with the use of their own resources." More importantly, Hughes' tenure at Lehigh University laid the important foundations for an interdisciplinary educational space where students, faculty, and staff are not afraid to listen to each other and challenge each other through intellectual thought based on justice, equality, and peace. Undoubtedly, these ideas shaped the trajectory of the education and psychology study at Lehigh University and the commitment to pursue a just education for all through research, scholarship, and practice.

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