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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is difficult always to be a creative artist. I think, however, that we should get on more rapidly if we realized that, if education is going to live up to its profession, it must be seen as a work of art which requires the same qualities of personal enthusiasm and imagination as are required by the musician, painter or artist. Each of these artists needs a technique which is more or less mechanical, but in the degree to which he loses his personal vision to become subordinate to the more formal rules of the technique he falls below the level and grade of the artist. He becomes reduced again to the level of the artisan who follows the blue prints, drawings, and plans that are made by other people.

—John Dewey (MW 15: 186)

If we have taught extensively, we know that effective teaching—teaching that accomplishes the things we desire—is one of society's most complex, challenging, and compelling endeavors. Good teaching demands that we

Authors' Note: References to works by John Dewey are from the collection of his works published by Southern Illinois University Press: *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898*; *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924*; and *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925–1953*. References to these works are abbreviated as EW, MW, and LW, where, for example, EW 5: 94 indicates that the material cited or idea noted is in *The Early Works*, volume 5, page 94.

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progressively become better educated people ourselves, as well as grow in our understanding of our teaching fields, cultivate our abilities to communicate effectively, and enrich our understanding and effectiveness in guiding multiple social and intellectual interactions. Doing these things—becoming better educated and learning more about our teaching fields, communication, and human interactions—are daunting. No, they are actually staggering in many schools today. In fact, much more is required of teachers. If we are going to positively influence children and youth as maturing, whole people, we will be called on to touch more than their intellectual development; for example, we will need to give attention to their social, emotional, ethical, and physical growth.

The challenge becomes even more intimidating when we see that the teacher is more than a successful classroom educator. She[1] needs, for instance, to be prepared to help the public, caregivers, policymakers, neighbors, business leaders, board members, friends, and politicians better understand the realities of the teaching profession. The advocacy and public relations roles of the teacher increase as the profession becomes more misunderstood, less respected, and regularly belittled in explicit and implicit ways. Of course, she does even more, including serving on school and district committees, volunteering for extracurricular activities, maintaining bridges to parents and guardians, purchasing materials and equipment, and engaging in professional development activities. The list of involvements for professional educators extends into their homes and communities and into organizations where daily and year-long activities and discoveries inform work and provide evidence that teaching is not an 8:00 to 3:00 job for nine months a year.

In this volume, however, we are primarily interested in aspiring and practicing teachers understanding teaching and learning. Even this domain, however, requires more than knowledge of one's teaching field and the ability to talk to students. But this particular knowledge and ability is not as simple as many critics innocently imply. If we would take the time to walk into a classroom of children or adolescents and tell them that we are their substitute teacher, we would soon learn that our perception of teaching as being merely that of imparting information and talking is badly mistaken. If we were to choose to return as a substitute teacher for a few more days, our appreciation for good teaching and teachers would grow immensely, for, as we stated earlier, teaching is a complex undertaking that demands the best artists.

Serving as a substitute teacher for a week, however, would not tell us everything we need to study to become a teacher, much less a professional

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educator, for the desire to learn while substitute teaching would of necessity be slanted toward ourselves: toward surviving in the classroom, not truly educating students. Indeed, we probably would not even know what educating a person really entails if we have never studied the topic. After passing the threshold of classroom survival, without which little teaching is possible, we would probably shift our focus to simply teaching ideas and information or, worse, merely transmitting facts and figures. Focusing on survival and transmission of information is a problem for more than many substitute teachers: People who are first-year teachers, teachers who have been poorly prepared to teach, and those who have missed thoughtful educator preparation programs are prone to have similar challenges.

Some critics believe that those teachers who have nearly insurmountable problems with students just do not have "what it takes" to be effective educators. Obviously, some don't, but others do after they are appropriately prepared. "What it takes" can be learned: People do. But those who either naturally have or have socially developed what it takes to manage classrooms are not automatically going to be good teachers, much less professionally informed educators. They have an important prerequisite, but more is needed.

People who genuinely understand teaching realize that it entails considerably more than having knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy and being gifted (whether from nature or experience or study or all three). It also includes a set of understandings, activities, interactions, relationships, ways of thinking, and grounded habits of intuiting based on a broad knowledge of many things, such as society, families, children, psychology, democracy, learning, ethics, community, pedagogy, and forms of inquiry and creativity. This is why the contributions of different kinds of researchers, scholars, and practitioners are needed to illuminate the work of teachers. Because the bodies of reflection and knowledge that inform teachers are growing, we must also. A narrowly focused personal or district professional development plan or program only reinforces the myth that a little training and giftedness make teaching simple and easy and that problems are simple and isolated. Believing that teaching is an unproblematic and straightforward undertaking, then, is one of the most dangerous contemporary ideological errors. More important, it hinders students' learning and limits their lives. As a dogmatic myth, it does not answer critics. It silences opponents by attacking, disenfranchising, and disempowering them. The mythmakers welcome the opportunity to discredit their critics, not by a reflective examination of evidence and argument but by ad

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hominem claims. The myth of the simplicity of being a teacher, therefore, is a serious hindrance to both educating future teachers and advancing the education profession. Rejecting this popular myth is an important step in realizing that the genuine teacher is much different than the stuffer of minds in a small, cramped room.

How do we get beyond this educational myth, this black hole that sucks so many of us into it? Or, in Dewey's words, how can we assist others in understanding that education is "the most complex, intricate and subtle of all human enterprises" (LW 3: 255)? No exit seems to exist if we do not try to get beyond our stereotypes and think carefully about the steady streams of ideas that can overwhelm us. Throwing away the irrelevant and mindless ideas that come our way is crucial. This winnowing takes time and thought, however. Much time is required to discover, test, and apply the reflective and reliable in these streams of thought and, unfortunately at times, non-thought. Our culture, within and outside of schools, cannot be liberated from its myth if we as a society and profession don't appreciate the very possibility of learning much more about teaching. To believe that we have arrived is a sign that we have stopped growing as professionals. To think that there is little or nothing to learn about being a professional is equally deadly. So, we turn briefly to some important attempts to free us from the narrow-minded myth of teaching being an effortless and uncomplicated undertaking.

Some researchers attempt to understand teachers and students by pursuing quantitative and qualitative studies in classrooms and schools. They give us psychological, anthropological, and sociological norms, averages, and trends, as well as close-up pictures of particular cultures, populations, schools, and individuals. Other scholars examine historical, ethical, and philosophical issues to see what has been, why it has been, and whether it should have been or should be now, offering analytical, interpretative, evaluative, and comprehensive insights. Still other researchers investigate the development of the central nervous system, especially the brain, to inform teachers. In addition, they discover information that helps parents and health care workers better prepare each child for more successful learning experiences. Related to this research are the findings of medical and behavioral scientists that help us understand the development of children and youth and, thereby, provide insight regarding human growth and learning. Many other academics contribute by studying the teaching and learning of specific subjects, such as languages, art, mathematics, music, biology, reading, history, and health

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education. But the best of scholars and researchers can disappoint us if we expect too much—or the wrong things. They can only provide insights, concepts, principles, patterns, schemata, data, and criticism. These contributions are valuable, even essential, but beyond that, they demonstrate that teaching is complex and will always require interpretation by reflective, imaginative, and experimental thinkers and practitioners. They provide us with information sources and illumination that help us become artists if we study them carefully. Artists, of course, are not people who are trained to follow rules, formula, and directions mindlessly.

Others who study education and schooling, like us, draw from many of the humanistic contributors to try to clarify teaching by studying and creating images and conceptual pictures of teaching. Raising probing questions, for example, is important: What is happening when a teacher has the relevant understandings and uses her mind, and especially her imagination, to turn a so-called dull subject and 30 bored students into a lively, engaged learning community? And why is it happening? Asked another way, what happens when a sterile auditorium is transformed into a theatrical setting? Before moving forward with these questions, we should say that it does not just happen. No way. A great deal of learning, imagination, preparation, planning, and practice is required before the curtains are raised—or the students are engaged and learning.

Images and pictures can help us understand the work of the artist—whether a drama director or a classroom teacher—in the theatre and in the classroom, and both positive and negative images help clarify what we wish to promote and discourage. Think of the earlier depiction of the teacher by Dewey when he compares her to an artisan who "follows the blue prints, drawings, and plans that are made by other people" (MW 15: 186). Will this mental picture attract future teachers? Does the experience of doing what has been handed to or forced on us by others help retain teachers? What about Dewey's image of "a tradesman" who works in a "machine shop" (Archambault, 1964, p. 201)? Who among us wants to be "a living phonograph" or "a servile rubber stamp" (LW 2: 122)? Nothing is wrong, of course, with being an artisan or a tradesperson. Indeed, a great deal is to be admired about being a highly qualified artisan or tradesperson. But teachers, as cultivators of thinking people, have different roles to play and should be creative and reflective as they develop students who exhibit these and other qualities. We do not—or should not—simply implement the plans of others; we have to

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think for ourselves. Who wants to be seen as a disc spinner or rubber stamp? Maybe there are a few aspiring and practicing teachers who admire these images, but are they the people we want to educate our children and youth? And would they inspire their own students to become immediate learners, much less future teachers?

Our point, we hope, is clear: Some images are repugnant and repel. Dewey's depictions, thus far, fit into this category, and many current mental pictures as well as realities of teaching are largely distasteful to people. Why, we might ask, would anyone with two brain cells want to be a teacher today? No one would. Well, that is not exactly correct. In reality, there are a variety of reasons intelligent, caring people want to be teachers, but they are not attracted to the field because it has a genuinely positive image. Those who have admirable motives want to teach because they love to learn, enjoy being with students, want the best for society, and so forth. Frequently, they are clearly choosing the profession in spite of its image.

So, where does this lead us? To begin with, it tells us that figures of speech—analogies, similes, and metaphors—and literalisms are often used to depict teaching negatively. On the other hand, they enable us to uncover or clarify important dimensions of teaching or being a teacher. Sometimes the images or analogies slip over into ordinary usage, and their meanings are partially hidden or, on occasion, they are interpreted in a literal fashion. The explicit images seem more powerful than the hidden ones, but the implicit or hidden pictures of teaching and the teacher can be influential, too. Their potency may rest in the fact that they represent more than points of comparison: They often contain fundamental and intrinsic insights into the nature of teaching and learning.

Images of the teacher, whether explicit or implicit, or figurative or literal, are the focus of this book. More specifically, we examine some of the writings of John Dewey to unearth his thinking on the teacher, teaching, and, to a degree, learning. Other educational thinkers could be studied, from Plato to Maxine Greene. Plato, for example, is famous for his picture of the teacher as a midwife. Helping students give birth to ideas is certainly a vivid image and unforgettable pleasure. Erasmus suggested that teaching is like farming. Cultivating the growth of children and youth, therefore, has become a common way of seeing our work. Rousseau saw the teacher as a person who engages in a very demanding art. And who wishes to deny that teaching is both demanding and an art? Certainly, not teachers, teaching interns, and substitute

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teachers. Richard Peters believed that the teacher is a guide who initiates the young into forms of knowledge and that we should guide students so that they can join the ranks of those who are on the inside of reading, writing, and calculating as well as of thinking in terms of history, art, mathematics, music, biology, religion, literature, chemistry, politics, government, and physics. John Holt reminded us of similarities between the teacher and the travel agent who helps students plan their educational journeys. Sharing opportunities and options with students, as this analogy suggests, is a wonderful part of teaching. Maxine Greene compared the teacher to a stranger who sees newness and wonder in learning. The teacher invites students to become fellow strangers and to travel with her, in groups as well as individuals, to see or discover the previously unseen, unrecognized, and unimagined. These images, carefully examined, frequently help us understand in part what teaching is, not just what teaching is like.

The stranger, the travel agent, the guide, the artist, the farmer, and the midwife—as well as many other images of the teacher—greet us in educational literature. Many writers appear content with one or two powerful images of the teacher and run the risk of being misinterpreted by anyone who is looking for a simple solution to the challenges of teaching. This is the legacy of the myth of simplicity and, perhaps, a natural tendency. There are already too many seekers of trouble-free explanations, too many people searching for the cure to all educational problems. In fact, there are far too many people in various walks of life who think they have already discovered the panacea for perfect pedagogy and, consequently, set us farther back than they move us forward. We do not want to leave the impression, therefore, that either Dewey or we think that if a teacher becomes a sophisticated educational artist, all of her challenges will disappear, students will be accepted into prestigious universities, and schools, communities, and countries will flourish. Teaching and learning are far more complex and complicated than simply being an imaginative artistic teacher. And so is the overall welfare of a student, not to mention a country. Obviously, however, we think that being an artist in the learning communities of our schools will help enliven and enrich teaching, learning, and schooling in radically important ways. Teaching with cadres of other artists can only extend the learning communities down the hallways of our schools.

David Hansen is a notable exception to the pattern of suggesting that a single metaphor captures the heart of teaching.[2] He noted comparisons

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between the teacher and, among others, a father, director, monarch, lover, servant, and artist. No one comparison says it all. Nor does any set of analogies provide all of the illumination and wisdom we need. Nor are images enough: Other forms of inquiry and reflection are necessary if we are to have a comprehensive view of the teacher as an artist and a professional who has the knowledge, understanding, skills, and imagination that are required for developing an artistically exciting, intellectually stimulating, and aesthetically satisfying learning environment. Moreover, it is critical that we keep in mind that every analogy, when pressed too far, becomes misleading and distorts the concept and practice of teaching. Every idea that emerges about the teacher has the potential to create haze as well as sunshine, including those Dewey offers. Among the helpful analogies are those that illuminate the heart of teaching, that make clear secondary nuances of teaching, and that reveal marginal ideas about teaching. In examining every analogy, then, we have the responsibility to distinguish the haze and sunshine and the heart and the periphery as we seek to understand and practice the art of teaching. Teaching, therefore, remains a distinctive art even though it is similar to many others.

We have hinted at a couple of reasons for examining John Dewey's thoughts about the teacher; for example, he suggests compelling, insightful, and multiple images of the teacher and, thereby, helps us avoid reducing the responsibilities of the teacher to a single and perhaps simplistic analogy. He also is wise enough to know that no one figure of speech, comparison, or literal depiction captures the richness and complexity of teaching. He is worth studying, too, because his analogies and other claims form a pattern for understanding the teacher in the broader context of an educational theory or philosophy of education. This advantage is an important one, for a study of isolated and decontextualized images of the teacher can be misleading. For example, both Richard

An Introspective Moment

Which figure of speech regarding the teacher beautifully expresses a major portion of how you view the teacher? What's attractive about the analogy? How might it cause you to focus too much on only one aspect of teaching? Does Dewey mention another figure that appeals to you? If yes, how does it complement or amplify the initial image you selected?

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Peters and John Holt speak of the teacher as a guide, but their educational theories are drastically different: The former stresses the importance of getting on the inside of forms of knowledge, and the latter focuses his attention on freeing the student to follow her interests. Of course, it should be clear that we can learn much from Dewey's images of the teacher even if we disagree in important ways with his broader educational approach.

We have selected more than a dozen or so of Dewey's images of the teacher to study in this brief work, that is, the teacher as artist, lover, wise mother, navigator, gardener, pioneer, social servant, engineer, curriculum builder, group leader, composer, wise physician, and community constructor. Hidden in these discussions are other less prominent and sometimes overlapping but compelling images of the teachers, e.g., guide, mediator, director, copartner, helper, starter, mediator, interpreter, organizer, watcher, metalworker, researcher, midwife, usher, salesperson, farmer, and conductor. A more exhaustive study of Dewey reveals a host of other images of the teacher (e.g., citizen, prophet, learner, researcher, chef, nurse, participator, judge, critic), embedded in his thought, hidden but sometimes sitting on the surface to be scooped up by the miner of his works.

We begin our study with the teacher as artist. We could have said the artist of pedagogy or the art of teaching, for, as we note in the following, Dewey seems to speak of the teacher *being* an artist as well as being *like* an artist. We selected this starting point for several reasons. First, it is one of Dewey's earliest and latest depictions of the teacher. The continuity and development of this image in his voluminous writings indicate how important the concept is to him. Second, it appears that he speaks of the teacher as an artist in both a figurative and a literal sense. The teacher is *like* an artist and *is* an artist. This frame of reference is, perhaps, unique among great educational thinkers and, once again, suggests the critical place this image has in his thought. Third, the teacher as artist appears to be the chief and overarching image of the teacher from his point of view. That is to say, given Dewey's view of the artist, the other images of the teacher—for example, lover, wise parent, pioneer, and so forth—offer enlarging, enriching insights into this basic idea. These distinctive images broaden our vision of the teacher and help us avoid the attractive abyss of collapsing a panoramic view of the teacher into a single snapshot. Fourth, looking at Dewey's beliefs enables us to enter his important, challenging, and often neglected—at least by educators—book *Art as Experience* (1934; LW 10) in an oblique way.

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Art as Experience is not for the casual reader but is a book for the person who wishes to grapple with Dewey's broader implication for the art of teaching, the teacher as artist, and the aesthetics of teaching and learning. If there is time, we recommend reading *Art as Experience* (1934) along with this work. You will also find that portions of *Democracy and Education* (1916; MW 9), *Experience and Nature* (1929; LW 1), *How We Think* (revised 1933; LW 8), and *Experience and Education* (1938; LW 13) offer valuable insights into the art of teaching. And so, studying Dewey enables us to situate his views of the teacher in his broader educational theory or philosophy, a framework that is both greatly admired and criticized in educational circles.

This book's chapters are usually divided into the following categories:

1. the chapter title,
2. an opening citation or epigraph by Dewey,
3. the text itself,
4. quotes from Dewey and questions for reflection and discussion,
5. implications of the chapter for the teacher,
6. related readings by Dewey, and
7. endnotes.

In addition, we include three different activities in chapters that we think will enable the reader to better understand the concepts being discussed:

8. creating a snapshot of a teacher by using the ideas discussed,
9. analyzing one's own strengths and challenges by engaging in an introspective moment, and
10. considering reflective questions about the thoughts discussed.

Moreover, we intersperse a series of figures throughout the book to summarize, clarify, and illustrate ideas. Finally, we have created an opportunity for the reader to record some concluding thoughts for the chapter under the heading of "A Summative Exercise." A table (see Table 1.1, The Artistic Teacher) at the end of each chapter provides a convenient way for the reader to record a few highlights regarding the teacher as artist.

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Table 1.1 The Artistic Teacher

Chapter	*Understandings*	*Qualities*	*Activities*
1	Bodies of knowledge, personal techniques, and vision of student development	Creative, enthusiastic, and imaginative	Thinks for herself

This organizational pattern is designed to facilitate the interests of different readers, such as the snatch-a-few-words reader, the chapter-a-day reader, the member-of-a-discussion-group reader, the I'm-on-my-summer-break reader, the if-I-have-to-I-will reader, and the supplementary-textbook-assignment reader. You may just wish to scan the initial quotes and related text and ignore the rest. Or, alternatively, you may find that you have both the time and interest to take advantage of all of the material. Ideally, the organization of chapters will facilitate your plans whether they involve skimming, scanning, or studying.

We hope you enjoy Dewey's thinking and that his ideas encourage you to keep refining your own reflective, dynamic picture of the teacher as you develop your equally reflective, dynamic practice as an artist.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHER

Before moving to the next chapter, let's stop to think about the opening citation or epigraph. Several ideas strike us as being important. First, Dewey says that it is difficult to always be a creative artist. Thinking that artistic teaching is easy is a mistake if he is correct. Thinking that we can be artistic in each teaching activity is also an error. Even the best of artists have to engage in nonartistic activities and do work that does not meet their standards. Painters and sculptors, for example, discard or destroy many of their efforts. They are disappointed with what they have envisioned or created. Of course, we do not have the luxury of taking back our efforts, but we can start again. So we are not like those artists who can dispose of their efforts but like performers—actors, dancers, musicians—who work with a live audience. But we can keep trying to improve our work and grow as masters of the art of teaching. Our ideals, as artists, always remain high.

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A Teacher Snapshot

Recall a former teacher who captures the spirit of what Dewey means by enthusiasm, imagination, technique, and vision. Was she considered a great teacher by students? Were there other teachers who lacked these qualities but were also seen as terrific teachers? If so, what qualities did they have that made them effective? Do your memories support or undermine Dewey's point of view?

Second, Dewey observes that artistic teaching entails enthusiasm, imagination, technique, and vision. We will return to these topics later, but for now it is worth noting that he is saying anyone who consistently lacks any of these four—enthusiasm, imagination, technique, and vision—is jeopardizing her standing among the ranks of pedagogical artists. Tending these qualities, dispositions, and skills, then, is imperative, if he is correct. This thought leads us to a series of questions: What should we do for ourselves when our enthusiasm for teaching is waning? Our imagination is inadequate? Our techniques are sterile and repetitive? Our vision is blurred or fading? How do we help one another when we notice needs in these areas?

Third, there is an implicit implication in Dewey's acknowledgement that teaching is a complex, subtle, and nuanced set of understandings, insights, attitudes, judgments, and activities. What is this implication? If we imagine an hour in the life of a teacher, we obtain a glimpse of the implication. We start the school day by hanging up our coat and hiding our purse in the lower drawer of the desk, trying to eliminate the gremlins that infiltrated the computers overnight, welcoming the university intern, and ensuring that as students arrive, each becomes immediately engaged in learning activities. Next, we locate the missing math manipulatives, answer the intern's questions, get each student'sattention as she arrives, listen to announcements over the intercom, assist Hannah in the restroom, ask the intern to request that the secretary call Omar's father about returning the zoo permission form, check on Juan's missing materials, ask Letitia to return to her desk, tell Scott to leave Melanie alone, survey the class to determine if everyone is present, complete necessary forms for the office, organize students into groups, get students' attention as we explain a few prerequisite ideas, initiate a study of a math problem, answer students' questions, move quietly but swiftly among the groups to facilitate their learning, walk over to stand beside Bram, confirm the status and progress

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of each group, secure the class's attention as a group, discuss the solutions of two of the math groups, frown at Pierre as he grabs Zoe's journal, and help students identify the two different methods that were used to solve the same math problem. Then, we remind the class of the importance of respecting each other, prepare the class for physical education, take Kierra to the hallway and encourage her to begin walking in the direction of the learning resources center, walk the class to the gym for physical education, talk with the intern about her activities for the rest of the day, regroup our thoughts for the return of the class, and welcome the class back from gym. Only four and a half hours to go, if we believe the district manual.

What is the implication we are suggesting? For us, it is that the teacher, if she is an artist, is an educational maestro, a professional who integrates "the activities of a busy classroom or extramural project with the skill of a great orchestral conductor." For the students, there is "a wonderful experience" (LW 11: 544). For the outsider, there is a miracle. Unfortunately, the same early morning hour may be overwhelming to many new teachers, because they need to practice their art for years before they become genuine artists (MW 3: 253–254). They need excellent university preparation and school practica if they are going to survive in these early years and happily thrive later. But they are unlikely to live to tell about their experiences, much less flourish, if they do not have regular interactions with the accomplished orchestral conductors in their schools. Future great conductors should profit much from their studies in universities and conservatories, but they arise and grow with orchestras. Magnificent teachers are the same; they flourish in schools. To think otherwise is, candidly, to fail to think. To fail to plan for continuous professional growth after university is to let down both aspiring and practicing artists. Consequently, it will be useful if we think of ourselves as aspiring orchestral conductors. Or, maybe, it will be helpful to think of ourselves as facilitators of budding orchestral conductors if we are administrators, mentors, or teacher educators.

NOTES

1. Feminine pronouns are used throughout this work to refer to both men and women.
2. See *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching: Toward a Teacher's Creed* (Teachers College Press, 2001). Interestingly, Hansen has profited immeasurably from examining the treasures of Dewey's thinking.

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