

## Balkanizing John Dewey

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A Yugoslav pedagogue reporting on the advanced state of schooling in Czechoslovakia in 1934 had this to say about Czechoslovak educational literature:

In their reviews, books and lectures many foreign pedagogues are mentioned. One thing is characteristic, however: German pedagogues are mentioned by far the least, regardless of whether they are Austrian or “Reichsdeutsche.” In place of this, they emphasize Tolstoy, J. Dewey, Spencer, M. Montessori and others.<sup>1</sup>

Given the concerns of this book, it will come as no surprise that the mention of Dewey here is my foremost interest. Salih Ljubunčić, the Zagreb professor who included Dewey in this list of educational thinkers, considered it extremely praiseworthy that Czechoslovaks were turning to these thinkers and not to Germans. That they were turning to foreign pedagogues was itself also something to be admired about Czechoslovak educators in Ljubunčić’s view. John Dewey was one of the foreigners who could be mentioned in this eighty-page Yugoslav book on Czechoslovak schooling as harbingers of modernity. In this brief statement that puts “J. Dewey” alongside a set of other noted figures, one can almost literally envision a bookshelf in the traveling library that circulated and reassembled Dewey in Yugoslavia.

The “Balkanizing John Dewey” referred to in the title of this chapter uses the term “balkanizing” in a deliberately ironic way. In English, the word “balkanize” frequently refers to the unraveling of some entity into various subparts, akin to the twentieth-century historical

pattern of countries on the Balkan peninsula of Southeastern Europe disintegrating into many smaller ethnic and religious units. Contrary to this, however, my use of the term “balkanizing” refers to one specific localization of Dewey’s works. It is not meant to suggest a dilution or splintering of Dewey’s ideas but rather the particular hybridized assemblage of discursive practices through which Dewey traveled in part of the Balkans, namely Yugoslavia, in the 1920s and 1930s. Instead of being a divider, the balkanization of Dewey was actually more of an assembling of multiple parts through which intelligibility was created.

That Dewey was mentioned by a Yugoslav professor of pedagogy as indicating how Czechoslovaks were wisely turning away from Germans clearly shows how the assembling of Dewey in Yugoslavia—or, as just outlined, his “balkanization”—took place in a field of multiple cultural relations. A Pan-Slavic solidarity with its Germanic other was one of the major features of the grid through which Dewey was reasoned about by Yugoslavs. The works of “J. Dewey” provide an entry point for examining the constitution of a “Slavic modernity” in Yugoslavia and the kinds of actions, knowledges, and reasoning that formed modern modes of living.

The Yugoslav balkanization of Dewey in the 1920s and 1930s engendered a multiple of modernity in which—contrary to the Weberian thesis—enchantments and disenchantments were concurrent gestures.<sup>2</sup> Dewey entered into the making of a Slavic modernity through ideas of action and agency that circulated with him. On the one hand, Dewey traveled in Yugoslavia as a thinker and an actor, as the exemplary embodiment of a modern, desacralized human agency. This disenchanting agency can be seen as the relocation into society of an agency once considered to reside in transcendental, divine, or natural forces.<sup>3</sup> This was a cultural conception of human agency that traveled in the way that Dewey was seen not just as a thinker but as a thinker who put thought into action. Yet, on the other hand, traveling in Yugoslavia with Dewey was an enchantment of action and activity, namely an enchanting of the school-based “work” activities of the child. Students’ work and activities were theorized as related to a kind of “genetics,” which was less a physiological/biological notion than it was the deferred location that housed the motivating, inspiring features that imbued the inclinations, dispositions, and *interests* of the child with purposive-ness. In Yugoslavia it was with the idea of the “Slavic soul” that what Weber referred to as “mysterious, incalculable forces”<sup>4</sup> entered into thinking about the interests and activities of the child. The soul was the elusive target of modern, twentieth-century progressive pedagogy,<sup>5</sup> yet the

soul never achieved the kind of calculability that Weber claimed was modernity's means of mastery and was responsible for giving rise to a disenchanted world. What is worthy of note is that instead of por-tending a counter- or antimodernity, the enchantments that traveled with Dewey in Yugoslavia more accurately appear to have been part of the making of a modernity.

This chapter first discusses the circulation of Dewey as a conceptual persona. An investigation of the various ways Dewey was positioned allows for a discussion of how Dewey was woven into the cultural forms of modernity in Yugoslavia. The second section of the chapter examines the translations of Dewey's work into Serbo-Croatian in order to specify further the particular local assemblings of this "internationally renowned" American pragmatist and what ideas about action, knowledge, and reason circulated in the libraries through which his works traveled. These twinned lines of inquiry map the configuration of discourses and practices that made Dewey comprehensible along the particular, local enchanted and disenchanted contours taken by "modern" modes of living and the "modern self" in interwar Yugoslavia.

## The Persona of Dewey in Yugoslavia

The listing of Dewey seen above put him in the midst of a crowd of thinkers of similar iconic status. In the early twentieth century and beyond, such individuals regularly circulated as conceptual persona, peopling various pedagogic literatures with international figures around whom a common grounding for modernization projects could be based. The "individuals" appearing in such lists were particular local figures not merely simulacra of an "original." References to thinkers en masse as seen in the alleged Czechoslovak emphasis on "Tolstoy, J. Dewey, Spencer, M. Montessori and others" perform a credentializing function of bringing certain global figures into particular local relations. It would be a mistake, however, to view this phenomenon merely as semiotic play involving only the manipulation of symbols empty of substance. While it is likely that similar listings can be found in numerous settings around the globe, there is a specificity to this particular listing and it proves possible to excavate historically the particular "J. Dewey" one encounters in this 1934 Yugoslav text. Tolstoy's presence as one of Dewey's shelf-mates is anything but haphazard; the Czechoslovak setting for this collection of "foreign pedagogues" is, similarly, not accidental. Interactions with Czechoslovakia were a central part of the modernization of the Yugoslav child, teacher, and

school. This was a modernity that had a “Slavic” shape even as certain notions of agency and personhood were globalized through it.

Salih Ljubunčić’s book on schooling and education in Czechoslovakia was based on a considerable amount of exposure to Czechoslovak education, but most immediately it grew out of a two-week study-tour of the country. In 1933 Ljubunčić led a group of thirty Yugoslav teachers on an excursion that took the group from Zagreb, through Vienna, to Bratislava and then through parts of Czechoslovakia (Žlín, Brno, Pardubica, Hradec Kralovy, and Prague) where noted educational innovations could be met with.<sup>6</sup> A prejudice against German educational influences pervades his text and appears in the very itinerary of the study-tour. As they were passing through Vienna, the group visited schools established for Czechoslovaks living in the city. In a report published in a Slovenian language teachers’ journal one of the participants on Ljubunčić’s 1933 study-tour described visiting the Comenius school in Vienna and noted, “to begin with we felt a Slavic hospitality in the middle of this foreign existence, it warmed us.”<sup>7</sup> Not only was this school a place where the Yugoslav visitors were made to feel particularly welcome, it was a school they considered one of the most modern educational facilities in the city. The advancedness of Czechoslovak schools in Vienna, the former Habsburg imperial capital, was for Yugoslavs a testament to national perseverance.

The Viennese itinerary of this Yugoslav study-tour points to one of the conditions that made for the particularly strong Yugoslav interest in Czechoslovakia, which was that the two countries were understood as sharing a similar “historical destiny.” They were newly independent “young” nations that had partly emerged out of the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian empire at the end of World War I. This moment was frequently referred to in Yugoslav literature as a restoration of the independence that had been denied during the period of Habsburg—and additionally for Yugoslavs Ottoman—control. In the introduction to his Czechoslovak study Ljubunčić faulted Yugoslavs for “not looking beyond the borders of Austrian and German pedagogy.” With their liberation Yugoslavs should now be “interested in Romance (French and Italian) and Anglo-Saxon (English and American) pedagogy,” he wrote.<sup>8</sup> Czechoslovakia had successfully freed itself from these influences and was properly enjoying its national independence as was indicated by this particular bookshelf on which “J. Dewey” was found in 1934.

Alongside the shared temporality of both peoples living in a moment of national liberation or a postcolonial present, Czechoslovaks and

Yugoslavs shared a set of “Slavic” affiliations. Serbo-Croatian and Czech and Slovak are linguistically related languages, part of a Slavic language group that also includes Polish, Russian, Bulgarian, and Byelorussian. Slavic commonalities helped, for example, to make Czechoslovakia the most popular travel destination for Yugoslavs in the interwar era. Czechoslovaks were “our northern brothers” and Czechoslovakia was seen as the “most advanced Slavic country.”

This cultural construction of Slavic relatedness smoothed the way for Czechoslovakia to appear to Yugoslavs as an attainable model of modernity. In his text on Czechoslovak education, Ljubunčić noted the pronounced American influence on Czechoslovak pedagogues such as Vaclav Příhoda, Stanislav Vrána, and Jan Úher. He even went as far as to suggest that some of the advances found in America could be channeled to Yugoslavia by looking toward Czechoslovakia. A review of the book in *Učitelj* (Teacher), the most prominent Yugoslav educational journal of the interwar era, noted that in his conclusion,

once again Mr. Ljubunčić notes the “Slavic characteristics, or even more specifically, the Czechoslovak characteristics of this entire movement, which, in truth, bears the influences of American pedagogues.” In addition, the writer hopes that “Slavic humanism will spiritualize American (and Czech) practicality, and that the reformed Czechoslovak school will be above all else Czechoslovak.”<sup>9</sup>

The Slavic was considered, as one can see here, to have the potential to preserve a degree of local legitimacy and national authenticity in the face of modern, American influences in the sphere of education. Yet, there is the clear intimation in Ljubunčić’s comment that the Slavic even has something to offer America itself. The enchantment that is suggested in the idea of Slavic humanism having the potential to “spiritualize” America is allusive to other contemporary discussions of the Slavic “soul” or “spirit” as a guiding, motivating feature of reality. The spiritualization of American pedagogy invoked here can be seen as a proposal for the enchanting of educational reform; it was a gesture toward ultimately grounding and enshrining the ontological and epistemic foundations of activity and thought in spiritual enchantments that the world offered.

The Yugoslav channeling of “J. Dewey” through Czechoslovakia was not an errant gesture. The bookshelf being examined here was one on which Dewey was assembled together with a commitment to Slavic ethnic distinctiveness. The practicality of action that Dewey’s

work portended had been reworked in accordance with “Slavic characteristics.” It should not, however, be assumed that these characteristics were static cultural notions that preceded Ljubunčić’s text in an a priori manner. It is quite evident in Ljubunčić’s writings—for example, in the description of Slavic hospitality—that the “Slavic relatedness” that warranted the compatibility of Czechoslovakia as a model for Yugoslavs to study was also being culturally constructed through these very travels, interactions, and texts. Ljubunčić’s positioning of Dewey as a meritorious influence in Czechoslovakia was connected to the imagining of the Slavic as a form of enchantment. This connection with the Slavic meant not only that Dewey was assembled in relation to local/regional traditions but that the balkanized Dewey actually had the potential to support and sustain the fabrication of traditions as a source of enchantment.

The cultural importance of the Slavic in interwar Yugoslavia helps to explain the placement of “J. Dewey” next to “Tolstoy.” The Russian novelist and thinker Leo Tolstoy had run experimental schools in the 1890s, the most famous of which was Yasnaya Polyana where he developed “student-directed” programs<sup>10</sup> that Yugoslav writers often referred to as “free schooling.” In the interwar era, Yugoslav educators claimed Tolstoy as an important Slavic forefather. Scholars such as Sergei Hessen (a Russian émigré who was based at various times at German, Czech, and Polish universities and whose comparative education works on Soviet and American schools were widely circulated in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s) made note of the considerable similarities between the two men.<sup>11</sup> Beyond their shared commitment to running experimental schools, the focus in Dewey’s writings on the “life” of the child, and on schooling as a mode of living could be seen as bearing a close resemblance to Tolstoy’s notion of “life.” Putting Tolstoy on the same bookshelf as Spencer, Montessori, and Dewey brought Tolstoy into communication with, and put him in the same class as other persona who circulated internationally. The presence of a Slavic hero on the bookshelf with Dewey was yet another way that a cultural construction of the Slavic was interwoven into the assembling of the balkanized Dewey.

Though Dewey on Ljubunčić’s list of Czechoslovakia’s foreign pedagogues was pointedly unaccompanied by any German writers, this wasn’t true in every case. In other Yugoslav literature Dewey was closely associated with Georg Kerschensteiner. Typically, however, Dewey was presented as the senior figure in the relationship. A book review announcing the 1935 Serbo-Croatian publication of two of

Dewey's essays in a book titled *School and Society*<sup>12</sup> noted that Dewey was,

one of the world's most well known and most popular writers on contemporary pedagogical theory. Kerschensteiner, Dewey and A. Ferrière are three of the most noted and most popular Euro-American writers, theoreticians and propagators of the active school.<sup>13</sup>

In this linking of Kerschensteiner, Dewey, and Adolphe Ferrière activity and agency were the key points of intersection. All three were seen as "theoreticians and propagators," a characterization that hints at a modern conceptualization of agency in which thought tied to action located in people a set of functions and responsibilities that accompanied the enhanced status that individuals were able to possess as "agents of higher principles."<sup>14</sup> Kerschensteiner, Dewey, and Ferrière executed these functions and responsibilities in an exemplary manner. A certain disenchantment can be seen to be traveling on this bookshelf of educational reformers who were both thinkers and actors inasmuch as an ability to act, speak, and make recommendations in the "interests" of advancing society has been lodged in these individuals as opposed to in a transcendental, divine, or natural site.

However, the "activity" of the child was not solely that of a disenchanting modern agency. This Yugoslav text represented Dewey's theorization of activity and took it to be the central strand uniting him with Kerschensteiner and Ferrière. Dewey was credited with characterizing the active child's activities as having four aspects. It was recorded that Dewey thought of the "child's activity" (1) as a means for self-expression; and (2) as a way of directing the child to the satisfaction that could come from his or her own curiosity—one can note that these first two features theorized a modern self who was constituted through its own actions and out of a purposive-ness seen, tautologically perhaps, to reside "within." The 1935 text also recorded that Dewey thought that the "child's activity" was (3) a means to keep the child constantly doing work, a desideratum because "in children, thinking and doing were still undivided"; and (4) a means of forming an artistic sense. In this theorization "activity" was cast as something of a guarantee, a reliable foundation on which the individual (as well as social institutions) could be based. "Because of this," the Yugoslav reviewer wrote in reference to Dewey's characterization, "the school must educate and direct instruction according to the principle of 'teaching through work.'"<sup>15</sup> Connecting "activity" and "work" through

Dewey meant that the Kerschensteiner's *arbeitsschule* [work school] ideas<sup>16</sup> could be cast as deeply indebted to Dewey. Through this, the child's school "work," particularly when that entailed manual activities, was imbued with the redemptive qualities of a "rooted," purposeful self-expression tied to an individual practical action that could generate social progress.

In Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s, the "work school" movement was arguably one of the most institutionally successful "New Education" or "Progressive Education" reform currents. A Yugoslav association published the journal *Radna Škola* (The Work School),<sup>17</sup> in which—as in Kerschensteiner's writings—"work" was viewed not only as vocational handiwork but as a pedagogic conceptualization of independence and self-reliance.<sup>18</sup> Dewey's formative influence on this movement was noted in a 1926 article from *Radna Škola*. In a report on "The Old and New School According to Dewey" the assertion appeared that "the Pedagogic influence of Dewey is powerfully felt in England and in Germany, particularly in Kerschensteiner."<sup>19</sup> In Yugoslav literature, these Dewey–Kerschensteiner attributions served to undermine somewhat Kerschensteiner's originality. This occurred in the two instances just mentioned when Dewey and Kerschensteiner were placed side by side one another. The assertion of considerable indebtedness also figures in a lengthy overview of Dewey's work that appeared in 1934 in *Učitelj*. The article noted that "the great German pedagogue, and in truth the greatest European Pedagogue, *Kerschensteiner* received the inspiration for his famous *Theory of Education* basically from John Dewey" [emphasis in original].<sup>20</sup> In the flows and networks that wove Dewey together with Kerschensteiner in Yugoslavia, the American philosopher was consistently given the upper hand. Dewey's vision of activity thus appeared on the Yugoslav cultural map as it was drawn into connection (as a formative influence) to the pedagogical theorization of work and manual or vocational education.

When Czechoslovak pedagogues turned to America, Yugoslav writers emphasized the extent to which "America" was indigenized and reworked to accord with the "Czechoslovak" and the "Slavic." This did not occur in instances when Yugoslavs remarked on the ways that German pedagogues turned to America. As presented by Yugoslavs, the Dewey that traveled on the same bookshelves as Georg Kerschensteiner had not been Germanized. Instead, the cultural representation was of a German pedagogical movement more being beholden to America than a reasoned appropriation of America. Nonetheless, as he circulated in different ways in each of these orbits Dewey helped to theorize "work"



for Yugoslav educators through his ideas about action and its place as an ordering principle in educational thought and processes. As an indigenous foreigner in Yugoslavia, Dewey appeared on the one hand as a moderating figure whose American pragmatism could authentically explicate certain German pedagogical theories. And, at the same time he was a figure whose ideas about practicality and practical action were considered extremely conducive to “indigenization,” or to what one saw earlier described as the “spiritualization” that could be hoped to occur when Czechoslovaks (and by extension Yugoslavs) brought “J. Dewey” into the “Slavic” world.

### Routes to Reading Dewey in Yugoslavia

In the 1920s and 1930s, the works of the French professor of education, Edouard Claparède were particularly significant in the movement of John Dewey’s writings into Yugoslavia. As with the conceptual Dewey who appeared in Yugoslavia, the Dewey that appeared in textual commentaries was also a particular local assembling. Claparède was an important part of this assembling, as probably one of the most widely circulated and influential of Dewey’s interlocutors in the country. Because of his stature as a renowned professor of psychology at the University of Geneva and the founder of the Rousseau Institute, Claparède was a conceptual persona of international stature in his own right. The primary concern here, however, is with Claparède’s packaging of Dewey. Claparède was a conduit for bringing Dewey’s writings into Yugoslavia—an “envelope” that affected how the “contents” were read. What Claparède offered was a scheme for thinking about Dewey. This was a scheme, it can be noted, that supported the “Slavic” as a meaning-giving and action-orienting object of knowledge in the formation of Yugoslav schooling. Claparède’s key contribution to making the balkanized Dewey intelligible was thinking about the enchantments and disenchantments that were caught up in the making of modern selves, modern schools, and modern modes of living.

In Yugoslavia Claparède was discussed as a noted child-study advocate and a pioneer in experimental pedagogy. He saw in Dewey’s pedagogy three primary elements: in Claparède’s scheme, Dewey’s educational ideas were first “*genetic*,” which meant that the education occurred not from outside but from within the child. Second, Dewey’s pedagogy could be seen as “*functional*,” which meant that activities of schooling were an instrument for spiritual unfolding that took account of the present and the future. And third, it was “*social*,” which meant

that it prepared the individual for a productive role in the larger society. This schematization of Dewey first appeared in the introduction to a 1913 collection of Dewey's articles translated into French.<sup>21</sup> Claparède's essay was then published in Serbo-Croatian in a 1918 journal and again a second time in 1920 as a pamphlet<sup>22</sup> in a series of publications on pedagogy edited by Milan Šević, the head of the faculty of pedagogy at the University of Belgrade. This same essay of Claparède's on Dewey reappeared in 1930 when a two-page summary was published in the journal *Učitelj*.<sup>23</sup> Thanks to the wide circulations and recirculations of Claparède's texts, thinking about Dewey as offering a *genetic, functional, and social* pedagogy moved into Yugoslavia.

(It can be noted that Yugoslavia was not the only Central/Eastern European Slavic country to meet Dewey through Claparède. Claparède's essay was also frequently cited in Czechoslovakia. Especially in light of the perceptions seen earlier, it is quite interesting to find that in his 1930 book on American education Jan Úher turned to explaining Dewey's educational ideas to his Czechoslovak readership at least partly through the schema presented in Claparède's essay.<sup>24</sup> This recourse to Claparède isn't particularly surprising except that Úher's book was expressly written after and on the basis of his study-tour travels to the United States.)

In Claparède's conceptual schema, the *genetic* aspects of Dewey's educational philosophy concerned his ideas about development and how the teacher ought to respond to the desires and interests of children. What Dewey offered, according to Claparède, was an "understanding of [the child's] interests as a genetic symptom" and a way in which "we can follow the child's nature."<sup>25</sup> It can be noted in passing that the notion of development Dewey elaborated, for example, in *Democracy and Education*, differs somewhat from a concept of genetic unfolding that could be nurtured and monitored by tracking the expressions of the child's interest, the main point for present purposes is that the latter idea traveled in Yugoslavia as an authoritative presentation of Dewey. Claparède's reading of Dewey, in fact, put an extremely strong emphasis on the centering of education in the child, in "genetics"—an emphasis that seems to have been keenly picked up on in Yugoslavia.

In its Serbo-Croatian translation, Claparède's essay was prefaced by an introduction written by Milan Šević that indicates how both enchantments and disenchantments were present in this thinking about education and its "genetic" dimensions. Presenting the Claparède/Dewey concepts that his readers were about to be exposed to, Šević opined,

“everyone has a certain capital in their aspirations and impulses that must be pursued in order to move forward.” He continued, “the problem of education is this, to discover that capital.”<sup>26</sup> With this statement Šević tied Claparède’s “genetic” categorization to a theory of progress, a “moving forward.” This “capital” was something as-if hidden inside the child. Child study could reveal something of this genetic capital and a child-centered pedagogy could nourish it. Yet, although “genetic capital” was something the child was considered to possess to begin with, it was not something static. Yugoslavs read through Claparède that for Dewey the psyche was not a static system but a dynamic process. These “genetics” were, accordingly, not the feature of an a priori determinism but the proper, “natural” material for educators to work on.

In pursuing and educating by means of the child’s aspirations and interests, the disenchantments of a scientific mode of reasoning and acting took shape. Through the research in the field of experimental pedagogy and at institutes such as Claparède’s Rousseau Institute, education scientists could carefully study child interests and activities as symptomatic forms of the child’s nature. The “natural,” “genetic” entity so well lodged in the child’s interior was, however, the deferred object of the science and an elusive “thing” that could be attributed with an enchanted purposiveness. In this regard, there appear to be certain connections between Claparède’s ideas about the “genetic” and Henri Bergson’s vitalism,<sup>27</sup> with the inner, genetic nature of the child serving as an “*élan vital*.” Thanks to Claparède’s categorization, the modern approach to teaching and thinking about the child’s interests that circulated through Yugoslavia in affiliation with Dewey was one that constructed enchantment and disenchantment in related gestures.

By analogy, the “Slavic” could similarly be understood as an inner, motivating spirit that needed to be pursued by Slavs. Finding a “Slavic soul” and properly putting it to use was a major goal of the many Pan-Slavic meetings that were held in the 1920s and 1930s. In this period Yugoslav educators, along with sociologists, geographers, mathematicians, and even beekeepers<sup>28</sup> attended international Pan-Slavic conferences with Poles, Czechoslovaks, Bulgarians, and representatives from other Slavic countries. Pan-Slavism could provide a key element of the “genetics” inside the child, and, relatedly, it could provide a “genetics” for thinking about rural villages. The Pan-Slavic literature frequently valorized village/rural schooling as the source of something quite like an *élan vital*. The above mentioned Milan Šević was the chief Yugoslav delegate to the 1931 Slavic Pedagogical Congress in Poland

and in one of his reports he described a field-trip to a Polish village school near Warsaw, writing that the village preserved values and personality, “which the cities lost, not only for themselves but for the entire nation.”<sup>29</sup> For Yugoslavs, the “genetics” of the village, of the child, and of the Slav were enchanted and guiding objects. They were capital to be pursued; they were dynamic objects that allowed movement forward. Because of its emphasis on genetics, Claparède/Deweyan pedagogy allowed for its own indigenization, and acceded to its own balkanization, on a theoretical and practical level.

The *functional* aspects of Dewey’s pedagogy were consistent with a functional psychology that, for Claparède, held promise for renovating associationist psychology with an understanding of consciousness as less static and more attuned to environmental adaptability in a Darwinian sense. As mentioned above, Claparède emphasized the dynamic as opposed to static features of the psyche, which was an emphasis that corresponded to viewing the human as a whole unit with functional integrity in adapting to its needs and its environment. The activities of the child were an important concern in this respect and Claparède noted that educators needed to make sure that the child’s activities and work accorded with his or her “interior needs.”<sup>30</sup> As “functional,” the child’s activities thus had the potential to provide a surface for pedagogic interventions.

The connections between functional psychology, Dewey, and Kerschensteiner’s work school movement were noted in a specially commissioned survey of Czechoslovak education that appeared in Serbo-Croatian in 1938. In a passage that captures many of the themes previously discussed in this chapter, a Slovak school inspector by the name of Franjo Musil explained to Yugoslav readers the historical development of Czechoslovak didactics. Musil’s story was noticeably similar to the tale that Salih Ljubunčić told through the “Tolstoy, J. Dewey, Spencer, M. Montessori” bookshelf that this chapter began with. According to Musil, up until 1918 German and Austrian pedagogies had been forced on a Czechoslovakia that with independence post-1918 was able choose more freely what best suited its educational needs. The free school [*slobodna škola*] movement that emphasized “active methods” and eclipsed the “passive learning” of information (as under the old regime) was seen by Musil as forming “under the influence of studies in functional psychology which freed children to proceed through a system of activities that would develop their dispositions.” This led, he noted, to the organization of schooling around “centers of children’s interest.” Musil’s bookshelf of pedagogic leaders

in this area included “Montessori, Decroly, Claparède and, in particular, Dewey.” In the traveling of this library to Yugoslavia, it can be noted that Dewey’s theorization of activity was taken as a key concept warranting the focus on the child’s work. Musil stated that this impulse had even led to the establishment of “educational handiwork” being established as a required school subject for boys in Czechoslovakia.<sup>31</sup> Once again Dewey traveled in Yugoslavia in the company of Kerschensteiner; here he has also been put in the company of Claparède and functional psychology and figures as the philosopher of a social redemption promised by pedagogic work centering on the child’s activity.

The *social* aspects of Dewey’s pedagogy were, in Claparède’s view, infused throughout Dewey’s ideas. He noted that Dewey responded to contemporary societies (“the new conditions of our new civilization”) when children were severed from many of the natural occupations that were once adequate to “develop a social instinct.” In the essay Claparède suggested a large concern with anomie by mentioning the loss of family life, and the phenomenon of parental work outside the home meaning that children were not kept to their work or tasks. Claparède concluded that it was only the school that could fix contemporary social life. And toward this end he turned to Dewey’s concept of the “the school as a small community.” He also once again turned to Kerschensteiner and the notion of handiwork as “the best type of work for interpersonal cooperative work” and “work in a community”<sup>32</sup> as educational strategies that would redeem society.

Milan Šević, in his introduction to Claparède’s piece, also took up the question of what it was that would allow people to live well together. He drew out of Claparède/Dewey the collective development of individual self-responsibility and a healthy reason as the signature features for productive social living in contemporary times. Related to this, for both Šević and Claparède, one of the things that was central about Dewey was that not only did he think such things but that he carried them out—an observation already discussed earlier. Practical actions and a restructuring of human agency were offered toward the goal of repairing and moving society forward as a successful human enterprise.

## Conclusion

Balkanizing John Dewey was a cultural phenomenon occurring in a number of uncoordinated, overlapping ways. Dewey was circulated and reassembled in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s as a harbinger

of modernity. This modernity, however, was one that could be flexibly molded and enchanted and disenchanting to fit local conditions. The concepts of practical action that circulated with Dewey could be Slavized—something Yugoslavs considered their “northern brothers” the Czechoslovaks to have done quite successfully, for example, “the Czechoslovak school will be above all else Czechoslovak.” This adaptability wasn’t only the result of contemporary thinking about appropriation, it had also to do with the skills and dispositions necessary for living in uncertain times and shifting cultural terrains. Dewey’s localization and assembling in interwar Yugoslavia had centrally to do with the assembling of one of the multiples of modernity.

On the modern bookshelves and in the libraries with which Dewey traveled he was reassembled with other conceptual persona, international figures who too each had their specific balkanized versions. Among these figures, however, Dewey most consistently appeared in Yugoslav literature as a theorist of actions and activity. The theorization of “action” attributed to Dewey was tied to a modern mode of living organized according to individual independence, self-reliance, and self-government. The modern self that could be glimpsed and fabricated through the proper pedagogical use of the child’s work, activities, and interests was one who was constituted through its own actions. This way of acting was both a doing and way of thinking inasmuch as action tied to interests/curiosity/dispositions generated principles of reflection and criteria for evaluating knowledge. In the assembling of Dewey both as persona and in textual commentary on his work the “activity of the child” provided a sound basis for reliably intervening on the individual and for reconstituting the social as a domain of interaction and mutuality. Yet this activity was both enchanted with a guiding purposiveness and disenchanting in itself and in the educational reformer’s progress-oriented acting according to a set of assumed functions and responsibilities.

John Dewey’s active and acting child appeared in Yugoslavia as the best way that true nature could be expressed and nurtured in a modernity. The “genetics” of this child were offered up to the disenchanting lenses and tactics of scientific study that would be undertaken by psychologists and through experimental pedagogy. Yet, an enchanted “core” remained—the seat of purposiveness, intentionality, and volition of which interests and activities were, in Claparède’s word, only “symptomatic.” The attribution of a spiritual mystery to the soul was a central idea that traveled with Dewey in Yugoslavia. Whether this was the “Deweyan” in a Hyde Park or Morningside Heights sense is

less important than the possibilities this engendered for Dewey as well as “J. Dewey” to comply with and support the importance of the “Slavic” in forming and enchanting the modern Yugoslav child and school.

The balkanization of John Dewey was a feature in the creation of a “Slavic modernity” in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s. This modernity was distinct in one respect in being so commonly articulated along a network of Yugoslav–Czechoslovak interaction and not according to a rigidly preserved center–periphery dynamic of relations. In other aspects, Yugoslavia’s “Slavic modernity” was distinct in bringing together the educational reformer’s agency with the agentic activities of the child. Theorizing Dewey’s active and acting child through the “Slavic” meant that purposive-ness of action could be desacralized, disenchanting, and located within society—and, it could at the same time be naturalized, and re-enchanting by being located within the spiritualization of a “Slavic genetics” that was individual and social.

Alongside this, a certain pragmatism was ensconced in the very processes and activities of John Dewey’s balkanization. Cultural thinking in the 1920s and 1930s about the dissolution of barriers to the flows of knowledge and the putative “universality” of social problems and their solutions generated a progressive point of view that meant that Yugoslavs were drawn into the project of pragmatically creating a universe. In this world (here it has been a “Slavic world”) actions generate their own knowledges; serialistic, repeated actions reinforce and create a mental world in which these actions fit. The progressive point of view in Yugoslavia in the 1920s and 1930s was a view on a world built around doing and progressing—a world of (pragmatic) involvement in that acting and advancing.

## Notes

1. Salih Ljubunčić, *Školstvo i prosvjeta u Čehoslovačkoj: s osobitim obzirom na pedagošku i školsku reformu*, ed. Salih Ljubunčić, *Biblioteka “Škole Rada”* (Zagreb: Naklada A. Brusina Naslj. V. i M. Steiner, 1934), 52–53.
2. My thinking on the twinning of “disenchantment” and “enchantment” is indebted to Jane Bennett, “The enchanted world of modernity: Paracelsus, Kant and Deleuze,” *Cultural Values* 1, no. 1 (1997).
3. John W. Meyer and Ronald L. Jefferson, “The ‘actors’ of modern society: The cultural construction of social agency,” *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 1 (2000): 101.
4. Max Weber, “Science as a vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 139.

5. See the discussion in Thomas S. Popkewitz, *Struggling for the Soul: The Politics of Schooling and the Construction of the Teacher* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998).
6. Salih Ljubunčić, "Naučno putovanje naših učitelja u Čehoslovačku," *Napretka i Savremena Škole*, no. 5–10 (1933).
7. Andrej Debenak, "Vtisi iz učiteljske studijske ekskurzije po Čehoslovaški," *Učiteljski tovaris* 62, no. 10–11 (1933).
8. Ljubunčić, *Školstvo i prosvjeta u Čehoslovackoj*, 5.
9. "Salih Ljubunčić: Školstvo i prosvjeta u Čehoslovackoj [book review]," *Učitelj* 44, no. 3 (1934): 235.
10. Bob Blaisdell, *Tolstoy as Teacher: Leo Tolstoy's Writings on Education* (New York: Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 2000).
11. Tadeusz Nowacki, "Wstęp," in *Sergiusz Hessen: Filozofia — Kultura — Wychowanie*, ed. Maria Hessenowa (Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1973).
12. The book included two of Dewey's essays, "The School and Social Progress" and "The Child and the Curriculum."
13. "Đon Duji: Škola i društvo [book review]," *Učitelj* 50, no. 4 (1935).
14. Meyer and Jefferson, "The 'actors' of modern society," 105.
15. "Đon Duji: Škola i društvo [book review]."
16. See Hermann Röhrs, "Georg Kerschensteiner," *Prospects (Paris)* 23, no. 3/4 (1993).
17. *Radna Škola* was published between 1924 and 1929. In its final years the journal was affiliated with *The New Era*, the flagship publication of the New Educational Fellowship. Unlike *The New Era's* other international associates in the 1920s and 1930s, however, *Radna Škola* published almost no translations of *New Era* articles.
18. This position pervades most of the issues and appears in the letter from the editor (Jovan S. Jovanović), which launched the first issue. Alongside stating that one of its goals was to have "manual work" (*ručni rad*) appear as a school subject the editor noted his hope that "work" would become a "principle" from which everything in pedagogy would follow. Jovan S. Jovanović, "Našim Čitaocima," *Radna Škola* 1, no. 1 (1924).
19. Vlad. Spasić, "Stara i nova Škola po Đonu Duiju," *Radna Škola* 2, no. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 (1926): 127.
20. Dragoljub Branković, "Pedagogika Đona Duja," *Učitelj* 44, no. 2 (1934): 172.
21. Edouard Claparède, "Introduction," in *L'Ecole et l'enfant* ([John Dewey] Neuchatel, Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé; Librairie Fischbacher, 1913).
22. Edouard (Claparède) Klapared, *Pedagogija Đona Đuia*, trans. Milan Šević (Beograd: Izdanje Knjižarnice Rajkovića i Dukovića, 1920).
23. Z. Đirić, "Pedagogika Đona Đuia—Ed. Klapared," *Učitelj* 10, no. 6 (1930).
24. Jan Úher, *Základy Americké Výchovy* (Praha: Čin, 1930), 103–106.
25. These excerpts are translated from the Serbo-Croatian. Klapared, *Pedagogija Đona Đuia*, 19.
26. Milan Šević, "Introduction," in *Edouard (Claparède) Klapared, Pedagogija Đona Đuia* (Beograd: Izdanje Knjižarnice Rajkovića i Dukovića, 1920), 4.



27. Claparède was familiar with Bergson's work Daniel Hameline, "Edouard Claparède," *Perspectives: revue trimestrielle d'éducation comparée* 23, no. 1–2 (1993): 6, Even though he disputed some of Bergson's arguments (Tröhler, chapter 3, this volume).
28. Noah W. Sobe, "Cultivating a 'Slavic modern': Yugoslav beekeeping, schooling and travel in the 1920s and 1930s," *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no. 1–2 (2005): 145–60.
29. Milan Šević, *Prvi Slovenski Pedagoški Kongres* (Beograd: Pedagogijska Knjižnica, 1932), 22.
30. Klapared, *Pedagogija Dona Đuia*, 23.
31. Franjo Musil, "Razvoj i današnje stanje Čehoslovačke didaktike," in *Pedagoška Čehoslovačka, 1918–1938*, ed. M. P. Majstorović (Beograd: Izdanje Jugoslovenskog Učiteljskog Udruženja, 1938), 28.
32. Klapared, *Pedagogija Dona Đuia*, 25.