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精粹主義的形成歷史與理念訴求： 以W. C. Bagley與精粹主義協會 創始成員為焦點

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摘要

研究目的

本研究探討美國精粹主義協會的成立脈絡，同時分析其核心成員W. C. Bagley、F. A. Shaw與M. J. Demiashevich的教育理念。解析《精粹主義宣言》的主張及其產生的後續影響，據此重構該主義的興起背景與核心理念訴求。

主要理論或概念架構

本研究架構聚焦於1930年代美國經濟大蕭條引發的社會動盪，探究此背景如何促使教育思潮從兒童中心的進步主義轉向強調社會穩定與國家競爭力的精粹主義。本研究整合三位創始成員Bagley、Shaw與Demiashevich分別在師資培育和

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行政實務以及歐陸哲學的多元視角，藉此突破過去將精粹主義簡化為進步教育反動派的單一框架，同時細究1938年的《精粹主義宣言》，分析該文本對基礎學術成就低落與紀律喪失的診斷。此外，本研究藉由J. Dewey及W. H. Kilpatrick的回應進行理念辯證，探討精粹主義維繫民主共同文化的歷史意義，並論述其在當代素養教育潮流中重建實質學力共識的理論價值。

研究設計／方法／對象

本研究採歷史研究法，將Bagley及其領導之精粹主義協會創始成員列為研究對象。以1938年出版的《精粹主義宣言》為核心分析文字，另以Bagley、Shaw與Demiashkevich等人的著作、報刊資料及教育期刊論述等同時期文獻為主要史料，並輔以相關傳記研究與教育史研究，進行脈絡化詮釋。本研究藉由文字細讀、史料批判與比較分析，重構1930年代美國社會變遷與教育論戰脈絡，並探討精粹主義如何藉由學科系統性、基本學力、共同文化、學業標準與紀律責任等訴求回應教育危機，據以析論其理念內涵與實踐指向。

研究發現或結論

研究發現顯示，精粹主義的形成並非單純地對進步主義教育的消極反動。在1930年代大蕭條與社會動盪背景下，美國社會要求學校承擔秩序穩定與國家競爭力，精粹主義遂以學力危機論述回應公眾期待，其主張恢復學術標準與共同基礎課程，並強調學習紀律在社會動盪時期的重要性。精粹主義三位創始成員之背景、思維有其差異：Shaw偏向在進步與傳統間尋求實踐綜合；Bagley從民主公共責任與社會遺產傳遞視角出發，批判教育實務中基礎訓練遭受邊緣化的問題；Demiashkevich以哲學立場反對價值相對化並強調文明恆常基石。最後，根據媒體報導與Dewey、Kilpatrick回應精粹主義的歷史資料，衍釋教育變革需走出形式擺盪，並在理念辯證與教育尺度間做價值權衡，方能凝聚實質學力的改革共識，並重新釐清公共教育在共同文化、能力培育與社會整合上的核心任務。

理論或實務創見／貢獻／建議

本研究於理論貢獻部分，在於透過史料分析將精粹主義還原為特定時代下的教育問題框定與公共論述建構，而非僅將其視為立場標籤。透過對三位創始者之

論證路徑與關懷焦點的差異辨析，呈現精粹主義內部多元理念的生成方式，補強過往研究忽略思想互動脈絡之不足。實務層面則建議當代教育改革宜以核心知能與共同基準為基礎，並建立可檢核的學業期待與學習規範。本文主張創新方案應在穩固尺度下展開，藉此降低政策搖擺並強化公共教育之社會整合功能。

關鍵詞：W. C. Bagley、教育改革、教育哲學、進步主義、精粹主義

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The Historical Formation and Ideological Claims of Educational Essentialism: A Study Centered on W. C. Bagley and the Founding Members of the Essentialist Committee for the Advancement of American Education

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Abstract

Purpose

This study situates the rise of American Essentialism in its historical context and analyzes the educational thought of W. C. Bagley, F. A. Shaw, and M. J. Demiashkevich. It also provides a critical reading of *An Essentialist's Platform for the Advancement of American Education*, analyzing its key arguments and historical reception in order to clarify the movement's origins and core theoretical commitments.

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Main Theories or Conceptual Frameworks

This study's conceptual framework traces how the social upheavals of the Great Depression in the United States helped shift educational thought from child-centered Progressivism to Essentialism, with its renewed emphasis on social stability and national competitiveness. Integrating the distinct perspectives of the three founders, namely Bagley, Shaw, and Demiashkevich, who are rooted respectively in teacher education, administrative practice, and Continental philosophy, the study moves beyond portrayals of Essentialism as a mere "reaction." The framework centers on a close reading of the 1938 manifesto, *An Essentialist's Platform for the Advancement of American Education*, especially its diagnosis of declining academic attainment and the erosion of discipline. It further engages responses by John Dewey and William H. Kilpatrick to assess Essentialism's historical and theoretical significance for sustaining a democratic common culture and, in light of contemporary competency-based reforms, for rearticulating a shared commitment to substantive academic learning.

Research Design/Methods/Participants

This study employs a historical research design centered on Bagley and the founding members of the Essentialist Committee under his leadership. It takes the 1938 manifesto, *An Essentialist's Platform for the Advancement of American Education*, as its core analytical text and draws primarily on contemporaneous sources, including the published writings of Bagley, Shaw, and Demiashkevich, newspaper materials, and commentary in educational journals. Relevant biographical studies and scholarship in the history of education are also consulted to contextualize the interpretation. Through close textual reading, source criticism, and comparative analysis, the study reconstructs the sociohistorical context of social change and educational debate in 1930s America and examines how Essentialism responded to a perceived educational crisis by emphasizing curricular coherence, basic academic proficiency, a common culture, academic standards, discipline, and responsibility, thereby elucidating its conceptual foundations and

orientation toward educational practice.

Research Findings or Conclusions

The findings indicate that Essentialism emerged not merely as a passive reaction against Progressive education, but as a response to the Great Depression and the attendant social unrest of the 1930s, when American society renewed its expectations that schools should secure social order and bolster national competitiveness. Essentialists framed this moment as an “academic crisis,” advocating the restoration of academic standards, a common foundational curriculum, and disciplined learning.

Comparative analysis further reveals divergent emphases among the founders: Shaw pursued a pragmatic synthesis of Progressive and traditional orientations; Demiashkevich mounted a philosophical critique of value relativism and stressed enduring civilizational foundations; and Bagley, invoking democratic public responsibility and the transmission of social heritage, criticized the sidelining of foundational training. Finally, drawing on contemporary media coverage and Dewey’s and Kilpatrick’s responses, the study argues that educational change must move beyond oscillations in form and method. Reform requires explicit normative deliberation and principled criteria if it is to sustain a shared commitment to substantive academic learning and to clarify schooling’s public mission in maintaining a common culture, cultivating capacities, and fostering social integration.

Theoretical or Practical Insights/Contributions/Recommendations

Theoretically, this study uses archival analysis and contextual interpretation to reposition Essentialism as a historically situated mode of educational problem-framing and public discourse formation, rather than a mere ideological label. By distinguishing the founders’ argumentative trajectories and focal concerns, the study clarifies the movement’s plural sources and the processes through which its ideas crystallized, addressing scholarship that privileges the manifesto’s phrasing while underexamining the broader arena of intellectual exchange.

Practically, the study argues that contemporary reform should be anchored in

cumulative core competencies and shared benchmarks, supported by assessable academic expectations and learning norms. Such grounding enables innovation within coherent criteria, reduces policy volatility, and strengthens schooling's integrative public function.

Keywords: W. C. Bagley, educational reform, philosophy of education, progressivism, essentialism