EDUCATIONAL THEORY

THE TRAVELS OF *DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION*: A CROSS-CULTURAL RECEPTION HISTORY

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Abstract. After its publication in 1916, *Democracy and Education* opened up a global debate about educational thought that is still ongoing. Various translations of Dewey's work, appearing at different times, have aided in introducing his ideas within different conversations and across different cultures. The introduction of Dewey's masterwork through academic, institutional, or political avenues has influenced its reception within contemporary educational scenarios; these avenues need to be taken into account when analyzing the book's reception as well as its impact on the reconstruction of educational discourse.

Premise

The history of educational thought can be seen as the "reflective examination of educational issues and problems."[1] It has developed over time through multiple perspectives as well as within different discourses and a variety of dialogues. I refer here to the notion of discourse as defined by Michel Foucault, who used it to describe both a way of constructing knowledge as well as a form of power circulating in the social field, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations, that can attach to strategies of domination as well as resistance.[2]

Exploring the impact of a book on educational thought requires a specific focus on the areas and forms of discourse within which it has been received and used to construct new forms of knowledge and understanding. At a particular historical moment a book may be constructive or destructive to lines of cultural debate and political discourse, to different forms of "narrative," depending on the degree of its connection to and implementation in the complex dynamics of cultural, institutional, political, and social change. It is therefore useful to determine at what level of discourse the impact of a book has occurred (at a cultural and scientific level, or at an institutional and political level) in order to identify the audiences involved and the penetration of its ideas within the different contexts. Understanding the media used to present these ideas (official documents, books, journals, reviews, conferences, talks, media, and so on) will help to explain the impact of a book's ideas and their ability to be absorbed at the various levels of society.

Translations, depending on how they are introduced through different formats and by different sponsors, may attract a broader and more heterogeneous audience.

1. See "About," *Journal of Thought* (online), http://www.journalofthought.com.

2. Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," *Social Science Information* 10, no. 2 (1971): 7–30.

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Translations can greatly influence a book's impact and shape its ideas, but they can also reorient and filter its reception in educational discourse within various cultural contexts.[3] Accordingly I will consider *Democracy and Education* as a part of what Thomas Popkewitz defines as the "traveling libraries" that constitute the theoretical background of educational debate all over the world. There are also, as Popkewitz notes, "different assemblages and connections in which Dewey participates in different traveling libraries."[4]

My analysis will focus not only on the circulation of Dewey's ideas, but also on their misunderstanding and misinterpretation within educational thought. In particular, I will highlight how the diffusion of Dewey's masterwork in different cultural and social contexts and in different historical moments has in several cases brought about a progressive detachment of the author's ideas from the discourse within which they had been developed. Additionally, I will look at the separation of the discursive threads interwoven in the original fabric of the book.

I will argue that this detachment and separation has created a distorted or incomplete reading of *Democracy and Education* because translators have failed to ground Dewey's ideas in a philosophical and theoretical area of discourse (according to his speculative design), and instead used other practical avenues (such as institutional or political ones) to communicate his thoughts. Although these other areas are, in fact, embedded and interwoven within the overall context that Dewey outlines, the new translations tend to have agendas that distort Dewey's message in the absence of appropriate reflective adjustment and mediation.

I will in particular explore how the discursive processes developed in those different areas have often separated the democratic and educational issues from the philosophical and epistemological ones. To demonstrate this, I will first identify the origins of this detachment in the "developed discourse" from which *Democracy and Education* originated and then refer to a series of "case studies" that highlight how the introduction of Dewey's masterwork in an academic, institutional, and political frame of discourse has influenced its reception within contemporary educational scenarios.

3. In this exploration I will take into account the historical moment of the first issue of *Democracy and Education* and of its following editions and translations, which are important indicators of the permeability of the cultural and political space for Dewey's philosophical and educational ideas; of the complexity of the cultural, political, and social contexts; and, in the case of translations, of the intellectual profile of the translators and their involvement in the educational and political debate as well as the cultural and political orientations of the publishers and their audiences.

4. Thomas S. Popkewitz, *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education (*New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 16.

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The Roots of *Democracy and Education* in a "Developed Discourse" and Its Misunderstandings

As Jürgen Oelkers points out, *Democracy and Education* is rooted in a cultural and political debate regarding the nature and role of public education, and in particular higher education, that had been taking place in the United States since the Civil War. The book "could therefore start out from a developed discourse, to which Dewey gave a special flavour of his own. This special feature emerged from a theory problem. Dewey asks not only about the relationship between democracy and education, but asks also at the same time which theory of education is at all suitable for this relationship."[5]

Dewey conceives educational theory as a "philosophy of education," which implies a "reconstruction" of the nature and function of philosophy; the result is that philosophical and educational discourses go hand in hand in Dewey's masterwork and cannot be disconnected.

Nonetheless, David Hansen points out that *Democracy and Education* has had a much greater impact on the educational debate than on the philosophical one. Indeed, "if philosophers, with notable exceptions, have tended to ignore the book, the rest of the world has not. Its worldwide audience over the last ninety years has consisted of students in colleges of education, educational practitioners and researchers, humanities and social science faculty in many disciplines, public intellectuals, and readers of countless other stripes and persuasions."[6]

But as a matter of fact, within this broad field of reception, Joe Burnett observes, "Dewey's educational philosophy seldom was applied, seldom was understood. Its confusion with romantic progressivisms still abounds, and that intellectually inchoate congeries of ideas is both significant cause and effect of intellectual drift."[7]

In the United States, at the beginning of the twentieth century Dewey's ideas became associated with the cultural and political trend known as "progressivism," whose main concern was the political and social effects of the concentration of corporate power and private wealth, the separation between academic education for the few and narrow vocational training for the masses, the decline of local community life and small-scale enterprise, and the lack of valuable opportunities to acquire the cognitive and linguistic tools for democratic participation.

In 1919, three years after the publication of *Democracy and Education*, the Progressive Education Association was founded with the goal of "reforming the

5. Jürgen Oelkers, "Remarks on the Conceptualization of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*" (lecture delivered at the annual John Dewey Society Symposium, Montreal, Canada, April 2005), 8.

6. David Hansen, *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: A Critical Engagement with Dewey's "Democracy and Education"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 2.

7. Joe R. Burnett, "Whatever Happened to John Dewey?" *Teachers College Record* 81, no. 2 (1979): 202.

entire school system of America."[8] Committed to a democratic framework, the progressive education approach — largely indebted to Dewey — was implemented by a number of experimental schools established all over the country. In the development and discussion of these educational experiments, however, there was a fair degree of misunderstanding of Dewey's educational theory.

As Tomas Englund points out, reconstructionism (which has been the counterpart of progressivism within educational debate in the United States since the 1930s) has also failed to capture and encompass the full meaning of *Democracy and Education*.[9] The founders of reconstructionism (George Counts, Theodore Brameld, and Harold Rugg) identified education as a process that should provide students with cultural and intellectual tools for building a "participatory democracy." But they did not focus on the nature of the educational process, understood generally as a process of growth, or on the nature of democracy, which, according to Dewey, must be understood first of all as "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."[10]

In order to understand this point it is useful to read *Democracy and Education* in connection with Dewey's debate with Walter Lippmann following the publication in 1922 of Lippmann's book *Public Opinion*, which addressed the role of education and schooling in the development of public opinion.[11]

Countering Lippmann's claim that deliberative democracy was an unworkable dogma or impossible dream, Dewey, first in a review published in the *New Republic* (1922) and later in his book *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), affirmed the possibility of forging a democratic public by nurturing democratic institutions in which people would gradually educate themselves into the processes of deliberation and decision making.[12] The formation of public opinion is for Dewey the consequence of a shared "communication of the results of social inquiry," and this "marks one of the first ideas framed in the growth of political democracy as it will be one of the last to be fulfilled."[13]

8. Stanwood Cobb, quoted in Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 241.

9. Tomas Englund, "Rethinking Democracy and Education: Towards an Education of Deliberative Citizens," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 32, no. 2 (2002): 305–313.

10. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916), in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899–1924*, vol. 9, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 94. All references to Dewey's works will be to the multivolume series comprising *The Early Works, 1882–1898*, *The Middle Works, 1899–1924*, and *The Later Works, 1925–1953*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston and published by Southern Illinois University Press. Volumes in this series will henceforth be cited as *EW*, *MW*, and *LW*, respectively; for example, the citation "*Democracy and Education* (1916), *MW* 9, 94" indicates that this work appears in *Middle Works* from this series, volume 9, and the discussion or quotation cited is on page 94.

11. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922).

12. See John Dewey, "Review of *Public Opinion* by Walter Lippmann" (1922), *MW* 13, 337–344; and John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems (1927)*, *LW* 2, 235–372.

13. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 345.

Accordingly, Dewey's view of democracy cannot be divorced from his view of inquiry as the basis of a deliberative form of dialogue and confrontation that is the core of democratic life. Therefore, a reading of *Democracy and Education* that treats it as a reference point for the construction of a participatory citizenship but does not focus on the deliberative and reflective requirements of a democratic social life would be contradictory and misleading, as we will see in the following case studies that contextualize different interpretations of *Democracy and Education* in the history of educational thought.

Academic Versus Public Discourse: The Case of the Japanese Translation

Around the 1920s Dewey made a series of trips coordinated with the publication of various translations of *Democracy and Education.* At times these translations, either incomplete or adapted for a limited use, distorted the book's impact on educational thought. The reception of Dewey's masterwork in Japan, where a first full translation appeared in 1919, provides a notable example of the application of Dewey's ideas limited specifically to the academic discourse.

As Victor Kobayashi reminds us, "the book appeared under the title, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (Kyōiku Tetsugaku Gairon), which was the subtitle for the original English edition."[14] Hoashi Riichirō, who translated and edited the book, explained that it was not possible to use the original title because there were concerns about using the word "democracy" at that time, even though Japan was involved in a democratization movement as well as a growing number of international cultural exchanges.[15] This broadening of international connections resulted in more translated literature and scholarship, more travel overseas, and more international visitors.

The so-called "Waseda School of Deweyan Thinkers," based at Waseda University where Hoashi taught, was an active part of this movement for democratization. Indeed, the early translation of *Democracy and Education* soon attracted the critical attention of many scholars of the contemporary educational and political situation, but it did not significantly impact educational discourse developed outside academic circles. As Dewey himself noted, "such higher criticism" was "confined to the confidence of the classroom" and was assigned to the narrow arena of academic discourse.[16]

At that time any attempt to introduce progressive ideas into an educational discourse outside the academic sphere was controlled and, in some cases, harshly suppressed by the Japanese government. For example, in 1920 Hoashi published an

14. See Victor N. Kobayashi, "Japan's Hoashi Riichirō and John Dewey," *Educational Theory* 14, no. 1 (1964): 52.

15. Ibid. Hoashi Riichirō was a Japanese scholar who had been studying for his PhD at the University of Chicago and later became a professor at the prestigious Waseda University, where several other Japanese Dewey scholars also taught.

16. John Dewey, "Public Opinion in Japan" (1921), *MW* 11, 173.

article titled "Administration, Rather Than Domination; Freedom, Rather Than Restriction," which resulted in a two-month imprisonment and dismissal from his position at Waseda University. Later, his 1929 book *Educational Reconstruction*, in which he attempted to apply Deweyan principles in critiquing Japanese education and developing a new educational framework, was immediately suppressed by the government.[17] As Kobayashi points out, all calls for educational reform were gradually silenced within a general and widespread acknowledgment of a nationalistic and performance-oriented educational model.[18]

Nonetheless, Hoashi's translation of *Democracy and Education* has had a long printing history in Japan. It was reprinted in 1924 and 1929. After World War II, seven printings accompanied the so-called "Dewey Boom" in Japan. Hoashi himself revised the translation in the 1952 edition, which includes a summary of Dewey's philosophy and a special English-language preface by Dewey.[19] Still, the book remained a resource for progressive scholars within academic circles; it did not become a part of the larger educational discourse. This separation between academic and public discourse limited and distorted the impact of Dewey's ideas on educational policies and practices and prevented their penetration into general educational discourse for many years.

This case is representative of the barriers academic discourse encounters when attempting to promote and sustain educational renewal within a cultural context where the development of an enlightened liberal public opinion, as Dewey noted in the essay "Public Opinion in Japan," was strongly limited by administrative centralization, governmental control of public opinion, and weakness of critical thought.[20]

Democracy and Education in the Revolutionary Discourse in Russia

According to historian Paul Kengor, one of the first attempted translations of *Democracy and Education*, even if not complete, appeared in Russia in 1921, before the end of the civil war, when the Soviet government published a sixty-two-page pamphlet comprised of excerpts from Dewey's masterwork.[21] In that context, according to Kengor, "Dewey's ideas were apparently judged as crucial to the revolution as any weapon in the arsenal of the Red Army."[22]

17. Kobayashi discusses Hoashi's 1920 article and 1929 book in "Japan's Hoashi Riichirō and John Dewey." He cites the latter as Hoashi, *Kjdiku Kuizo Ron* [Educational Reconstruction] (Tokyo: Shinseido, 1929).

18. Victor Nobuo Kobayashi, *John Dewey in Japanese Educational Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964).

19. Ibid.

20. Dewey, "Public Opinion in Japan."

21. Paul Kengor, *Dupes: How America's Adversaries Have Manipulated Progressives for a Century* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2012). See especially the chapter dedicated to Dewey, titled "The Kremlin's Favorite Educator," for Kengor's critical reconstruction of what he identifies as examples of the "manipulative" use of progressive thought outside the United States.

22. Ibid., 89.

In this case, the channel used to introduce Dewey's thought into the educational debate was not academic but institutional. The Soviet government found in *Democracy and Education* the pedagogical background to develop a model for the construction a new educational system. The government made it available to educational scholarship as a resource consistent with the cultural, political, and social projects being developed at that time.

But the cultural and political message of *Democracy and Education* was not really understood and use of the text was mainly limited to the educational field in order to support the construction of a new educational narrative aimed at sustaining the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Russian educational system. This complex scenario has been well described by Irina Mchitarjan, who explains that "whereas the educational administrators, the representatives of the state and Church authorities, wanted to preserve the underdeveloped Russian school system, the increasingly powerful forces of reform advocated — for different educational reasons — the introduction of compulsory education and the establishment of a general, equal and educationally reformed school system."[23]

The most advanced educational scholars and political leaders found in *Democracy and Education* the pedagogical framework for constructing a new "free school" that would be available to all social classes and aimed at developing a new form of citizenship based on an educational ideal of "democracy." Somewhat ironically, this was identified as American education, which Dewey (who was positively impressed by his visit to Russia in 1928) found, at least to a certain extent, present in Soviet Russia's first educational experiments.

As Dewey wrote in a series of articles that appeared in the *New Republic* in 1929 and were subsequently published in the volume *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World*, Russia was at that time "a country in a state of flux"[24] characterized by the

> will to use an economic change as the means of developing a popular cultivation, especially an esthetic one, such as the world has never known. … This new educative struggle may not succeed; it has to face enormous obstacles; it has been too much infected with propagandist tendencies. But in my opinion the latter will gradually die of inanition in the degree in which Soviet Russia feels free and secure in working out its own destiny. The main effort is nobly heroic, evincing a faith in human nature which is democratic beyond the ambitions of the democracies of the past.[25]

I agree with David Granger that "Dewey is not attending principally here to the political and economic dimensions of the revolution. Rather, his focus is

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23. Irina Mchitarjan, "John Dewey and the Development of Education in Russia Before 1930: Report on a Forgotten Reception," in *The Global Reception of Dewey's Thought: Multiple Refractions through Time and Space,* ed. Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Jürgen Schriewer (New York: Routledge, 2012), 174.

24. John Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World: Mexico–China–Turkey* (1929), *LW* 3, 208.

25. Ibid., 213.

on its psychic and moral elements."[26] However, I would say that this does not come from an aesthetic perspective —through a practice of "cultivated naiveté" — but from the perspective of an educational inquirer. Dewey concentrates on the contextual conditions that would make possible the unfolding of a continuous process of "growth" through the "reorganization and reconstruction" of individual and collective experience, which are the main pedagogical tenets in *Democracy and Education*. Dewey is focused on the educational implications and outcomes of what he understood as an economic, political, and social "experiment" aimed at constructing the conditions necessary to provide "the opportunity for all to participate freely and fully in a cultivated life."[27]

He is therefore convinced that "while in the end this transformation is supposed to be a means to economic and political change, for the present it is the other way around." On this basis he suggests that in Russia one could find "a striking exemplification of the conscious and systematic utilization of the school in behalf of a definite social policy." For these reasons he also acknowledged that there were numerous "elements of propaganda connected with this policy," many of which were "obnoxious" to him. Nonetheless, Dewey was impressed by "the broad effort to employ the education of the young as means of realizing certain social purposes" that he believed "cannot be dismissed as propaganda without relegating to that category all endeavor at deliberate social control."[28]

In postrevolutionary Russia Dewey saw the concrete possibility of putting into practice the idea that he had long nourished of a school in which "pupils, and therefore, studies and methods, are connected with social life, instead of being isolated." This was an idea that he saw underlying "all attempts at thorough-going educational reform." He believed that it was possible in this case because "for the first time in history" there was a whole educational system officially organized on the basis of that idea and also because the "social life" to which the school is connected must be inspired by a democratic frame of reference. This is what Dewey saw in the Russian educational situation and for him this was "enough to convert one to the idea that only in a society based upon the cooperative principle can the ideals of educational reformers be adequately carried into operation."[29]

But what Dewey considered to be a condition of fully accomplishing educational renewal was, in fact, the main cause of the continuous fading of the experimental spirit and of the democratic tension capable of inspiring educational discourses and practices. This was also the cause of fading interest in Dewey's ideas and works over the years. As the revolutionary struggle crystallized into a structured form of economic, political, and social organization, it lost its educational

26. David Granger, "Art in Inquiry: John Dewey, Soviet Russia, and the Trotsky Commission," *Inter-American Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2013): 57.

27. Dewey, *Impressions of Soviet Russia and the Revolutionary World*, 244.

28. Ibid., 231.

29. Ibid., 233 and 233–34.

potential. But that is not the main reason for the gradual rejection of Dewey's ideas. The need to develop a strong national and political identity led to the rejection of foreign models. Models reflecting a capitalist and bourgeois society, in particular, were rejected. The main reasons for the dismissal of Dewey's ideas as a resource for educational discourse were (a) misunderstandings of his idea of democracy, (b) the progressive development of a totalitarian idea of social order, and (c) the internal cultural, economic, and social conditions that prevented putting his ideas into practice as a part of the Russian educational experiment.

Indeed, as James Scott Johnston notes, "Dewey's call was clearly for a 'ground up' version of democracy, but this alone could not answer to the many and sometimes insurmountable social and political differences of the contexts in which he would be read and implemented by the various publics."[30]

If the connection between education and social life that Dewey envisaged had been treated as an ideal of social order to which all citizens could equally contribute, then Russian educational discourse might have been friendly to the suggestions of *Democracy and Education*, but this was not the case. Consequently, over time the core ideas of Dewey's masterwork had less and less impact on mainstream educational discourses and practices in Soviet Russia.

"Philosophylessness" and the Unreflective Reception in Turkey

In Turkey Avni Barman's translation of *Democracy and Education* appeared in 1928. Barman was a strict supporter of the director of the Turkish Ministry of Instruction and Training. The translation followed Dewey's visit to Turkey in 1924, during which the American scholar had the opportunity to travel in the country and analyze its cultural and educational conditions with a view to providing the new republican government with pedagogical suggestions aimed at designing a new public and secular educational system.

Dewey's analysis was published in his *Report and Recommendation upon Turkish Education*, but this report was not immediately made available to educational scholars and teachers.[31] In fact, it was made public only many years later.[32]

Dewey's report, and in particular the educational ideas expressed in *Democracy and Education*, contributed to a cultural and political project aimed at creating new values, new ideologies, and new worldviews.[33] These were to be brought about

30. James Scott Johnston, "Intersections, Oppositions, and Configurations in the Transnational Reading of Dewey," in *The Global Reception of Dewey's Thought,* ed. Bruno-Jofré and Schriewer, 225.

31. John Dewey, *Recommendation on Turkish Education* (1924), *MW* 15.

32. William W. Brickman, "The Turkish Cultural and Educational Revolution: John Dewey's Report of 1924," *Western European Education* 16, no. 4 (1984–85): 3–18.

33. Andreas M. Kazamias and Byron G. Massialas, *Tradition and Change in Education: A Comparative Study* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

through education, conceived as the foundation of the political and social transformation called for by the 1923 constitution of the Turkish Republic.[34] Establishing a new and modern state required the abolition of many of the old Ottoman institutions and a deep revision of educational structures — of educational curricula as well as of the educational role and cultural profile of teachers.[35]

As in Russia, the main channel through which *Democracy and Education* was introduced into the educational arena was an institutional one, but in Turkey it occurred through an unreflective process of assimilation. The circulation of Dewey's ideas was oriented toward a progressive modeling of educational curricula and practices in an attempt to overcome the tension between two different ideas of education through a process that Sabri Büyürdüvenci defines as "philosophylessness."[36] Indeed

> from the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923 to 3 March 1924, two different types of education[al] concepts continued to coexist in Turkey. One of them consisted of old-type schools based on religious education supported by the Ministry of Religious and Social Foundations or some local welfare foundations and the other of secular and modern schools which were under the control of the Ministry of Education. With the passage of the law on Unification of Education, 3 March 1924, the duality in Turkish education was eliminated and replaced with a truly western and secular system which in turn became the basic foundation of the Turkish Republic.[37]

Dewey was involved in this process and was aware of the risk that such unification could lead to a harmful uniformity. In his *Report and Recommendation upon Turkish Education*, he wrote that

> while Turkey needs *unity* in its educational system, it must be remembered that there is a great difference between unity and uniformity, and that a mechanical system of uniformity may be harmful to real unity. The central Ministry should stand for unity, but against uniformity and in favor of diversity. Only by diversification of materials can schools be adapted to local conditions and needs and the interest of different localities be enlisted. Unity is primarily an intellectual matter, rather than an administrative and clerical one. It is to be attained by so equipping and staffing the central Ministry of Public Instruction that it will be the inspiration and leader, rather than dictator of education in Turkey.[38]

The republican government decided to invest in education, considering it the most powerful tool for creating a national identity: a secular cultural texture and a dynamic society whose development would be grounded on the dissemination and advancement of knowledge and science. As Sabiha Bilgi and Seçkin Özsoy

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34. Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).

35. Selahattin Turan, "John Dewey's Report of 1924 and His Recommendations on the Turkish Educational System Revisited," *History of Education* 29, no. 6 (2000): 543–555; and Selahattin Turan, "Transition of Planning Process of Turkish Teacher Education Reflected on Curricular Structures," *Educational Planning* 17, no. 2 (2008): 1–10.

36. Sabri Büyürdüvenci, "John Dewey's Impact on Turkish Education," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 13, no. 3 (1994–95): 393–400.

37. Ibid., 395.

38. Dewey, *Recommendation on Turkish Education,* 274.

point out, "the insistence on the link between science, morality, social order, and betterment in Dewey's texts were to provide the elite with an objective basis for their project of converting the masses of Anatolia to a new secular religion. The Republic was to be the new religion, from which all moral principles will be drawn."[39]

Within this context, Büyürdüvenci points out, "educational problems in the country were treated by a certain paradigm on which there was not adequate discussion and questioning. Domination of a single paradigm over education also effected the development of pluralism and consequently the improvement of the democratic life negatively."[40] Therefore the main themes that constitute the core of Dewey's reflection in *Democracy and Education* — the demand that educational issues and problems should be analyzed philosophically, treatment of philosophy as a "general theory of education," and acknowledgment of pluralism as a necessary condition and outcome of a true democratic discourse and practice — did not become a part of educational discourse and could not foster a reflective debate or contribute to the development of either pluralistic educational thought or a "democratic secular value base on which the educational system might function and [a] democratic spirit."[41]

Resistances and Misunderstandings: The Case of Germany

As Hans Joas points out, in Germany "no other thinker of such intellectual stature has been so consistently neglected as Dewey."[42] Jürgen Oelkers also made this point in the epilogue to the 2000 edition of a new translation of *Democracy and Education*, pointing out that in Germany Dewey has been "read very little, hardly translated, and not discussed at the end of the twentieth century."[43] Even in the context of educational discourse there was much resistance to his thought. As Oelkers notes, where Dewey was read, "the resistance dominated." This response rested on misunderstandings and on an altogether "failed reception."[44]

The first contact with Dewey's ideas occurred through Georg Kerschensteiner, who discussed Deweyan pedagogy widely as the basis for a project of vocational education before World War I began. The first translation of *Democracy and Education* — by Erich Hylla, the founder and first director of the German Institute for International Educational Research — was published in 1930 under

39. Sabiha Bilgi and Seçkin Özsoy, "John Dewey's Travelings into the Project of Turkish Modernity," in *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey: Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education*, ed. Thomas S. Popkewitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 153–77.

40. Büyürdüvenci, "John Dewey's Impact on Turkish Education," 398.

41. Ibid.

42. Hans Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 16.

43. Jürgen Oelkers, "Epilogue," in John Dewey, *Demokratie und Erziehung: Eine Einleitung in die philosophische Pädagogik,* ed. Jürgen Oelkers (Landsberg, Germany: Belz, 2000).

44. Dewey, *Demokratie und Erziehung*, 497.

the title *Demokratie und Erziehung: Eine Einleitung in die philosophische Pädagogik.*

Hylla had been in the United States for some time, studying and teaching at Columbia University, before returning to Germany where he was involved in the educational reform process initiated during the short life of the Weimar Republic. Democratic forces promoted the establishment of a four-year common primary school and a commission was designed to develop a general reform for the whole educational system.

"The German version [of *Democracy and Education*]," Kersten Reich points out, "used misleading translations of some of Dewey's central terms, particularly as the translator was often unable to comprehend adequately the meaning as well as the philosophical context of Dewey's pragmatism." Moreover, "his ideas of democracy as a way of life based on the far-reaching participation of all citizens in democratic processes were contrary to the dominant political tendencies in Germany" as well as to mainstream educational and political discourse in the country.[45]

In this context *Democracy and Education* was not well suited to the development of a new educational paradigm through sound pedagogical reflection; instead, Joas observes, it was "instrumental in countering the idealistic influence of '*Bildung*' and promoting the idea of practical, project based learning, something which led to an understanding of the classroom as a cooperative community."[46] For these reasons the impact of Dewey's thought on educational debate was temporary and very limited; his ideas were neither part of the academic discourse (since his educational ideas were disconnected from their philosophical background, which was little explored or understood by German scholars) nor of the educational discourse.

After the end of the Second World War, Hylla was involved in the process of re-education and in the "reconstructing German education" campaign that aimed to eliminate the Nazi educational system and reconstruct a democratic form of schooling. These efforts met internal cultural resistance. At that time he edited a new translation of *Democracy and Education* that was published by Westerman in 1949. Again Dewey's masterwork was used as a resource to promote a project of reform that was neither rooted in mainstream German academic discourse nor part of the contemporary educational debate. It mainly focused on the shift to "elite and mass education," to which a sound understanding of Dewey's ideas would have provided useful cues if they had been a part of the political discourse.

45. Kersten Reich, "Democracy and Education after Dewey — Pragmatist Implications for Constructivist Pedagogy," in *Reconstructing Democracy, Recontextualizing Dewey: Pragmatism and Interactive Constructivism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Jim Garrison (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 55.

46. Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Theory*, 95.

An Inspiration for Educational Reform: The Reception in the Spanish World

According to Oelkers, while *Democracy and Education* "was translated into almost every European language," it "did not become the center of discussion" for educational debate in the twentieth century because, he contends, even radical education was "much more child centered than open to radical questions of political democracy."[47] Although Oelkers's argument may apply to Switzerland, Belgium, and to some extent France (where Dewey's ideas have been strongly filtered and adapted through Édouard Claparéde's and Adolphe Ferrière's psycho-pedagogical approaches),[48] it is not entirely true for all the European countries. It certainly cannot be said for Spain, where the reception of Dewey's thought had strong political and social implications. Indeed, as Jaime Nubiola points out, Spain and the so-called "Hispanic world" have to be considered as a "world apart, lagging far behind the mainstream Western world."[49]

Between 1916 and 1936 the Spanish educational debate focused mainly on issues of social change and innovation that could only be brought about through educational institutions and practices. Within this debate *Democracy and Education* was well received, and it became an important source of inspiration for educational movements committed to the creation of a secular, unified, and progressive school.

The first Spanish translation of the book appeared in 1926, first as a selection in the volume *Ensayos de Educación*, edited by Domingo Barnés Salinas, and then in three other volumes published between 1926 and 1927. Barnés Salinas was a member of the so-called "second generation" of intellectuals and scholars gathered in the Institución Libre de Enseñanza (ILE) — a cultural, political, and pedagogical project developed in Spain between 1876 and 1936 by a group of scholars expelled from the monarchic state university. They created a secular private institution that became a leading center for educational innovation and political debate based on a liberal and socialist perspective.

During its short but intense life, ILE was the epicenter of the most advanced cultural and political discourses and supported the dissemination of the most sophisticated contemporary educational and scientific theories through the *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza,* to which Dewey himself contributed. Barnés Salinas was strongly committed to the "education" and "regeneration" of pedagogical resources for educators, and in this spirit he worked as director of the Museo Pedagógico Nacional (the National Educational Museum in Madrid), as well as professor of pedagogy at the Escuela de Estudios Superiores de Magisterio (a

47. Jürgen Oelkers, "Democracy and Education: About the Future of a Problem," *Studies in Philosophy of Education* 19, no. 1 (2000): 3.

48. Daniel Tröhler, *Languages of Education: Protestant Legacies, National Identities, and Global Aspirations* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

49. Jaime Nubiola, "The Reception of Dewey in the Hispanic World," *Studies of Philosophy of Education* 24, no. 6 (2005): 437.

teacher training college), until he was finally appointed Ministro de Instrucción Pública (Minister of Public Instruction) in 1933.

Within this context, Dewey's theory of education as presented in *Democracy and Education* was the main resource for the design of a global project of a "carta mínima de educación internacional" (minimal charter of international education) and was the inspiration for the construction of the new pedagogical framework that promoted the most significant educational reforms in Spain. However, these efforts were brutally interrupted by the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime. Like many other scholars, Barnés Salinas was expelled from Spain in 1939 and emigrated to Mexico, where he died in 1940.

In Spain Dewey was a source of inspiration not only for ILE progressive and neoliberal scholarship, but also for the new stage of Spanish socialism that led to the creation of the Escuela Nueva, founded in 1910 by Manuel Núñaz dé Arenas as both a center of popular education and a school of socialism. The Escuela Nueva experiment made communication possible between the socialist ideologues and some sectors of the ILE. One of the key ILE members who participated in this dialogue was Lorenzo Luzuriaga. At the 1918 Congress of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party, Luzuriaga presented a report that served as the substantive basis for the socialist educational program, which was grounded on the principle of an active, secular, public, and unitary educational framework very close to Dewey's ideas. By introducing the concept of an education open to all social classes, Luzuriaga distinguished himself from his contemporary colleagues and anticipated utterly new pedagogical frameworks within a socialist matrix, but his innovative educational project — which involved free tuition for all, mandatory basic education, equality of rights before training, a model of a comprehensive school and the integration of primary and secondary schools, broad autonomy for university education, and the creation of a single faculty — could never be fully developed. In 1922 Luzuriaga founded the journal *Revista de Pedagogía*, which promoted diffusion of progressive education in Spain. In 1937 he was exiled, first to England and later to Argentina. During his stay overseas he edited and translated a complete version of *Democracy and Education* that was published in 1946 by the Editorial Losada in Buenos Aires. Luzuriaga's translation, which has been re-edited in Spain, has remained the main reference for educational discourse and has played an important role in the intense cultural and political debates that shaped educational innovation in the Hispanic world after the Second World War. Nonetheless, this educational discourse only partially involved educational practitioners.

A Political Manifesto for Social Change in Postwar Italy

The first Italian translation of *Democracy and Education* was not published until 1949, after the end of the Second World War and the establishment in 1946 of a new form of government, a democratic republic, through a popular referendum. Dewey's masterwork was translated by Enzo Enriques Agnoletti and published by La Nuova Italia, a publishing house founded by Tristano Codignola.

A pupil of Pietro Calamandrei, Agnoletti was one of the founders of the Italian liberal movement. He was arrested, confined, and sent to jail during the fascist regime. Following the liberation, Agnoletti became the representative of the Action Party until the arrival of the Allies, after which he, along with Tristano Codignola and Pietro Calamandrei, joined the Union of Socialists, which then merged with the Socialist Unity Party and finally became the Italian Social Democratic Party. These three intellectuals were active in Popular Unity, adhering, along with the majority of that movement, to the Italian Socialist Party. Agnoletti was active in republican life as a member of the parliament, and his cultural activities were strongly connected with his political activities.

To Codignola, La Nuova Italia was not simply a publishing house but a cultural and political project aimed at "renewing" Italian culture by means of a thorough transformation of educational models and practices as well as educational materials such as school textbooks. With few exceptions, all the Italian translations of Dewey's works were later published by La Nuova Italia and edited by scholars associated with the so-called Scuola di Firenze (Florence School), who shared Codignola's project.[50]

Codignola was convinced that educational reform was the key to advancing cultural, political, and social democracy. Within this framework, the translation of Dewey's masterwork was conceived as a strategic cultural and political action, aimed at promoting the emerging debate about the necessity of developing a new educational project in order to construct a new form of democratic citizenship based on a new republican ideal. Thus in Italy *Democracy and Education* has served as the core of a pedagogical "manifesto" and as a reference textbook in the educational debate at both academic and practitioner levels. It has also intellectually informed two subsequent generations of "lay" educational scholars and practitioners.

Dewey's book has influenced generations of Italians by defining a shared ethical and political aim to be developed and translated into democratic forms of education. His work shaped the educational discourse that developed around the journal *Scuola e Città* founded by Ernesto Codignola (Tristano Codignola's father) in 1950, as well as many interesting educational experiments and practices (such as Scuola-Città Pestalozzi in Florence).

The medium of political discourse within the construction of democratic processes has made it possible for *Democracy and Education* to circulate in various cultural and intellectual contexts and to construct and inform an educational public opinion in Italy, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of Dewey's ideas and strongly influencing the development of innovative educational experiences

50. For a reconstruction of the cultural climate, see Franco Cambi, *La scuola di Firenze da Codignola a Laporta, 1950–1975* [The Florence School from Codignola to Laport, 1950–1975] (Naples, Italy: Liguori, 1982); and Franco Cambi and Maura Striano, *John Dewey in Italia: La Ricezione/Ripresa Pedagogica. Letture Pedagogiche* [John Dewey in Italy: The pedagogical reception/renewal. Pedagogical readings] (Naples, Italy: Liguori, 2010).

and practices. It has not, however, afforded a reconstruction of educational discourse on a new theoretical and practical basis. This deficiency is due to the historical separation between educational and philosophical areas of discourse in the country.

Reconstructing Educational Discourse through *Democracy and Education*

In 1978 the philosopher of education Olivier Reboul reviewed the first French translation of *Democracy and Education*, by Gérard Delladalle, which was published in 1975. Reboul complained that Dewey's masterwork had only become part of the philosophical and educational discourse sixty years after its publication and acknowledged its being "a reliable treatise in philosophy of education" within a discursive scenario where the term "philosophy of education" "is often used as a new name for the old general pedagogy, with its commonplaces and its wishful thinking. Others, artlessly positivists, identify it as the locus of all the wild imaginings, and contrast it with the 'objectivity' of Educational Sciences."[51]

In making this point, Reboul highlighted the theoretical framework within which Dewey developed his ideas and opened up space for a philosophically grounded educational discourse, which I believe is the key to a reconstruction that is based on *Democracy and Education.*

Dewey's main purpose in writing *Democracy and Education*, as he explained in his introduction to the book, was

> to detect and state the ideas implied in a democratic society and to apply these ideas to the problems of the enterprise of education. The discussion includes an indication of the constructive aims and methods of public education as seen from this point of view, and a critical estimate of the theories of knowing and moral development which were formulated in earlier social conditions, but which still operate, in societies nominally democratic, to hamper the adequate realization of the democratic ideal.[52]

According to Dewey, the relationship between democracy and education must therefore be explored through a process of philosophical inquiry, which helps us to identify the theories and models in use and their relationship to a specific kind of social order. Moreover, educational problems and practices need to be analyzed on the basis of "a general theory of education" functioning as the theoretical and reflective background that can provide problems and practices with sense and meaning. For this reason, issues of democracy and education cannot be divorced from the issue of the epistemological foundation of a philosophy of education.

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51. Olivier Reboul, "Démocratie et éducation" [Democracy and education], *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 83, no. 3 (1978): 427, translation by author. The original French quotations are, respectively, "un veritable traité del philosophie de l'éducation," and "n'est souvent qu'un nouveau nom de baptême pour la vieille pédagogie générale, avec ses lieux communs et ses voeux pieux. D'autres, ingénuement positivistes, y voient le lieu géométrique de toutes les élucubrations, qu 'il sopposent à « objectivité» des sciences de l'éducation."

52. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 4.

Dewey wanted to make philosophical discourse a public discourse. He did not intend to vulgarize philosophical discourse, however, but rather to focus it on the "problems of men [and women]." In order to do so, he used educational discourse to mediate between philosophical and public discourse. Accordingly, from a Deweyan perspective, educational discourse is and must be a public dialogue and a deliberative space within which it is possible to construct new knowledge and understandings on the basis of reflective processes that permeate and connect different areas of discourse.

This has been highlighted, according to Tomas Englund, by the "neopragmatist reading" of *Democracy and Education,* which has focused on the communicative and deliberative implications of the construction of educational discourse conceived as a public enterprise.[53] This approach has stressed the strong link between the public and the private, and it has also emphasized the need for a public philosophy as the foundation for educational discourse, providing basic starting points for an analysis of the relationship between democracy, society, and education.[54]

On this basis, it is possible to reflect on the different forms of discourse (academic, institutional, political) that have mediated (and in some cases distorted) the reception of Dewey's masterwork in the arena of educational debate. It is also possible to identify the crucial issues that have to be worked out in order to reconstruct educational discourse by analyzing the complex relationship existing (or not existing) between academic and public discourses on education. This can be done by considering the implications of an educational discourse that is either governed by and oriented toward institutional goals and rhetoric or developed using narratives borrowed from the political arena.

Consequently, it may be possible to highlight the theoretical, political, and practical dimensions and the different levels and forms of discourse in use whenever and wherever educational reforms are needed, planned, and implemented in contemporary scenarios using *Democracy and Education* as a multilevel reference that engages multiple audiences within different areas of discourse that are reflectively interconnected.

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53. Englund, "Rethinking Democracy and Education."

54. Ibid.