European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy

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Symposia. Democracy and Education as a Source of and a Resource for European Educational Theory and Practices: A Retrospective-Prospective View
Stefano Oliverio, Maura Striano, Leonard J. Waks

Democracy and Education and Europe: A Century Long Exchange

1. A Travelling Classic

On the centennial anniversary of the publication of Dewey’s Democracy and Education (New York, Macmillan, 1916) this symposium (including contributions from European and non-European scholars) explores both the epoch-making significance and the topicality of the ideas in Dewey’s masterpiece for the development of European educational reflection.

Democracy and Education has frequently been represented as a turning point in educational discourse, inaugurating a radically new regime for educational theory which deeply influenced the 20th century’s educational culture. Indeed Dewey’s masterpiece may be used as a sort of litmus test to assess in which horizon different (European) educational theories (and experiences) can be situated. As Oelkers highlights, Democracy and Education started out from a “developed discourse” regarding the nature and role of public education that Dewey entered pointing out that in order to explore that relationship properly it was necessary to understand “which theory of education is at all suitable for this relationship” (Oelkers 2005: 8).

Bellman (2006) explains the widespread dissemination of Dewey’s ideas, referring to a framework defined by Meyer and Ramirez (2002) within which the educational ideas that travel most extensively are those which have both a universalistic and a rationalising quality. According to this framework, the universalistic quality of the ideas expressed in Democracy and Education undoubtedly justifies the “travels” (Striano 2016) of Dewey’s masterpiece to very different cultural, political and social world areas (such as China, Japan, Turkey, the Soviet Russia and Europe) through an impressive number of translations, reviews and commentaries as well as lectures on its themes in these settings by Dewey himself.

At different levels and in different contexts, indeed, Democracy and Education has contributed to opening up and sustaining an ongoing debate on the cultural and social role of education and on the value of education for social development which remains a universally shared concern. The universal relevance of this concern was clearly visible in contexts of cultural, political and social reconstruction which emerged, for example, after the Soviet Revolution in Russia and after both World Wars in Europe. Once again it is central in contemporary institutional and political agendas, documents and recommendations (see for example the objectives of the UNESCO Dakar Framework for Action); it constitutes a general frame of reference within which educational discourses practices have to be inscribed in order to gain effective meaning and scope.

But it is not only the universalistic quality of the ideas explored and proposed in Democracy and Education that makes that work an enduring reference point for educational reflection. Dewey’s masterpiece has, in addition, a significant rationalizing

* Università di Napoli Federico II [stefano.oliverio@unina.it], [maura.striano@unina.it], Temple University [ljwaks@yahoo.com].
power that has not been sufficiently explained and used to sustain the necessary
deconstruction and reconstruction of educational ideas, models, theories, scopes and
values within contemporary educational discourse. Indeed, as Dewey explains in
the “Preface” to the work, the aim of his work was to “to detect and state the ideas
implied in a democratic society” and to “apply these ideas to the problems of the
enterprise of education” (MW 9: 3).1 Dewey therefore suggested a model of inquiry
that highlighted the necessity of laying bare the ideas grounding democratic societies
in order to test their consistency with current educational processes and practices.
Such an inquiry would thus expose the need for a deconstruction and reconstruction of
ideas and theories formulated in other, nondemocratic eras and settings which might
prove inconsistent with the educational purposes of a truly democratic society.

This is the rationalizing function of a philosophically grounded “general theory
of education” that could assist educators and political actors in reaching a deeper
understanding of the educational task before those who in different times have
been willing to orient the educational enterprise towards the development of a truly
democratic society. In this perspective Democracy and Education has offered and
still offers a very effective methodological tool and reference in supporting the
identification and the reflective examination of some crucial issues that have occupied
and still occupy a preeminent space within contemporary educational debate:

- the cultural and social implication of education, intended as a continuous process
  of reconstruction and reorganization of individual and collective experience;
- the role of philosophy as a general theory of education to reflectively support and
  orient educational policies and practices;
- the role of education (as a theoretically grounded and socially acknowledged
  practice) in supporting social growth and social development according to a
  philosophically grounded democratic pattern, contextually and historically situated.

The rationalizing power of Democracy and Education has been often reduced by
the mediation of the forms of discourse through which it has been introduced in the
arena of the educational debate (for example it has been used as a reference to sustain
educational change and innovation in very different contexts and historical moments
mainly through an institutional and political discourse underpinned by peculiar
narratives and rhetorics).

Over time in Europe, but also in the Mediterranean space, or in the Eastern
countries, Democracy and Education and its translations have had deep connections
and implications in the complex dynamics of institutional and social change but have
rarely been referred to as theoretical and methodological reference to explore the
conceptions and ideas that shape contemporary educational processes and practices in
order to connect them to new possible forms of social order.

1. References to John Dewey’s published works are to the critical edition, The Collected Works of
University Press, 1967-1991, and published in three series as The Early Works 1882-1899 [EW], The
Middle Works 1899-1924 [MW], and The Later Works 1925-1953 [LW].
A critical reconstruction of the reception of *Democracy and Education* (in Europe and in other cultural and political areas), and an analysis of its living legacy have to be focused on the relationship highlighted by Dewey between the “ideas” circulating in contemporary cultural and socio-political scenarios and educational institutions, policies and practices.

This requires us to understand Dewey’s masterpiece first of all as rationalizing reference and textual matrix useful in exploring the theoretical, political and practical issues implied whenever and wherever educational reforms are needed, planned, and implemented with reference to the establishment of a new social and political order; secondly to approach it through a multilevel reading, focusing simultaneously on the cultural, ethical, political and practical forms of discourse imbedded in the text in order to sustain the reconstruction of the meaning and sense of educational policies and practices which is lacking in contemporary educational discourse.

2. A Trans-Atlantic Give-And-Take: Democracy and Education Between the European Educational Tradition and the Modern Discourse of Learning

We have delineated thus far a picture of the reasons for considering *Democracy and Education* a reference point for debates on and projects of reconstruction in education (at both the theoretical and practical level) in different contexts, including Europe and the Mediterranean area, while hinting at the need to approach it through a complex reading that does not disconnect the various dimensions which are closely interwoven in its philosophical-educational device (but, as aforementioned, very rarely has this multilevel appropriation occurred).

Speaking of the question of the influence of Dewey, Gert Biesta and Siebren Miedema have pointed out – arguably in a genuinely Deweyan perspective – that

> [the activity of reception entails an interaction between existing traditions, ideas, and practices and input from the “outside” – which implies that change will be the rule and continuity the exception. Interaction always brings with it questions about context, since it is the specific context in which ideas and practices are received which is of a decisive influence on the way in which these ideas and practices are taken up, digested, translated, transformed, and eventually made into something new. (Biesta & Miedema 2000: 33)]

This explains also why very often, in different contexts, we have to do with “Deweyesque practice” (to idiosyncratically adopt a phrase of Darling & Nisbet 2000: 40) rather than with a real re-fashioning of educational practices according to Deweyan ideas.

The engagement of this symposium with the question of the significance of *Democracy and Education* as a turning point of the European educational discourse and an ‘inescapable’ interlocutor in the ongoing European educational conversations, involving multiple voices and traditions, should be situated within the horizon of that thriving strand of scholarship represented by the study of the reception of Dewey’ ideas (see Oelkers & Rhyn 2000; Popkewitz 2005; Hickman & Spadafora 2009;
Bruno-Jofré et al. 2010; and Bruno-Jofré & Schriewer 2012). Jürgen Schriewer has aptly argued that this scholarly interest should be interpreted within a broader perspective and not related exclusively to the importance of Dewey’s work as an educational theorist, great as it has been.2

The international circulation of knowledge has become a prominent topic of research over the last few decades […]. One of the most productive strands of research in this respect is neo-institutionalist sociology. Insistently it has emphasized the particular role that the global diffusion of knowledge – knowledge understood in a broad sense, including philosophical ideas on education, progress, and democracy as elaborated by scholars like John Dewey – has played as a basic mechanism contributing to the construction of what authors such as John W. Meyer have called the modern “world culture” or “world society.” (Schriewer 2012: 1)

Against the backdrop of an increasing body of literature devoted to the worldwide impact of Dewey’s educational theory and philosophy, what is the specific contribution of this symposium, apart from its predominant (and celebratory) focus on only one among Dewey’s works? We would like to mention two aspects, which, without excluding any other possible readings of this special issue, could provide a compass to orient oneself in it. Both aspects are closely related to the zooming in on the European context.

First, the relationship between Dewey and Europe should be read in both directions, so to speak: not only have different European cultural traditions ‘taken up’ Democracy and Education through the aforementioned process of interaction (as the papers of Samuel Renier and Bianca Thoillez in this symposium show respectively in reference to France and Spain) but Dewey’s masterpiece is itself a way of engaging with the European culture. As the opening paper of this special issue makes it clear, Dewey deployed a very sophisticated strategy to critique some trends in American education: he did not discuss them explicitly but rather by way of analogy, by illustrating the limitations and weaknesses of some theoretical devices of the European educational tradition, which act, accordingly, as the ‘polemical substitutes’ for the actual and coeval addressees of Dewey’s critique. This insightful suggestion of Avi Mintz (who examines in detail this argumentative strategy in reference to Chapter 7 of Democracy and Education) could be extended to other parts of the book (and, more generally, of Dewey’s works). We will confine ourselves here to some hints about the chapters preceding Chapter 7. In the first four chapters, Dewey presents some of his main ideas on education (culminating in the notion of growth in Chapter 4) showing throughout the influence of Darwin and evolutionary theory. Chapters 5 and 6 are dedicated to exploring some ideas of the educational tradition, by showing their weaknesses (but also their strengths). In these chapters, the manifest ‘interlocutors’ of Dewey are Froebel and Hegel, Locke and Herbart, that is, additional European thinkers (see Section 2 of the paper of Bianca Thoillez in this symposium about the relation

2. “John Dewey’s educational thought began to receive world-wide attention immediately after publication of School and Society in 1899. Scholars are only now beginning to chronicle and interpret this phenomenon” (Bruno-Jofré et al. 2010: 3).
between Dewey and Froebel and how this impacted on the reception of Dewey within the Spanish culture). Through the screen of a bright historical reconstruction of some moments of the educational thought we can, however, spot also the profiles of some theories which were still current – and often hegemonic – in the American educational landscape at the time of the publication of *Democracy and Education*. To put it in a nutshell: In the early chapters of *Democracy and Education* Dewey first presents his conception of education (itself influenced by new developments in European thought) and then offers a thorough-going philosophical critique of the influential and revered philosophical-educational approaches of the European heritage against which that conception represents the epoch-making alternative.

This is the first facet of what we could call the Dewey-Europe give-and-take. The second facet could be introduced by taking the cue from some considerations developed by a contemporary French philosopher with a strong interest in education, Denis Kambouchner (2013). In his recent *L’École, une question philosophique*, after explicating the challenge of Durkheim’s educational thinking to the French humanities-oriented tradition in schooling, Kambouchner shows how the paradigm shift in education embodied by Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* posed an even greater threat to Durkheim’s project than “objections of the humanistic kind” (*Ibid.*: 296). This is a noteworthy remark: although both Durkheim and Dewey championed a ‘new intellectual culture’ based upon modern science, they represented two completely different options. Despite his criticisms to the traditional ‘literary’ curriculum and the innovations he suggested introducing by drawing upon the “culture of languages,” the “scientific culture” and the “historical culture” (*Ibid.*: 292 ff.), Durkheim – in Kambouchner’s view – still belonged to the traditional camp in educational theory, focussed on a pedagogy of the “presentation” of the “contents” and on the “imprints that the minds will keep of the contents which are presented to them” (*Ibid.*: 296). In contrast, Dewey’s educational theory notoriously pivots on the interests of children and it invites educators not to ignore – as was common in traditional pedagogy – “the existence in a living being of active and specific functions which are developed in the redirection and combination which occur as they are occupied with their environment” (MW 9: 77). Dewey does not dismiss the significance of the “past products” of culture, but insists that the latter are significant insofar as “the heritage from the past” is placed “in its right connection with the demands and opportunities of the present” (MW 9: 81). As strong as Durkheim’s emphasis on the innovation of the curriculum in the direction of a harmonization with the modern, science-oriented society, may have been, he remained, in Kambouchner’s interpretation, within a classic educational framework. Dewey, with *Democracy and Education*, by contrast, inaugurated a radically new regime for educational theory also in the European context. This regime culminates in the idea that education is about the promotion in “the human being [of] a habit of learning [so that] [h]e learns to learn” (MW 9: 50).

Jürgen Oelkers also calls attention to the significance of this shift of focus:

> Ultimately, the child learns to learn […], *to use Dewey’s famous phrase which turns up here for the first time*. “Learning to learn” calls for controlled and intelligent processes
in adapting to changing situations and not for a movement that has a fixed goal and remains unaffected by learning. (Oelkers 2000: 7; emphasis added)

It should be noted that in some respects the phrase “learning to learn” cannot be considered as a Dewey coinage and is well attested in Europe before the introduction of Dewey’s ideas. For instance, to pick up just one example from the French educational debate, as early as in 1893 Léon Bourgeois stated in a public speech:

The goal of primary education should not be that of providing the child with a great amount of knowledge but rather it should consist in making the child able to acquire a lot of knowledge. This is, and not only in primary education, […] what I consider to be an axiom in pedagogical matters: the goal of all teaching in general (I may appear to tell a paradox but I believe that it is the truth) is not learning but learning to learn. (Bourgeois 1893: 114)

It could be plausibly argued that, although Dewey may not have been the first to use the phrase, he gave it a new spin, originating from the novelty of his philosophy and, in particular, of his ideas about experience and knowledge. And this seems to be the reason why Kambouchner, a sophisticated champion of the tradition of humanistic education, construes the “modern authority of Dewey” (Kambouchner 2013: 344) in the following terms:

Dewey’s statements about the goals of education as having to consist in the continuation of education have kept an authoritativeness that the cumbersome vulgate of the “learning to learn” should not lead us to minimize. (Ibid.: 33)

It is to note, first, that by speaking of “the cumbersome vulgate of the ‘learning to learn’” Kambouchner implicitly refers to what has become over a decade a catchword of the EU official discourse in education, since an influential act of the European Parliament (Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning [Official Journal L 394 of 30.12.2006]). In this Recommendation eight key-competences are listed and one of these is the learning to learn defined as “the ability to pursue and organise one’s own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one’s own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.” Secondly, although Kambouchner is clear in not conflating Dewey’s tenets and the EU discourse of the “learning to learn,” he is not willing to consider Dewey as an ally but prefers to recur to the tradition of the humanistic education. In other words, while recognizing that a Deweyan “learning to learn” is not coextensive with the drift of learnification (as Biesta (2006, 2010) has called it), Kambouchner seems to nurture misgivings about the Deweyan project as well.

Not all critics of the Deweyan approach have been, however, so balanced as Kambouchner and the tendency to enlist Dewey’s legacy as an underpinning of
the contemporary European discourse on learning is always incumbent in many educational camps. For this reason, on the centennial of the publication of *Democracy and Education* it has seemed important to ask: does the EU project of creating a transnational space of learning (also by furthering a convergence of the different EU educational systems) really represent the outcome of an ‘educational philosophy’ (in a broad sense) akin to Dewey’s? Or could the latter – perhaps especially as inspired by *Democracy and Education* – act rather as a tool for the criticism of the dominant trends in EU policies? The papers of Andreas Nordin and Ninni Wahlström, and of Vasco D’Agnese, explicitly engage with these questions, showing that the panoply of notions and categories marshalled in *Democracy and Education* might offer us a repertoire of tools to counter certain drifts in the educational discourse rather than means for undergirding them.

The essays of Michael Luntley and Larry Hickman round out this symposium: the former tackles the limitations of the contemporary educational policy through a re-examination of Dewey’s account of inquiry and of his conception of ‘problem.’ In particular, Luntley shows how it is necessary to appeal to the aesthetics of experience in order to make sense of those pre-cognitive disruptions in the organism-environment transaction from which problems start. Larry Hickman engages with a most topical issue, namely the use of technology in education (see Waks 2013; and Oliverio 2015). It is also an ‘educational frontier’ of the EU discourse, as is manifest, for instance, in the communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions (COM(2013) 654), bearing the significant title *Opening up Education: Innovative Teaching and Learning for All through New Technologies and Open Educational Resources*. The very beginning of the text is revealing of the typical horizon within which most EU educational discourses are situated:

> This Communication sets out a European agenda for stimulating high-quality, innovative ways of learning and teaching through new technologies and digital content. ‘Opening up education’ proposes actions towards more open learning environments to deliver education of higher quality and efficacy and thus contributing to the Europe 2020 goals of boosting EU competitiveness and growth through better skilled workforce and more employment. (COM(2013) 654: 2)

The typical neo-liberal ring of the EU documents, to which Nordin, Wahlström and D’Agnese draw our attention, resonates also in this passage. Hickman, in his contribution to this symposium, shows how *Democracy and Education* offers an alternative framework for deploying technology – as a way of empowering students and cultivating the project of a democratic education.

3. Democracy and Education and the Roman Catholic and Marxist Traditions

In our call for papers for this symposium we had solicited also contributions dealing with the responses to *Democracy and Education* coming from various institutions and
ideologies, such as the Catholic Church and Soviet-oriented Communism. Although Samuel Renier in his paper presents some reactions of Marxist critics in France to *Democracy and Education* (and their critiques are fairly representative of the typical bone of contention of Marxists in relation to Dewey’s thought), the reader will find no papers in this symposium specifically focused on these topics. We would like, therefore, to illustrate, in broad strokes, the reasons why we had spotlighted these themes.

A few years before the publication of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey had pointed out the similarity between pragmatism and

the theory of “economic interpretation of history,” taken in its broad sense. According to this theory, the main features of the structure of any particular society are best understood by looking first into how that society went at the problem of maintaining itself in existence – how it undertook the primary business of “making its living.” (MW 4: 178)

We mention this passage because it testifies to the possibility of an elective affinity between Dewey’s and Marxist educational theories, at least in some respects. And, in fact, this affinity seems to have marked Dewey’s reception in the USSR mainly at the beginning. Irina Mchitarjan (2012) has reconstructed the history of Dewey’s influence in the Soviet Russia, from the “enormous upswing” (*Ibid.*: 180) in the first years of the Revolution, with the translation of various works and, in particular, of *Democracy and Education* in 1921, to the rejection from the late 1920s “with the ‘intensification of the class struggle’ and the increasing control over the school by the Bolshevist Party” (*Ibid.*: 186). Mchitarjan highlights how the initial favourable reception was principally the outcome of three factors: that “Dewey’s pragmatic education corresponded best to the ideas of Marxism,” the Deweyan “well-reasoned pedagogy as such,” and finally the commitment of liberal Soviet educators to promoting the “adoption of international progressive education” (*Ibid.*: 188). The subsequent attack on Dewey was due less to purely educational and pedagogical reasons than to the “lack of political intention” of his pedagogy, which “could not support the ideas of class struggle, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and of communism” (*Ibid.*: 188-9).

At a philosophical level, Dewey and Soviet theorists strongly disagreed about the question of relation means-ends (think also of Dewey’s reflections in the 1930s: e.g. (LW 13: 349 ff.). See also Waks 1999). This difference reverberated also in contrasting views about educational reform:

Whereas for Dewey freedom was both the end and the means of social change, the Bolshevists wanted to enforce the idea of social freedom by authoritarian means – even in school. (Mchitarjan 2012: 189)

4. It is appropriate to refer, in this context, also to the interesting reflections of the Italian philosopher and historian of education Nicola Siciliani de’ Cumis (2003) on the relationship between the most important and influential Soviet educationalist, Anton Makarenko, and John Dewey. Although no real encounter is chronicled, Siciliani de’ Cumis insists on “the hypothetical, objective fruitfulness of a virtual and at distance dialogue” (*Ibid.*: 380) between these two major figures of 20th century educational theory.
The relationship with the Catholic culture is not less significant, for at least two reasons. First, as Bruno-Jofré et al. (2010: 8) have noted, “the intersection of religion in the uptake of Dewey and its bearing on the understanding of democratic education” is a most important factor to explore when engaging with the question of Dewey’s influence. While their discussion focuses on the configurations that Dewey’s ideas took in specific historical circumstances and contexts, we would like to highlight, in an admittedly sketchy way, a more general issue in the Dewey-Europe give-and-take, namely the reception of Democracy and Education within the Catholic philosophical world.

Second, it can be argued that the confrontation with the Catholic culture is a constant motif in Dewey’s production. Indeed, the Catholic culture is, in his view, one of the most influential embodiments of that unmodern philosophy that still operates at the ethical and political level and prevents “the genuinely modern” (MW 12: 273) from coming into existence. In Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy (Dewey 2012: 56), while discussing the medieval synthesis, Dewey highlights:

The thing which is enduringly effective, however, is the existence of a social institution as the source, bearen nurse, and administrator of the imaginative and emotional appeals. […] More particularly, it is through the Roman Catholic Church that the ideas of Plato and Aristotle effectively entered the culture of the western world until they live on in man’s interpretation and understanding of what they do and what they believe at the present time.

At a more educational level, the persistence of an unmodern attitude manifests itself in projects like “The Great Books” by Robert Maynard Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, expressly based on a view of philosophy as philosophia perennis, inspired by the metaphysics of Aristotle and St. Thomas. Dewey strongly opposed this educational conception (LW 11: 397 ff.) and in Experience and Education he explicitly warned about the perils of a “return to the logic of ultimate first principles expressed in the logic of Aristotle and St. Thomas” aimed at providing “the young [with] sure anchorage in their intellectual and moral life” so that they are not “at the mercy of every passing breeze that blows” (LW 13: 57-8).

The Catholic world reciprocated this mistrust: even when the relevance and significance of Dewey’s thought was recognized (as has often been the case in many Catholic thinkers), the dangers of his approach were emphasized, in particular in reference to the lack of a metaphysically normative horizon, the stress upon practice by deleting the values of the contemplative life, and the inadequacy of his instrumentalist theory of knowledge (see Chiosso 2009).

We will confine ourselves to two fairly representative instances. In his monumental Essai de philosophie pédagogique, the Flemish educationalist Franz de Hovre, dedicates twelve pages to Dewey (de Hovre 1927: 87-99) and, moreover, a section to Kerschensteiner and Dewey (Ibid.: 115-6). de Hovre’s general viewpoint is stated in the introduction to his volume:
This book has the following object: the philosophical foundation of the Catholic doctrine of education and the educational foundation of the Catholic conception of life. The existence of a mutual relationship between the doctrine of education and philosophy of life represents the core thought of the entire work. (Ibid.: xiii)

When he comes to Dewey, after outlining his philosophy and educational theory, de Hovre recognizes that Dewey is a first-rate philosopher and educationalist but faults him for passing over in silence “the ideal foundations of Society” and for resolving “the individual in the social milieu” (Ibid.: 98). Dewey’s “capital defect” is detected in the “complete absence of any religious sense which could have cautioned him against all his one-sidednesses” (Ibid.). Among the defects of Dewey’s educational device, along with its “Americanism,” the influence of Rousseau is mentioned: de Hovre goes as far as to state that in reading Dewey one actually has the impression of reading Rousseau (Ibid.: 98). It is fairly a surprising remark: indeed, the limitations of Rousseau’s ideas are clearly discussed in Chapter 7 of Democracy and Education (see the paper of Avi Mintz in this symposium, which engages with the question also in reference to Schools of To-morrow). But – and this is even more striking – Democracy and Education is not even mentioned in de Hovre’s reconstruction, even if a section is dedicated to “Éducation traditionnelle et Démocratie” (Ibid.: 93). This omission is all the more remarkable because de Hovre shows a vast knowledge of Dewey’s works, including, for instance, The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy, the Ethics co-authored with Tufts, the Essays in Experimental Logic. We are not suggesting that de Hovre would have qualified his views on Dewey had he carefully studied Democracy and Education. As a matter of fact, de Hovre was among those contributing to the conceptual basis for the response to Dewey’s ideas within Catholic philosophical culture. The absence of any reference to Democracy and Education is, however, a sign that we cannot take for granted its role in Dewey’s influence the world over, also in the case of scholars who have a first-hand knowledge of Dewey’s works.

Jacques Maritain has been perhaps the most influential Neo-scholastic philosopher of the 20th century. His educational reflection should be considered not only as a major expression of the “perennial[sm] in educational theory” (Gutek 2005: 248) but also as an ongoing confrontation with Deweyan theories. This is not by chance. The most important educational work of Maritain, Education at the Crossroads (1943), culminated in an appeal to American youth to break free from the instrumentalist and pragmatist philosophy. For Maritain, instrumentalism poses a threat to the democratization of American education – a trend he saw as one of the glories of US. Indeed, despite the fact that Dewey is recognized as a “great thinker” (Maritain 1943: 115), who “is able to maintain an ideal image of all those things which are dear to the heart of free men” (Ibid.), his philosophy is inadequate and risks lapsing into a “technocratic denial of the objective validity of any spiritual need.” Indeed, pragmatism is listed by Maritain as the third mistake of modern education and Dewey’s instrumentalist philosophy of knowledge is critiqued because “thinking begins, not only with difficulties but with insights […]. Without trust in truth there is
no human effectiveness” (Ibid.: 13). Along with this epistemology-oriented critique, Maritain states as a primary concern that pragmatism cannot accommodate the human aspiration to interior freedom because it insists on the exclusively social character of the self. At the school level, by implicitly referring to Dewey’s definition of education as the reconstruction of experience (MW 9: 82), Maritain credits Dewey with the merit of having drawn our attention to the need to adapt the pedagogical methods to the pupil’s interests. He disapproves, however, of the lack of any reference to criteria on the basis of which to assess the aims and values of education (see also Valentine 2004).

Thus, Maritain – who, in fact, refers to Hutchins’s *The Higher Learning in America* (1936) in another part of his book – joins the American debate between Dewey and perennialists. If we take up in one picture, on the one hand, the European Catholic thinker speaking to an American audience and invoking a sure anchorage in the scholastic metaphysics in order to underpin the American democratic project and, on the other, the American pragmatist philosopher critically revisiting the European heritage in order to counter some trends of the American scene, we get a good sense of the trans-Atlantic give-and-take, which this symposium has endeavoured to explore in reference to *Democracy and Education*.

4. A Trans-Atlantic Exchange: New Directions

We have been speaking so far about a two-way exchange: Dewey’s American response in *Democracy and Education* to the European philosophical and pedagogical inheritance, and Europe’s uptake of Dewey’s response. If we are to understand *Democracy and Education*’s relevance for contemporary Europe, we now have to dig more deeply into the text – and discover how that work was itself a direct response to the specific European problematic situation of 1916.5

4.1. Nationalism and Its Transcendence

The belligerence between European nation states leading to World War One, and conflicts among ethnic groups within multi-ethnic nation states, dominated Dewey’s thought while writing *Democracy and Education* (see for example his “Internal social reorganization after the war” [MW 11: 73-86], and “What are we fighting for?” [MW 11: 98-106]). He saw nationalism as the root cause of these conflicts. His account goes as follows: 18th century *philosophes* condemned hierarchical social and political arrangements and like the ancient stoics, idealized a social organization of free individuals as wide as humanity. But they offered no concrete means for realizing this new order (MW 9: 98). 19th century German idealism filled this gap by assigning the task of ‘humanizing’ humanity to the “enlightened” nation state. The individual’s true realization would be achieved by absorbing the aims of the ‘organic’ nation state. In practice, however, state educational systems were instead shaped to supply

5. Some material in what follows is drawn from Waks 2007.
soldiers, workers, and administrators for the state, not to foster liberal individuality. Thus, Dewey concludes, “the ‘state’ was substituted for humanity; cosmopolitanism gave way to nationalism” (MW 9: 99). The enlightenment’s full and free interplay of all devolved into a limiting devotion to exclusive and belligerent states.

Dewey saw this situation as self-limiting. Nationalism, whether political, racial, or cultural, was simply “breaking down” under emerging conditions of global association, as he notes in German Philosophy and Politics (MW 8: 203). The sovereign nation state he saw as merely a transitory and problematic phase – “federated humanity” with its own institutions could no longer be seen as “a mere dream, an illusion of sentimental hope,” he argues in Ethics (MW 5: 431).

New conditions of association, especially air transportation, and global commerce and communications, were indeed leading to a “physical annihilation of space” as he puts it in Democracy and Education (MW 9: 92). Society is widening, thus weakening the efficiency and reach of received national institutions and making them less effective as guarantors of human rights (MW 5: 421-2).

Some transnational political institutions are thus both necessary and, in some form, inevitable. But so long as nation states act in isolation as competitors, transnational institutions can do no more than pick up the pieces after inevitable wars. We need something more, a positive ideal of “fruitful processes of cooperation” through the “furtherance of the breadth and depth of human intercourse” irrespective of class or race, geography or national boundaries (MW 8: 203-4).

4.2. A Transnational Educational Project

But how can a cooperative order be established when the instruments of education and public opinion remain in the hands of the very nation states that are the sources of the problem? Dewey’s answer to this question lies at the heart of his entire project in Democracy and Education. He argues that America is genuinely multi-national (and thus a non-nation state). In the modern American industrial city, we have a diversity of populations, of varying languages, religions, moral codes and traditions […], more primary communities, more differing environments of custom, tradition, aspiration and social control, than previously existed on an entire continent. (MW 9: 87-8)

We could, he argues in German Philosophy and Politics, take this “accident of our internal composition” and reshape it as a guide for building a multi-ethnic community at home that offers a model for voluntary emulation throughout the world (MW 8: 203).

The educational implications, worked out in Democracy and Education, are clear: because we are, as Dewey points out in Nationalizing Education (1916),

as a nation composed of representatives of all nations who have come here to live in peace […] and to escape the enmities and jealousies (of) old-world nations, to nationalize our education means to make it an instrument […] in the positive cultivation of sentiments of respect and friendship for all men and women wherever they live. (MW 10: 209; emphasis added)
This is accomplished as the school brings young people from multiple ethnic and cultural groups together for shared activities, so that the dispositions of each can reflect diverse influences and lead to a fusion (not of perspectives, but) of horizons (MW 9: 24-6). Bringing learners from diverse national and cultural groups together constitutes the necessary educational context. The very differences between learners – as displayed by their divergent outlooks (shaped by their different ethnic backgrounds) as they approach common tasks – are primary subject matters. The fusion of learners’ horizons – their formation of capacities to shape common interests, project common ends, and converge upon common means despite different perspectives – is a primary educational goal.

4.3. Democracy and Education and Transnational Europe

All of this is aspirational. One hundred years after the publication of Democracy and Education, democratic education of this sort remains vastly incomplete in the United States and elsewhere. On the other hand, transnational institutions exist at regional and global levels. The once belligerent nations of Europe are now joined together in an economic and cultural community with its own political agencies. European citizens readily cross national borders to study, work, and enjoy recreational and cultural enrichment.

Educational networks like iversity.org make courses from Europe’s leading universities available online at no cost. Europe’s metropolitan areas are as diverse as those of twentieth century American industrial cities, and new immigrants – and refugees – are arriving daily. What might Democracy and Education offer the European project of today? We offer two suggestions.

First, the normative coherence that nationalism provided for school and college curricula since the 18th and 19th centuries has been shattered by post-modernization, leaving behind only an empty ideology of educational “excellence” often advanced as a weapon of international competition (Readings 1996). As detailed in several of the articles in this special issue, like the United States, Europe, both in its several nations and as a transnational community, has arguably fallen into this trap with its

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6. The term “fusion of horizons,” which captures Dewey’s meaning precisely, derives from Gadamer (1989), and has entered the discussion of multicultural education through Taylor (1994). Taylor explains: to approach an object or event of one culture with the value presuppositions and habits of another is to miss the point. We have to “learn to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formally taken for granted as the background to evaluation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background of the formerly unfamiliar culture. The ‘fusion of horizons’ operates through our developing new vocabularies of comparison, by means of which we can articulate these contrasts” (Taylor 1994: 67).

7. We wrote these lines before the Brexit referendum. The UK vote resonates with the passions and hopes of nationalist political leaders throughout Europe, who aim at turning back the hands of time, and introduces a note of uncertainty for the EU project. The main trends we have indicated here, albeit in an admittedly aspirational way, are nevertheless unlikely to undergo a substantial reversal. The new situation, however, does require further inquiries toward new understandings of the project of a transnational Europe.

8. iversity.org (https://iversity.org/) is a Europe-based on-line education platform, created by Jonas Liepmann and Hannes Klöpper. It has operated since 2013 in the sector of higher education through on line courses and lectures mostly provided in English and German.
Improving the quality and efficiency of education is at the centre of education policy debate at both national and EU level. It has a crucial role to play in Europe’s Lisbon strategy to build its future prosperity and social cohesion. It lies at the heart of the EU’s goals for education and training in the period up to 2020. It involves raising performance in compulsory education, in particular with regard to the high percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science and more generally preparing young people for the knowledge society of the 21st century. In this context, reliable information on pupil performance is key to the successful implementation of targeted education policies and it is not surprising that in the past two decades national tests have emerged as an important tool for providing a measure of educational achievement. (Figel 2009: 3)

Re-situating European curriculum efforts within the project of European ideals and transnational democracy can restore normative validity for these efforts and provide some concrete direction for selection of common subject matters.

Second, Dewey’s vision of education through intercultural communication as leading to a fusion of horizons can be of use in reconceiving democratic education within European nations. At the metropolitan level, *Democracy and Education* points toward innovative educational experiments, combining local schools, regional educational facilities, and the Internet, for activities where young people from diverse groups, including those most disadvantaged and excluded, at all educational levels, can intermingle in common physical or virtual spaces, at least periodically, for problem-based learning and ameliorative efforts to address significant common problems (Waks 2006).

Europe is now positioned as a transnational space capable of generating more genuinely cosmopolitan educational programs. Pilot efforts of both European nations and the European community can be emulated, and adapted to settings and conditions in other world regions. These various efforts can then – especially via Internet technology – communicate, share resources, and create rich informal and formal cooperative networks for democratic education.

**References**


Avi I. Mintz*

Dewey’s Ancestry, Dewey’s Legacy, and The Aims of Education in Democracy and Education

Abstract: In Democracy and Education, in the midst of the pivotal chapter on “The Democratic Conception in Education,” Dewey juxtaposes his educational aims with those of Plato, Rousseau, Fichte and Hegel. Perhaps Dewey believed that an account of their views would help elucidate his own, or he intended to suggest that his own ideas rivaled or bested theirs. I argue that Dewey’s discussion of historical philosophers’ aims of education was also designed to critique his contemporaries subtly and by analogy. My analysis of Dewey’s critique supports a second argument: one of the reasons Dewey’s legacy has been long debated (particularly his relationship to pedagogical progressivism) derives from his reluctance to criticize his contemporaries explicitly and directly. Had Dewey critiqued his fellow American progressives in the same way he did historical European philosophers of the past, his readers would have better understood his relationship to progressive American educational ideas and practices. Yet Dewey’s subtle approach also accounts for the creation of a work that genuinely warrants being called a classic – it rises above the educational debates of the early twentieth century to enter into a conversation with its educational ancestry, a conversation that Dewey propelled forward.

Introduction

Democracy and Education was an ambitious project. Dewey stated in both 1916 and 1930 that it was the most comprehensive statement of his philosophy, but the work achieved something even greater: it put Dewey’s name alongside the greatest Western philosophers who addressed education. Indeed, when Democracy and Education was published in 1916, it was hailed as the greatest work of educational philosophy since Rousseau’s Emile (Cremin 1964: 120). By 1916, Dewey had already secured an international reputation as the greatest educational philosopher of his day. Thus his readers may have been inclined to receive his most comprehensive work on the philosophy of education as a landmark work on the topic. Perhaps his early readers drew this conclusion because at the heart of Democracy and Education is a chapter on “The Democratic Conception of Education” in which Dewey presented a positive statement of the relationship of democracy and education followed by a critique of Plato, Rousseau, and Fichte and Hegel. Dewey seemed to invite his readers to reflect on how his arguments stand next to theirs.

Did Dewey simply believe that critiquing historical philosophical conceptions of education would best help clarify his own account? Or might Dewey have had other motivations as well? Consideration of these questions, I argue, suggests an answer to another question, one that has persisted since the Dewey began writing on

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* The University of Tulsa [avi-mintz@utulsa.edu].

1. In a 1916 letter he wrote “[the Democracy and Education in spite of its title is the closest attempt I have made to sum up my entire philosophical position.” In 1930 he wrote that it was “for many years [the book] in which my philosophy, such as it is, was most fully expounded.” Both letters are cited in MW 9: 377. References to John Dewey’s published works are to the critical edition, The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953, edited by Boydston J.A., Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1991, and published in three series as The Early Works 1882-1899 [EW], The Middle Works 1899-1924 [MW], and The Later Works 1925-1953 [LW].
education: Why was Dewey so frequently misread? The answer to the former question is only partly that Dewey thought that there was value in tackling entrenched and influential educational ideas, and that doing so helped elucidate his own views. I argue that Dewey’s discussion of educational aims was designed not only to critique Plato and Rousseau, but also primarily, subtly, and by analogy, to critique his American contemporaries via historical European philosophers. Recognizing Dewey’s reticence to criticize his American contemporaries by name ought to be more seriously considered in the voluminous debate about Dewey’s legacy. Before turning to that argument, however, I turn to Dewey’s employment of the history of educational philosophy in his works.

1. Dewey and the History of Educational Philosophy

One hundred years after placing his educational aims alongside Plato, Rousseau and others in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey’s analysis reads not as ambitious overreaching but as appropriate and fitting – *Democracy and Education* incontestably stands among the most important works of the history of educational thought. Yet Dewey did not regularly engage deeply the philosophers of the past in his educational writings. Unlike, say, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, whose works engage a historical conversation routinely and substantively, Dewey’s educational works are only occasionally peppered with analysis and comparison of historical ideas and concepts.

Nevertheless, Dewey repeatedly made the case for the value of history in contemporary educational theory and practice. Dewey not only read widely in the history of education and educational philosophy, he also saw the benefit of students doing so. For example, Dewey assembled a syllabus for a “History of Education” correspondence course through Columbia University’s School of Liberal Arts and Sciences. On the syllabus, Dewey wrote that “teachers, parents and others interested in correct educational theory and practice” need to recognize that “no teacher can do the best possible with the present conditions and tendencies without knowing something of how they came to be” (LW 17: 160).2 The range of topics and readings in the syllabus are remarkably broad; the course covers, for example, Greek, Chinese, Roman, early Christian, Medieval, and Renaissance education, in addition to more recent history. On the Greeks alone the students were instructed to read not only selections from Plato and Aristotle but also selections from Protagoras, Isocrates, Aristophanes, Thucydides, and Homer. He directed students to historical scholarship on the sophists, but Dewey warns them that the authors he assigned to them (Paul Monroe and Thomas Davidson) exaggerate the individualistic nature of the sophists’ work (LW 17: 183-4).3 Dewey’s detailed syllabus (of which only the first four of twenty-four sections are extant) basically amounts to its own textbook; it is evidence

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2. Dewey was consistent in his remarks about the value of history, at least, if history is understood in a certain way (a topic to which I return below). For another example of Dewey attesting to the value of history, see MW 1: 104-9.

3. On the depth of Dewey’s engagement with the Greeks in particular, see Kirby 2014.
of the depth of Dewey’s awareness of and engagement with not only historical educational philosophy but also contemporary scholarship on the subject.

Yet Dewey’s educational publications, despite occasional references to historical figures, do not generally explore historical philosophers’ ideas at length. Dewey did not need to turn to history to find a wide variety of competing articulations of educational aims. He found himself in a particularly rich environment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in that regard: Dewey and his contemporaries were deeply immersed in debates about the purpose of schooling in America. It was a time in American history when more and more children were attending schools, and attending them for longer. The subsequent growth of schools led to much debate about what those schools ought to accomplish; should they prepare graduates for work, for college, or for ‘life’? Should they cultivate discipline, or develop students’ interests? The list could go on — the chapter headings of Democracy and Education capture the wealth of educational aims debated while Dewey was writing. And, yet, at the key moment of argument in Democracy and Education is a critique of some of the giants of the western canon rather than his contemporaries. Why does Dewey turn to historical philosophers instead of his contemporaries’ arguments?

2. Plato, Rousseau, Fichte and Hegel in Democracy and Education

In chapter seven, arguably the heart of Democracy and Education, Dewey made the case that “democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience,” and provided two standards for evaluating the quality of social life: “the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups” (MW 9: 105). His conception of the relationship of democracy and education is presented in the first two sections of chapter seven (7.1 and 7.2). In a somewhat abrupt transition, he wrote,

subsequent chapters will be devoted to making explicit the implications of the democratic ideas in education. In the remaining portions of this chapter, we shall consider the educational theories which have been evolved in three epochs when the social import of education was especially conspicuous. (MW 9: 94)

4. In contrast, throughout his philosophical works on subjects other than education, readers encounter frequent discursions on Aristotle, Plato, Hume, Kant, and so forth. Consider the case of Aristotle, for example. The index to Dewey’s Collected Works contains 160 lines of references to Aristotle. Yet only two of the 160 lines of entries refer specifically to Aristotle on education, referring readers to three works, two of them encyclopedia entries (in MW 7 and MW 13, respectively). The other reference is to Democracy and Education in the “Labor and Leisure” chapter. There are a few other references to Aristotle on education that appear under more specific Aristotle index items — in Democracy and Education, for example, Aristotle is also mentioned in the “Intellectual and Practical Studies,” the “Physical and Social studies” and the “Theory of Morals” chapters. Nevertheless, these references add at most a few more lines to the two others on education, and remain a very slim proportion of the 160 lines of entries overall in Dewey’s Collected Works. Given how often Dewey discussed Aristotle in his non-educational philosophical writings, the contrast is striking. See Dewey (1991: 116-8).

5. Part of the unnaturalness in the transition in the argument may have been due to the fact that the book was originally contracted as a textbook. Indeed the initial contract assigned the title of “Text-book on
7.3 focuses on Plato, 7.4 on Rousseau (primarily, at least, as the most prominent figure of “The ‘Individualistic’ Ideal of the Eighteenth Century”) and 7.5 on Fichte and Hegel (as representatives of “Education as National and as Social”).

Dewey wrote that Plato’s educational philosophy is “in bondage to static ideals [...] the final end of life is fixed” (MW 9: 97). Further, Plato “limited his view to a ‘general and ultimate’ aim,” which Dewey warned, is something that “educators have to be on their guard against” (MW 9: 116). Dewey’s critique, on the one hand, makes sense. Plato’s Socrates does indeed discuss the value of understanding the ultimate aim of education – establishing a just community under the wise leadership. And Plato’s Socrates does indeed propose a society with three fixed classes. Yet there is something unsatisfactory in Dewey’s analysis. Plato’s Republic is not the only place one could find a society that is “in bondage to static ideals” nor is it necessarily the best example of that. Dewey knew well of class-based societies of the past and in 1916. Was Plato really the best source for this critique? Dewey ignores most of the innovations that Plato’s Socrates describes that have become influential in educational philosophy and are of continued influence in higher education. There is no discussion of the broad liberal arts curriculum of The Republic’s Book VII (521d-34e). He offers no discussion on the importance of gender equality in education, or the lasting effects on character of stories, music, and poetry. Perhaps most surprisingly given Dewey’s task at hand, he neglects to address Socrates’ critique of democracy in Book VIII (555b-566b). Dewey has not necessarily mischaracterized Socrates’ argument, but the reader begins to wonder why Dewey would turn to Plato at such a critical point of Democracy and Education if his treatment of Plato is so partial.

I shall discuss Dewey’s analysis of Rousseau, Fichte, and Hegel below, but for now it suffices to say that Dewey’s engagement with their ideas in Chapter 7 is also conspicuously limited. Indeed, among the copious scholarship on Democracy and Education since its publication one hundred years ago, very little scholarship has appeared on Dewey’s treatment therein of Plato, Rousseau, Hegel, and Fichte. And this is fitting, since, as I’ll argue, his engagement serves another purpose. So why did he address them at all, let alone put them at the very core of his book?

One obvious and incontestably valid reason is that Dewey believed that through critique of the ideas of others, he could more clearly articulate his own educational philosophy. Using Plato, Rousseau, and others to test out his two standards of democratic education is clearly central to Dewey’s use of them. But since he spends most of Democracy and Education applying these standards in great depth to contemporary concerns, and does so quite successfully, the value of these historical philosophers in the book is questionable.

Another explanation might be that Dewey intended to place himself alongside Plato and Rousseau as one of the greatest educational philosophers in history. By 1916, Dewey was already hailed internationally as the leading educational theorist of his generation, so maybe he believed there to be value in distinguishing his own views from the other giants of educational thought. Dewey may have wanted to juxtapose

the Philosophy of Education” (MW 9: 377-8).
his argument with theirs to illuminate the new, paradigm challenging directions he
sought to take educational philosophy and society more generally.

As should be clear from my discussion of Dewey’s history course, I do not believe
that Dewey was either poorly informed about the history of educational philosophy,
nor that he was uninterested in it. To the contrary, Dewey’s “History of Education”
syllabus suggests that he was eminently capable of providing a more robust critique
of those historical philosophers should he have elected to do so. There is something
else at play in chapter seven: Dewey used these historical accounts to critique his
contemporaries’ educational theories and practices.

In the two decades preceding the publication of *Democracy and Education*, and
during the period that he was writing it, Dewey was immersed in thinking about and
popularizing child-centered, progressive, experimental schools. Dewey’s followers
and critics often associated him with child-centered, pedagogical progressives, but
this was an association he often resisted.

Dewey’s criticism of Rousseau in *Democracy and Education* is targeted not
only at Rousseau, and, I argue, not primarily at Rousseau. In chapter nine, Dewey
explicitly wrote that nature as aim is “of recent influence” (MW 9: 118), appealing to
the “educational reformers disgusted with the conventionality and artificiality of the
scholastic methods,” but that “since no one has stated in the doctrine both its truth
and falsity better than Rousseau, we shall turn to him” (MW 9: 119). Dewey had long been
warning of the excesses of child-centered, pedagogical progressivism.6 *Democracy
and Education* was no exception as Dewey reiterated that, for example, the “idealizing
of childhood” was in effect “nothing but lazy indulgence” (MW 9: 56). Dewey’s
criticism of pedagogical progressivism was not of merely theoretical problems that a
progressive school might encounter; by 1916, in addition to the experiences with the
progressive Colonel Francis Parker’s school (which Dewey’s children had attended:
see Westbrook 1991: 96) and his own Laboratory School, Dewey was well aware of
the pitfalls of the “new” education, and his knowledge of these schools informed his
analysis in *Democracy and Education*.

In *Schools of To-Morrow*, published in 1915, Dewey provided an account of
several schools that endorsed Rousseauian ideals, ideals about which he would point
out many flaws in *Democracy and Education*. Dewey and his daughter and co-author
wrote that, of the various schools they described, “most of these points of similarity
are found in the views advocated by Rousseau” (MW 8: 389). For example, of
Mrs. Johnson at Fairhope, in Alabama, they noted that “her main underlying principle
is Rousseau’s central idea” about the nature of childhood (MW 8: 222). Dewey did
not criticize these individuals or schools directly though, despite the fact that the

6. In *My Pedagogic Creed*, he wrote that a student’s interest is not to be “repressed,” but, pointedly, it
must not be “humored” either (EW 5: 92-3). In “Interest in Relation to training of the Will,” published
in 1896, he wrote that “[t]he spoiled child who does only what he likes is the inevitable outcome of
the theory of interest in education” (EW 5: 116). In 1902, in *The Child and the Curriculum*, Dewey
rejected the “sentimental idealizations” of the child (MW 2: 279). In *Interest and Effort in Education*
published in 1913 his tone is similar (MW 7: 154-5). This is not to say that Dewey did not continuously
refine his position. He certainly did so. See, for example, his evolving treatment of interest in Jonas
(2011: 124-6).
schools are, in many ways, examples of the “new” education that he consistently described as extreme in *My Pedagogic Creed, The Child and the Curriculum*, and in other educational writings. Only Rousseau and, to a much lesser extent, the Italian educational theorist Maria Montessori are targets of any direct criticism in the *Schools of To-Morrow.*

Rousseau stands in for the sorts of schools and teachers he described in *Schools of To-Morrow.* In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey criticized Rousseau because “merely to leave everything to nature was, after all, but to negate the very idea of education” (MW 9: 99).8 Such a clear, harsh attack is never leveled at Dewey’s American contemporary pedagogical progressives by name, though “leaving things to nature” was very much an orienting ideal of the progressive schools that were being conceived of or opening in that period.9 Only in the conclusion of *Schools of To-Morrow* does Dewey note, in what might be read as a rebuke of the schools described, that “mere activity, if not directed toward some end, may result in developing muscular strength, but it can have very little effect on the mental development of the pupils” (MW 8: 391). Is the conclusion referring to schools reported on in the book, or to other schools which fall short of the examples reported on in the book? The reader is left to speculate about whether the schools described in *Schools of To-Morrow* somehow met the ideals of democratic schools that Dewey described in the conclusion.10

7. The criticism of Montessori schools was minimal, but the fact that the Montessori schools received any criticism at all, given the treatment of the other schools in the book, is noteworthy. The Deweys praise Montessori schools because the student “is confronted with an obvious problem, which is solved by his own handling of the material. The child is educating himself in that he sees his own mistakes and corrects them, and the finished result is perfect; partial success or failure is not possible.” But the Deweys argued that Montessori students are not free intellectually because they lack the freedom to create (MW 8: 307, 309). Notably, Montessori is also criticized in *Democracy and Education* (MW 9: 160 and 205). One can only speculate about why Dewey was willing to criticize Montessori by name. Perhaps it was because her schools were so well established in Italy that he did not fear for her reputation. As the schools were growing in popularity beyond Italy, maybe Dewey thought that American progressive educators might correct some of the problematic aspects of them. Or perhaps Dewey was contributing to a scholarly discussion taking place among his colleagues at Teachers College. William Heard Kilpatrick had travelled to Italy during the time Dewey was writing *Schools of To-Morrow* and *Democracy and Education* and had reported on Montessori’s educational theory and influence. Kilpatrick published *The Montessori System Examined* in 1914 and acknowledged Dewey’s suggestions on his draft version of the book. See Beineke (1998: 71).

8. Dewey was not beyond character attacks on Rousseau. In the opening of chapter four of *Schools of To-Morrow*, Dewey pointed out to readers that Rousseau had abandoned his children to the foundling system (MW 8: 248). By the 1920s, many schools would be caricatured for their *laissez-faire* approach, including that of Lucy Sprague Mitchell, with whom Dewey was a close associate. Cremin describes places like Caroline Pratt’s Play School (opened in 1913 and which Lucy Sprague Mitchell began supporting and working in by 1916) as follows: “In too many classrooms license began to pass for liberty, planlessness for spontaneity, recalcitrance for individuality, obfuscation for art, and chaos for education – all justified in the rhetoric of expressionism” (Cremin 1964: 207). Lucy Sprague Mitchell, like other pedagogical progressives, is never the direct target of Dewey’s criticism, despite the fact that, in many ways, her school was an extreme example of the “new” education. On Sprague and Dewey’s relationship, see Antler (1987: ch. 11).

9. After its publication, he was quick to deny that the schools described in *Schools of To-Morrow* were “Dewey” schools, inspired by his work. Rather, he wrote in an open letter addressed to William Bagley, “much of the significance of the various experiments lies in the fact that they have sprung up independently under diverse auspices” (MW 8: 414). Further, Dewey seems to have conceived of the
in all of the reporting of the schools in *Schools of To-Morrow*, in which the joy, cheerfulness, and happiness of the children is a frequent theme,\(^{11}\) does Dewey raise a concern that the emphasis on the individual might result in neglecting the social aspect of education. The criticism falls on Rousseau alone, and the “sentimental egotism” of his educational philosophy (MW 8: 249).

Maybe Dewey considered the American educators featured in *Schools of To-Morrow* – unlike Montessori and Rousseau – too minor or too close to him to warrant rebuke from him; Dewey would have been well aware that his opinion on all matters educational was taken very seriously by the 1910s, and may therefore have been reluctant to judge harshly the educational pioneers he featured. But to better understand Dewey’s reluctance to criticize pedagogical progressives, we might consider the case of William Heard Kilpatrick, who was arguably the most influential pedagogical progressive. Two years after the publication of *Democracy and Education*, Kilpatrick (1918) published “‘The Project Method,’” instantly launching him to the forefront of the charge to implement the “new” education in schools.

In the view of many scholars, Dewey labored tirelessly to distinguish himself from child-centered progressives. Westbrook, for example, writes that Dewey “took every available opportunity” (Westbrook 1991: 502) to challenge them, and that he was “anxious to distinguish his thinking from that of other reformers with whom he profoundly disagreed” (*Ibid.*: 501). Westbrook names Kilpatrick as “one of [Dewey’s] principal targets” (*Ibid.*: 504). Yet the direct references to Kilpatrick in Dewey’s *Collected Works* tend to be positive. Though scholars point to essays like “The Way Out of Our Educational Confusion” (LW 6: 75-89) as a direct attack on the project method, the work never mentions Kilpatrick by name. And Dewey’s criticism in that essay could be read as directed not at the project method in principle, but rather at the way that the project method was implemented in some elementary schools. One searching Dewey’s *Collected Works* for explicit, sustained critical engagement with Kilpatrick’s ideas would find only the appreciative foreword Dewey penned for Kilpatrick’s biography in 1952 (LW 17: 52-6).

In *Democracy and Education*, readers encounter similar reluctance. Dewey challenged Rousseau because it enabled him to air, once again, his criticism of pedagogical progressivism. The effectiveness of Dewey’s indirect criticism of pedagogical progressivism is something to which I shall return in the next section. First, we might recognize that Dewey’s approach was similar when addressing the social efficiency progressives.

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\(^{11}\) For example: “They are uniformly happy in school, and enthusiastically proclaim their ‘love’ for it. Not only is the work interesting to the group as a whole, but no individual child is forced to a task that does not appeal; each pupil may do as he pleases as long as he does not interfere with anyone else” (MW 8: 226).
In his critique of German nationalistic ideals in 7.5, Dewey explicitly noted that social efficiency was emphasized as an aim of nationalistic education; in Germany, the school system [...] supplied the patriotic citizen and soldier and the future state official and administrator and furnished the means for military, industrial, and political defense and expansion, it was impossible for theory not to emphasize the aim of social efficiency. (MW 9: 100; emphasis added)

Dewey’s discussion of nineteenth century political and social aims in chapter seven (a line of argument he continued in chapter nine), allowed him to critique the administrative, social efficiency progressives indirectly.12

The social and national aims attributed to Fichte and Hegel in 7.5 diverged in two important ways among Dewey’s contemporaries. On the one hand, some maintained the Hegelian framework for viewing individuals as needing to be civilized, in a sense, and brought into a national culture. The educational expression of this Hegelian view was the much debated (and much scorned by progressives) Committee of Ten Report of 1893 and the Committee of Fifteen Report of 1895. Charles W. Eliot and William Torrey Harris made an unapologetic case for a broad, liberal arts curriculum for all (rejecting the progressive calls for curricular differentiation). Dewey suggested in his analysis of national and social aims, as well as his discussion of culture as aim (in chapter nine, section three), that a rigid, common, liberal arts curriculum is yet another way that an individual student’s interests are subordinated to an external end, in this case to initiate the student into culture.

On the other hand, social efficiency progressives like David Snedden argued that schools should prepare students for their civic, economic roles in the state. Social efficiency, in Dewey’s analysis, subordinated the student to a civic goal. Dewey criticized social efficiency progressives for articulating a vision of education that would only perpetuate the status quo, even exacerbating social stratification in which different schools prepared students for a life similar to that of their parents’ community:

It is the aim of progressive education to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them [...] there is a danger that industrial education will be dominated by acceptance of the status quo. (MW 9: 126)

Dewey wrote an essay criticizing vocational education in The New Republic in 1914 to which David Snedden responded. Dewey’s rejoinder was published along with Snedden’s critique in 1915 in the same magazine. In both essays, Dewey wrote that industrial, vocational education accepts the current class divisions and perpetuates them. In 1914 he wrote,

12. I speak broadly about social efficiency progressivism, though it is an “amorphous, if not ambiguous” category (Fallace & Fantozzi 2013: 145).
inevitable effect is to perpetuate it, with all its antagonism of employer and employed, producer and consumer.\textsuperscript{13}

In 1915, he wrote,

I am utterly opposed to giving the power of social predestination, by means of narrow trade-training, to any group of fallible men no matter how well-intentioned they may be. (MW 8: 411)\textsuperscript{14}

In Democracy and Education, rather than targeting David Snedden directly for his efforts to determine students’ aptitudes and, consequently, their civic and economic potential, Dewey wrote broadly of the problem of subordinating the individual to the state. Snedden’s name appears nowhere in Democracy and Education, not even when Dewey turns again to the topic of social efficiency in chapter nine, nor when he explicitly addresses vocational aspects of education in chapter twenty-three.

Just as section 7.5 offers a subtle critique of two of Dewey’s contemporaries’ schools of thought, so too does the critique of Plato in 7.3. One might expect that Dewey would have been likely to criticize advocates of traditional education more directly. But despite Dewey’s consistent, trenchant critiques of traditional education, he rarely targets specific individuals who promote or practice such pedagogy.\textsuperscript{15} In Plato, Dewey finds another stand in because, just as in the “old education,” static knowledge serves as an end, and inflexibility and resistance to change are underlying principles (MW 9: 94 and 97). Additionally, perhaps the critique of Plato targets advocates of “culture as aim” such as William Torrey Harris, who thought that they could help the nation’s youth escape from the cave, joining the ranks of the enlightened. Like Plato,

\textsuperscript{13} Dewey noted that the defenders of vocational education often cited Germany as a model. Dewey warned that Germany’s purpose was “frankly nationalistic […] the wellbeing of the state as a moral entity is supreme. The promotion of commerce against international competitors is one of the chief means of fostering the state” (MW 7: 94-5).

\textsuperscript{14} Dewey also wrote in that article that “[t]he kind of vocational education in which I am interested is not one which will ‘adapt’ workers to the existing industrial regime; I am not sufficiently in love with the regime for that. It seems to me that the business of all who would not be educational timeservers is to resist every move in this direction, and to strive for a kind of vocational education which will first alter the existing industrial system, and ultimately transform it” (MW 8: 412). In Democracy and Education he warned similarly of the danger of social predestination: “Any scheme for vocational education which takes its point of departure from the industrial regime that now exists; is likely to assume and to perpetuate its divisions and weaknesses, and thus to become an instrument in accomplishing the feudal dogma of social predestination” (MW 9: 328). See also his similar comments years later in LW 3: 262.

On the debate with Snedden, see Labaree 2011.

\textsuperscript{15} Two decades after writing Democracy and Education, Dewey would pen two essays in The Social Frontier critiquing Robert Hutchins’s The Higher Learning in America “Rationality in Education” (1936) and “President Hutchins’ Proposals to Remake Higher Education” (1937). Despite all the attention to Dewey’s direct challenge to Hutchins, those essays total only eleven pages in the Collected Works (LW 11: 397-407). The Collected Works Index lists only two other essays in which Hutchins is mentioned explicitly: “The Democratic Faith and Education” (1944) and “Challenge to Liberal Thought” (1944) in LW 15: 251-75. This is not to say that Dewey does not take up the debate with Hutchins elsewhere. It is merely to say that elsewhere he took up the debate indirectly, akin to his approach in Democracy and Education. At least Dewey’s challenge to Hutchins, unlike his treatment of Kilpatrick, helped his readers understand the precise nature of their disagreement (though Dewey’s argument is typically complex); see Johnston 2011.
Harris proposed a rigid, “academic” curriculum. At the same time, Dewey’s concerns about class stratification targeted the social efficiency progressives because of the way their educational vision was centered on preparing students for particular kinds of employment, as I described above. In his discussion of vocational education in chapter twenty three, Dewey explicitly invoked Plato and described his most significant error as his “limited conception of the scope of vocations socially needed” (MW 9: 319).

Dewey’s approach to the historical philosophers’ ideas in chapter seven reveals that Dewey was not primarily concerned with illuminating the logic and nuances of those philosophers’ arguments. Rather, Dewey highlighted in his analysis only the ideas that were influential, advocated, or debated among his contemporaries. And this treatment of historical philosophers is consistent with Dewey’s general ideas about the value of history. “History,” Dewey wrote, “deals with the past, but this past is the history of the present” (MW 9: 222). Indeed, Dewey’s discussion of Plato, Rousseau, and the German Idealists ought to be read primarily as an engagement with the present – a vehicle to advance criticism of his contemporaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Target</th>
<th>Indirect Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>Traditional education and “culture as aim” advocates who sought a fixed curriculum and “static ideals” (e.g. William Torrey Harris)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social efficiency progressives who sought to determine children’s potential and provide an education tailored to that potential (e.g., David Snedden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rousseau</td>
<td>Pedagogical, child-centered progressives (e.g. the educators featured in Schools of To-Morrow)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fichte and Hegel</td>
<td>Social efficiency progressives who subordinated the individual to serve the state’s industrial régime (e.g. David Snedden)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hegelian defenders of traditional education who believed the state’s role is to civilize citizens, initiating them into national culture (e.g. William Torrey Harris)</td>
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Connections between Dewey’s historical critique and his contemporaries

3. Dewey’s Legacy

It is by now a commonplace among Dewey scholars that Dewey’s name was often invoked to support ideas and practices that were dramatically opposed to his intent. Scholars have proposed a variety of theories to explain this state of affairs. Some have argued that, early in his career, he advocated child-centered progressivism, and only later became its critic (most prominently in Experience and Education). But such

16. Likewise he wrote: “A knowledge of the past and its heritage is of great significance when it enters into the present, but not otherwise” (MW 9: 81). On the nature of Dewey’s engagement with the present in Democracy and Education in the context of the First World War, see Waks 2007.

17. Cremin offers a nuanced version of this position: “[A]s the twenties progressed, he became less the
an explanation is not supported by Dewey’s works, since, from his earliest works, he warned against excessive indulgence of children’s interests, and a variety of other beliefs and practices that characterized pedagogical progressivism. Another theory suggests that it was Dewey’s disciples who molded Deweyan theory into practice, and Dewey’s lofty, complex ideas were often simplified into practices that emphasized the “new” education, while failing to incorporate what Dewey argued was valuable about the “old” education. William Heard Kilpatrick is frequently identified as the culprit, and has been at least since the 1950s. Sometimes the argument of disciples’ influence is proposed alongside an argument that Dewey was unclear about the practicalities of his theory or that he was difficult to read. Another explanation is that the middle road that Dewey sought to construct between the traditional and new curriculum led to his irrelevance to each side; Dewey’s criticism of the traditional curriculum was too radical for most American educators to follow, and his failure to go as far as the pedagogical progressives failed to garner their support (Westbrook 1991: 508).

Other than the theory that Dewey changed course in his career, all of the other explanations for Dewey’s legacy have merit. But one ought to consider whether Dewey’s ideas would have been better understood if he had been willing to challenge the ideas of others more directly. Readers of Schools of To-Morrow and Democracy and Education can point to precise critiques of Montessori that not only better illuminate Montessori’s theory, but also Dewey’s. Had he been willing to subject his fellow Americans to similar direct criticism, Dewey’s arguments would have been clearer, and Dewey would have been less easily mistaken for endorsing positions that he would have rejected. Among the clearest of Dewey’s many discussions of vocational education, for example, is the essay he was invited to write to respond to Snedden’s critique of him — in which, it is worth noting, Snedden read Dewey as “giving aid and comfort to the opponents of a broader, richer and more effective program of education” (Snedden 1915). Outside of a handful of responses similar to the one he penned to Snedden, or occasional book reviews, Dewey rarely criticized either his fellow progressives or his critics by name in his educational writings. The overall effect was to enable many of his readers to project views onto Dewey that Dewey would not have endorsed. Furthermore, it made it more difficult for Dewey’s readers to grasp his precise challenge to the traditional education, social efficiency progressivism, pedagogical progressivism, and, later, social reconstructionism.

Why might Dewey have been so reluctant to criticize others? Dewey’s work is animated by a deep respect for those teachers and researchers who were devoting

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18. In addition to my above discussion of the critique of Rousseau, see note 6.
19. See Kandel 1958. See also Null 2007. Another related but distinct claim is that Dewey’s pragmatic progressivism in education arose only after Rousseauian romantic progressive education had become well-entrenched. The romantic progressives adopted some of Dewey’s critique of traditional education, but were never heavily influenced by Dewey. See Burnett 1979.
22. On the Robert Hutchins exception, see note 15.
their time and energy to pedagogy and educational reform. Perhaps the explanation is too facile, but Dewey may have hesitated to criticize the work of his fellow American pioneers who shared with him a commitment that education is central to the flourishing of a democratic society and democratic citizens. Dewey seems to have preferred to explore the ideas themselves of America’s educational reformers, scholars, and teachers, rather than tarnish reputations. To put this in the most favorable light, Dewey’s fellow educators and education scholars were treated with the generosity of spirit that Dewey believed ought to animate disagreements in the best kind of society.

Democracy and Education provides us with a prominent example of Dewey critiquing his contemporaries subtly and by analogy. By turning to Plato, Rousseau, Fichte and Hegel in chapter seven, Dewey’s readers of the past one hundred years may have failed to appreciate how deeply his argument is rooted in the ideas and debates of his own lifetime. Yet Dewey’s indirect approach also accounts for the creation of a work that genuinely warrants being called a classic – it rises above the educational debates of the early twentieth century to enter into a conversation with its educational ancestry, a conversation that Dewey propelled forward, giving Democracy and Education an air of timelessness.

References


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Andreas Nordin, Ninni Wahlström

Exploring European Education Policy through the Lens of Dewey’s Democracy and Education

Abstract: In this article, we use the basic concepts of Dewey’s pedagogical philosophy on democracy and education as analytical tools for exploring the democratic potential of a transnational education policy within the contemporary European risk discourse. A Deweyan reading of main policy documents, starting with the 2000 Lisbon Strategy, allows for critical discussion of some of the basic assumptions and consequences of the EU-advocated transnational education policy. The data sources include 28 EU policy documents from 2000 to 2014. The analysis shows that in addition to a prevailing “human capital” discourse, there is potential for a communicative “democratic discourse” that promotes social cohesion. The democratic discourse underlines the full and free communication between different groups as the only way to promote and ensure the conditions for social cohesion. In this crisis of nearby wars, terror attacks and refugees in Europe, economy and competition are not viable concepts for seeking solutions. We argue that a shift to a language adapted to the real crisis and the fear of future crises in Europe is needed. We argue that a language that understands social efficiency, communication and a moral interest in the way Dewey outlined the concepts in *Democracy and Education* corresponds to the strong need to maintain and strengthen a democratic education and a democratic way of living for all.

Introduction

On the centennial anniversary of the publication of John Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (MW 9), the article takes this book as the point of departure for critically examining the transnational education policy that emerged from the 2000 agreement on the Lisbon Strategy within the European Union. A basic aim of the Lisbon Strategy was to create a transnational space for learning within the EU’s core areas, which also had clear implications for the formation of a common European education policy. The purpose of the present study is to analyze the EU policy documents, with a focus on compulsory schooling, through the lens of core concepts from *Democracy and Education*, to explore whether, and how, the EU has managed to balance society’s need for cohesion with the market’s need for economic efficiency. This analysis is based on the assumption that Dewey’s groundbreaking book still serves as an important starting point for a critical analysis of national and transnational education policies. To guide the inquiry, the following research question was formulated: How can we use the basic concepts of Dewey’s pedagogical philosophy on democracy and education as analytical tools for exploring the democratic potential in a transnational education policy within today’s European risk discourse?

In the first part of the article, the Lisbon Strategy is introduced. The period of time is 2000-2014. In the second section, a theoretical framework is developed, based on certain core concepts from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*: socialization,
social efficiency and social control. Further, the methodological framework of critical discourse analysis is introduced. Thereafter, four main themes within the Lisbon Strategy are explored through the lens of the analytical concepts developed from Democracy and Education. In the fourth and final part, the results of the analysis are critically examined and discussed in terms of what sort of language is needed for handling different situations.

1. The Lisbon Strategy and Afterward: A Brief Background

In March 2000, the European Council held a special meeting in Lisbon, Portugal. Since the EU was facing challenges due to globalization and “a new knowledge-driven economy,” the European Council recognized an urgent need to set up a program for building knowledge infrastructures to modernize the social welfare and education systems, with the aim of Europe becoming “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” with “greater social cohesion” (European Council 2000: §5). In order to implement this strategy, the European Council introduced “a new open method of coordination,” henceforth OMC (Ibid.: §7). European educational cooperation is not a new phenomenon; to some degree, there have always been influences across borders concerning education systems and policies. However, the Lisbon Strategy for fostering a competitive Europe and its OMC turned these influences into more explicit cooperation between the EU member states, including establishing common goals and common monitoring of processes.

With reference to Lawn and Grek (2012), we can discuss a European space for education – a space that one might understand as an imaginary Europe, blurred and indistinct, but nevertheless an arena of its own, distinct from the member states’ national education systems but where the EU at the same time influences national education policies in significant ways (see also Dale 2009a).

It is not only that soft governance, similar to the OMC, includes the idea that the member states should learn from each other. It is also how the complex network of systems of schools and university projects, education managers and information and communication technology projects, etc., helps establish the meaning of the European space for education. Lawn and Grek (2012) distinguished a second wave in EU education policy between 2000, with the decision to pursue a common goal for Europe, and 2010, and the emphasis on lifelong learning and comparisons of data as the basis for a converging European education policy. A third wave in EU education policy began in 2007, characterized by increasing interest in, and acceptance of, the EU’s involvement in national systems for compulsory schooling, school curricula and national assessment systems (Wahlström 2016b).


The initial positive movements in terms of Europe’s ability to rapidly develop into a competitive and sustainable economy with more and better jobs and greater social
cohesion were transformed in 2005, when a theme of crisis emerged. Globalization and rapid changes legitimized the crisis discourse, creating a sense of urgency and a point of no return (Nordin 2012, 2014). Thus, the image of crisis, in turn, legitimized the need for radical change in terms of comprehensive reforms in the EU member states (Robertson 2008). Today, Europe is experiencing several external crises – including Greece’s economic crisis, the influx of refugees feeling war and terror in the Middle East and parts of Africa, and the Russian incursion into Ukraine. However, as Beck (1992) stated, the risks are not exhausted as a result of the consequences and effects that are already a reality. Risks include potential future factors pointing toward future destruction that has not yet occurred but that threatens to happen. Risks are “irreal” in the sense that they are real and unreal. The centrality of the awareness of risks lies not in the present but in the future, in the form of projected future threats. Drawing on Beck (1992), Europe is moving from a class society to a risk society. In a class society, the political subject was the proletariat. A risk society lacks a corresponding focus; instead, a risk society is about threats that more or less affect all. This shift between two different social rationalities implies that the characteristics of cohesion change. Although the driving force for development in a class society was an egalitarian ideal, the dynamics of development in a risk society are related to safety. An unequal society has been succeeded by an uncertain society as the norm.

3. Europeanization and the Risk Society

The process of Europeanization must be understood as a transition from first to second modernity. The project is not only about the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital but also about a new form of transnational society, characterized by its potential, dynamics, contradictions and crises. The ambivalent story of Europe and its paradoxes can be understood as shaped by unintended side effects, instead of as a well-thought-out political project. Europeanization is a result of political decisions and their unintended long-term impacts. According to Beck and Grande (2007: 37), “Europeanization ‘takes place’ and ‘operates’ in the specific mode of institutionalized improvisation.” Drawing on the politics of side effects, Beck and Grande (2007) refer to John Dewey, who, in his 1927 text The Public and Its Problems, foresaw the importance of side effects. The public does not define itself in relation to collectively binding decisions but instead in relation to the consequences of decisions that are felt as problematic or unintended.

To the question of how political action is possible in multi-ethnic, transnational and cosmopolitan contexts, Dewey answers that the political – its binding power, its sensorium and nervous system, which generates and binds attention, morality and the willingness to act – emerges only in public controversies over consequences. (Beck & Grande 2007: 38)

Thus, the public is formed as a consequence of the disturbing side effects of decisions reached by consensus among governments. The politics of risk includes the politics
of risk construction and the politics of risk minimization. The social construction of risks contributes to defining the scope of action; it involves a definition of reality and leads to certain political actions (Beck & Grande 2007: 201). The underlying assumption of crisis and risk in the EU discourse of reality and identity constitutes the background against which we understand our analysis of the transnational education policy documents within the EU.

Dewey provided a way of knowing about the world that goes beyond the dualisms of mind – world and objectivity – subjectivity. By placing what we can know about the world at the center of the interactions – and later on, the transactions – between people, Dewey “moved” the center of the discussion about how to gain knowledge of the world from the mind to all indefinite interactions between living organisms and their environments (MW 9; LW 16: 242-56). The key concept in this change of the focal point for knowing is the concept of experience. For Dewey, the transactional view of experiencing always concerns the relationship between actions and consequences. According to Dewey, knowledge is constructed and real (Biesta 2014). Thus, Dewey argued for a “piecemeal realism” concerning the human actions involved in the process of inquiry. There are things that are existentially real, but they are not real in any essentialist way; instead, they are contingently real objects, not permanently real ones (Westbrook 2005; Sleeper 2001). In Dewey’s concept of “transactional realism” (Sleeper 2001) as a continuation of his naturalism, there is no gap between human beings and the world; knowing itself is an activity concerned with conditions, relations, reflections, inferences and consequences.

4. Social efficiency and social control

In Democracy and Education, Dewey places the institution of school as a superficial space for tuition compared to society as a whole. From the start, the individual is already embedded in society, like an organism in its environment. For Dewey, society has connotations with “common,” “community” and “communication” (MW 9: 7). It is through society we get something in common and we live in societies because of what we have in common in beliefs, aspirations and knowledge. The way we acquire this common frame of reference is through communication. “Society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication” (MW 9: 7). Accordingly, society is the indispensable environment that provides the basis of every individual. Through this transmission in society, socialization of the individual inevitably occurs. This is the main source for tuition for every individual. As Hickman (2006) points out, socialization is the model for all teaching according to Dewey. However, all socialization cannot be described as ‘good’ and does not necessarily lead to the growth of the individual and, by extension, to the development of society. Growth occurs only when socialization is created in a social context where “a child is socialized in ways that expand his or her intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic horizons” (Hickman 2006: 69). In chapter seven in Democracy and Education, Dewey emphasizes that education is a social process. To be able to know whether such social interaction leads to an individual’s
growth, Dewey proposes two criteria: To what extent do all members in a group share the same interest? To what extent is there full and free contact and interchange with other groups and associations? These indicators of educational socialization are also the two indicators for democracy (Englund 1999; Hook 2008; and Wahlström 2016a). This is not a coincidence. For Dewey, democracy is about individuals’ growth and development and is therefore imbued with educational elements. The freedom to develop new interests, both common and personal, in a society, as well as in a group, characterizes democracy and education.

Hickman (2006) shows how social control and social efficiency are connected with the two criteria for socialization by the human capability to interact with others. In today’s school and public debate, the word control often brings to mind an external check of something, such as national tests or school inspections. Dewey’s understanding of the word is instead that genuine social control means “a way of understanding objects, events, and acts which enables one to participate effectively in associated activities” (MW 9: 41). Social control has nothing to do with being authoritarian, but is about being engaged in an understanding of matters as they are. The experimental way of handling things and situations in the world led Dewey to use the word “control” in inquiries about situations that are problematic in one way or another. Similarly, social efficiency in Dewey’s terms is not associated with the measurement of products or output but instead with a moral obligation “that a social return be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive capacities be afforded all” (MW 9: 129). If democracy is understood in its moral and ideal sense, social efficiency is the way to jointly manage and share what is common.

In Europe today, socialization, social efficiency and social control are all key concepts that can be interpreted in at least two different directions. In 2015 Europe, the term socialization is largely associated with the ability to see Europe as a common society and the opportunity to integrate refugees from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa. For that purpose, the meanings of social control and social efficiency are topical. The first interpretation is called a “democratic” interpretation, taking Dewey’s philosophy of democracy and education in consideration. The second way to interpret these key terms is to understand them from a “human capital” perspective. The origin of the human capital concept can be traced back to the work of Adam Smith in the 18th century. Smith emphasized the benefit for the whole society in developing the skills of each individual. However, it was not until the 1960s that the concept of human capital was recognized by economists, as an explanation of large differences in economic outcomes between different countries. In the present time, when the impact of a knowledge-based economy and increasing globalization have become more significant, for the individual as well as for the national economy, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, henceforth OECD, has gradually expanded its definition of human capital. In 2001, the OECD defined human capital as “the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (Boarini et al. 2012: 10). The fundamental core of human capital is that it is related to economic activity. In the following analysis, we contrast these two ways of understanding
social efficiency when exploring the themes of economic growth and social cohesion in Europe (European Council 2000) and the restructuring of education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results (European Commission 2012).

5. Communication as a Process of Social Coordination and Cooperation

Although Dewey’s understanding of communication is above all related to his work Experience and Nature from 1929, this basic idea is clearly formulated in the 1916 Democracy and Education. Biesta (2006) suggests that Democracy and Education does not symbolize the culmination of Dewey’s thoughts on communication as the basis for all human interaction and particularly distinctive for education. Instead, this text represents the beginning of a “communicative turn” in Dewey’s philosophy on democracy and education. For communication, as for socialization, the notion of environment plays an important role. For Dewey, “environment” is a medium that differs in meaning from the term “surroundings,” denoting what encompass an individual. Environment “denote[s] the specific continuity of the surroundings with his own active tendencies” (MW 9: 115). Neither has environment anything to do with geographic proximity in Dewey’s interpretation of the term.

Some things which are remote in space and time from a living creature, especially a human creature, may form his environment even more truly than some of the things close to him. The things with which a man varies are his genuine environment. (MW 9: 15)

This is a particularly important observation today, a hundred years after this text was written, because what affects our environment to such an extent that sometimes we can speak of isolated enclaves is migration and digitalization that can contribute to making the immediate surroundings less important for individuals’ interaction.

Dewey’s theory of education is not a theory of instruction but of communication. He was concerned about how meaning can be communicated, and his answer was that communication of meaning is not about transmission but about participation (Biesta 2006). Real participation occurs only when there is “a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession” that “modifies the disposition of both the parties who partake in it” (MW 9: 12). In addition, participation constitutes the difference between “training” and “education.” Training is about behavioral changes in outer action without necessarily changing the individual’s disposition, but educative teaching is concerned with the degree to “which an individual shares or participates in some conjoint activity” (MW 9: 26). Because education is understood in terms of practice, as a joint activity based on communication, environment plays a major role in Dewey’s theory of education. “We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment” (MW 9: 23). However, not only participation in a joint activity is central for education; it is also important to acknowledge the significance of things in the process of making meaning of the world. The meaning of the world is not found in the things and events themselves but in the social practices where things and events
are important for human participation. As Biesta (2006: 32) notes, “meaning only exists in social practices, it is, in a sense, located in-between those who constitute the social practice through their interactions.” Things gain meaning only through joint activities in a common environment, which is not the same as denying that things, like stones and apples and the like, also exist outside human activities (Wahlström 2010b).

In Democracy and Education, it first become clear the Dewey’s philosophy is a philosophy of communicative action (Biesta 2006). Dewey’s philosophy is grounded in his naturalistic approach that finds its foundation for communication in human nature. Dewey saw an indissoluble link between communication, social interaction and education in the following terms: “Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative” (MW 9: 8).

6. An Interest in Learning from all the Contacts in Life

For Dewey, the moral self an approach that takes all relationships into account. As characteristic of Dewey, he draws no sharp boundaries between internal and external activities, between mind and action.

The generous self consciously identifies itself with the full range of relationships implied in its activity […] and it readjusts and expands its past ideas of itself to take in new consequences as they become perceptible. (MW 9: 362)

In Dewey’s formulation, he makes no distinction between the moral experiences compared to other experiences. The nature of experience, Dewey writes “can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element” where the active phase is termed “trying” and the passive phase “undergoing” (MW 9:146). In the active phase, examining relationships and possible consequences is central for the inquiry that precedes the inferences that are drawn, and that finally result in some sort of action. In the passive phase, we undergo the consequences of our actions. The moral self acts in the same way, taking all relationships and inferences into consideration, in an effort to readjust habits that are disagreeable. The moral value of a person’s conduct depends on the implications of the behavior.

Education is moral in the sense that all education acquired under conditions in which the social significance of education is realized develops moral insights. Qualities for learning, such as open-mindedness, sincerity, thoroughness and the like, are all moral qualities (MW 9: 366). Thus, morality is built into education when education is conducted in a way that makes students participants in a shared, communicative exploration of a subject, in which relationships and consequences are put to the fore. Dewey concludes Democracy and Education with the following sentence: “Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest.” It is noteworthy that Dewey ends his text with this formulation. As Hansen (2006) suggests, the kind of interest a person takes also measures the moral quality. Thus, interest and self are inextricably linked. To realize your full humanity, and to support others in that
process, you have to be in close contact with the world; regardless of whether these contacts are agreeable or conflict, you still have to engage in them.

There are at least two ways to understand a term such as social efficiency. We call the way that Dewey understands the term a democratic perspective, and the way the term often is understood in policy texts a human capital perspective. The crucial difference between these two perspectives is that the democratic perspective is based on an explicit philosophy on human relationships, experiences and meaning, while the human capital perspective is based on a pronounced theory of economic growth. We use this dualism as a denotation of the opposite ends of an imaginary continuum between the two perspectives in our conceptual framework for the analysis of the policy texts from the European Lisbon Strategy and onward. This is not to say that we do not acknowledge the importance of the economy for societal development and investments in education, collective as well as individual; what we note here is the difference in the basic starting points for what can count as important for developing national education systems in the democracies of Europe: economic theory or a philosophy on democracy. In the same way, communication can be understood as transmission as well as participation. Finally, education can be viewed from a perspective of (lifelong) learning adapted to the market and from a perspective of education permeated by moral aspects of personal growth.

7. A Methodological Framework

The study adopts the method of document analysis, and this method comprises two steps. In the first step, our understanding of discourses is based on critical discourse analysis, henceforth CDA, as outlined by Fairclough (1992, 2010) and Wodak (2008). Characteristic of this critical approach is the maintenance of a “weak boundary between theoretical practice and the practice it theorises” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 31). This framework applies a dialectical approach to the analysis, and given its emancipatory knowledge interest, positions itself within the very practice it theorizes. Our understanding of discourse is inspired by Fairclough’s (1992: 64) definition: “Discourse is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.” Focus thus is placed on the communicative interactions between people in which they continuously make and remake their lives, the interplay between people and their environments. In political discourses, different positions are being negotiated, and in accordance with that, we see policy texts as ‘sites of struggle’ where the power balance between different positions differs over time (Wodak 2008). Texts are at the same time seen as materialized expressions of discourse and themselves part of an ongoing communicative practice extended in time and space. The term discourse also applies to what resources and/or constraints are present at a given time and space. We argue that the concept of discourse enables a deepened understanding of the contextual preconditions set up by different policy discourses, the power relations between different positions and how they change over time. Preconditions also affect people’s willingness to become part of a widened communicative environment and the possibility that they will as
proposed by Dewey. The procedure for elaborating the empirical categories follows the analytical steps of content analysis: (a) reading closely and systematically to identify the main educational discourses in the texts, (b) comparing the discursive constructions of the categories in the texts (i.e., semiotic legitimization), (c) analyzing the shifts in the justification of the discourses in the texts, and (d) taking the discursive and sociocultural aspects into account in understanding the displacements or changes in the discourses. Furthermore, we analyze the construction of policy as a whole and make comparisons in terms of intertextuality during the period 2000–2014.

We identify three basic documents: The Lisbon Strategy (European Council 2000), Europe 2020 (European Commission 2010), and Rethinking Education (European Commission 2012). Our empirical analyses reveal four central themes as discursive strategies: (a) economic growth and social cohesion in Europe, (b) European crisis and global competition, (c) the restructuring of education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results and (d) moral argumentation for more thorough control of compulsory education in Europe. The first two discursive strategies concern Europe and the EU as a whole, but the last two argumentative discourses more specifically concern the EU member states’ school systems. Thus, the first two discursive strategies formulate the core values that constitute the prerequisite for the latter two more action-oriented strategies for schools and education.

In the second step, we analyze the empirically substantiated policy discourses and their underlying philosophical assumptions in relation to some of the core concepts of Democracy and Education, reflecting Dewey’s philosophy. Against the backdrop of Dewey’s two criteria for democracy, to have, as fully and freely as possible, communication within and between different groups, we identify three central concepts, or concept areas, as fruitful tools of analysis when exploring the transnational policy of compulsory schooling after the introduction of the Lisbon Strategy. The first concept is social efficiency: we use the concept discussed in Chapters 7, 9, and 3 respectively, in Democracy and Education as a critical lens to examine the themes of “economic growth and social cohesion in Europe” and “the restructuring of education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results.” Secondly, communication as a process of social coordination and cooperation from Chapter 1 in Democracy and Education provides a critical lens for examining the themes of “a European crisis and global competition.” Drawing on Dewey’s perspective of the quality of human interaction as a moral interest in engaging intelligently and ethically with a changing world (Ch. 26) as a third concept, we explore the meaning of “moral argumentation for a more thorough control of compulsory education in Europe.”

This Deweyan reading of some of the main policy documents, starting with the Lisbon Strategy (2000), enables us to critically discuss some of the basic assumptions and their consequences for the EU-advocated transnational education policy. The benefit of adopting Dewey’s work Democracy and Education as the critical starting point is twofold: First, it helps discuss the relationship between education and society from a pedagogical point of view, and second, it helps clarify that all interpretations of discourses, for politicians as well as for the public, always provide alternatives for action.
The data sources include 28 EU policy documents from 2000 to 2014. We selected them because they are related to three key documents: (1) the principal document for the Lisbon Strategy (European Council 2000) with 12 subsequent documents within the OMC; (2) the principal document for Europe 2020 (European Commission 2010) with eight subsequent European semester documents including specific country reports, and recommendations to each country; and (3) the principal document for Rethinking Education (European Commission, 2012) with five subsequent documents regarding the agenda for European cooperation regarding schools.

8. The Lisbon Strategy: Analysis Results

This section includes the result of analyses of the four themes. In the first part, we analyze the theme of economic growth and social cohesion in Europe followed by the European crisis and global competition. Striving for restructuring education for greater efficiency and better knowledge results constitutes the third part of the section, and finally, moral argumentation for more thorough control of compulsory education in Europe concludes this section.

8.1. Economic Growth and Social Cohesion in Europe

In the Lisbon Strategy from 2000 (European Council 2000: § 5), the new strategic goal for the next decade for Europe was set: sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The goals, which should be met by 2010, should have been reached with a transition to a knowledge-based economy through better policies for structural reform for competitiveness and innovation, as well as “modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion” (European Council 2000: § 5). The aim of the strategy was to gain full employment and to strengthen regional social cohesion in Europe. The striving for a competitive and common Europe mirrors the purpose that was set out after the Second World War: From the start, the EU was thought of as a “peace project,” built on the assumption that common economic interests, close cooperation and trade would prevent future conflicts and war. Thus, from the start, the Lisbon Strategy combined the goals of economic growth and social cohesion. In the strategy, it was argued that a transition to a digital knowledge-based economy would also improve people’s quality of life and contribute to a better environment. “Every citizen must be equipped with the skills needed to live and work in this new information society” (European Council 2000: § 9). It is clear from the policy document that “every citizen” must be included, and the policy argues for combatting illiteracy and providing special attention to people with disabilities.

Consequently, there is a need for the nations’ education systems to adapt to the demands for improved quality in the labor market. Three target groups were identified: young people, unemployed adults and those whose jobs were at risk due to rapid changes. Education should have three main components: local learning
centers; basic skills with an emphasis on information technologies, foreign languages, entrepreneurship and social skills; and a system for qualification transparency, fostering the mobility of students and teachers. To spread best practices and achieve greater convergence, the OMC was implemented. From the beginning of the project in 2000, the Lisbon Strategy largely focused on education. During the first seven to eight years, the educational interest was centered on vocational training and common qualification systems in higher education (Lawn & Grek 2012). At the same time, a dense network of statistical data for comparison between the member states was developed, as an important presupposition for the OMC (Ozga & Lingard 2007; and Grek 2009). Around 2010, the focus shifted to implementing the European Framework for Key Competences in the national compulsory school system, and closer monitoring of the achievement of national school systems emerged.

When 2010 arrived, the optimistic formulations were gone. “The [economic] crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed structural weakness in Europe’s economy” (European Commission 2010: 5). In the new Europe 2020 strategy, the goal was set to “come out stronger from the crisis” and to develop the EU to be a “smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion” (Ibid.). By 2020, at least 75% of the European population should be employed, and the percentage of high school dropouts should be under 10%. At least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree. The EU leadership urged member states to ensure efficient investment in their national education systems, at all levels, from pre-school to tertiary education, to improve the educational outcomes at all stages. The evaluation of the national knowledge results is implemented through the surveys of the Programme for International Student Assessment surveys, henceforth PISA, run by the OECD. To ensure progress toward the goals set for 2020, “Education and Training Monitor” was implemented in 2012, to “unlock the full potential of education as a driver for growth and jobs” and to help the member states to pursue reforms for greater efficiency of their education systems. The country-specific assessment within the framework should ensure, among other things, that the percentage of 15-year-olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, assessed by the PISA tests. The underlying assumption is that education could solve the problem of the economic crisis and the demographic problem of an aging labor force. Another assumption is that if students lack an upper secondary education, they risk getting caught in unemployment and social exclusion.

When reading the policy documents through the lens of Dewey’s Democracy and Education, it becomes clear that well-functioning socialization in society, either in one’s own country or in Europe as a whole, is deemed very important. It is not only about the need to contribute to the common welfare but also a fear of the consequences if different groups are left out of society. In Dewey’s terms, it is not possible to position oneself outside society, but Dewey acknowledges that not all societies are good societies, which he exemplified with the metaphor of a gang of thieves. What characterizes good societies are the large number of values and interests in common within the group, and a recognition of shared values as a factor in social
control (MW 9: 92). Another criterion for a democratic society is free interaction between different social groups and continuous readjustment as consequences of encounters with other groups. Readiness for changes in habits, instead of merely a lively exchange, distinguishes the democratic approach (MW 9: 92) from an exchange of people and services for an economic boost from a human capital perspective. Since the European democracies cannot be authoritarian toward their inhabitants, the democracies need, similar to all other democracies, to rely on education for infusing a disposition of interest in people and circumstances other than their own. Thus, for democracies in general, as well as for Europe, it is not just about getting the informed citizens to the polls but also about appreciation of an “associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (MW 9: 93) in their everyday lives. In the EU policy documents, there is an awareness of the danger of creating enclaves and excluding groups, both from a social and an economic perspective. However, when it comes to education, the meaning of social efficiency is more in line with the economic thinking of supply and demand of skilled labor, than of handling challenging social situations in an intelligent and effective way, in accordance with Dewey’s thinking of social efficiency. There is a strong impact of an economic logic, not least from the OECD and their policy initiative in education, including the PISA surveys.

8.2 European Crisis and Global Competition

When launching the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, the European Council painted a picture of Europe entering a radically new era due to globalization and challenges from “a new knowledge-driven economy” (European Council 2000: § 1). The forthcoming expansion of the EU was discussed as an important part of the creation of new opportunities for growth and employment. An optimistic future was sketched where Europe’s “generally well educated workforce as well as social protection systems” (European Council 2000: § 3) were seen as capable of securing a stable framework for managing structural changes for a knowledge-based society. Through the introduction of the OMC, a communicative logic was built into the system in order to facilitate transmission of knowledge and experience between the member states in a continuous process of policy learning (Alexiadou 2014). The communicative logic of mutual learning is based on two premises: first, that the problems addressed are not national problems but common problems and, second, that “Europe” is the appropriate level for addressing those common questions (Dale 2009b). The process of Europeanization in education is formed as its own unit, by numerous networks, private actors and interest groups, through sharing of meanings, the production of identities and increasing commonalities. The exchange of contacts and conversations takes place at all levels: city-to-city networks, expert networks, research networks, networks between national and local authorities etc. (Lawn 2007). Although not explicitly discussed as such, the logic of the OMC connects to Dewey’s idea of social coordination and cooperation through communication opening up for different voices and experiences to be heard in a mutual process of policy learning. However, communication within and between different groups is mainly formed in what Nancy Fraser (1989) terms “from above”
by expert groups, forming expert “needs interpretations,” while the needs “from below,” forming oppositional discourses, are left out of discourse formations on European needs. The vivid exchange and discussions within and between networks, forming a discourse of Europe, are therefore first formed in a depoliticized, official economic arena (Wahlström 2010a). With this limitation regarding the participation of different social groups communicating within and between each other, the OMC does not provide communication in terms of the meaning the term is given in *Democracy and Education*. As Dewey notes in his discussion of the individuals who form a society, “what they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding.” Moreover, “the communication which insures participation in a common understanding” is one which secures similar “ways of responding to expectations and requirements” (MW 9: 7). Such communication for the creation of communities requires broad participation of different social groups, both vertically and horizontally. Despite the communicative methodology, the OMC is mainly about horizontal communication, discursively embedded in a wider policy environment that emphasizes global competition and the development of human capital through lifelong learning. Member states were invited into a voluntary development process built up around benchmarks, goals, indicators and the persuasive power exercised by the continuously growing amount of comparable data presented in different kinds of league tables and ranking lists (Lawn & Grek 2012). At first, the tone was very optimistic and the strategy for coordinating the policy initiatives among the member states through communication seemed to do the work as expected (European Council 2004: 4). However, by the time of the planned mid-term review in 2005, the previous optimism had been replaced by a growing sense of crisis due to what was described as a lack of progress (Robertson 2008).

External events since 2000 have not helped achieving the objectives but the European Union and its Member States have clearly themselves contributed to slow progress by failing to act on much of the Lisbon Strategy with sufficient urgency. This disappointing delivery is due to an overload agenda, poor coordination and conflicting priorities. (Kok 2004: 6)

The Kok report criticizes the EU as well as the member states and argues that “greater focus is required to build understanding of why Lisbon is relevant to every person in every household in Europe” (Kok 2004: 7). This argument comes closer to a Deweyan way of understanding communication. The problem is that communication still is expected to be implemented “from above,” instead of forming a public as Dewey argues in *The Public and Its Problems* (LW 2: 235-372), concerned with “the side effects” of risks in a time of globalization (Beck & Grande 2007). The focus of the crisis discourse that emerged around 2005 is the structural aspects with economic growth and jobs as core issues in order for the EU to regain global competitiveness. The European Commission states, “Europe’s performance has diverged from that of our competitors in other parts of the world” (2005: 4). Within only a year, the European discourse thus changed to more explicit crisis rhetoric urging immediate...
action in order to prevent a catastrophe: “At risk – in the medium to long run – is nothing less than the sustainability of the society Europe has built” (Kok 2004: 16). The Commission expresses great concern about structural ‘risks’ such as an average growth rate below comparable countries, a declining population starting in 2013/2014 and a smaller percentage of the population being employed (European Council 2006: 8). Without being able to manage these “risks,” the Commission states that the EU runs the risk of widening the gap with competitor countries such as the US, China and India when it comes to key knowledge economy sectors. The bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in the US in 2008 contributed to the cementation of the crisis discourse and formed the basis for the Commission to launch a new growth strategy for Europe called Europe 2020. With the financial crisis, external factors thus coincide with the former crisis discourse that focused mainly on potential future risks, establishing special premises when regarding time and space. In the preface to Europe 2020, Barroso states,

The crisis is a wake-up call, the moment where we recognize that “business as usual” would consign us to a gradual decline, to the second rank of the new global order. This is Europe’s moment of truth. (European Commission 2010: 2)

The emerging crisis discourse is thus built up by a combination of an argumentative strategy intended to legitimize extensive reforms and the realization of one out of many potential risks that Beck and Grande (2007) talk about as inherent in today’s globalized society, a financial crisis.

One of the fundamental problems posed by the Kok report (2004) and the Commission (European Commission 2010) is that the OMC has not been able to coordinate national policy initiatives as expected. It had given the member states too much communicative space, which had resulted in a slow and straggly reform agenda. Time is therefore an important aspect in future European policy initiatives. The joint interim report in 2006 urges that the serious situation in Europe calls for more effective reforms and that the “pace of reforms must be accelerated” (European Council 2006: 8). To gain better effectiveness, the EU needs to “go into the member-states and engage in an ever more intense discussion with civil society” according to Barroso (2005: 5). The discursive theme on more direct involvement by the Commission in national educational policy making is followed up in the Europe 2020 strategy. To strengthen the coordination of national policy initiatives, a new structure for surveillance is introduced. Compulsory schools are more explicitly included in the educational agenda than before (cf. Wahlström 2016b), and moral aspects are reintroduced into the European discourse, but without the social and democratic connotation that characterized the moral discourse in European policy during the 1960s and 1970s concerning the inclusion of marginalized groups, poverty reduction and solidarity (Nordin 2012). This time, the moral theme instead has to do with the individual responsibility of every European citizen to engage in a self-directed process of lifelong learning to be constantly employable.
8.3. The Restructuring of Education for Greater Efficiency and Better Knowledge Results

According to the European Commission (2010), the European crisis discourse calls for a restructuring of the educational sector in order to gain greater efficiency and better knowledge results. One of the main reasons for the lack of progress and a cornerstone in the crisis discourse, the Commission claimed, was the communicative freedom facilitated by the OMC. Too many voices and too much diverse interaction had made it difficult to maintain direction. From this argument, it becomes clear that “soft governance” (Lawn & Grek 2012) emphasizing networking and communication has a closer affinity to governing by governments than to widespread social participation.

In the Rethinking Education strategy from 2012, the arguments for education as preparing for democracy in the way Dewey understands democracy, as an “extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others” for breaking down “those barriers of class, race, and national territory” (MW 9: 93), are thus overshadowed by economic arguments. After having stated that the “broad mission of education and training encompasses objectives such as active citizenship, personal development and well-being,” the Commission immediately notes that

against the backdrop of sluggish economic growth and a shrinking workforce […] the most pressing challenges for Member States are to address the needs of the economy and focus on solutions to tackle fast-rising youth unemployment. (European Commission 2012)

The subsequent policy argumentation in Rethinking Education is almost entirely based on an economic logic of education as skills that “determine Europe’s capacity to increase productivity” (European Commission 2012: 2). The main concern for the education field is about providing the “right” skills for employability and to increase efficiency in educational institutions. Concepts such as skills and competencies also mark a discursive shift toward a new language for education characterized by individualization and market orientation. In the EU policy documents, the language of lifelong learning is described as a “semantic bridge” between the labor market and the educational sector. Lifelong learning in the context of the Lisbon Strategy has little to do with the democratic way of life advocated by Dewey. Although, just like Dewey, the policy documents link education, learning and the development of certain skills and competencies to a way of life, instead of to a strict formalized process within certain prepared school buildings, the vision that evolves in the EU documents is quite different. The development of competencies within the strict individualized conception of lifelong learning is described as follows by the Commission:

Key competences represent a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment. These should be developed by the end of the compulsory
schooling or training, and should act as a foundation for further learning. (European Commission 2004: 6)

The adaption of competencies is brought forward as an individual adaption strategy in order for citizens to become, and remain, employable throughout their lives. Lifelong learning is constructed as a decontextualized conception of education where general knowledge is developed in the minds of flexible learners. The introduction of psychological concepts such as “attitudes” and the discourses of competencies in terms of “transferable packages” reveal an agenda for European education that in many aspects operates in the opposite direction from the term social efficiency suggested by Dewey. Social efficiency in Dewey’s terms is “that socialization of mind which is actively concerned in making experiences more communicable” by going beyond social stratifications and barriers. In the same utterance, he dissociates himself from an interpretation of social efficiency “confined to the service rendered by overt acts, its chief constituent […] is omitted” (MW 9: 127). In Dewey’s understanding of social efficiency, the concept is an effect of expanded communication where intellectual, emotional and aesthetic horizons are widened (Hickman 2006). In contrast, when social efficiency is “severed from an active acknowledgement of the diversity of goods which life may afford to different persons,” social efficiency involves “hard and metallic things” (MW 9: 128). There is no reason to believe that the discourse of lifelong learning would not include a wish for expanded intellectual, emotional and aesthetic horizons. However, the European Union discourse of lifelong learning fails to acknowledge the criteria of individuals making their own intelligent choices, instead of “dictat[ing] to them what their good shall be” (MW 9: 128). From a democratic perspective, social efficiency and social control, as intelligent handling of different social situations, emerge from the individual acknowledging the public good. An argumentation imposed on individuals from outside and above, instead of being cultivated from within the individual, becomes “hard” and demanding according to Dewey. The European Union discourse of lifelong learning has not emerged from the citizens of Europe. Instead, the discourses of lifelong learning and effective learning belong to an economic interpretation of the needs that relate more to Europe and the individual member states in a human capital perspective and thus have difficulty reaching out to the individuals in the European region. Therefore, it is rational that the EU makes an effort to implement the key competencies within the European framework of lifelong learning through the national frameworks for education in order to reach greater efficiency and better knowledge results. Put differently, through a reduction, instead of an expansion, of participants in communication, Europe should gain greater efficiency in education. The focus must be on the individual construction of knowledge instead of what is developed between people in intersubjective transactions.

Although still based on the principle of subsidiarity, the Europe 2020 expresses a growing interest in including compulsory schooling in the Lisbon Strategy more explicitly than before as a means of strengthening the role of the EU in governing national educational reforms and to achieve better knowledge results in the European
region. The EU promotes an individualized and competitive conception of education in which individual success in a flexible market is set before fostering participation in a broader sense, as citizens and humans. To achieve greater effectiveness in implementing the lifelong learning agenda, Europe 2020 includes a new architecture to secure a better and more effective implementation called “the European semester.” It rests on two pillars, one with a thematic focus for the implementation of seven “flagship initiatives” that cover different policy areas. The other is a system of “country-specific recommendations” aimed at strengthening the role of the Commission in governing national policy and to identify what was described as “national bottlenecks.” The Commission has also acquired a strengthened mandate to enforce the recommendations delivered by the Commission.

In cases where recommendations are not followed up sufficiently within the timeframe provided, the Commission may issue policy warnings and ensure effective enforcement through appropriate incentives and sanctions. (European Commission 2010: 6)

This means that there now is a strong movement to centralize the evaluation of educational results in Europe, as an intergovernment organization, and at the national level in individual states. Even the issue of school content has received increased attention from key players in Europe, as well as individual member states.

8.4. Moral Argumentation for More Thorough Control of Compulsory Education in Europe

The European crisis discourse means a renewed interest in moral aspects. The launch of the Lisbon Strategy meant a reduction in discursive themes such as solidarity, poverty reduction and democracy in favor of themes such as lifelong learning, competitiveness and accountability. However, the risk of increased economic nationalism and protectionism in the wake of the crisis discourse led the Commission to reintroduce the moral dimension the policy agenda. In Europe 2020, the Commission argues that in order to enter a new, smart and sustainable economy, Europe needs to act collectively (European Commission 2010: 7). The new economy should prioritize smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: smart in terms of focusing on knowledge and innovation, sustainable through increased resource efficiency and inclusive in delivering economic as well as social and territorial cohesion. In addition to a strengthened surveillance system and better and more reliable data to measure progress, social cohesion is highlighted as an important policy area to address to realize the European vision of a new economy. When looking ahead, the Commission counts on Europe’s strong values, democratic institutions, our consideration for economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity, our respect for the environment, our cultural diversity, respect for gender equality. (European Commission 2010: 7)

Europe 2020 opens up for a widened policy agenda linking economic growth to aspects such as common values, diversity and solidarity. The production and use of comparable
In order to foster citizens who take personal responsibility for fulfilling the overarching Lisbon objectives, the Commission states that lifelong learning has to guide education at all levels.

Moreover, the framework for competences, as requested by the Lisbon Council, should be seen from the perspective of lifelong learning, i.e. acquired by the end of compulsory schooling but also learned, updated and maintained throughout life. (European Commission 2004: 3)

Lifelong learning as a means for securing smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is explicitly discussed as an educational concept, bridging the gap between the educational sector and the labor market. To foster the spirit of lifelong learning in Europe’s citizens and secure their acquisition of the appropriate competences and skills, the crisis discourse contributes to more thorough control of compulsory education (cf. Nordin 2012; and Wahlström 2016b). Compulsory education is central for fostering common values and a sense of shared responsibility for the EU’s overarching objectives for economic growth. In the policy document Rethinking Education, the Commission states the importance of developing transversal skills and emphasizes entrepreneurial skills in particular, methods for transforming knowledge and innovation into creating employment and businesses.

Key actions are to ensure that measures are taken to introduce transversal skills across all curricula from early stages of education up to higher education, using innovative and student-centred pedagogical approaches, and to design assessment tools through which levels of competence can be effectively assessed and evaluated. All young people should benefit from at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education. (European Commission 2012: 15)

More thorough control of compulsory schooling in Europe thus means an increased focus on transversal skills as the guiding principle in organizing the knowledge content to be learned in schools. Individualized and decontextualized knowledge enhances flexibility and thus also employability, and should permeate all levels of education in Europe, including compulsory schooling.

The European crisis discourse thus strengthens the economic imperative at all educational levels, emphasizing that there are no alternatives other than to invest, nationally and personally, in the acquisition of the necessary skills. However, despite the strong economic imperative, the Rethinking Education policy document has discursive elements pointing in other directions, elements that widen the idea of what
education is, or could be, all about. The Commission states: “The broad mission of education and training encompasses objectives such as active citizenship, personal development and well-being” (European Commission 2012: 2). Combining this broadened definition with the expressed emphasis in *Europe 2020* for Europe to open up to the rest of the world in ever-more intense communication and cooperation as a way to combat the negative effects of the financial crisis holds a starting point for a more profound rethinking of education than what is offered within the human capital discourse.

The Lisbon Strategy and its subsequent education policy ideals thus include a dominant moral argumentation for every citizen’s duty to contribute to increasing economic welfare in the European region and a more unseen and ambiguous moral duty to communicate and learn from others. The latter partly finds resonance in the concluding section of *Democracy and Education*: All education that has the force to develop students’ interest in sharing effectively in social life is moral, and the essential moral interest is to develop an “[i]nterest in learning from all contacts of life” (MW 9: 370). The text’s terminating lines summarize Dewey’s fundamental idea that has been prominent throughout the book, namely, that the most important outcome of education is a person who is willing to and capable of engaging intelligently and ethically in a changing world (Hansen 2006). This is the moral measure for all education. As Hansen (2006) notes, this moral claim echoes Immanuel Kant’s imperative that we should always treat others as ends in themselves and never treat any other human being as a means to our own ends. In striving to lead our lives in this way, we can be said to lead a moral life, and education is an important means for becoming moral selves. According to this way of thinking, quality of life can never be formed only by various quantities of material assets or social capital but by social efficiency in communication and responses through encounters with others. Thus, living a moral life is not something you can achieve through education; living a moral life is something you do through and in being educated, in the same way experience is not a collection of personal memories and conclusions but something you do, as an active verb, on your way through life in contact with others. The moral quality of life is discernible through the situations humans create (see Hansen 2006). The formulations in the EU policy documents on education partly acknowledge this insight, but they focus on a human capital understanding of the need for all people to be “included” as a prerequisite of economic growth.

9. Concluding Thoughts

The EU is based on the idea of an internal market. Therefore, it is not a surprising result of this study’s analysis that the transnational policy documents discussed compulsory education and the national European school systems mainly in terms of a human capital discourse, based on economic arguments for guaranteeing basic skills, decreasing dropout rates and promoting teaching efficiency. However, examining the policy documents from the perspective of Dewey’s philosophy of democracy and
education allows for going beyond a limited human capital perspective and making visible an alternative approach to education.

A “democratic perspective” expands the vision of a European citizenship in relation to national citizenship. With reference to Hansen (2006: 166), Dewey believes that “the art of living and the art of democracy are symbiotic.” Dewey concludes that a society “which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life” is from this standpoint a democratic society (MW 9: 105). This form of “associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (MW 9: 93) requires a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder. (MW 9: 105)

In this way, there is a strong connection between Dewey’s understanding of social life, democracy and education.

In the study, we used Dewey’s concepts of social efficiency, communication and the moral interest for a critical analysis of the content of EU policy documents that are relevant to education. The analysis reveals the possibility of a re-understanding of the policy documents. We are, as readers, not bound to accept the term “social efficiency” as a human capital term. We can choose to interpret and argue for an understanding of social efficiency as taking an active interest in other people’s lives, the way other people look at life and what they appreciate in order to live a good life. We do not need to understand “communication” as a process of passing information from one level to the other, for example, from the European Council to the national parliaments; instead, we can imagine communication, as Dewey did, as participation and shared experiences from the ground. Finally, moral interest is not necessarily linked to European economic welfare but far more to the way we respond to the Other. Such an alternative reading makes it possible to also pay attention to the possibilities and the potentialities that could hide beyond the dominant limited human capital discourse.

We wrote these lines on November 14, 2015. That day, it was reported that about 130 people had been killed in six coordinated terror attacks in Paris and that many people were injured. During the fall, the Swedish government also estimated that 150 000 people would apply for asylum in Sweden this year. During just one week in October, 9179 asylum applicants arrived in Sweden. Of them, 2441 were unaccompanied children (under the age of 18), mostly from Afghanistan but also some from Syria (DN 2015-10-19). During the year as a whole, several thousand refugees have come to Sweden and Germany each week while other European countries have regarded themselves as transit countries where refugees may cross but not stay. Other European countries do not permit transit or applications for asylum. Italy and Greece are experiencing tremendous pressure, as those countries become responsible for receiving refugees who arrive by boat in Europe.
In this crisis of nearby wars, terror attacks and refugees in Europe, economy and competition are not viable concepts for seeking solutions, even though the economy certainly plays an important role in handling the problems. Instead, we argue that the European member states, their citizens and their educators need a different language for defining themselves as a public (LW 2: 235-372). A shift to a language adapted to the real crisis and the fear of future crises in Europe could preferably be a language that understands concepts such as social efficiency, communication and a moral interest as full and free communication within and between different groups as Dewey developed his philosophy on democracy and education, in order to maintain and strengthen a democratic education and a democratic way of living for all.

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Narrowing Down Education. A Deweyan Perspective on the EU Educational Framework

Abstract: At least since the Lisbon Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, European education has been increasingly framed in terms of a neoliberal rallying cry. Such a gesture has widely affected education and schooling in Europe and has pushed educational institutions and processes towards a significant transformation. Such a transformation – and this is my point – is anything but benign: it implies a lack of invaluable educational features such as critical agency, democratic sharing, and meaning creation. In this paper, I wish to address this issue in the light of Dewey’s thought and philosophy of education, mainly in reference to his masterpiece Democracy and Education. In particular, drawing from the Deweyan conception of democracy and meaning creation, I wish to argue that a different conception of education, where education is not rationed, individualised or commodified, is required. I also argue that the EU framework on education is inconsistent, as it is not able to fulfil its own goals. By enacting the EU educational framework, we indeed lose sight of the variety, complexity and unpredictability of education and society.

Introduction

At least since the Lisbon Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EU 2000), European education has been increasingly framed in terms of a neoliberal rallying cry. This “neoliberal cascade” (Connell 2013) has widely affected education and schooling in Europe, pushing educational institutions and processes and even what we may call “educational subjectivities” (of both teachers and students) towards a significant transformation (Ball 2003). Such a transformation – and this is my point – is anything but benign: it implies a lack, if not an eclipse, of invaluable educational features such as critical agency, democratic sharing among all the actors of educational processes and practices, and meaning creation. In my paper, I wish to address this issue in the light of Deweyan thought and educational philosophy, mainly in reference to his masterpiece Democracy and Education. In particular, I focus on a) the well-known Deweyan understanding of democracy as “a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (MW 9: 93); and b) on meaning creation and its relationship to educational processes and practices. As we know, Dewey related the growth and wealth of democracy to “varied points of shared common interest,” “mutual interests” and “freer interaction between social groups” (MW 9: 92). Importantly, such features are not only basic features of democracy but are also, according to the Deweyan challenge to any form of dualism, means of pursuing individual and collective growth. The failure to recognise such a transactional relationship results in an impoverished conception of education at the individual and collective levels – and indeed, such a division between the lives of individuals and the life of community

* Seconda Università di Napoli [vasco.dagnese@unina2.it].

does not make sense within a Deweyan framework. Thus, I wish to argue that only through a different conception of education, one in which education is not rationed, individualised or commodified, do we find the clear sense of “unattained possibilities” (LW 1: 143) that in turn make living worthwhile. I also argue that the EU framework on education is inconsistent in that it is not able to fulfil its own goals.

This paper is organised into three sections. In the first section, I analyse key documents in European educational politics. Starting with the Lisbon Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and continuing with Europe 2020 and Rethinking Education, I explicate basic features of the European framework on education and argue why and how it is actually problematic. In this section, I also engage with critical literature on what we may call the neoliberal turn in education. In the second and third sections, I specifically address what I see as the main weaknesses of the EU framework on education while suggesting a different perspective on educational processes. More specifically, in the second section, I address the EU propensity to conceive of education as adaptation – both individuals and educational systems are, in the EU’s words, expected to “adapt [to] the demands of the knowledge society” (European Council 2000: § 25). In the third section, I discuss the EU’s tendency toward the individuation and atomisation of educational practices, whereby educational actors – individuals as well as institutions – are viewed as isolated and distinct elements, each pursuing their own goals. Finally, I argue that these two tendencies – adaptation and atomisation – taken together entail a narrowing down of the democratic and ethical dimensions of educational processes and practices. In other words, these tendencies become a threat to democracy when they are imposed on schooling and education.

1. How Does the EU Conceive of Education?

Although the history of European co-operation on educational policy dates back to the early 1960s, the impact and scope of this cooperation “has moved with increased velocity in recent years” (Lawn & Lingard 2002: 290). According to Lawn and Lingard, “like an emerging behemoth, the European area of education policy has gradually involved more and more system administrators in national agencies, cities and regions” (Ibid.: 290). Importantly, such influential processes has affected the educational system at all scales, from the Continental to the national and regional levels; even individual schools and teachers are required to conform to the EU framework on education (Lawn & Lingard 2002; Ball 2003; Clarke 2012; and Connell 2013).

Several scholars have discussed this effect, and EU gestures have been described and labelled in various ways, ranging from those of “creeping extension” (Field 1998: 26) to “covert activity” (Ryba 1992: 11) and even to cases of “semi-clandestine perversion” (No’voa 2000: 33). Criticisms of this underlying educational framework have also been raised in the fields of educational philosophy and theory and mainly highlight the narrow view of education emerging from such a framework and its

2. For a detailed analysis of this issue, see Murphy 2003; and Keeling 2006.
undemocratic effects on education and schooling (cf. Burbules & Torres 2000; Biesta 2006, 2015a, 2015b; Simons 2006; and Masschelein & Simons 2008). It is outside the scope of this paper to comprehensively analyse the bulk of scholarly work on this issue – not least because such criticisms belong to a broad variety of conceptual frameworks and perspectives; nevertheless, some engagement is required for my own purposes. In this section I shall focus on what I believe are the most critiqued effects of the neoliberal framework on educational policies, and I show how EU educational policies penetrate such a framework. More specifically, I wish to show how the EU educational framework exhibits the following: a) a strong orientation towards adaptation and a definite view of education as a means of human capital formation: both individuals and educational systems are expected to adapt “to the demands of the knowledge society” (European Council 2000: § 25), and b) an individuation or atomisation of educational practices, whereby educational actors – individuals as well as institutions – are viewed as isolated and distinct elements, each one pursuing its own path and eclipsing the democratic and ethical dimensions of educational processes and practices. In making my point, let me begin with the introductory statement of what is known as the Lisbon Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. I quote three significant passages and then provide my comments:

The European Council held in Lisbon in March 2000 marks a decisive moment for the direction of policy and action in the European Union. Its conclusions affirm that Europe has indisputably moved into the Knowledge Age, with all that this will imply for cultural, economic and social life. Patterns of learning, living and working are changing apace. This means not simply that individuals must adapt to change, but equally that established ways of doing things must change too. The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council confirm that the move towards lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. Therefore, Europe’s education and training systems are at the heart of the coming changes. They too, must adapt. (EU 2000: 3; emphasis added)

The conclusion is that, above all, education and training systems must adapt to the new realities of the 21st century. (Ibid.: 6)

Europe’s education and training systems need to adapt both to the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment. (European Council 2000: § 25)

In these quoted passages, it is above all important to note how the neoliberal framework is taken for granted. ‘Social life’ is narrowed down to its economic features: the “knowledge-based economy” and “the need for an improved level and quality of employment.” This implies that knowledge is defined and consumed by its monetary value and that human beings are conceived of and viewed as human capital. Such an approach is both characteristic of and functional for neoliberalism. As Connell puts it,

Neoliberalism has a definite view of education, understanding it as human capital formation. It is the business of forming the skills and attitudes needed by a productive workforce – productive in the precise sense of producing an ever-growing mass of
profits for the market economy. “Human capital” is a metaphor, and in itself too narrow. However, this economistic idea does catch an important feature of education, that it is a creative process oriented to the future. (Connell 2013: 104)

Finally, there is no competition between or acknowledgment of different perspectives on society and education; the competition is occurring within the system, namely, between schools, teachers and students, and not between different systems or models of society. In such a framework, individuals and institutions are required to continually strive to enhance their positions as established in various ranking and league tables (cf. Alexander 2011; and Au 2008). From an educational point of view, this implies that the only possible option for education is for it to adjust itself to the system’s requirements; as it is explicitly stated that “education and training systems must adapt to the new realities of the 21st century.” Individuals too, as is made clear, “must adapt to change.” We are not far from truth in saying that at the very heart of such a stance is the desire to subsume every educational aim, possibility, or value into its own model. Moreover, such a stance is predetermined and is evident in itself; it is not a matter of on-going discussion. In this way, EU “educational” policies, de facto, tend to expropriate subjects and communities of their knowledge and culture, denying their legitimacy. We come to see how the EU’s notion of education is ultimately exclusive rather than inclusive. At the risk of being pedantic, I wish to clarify this issue: the EU states that individuals must be included in educational politics, thus contributing to the development of society – which has more than a passing similarity to the No Child Left Behind act. However, the very problem resides in the fact that individuals – both children and adults – are not included in the first place because the EU statement, so to speak, leaves no room for transformations or transactions among individuals and environments. To be included, individuals must previously meet certain requirements, and if they do not, they must adjust themselves first to be included in educational paths. Of course, education also entails socialisation and the need for judgment, and it is concerned with providing individuals with the necessary skills for living in society – the well-known paradox of educational freedom and educational authority (see Biesta 2009, 2010). However, such a strong orientation towards a pre-established qualification of individuals raises serious concerns regarding the commitment of education to democracy and newness. To the extent that education is pre-conceived throughout, it is difficult to envisage how critical agency, which is certainly a pivotal feature of education, can be pursued.

Strong commitments to the labour market and the narrowing down of education – and living – to its economic dimension are reinforced in Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In this document, which forms the basis for EU policies from 2010 to the next decade, we find the following:

Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation. [...]  “Youth on the move” to enhance the performance of education systems and to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market. (European Commission 2010: 5)

3. The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the U.S.
To ensure that the competences required to engage in further learning and the labour market are acquired and recognised throughout general, vocational, higher and adult education and to develop a common language and operational tool for education/training and work. (Ibid.: 19)

Once again, we find the same implicit assumptions. The only possible option available is for education to follow and adjust; it is a means of facilitating “the entry of young people to the labour market”; the first aim of all actors involved in educational paths is “to ensure that the competences required to engage in further learning and the labour market are acquired and recognised” – which is why education is all-consumed by learning (cf. Biesta 2006). I wish to highlight that the instrumental value of education is not only a problem in itself, but it also carries the connotation of an “atomisation” of education at all levels, thus pushing towards a restriction of educational opportunities, a concept referenced directly in the following:

Instrumentalism is thus linked to another tendency in neoliberal education policy, a shift towards individuation or atomisation, whereby educational institutions and agents are viewed as isolated and distinct elements, with little or no recognition of how they also comprise larger systems or structures, or of how the meaning of each can only be understood in relation to that larger whole. This individualisation is evident in the frequent lack of recognition of the key role of context in understanding the work of individuals. (Clark 2012: 300)

Such a process of atomisation is apparent in the EU’s push towards personalised paths for learning:

Everyone should be able to follow open learning pathways of their own choice, rather than being obliged to follow predetermined routes to specific destinations. This means, quite simply, that education and training systems should adapt to individual needs and demands rather than the other way round. (EU 2000: 8)

Although this passage should suggest the adoption of a broader framework on education, one in which everyone is able to choose and pursue her/his own concept of learning and education, I believe something different is at work here to the extent that such “open learning pathways” are to be pursued according to “the demands of the knowledge society and to the need for an improved level and quality of employment” (European Council 2000: § 25). Such pathways respond only to the overall requirements of a “peculiar” vision of society. In other words, individual pathways are not the means by which individuals freely choose one way or another, one form of content or another, in an open and transactional interaction with society and environments. Rather, such pathways seem to be the ways in which individuals can best adapt to the pre-specified requirements of the neoliberal vision. Then, within the EU framework, the space for politics is replaced by a space in which anything can be conceived of and enacted in terms of the pre-established services delivered. The only matters up for discussion are the efficiency and performativity of the system under examination:
The relationship between the neo-liberal state and its citizens’ has become less a political relationship – that is, a relationship between government and citizens who, together, are concerned about the common good – and more an economic relationship – that is, a relationship between the state as provider and the taxpayer as consumer of public services. (Biesta 2010: 53-4)

An additional document, *Rethinking Education*, delivered by the European Commission in 2012, works in the same vein. Its main passages are symptomatic of the EU’s gestures towards education. Let me quote them:

Rethinking Education was set up in 2012 to reform education systems across the EU so as to meet growing demand for higher skills levels and reduce unemployment. What is needed? With labour markets and the demand for skills changing, education systems need to adapt so that they can cope with the rising demand anticipated over the next decade. (European Commission 2012)

The European Commission will continue to take action and pursue discussions designed to ensure that education systems introduce new teaching and learning methods by 2020 that will enable them to equip students with the right skills for employment. (*Ibid.*)

The point I wish to make clear is that such a document – like the other quoted above – is not a framework created for a specific purpose (namely, how education must face its function of qualification or its commitment to the labour market). I do not object to anything in regards to such a requirement, and it would be an odd opinion indeed if one were to consider education as extraneous to such a pivotal issue. The problem, as simple as it is misguided, is that this aim is pursued as the only function that education must perform. There is nothing wrong with a single institution or some peculiar scholarly perspective that frames education in such terms – indeed, I am also of course arguing for a specific educational logic, and I thus, in a sense, restrict education to one specific logic. However, problems associated with the case exposed here are twofold: a) the institution of which we are speaking is the EU, which is the major actor in European educational processes and practices; in other words, one would expect a wide, multidimensional and inclusive approach from such an institution; and b) in the EU’s documents on education, we find no trace of alternative perspectives or, importantly, initiatives aimed at discussing and broadening its approach: all educational actors are expected to enact these pre-conceived policies. In these sentences a strong erosion of both ethical and democratic dimensions of education through neoliberal policies is enacted,

any idea of education as a public responsibility and site of democratic and ethical practice is replaced by education as a production process, a site of technical practice and a private commodity governed by a means/end logic – summed up, again, in that supremely technomanagerial question – ‘what works?’ (Fielding & Moss 2011: 23-4)

Europe is also facing a skills deficit and, during a time of economic crisis, highly-skilled individuals have a better chance of finding a job. With an estimated 90% of jobs requiring digital skills in the near future, it is thus essential that education and training systems provide individuals with the required skills. (European Commission 2012)
Now, to first discuss why a different logic is required, let me make an additional remark. One of the main features of such a framework, consistent with the neoliberal narrative, is its tendency to close the loop between the knowledge required to analyse the situation in which education currently finds itself and the knowledge that education should produce. The neoliberal – and EU – narrative tends to speak in a detached and supposedly ‘objective’ manner in terms of given aims, percentages, tables, data and ‘facts’ that do not allow any other type of analysis or knowledge to enter the educational debate. Such a choice in turn works to produce a form of knowledge that is strictly functional to its base (Ball 2003). As a corollary, because the aims and purposes of education are given in advance, critical engagement with educational aims, purposes, and the overall framework is neither required nor pursued. Most likely, such a politics of learning will bring about an impoverishment of students’ (and teachers’) critical agency. In what follows, drawing on Deweyan reflection, I attempt to hint at a different educational logic.

2. Education as Adaptation

Thus far, I have attempted to argue against the EU educational framework. Here, to first explore why and how Deweyan educational thought may be useful in analysing such an issue while suggesting a different way to conceive of education, let me make an additional remark about the choice to use a Deweyan framework. I begin, by way of introduction, with a passage from the *Preface* to *Democracy and Education*:

This book connects the growth of democracy with the development of the experimental method in the sciences, evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences, and the industrial reorganization, and is concerned to point out the changes in subject matter and method of education indicated by these developments. (MW 9: 3)

The passage, although it is well known to any Deweyan scholar, is useful in clarifying a question: Dewey’s aim, as we know, was never to address education from an abstract, ‘philosophical’ perspective. Quite on the contrary, in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey was concerned time and again with how we must understand education as a “necessity of [l]ife” (MW 9: 4), as the title of Chapter One so powerfully suggests. According to the Deweyan framework, education is, above all, a matter of life and death because

the living thing may easily be crushed by superior force, it none the less tries to turn the energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence. If it cannot do so, it does not just split into smaller pieces (at least in the higher forms of life), but loses its identity as a living thing. (MW 9: 4)

Such a conception of education is not limited to the passage quoted above. On page five, we find an even bolder statement concerning the need for education: “The primary ineluctable facts of the birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group determine the necessity of education” (MW 9: 5). Dewey definitely
conceived of education as the basis from which human beings face “the problem of how to engage in life” (MW 14: 58). Throughout his work, from *How We Think* to *Knowing and the Known*, Dewey clearly recognises the dangers and horrors that dwell in our aleatory world:

Man finds himself living in an aleatory world; his existence involves, to put it baldly, a gamble. The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable, uncannily unstable. Its dangers are irregular, inconstant, not to be counted upon as to their times and seasons. Although persistent, they are sporadic, episodic. [...] These things are as true today as they were in the days of early culture. It is not the facts which have changed, but the methods of insurance, regulation and acknowledgment. (LW 1: 43-4; emphasis added)

Such a world “genuine hazard” (LW 1: 62) demands effective responses so that human beings can survive. Human beings, from their first appearance on Earth, have been thrown into such an aleatory world. To survive, they have been called on to transform unsettled and indeterminate situations into ones of more stability and clarity, thereby finding grounding elements through the flow of experience (LW 12: 186). For Dewey, knowledge – and education – are literally a matter of life or death. Thus, in employing a Deweyan framework, we cannot be charged with being removed from reality and uninterested in the concrete realities of society and education. In what follows then, in the light of the Deweyan conception of education and democracy, I wish to offer some warnings on the weaknesses and risks associated with enacting such policies. I also wish to show that EU framework is inconsistent and, namely, that it is not able to perform its own functions. More specifically, in this section I address the first issue: the EU conception of education as adaptation.

In analysing the account of education Dewey provides in *Democracy and Education* and in keeping my goal in mind, we can see that Dewey raises two questions that undermine the EU framework: a) the extent to which it is possible to give “purely external direction” (MW 9: 30) to educational processes and practices, and b) the question of the “diversity of stimulation” (MW 9: 90) needed to actually have education. I begin with the former question. The EU’s statements that “individuals must adapt to change” and that “Europe’s education and training systems” must adapt as well (EU 2000: 3) seem to overestimate opportunities to externally direct educational paths and processes. Education in the EU framework is conceived of as a force from above that shapes individuals by “putting them on the right track” as it were. In my opinion, it is not important if such an approach is labelled by the EU as good for individuals, society, or both. The very problem lies in the fact that such a gesture is inconsistent. In other words, it does not fulfil its own purposes. As Dewey states, in education,

purely external direction is impossible. The environment can at most only supply stimuli to call out responses. These responses proceed from tendencies already possessed by the individual. Even when a person is frightened by threats into doing something, the threats work only because the person has an instinct of fear. If he has not, or if, though having it, it is under his own control, the threat has no more influence upon him than
light has in causing a person to see who has no eyes. While the customs and rules of adults furnish stimuli which direct as well as evoke the activities of the young, the young, after all, participate in the direction which their actions finally take. In the strict sense, nothing can be forced upon them or into them […] Speaking accurately, all direction is but re-direction. (MW 9: 30)

This statement, as often occurs when analysing Deweyan claims, works at different levels: a) at an educational level, b) at an ethico-political level, and c) at an existential level. With regards to the educational level, when analysing interactions between individuals and the environment, Dewey focuses on the individual level. He states that the “[t]he environment can at most only supply stimuli to call out responses” and that “[t]hese responses proceed from tendencies already possessed by the individual.”

Now, it is a given that some of the most Deweyan revolutionary insights come from his challenge to any form of dualism and from his transactional view of individuals and things as emerging from shared experience and communication. Nonetheless, it would be fruitful to focus on the fact that Dewey puts a clear emphasis on the individual angle in this passage. If I am allowed to interpret such a gesture, I believe that what is at stake here is not a theoretical stance – in other words, the transactional approach, whereby individual and society take form together, is not in question. The point rather is an existential and ethico-political one. The Deweyan call is a warning against any totalising thought or all-inclusive approach. In other words, it is a call to freedom: “nothing can be forced upon [young people] or into them.” Even an individual acting “frightened by threats” acts on “tendencies already possessed by the individual.” This is why “we never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment.” What educators must do is “design environments for the purpose” (MW 9: 23). The EU, conversely, takes the environment as a given and then requires the individual to adapt to such an environment by means of education. As we can see, the EU turns education on its head, thus simultaneously limiting both individuals and collective educational possibilities. Such a limitation also works to undermine EU goals of innovation and achievement because every achievement, in Deweyan conception, is based on personal commitment – the “tendencies already possessed by the individual” (MW 9: 30) and “shared common interest” (MW 9: 92), or the very things that EU educational politics removes.

The same happens when we consider the Deweyan focus on meaning. Although I develop this point in the following section, I wish to highlight here that Dewey repeatedly draws our attention to the relationship between meaning creation and shared experience. As he states, “things gain meaning by being used in a shared experience or joint action” (MW 9: 20). What is important to bear in mind is that such a “shared experience or joint action” cannot – by definition – be an experience shaped from above in response to pre-specified demands. For sharing to occur, we need freedom (the freedom to interact and the freedom to project possible aims and goals). In Democracy and Education, Dewey expends crucial words on meaning creation, going so far as to state that,
There is no limit to the meaning which an action may come to possess. It all depends
upon the context of perceived connections in which it is placed; the reach of imagination
in realizing connections is inexhaustible. (MW 9: 215)

In this passage, we come to see how action does not have meaning in itself; action
does not carry any meaning because “it all depends upon the context of perceived
connections in which it is placed.” In other words, the human capacity to create
meaning – in Deweyan words, “the capacity for constantly expanding the range and
accuracy of one’s perception of meanings” (MW 9: 130) – is potentially inexhaustible.
A limitation in connections flows inevitably from narrowing down the creation and
perception of meaning, namely, in narrowing down the broadening of “the meaning-
horizon” (MW 9: 84) that Dewey so powerfully calls for.

Such narrowing down has strong effects on the subject as well. If, according to
Dewey, “the self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation
through choice of action […] [and] the generous self consciously identifies itself with
the full range of relationships implied in its activity” (MW 9: 361-2), then by limiting
the choices the self can effect and its range of relationships, the EU ends up also
limiting the contribution that the self can make to the formation and development of
society. This point leads me to discuss the second feature of EU educational politics,
that is, the atomisation of educational practices.

3. Atomising Education

While one could argue that the individuation of educational processes and
practices pursued by the EU constitutes a step towards the free and open development
of learning possibilities – in the end one can claim that individuals are able to choose
what, when and how to learn through such a path – it is my contention that this gesture
entails a strong limitation on educational possibilities, both individual and social, and
that such a freedom is only an ostensible one. In this section, I wish to argue that the
EU’s gesture entails the restriction of an individual’s educational opportunities and
even a threat to democratic society as a whole.

The atomisation of educational practices affects two related levels: a) the level
at which individuals and society shape one another and at which, in a sense, both
come into the world together; and b) the level at which meaning arises. The first
level is one of the most frequently analysed by Deweyan scholars. One of the most
important insights of Dewey’s transactional approach is his account of democracy
as “primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience”
(MW 9: 93). Through such a mode, as we know, through “more numerous and
more varied points of contact” between people who share interests and stimuli, “a
liberation of powers” (MW 9: 93) is achieved. This occurs because “[t]he individual
in his isolation is nothing; only in and through an absorption of the aims and meaning
of organized institutions does he attain true personality” (MW 9: 101). Thus, it is
in a sense surprising how the cradle of democracy lacks such a pivotal dimension
in its educational processes. In what follows, however, I wish to focus on another
unfortunate outcome of atomisation, an outcome that affects the creation of meanings. Let us pay attention to the following passage:

There is no limit to the meaning which an action may come to possess. It all depends upon the context of perceived connections in which it is placed; the reach of imagination in realizing connections is inexhaustible. (MW 9: 215)

Here we come to see how action, namely the “most basic category” (Biesta & Barbules 2003: 9) of the Deweyan approach, has no meaning in itself. Of course, actions are enacted in determinate contexts aimed at realising determined purposes. However, this does not complete the meaning of our actions. In Deweyan terms, meanings are always open to further creation/interpretation (Garrison 1996). However, at the very same time, they are always at risk of collapsing, of imploding, or of being consumed. Importantly, these meanings may be unlimited. Education, for Dewey, is also the means through which human life gains its ever-open and ever-possible meaning. The problem is that such an ever-present potentiality of further meanings can be enacted only when imaginations can realise actual connections, as such a potentiality depends on “the context of perceived connections in which it is placed.” Stated negatively, when such connections are impeded or removed, the creation of meanings is curtailed as well. Such an atomisation of educational practices and processes also threatens thinking itself. Despite the grouping of thinking and reflective thought that has largely appeared in interpretations of his work, Dewey highlights in several passages how thinking entails an inescapable uncertainty at its core. In his words, “to consider the bearing of the occurrence upon what may be, but is not yet, is to think” (MW 9: 153). Such an uncertainty, faithful to his philosophy, also constitutes the door to growth and education: the possibility, in Granger’s words, “[to] liberate and expand the potential meanings of things” (Granger 2006: 7).

A number of scholars have analysed meaning creation in Deweyan work. Due to space restrictions, I wish to linger only on the relationships between meaning, possibilities and newness. To make my point I will draw from Garrison’s, Granger’s and Waks’ (converging) accounts.

In a 1994 article, Jim Garrison, in discussing the function of art, states, “the ‘truth’ of art, of poetry, is that it can disclose the beauty of meaningful possibilities that are concealed beneath the mask of the actual, the ordinary, the everyday” (Garrison 1994: 3). He then goes on to state that such a function pursued by “expansive imagination” is essential for freedom to exist:

A lack of imagination and thereby a sense of possibility is the greatest oppression there is. It is here that any critical and transformational theory of education must take its departure […] Without an expansive imagination, one willing to go beyond approved limits, it is impossible to be free. (Ibid.: 3)

It is crucial to bear in mind that freedom, according to Dewey, serves as the basis from which we can conceive of communication, democracy and growth. Without the possibility of expanding freedom, all Deweyan work would end in emptiness. In fact,
we can even say that his work constitutes a continuous endeavour to understand and expand freedom and its conditions.

The expansion of meanings is also the point of departure of Granger’s account: “In learning to conduct more of everyday experience in an artful manner, we increase our ability to liberate and expand the potential meanings of things” (Granger 2006: 7). By integrating art into everyday experience, the world comes to be presented “in a new and different perspective” (Ibid.: 104). This different perspective is also Waks’ point. In his “Agency and Arts: John Dewey’s Contribution to Pragmatic Cosmopolitanism,” Waks highlights the role of art as the “channel for spontaneous, pre-rationalized initial expressions of the ‘whole’ person” (Waks 2009: 120) and as an essential component in the “opening [of] new vistas and widening perception” (Ibid.: 121). According to Waks’ account, art is important both to overcome separation within a subject’s experience and to foresee unnoticed perspectives.

Such a possibility is quintessentially pedagogical to the extent to which we conceive of education as the means by which we may pursue and welcome newness (see Garrison 1996, 2005; Biesta 2006, 2007). Now, it is worthy to note that Dewey conceives of “imaginative experience” and education along the same lines; an imaginative experience “is what happens when varied materials of sense quality, emotions and meanings come together in a union that marks a new birth in the world” (LW 10: 272). Moreover, he writes:

A sense of possibilities that are unrealized and that might be realized are, when they are put in contrast with actual conditions, the most penetrating “criticism” of the latter that can be made. It is by a sense of possibilities opening before us that we become aware of constrictions that hem us in and of burdens that oppress. (LW 10: 349)

Such an account goes hand in hand with the Deweyan interpretation of education as an “emancipation and enlargement of experience” (MW 6: 301). Such an “emancipation and enlargement of experience,” following Garrison, Granger and Waks’ converging interpretations, simultaneously welcomes newness (or, in Deweyan terms, “a new birth in the world”) and the recovery of the unity of the subject’s experience.

There is also another question at stake: the “diversity of stimulation” (MW 9: 90) that is needed to actually have education. Let us pay attention to the following passage:

Diversity of stimulation means novelty, and novelty means challenge to thought. The more activity is restricted to a few definite lines as it is when there are rigid class lines preventing adequate interplay of experiences – the more action tends to become routine on the part of the class at a disadvantage, and capricious, aimless, and explosive on the part of the class having the materially fortunate position. (MW 9: 90)

Here, Dewey furnishes in advance a strong critique of the EU neoliberal educational framework. In this passage, the lack of “diversity of stimulation” is potentially “explosive.” In Deweyan educational philosophy, equilibrium can only be attained through growth.
This passage is even more interesting when considering its final section. The lack of “diversity of stimulation” and “adequate interplay of experiences” is not only damaging to those socially or economically disadvantaged; importantly, it is also dangerous for those who assume a “materially fortunate position.” In other words, such a lack is a threat to society as a whole. This is why Dewey states that,

the intellectual variations of the individual in observation, imagination, judgment, and invention are simply the agencies of social progress, just as conformity to habit is the agency of social conservation. (MW 9: 306)

The individualisation and atomisation of educational processes and practices pursued by the EU also implies a progressive eclipse of the democratic and ethical dimensions of educational processes and practices. I wish to make clear from the outset that I am not claiming that the EU has no ethics or sense of democracy; that would be a senseless claim. My point is, of course, slightly more nuanced, touching on the (hidden) ethics of the neoliberal framework and the current lack of democracy in education. The “open learning pathways” (EU 2000: 8) towards which EU calls for, most likely work to cut possibilities to concretely share contents, ways of learning and individual’s choices. The public dimension of educational processes is, then, severely reduced by EU educational politics in that EU does not work to promote public debates about the aims of education. Such aims, in fact, are pre-established, along with the overall framework in which individuals as well as institutions are called to think and act. Individual needs and demands, too, are only conceived of in such a neo-liberal framework, thus denying the ethical dimension of educational processes, one in which the debate about the ends of education is promoted and sustained.

To cut to the chase, the problem with the EU framework is that it presents itself as unique and inevitable. Then we only have an appearance of openness. The EU choice of a specific concept of education is not presented as an – ethical – choice, but as a matter of fact. Additionally, educational actors and institutions are required to follow pre-determined paths. There is no dynamic coming from below, where below are educators, teachers and students. Moreover, despite several claims made about the connections between training and society’s challenges, it is all too clear how such connections will be enacted based on a determinate economic vision of society. The problem with this lies not so much in the specific lens chosen, but in the very fact that such a broad institution adopts only one lens on education, thus erasing other approaches. Again, it is here worth quoting Dewey at length:

In final account, then, not only does social life demand teaching and learning for its own permanence, but the very process of living together educates. It enlarges and enlightens experience; it stimulates and enriches imagination; it creates responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought. A man really living alone (alone mentally as well as physically) would have little or no occasion to reflect upon his past experience to extract its net meaning. (MW 9: 9)
Then, if education also entails the enhancement of social progress and transformation, “novelty” and the “diversity of stimulation” must be considered key educational features.

Education is the place where our lives and the life of society take form. When we conceive of education from a pre-established stance, we conceive of living before living can show its own possibilities. Society functions in the same way. In fostering only one concept of education, we crystallise, so to speak, the current form of society and existing power relationships. Thus, education, to the extent that it is concerned with freedom and justice, must also be concerned with otherness and possibilities and namely with the space that has not yet been thought of. However, to the extent that the meaning of education lies in transformation and that education is concerned with justice, education must be concerned with the ungraspable openness of our thought. Education must demand work to go beyond what we and society currently are. As educators, we must continually ask whether our views of education are inclusive and good enough to meet and manage this challenge. Through such engagement, without challenging given “forms of life,” education is at risk of becoming a means of facilitating the progressive impoverishment of living and the perpetuation of injustice and inequality into the future.

This is not the place to discuss the relationship between the real nature of today’s economy and the fairy tale version of it, though opportunities to create new processes in the globalised world are, in my view, intentionally overstated. That globalisation has led to a larger space for creativity in education and in the workplace at large is all too apparent. The weight of international associations such as the EU, with their strong influence on countries, and increasing levels economic inequality point in the opposite direction. The real decisions on education are most likely made by fewer people than in the recent past. The EU, for example, hardly creates a space for sharing knowledge and experience on education, as such a space starts with teachers, educators, and key local actors in the field of schooling and education. Rather, the EU aims to govern the educational process through pervasive penetration into schools, educational departments, government agencies dedicated to education, and families. This approach is a mistake, and not merely from a humanistic and old-fashioned perspective.

I am concerned with the fact that when education is virtually narrowed down to just one function – i.e., employability – we lose sight of the variety, complexity and unpredictability of life and education. In other words, I hold nothing against a call for the usefulness of educational paths – from a Deweyan perspective, doing so would be an odd gesture. My main concern lies in the way and extent to which such usefulness is to be conceived. My point is that if education is required to respond only to specific demands of the labour market, thus producing a predetermined set of skills, it then fails to prepare individuals for the declared future and challenges. The EU should be aware that newness, the challenging of perspectives, and shared interests are essential, not only to education but also to the development of society, which depends on the presence of variety, as biology and social sciences as well have shown, throughout the past two centuries, time and again.
References


Michael Luntley

What’s the Problem with Dewey?

Abstract: In Democracy and Education Dewey has a rich conception of educational flourishing that stands at odds with the instrumentalism about learning endemic to much contemporary educational policy. And his vision posits deep dependencies between the different domains in which education is transformative: the transformation of the individual learner into an inquirer equipped to adapt in a changing environment and the transformations in the social world required for the provision of opportunities for such experiences to all. In this paper, I trace the roots of Dewey’s conception in his account of inquiry. I focus on the key concept of a ‘problem.’ For Dewey, inquiry begins with a problem, but his concept of a problem is challenging and lacks an adequate theoretical rationale. Problems start with disruptions in our environmental engagement that figure in non-knowing encounters. Dewey needs an account of these pre-cognitive disruptions and of what constitutes their resolution. I argue that the account can be found in the aesthetics of experience. This draws upon some of Dewey’s insights regarding our experience of art objects and it finds a central role for the aesthetics of experience as not only the prompt for inquiry and the unification of experience that settles inquiry, but also in what I call the ‘craft of inquiry’ – the very practice of inquiring. If this is right, any adequate account of learning, let alone a pedagogy fit to encourage learning, must have a central role for aesthetics as providing the conditions for the possibility of learning. A proper appreciation of Dewey signals the opportunity for a radical re-thinking of how to shape a pedagogy fit for educational flourishing – a pedagogy designed for inquirers. And it helps us understand better the deep dependencies between the projects of individual and social transformation.

Introduction

In Democracy and Education Dewey presents a vision of a richly liberal conception of education, one that sees education as fundamentally transformative, from the opening naturalistic conception of living things maintaining ‘themselves by renewal’ to the conception of education as “a constant reorganizing or reconstructing of experience” (MW 9: 82). This is transformative on a number of different levels. It transforms the individual: in ancient Athens “custom and traditional beliefs held men in bondage” (MW 9: 272) and education needs to provide the “reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of consequent experience” (MW 9: 82). However much this requires transformation of the individual, Dewey is clear that there is a social dimension to the transformative role and purpose of education. The ancient Greeks, for example, did not liberate all from the bondage of custom. Our critique of the class divisions in ancient Athens is only honest if “we are free from responsibility for perpetuating the educational practices which train the many for pursuits involving mere skill in production, and the few for a knowledge that is an ornament and a cultural embellishment” (MW 9: 265). A truly democratic society is one “in which

* University of Warwick [Michael.Luntley@warwick.ac.uk].

all share in useful service and all enjoy a worthy leisure” (MW 9: 265). Education for democracy requires deep immersion in culture for all, for a “democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (MW 9: 93). And, for all this to be possible, pivotally education requires the acquisition of the higher order abilities for learning how to learn, learning how to be an inquirer, for “a society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of a change occurring anywhere, must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability” (MW 9: 93-4).

Dewey’s vision is extensive and, arguably, prohibitively expensive. It is extensive for its opposition to the sort of instrumentalism about education with which we have become increasingly familiar. For Dewey, education is about equipping people with the experiences and abilities to take part across the board in the shared enterprise of human culture, in exercises of “conjoint communicated experience.” In addition, it is a conception of education that posits deep dependencies between the provision of individual transformation (personal initiative and adaptability) and social transformations (conjoint communicated experience). It is this latter point that threatens the economic viability of Dewey’s vision. In a policy climate in which service provision is measured for its contribution to the economic well-being of society, a Deweyan liberalism about education will always lose out to an economic instrumentalism that accepts a stratification of opportunities in education. Dewey’s requirement that all experience the immersion in culture on which individual adaptability depends will lose out in the competition for economic resources unless it can provide the basis for a fundamental re-thinking of the intrinsic purposes of education. That is the point of Kitcher’s (2009) well-known defense of Dewey. In this essay, I want to develop some of the tools needed for undertaking this re-thinking.

A central question must concern the nature and direction of the dependency between individual transformation and social transformation. I do not propose to decide on the issue of which, if either, is basic? There is, however, room for understanding, in a good deal more detail, the key ideas that drive Dewey’s thinking and which might help hold his vision together. A key idea in Democracy and Education is the concept of adaptability. It operates at both the individual and social level. It requires an ability to respond intelligently to novelty, howsoever that may arise. And although Dewey opens the book with a naturalistic sentiment of life as “a self-renewing process through action upon the environment” (MW 9: 4), that process is already conceived as an open-ended enterprise, for he says, “the living thing […] tries to turn the energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence” (MW 9: 4).

This suggests the project of timely adaptation to the contingencies met with in the environment is the individual’s project and demands of the individual the wherewithal to respond to happenings with imagination. And that thought is key to the statement of educational values much later in Chapter 18. Dewey there remarks,

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2. See Nussbaum 2009 for a recent appeal to Dewey for the resources to combat the instrumentalism rampant in much educational policy.
play-activity is an imaginative enterprise. But it is still usual to regard this activity as a specially marked-off stage of childish growth, and to overlook the fact that the difference between play and what is regarded as serious employment should be not a difference between the presence and absence of imagination, but a difference in the materials with which imagination is occupied. (MW 9: 245)

He goes on:

The emphasis put in this book […] upon activity, will be misleading if it is not recognized that the imagination is as much a normal and integral part of human activity as is muscular movement. (Ibid.)

I want to suggest that at the heart of Dewey’s key concept of adaptability is the imagination; that the heart of what it is to be an inquirer responding to problems is to be a subject with imagination. It is the imagination that is the key driver to the transformations at stake in education. It is the imagination that holds together the different strands of Dewey’s liberalism.

If we endorse Dewey’s rich liberalism, we have a tool for a critique of the managerialism about educational policy found throughout Europe. But with what right can we endorse Dewey’s liberalism? I shall trace the case for Dewey’s liberalism back to his conception of inquiry. I want to argue that a proper appreciation of Dewey’s model of inquiry lays the foundation for a radical underpinning of his richly liberal conception of education.

Here is a simple way of setting out the trajectory I want to explore:

- For Dewey, learning is the activity of inquiry.
- Inquiry starts with a problem (it is historically rooted).
- Inquiry ends when the problem is solved.

Adaptation is done in response to problems, and comes to rest (for the time being) when the problem is solved. So education should be geared to solve problems, not serve the economy, nor the instrumental targets set by modern managerialism. But what are problems and what are Europe’s problems re education? There are multiple potential answers to the latter question, many of which are important, but I want to concentrate on the former question, for I think that our key theoretical problem is that we have no detailed and cogent account of how to answer that first question:

- What is a problem?

Furthermore, I want to suggest a reading of Dewey on problems that provides a radical critique of much extant thought on education and the conditions for learning: problems start at a level of experience properly called the aesthetic.

Others have marked out some of this path, but thus far the role of the aesthetic of experience has not been accorded the full seriousness and importance it warrants.3

3. See Alexander 2012, 2014 and Leddy 2015, although neither quite capture the central role for the aesthetic that I envisage.
On the approach I pursue, the aesthetic is not merely an important element of experience that figures in both the drive and consummation of inquiry, it is the condition for the very possibility of inquiry. The idea of inquiry does not make sense without an account of its origins, its practice and its resolution in the aesthetic. If this is right, at the heart of any credible pedagogy there must be an account of the role of the aesthetic as the driver, vehicle and consummation of inquiry.

Dewey sees inquiry starting with what, for want of a better label, we might call an ‘itch’; it’s the sense of irritation, of things being not quite so. It’s the sense of unease that all is not right, our place in the environment is out of kilter. Inquiry concerns the dynamic that takes us along a trajectory defined by “the rhythm of loss of integration with the environment and recovery of union” (LW 10: 20-1).4 As Fesmire (2015: 87) explains the dynamic: “Reflective thought is provoked by a hitch in the works, when an unsettled world stops being congenial to our expectations.”

The ‘itch’ is the irritation, the sense that things do not fit. It prompts inquiry, which is resolved when a sense of fit is recovered. But the recovery of a sense of fit is also a recovery that equips us with meaning and understanding, a conceptual grasp of how our problems got resolved. The sense of fit cannot, therefore, be wholly isolated from those cognitive processes that provide understanding. We need an account of how the aesthetics of experience, although outwith the range of a conceptual and knowing experience of things, nevertheless provides the condition for the possibility of an inquiry that issues in conceptual knowing, no matter how much we might also want to insist that inquiry’s closure is only properly delivered by a renewed sense of fit that settles the initial itch. On the reading of Dewey I offer, the aesthetic, while not itself part of a knowing experience, is nevertheless the element of experience that makes knowledge gathering possible. The aesthetic needs therefore, notwithstanding its separateness from the field of a knowing experience, to be capable of integration within the whole of the cognitive apparatus (broadly conceived) of the mind’s engagement with the environment. On my reading, the role of the aesthetic in Dewey’s account of inquiry is as a transcendental condition for knowing encounters.

It is important to Dewey that this sense of itch falls outwith the frame of our conceptual take on things. It is a sense of itch that makes things salient. It is, however, difficult to see how this notion of salience can make sense without the idea of the ‘itch’ being a disturbance within a patterning to experience. At the same time, the sense of patterning is not yet a conceptual patterning. To make sense of this idea we need the resources for attributing a patterning to experience, something that can be disrupted. This is what people mean when they speak of the role of the noncognitive in Dewey’s account of aesthetic experience (Alexander 2014). The label ‘noncognitive’ is, however, unhelpful. If there is a real point to some such element of experience, then it is something that is handled by human cognitive resources. For sure, it is something that falls outwith the scope of conceptual content and to deny that would be to run the risk of over-intellectualising experience – something Dewey repeatedly warned against.5 That makes the aesthetic difficult to capture in our description of the

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5. “There is nothing intellectual or cognitive in the existence of [problematic] situations, although
phenomenology of experience and it can seem to render it invisible to the tools of analytic philosophy. But that last point is mistaken. The idea of a notion of aesthetic experience that falls outwith the conceptual content familiar to our ordinary notion of meaning is challenging to describe, but we should not thereby take it as challenging to theorise. If we do not theorise about it with care and attention, then we forfeit the right to deploy it in an account of the logic of inquiry that informs pedagogy.

I take the idea of a trajectory from ‘itch to fit’ as a serious attempt to understand Dewey’s dynamic concept of inquiry. My project is to provide a theoretical account of this trajectory and make it serviceable for a fundamental re-shaping of pedagogy. Before outlining some of the detail of the theoretical account of the trajectory from ‘itch to fit,’ I want to set out the methodological options. Understanding Dewey, let alone learning from him, requires care regarding our methodological assumptions just as much as the assumptions that shape our substantive ideas.

1. Methodology

There are two issues on which I want to set out my stand before embarking on the detailed argument. The first issue concerns the sort of argument that is involved in appealing to the aesthetics of experience. The second issue concerns how my account of the aesthetics sits with the common presumption that Dewey’s theory of inquiry involves a form of social constructivism (e.g. Carr 2003: 123 f.; and Fesmire 2015: 90 f.). I start with the first issue.

If we are interested in the aesthetics of experience, here are two key questions: (i) What is the aesthetic? (ii) What’s the argument for this element of experience? On the first point, the aesthetic concerns elements of experience that must not be over-intellectualised, for there is an intrinsic indeterminateness to the aesthetic in experience. The aesthetic concerns the itch that demands our attention, an unsettlingness that demands a response. So we need a theory of the ‘itch.’ For the moment, this is what I mean by the aesthetic in Dewey’s account. For sure, lots of what counts as ‘aesthetic’ gets rendered into the conceptual frame of thought and talk. For now, I use ‘aesthetic’ as a more neutral term where others use ‘noncognitive’ (Alexander 2014). Neither term is fully satisfactory, but ‘noncognitive’ suggests a distance from cognition that renders opaque the idea that the aesthetic of the itch provides a condition for the possibility of cognition’s inquiry.

The aesthetic itch is what Dewey had in mind when he says that not all experience involves knowing. That can suggest that the answer to the second question is a

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6. Hence Alexander’s (2014) critique of linguistic pragmatism in favour of Dewey’s experiential pragmatism and compare Kitcher’s (2014) jibes against the preoccupations of logic-chopping philosophers who miss the pragmatist drive to “reconnect philosophy with life” (ibid.: 99). Note also that Kitcher links this with Dewey’s “worries about the detachment of art from everyday life” (ibid.: 100). Similar sentiments run through Kitcher 2012.

7. For Dewey, problematic situations are “precognitive” (LW 12: 111). And see Alexander (2014: 71):
phenomenological argument. It will be an argument that broadly works along the line of: ‘Look see. This is how it is. Don’t over-describe it or you run the risk of intellectualising it.’ But that is too quick, for our two questions are quite distinct. In terms of what it is, the aesthetic cannot be captured too accurately in the terminology of modern theories of experiential content without losing its phenomenological indeterminacy. But with regard to the argument for it, we need more than a descriptive claim, for we need, as theorists, to be able to give a clear account of the role of the aesthetic. If we can’t deliver that, then we’re just mumbling in the dark. Giving a clear theoretical account of the aesthetic does not mean we over-intellectualise it, but it does mean we have to give an intellectually cogent account of its role and how it integrates with knowing experience and why it is important. Let’s start with that last point.

On a phenomenological account, the aesthetic is important because it is required for an account of experience to be full and complete. That is how experience is: it has an aesthetic element. On the argument I want to explore, the aesthetic is important because it provides the condition for the possibility of inquiry; it provides the account of that which renders inquiry possible and which motivates the search for meaning and understanding – that which invites us to adapt. And yet, faithfulness to the phenomenology of the aesthetic means that we owe an account of something that in itself does not provide meaning and understanding. So we need sufficient theoretical granularity to our account of the aesthetic that will support the argument that its existence is a condition for the possibility of inquiry while also accommodating a phenomenology that does not leave it over-intellectualised. We need to talk precisely and with theoretical detail in a way that gives traction to that which is not precise. The theoretical mode of discourse cannot compete with the phenomenological appeal but it needs to legitimise the importance of the phenomenological appeal. Put simply, providing the phenomenology of the Deweyan aesthetic might be an exercise that risks slipping through the net of mainstream analytic philosophy, but providing the theorist’s account of what it is and why it matters is part of the core business of any credible detailed theory of experience. The former project looks to estrange Dewey from the concerns of contemporary philosophy; the latter brings him home.

The second methodological issue that I want to note concerns the status of Dewey’s constructivism. There is little doubt that Dewey’s concept of experience is broader than the model of perception as knowledge gathering that dominates contemporary philosophy. As Alexander (2014: 66) notes, “experience” in Dewey’s sense is not “perception” but adaptive existence, which in human existence takes in the form of culture.

There are two point at stake here. The first is the point already noted, experience has a dimension that I am calling the aesthetic. This is a dimension that is only problematically captured if one tries to conceive it in terms of contemporary theories of experiential content, regardless of one’s willingness to add ‘nonconceptual content’ alongside conceptual content, or to add a relationalist model of experience to the contentful. One thing that is signaled by ‘culture’ is the indeterminacy of experience.

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"Not all experience is experience-as-known and that knowing experience arises and terminates within experience that is not knowing."

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that characterises the aesthetic. It’s the point that “not all experience is experience-as-known and that having experience arises and terminates within experience that is not knowing” (Alexander 2014: 71). But there is another element to the appeal to experience as culture, and that’s the social dimension to the construction of culture that many find in Dewey. Alexander again:

We do not begin our inquiries […] except under certain defining situations. Unless one has lived and interacted with others, learning a language and participating in a culture with its stories and traditions, one cannot even begin asking questions. (Alexander 2012: 89)

There are a number of issues in this passage. Here are two issues that will dominate in my argument.

First, Alexander presents inquiry beginning with questions. That cannot be right, for ‘questions’ do not belong within the domain of the aesthetic. Alexander is well aware of the point and has done much to present Dewey’s concept of inquiry as driven by the non-cognitive. Nevertheless, the use of the idea of ‘question’ here shows the extent of the difficulties we encounter in trying to give a coherent and detailed account of how inquiry starts with the indeterminate ‘itch’ within the aesthetics of experience. I provide a theory of the aesthetic ‘itch’ in the next two sections.

Second, Alexander here gives clear expression to a sense of dependency on situatedness in culture as a precondition for asking questions and beginning inquiry. Inquiry is always situated in a shared culture. It’s not clear to me in what sense Dewey endorses this idea of inquiry’s situatedness in shared culture. I shall develop a reading of Dewey that sees the shared culture as a construct of earlier phases of inquiry. It is a construct that scaffolds later stages, but the shared culture is the product of a more basic notion of culture that is found in the individual’s aesthetics of experience. That is the order of explanation that I offer in my reading of Dewey. I will note the reasons for this as the argument proceeds, but it is important to mark now that although at any stage of inquiry shared culture scaffolds the following stage, the role of shared culture is not constitutive of inquiry but a result of the basic form of inquiry that is individualistic both in its problems and its aesthetics. The root to culture is individual, not shared and it is due to those roots that we acquire shared culture. Shared culture is an explanandum, not the explanans. I am assuming that individual transformation is the motor of the social transformation, not the other way around.

The individualism in my reading of Dewey will jar many people’s sense of his emphasis on the social, the cultural and the intrinsically democratising drive of his vision of education. With regard to the political and social impact of Dewey’s concept of inquiry I have no problem. My emphasis on the individual notion of culture is an explanatory device. The priority I see in the individual is an explanatory one. There is not space in this essay to treat this aspect of methodology in adequate detail, but let me mark one root to a social constructivist account of Dewey with which I take issue.

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8. There are many forms of dependency on the social that figure in theories of learning; for a critique of the influential Vygotskian version, see Luntley forthcoming.

It is tempting to think that there are at least two senses of problem. The individual’s problems and society’s problems. Problems are the root to learning. So what drives an individual’s learning? The answer, presumably, is their problems. If we find the individual’s problems as those that they inherit from initiation into socially constructed problems, then the source of individual learning is simply the problems inherited by their initiation into the current cultural forms. But that hides the following diagnostic possibility – the idea of a meta-problem with educational thinking:

- The meta-problem with educational thought and policy is that it is not driven by an adequate conception of the problems that drive individual learners – it has no account of individuals’ problems.

If individuals’ problems are socially constructed (what you pick up from initiation into culture) there is no such meta-problem. But that means that the potential for a Deweyan critique of instrumentalism about education is wholly dependent on how you draft the problems you inherit on initiation into culture. And that is highly contentious. One way of seeing the bearing of Dewey on European educational thought in the 21st century is to focus on the issue: what are Europe’s problems? And that takes us into a long, although potentially interesting series of empirical and policy issues about European education. My argument is located in a different set of concerns. My central claim is that there is a fundamental flaw in educational thinking that Dewey can help us expose and that the exposure provides a powerful individualist cognitive account of why the aesthetic matters at the heart of our thinking about and practice of education.

This is a different route to the familiar broadly social constructivist reading of Dewey. It is the route that takes the meta-problem seriously and finds leverage on the critique of instrumentalism by rooting the critique in an analysis of the concept of ‘problem’ as it figures at the level of the individual learner. My central claim is that Dewey has the resources for a conception of the individual’s problem that drives inquiry. That notion of problem is framed by his account of the aesthetics of experience. Learning begins by confronting a problem framed within aesthetics, an account of experience that is intrinsically open-ended although patterned. This is an account that explains the deep source of Dewey’s pragmatism – the fact that learning is always situated in real historical time. Learning is timely, not timeless. It is the process by which we smooth the itches in current experience and prepare ourselves for what comes next, where what comes next is invariably open-ended and unpredictable. This is a process that we must face not with rules and prior commitments other than a preparedness to interrogate openly and freely in the search for the smoothing that reduces the friction of the next itch wherever it may lie.9

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9. Although this is individualistic and although I have noted points of contrast with Alexander’s reading of Dewey, I agree fully with the main thrust of his reading that in Dewey we find something usefully called ‘experiential pragmatism’ in contrast to the linguistic pragmatism found in Brandom. And the reason for this lies in the notion of the “irreducibility of the noncognitive” (Alexander 2014: 65). I disagree with Alexander only on the detail of how to make sense of the noncognitive (I prefer “aesthetic”), with the need to have a coherent and detailed theoretical account of the aesthetic and the explanatory advantage in seeing the social aesthetic arising out of the individual aesthetic.
2. Inquiry

Inquiry starts with a problem. Depending on how we think of problems, this can seem banal and trivial or challenging but elusive. If a problem is identified with a question, the resulting concept of inquiry is trivial and misses Dewey’s main concern. Here’s a first rough way of marking out how the concept of problem can play an important explanatory role in inquiry.

Contrast two different models of problem solving:

(a) problem-solving in terms of working out the consequences of what is already known;

(b) problem-solving as learning, as a source for extending cognition.

The first sense is trivial. It takes problem solving as little more than moving the conceptual furniture into new positions. Many of the things we do in education involve conceptual tidying, but this involves a conception of problem-solving in terms of re-arranging of what is already known into a new configuration, a superficial kind of cognitive make-over. Problem-solving in this sense is exemplified in doing basic arithmetic, for example, let the problem be: what’s 68 + 57?\(^\text{10}\)

The contrast between problems in type (a) and (b) might look too binary, for what about ‘real problems’ as, e.g. in ‘real maths’? That’s a good point in the context of pedagogic policy, but the notion of ‘real’ here means roughly ‘matters in some way to the pupil.’ It is true that there is a sense of that which is, in policy terms, important for gaining pupils’ attention, focus in behaviour, commitment to work, etc. There is also, underlying that, the sense of ‘mattering to the pupil’ that I want to get into focus and that’s the sense of mattering in which the pupil is met with a disruption that demands their attention, a disruption that engages them as inquirer, not simply as a task that is interesting. So ‘real maths’ is important if it offers interesting tasks rather than abstract tasks – agreed. But it is theoretically important if those ‘interesting tasks’ are not just interesting because anchored in some concepts that are key to the pupil (counting change due in a purchase rather than just adding numbers in the abstract), but are enthralling because they present to the pupil an experience or set of experiences that disrupt and reveal new domains to experience that in turn produces cognitive growth – learning.

The second sense of problem-solving is the challenging and elusive one. It requires a concept of a problem that arises out of a disruption to experience but where that disruption is not presented within the conceptual resources already available to the learner. It requires a notion of a disruption that can unsettle the learner and drive them into the work of inquiry, but the challenge it presents must be one that opens up new experiences and new concepts, otherwise no real learning will take place. I am assuming

\(^{10}\) It is interesting to note that such problems are not, of course, problems at all, for unless someone else asks you the question, ‘What is 68 + 57?’, it has no obvious appeal; it does not, in the abstract demand attention. This sense of problem-solving is invariably dependent on others raising the question and is, perhaps, one reason for taking the social turn in the account of problems. Dewey contrasts arithmetical examples with real problems, arithmetical problems are, he says, merely “tasks,” things set by others, cf. LW 12: Ch. 6, § II, esp. p. 111.
here that ‘learning’ requires a transition that delivers cognitive enhancement; at its simplest, the acquisition of new concepts. It is the idea of a disruption in experience that demands attention and demands the work of learning that is key to understanding Dewey’s concept of problem. Whatever else we may say about Dewey, it is clear that the notion of problem-solving he requires is type (b) above.

Dewey is clear that problem-solving involves more than mere tasks, it is the means for extending cognition. Problem-solving arises from the things that unsettle us:

The unsettled or indeterminate situation might have been called a problematic situation. This name would have been, however, proleptic and anticipatory. The indeterminate situation becomes problematic in the very process of being subjected to inquiry. The indeterminate situation comes into existence from existential causes, just as does, say, the organic imbalance of hunger. There is nothing intellectual or cognitive in the existence of such situations, although they are the necessary conditions of cognitive operations or inquiry. (LW 12: 111)

In this passage we have all the key ingredients for understanding Dewey’s concept of inquiry as problem-solving. Problems arise outwith the scope of intellectual or cognitive experience, they arise from a natural imbalance in our engagement with the environment (akin to hunger). This is a problematic situation. Problematic situations demand our attention, our inquisitiveness. Problematic situations are the necessary condition for inquiry. A problem is a ‘partial transformation’ of a problematic situation. As Dewey goes on to say,

A problem represents the partial transformation by inquiry of a problematic situation into a determinate situation. It is a familiar and significant saying that a problem well put is half-solved. (LW 12: 111-2)

The key concept in all this is that of the problematic situation. Without that, problems become mere intellectual games with the “semblance but not the substance of scientific activity” (LW 12: 112). It is the concept of a problematic situation that provides the drive to inquiry and identifies the end-point to any given inquiry which is found in conversion of the problematic indeterminacy into a sense of unity. Hence Dewey’s official definition of inquiry:

Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole. (LW 12: 108)

Dewey’s concept of a problematic situation is, in outline, clear enough, but it has an inbuilt imbalance in its conception, reflected in Dewey’s observation that to call the situation ‘problematic’ is anticipatory. He says this, for in calling it ‘problematic’ we have already started to respond cognitively to the disruption and to begin to formulate it as a problem. But the unsettling disruption must be separate from such beginnings of cognitive response, or else the cognitive response, the first formulations of a problem, would not be one undertaken in response to the disruption that the
indeterminate situation presents in experience. I think it is clearer, therefore, if we see the initial experience as involving a simple sense of disruption. That is the key to what Dewey calls a ‘problematic situation’; there is something that unsettles us. The unsettling character is independent of how we respond to it and begin to treat it as a problem. Our challenge as theorists is to make sense of this initial unsettling character to experience.\footnote{11}

In summary, we have the following key ingredients to Dewey’s concept of inquiry:

Outline of Inquiry:

(i) A situation can be salient to us independent of our knowing/conceptual encounters with it.

(ii) Salience arises from a disruption to our expectations, where these are understood as part of a more primitive and natural mode of engagement with things than a knowing/conceptual engagement.

(iii) Resolution of such disruptions arises when the situation is rendered into a unified whole.

If we can make sense of the ideas of salience and expectations independent of knowing conceptual encounters with things, we will then have a model of inquiry as problem-solving as the source for extending cognition. Problem-solving thus conceived will provide the basis for learning as a transformative enhancement to the expressive repertoire of cognition.

What I want to argue is that Dewey’s concept of salience in terms of disruptions to expectations involves operations within the aesthetics of experience. This provides an account of experience more primitive than the knowing conceptual encounters. In addition, although it is not obvious from the summary above, the sense of ‘unified whole’ that is achieved at the resolution of a problematic situation is also a contribution to the aesthetics of experience. Inquiry begins and ends in aesthetics. Once we can see how to make sense of these claims, we will also have the resources to see how the aesthetic figures throughout in what I shall call the craft of inquiry. It is tempting to think that the only role for the notion of a nonconceptual salience is as the kick-start to inquiry. Then, once a disruptive situation takes on a conceptual form as it becomes a problem-situation, concepts take over and the resulting unification is also a conceptual ordering of the initial disruptive experience. That is not, however, Dewey’s position. For Dewey, the aesthetic is not only the necessary condition for inquiry, it is also the underlying background to conceptual encounters. It is what Dewey called, “our constant sense of things, as belonging or not belonging, of relevancy, a sense which is immediate [not] the product of reflection” (LW 10: 198).

\footnote{11. The challenge is, of course, the one that most contemporary philosophers think is incoherent – the challenge of making sense of the ‘given’ as a pre-conceptual input to cognition, for classic treatments see Sellars 1956; McDowell 1994; and Brandom 1994. And that is why Brandom’s version of pragmatism is a linguistic one, he thinks the option of an experiential pragmatism would require returning to the myth of the given. My reading of Dewey is, therefore, a reading that amounts to claiming that the default setting in much contemporary philosophy re the foundational nature of the linguistic needs to be adjusted. There is much at stake here.}
This background is in all experience and when it is foregrounded, it provides what Dewey calls ‘an experience’ – that’s the consummatory experience that provides the sense of unity at the resolution of disruption. It is akin to the sense of ‘an experience’ when the background expectations and saliences are foregrounded in works of art. The task then is to provide sufficient detail to the nature of the aesthetic to begin to make sense of how it can play this foundational role without lapsing into yet another flashback to the myth of the given.

3. Aesthetic Salience

Dewey needs a coherent concept of salience. That much is clear. It needs to provide a means of engaging with situations independent of conceptual engagements that provide the content to cognition. The obvious move at this point is to treat the concept of salience that Dewey needs as either a return to the myth of the given or to see it as an instance of an appeal to a notion of nonconceptual content to experience. Both options are fraught with difficulties not least of which is the familiar conundrum: how can a level of experience that is devoid of conceptual content give rise to concepts? But the familiar problems here arise in part because we have not heeded Dewey’s insights. If you set up the problem in terms of how nonconceptual content gives rise to conceptual content, you have ignored Dewey’s claim about the indeterminacy involved in salience. The unsettlingness of a problematic situation is not just a matter of a content (albeit a nonconceptual one) not being satisfied. The notion of unsettlingness is not so determinate. I prefer then not to try to capture the concept of salience in content terms at all, but simply to say that salience at the level of aesthetic of experience arises when a pattern is disrupted. There are two things that need to hold with respect to the notion of pattern for it to capture the concept of salience that Dewey needs. First, the notion of pattern must make sense of the indeterminacy of disruption that Dewey wants; second the notion of pattern need not itself contribute to the content of experience. It is not necessary to treat the pattern involved here as itself an element within experience; what is necessary is that the disruption is an element of experience. I treat the second point first.

If experience can make things salient due to a disruption, an ‘unsettlingness,’ then that must be because a pattern that the subject expects has been disrupted. It is difficult to see how we could make sense of disruption without crediting the experiencing subject with some sort of expectation of a pattern. But that does not commit us to treating the pattern, let alone the subject’s expectation of the pattern, as themselves elements of experience. For example, a loose floorboard is salient when you step on it. It thwart’s your expectations about the rigidity of the floor you are crossing, but it is an unnecessary extravagance to make such expectations a component of phenomenology as you walk across the floor. There need be no ‘way that you experience the floor’ as a component of your experience as you walk over a stable floor. It is only when you step on the loose board that experience changes and you become aware of the board. And

12. Cf. Shusterman (2010: 37) for this way of reading Dewey’s notion of our experience of art.
13. A good starting point for contemporary debate about nonconceptual content is Gunther 2003.
even then, although the loose board becomes salient because a pattern of expectations regarding solidity has been disrupted, there is no need to treat that pattern (the ‘way the board is picked out’) as itself an element of experience. It is enough if we treat the board itself as the item of awareness and experience; that is, we have a direct relational awareness of the loose board brought about by the disruption to a pattern of solidity. The pattern need only register at the sub-personal level of experience as something that the subject’s cognitive machinery monitors. From the point of view of the phenomenology of experience, the solidity of the floor is silent. We say that the subject expects the floor to be solid, but that does not commit us to thinking the subject’s experience is awash with representations of the floor’s solidity. It is enough if their sub-personal cognitive systems represent solidity and, when the expectations of those systems are thwarted, an alarm is registered in personal experience that makes the loose board an item of awareness. If we reserve ‘content’ for that which is available to awareness, then the representation of the patterns of solidity need not themselves ever become available to experience (cf. Luntley 2010 for this idea).

The above suggestion does not take us very far in understanding Dewey. What it does is remove the impulse to treat the patterns implicated in an account of expectations as items of conscious experience. That is an important move, but it does not take us to the heart of Dewey’s conception of disruption. Having patterns monitored by sub-personal cognitive in silence and below the radar of conscious awareness does nothing to account for a sense of disruption that captures the indeterminacy of which Dewey speaks. To make sense of Dewey’s conception of what starts inquiry, we need not just a notion of pattern that is, for the most part, monitored below the level of personal awareness, we need a notion of pattern that, even if it becomes accessible to consciousness, delivers the indeterminacy that Dewey posits. This is the bit that seems difficult, but it is the component of Dewey’s thinking that shows why Kant was right to use the label ‘aesthetic’ for that which is a condition for judgement and also why what is so labeled figures in those experiences characteristic of our engagement with art. The patterns implicated in the notion of disruptive salience are patterns that enjoy an indeterminate open-endedness. We need to turn to sources different to standard theories of non-conceptual content in order to make sense of Dewey’s concept of a problem.

4. The Sense of Fit

I want to appeal to recent work in both psychology and philosophy to begin to fill out a theory of the kind of disruption that Dewey appears to have in mind. Carey (2009; see also Carey et al. 2011) has set out a comprehensive developmental account of the acquisition of number concepts. It is a bootstrapping theory. Like any bootstrapping theorist, Carey has been criticised for failing to account for the transformative transition from possession of the pre-cursors of number concepts to grasp of number concepts. Any bootstrapping theory that posits a form of experience that is weaker than a conceptually saturated experience but which, nevertheless, is held to give rise to the latter will be met with the outraged response: ‘How did you get all that out of so
little?’ Hence the enduring appeal of those who argue that the bootstrapping problem cannot be solved. But what can make that response look inevitable is, in part, the poverty of our conception of what goes into the form of experience that is precursor to the conceptually saturated one. And it is here that Dewey has suggestions that dovetail with two otherwise separate initiatives in contemporary research.

Carey does not dwell on the point, but she makes a key observation regarding her account of the experiences that are precursors to grasp of cardinality. She says that before children use numerals to express number concepts, they use them akin to nonsense words in strings like nursery rhymes and similar word games. So the sequence

\[1, 2, 3, 4\ldots\]

is learnt as a string akin to

eeny, meeny, miny, mo.

The rhythm, rhyme and repetition of sounds provides the young child with a use of numerals where they serve as ‘placeholders’ for what will become numerical concepts. I shall ignore the issue of what resources are required to pull off the transition from placeholders to concepts. My interest lies in understanding the starting point.

A child who knows the sequence for the numerals as placeholders has a sense of pattern to their use, a sense that draws upon formal features of strings found in their rhythm and the repetition of this rhythm, often also involving rhyming games. The young child who hears

\[1, 2, 3\ldots\]

expects ‘4’ to come next. There is a pattern to their experience. If you said, ‘1, 2, 3, 5’ they would experience it as wrong. But that notion of ‘wrong’ is not a content notion. It is not a semantic sense of wrong; it is not that the sequence is false. The child may yet have no sense of cardinality. Their sense that the sequence is wrong is just like their sense that

eeny, meeny, mo, miny

is wrong. This is wrong, but no semantic error is involved. Both ‘disruptive’ sequences are sequences that are experienced as disruptive. This does not seem like the loose floorboard. The child might be actively playing with rhyming sequences, enjoying the counting rhymes, aware of the rhythms and rhymes displayed in the repetition and when another child presents the disruptive sequence, it sounds wrong. The challenge is to identify theoretically this notion of ‘wrong.’ Carey does not address the issue, but let’s make some obvious moves.

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15. Ignoring the transition problem might seem an act of outrageous bravado, but the point is simple. If there is an answer to the transition problem, it will arise in the detail of the account we provide in pulling together a staged bootstrapping account of learning. It will not be settled in a single sentence.
The first thing one might want to say is that anyone brought up with these rhymes acquires a sense that, e.g., ‘mo’ comes after ‘miny.’ It fits. The word belongs in that position. We might say this: it is what you ‘ought’ to say after ‘miny’ in that sequence. And the same applies to the use of ‘4’ after ‘3’ in the counting rhymes. The concept of ‘fit’ here picks out what Ginsborg calls primitive normativity (Ginsborg 2011). The concept of primitive normativity involves a sense of ‘ought’ that characterises our experience of various patterns. It is a phenomenologically real feature. It is primitive in two senses.

First, it contributes to a very basic form of experience involving our engagement with various formal features of things, patterns of rhythm, rhyme, repetition in the case of words; balance of hue and intensity with regard to colours, and patterns of line and shade in graphic forms. These are properties that figure large in our experience of art objects, but they figure in patterns that are importantly subjective. This is the second sense in which the normativity of fit is primitive. The sense of fit that applies to the position of ‘mo’ after ‘miny’ is a sense of ought that lacks generality. It is a sense of how things are experienced as belonging in my experience. That I find ‘mo’ belonging after ‘miny’ does not mean that I thereby have resources for criticising you if you produce the sequence

Eeny, meeny, mo, miny.

I will find the sequence disruptive, but not with a sense of error that provides resource for critiquing your performance. Your performance will jar. It will sound wrong, but there is no semantic error involved. The error is an aesthetic error, your performance does not fit in the patterns that I have come to expect in the use of these tokens. It is the lack of generality to the position occupied by ‘mo’ that betrays the fact that whatever pattern is involved here, it is not a conceptual pattern.

A defining feature of conceptual content is that the bearers of such content exhibit a generality with respect to the place they occupy within structures that carry conceptual content.17 The word ‘four’ only carries the concept of the number between three and five in the series of natural numbers when it figures in patterns of use that make its applicability correct of sets of things that share the same cardinality, namely they all have four members. As a concept bearing device, the word ‘four’ carries a conceptual content when it has a role applicable to groups of apples, of people, the suits in whist, the riders of the apocalypse, and so on. The word ‘mo’ exhibits no such generality of application. The sense of ‘ought’ governing the fit of ‘mo’ in the nonsense rhyme is therefore quite unlike any sense of ‘ought’ that might be thought applicable to the use of content bearing words when used in adherence to standards of semantic correctness. The objectivity of such standards is manifest in the generality of application that provides the resources to critique others’ usage if, e.g., they use ‘four’ when only three riders go by.

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16. ‘Brought up,’ for these things are only properly understood in the context of their natural history, something Wittgenstein (2009: § 25) emphasized too: “Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.”

The idea of primitive normativity opens up scope for a rich structure to experience that populates a good part of the things we ordinarily treat within the aesthetic. The idea of the sense of fit as a subjective ‘ought’ captures that part of our experience of things that finds a heftedness, a sense of belonging and order to experience in the absence of rules and objective demands upon patterns. It introduces patterns that, although oftentimes accompanied with a strong sense of ‘fit’ are, by any sense, quite open-ended and amenable to playful imaginative extension. These are patterns with their accompanying sense of fit that are, nevertheless, open to agential modification. Like the paths we tread when walking across open country, these are patterns to which we feel some sense of allegiance – we respect the path as worn by previous walkers – but we are not beholden to them or to anything else to always walk in just the same way.\(^\text{18}\)

In short, the sense of salience that I think Dewey needs is found in the disruption experienced in the sequence

Eeny, meeny, mo, miny.

The sequence thwarts our expectation. But there is no determinate sense of error here, for the notion of fit that has been transgressed has no generality to it. For sure a sequence that retained the rhyme but replaced the last word,

Eeny, meeny miny, oh

might not jar as much, but it still does not fit; it lacks the repetition of the em sound expected as the lead consonant to the last three words of the sequence. The indeterminacy is manifest also in the adaptability of fit. The disruptive sequence can be rendered fit by adopting the varied rhyming scheme and placing it within an extended instance of the rhythmic pattern with,

eeeny, meeny, mo, miny
mine is big and yours is tiny.

Such examples are commonplace in the playful engagement with rhythm and rhyme found in young children’s early encounters with language.\(^\text{19}\)

5. Fit, Work, and Closure

The appeal to the idea of fit gives theoretical purchase on the ‘itch,’ the disruptive irritant that starts inquiry and which, when attended to, provides us with a problematic situation. With the idea of an experience that jars our sense of fit, we have the starting point to inquiry. There is much more to be said about how to develop the detail of the cognitive dynamics of this reading of Dewey’s account of inquiry. But we have the beginnings of a reading of Dewey that permits theoretical development in laying

18. Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of a path, indeed a garden path, for the idea of a rule: see Wittgenstein (2005: § 90; and 1978: § 163).
19. See Cook 2000 for a good starting point on the literature on children’s language and play.
out the trajectory of an individual’s engagement with inquiry that offers explanatory leverage on what is going on, rather than merely descriptive comfort.

Dewey has inquiry starting with an indeterminate situation and resolving when this is transformed into a ‘unified whole.’ Part of what is implicated in the end point of any inquiry will doubtless involve a conceptual unification, but I think Dewey intended the sense of closure and wholeness at the terminus of inquiry to mean much more than that. On the reading that I have indicated, the closure is also part of the aesthetics of experience. The slogan I offered was to consider inquiry as the dynamic from ‘itch to fit.’ The disruptive ‘itch’ is theorised as the loss of fit. It is proper then to see the conclusion of inquiry as the return to a sense of fit. That is the idea that is clear in Dewey’s conception of inquiry as a dynamic that restores a balance to our engagement with the environment that was unsettled by the problematic situation.

In his account of our experience of art, Dewey makes explicit appeal to the notion of ‘an experience’ and I think that is best understood on the model that I am promoting as an appreciation of fit. There are many ways of responding to art objects and many of them involve ascription of content to the objects, whether words, patches of paint or movements of a dancer. But some of the ways of responding to art objects that seem central to many aesthetic experiences involve the response that comes from an appreciation of the formal properties of fit. Apt vocabulary choices can provide the novelist with a sentence whose individual words are hefted in each other’s company in a way that alerts us to the cadence available when words are handled by writers with a craftiness for finding fit. Or consider the resonance of colours in a Malevich abstract, or the thrum of the etched lines and scratchings in the paint in a Ravilious landscape. There are lots of moments when our experience of art draws upon our sense of fit, when the artist provides an arrangement of words, colour or line that brings to our attention the way some patterns can be enjoyed for their sense of fit, whatever other purpose they may also serve. One of the things art can do when it provides what Dewey calls ‘an experience’ is bring to the surface the patterns that provide some of our most basic expectations in experience, the patterns whose disruption prompts inquiry. How natural, then, that inquiry should end in the resolution of those disruptions, in an experience in which the aesthetic order is, for the time being at least, restored.20

And all this is natural in a sense that is central to Dewey’s philosophy. It is natural, for it draws upon features of our experience that fall within a naturalistic account of inquiry as a dynamic between the rhythm of disruption and fit in our sense of aesthetic patterns. The account is, in this respect, properly on a par with the dynamic from hunger to satiation of need in our pursuit of food. What is natural for our species is the ‘hunger’ for patterns that fit. The idea of primitive normativity is the idea of a sense of ‘ought’ that is subjective. It is, however, not idle. It is not subjective in the way that colour or value are sometimes taken to be subjective in error-theories of those properties. The ‘ought’ of fit is subjective, for it is part of how we respond

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20. Having the aesthetic order restored is also, perhaps, part of what Wittgenstein meant by bringing peace to philosophical perplexities. If so, his quietism is momentary, not enduring; it applies to the settlement of a moment in a Deweyan dynamic, rather than an endpoint to philosophy.
to regularities, but it is a natural response for creatures like us. And that we have this response does explanatory work in our self-understanding, for it is because we respond to patterns with a sense of fit that we seek out patterns, that we adjust them when they are disrupted, that we create new extensions of them when their course dries up. It is our aesthetic sense of fit that is a key driver in the pursuit of pattern making and pattern sustenance. And that, at heart, is the idea running through Dewey’s theory of inquiry.

The dynamic from itch to fit is not, in itself, a knowing dynamic. It is not a trajectory of conceptual organisation. It is a naturalistically conceived dynamic. It is, however, I suggest, the necessary condition for the emergence of conceptual organisation. Making good on that suggestion is work for another occasion, but it is important to note that even if that claim can be substantiated, it does not remove the aesthetic dynamic from inquiry; it does not get supplanted by the conceptual dynamic, rather it contributes to it.

6. The Craft of Inquiry

I have suggested a reading of Dewey that provides a naturalistic theory of inquiry. I have used resources from contemporary research to provide a reading of Dewey’s concept of inquiry that provides explanatory purchase on the dynamic from itch to fit. The appeal to the aesthetics of experience in characterising the initial ‘itch’ does not exhaust the explanatory project I am grafting onto Dewey’s theory of inquiry. The aesthetic plays an important role in concluding inquiry, but it also figures in the ongoing culture of inquiry. The work of inquiry also has room for the aesthetics of experience. I want to close with some brief remarks on the phenomenology of inquiry. The details of the theoretical model that I am recommending require more space and the explanatory project of working through the detail of the theoretical model sketched must wait on other occasions. But if the approach is plausible, what does it capture in the phenomenology of inquiry? The answer, I think, is that it provides some important observations about what we might call the ‘craft of inquiry.’ It also gives credence to Dewey’s recommendation that it is the imagination that is the hallmark of human action, and the mark of teaching that is more than merely mechanical.21

When confronted with an initial itch, the unsettlingness that once attended provides the sense of a problematic situation, it is not obvious how one should respond. As Dewey observes, ‘a problem well put is half-solved.’ But what, then, is it to put a problem well? Clearly, at a minimum, it is something like this: it is to frame the question(s) that drive inquiry in a way that permits solution. But that just invites a further question, ‘What is it to frame a question?’ What is the initial move by which an itch is taken up by cognition? There are lots of things to be said about this, but I want to sketch some ideas that seem to me to illuminate aspects of the phenomenology of inquiry that we rarely talk about, aspects that are themselves part of the aesthetics of experience.

21. “An adequate recognition of the play of imagination as the medium of realization of every kind of thing which lies beyond the scope of direct physical response is the sole way of escape from mechanical methods in teaching” (MW 9: 245).
An itch is a disruption in a pattern of expectations that lacks the generality due to conceptual patterns. We are unsettled by the disruption. So where there’s an itch, there’s a breach in an aesthetic pattern. By its nature, the pattern breached provides no resources for handling the sense of itch, for there is no generality to the position in the pattern where the breach occurs. So if it feels like a breach, we need other resources to heal the sense of disruption. One option is the simple playful one in which we capture the breach and make it a moment within a different sense of fit. This is the move that is rampant in children’s play with words. It is the move that seals the breach in

   eeny, meeny, mo, miny

by offering the new pattern,

   eeny, meeny, mo, miny
   mine is big, yours is tiny.

Many breaches are settled in that way, but that is not the way of inquiry, it is the way of aesthetic improvisation. In inquiry, the task is to repair the breach with a response that offers understanding. Inquiry therefore demands, of the inquirer, some grasp of concepts and some thirst for applying them. That means that when inquiry moves to seal a breach in the aesthetic pattern, the move at stake is to find some general pattern to repair the breach. There is no recipe for selecting the general pattern, other than improvisation, the experimentation with ways of treating the breach as an instance not just of a new fit pattern, but of a pattern that is general.

If something like this is right, what moral does it suggest with regard to the phenomenology of inquiry? I think it suggests that we should expect to find the phenomenology of inquiry manifest as an imaginative and oftentimes playful experimentation with the aesthetic forms of experience. Of course, we identify hypotheses, we test them by checking their consequences for observation and the inferential shadow they cast over our web of beliefs. But we also judge them with respect to how well they fit with some of our deepest cultural bearings, the intellectual myths and presumptions that reflect some of the shape of the aesthetics of experience. What does this mean? Here’s a simple example.

Think of the experience common to many academics on grading student papers: early on in reading the paper, perhaps as early as the first couple of paragraphs, you form a view about the intelligence on offer and the grade due. Some academics are shy of acknowledging this point, for it might reflect an improper rush bordering on prejudice to admit such views arising so early. I think, however, acknowledging it tells us something important about the culture of inquiry. Our early initial judgement might be due to the fact that the student is posing exactly the right questions and making our favoured first inferences in evaluating them. But I think it is rarely that simple. I suspect there is something real and important to the thought that what you

22. The big questions concern how much native ability is required in order to support communication and the pursuit of inquiry. For an exploration of this in a manner that captures something of Dewey’s insistence on avoiding too intellectualist a view of experience, see Malloch & Trevarthen 2009.
are responding to, what makes you think that there is an intelligent voice present in the paper with an impressive grip on things, is that the writing exhibits a sense of fit in their formulation of the key problem. It is the thought we might express by saying something like, ‘it hangs together.’ If so, I suggest that whatever conceptual unity we might be commenting on, there is also and underlying that, an aesthetic unity. This is something that can be salient early on and, of course, one might later revise one’s view on this.

Think of the phenomenology of engaging in inquiry, e.g., the phenomenology of writing a paper. How is for you when you start on a research paper? When I started this paper, I did not know that I would write this section on the craft of inquiry. That came later. Did I not know what I was doing when I started? If so, that might betray a lack of foresight on my part, but I suspect a more honest and interesting answer reflects a common and important way of working. We work in inquiry by playing around with the itch – the sense of what bothers us and we gesture towards a sense of what might settle us. Then we experiment and play around with ways of framing the problem. Sometimes, it comes clear very quickly. We crank the handle and churn out the essay, but most of the time, it is not like that. Most of the time, it takes work, graft and craft that is much more exploratory and playful than simply doing the analysis and running through the inferences. Learning involves a trial and error strategy not just in the narrow analytic sense of conjectures and refutations, but in the adjustments to the aesthetics of experience, the imaginative and playful experimenting with the aesthetic form of things until we arrive at a formulation of a problem that delivers the fecundity appropriate for serious cognitive work (MW 9: 245 f.). Even then, there is a considerable to and fro between careful analysis and derivation of the consequence of assumptions and theoretical posits and the crafty manoeuvrings of the domain of fit.

The reading of Dewey that I am offering is not based on the appeal to these phenomenological observations. It is based on the explanatory work that the aesthetics of experience enables in providing an understanding of the dynamic from itch to fit. But that explanatory work gains credence if it offers legitimacy to a phenomenology of the craft of inquiry that, to my mind, rings true.

7. The Problem with Dewey

I have outlined a reading of Dewey that takes seriously the project of providing an explanatory account of how inquiry is driven by problems. Inquiry is learning. Learning is driven by, brought to rest by and, arguably, its many modes of operations are replete with, manoeuvrings in the aesthetics of experience. If that is what learning is, we have no pedagogy fit for learning if we do not place the provision of the aesthetics of experience at the heart of our pedagogy. Engagement with the aesthetics of experience is much more than a motivational ‘extra,’ a boost to the cognitive enterprise, a means for framing interest, attention and motivation in the learner. Engagement with the aesthetics of experience is the condition for the very possibility of learning. The theory of pedagogy needs to start with aesthetics.
Educators acknowledge this. Policy-makers normally dare not, for the aesthetics is messy, hard to plot, intractable to modern management methods, invariably lost to the schedules of accounting targets, and so on. But if the aesthetics of experience does seem messy to the mindset of 21st century policy makers in education, no matter, for inquiry is, by their lights, messy. That’s the point. That’s the problem with Dewey. And it is perhaps a gesture towards an explanation of why the transformative inquiries of individuals require a transformation in our social spaces so that they provide conjoint common experiences. There is no telling where the messiness of problems will lead, nor where the resources for fit might be found. Such messiness is a problem with Dewey, but it’s a problem we should celebrate and proclaim and by so doing begin to reshape our conception of what pedagogy might become when once we understand how learning happens.

References


23. For an implicit grasp of the elusiveness and yet centrality of things that fall under the aesthetics of experience as I have been promoting it, see the detailed account of a year in the life of a New York kindergarten class in Diamond 2008.

24. Thanks to the editors of this special volume for giving me the opportunity to expand my initial paper and for their helpful suggestions in this regard.


Larry A. Hickman

Educational Occupations and Classroom Technology: Lessons from Democracy and Education

Abstract: Despite the fact that John Dewey had a great deal to say about education and technology, many of his insights have yet to be understood or appropriated. A close reading of Democracy and Education offers support for the view that Dewey was prescient in proposing a pedagogy that was friendly to current initiatives in innovative classroom technology including inverted or “flipped” classroom projects in the United States and elsewhere and the Future Classroom Lab project of the European Schoolnet. In both of these initiatives application of tools and techniques grow out of educational occupations guided by teachers rather than being imposed on learning situations a priori. Both initiatives honor the pillars of Dewey’s educational philosophy as presented in his 1916 Democracy and Education and elsewhere in his work: problem-or theme-based learning, peer-based learning, learning that is open to the world outside the classroom, and teachers who are engaged as coaches and facilitators rather than authority figures.

In 1896 John Dewey established a laboratory school at the University of Chicago. If departments of physics and chemistry had laboratories, then why should not a department of pedagogy have one as well? Dewey’s school was designed to express his commitment to evolutionary naturalism, that is, his view that since humans have evolved along with the rest of nature they should therefore be studied just as other animals are studied.¹

Breaking with a long tradition of a priori approaches to philosophy and pedagogy, he treated logic and epistemology as natural sciences. As he would write three years later in The School and Society, schools should be designed to provide an environment of embryonic community life, active with types of occupations which reflect the life of the larger society, and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious. (MW 1: 19-20)³

¹ Southern Illinois University Carbondale [lhickman@siu.edu].

1. For a helpful account of the history of Deweyan participatory learning, see Cunningham 2009. Cunningham addresses some of the same issues that motivate this essay. “Students can participate in collaborative activities that reflect current knowledge and contemporary situations and yet are sufficiently scaffolded to allow for meaningful and safe participation by a wide variety of learners in a limited amount of time. […] Deweyan educators should acquaint themselves with these possibilities, if only to see what might be learned from them about the prospects of participatory learning for the twenty-first century” (Ibid.: 51).

2. See Waks 2001. Waks discusses updated applications of Dewey’s notion that the school should be connected with out-of-school life, including the lives of business and industry. Progressive teaching methods, he argues, should now include cyber-simulations of natural and social processes. “[G]ames add something special: their alterations of skill and luck, necessity and chance, competition and cooperation, tension and release, make them excellent general models of real life” (Ibid.: 416).

Dewey thought that individual lives should be informed with the life of nature and of society. “When nature and society can live in the schoolroom,” he wrote, “when the forms and tools of learning are subordinated to the substance of experience, then shall there be an opportunity for this identification, and culture shall be the democratic password” (MW 1: 39). His students practiced this unification of nature and society by means of what he called “occupations.” There was, for example, work with wood. There was cooking, sewing, and work with textiles.

In his 1916 masterwork *Democracy and Education*, Dewey is clear that emphasis on “occupations” was a response to the “memorize and drill” pedagogies of the 19th century – those antique educational ideas that have, sadly, enjoyed a revival in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in the form of “teaching to the test” pedagogies associated with *No Child Left Behind* and *Common Core* initiatives in the United States. Dewey was clear enough about his dislike of such practices: “Education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told,” he wrote, “but an active and constructive process” (MW 9: 43).

Although these occupations – work with wood, cooking, sewing, work with textiles, and so on – are still important, they no longer hold the central place they did when Dewey’s school was new. They have been for the most part replaced by other classroom occupations such as video production, use of social media, techniques of hunting and gathering information on the Internet, writing computer programs, spreadsheet and database management, web page design, robotics, and 3-D printing.

As different as these 21st century occupations may initially appear from those of Dewey’s school, they in fact share common contexts, elements, and aims that Dewey spelled out in his works on education, especially in *Democracy and Education*. Contexts include the home, the school, the community, industry, the internet, and the wider world. Elements include raw materials, stock parts, tools – both existing and yet to be invented and developed as a part of the learning process – and finished products. Aims include socialization and experimentation, communication and negotiation as a part of conjoint activities, building on the success of competed educational projects, and acquiring skills that support lifelong learning.

1. Educational occupations flow from the native tendencies of children. Dewey’s view of the individual was radical, and his view of the social was equally radical. His radical social psychology rejected the notion that humans are essentially passive and need to be prodded into action. As a Darwinian naturalist he thought that humans have evolved along with the rest of nature and that in order to flourish they must continually adjust to changing environmental circumstances by forming and reforming habits of action, and by reconstructing received customs and traditions as the need arises. Some situations demand that environing conditions should be altered. Others demand accommodation to relatively external conditions on the part of the individual or group. An essential part of educational practice is providing educational occupations that allow learners to balance these two demands as a part of learning to manage change.

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*Middle Works 1899-1924* [MW], and *The Later Works 1925-1953* [LW].
He thought that neonates are individuals only in the most attenuated of senses. One of the central aims of education is the type of growth that allows children to become individuals in a more meaningful sense of the word – individuating themselves as they explore their talents and interests and as they find places for themselves within the natural and social environments. It is thus the responsibility of those who are a part of their social environments to assure that impediments to learning are removed and that the way is cleared for the continual reconstruction and renewal of society.

Dewey recognized that children are energetic by nature and that they enjoy experimenting with materials and making things. Educational occupations thus flow naturally from “native tendencies to explore, to manipulate tools and materials, to construct, to give expression to joyous emotion” (MW 9: 202). Dewey consequently restructured classroom design in order to free up spaces for motor activities and social interaction. He rejected theories of a fixed human nature, which he thought were blind to the wonderful plasticity of the human organism. His pedagogy was based on the idea that humans have native impulses, many of which are in conflict with others. The task of education is to generate the tools by means of which students can learn to organize and manage their impulses in productive ways – ways that facilitate the formation of good habits. Beyond that, he understood “character” as a way of talking about particular constellations of habits that influence not only present action, but also the formation of future habits. Proper deployment of educational occupations is thus essential to organizing native impulses and forming the habits that contribute to the formation of good character.

2. Educational occupations tend to balance theory and practice. The “fundamental point in the psychology of an occupation,” Dewey wrote in The School and Society, “is that it maintains a balance between the intellectual and the practical phases of experience” (MW 1: 92). The traditional theory/practice split was one among the many dualisms such as mind/body, inner/outer, and means/ends that Dewey attacked as militating against sound pedagogy. When education slips into what he termed “academic and aloof knowledge,” on one hand, or “a hard, narrow, and merely ‘practical’ practice” on the other, then it fails (MW 9: 144). In Democracy and Education Dewey treats the relation of theory to practice as the relation of reason to acting (MW 9: 340). He treats theory and practice as phases of educational occupations, that is, as complementary aspects of learning experiences (MW 9: 144).

Dewey’s remarks on the relation between theory and practice is perhaps best understood in the context of his remarks about the relation of means to ends. Theory is means and it is also end. It is means in the sense that theoretical constructs are tools that are utilized in educational occupations to support deliberation about and assessment of the consequences of proposed actions. Theory is also end in the sense that theories are constructed objects, to be constructed, that is, in ways that reflect the needs of the educational context. Practice is also means as well as end. Improved practice serves as end in the sense of the goal, or what Dewey calls an end-in view, of an educational occupation. Practice also serves as means for moving activity, including thought, forward, for reviewing and correcting errors – and building on successes.
3. Educational occupations serve as means to the end of socialization. It is essential, therefore that they involve joint activities. Here, again, is Dewey in Democracy and Education:

We may secure motor activity and sensory excitation by keeping an individual by himself, but we cannot thereby get him to understand the meaning which things have in the life of which he is a part […]. Only by engaging in a joint activity, where one person’s use of material and tools is consciously referred to the use other persons are making of their capacities and appliances, is a social direction of disposition attained. (MW 9: 44)

It is a commonplace that we generally read silently and alone, and that reading provides access to a wider world, to citizenship in what some have called “the republic of letters.” But in Dewey’s enriched pedagogy learning does not flower unless nourished by the sun and water and soil of personal interaction. For learners, one of the great lessons of working together on joint projects is that different backgrounds, talents, interests, and angles of vision usually make for better and more interesting ideas and outcomes. This, Dewey said, is not preparation for democracy; it is small scale democracy in action. So Dewey thought that schools were laboratories of democracy: joint activities yield rich lessons in cooperation, respect for the opinions of others, acceptance of diversity of many types, acknowledgment of the need for negotiation and compromise, and many other traits that are necessary to the functioning of a democratic society. Dewey went so far as to suggest that democracy is less a form of government (since democratic government can take many forms) than it is a way of living together. Activities associated with joint projects provide the conditions that are required for the seedlings of democracy to grow.

4. Educational occupations establish a continuity of the tools of school with the tools of home and industry. Educators trained in Dewey’s methods will recognize the fact that for those of school age the Internet is not merely a means of getting information: it is a means of communication. Educational occupations can be designed to build on the fact, for example, that YouTube users older than 13 can create accounts which allow them to upload videos and comment on the videos of others.⁴

Noel Murray, writing in the New York Times, notes that YouTube has built production facilities around the world to provide their best known creators access to soundstages and equipment. Yet the success of many of the site’s most beloved content producers may reflect their videos’ homemade charm, not their professional polish. (Murray 2015: F4)

Murray concludes that children have come to see online videos as another form of communication, akin to the conversations they have in the comments section of web sites. It does not take much of an imaginative leap to see the possibilities for educational occupations in this situation. Production facilities in schools can allow

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⁴. This type of interaction/production in the classroom is an important feature of the European Schoolnet, which I will discuss later.
students – working together – to produce classroom projects and share them with students at other schools, thus expanding the scope of one of the pillars of Dewey’s pedagogy: peer-based learning. This transition from watching passively to actively creating is precisely what Dewey had in mind.

5. Educational occupations develop the skills necessary for development of more advanced skills. Put another way, well-designed educational occupations encourage further educational activities that are built on successful outcomes. Beyond the occupations already mentioned, Dewey includes “outdoor excursions, gardening, cooking, sewing, printing, book-binding, weaving, painting, drawing, singing, dramatization, story-telling, reading and writing.” These are “active pursuits with social aims (not as mere exercises for acquiring skill for future use) […] and designate some of the modes of occupation” (MW 9: 204).

6. Educational occupations develop the tools and techniques of self direction. Collaborative work in the classroom situations not only socializes; it also provides tools by means of which learners can begin to craft their own futures based on increasing awareness of their talents and abilities, their interests, and their capacity for bringing energy and discipline to future learning projects.

7. Educational occupations integrate play and work. Dewey claims that

the defining characteristic of play is not amusement nor aimlessness. It is the fact that the aim is thought of as more activity in the same line, without defining continuity of action in reference to results produced. (MW 9: 213-4)

Educational occupations are effective when they involve “knowledge-getting” that is “an outgrowth of activities having their own end, instead of a school task” (MW 9: 203).

8. Educational occupations involve tool use. Central to Dewey’s treatment of technology was his claim that the difference between concrete and abstract tools, between those that are tangible and those that are intangible, is merely functional within a broader context of technology, that is, inquiry into the nature and use of tools and techniques. Technology is thus the ‘logos’ of technē. It is not necessary that learners know the properties of tools and objects before they can be intelligently used (MW 9: 297). Learners learn to use tools by using them, not being told about their use. Perhaps even more importantly the use of tools should emerge from the educational occupation and not be imposed on it. Attempts to impose irrelevant tools on learning situations can lead to resistance and reluctance to explore new technical possibilities.

A passage from Nobel physicist Richard Feynman’s (1999: 178) book The Pleasure of Finding Things Out illustrates this insight from Democracy and Education. Feynman invites us to consider a first grade science book, a science book for six-year olds. He sees three pictures. The first is a picture of a wind-up toy dog. The second is a picture of a real dog. The third is a picture of a motor bike. Under each picture there is a caption: “What makes it move?” The teacher’s manual provides the answer. The teacher is supposed to tell the children that what makes each of these things move is energy.
Feynman is not impressed. He doesn’t think that this is the way to teach science to six-year olds (or anyone else, for that matter). Neither did Dewey, who reminded us that “education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process” (MW 9: 43). Dewey thought that energy is a concept – an abstract tool that is used to perform functions such as getting additional data about some problem that we want to solve. It is like a key that opens the door to new ideas and new data. But is certainly not a definition that students need to memorize so that the teacher can tell them that each of the three pictures fit the definition. Dewey thought that that is an excellent way to hamper the excitement of learning about science.

Feynman’s alternative approach was similar to Dewey’s. Why does the toy dog move? It moves because the child winds up the spring, which begins to unwind when the crank is released. The child discovers that as the spring unwinds it runs the gears, which make the toy dog’s legs move. Feynman and Dewey are clear: successful educational occupations require active use of tools: it is better for the child to take the toy dog apart to see how it works than to memorize the definition of “energy.” Taking the toy dog apart is a good way to teach and learn science. Getting children to memorize the definition of ‘energy’ is not.

Beyond this simple example, it is important to note that tools – physical as well as conceptual – allow development of indeterminate or problematic situations into those that are well ordered and satisfactory in ways that are not definable a priori. Dewey’s remarks on concept formation are appropriate to this topic. Children, for example, form concepts as tools of inquiry first by identifying something of interest, say a dog. Then, with the help of a teacher or other adult, they supplement that incipient and tenuous concept by means of trials, errors, and corrections that determine other instances of its (canine) type, for example, by being corrected when they mistakenly identify a horse as a ‘big dog.’ Success comes when the child is able to locate what has been refined and reconstructed within a broader context in ways that resolve the tension in the original situation, for example, by developing the ability to distinguish various breeds of dogs. Dewey’s analysis of concept formation was, of course, borrowed from the sciences. Like other tools, he suggested, “the significance of atoms, molecules, and chemical formulae […] can be learned only by use” (MW 9: 229).

9. Educational occupations encourage the development of abstraction and scientific thinking. They encourage the development of tools that are flexible and that may not have an immediately obvious use.

The man of science in developing his abstractions is like a manufacturer of tools who does not know who will use them nor when. But intellectual tools are indefinitely more flexible in their range of adaptation than other mechanical tools. (MW 9: 233)

He thought the relation between abstraction and generalization of paramount importance. Generalization, he wrote, is “the functioning of an abstraction in its

5. For more on this see Waks 2014. Waks provides an extended discussion of the old “factory” paradigm of education and the new “networked learning” paradigm. Of particular relevance to educators is his Ch. 15: “What Needs To Be Done?”
application to a new concrete experience – its extension to clarify and direct new situations” (MW 9: 235). Dewey tells us that scientific abstraction and generalization are the keys to objectivity, that is, of “emancipation from the conditions and episodes of concrete experiences” in order to foster the “wide and free range of fruitful novel applications in practice.”

The success of learners’ involvement with educational occupations depends on adequate preparation by a number of parties. In what may have been a rebuke to some of his self-styled followers whose pedagogy favored lack of structure, Dewey reminded us that

\[\text{[i]ntentional education signifies [...] a specially selected environment, the selection being made on the basis of materials and methods specifically promoting growth in the desired direction. (MW 9: 43)}\]

Moreover, control of educational occupations

is not the same thing as physical compulsion; it consists in centering the impulses acting at any one time upon some specific end and in introducing an order of continuity into the sequence of acts [...]. The basic control resides in the nature of the situations in which the young take part [...]. To achieve [...] [this] internal control through identity of interest and understanding is the business of education. While books and conversation can do much, these agencies are usually relied upon too exclusively. Schools require for their full efficiency more opportunity for conjoint activities in which those instructed take part, so that they may acquire a social sense of their own powers and of the materials and appliances used. (MW 9: 44-5)

Dewey thought that every school classroom should be a laboratory. This view is apparently shared by the Innovative Technology for an Engaging Classroom, henceforth iTEC.

Over the course of the project, educational tools and resources were piloted in over 2,500 classrooms across 20 European countries, with the goal of providing a sustainable model for fundamentally redesigning teaching and learning. The project involved 26 project partners, including 14 Ministries of Education, and funding of €9.45 million from the European Commission’s FP7 programme. The project ended in August 2014.

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6. There is a vast literature dedicated to institutional failures to provide adequate preparation for support of educational occupations. In the United States, for example, many educators are highly critical of the lack of equalized funding across public school systems (see Kozol 1991). Racial and economic inequalities also come into play (see Noguera & Yonemura Wing 2006.) In the view of many educators, top-down government-imposed mandates for standardized, high-stakes testing (No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, the Common Core) also tend to interfere with providing adequate preparation for the success of educational occupations.

7. For more on this see Waddington 2015.

8. From the European Schoolnet Website: “In iTEC (Innovative Technologies for Engaging Classrooms, 2010-2014), European Schoolnet worked with education ministries, technology providers and research organizations to transform the way that technology is used in schools.”
The project of European Schoolnet, henceforth EUN, provides both Ministries and schools with: information and services relating to the innovative use of educational technology; outreach campaigns on specific educational topics such as maths, science and technology; and research activities [eun.org/about], which has developed a “Future Classroom Lab.” Since the opening of the Future Classroom Lab in January 2012, European Schoolnet and its 30 supporting Ministries of Education have worked closely with a growing number of ICT [Information and Communication Technology] providers to ensure an independently-funded and sustainable platform. Policy-makers, industry partners, teachers and other education stakeholders regularly come together in face-to-face training workshops and strategic seminars to develop visions for the school of the future and strategies on how to realise these.” With toolsets for constructing educational occupations that Dewey would, I suggest, have found congenial.

Consistent with his view that democracy is not so much a form of government as a form of life, Dewey continually emphasized the importance of communication among interested and affected parties, or what we today call stakeholders, as essential to the reconstruction and renewal of received customs and practices. He was particularly eager to see that schools take their place as active participants in the life of the wider community, and that the wider community enter into the life of the schools.

Toolset 1 provides guidance for individual schools as well as regional and national governmental entities regarding the selection of a “future classroom facilitator,” who in turn selects a core group of from 6-8 “forward-thinking and well-informed” individuals from diverse backgrounds. These might include curriculum experts, policy and strategy stakeholders (such as ICT coordinators), wider community stakeholders, and, of course, teachers and learners. Each member of the core group is then encouraged to draw on its own constituency group for information and advice. Guidelines stress the importance of the contribution of teachers and learners, whose feedback is essential to the design and testing of proposed innovative learning activities.

Dewey also emphasized the essential role of testing imaginative scenarios, or what he called “dramatic rehearsals,” as a part of problem solving. Although I will have more to say about this later, it is important to note that Toolset 1 offers guidelines for identifying trends in emerging technologies and trends in teaching and learning (such as the inverted or “flipped” classroom), using questionnaires that invite the use of

9. Here is the “About” statement of the European Schoolnet: “European Schoolnet is the network of 31 European Ministries of Education, based in Brussels. As a not-for-profit organization, we aim to bring innovation in teaching and learning to our key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners. Since its founding in 1997, European Schoolnet has used its links with education ministries to help schools make effective use of educational technologies, equipping both teachers and pupils with the skills to achieve in the knowledge society.”

10. From the European Schoolnet Website: “Created by European Schoolnet, the Future Classroom Lab (FCL) is an inspirational learning environment in Brussels, challenging visitors to rethink the role of pedagogy, technology and design in their classrooms. Through six learning zones, visitors can explore the essential elements in delivering 21st century learning: students’ and teachers’ skills and roles, learning styles, learning environment design, current and emerging technology, and societal trends affecting education.”
dramatic rehearsals: What technologies will have an impact on teaching and learning in the next five years? What are the challenges that will have an impact on teachers in the next five years? What are the challenges that will have an impact on students in the next five years? Trends are then ranked as a part of small group discussions.

If classrooms are to be laboratories that support educational occupations, as Dewey argued they should be, then teachers need to be aware not only of trends and possibilities, but of existing conditions that influence the quality of teaching and learning.

Toolset 2 provides an interactive tool for assessing available digital learning resources and comparing those results to a benchmark. Supporting materials include videos that provide examples of five levels of “future classroom maturity.” Because the first level registers the use of what are for the most part traditional learning tools and methods, and because the fifth level registers a connected classroom in which learners are more or less self-guided with respect to their learning skills and teachers are empowered to become innovative, these five levels of “classroom maturity” are worth describing in some detail.

1. The lowest level is “Exchange.” At this level there is little support or training for teachers in areas of digital learning. Use of digital tools is usually confined to individual teachers, so that teaching and learning are isolated. Digital tools are used infrequently and then only primarily to support traditional methods. Put in terms of Dewey’s discussion of educational occupations, there is at this stage a lack of continuity between tools of school with the tools of home and industry. Learners who have a rich digital environment at home will tend to find the learning environment of the school isolated and boring.

2. At the next level, “Enrich,” the teacher decides what technology the learners use, but may lack full understanding of its benefits. Training and support are primarily technical rather than pedagogical. Teachers are “enriched” by use of digital tools, but tend generally to be uncomfortable with their use. The learner becomes the user of digital tools, but at the direction of the teacher. There is little personalization of learner’s activities. In terms of Dewey’s treatment of educational occupations, there is at this stage still a measure of alienation of both teacher and learner from digital tools that could enrich the learning experience. Tools tend to be imposed on the learning experience rather than being chosen as relevant to and facilitating the learning experience.

3. At the level of “Enhance” there is more active experimentation by teachers with digital tools. Teachers are supported with ICT training. Learners are encouraged to develop more personalized, individuated learning objectives tied to objectives outlined in a “21 Century Skills” document. Skills listed include: “Critical thinking,

11. See [edglossary.org/21st-century-skills/] for an article on 21st century skills posted as a part of the Glossary of Education Reform, sponsored by the Great Schools Partnership. The essay contains the following disclaimer: “While the specific skills deemed to be ‘21st century skills’ may be defined, categorized, and determined differently from person to person, place to place, or school to school, the term does reflect a general – if somewhat loose and shifting – consensus. The following list provides a brief illustrative overview of the knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits commonly associated with 21st century skills.”
problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, synthesizing information; Research skills and practices, interrogative questioning; Creativity, artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression; Perseverance, self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability, initiative; Oral and written communication, public speaking and presenting, listening; Leadership, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, facility in using virtual workspaces; ITC literacy, media and internet literacy, data interpretation and analysis, computer programming; Civic, ethical, and social justice literacy; Economic and financial literacy, entrepreneurialism; Global awareness, multicultural literacy, humanitarianism; Scientific literacy and reasoning, the scientific method; Environmental and conservation literacy, ecosystems understanding; Health and wellness literacy, including nutrition, diet, exercise, and public health and safety.” Teachers become more comfortable with digital tools and learners begin to use technology to support creativity, collaboration and communication. Individualized assessment tools improve the performance of learners. In terms of Dewey’s discussion of educational occupations, it is at this stage that educational occupations begin to serve as means of improved socialization. Teacher/learner collaborations begin, and learning scenarios become more fluid and flexible.

4. At the level of “Extend,” learners gain greater control of what, how, and when they learn. There is increased initiative and connectedness on the part of teachers, who are encouraged to develop innovative approaches to learning and to share them with other teachers in their own school as well as those in other schools. Teachers are digitally competent and engage learners in ways that overcomes the gap between formal and informal learning. There is an increased emphasis on collaboration. Traditional subject boundaries are lowered as learner progress becomes more individualized. In this stage and the next one the core ideas of Dewey’s pedagogy are ideally expressed. The environment is structured but experimental, educational occupations reflect the interests of teachers and learners, levels of collaboration are high, peer learning is emphasized, and the classroom is opened to the wider world.

5. At the level of “Empower,” teachers and learners are empowered to experiment with and adapt new approaches and tools. The school is committed to innovation and teachers are sufficiently trained in the use of future classroom tools. Learning objectives are continually reviewed and there is a balance between assessment of formal skills, on one side, and developing skills that are less easily assessed, on the other. Learners become more self-directed and teachers become collaborative designers of innovative learning activities. In the language of Democracy and Education, at this ultimate stage educational occupations develop the skills necessary for development of more advanced skills. They encourage further educational activities built on successful outcomes.

Toolset 3 addresses the issue of writing “scenarios” for classroom use. Members of a core groups work collaboratively to create new scenarios or build on existing ones that are at least one level higher on the “classroom maturity model” than previous scenarios. Attention is directed to concerns such as: learners’ skills to be developed; building future classroom maturity; specifying learning objectives and means of assessment; and writing or adapting the scenario narrative so as to take into
consideration the learners’ role, the teachers’ role, the capacity of the school to support classroom innovation, and availability of required tools and resources.

Toolset 4. Whereas future classroom scenarios establish a vision of what a school thinks possible and desirable for the future of teaching and learning, in order to realize these visions teachers work together to create a set of learning activities such as creating a video or collecting data or images from outside the school. It is important to note that they involve collaborative design, that they are not tied to a particular subject area, that they are not lesson plans per se but activities that both seasoned and novice teachers can use to prepare their own lesson plans, and that they are open to revision. Finally, there are “learning stories,” which are narratives that give teachers a sense of how learning activities could be used in their own classrooms. Teachers can access a Widget Store, which is an online tool for storing small reusable learning tools that can be used within their own Learning Platform.

Toolset 5 provides suggestions for review and assessment of classroom projects. In this toolset teachers also have access to “share your story” videos and other materials that allow them to see what other teachers have done.

* In the preceding paragraphs I have suggested that the ideals and proposals set out in documentation supplied by the “Future Classroom Toolkit” project of European Schoolnet are consistent with the main themes of Democracy and Education. Now I want to discuss another initiative of the EUN that is imbedded within the larger educational project that I believe Dewey would also have found congenial: the inverted or “flipped classroom.” Although the literature of the EUN and its various projects does not appear to emphasize the inverted classroom as a major feature of its initiatives, this may be because the concept has been so successfully integrated into the projects as a whole.

Kerry Shoebridge, a physical education teacher in the U.K. reports that she created a video for the learners that introduced a new topic. They then used an online discussion board to comment on it and came to the classroom “really engaged, really wanting to know what the unit was going to be about, and what they were going to learn.” According to the report, “Kerry’s flipped classroom was a big success, with 95 % of her pupils passing. According to the students themselves, it was not just using technology that was important, but the fact that ICT supported independent learning by enabling students to take notes in whatever way they liked, and facilitated them developing their own learning styles.”

It may be helpful here, therefore, to say something more about the flipped classroom and how it relates to Dewey’s proposals in Democracy and Education. In 2012 Mary Beth Hertz, an Arts/Tech teacher in Pennsylvania reviewed the flipped classroom.

classroom for Edutopia, a non-partisan foundation dedicated to the improvement of K-12 education. She emphasized that the flipped classroom is not a synonym for online videos. In words that echo Dewey’s remarks in *Democracy and Education*, she quoted flipped-classroom pioneer Jonathan Bergmann: “It is the interaction and the meaningful learning activities that occur during the face-to-face time that is the most importance.” Hertz is wary of “off the shelf” flipped-classroom products marketed by for-profit educational suppliers, and she is also critical of Kahn Academy’s use of the technique in ways that neglect its multidimensional capabilities. She is also convinced that not everyone learns best through a screen. In general, however, she sees the flipped classroom as offering teachers and learners a wide assortment of techniques that promote individualized learning, that allow students to catch up when they miss classes, and that tend to provoke enthusiastic responses from learners.

Hertz also points out that the idea is hardly new.

Listening to Aaron Sams talk [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2H4RkudFzlc] about his experience with the flipped-classroom model, one can’t help but imagine that what he is describing doesn’t require video at all. What he describes is, in essence, what John Dewey described at the turn of the 20th century: learning that is centered around the student, not the teacher; learning that allows students to show their mastery of content the way they prefer. These are not new concepts.

Flipped classroom researchers Jacob Lowell Bishop and Matthew A. Verleger, focusing on learning in higher education, come to a different conclusion regarding the use of video. They define the flipped classroom more narrowly than does Hertz, as a “new pedagogical method, which employs asynchronous video lectures and practice problems as homework, and active, group-based problem solving activities in the classroom. It represents a unique combination of learning theories once thought to be incompatible—active, problem-based learning activities founded upon a constructivist ideology and instructional lectures derived from direct instruction methods founded upon behaviorist principles” (Bishop & Verleger 2013: 1). They cite research that shows that college students don’t generally complete reading assignments and prefer “live in-person lectures to video lectures,” but also like “interactive class time more than in-person lectures” (Bishop & Verleger 2013: 9).

A study published by the Flipped Learning Network (Hamdan *et al.* 2013) also reinforces central concepts of the pedagogy of *Democracy and Education*, supported with new digital tools. “Teachers record and narrate screencasts of work they do on their computer desktops, create videos of themselves teaching, or curate video lessons from internet sites such as TED-Ed and Khan Academy” (Hamdan *et al.* 2013: 4). What they describe as the four pillars of flipped learning fit nicely with the pillars of Dewey’s pedagogy that I discussed earlier. First, flipped learning requires flexible environments in which students choose when and where they learn. Consequently, educators need to be flexible in terms of how students are assessed. Second, flipped


15. Hertz: 3.
learning requires a shift in the learning culture away from the teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered approach. Third, flipped learning requires intentional content. Teachers evaluate what content they need to teach directly and what materials learners need to explore on their own outside the group learning experience. Teachers can call on a variety of techniques, including peer instruction, problem-based learning, Socratic methods, and so on. Fourth, flipped learning requires professional educators. Learning is enabled by digital tools, rather than being driven by them. Flipped learning involves active learning, peer instruction, priming (preparing learners with direct instruction outside the classroom), pre-training (in order to reduce the cognitive load on learners), and provision for diverse learning opportunities.

**Conclusion**

Returning to the iTEC project, it is possible to say by way of summary that it appears to promote the core concepts of the educational occupations discussed in *Democracy and Education* and elsewhere in Dewey’s work. These include recognition of a broad range of stakeholder interests, provision of time and space for teachers to step back and consider new ways of instruction, promotion of project-based learning, promotion of peer-based learning, treatment of teachers as learners who collaborate with their students via social media and digital tools such as Dropbox, respect for different cognitive styles, encouragement of flexible methods of assessment, commitment to a pedagogy that is enabled but not driven by digital tools, empowerment of teachers, appropriate use of quantitative tools, scalability, engagement of learners’ motor responses, development of learners’ sense of ends/means relationships, recognition of classroom as workshops of democracy, enhancement of student motivation, and sharing of best practices among teachers.

There is of course much more to the European Schoolnet project than the iTEC component. I have not considered, for example, the “1 to 1 Pedagogy for Schools Project,” which explores the use of low cost computer devices, ranging from mobiles and handhelds to laptops or netbooks, in educational contexts. This essay has merely attempted to examine EUN’s iTEC proposals for the use of educational technology in the context of Dewey’s masterwork, *Democracy and Education*.

**References**


Samuel Renier

The Many Lives of John Dewey’s Democracy and Education. A Historical Account of the Reception of a Book Still to Be Read

Abstract: Originally published in 1916, John Dewey’s seminal book Democracy and Education was not translated into French until 1975, thanks to the work accomplished by Gérard Deledalle. Welcomed by a relative indifference on the part of French philosophers, the book only received attention from a few intellectuals, working in the field of educational sciences. But this has not always been the case. The main purpose of this paper is to study the various ways according to which Dewey’s work has been read and used over the last century. Based on a comprehensive review of French literature concerning Dewey, it underlines two main moments proposing divergent interpretations and uses of his ideas, with the decade following its original publication; and, its translation into French. The relevance and the topicality of such a historical work appears to be all the more important as the beginning of the 21st century is marked by a rediscovery of Deweyan thought by the French audience, with the noticeable reprinting of Democracy and Education. In so doing, we shall thus point out the moving and transactional character of a book still to be read, pragmatically.

A century ago, the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey published one of his major and most influential books with Democracy and Education. After one hundred years, it should be noted that this book has been regularly reprinted and translated in numerous languages, ensuring the dissemination of its ideas in a diversity of countries and cultural contexts. The question it immediately raises concerns the topicality of the ideas presented in a book written in quite a different social background. How can Democracy and Education still be considered as a relevant book for today, and for today’s issues in a variety of social conditions that necessarily could not be foreseen at the time of its primal publication? Apart from an a priori answer which would simply postulate the timeless content of the ideas expressed in this particular book, it leaves us with the question of its reception, that is to say of the uses which were made of it and which conferred to it an actuality as well as a particular interpretation. In this respect, the case of the French reception of Democracy and Education appears to be especially interesting insofar as the century which separates us from Dewey’s original edition doesn’t present itself as a steady and equal movement of diffusion, as it wasn’t translated into French until 1975, thanks to the efforts of Gérard Deledalle.

Over the last decade, the reception of Deweyan thought in France has begun to be studied from a historical and philosophical point of view. Two trends may be distinguished within this field of study. On the one hand, extensive studies of the reception of pragmatism as a whole, that is to say as a philosophical movement, encompassing all its major figures, including Dewey. In so doing, they try to picture a global portrait of the encounter of two different philosophical cultures (Pudal 2007; Schultenover 2009). On the other hand, we find an increasing number of limited studies focusing on the reception of Dewey’s sole educational ideas, especially within the New Education movement and its leaders (Schneider 2000; Renier 2012; Renier 2013; and Frelat-Kahn 2013). These two types of studies do reveal themselves

* Université François-Rabelais de Tours (France) – Équipe émergente “Éducation, Éthique et Santé” [samuel.renier@univ-tours.fr].

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very useful in order to understand how a book like *Democracy and Education* has progressively found its way into the French intellectual background. However, as “an introduction to philosophy of education,” this book stands in between these two trends. It establishes a third way according to which “philosophy of education” is neither the field of application of some general philosophy nor a particular outlook on the educational phenomena. It rather develops a comprehensive view on our everyday experience of learning and growing in a world constantly evolving, calling for a new definition of philosophy and philosophical practices.

On the basis of this observation, we may not consider the reception of *Democracy and Education* with predetermined categories of analysis, which would lead us to endless oppositions. From a methodological standpoint, we may take as a working hypothesis that the definition of the ideas expressed in *Democracy and Education* are the result of a transaction between the book and its readers. There is no definite truth about it but only a multiple way to produce operational significations on its basis. There isn’t, equally, bad, wrong, inadequate or insufficient interpretations of Dewey’s ideas. What we shall try to establish is that there is, each time, a process of appropriation which has to be understood and assessed relatively to the situation and the project of the person or group of persons making use of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*. From this attention to the singular meanings given to it, we shall then attempt to better understand the plural character of Dewey’s book and the sense which may be attributed to his project of *introducing* a philosophy of education.

Though focusing on the reception of *Democracy and Education* cannot be totally realized without a consideration for the rest of his works, sometimes taken as a whole by its readers, it is possible to identify two major moments within the one hundred years of Dewey’s presence in France. These moments do correspond to two historical phases of the reception of *Democracy and Education*: firstly, the years surrounding its primal edition in the United States, at the beginning of the 1920s, during which a first wave of diffusion resulted from the reviews published in French journals; secondly, the years following the French translation issued by Deledalle in 1975, sixty years after its original publication. Taking reviews as our main material does not mean that other ways of diffusion of the views expressed in *Democracy and Education* didn’t existed or that their influence was of lower importance. But it shall humbly put the emphasis on the visibility given to it in some journals and by the action of specific individuals picturing a certain image of Dewey. Like ferrymen, or sometimes smugglers, their contribution is to pass this book through national, cultural and even historical frontiers and they help us to better understand the frontiers which Dewey might help us pass today.

1. Introducing Democracy and Education: (1917-1927)

Published in 1916 in the United States, *Democracy and Education* first arrived in France through the reviews published in several journals. These early appraisals of Dewey’s book, despite their reduced number, offer us a plural vision of its reception. Either focusing on a sociological, a philosophical or a pedagogical standpoint, these
interpretations are worth studying insofar as they contribute to giving distinct and divergent orientations to Dewey’s reflection to the French audience.

1.1 A Sociological Standpoint on Education in a Democracy

In June 1920, the Bulletin de l’Association Française pour la Lutte contre le Chômage et pour l’Organisation du Marché du Travail (Bulletin of the French Association for the Struggle against Unemployment and for the Organization of the Job Market) dedicated a whole issue to the topic of “Education and Vocational Guidance.” Among the four articles presented in this issue, John Dewey’s Democracy and Education is granted a prominent place, with a full translation of its twenty-third chapter on “Vocational Aspects of Education,” and a large review written by Max Lazard.1 They are accompanied by a long introduction of Julien Fontègne2 on the current development and the present need of vocational guidance, and followed by a detailed international bibliography established by Fontègne on the subject. But why is Democracy and Education given such importance and what is the purpose of the editors, Lazard and Fontègne, in doing so?

One may note that the choice of the 23rd chapter of Dewey’s book is no coincidence. Vocational education represents at that time a burning issue around which Fontègne and Lazard worked heavily. The aftermath of World War I and the persistence of a traditional school system gave no place to the emergence of vocations. Either pupils having to decide on their future or adults, disabled veterans especially, having to choose a different course for their lives and activities faced the same problem: the organization of the course of study and of the social setting of the job market can’t help them much. As a consequence, the issue of “course choice” (orientation) soon became a real issue. How to define and classify a profession among others? What are the requirements to practice it? Can we determine psychological types which may help to organize the choices made by individuals or suggested to them? All these questions prove to be central, as Fontègne points out in his study, and meet Dewey’s own reflections.

This community of views is all the more stressed in Lazard’s review as he provides an interpretation of Democracy and Education in which educational and pedagogical thinking are less important than the role that education plays in organizing society. The definition, given by Lazard, of education in Dewey’s book is strangely similar to the sociological one given by Durkheim:3 “By education, society seeks to deliver

1. Max Lazard (1875-1953) was a French banker and intellectual, who mainly dedicated his life to fighting unemployment. Though not a direct student of Durkheim, he was greatly influenced by the development of his sociological thought in his own works on the function of labor in the social organization. He was the founder and president of the Association Française pour la Lutte contre le Chômage et pour l’Organisation du Marché du Travail, and of its Bulletin in which Dewey’s translation and review appeared.
2. Julien Fontègne (1879-1944) was a French school inspector of technical education. He was a pioneer of the development of vocational choice and education, and participated to the foundation of the Institut National d’Orientation Professionnelle (National Institute for Vocational Choice) along with Henri Piéron and Henri Laugier.
3. As he defined in 1911, in “Education: Its Nature and Its Role”: “Education is the influence exercised
to young generations the skills which are necessary to the conservation of the social
habits of acting, of thinking, of feeling” (Lazard 1920: 28). Dewey’s definition of
philosophy, as “the general theory of education,” is consequently to be understood
as an organized interpretation of the social settings surrounding education in a given
society. In so doing, Lazard diverges greatly from antecedent interpretations of
Dewey’s educational philosophy which were developed in France (Renier 2013).
Another review, much shorter than the precedent one, of *Democracy and Education*
blatantly illustrates the divergence of views between Lazard and Fontègne, on the
one side, and the defenders of a pedagogical interpretation, on the other. Published
in December 1917 by the journal *L’éducation* (Education), this review is signed by
Albert Kohler. In a couple of pages, it presents Dewey’s general orientations in his
book, which he qualifies “a very considered and highly systematized pedagogical
theory” (Kohler 1917: 453). Kohler particularly emphasizes the link between the
social macrocosm and the school microcosm. If life is defined by its continuity, then
education has to focus on the social significance of its matters through the alliance
of theory and practice. These points are certainly to be found in *Democracy and
Education*, but they also represent the core issues of *The School and the Child*; translated into French a few years before and highly praised by French educators
(Renier 2013: 28-30). Quite the opposite, the interpretation defended by Fontègne and
Lazard will remain totally unnoticed. Their translation of *Democracy and Education*’s
23rd chapter is, as far as we know, never quoted in the papers analyzing Dewey’s ideas
and no references are ever made to it during the following years. Dewey’s legacy, in
their works, soon transforms itself and becomes that of theoretician of “activity” and
of the role played by manual activities in the training of pupils (Fontègne 1923).

1.2. French Philosophy and Dewey’s Pragmatism

The same year as Fontègne and Lazard, another review gave evidence of the
great attention paid to Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*. Published in the *Revue
by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop
in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him
by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined”
(Durkheim 1956: 71).

4. Albert Kohler (1873-?) was a Swiss pastor and theologian. He achieved a doctoral thesis on *Le
Bonheur dans l’enseignement de Jésus* (Happiness in Jesus’ teaching) in 1897.
5. *The School and the Child* is not a genuine book written by Dewey, but a volume edited by J. J. Findlay
in London (publisher: Blackie & Son Limited) in 1906. It gathers four essays previously and separately
published by Dewey: “Interest as Related to (the training of the) Will,” *Second Supplement to the
Herbart Yearbook for 1895*, Bloomington, National Herbart Society, 1896, 209-255 (EW 5: 111-50);
Contributions to Education,” 1902 (MW 2: 271-91); “The Aim of History in Elementary Education,”
*The Elementary School Record* 8, November 1900, 199-203 (MW1: 104-9); “Ethical Principles
Underlying Education,” *Third Yearbook*, Chicago, National Herbart Society, 1897, 7-34 (EW 5: 54-
83). References to John Dewey’s published works are to the critical edition, *The Collected Works of
Middle Works 1899-1924 [MW]*, and *The Later Works 1925-1953 [LW]*.
6. Even by Dewey scholars such as Ou Tsuin-Chen or Gérard Deledalle.
philosophique de la France et de l’étranger (Philosophical Review of France and Abroad), it was written by the French philosopher André Lalande. In this text, Lalande performs a common review of Dewey’s book with the one issued by Ludovic Zoretti entitled Éducation, un essai d’organisation démocratique (Education: an Attempt at Democratic Organization) in 1918. This choice made by Lalande to associate them in a common review is explained by the community of views they seem to share. Both try to indicate a way of reforming the educational school system in a more democratic way. But, as Lalande quickly points out, they do not develop the same kind of rationale. While Dewey presents “a serene philosophy of education […] written by an optimist” (Lalande 1920: 278), Zoretti goes into an analysis of the French educational situation, marked off by the war and by the evolution of its institutions and the socio-economic global background since the Revolution. To materialize the use he makes of these two texts, Lalande starts by the review of Democracy and Education, before getting into Zoretti’s book and finally making a comparison of them in which he tries to establish the signification of democracy as a process of organization of the social diversity of individuals into a political unity, that may arise from the common reading of these books.

Of all the reviews dedicated to Democracy and Education in the French context, the one written by Lalande stands out, for it certainly is the most extensive. In ten pages or so, he develops a comprehensive outlook on Dewey’s conception, in which he identifies a fundamental and organizing principle, on the basis of which we should understand the philosophical development that he makes in his book. This principle is that of experience, defined as follows:

[E]xperience implies the community of tested thoughts and of the control which verify them. The moral value of an institution can be measured by the degree of experience and, consequently, of inter-mental contact it brings about. (Lalande 1920: 279)

This explains the philosophical interest one is to find in education as a subject of study, as the main process of constitution of such experience. This also leads us to a renewed insight on pedagogy as far as education organized by experience distinguishes itself from mere drilling. As a consequence, it invites us to think anew the signification we give the democratic organization of society according to the place it allows to the experience of individuals as well as to the cooperation within and outside the political unity of nation-states. This, Lalande concludes, is the signification of “a pragmatist program,” defined as “experimentalist” (Ibid.: 284).

Lalande’s interest in pragmatism along with his focus on experience and experimentalism constitutes a genuine part of the philosophy he progressively develops at that time. In the famous edition of his Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie (Technical and Critical Vocabulary of Philosophy), Lalande writes

7. André Lalande (1867-1963) was a French philosopher. He is mostly renowned for his Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie (Technical and Critical Vocabulary of Philosophy), which he constituted between 1902 and 1923 and which was finally published as two volumes in 1926.
8. Ludovic Zoretti (1880-1948) was a French mathematician. He wrote a few works on education in the wake of his commitment as a unionist toward popular education.
an article on “Pragmatism” which he defines as a full philosophical tradition. But it is noticeable that his understanding of it relies more on Peirce than on Dewey. While Peirce is quoted as giving the definition of the pragmatist principle — in his article “What Pragmatism Is” —, Dewey never appears in that entry but he is rather classified in another one, called “Instrumentalism” and defined as “a variety of pragmatism: the doctrine of M. John Dewey” (Lalande 2006: 520). Lalande then constantly refers to Peirce in preference to Dewey, developing his analysis of the process of “induction” (Lalande 1929). Even if he does never give an explanation of such a situation, it is possible to make the assumption that Lalande finds in Dewey a theory of experience, whereas he identifies in Peirce a theory of experimentation. The distinction might seem very slight and shall necessarily depend on the meaning attributed to these two concepts, but the review of Democracy and Education clearly shows that the focus on experience serves to describe the concrete relationship of man with the phenomena in which he composes his life, sometimes quite hazardously. Experimentation, as Lalande specifies in his vocabulary, is “a method which consists in having a series or a set of experiences” (Lalande 2006: 324), thus adding to it the idea of a conscious control developed systematically. While dedicating to him an extensive and interested review, Lalande will never thereafter make a use of Dewey’s insights.9

1.3. The New Education Movement and Its Pedagogical Outlook

The third protagonist of the early reception of Democracy and Education in France is not French but Swiss, in the person of Adolphe Ferrière. Though Ferrière’s review of Dewey’s book appeared quite later — in 1927 – than the other ones, the interest of the former in the works of the latter may be found more than a decade earlier. As soon as 1914, Ferrière writes a letter to Dewey in which he acknowledges a form of admiration for his works and his ideas (Ferrière 2010). Having read the recent translation of The School and the Child, he mentions it as “the most important work [he] has ever read in the field of education” and considers “to share [with him] so completely a philosophical and pedagogical ideal.” However, their direct relationships seem to limit themselves to these vague contacts. The edited correspondence of Dewey mentions no other letter from him or sent to him.

At the time of the publication of his review, Adolphe Ferrière is already a well-known leader of the New Education movement, which he contributed to at a European and global level. Having founded the International Bureau of New Schools10 in 1899, he took an active part in the foundation of the International League for New Education,11 and he was the director of the French version of the journal New Era, published under the title Pour l’ère nouvelle since 1922. The choice to publish his paper in another

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9. One of the most striking examples of that oblivion is to be found in the volume edited in 1950 under the title Philosophic Thought in France and in the United States. Lalande wrote the concluding chapter “Reflections of a French Philosopher on the Preceding American Essays,” in which he does not approach Dewey, whereas the preceding essays did (Lalande 1950).
journal, *L’éducation*, reveals something of Ferrière’s aim in reviewing Dewey’s work. In comparison with *Pour l’ère nouvelle*, more focused on concrete educational initiatives, *L’éducation* is a journal where it is possible to publish large and detailed reflections, commentaries or reviews.\(^{12}\) Ferrière’s outlook in this text covers both these fields of interest, insofar as he achieves a detailed exposition of Dewey’s ideas throughout *Democracy and Education*, but at the same time he constantly stresses the concrete pedagogical side of these ideas. According to his words, Dewey’s book is “less a systematical treatise than a class lecture” (Ferrière 1927: 274). He sees in Dewey the promoter of an “active school and [of] a program based on child’s fields of interests” which, he adds “are the same idea” (*Ibid.*: 278). Indeed, “school is an obstacle to the fulfillment of the democratic ideal” (*Ibid.*: 275) and has consequently to be transformed. And, to conclude his demonstration: “So, and only so, man rises to freedom” (*Ibid.*: 279).

These quotes from Ferrière teach us two points. The first one is that he employs his own vocabulary to describe Dewey’s thought. “Active school,” “fields of interest,” “transformation of the school,” and “freedom in education” are elements of language we find in his works, such as *L’école active* (The Activity School),\(^{13}\) *Transformons l’école* (Transforming Schools)\(^{14}\) or *La liberté à l’école active* (Freedom in the Activity School). Here Ferrière explicitly attempts to show a convergence between Dewey’s book and his own ideas. Ferrière was no philosopher and searched during his whole life a solid base to establish his educational theories (Hameline 1995). With Dewey, especially in *Democracy and Education*, he found a theory which may help him at a time of controversy on the sense of activity (Tröhler 2009: 74); a theory that presents itself under a philosophical form.

The second point is more practical and concerns the role that Ferrière played in the reception and the diffusion of Dewey’s thought. Seen from a transactional angle, this movement of identification reveals a process of *familiarization*.\(^{15}\) Employing terms which are familiar to French educators, and focusing on the pedagogical consequences of the views presented in *Democracy and Education*, Ferrière contributes to lessen the strange, if alien, aspect of a foreign thought elaborated in a distant context.

The decade going from the original publication of *Democracy and Education* to the last review we mentioned by Adolphe Ferrière enables us to better understand the diversity of motives and interpretations behind the reception of Dewey’s book in France. This reception doesn’t naturally stop after this first moment but tends to become more discrete, due to the lack of a French translation. Meanwhile, other works of Dewey were published in France, with *How We Think* in 1925, *Schools of Tomorrow*

\(^{12}\) As an illustration of that policy, one may recall that it is that same journal which published the full translations of *The School and Society*’s first three chapters between 1909 and 1914.

\(^{13}\) An English translation was published in 1928 by John Day Co, thanks to F. Dean Moore and F. C. Wooton.

\(^{14}\) The same parallel can be found in Ferrière’s books. As soon as 1920, and without any connection with *Democracy and Education*, he already mentioned “the vast movement in favor of the ‘Activity School’ initiated in the United States by John Dewey” (Ferrière 1920: 45).

\(^{15}\) Such was already the case with Ovide Decroly, when he translated *How We Think* in 1925 (Renier, 2014).
in 1931, *Experience and Education* in 1947 or *Freedom and Culture* in 1955, along with a cyclical reprinting of *The School and the Child*. This specific configuration of the Deweyan thought will only start to change at the end of the 1960’s with the action of a great Dewey scholar: Gérard Deledalle.

2. Translating Democracy and Education: (1975-1978)

Though considered as a major piece of philosophy on education by its first reviewers in France, *Democracy and Education* has not received much attention during the following decades. A French edition was finally published in 1975, thanks to the translation done by Gérard Deledalle. In a different context of reception, the question it now raises concerns the attention paid to a sixty-year old book, as well as its significance for a new generation of readers.

2.1. Taking Pragmatism Seriously

By the middle of the years 1960s, the situation of pragmatism in France has greatly evolved. The sociological movement which once found interest in pragmatism, and Dewey in particular, has now turned to a more specialized discipline, enrooting its social theories in practical inquiries, like Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron’s book on *The Inheritors* published in 1964.\(^\text{16}\) Philosophical reflection also renewed itself during that period. The prime interest for pragmatism vanished over the years, equally touching Dewey, James and Peirce (Girel 2014: 17). On the educational side, the situation is no better. If Dewey’s reputation did not disappear and remained vivid, the New Education movement slowly came to an end after World War II. Its main figures, including Dewey, turned to be household names, associated with the past history of educational thinking and experiments (Renier 2013: 43-5). A few academic works do however balance this pessimistic picture with: the reprinting of Ou Tsuin-Chen’s doctoral dissertation in 1958, on *La doctrine pédagogique de John Dewey* (John Dewey’s Pedagogical Doctrine), and the successive presentation of Zoïla Bayley de Erminy, entitled *John Dewey, éducateur: une théorie de l’expérience et de la liberté* (John Dewey as an Educator: A Theory of Experience and Freedom) and of Dang Van Toan on *L’éducation sociale d’après Platon et Dewey* (Social Education According to Plato and Dewey) in 1965 before the Sorbonne. But these three works only had little impact insofar as their authors were all of foreign origin and did not stay long enough to develop their influence in France. Moreover, the last two were never published, apart from the volume presented for examination, and remained quite invisible for the French audience.


\(^\text{16}\) Some relations do exist, however, between Bourdieu and Dewey as shown by the quotes of the latter made by the former in its *Pascalian Meditations* in order to justify theoretically his critique of the scholastic reason (Bourdieu 2000: 31).
Dewey’s Philosophy). In comparison with his predecessors, Deledalle’s dissertation is neither solely nor primarily concerned with the educational aspect of Dewey’s philosophy. However education does represent a subject of study, situated within the whole of Dewey’s philosophy. This trend is visible in Deledalle’s thesis as well as in the small book he wrote in 1965 on La pédagogie de John Dewey (John Dewey’s Pedagogy), whose subtitle qualifies it as a “philosophy of continuity.” Philosophy and pedagogy are not clearly distinct or, if they are, they are closely connected with each other. Within such a frame, Democracy and Education appears to be an important part of Dewey’s general theory of education, which Deledalle quotes repeatedly.

Its importance becomes even more obvious with its translation, in 1975, by Deledalle himself. His translation of Democracy and Education confirms his interest in Dewey’s philosophy of education. The French edition, published by Armand Colin, presents a full translation of the original American edition, preceded by an essay written by Deledalle, and without additional notes. Despite its shortness, this presentation appears to be of great importance, according to the background it sets to introduce Dewey’s book. Deledalle insists on the subtitle of Dewey’s book: Democracy and Education is an “introduction to the philosophy of education.” As a treatise of philosophy of education, it is possible to grant it a triple destination. First of all, it may be read as “a treatise of pedagogy or educational sciences” or even “a textbook” (Deledalle 1975: 7). The philosophical interest of Dewey is that it does not confine itself to an empirical field but rather tries to reach the “principles” of education and to question them. It may so be useful to the professional educators as well as prospective students in the newly-created university discipline precisely called “Educational sciences.” But, according to Deledalle, it may also be read as a book of philosophy of education, that is to say an extended reflection on education, as an integrated part of a philosophical whole, as Plato or Rousseau did. Taking education as a subject, Democracy and Education invites philosophers to think anew on their conceptions of society, of the individual and its behavior, etc., insofar as “[e]ducation is everyone’s experience, of children as well as adults, including educators, at every moment of one’s life, in every situations of work and play or leisure” (Deledalle 1975: 9). It may also and finally be read as a thorough insight on our current social and educational problems, in order to analyze them. The philosophical rationale developed by Dewey is thus to be understood as a response to the problems which he identified at his time. These problems, which emerged in a different context, are not totally alien to us and we may wonder if some of our own problems could benefit from the analysis offered by Dewey in Democracy and Education, about the effects of industrial development on individuals or social cohesion. Each of these three ways of reading Dewey’s book indicates Deledalle’s preoccupation of the philosophical value its readers may find in its pages.


18. We shall not here discuss the choices made by Deledalle to translate some specific words or phrases.

19. On the link between Dewey’s reception and the foundation of Educational Sciences in France, see: Renier forthcoming.
The publication of *Democracy and Education* due to Gérard Deledalle is consequently to be linked with the more comprehensive view of Dewey and of pragmatism he developed in the same years. From this point of view, and without denying the great effort of translation he accomplished, Deledalle does not grant to it an extraordinary place or function within Dewey’s production. Repeatedly insisting on the primary character of “continuity” in Dewey’s philosophy, *Democracy and Education* does not represent a landmark but rather inserts itself in the continuity of Dewey’s pedagogy, going from its first experiments at Chicago to its last essays around World War II. The new presentation Deledalle writes for the second printing of his translation in 1990 confirms this trend. Instead of presenting the book itself, it proposes a global apprehension of “John Dewey’s pedagogy” (Deledalle 1990). This tendency is also and generally present throughout the works of Deledalle on Dewey and does not concern *Democracy and Education* alone. As existence itself, and the existence of man in its environment, the philosophy of Dewey is ruled by two major concepts: experience and continuity.20 On a more practical side, Deledalle’s intellectual enterprise may also be considered as an effort to show and to demonstrate the fact that there is a genuine and consistent philosophy in Dewey’s works, and that his philosophy deserves attention as far as it belongs to the philosophical tradition of pragmatism and, more generally, of American Philosophy (Deledalle 1954, 1987, 1995).

### 2.2. Taking Education Out of Ideologies and Doctrines

*Democracy and Education* was reviewed three times21 during the years following its first publication in French. Though this number might seem quite low, the reviews, and their reviewers, did play a great role in its reception as well as their reading of Dewey’s book eventually had an enduring influence over their thinking.

Chronologically, the first review to be published appeared in the 186th issue of the journal *La pensée* (Thought), in April 1976, and was due to Georges Cogniot.22 In this text, Cogniot performs a collective review of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*, along with *L’école primaire divise* (Primary School do Divide) by Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet, and *Les grands problèmes de l’éducation dans le monde* (The Great Problems of Education in the World), written by Jean Thomas on behalf of the International Bureau of Education. Cogniot starts by acknowledging the perspicacity of Dewey’s insight, when he states that modern societies do cultivate a separation of

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20. The original project of Deledalle’s two doctoral dissertations was precisely to study each one of these two concepts in Dewey’s philosophy (Deledalle 2010). He also considered to translate *Experience and Nature*, but finally turned to *Logic – The Theory of Inquiry* which he presented instead of the second study on continuity.

21. We do not take here into consideration the review published in the 367th issue of the *Bulletin critique du livre français*, in July 1976, because of its shortness and of its character as a résumé for librarians.

22. Georges Cogniot (1901-1978) was a French politician and philosopher. He quickly became a member of the French Communist Party and a leader of its intellectual branch. He founded the Marxist journal *La pensée*, in which he published a great number of articles, especially on educational issues.
their citizens between different social classes, helped by a school system which enlarges
the gap between them. But he quickly diverges then from Dewey’s view concerning
the ways of fighting this gap. According to him, Dewey completely misses his target
in Democracy and Education, insofar as he grants education a mission it cannot fulfill.
Pedagogy itself is no remedy to social troubles, and the schools are unable to reform
the same society that conditions them. This “vicious circle” relies, Cogniot says, on a
noble idea which is to develop the ability of men to think by themselves, helped by a
greater continuity between the school and its social environment.

But here precisely relies the bone of contention. From the Marxist point of view
defended by Cogniot schools can’t cause a social reform; social change has to come
first, in order to set proper conditions to develop a renewed education. That’s why he
considers Dewey to be “the perfect example of an idealistic thinker” (Cogniot 1976:
107) and Democracy and Education to “reek completely of a crazy idealism” (Ibid.: 108) or, even worse, “of total magic, of total pedagogistic utopia” (Ibid.: 108).23
The analysis delivered here by Cogniot is neither the first nor the only one to charge
Dewey with such criticism in the French media. As early as 1953, he had already
denounced “America’s cheap intellectual rubbish, for instance the pedagogical junk
of John Dewey” (Cogniot 1953: 6), along with Georges Snyders.24 Beyond the
ideological character of the position assumed by Cogniot, his review of Democracy
and Education does rise a series of questions concerning the status of philosophy of
education, relatively to other philosophical and social issues, as well as the aim and
function of educational thought or pedagogy.

The status of philosophy of education lies in the heart of the second review
dedicated to the French translation of Democracy and Education. Written by Guy
Avanzini,25 it was published in the 555th issue of the bulletin edited by the Société
Alfred Binet et Théodore Simon, in 1977. Differently from Cogniot, Avanzini does not
put forward a militant speech but rather develops a scientific discourse on education.
The journal itself represents this divergence of views, for it was created by Binet and
Simon in their joint effort to promote a scientific study of education at the beginning
of the 20th century. In a couple of pages only, Avanzini underlines the importance of
Dewey’s books for the New Education movement, of which “he represents the spirit”
(Avanzini 1977: 101). This spirit does not imply that Dewey would be the champion of
all the pedagogical initiatives that were gathered under this label, but that he deepens
the comprehension of its “spirit.” Instead of furnishing us a “method” just as did the
“Méthodes actives,” it aims at “preparing for liberal democracy” (Ibid.: 100).

This slight difference may seem anecdotal, but it points out the change Deledalle
brought about with the translation of Democracy and Education. Dewey can no more
be considered as a pioneer or a leader of the New Education movement because he

23. The French adjective pédagogiste refers to the term pédagogisme, which pejoratively designates
all those who are believed to place pedagogy before every other means or goals, on the base of a faith
placed on the influence of the educational work done in classrooms that would be more powerful than
any other reform.
24. For a more detailed account of that campaign, see Renier 2013.
25. Guy Avanzini (1929-) is currently professor emeritus at the University of Lyon II (France). He’s a
renowned specialist of the history of educational ideas.
does not completely belong to it nor share all the meanings that are expressed in its name. As a book of philosophy of education, it proposes a reflection which is distant from the realities and the diversity of pedagogical experiments. It may thus be read apart from the debates which concern this movement, either to endorse it or to devaluate it. That’s why Avanzini stresses the “greatness and weaknesses” of the book, whatever “value judgment” we may attribute to it, because of its significance for today’s educational issues. Philosophy of education, in this respect, represents a way of analyzing these issues and of taking some distance from them in order to think on the principles and the values they engage as well as the questions they raise.

2.3. Founding Philosophy of Education as a Genuine Subject of Study and Field of Research

The third review of Democracy and Education was finally released in 1978, in the Revue de Métaphysique et de morale (Review of Metaphysics and Morals), by Olivier Reboul. Though this review was published almost three years after the release of Dewey’s book, the author had a long-standing acquaintance with John Dewey’s philosophy, and Democracy and Education in particular. He previously published a review of it, before it was translated into French, in the 279th issue of the journal Critique in 1970. His acquaintance is moreover no coincidence, if we consider the long-term friendship existing between Gérard Deledalle and him since their common time at the University of Tunis at the beginning of the years 1960s.

Though being a specialist of the philosophy of Alain, about which he wrote his thesis dissertation, Reboul took great advantage of the reading of Dewey. In his review, he goes through the same questions that Avanzini and, to a lesser extent, Cogniot pointed out. That is to say: the primacy of continuity in man’s experience and its expression through education, and the necessity of a reorganization of the continuum between school and society (including the debate between Dewey’s position and a Marxist one). But what differentiates Reboul from his immediate predecessors is the emphasis he puts on the epistemological change introduced by Dewey. “It was about time [to publish a French translation of Democracy and Education that he himself condemned or warned us about, four decades earlier, as in “Progressive Education and the Science of Education.”

26. Experiments that he himself condemned or warned us about, four decades earlier, as in “Progressive Education and the Science of Education.”
27. Maurice Debesse already mentioned in the preface he wrote to Deledalle’s La pédagogie de John Dewey (John Dewey’s Pedagogy) in 1965 that when he exposed the conclusion of Experience and Education to his colleagues or his student, “they welcomed it without pleasure, as if it were a backing down from their apostle” (Debesse 1965: 11).
28. Olivier Reboul (1925-1992) was a French philosopher and professor emeritus of Educational Sciences at the University of Strasbourg. He was a renowned specialist of French philosopher Alain and greatly contributed to the development of philosophy of education in France.
29. As a collective review – which is a particularity of this journal – along with Deledalle’s books on The Idea of Experience in John Dewey’s Philosophy and John Dewey’s Pedagogy, and with the new printing of the French translation of The School and the Child.
30. See, for instance, the tribute published in the daily newspaper Le Monde by Deledalle, in its edition of January the 8th 1993, after Reboul’s death.
31. See the numerous parallels he draws between them in his book L’éducation selon Alain (Education According to Alain), published in 1974.
Education,” he states, “because, finally, we have a genuine treatise of philosophy of education” (Reboul 1978: 427). The phrase “philosophy of education” here designates, according to him, a real and distinct field of study. It is no new name for “the old general pedagogy” (pédagogie générale) nor “the geometrical center of every hare-brained idea” opposed to the objectivity of empirical researches on education. Developing philosophy of education signifies that concrete experience can be studied in relation to a more general reflection on the means and ends of education, so as to enrich and mutually define them anew. This is precisely the definition he gives of that discipline in his own seminal textbook, La philosophie de l’éducation (Philosophy of Education) published in 1971: “Philosophy of education so has a double specificity. Toward Educational sciences, because of the type of questions it raises. Toward other branches of philosophy, because of its object, education” (Reboul 2004: 15).

This enterprise of definition of a singular field of study will prove itself useful in the development of ‘Philosophy of education’ within the general field of the ‘Educational sciences’ (Renier forthcoming), but it also places Dewey and his Democracy and Education in a position of marginalization toward the general field of Philosophy.

Democracy and Education was not, at that time, received as a book of philosophy. It seems that the philosophers who were not directly or primarily concerned with educational issues and questions did not pay much attention to it. Deledalle’s personal involvement did certainly play a role to reverse this situation. For instance, he invited Michel Foucault in Tunisia and had extended discussions with him over Dewey and his philosophy. Deledalle gave him his two dissertations to read and Foucault used heavily the books Deledalle had gathered on Dewey and American Philosophy. As he asserts, ‘The Archeology of Knowledge is of ‘pragmatic’ inspiration – ‘pragmatic’ neither in the sense of James nor of Peirce, but in the sense of the philosophers of ordinary language and of Dewey” (Deledalle 2002: 48). But Foucault found greater inspiration in Dewey’s logical works than in its educational ones and he never mentioned having read Democracy and Education. More generally, and beyond the special case of Michel Foucault, it should be noted that Dewey suffered from a strange and persistent silence from philosophers. After the years immediately following the publication of the French translation of Democracy and Education, this silence will persist up until the years 1990s and a progressive renewal of interest in Dewey through the reception of neo-pragmatism and the involvement of a new generation of philosophers such as Jean-Pierre Cometti or Joëlle Zask.

Conclusion: Studying Democracy and Education – A Task Still Before Us

Focusing on the two main periods during which John Dewey’s Democracy and Education has received particular attention brings several observations. First of all, the reception of Dewey’s book is always engaged in a movement involving individuals as well as global trends. The individuals who wrote reviews of the book all developed a singular interpretation of it, in coherence with the situation in which their particular outlooks develop. Vocational education emphasized by Julien Fontègne and Max Lazard meets the needs of World War I aftermath as well as the sociological project
of developing course choice to fight unemployment and develop child-centered education. Similar statements can be made about André Lalande and the defense of a philosophy of experimentation, Adolphe Ferrière and the pedagogical side of the New Education movement, Gérard Deledalle and the acknowledgment of American philosophy, Georges Cogniot and a Marxist interpretation of educational reform, or Olivier Reboul and the constitution of Philosophy of education as a full field of study.

Each one of these reviews raises questions which are central to the understanding of *Democracy and Education*, concerning the status of philosophy of education, the role of pedagogy and schools in the reform of society, the place granted to experimentation in man’s experience of his world, etc.

In so doing, they configure Dewey’s reflection as a resource to think problems that were not necessarily and originally his own or those he intended to face with his book. From an epistemological point of view, the emergence of history in the understanding of Dewey’s pragmatism represents a wide field of investigation. It suggests as a working hypothesis that an effort of reconstruction needs a prior *recontextualization* (Garrison 2008). If reading *Democracy and Education* has something to tell us or to teach us regarding today’s problems and issues, it is because it is itself the product of a reflection addressing problems in a given situation, though not limited by it or to it. It may also help us in better understanding the types of discourse we produce, especially those based on the comprehension of one’s philosophy. While a third moment of reception is currently going on with the reprinting of *Democracy and Education*’s translation in 2011 and the revival of interest in pragmatist philosophy, especially Dewey’s, a retrospective outlook is likely to bring a deeper insight over the specificity and the relevance of our own contributions for the development of Deweyan thought as well as of the analysis it allows us to establish of today’s issues. Out of the many lives it already experienced through the past, *Democracy and Education* still has many more ahead to keep alive a philosophical reflection on the continuously renewed signification of education.

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Bianca Thoilliez*

John Dewey’s Legacy and Spanish Pedagogy

Abstract: Perhaps one of the most characteristic aspects of Dewey’s career is that the extent and variety of his work, not to mention his own longevity and his restless inquisitive personality, pose a problem to any systematic study of his legacy. At the same time, this “problem” represents the hallmark of his work. Furthermore, Dewey’s works and opinions were propagated and spread in many different formats across many different countries, which makes it only more problematic to study his works, their spread and influence. The first part of this article will present a framework for carrying out a contemporary study on the works of John Dewey, with special attention to the current comeback in interest in them in studies on education. The second part of the article will look into the situation of John Dewey’s legacy in Spanish pedagogy at two fundamental moments in history: the first in the context of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, the school that led the attempts to modernize education in Spain in the early 1900s. The second moment will focus on studying how the current renewed interest in Dewey has affected contemporary pedagogy in Spain. The article will end by reflecting on what a more integrated reading of Dewey’s pedagogical and philosophical ideas could bring to the theory of education made in Spain.

1. John Dewey’s Legacy: Disseminations, Receptions, Interpretations

The public and international dimension of Dewey’s works is one of the most salient features of his career. On one hand, the international dimension of Dewey’s ideas can be explained by the waves of social and education reforms in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars in very different latitudes. Dewey’s works fit in very well with the spirit behind the new proposals for reforms. Moreover, Dewey himself directly collaborated on spreading his ideas by traveling the world and giving courses in countries such as Japan, China, Mexico, Turkey, and Russia. On the other hand, the public-minded orientation Dewey gave to his work came about by how he conceived the philosopher’s job in pragmatic terms as an imminently reconstructive endeavor that should attempt to solve people’s everyday problems of his time, i.e., a philosophy that can only be considered as such if it makes a difference on what is happening in the world while also keeping things happening. It places great emphasis on the present and on the active nature of the philosopher’s professional undertakings, which therefore breaks away from the tradition and changes its approach.1

* Universidad Autónoma de Madrid [bianca.thoilliez@uam.es].

1. In his piece “The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy” (MW 10: 3-48), originally published in 1917 as part of the collective work Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude, Dewey stated: “Intellectual advance occurs in two ways. At times increase of knowledge is organized about old conceptions, while these are expanded, elaborated and refined, but not seriously revised, much less abandoned. At other times, the increase of knowledge demands qualitative rather than quantitative change; alteration, not addition. Men’s minds grow cold to their former intellectual concerns; ideas that were burning fade; interests that were urgent seem remote. Men face in another direction; their older perplexities are unreal; considerations passed over as negligible loom up. Former problems may not have been solved, but they no longer press for solution. Philosophy is no exception to the rule. But it is unusually conservative – not, necessarily, in proffering solutions, but in clinging to problems […]. The association of philosophy with academic teaching has reinforced this intrinsic conservatism […]. Philosophy when taught inevitably magnifies the history of past thought, and leads professional philosophers to approach their subject matter through its formulation in received systems. It tends,
The two above-mentioned considerations of Dewey’s work have in turn led to
two different lines of research into the breadth of Dewey’s works. Those two lines
of research are undoubtedly highly topical due to the renewed interest in pragmatism
in general and in Dewey in particular. Much has been published in recent decades
on Dewey as a person and on his intellectual legacy in the field of education as well
as in other areas. Beyond the understandable interest held by Dewey’s legacy itself,
the sheer intensity of this publishing comeback is nevertheless surprising. Campbell
(2010: 35-7) offers a number of explanation for why we might be living in a “golden
age” of studies on Dewey: (i) Dewey was a visionary, (ii) Dewey is in fashion, and (iii)
Dewey and the “Rorty factor.” Any attempt of my own to affirm which of Campbell’s
three reasons is the most correct would be foolhardy at best. Furthermore, in any case,
all three likely contributed to the “revival” in interest in Dewey. However, in what
follows, I will delve further into the first reason of the three: the one regarding the
appeal Dewey’s educational and philosophical perspective has today.

The history of publications by and about Dewey provides ample evidence of
the resurging interest in Dewey in recent years. For example, the first collected
bibliography of Dewey was edited by Richard J. Bernstein for Paul Edwards’s
Encyclopedia of Philosophy in 1967, which consisted of only six references. That
same bibliography was later updated in a revised edition by Donald M. Borchert in
2006, with fourteen new references. Campbell himself added eleven more references
that appear between 2000 and 2010, to which he says he could have added dozens
more. The Dewey story goes on and on largely due to the spread of his works and ideas
over the Internet and other technological media. The first of the two contemporary
lines of study on Dewey’s legacy, as mentioned above, is concerned with detailed
and in-depth analysis of the international reception of Dewey’s ideas. The starting
premise is that the reception processes of theories and discourse on education always
involve a degree of reinterpretation, particularly when one searches outside oneself in
a particular context to satisfy some particular needs or ends (Schriewer 2004). Indeed,
the internationalization of Dewey’s work lends itself well to such considerations.
Whether it is through more metaphorical statements such as “traveling libraries” or
by means of more operative formulations such as “intersections,” “articulations,”
and “transpositions” (see Popkewitz 2005; and Bruno-Jofré et al. 2010) the concern
centers on finding out how Dewey’s legacy in philosophy and pedagogy was spread
and reconstructed in different national and social contexts, what factors intervened in
that spread and reconstruction, and how they worked (see also Hickman & Spadafora
2009; and Tröhler & Oelkers 2005). The contexts of international reception usually
also, to emphasize points upon which men have divided into schools, for these lend themselves to
retrospective definition and elaboration […]. Direct preoccupation with contemporary difficulties is left
to literature and politics […]. I attempt to forward the emancipation of philosophy from too intimate
and exclusive attachment to traditional problems. It is not in intent a criticism of various solutions that
have been offered, but raises a question as to the genuineness, under the present conditions of science
and social life, of the problems" (MW 10: 3-4). References to John Dewey’s published works are to the
Early Works 1882-1899 [EW], The Middle Works 1899-1924 [MW], and The Later Works 1925-1953
[LW].
share the circumstance of finding themselves involved in and concerned about taking on democratic educational reforms. Bellmann calls attention to what is meant by “reception” in Dewey’s work, since “[it] also corresponds to the story American pragmatism tells about itself” (Bellmann 2004: 170). This concept makes particular sense in an essentially “patchwork” consideration of pragmatism (Margolis 2004), and of which Dewey was well aware. The Deweyan affirmation of the receptive nature that defines American philosophy may also explain the ease with which his ideas were re-adapted in very different national contexts, like a kind of round-trip journey. In what follows, we shall see more precisely how the study of Dewey’s work has been materialized in Spanish pedagogy.

2. John Dewey in Spanish Pedagogy

Featured below are two paradigmatic examples of how confusing the reception and study of Dewey’s works has been in Spain in two relevant time periods. The first one is set in the context of the pedagogic renewal and education reform movements at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza in the early 1900s. The second one is contemporary (from 1980 on), where Spanish pedagogy in the new democratic era has undergone a time of expansion with the development of a nationwide network of new public universities and degree programs in the field of education.

2.1. Losing Dewey (in Translation)

One of the most interesting ways Dewey’s ideas circulated around much of the world in the early 1900s is related to the boom of translations of his works done at different corners of the world. Spain was one of the places where his works gained attention (first and foremost in the field of education) and were therefore translated. Most of the translations were done by faculty members at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, henceforth ILE. The ILE appeared in Spain as a response to what was known as the “second university question.” On February 26, 1875, shortly after the restoration of the monarchy under Alfonso XIII, the reinstated Minister of Public Works and Development (under which was the Department of Education) Manuel Orovio sent a memorandum to every university in Spain. In it he called for an archconservative conception of education and a limit to academic freedom. A group of important university professors responded by resigning their professorships and starting up a self-financed alternative university independent from the state government in August 1876: the ILE. Its aim was clear: to develop and modernize science and to foment a physical, moral, and cultural regeneration of the nation. Armed with this ‘regenerationist’ purpose, the “institutionalists,” led by Francisco Giner de los Ríos (Colmenar, Rabazas, & Ramos 2015), managed to convince people that the main
reason for the backwardness of Spanish science was the lack of scientific and cultural contact with Europe and the United States. The ILE was the undeniable protagonist in innovating science and education in Spain in the early 1900s. In fact, it is hard to find a renewing idea, innovation or improvement to education introduced and disseminated to any degree of success in the late 1800s and early 1900s that the Institución was not behind or even played a major role in promoting. (Viñao 2000: 27)

With the advent of the Second Republic (1931-1939), many institutionalists went on to hold positions in different governments, thereby “officializing” many of the ILE’s ideas and initiatives. These, however, were cut short during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and later silenced and forgotten during the long years of the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975).

There were two institutionalists who paid special attention to the works of John Dewey: Domingo Barnés (Sevilla, 1879 – Mexico DF, 1940) and Lorenzo Luzuriaga (Valdepeñas, 1889 – Buenos Aires, 1959), who were keen on the pedagogical and political lines at the ILE. Both of them defended the “new school,” advocated an active pedagogy, and held several positions of responsibility at the Ministries of Public Instruction and socialist organizations (mainly Liga de Educación Política) before and during the time of the Republic (Carda 1996). Especially noteworthy in their academic careers was their work as translators, as a means to disseminate the new pedagogical ideas that were emerging and circulating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries all over the West. We are particularly interested in their translations of Dewey’s works because they have the potential to show how some of Dewey’s main ideas became lost in translation. Therefore, we will take Barnés’s and Luzuriaga’s respective versions The School and Society and Democracy and Education as paradigmatic examples of the difficulties in grasping Dewey’s ideas in the context of Spanish pedagogy. We will do so by focusing on how some key concepts to Deweyan thought were reflected in the Spanish versions of these two books.

The most telling example in The School and Society involves the concept of “growth,” Table 1 below lists the most significant examples of the texts analyzed.

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4. As noted in Jover, Ruis, & Thoilliez 2010, Barnés’s translation is a 1910 reprint of the book featuring three conferences given by Dewey in April, 1899 at the laboratory school at the University of Chicago, plus one additional text from a talk Dewey gave at a PTA meeting at the school in February of that same year. For some time it was widely assumed that an alleged 1900 Spanish edition of La escuela y la sociedad had been the first Dewey book in a foreign language. This assumption was based on a reference made in Dewey’s Checklist of Translations (Boydson 1969: 49). Today that assumption is known to be mistaken, and although it is still uncertain exactly when the first Spanish translation was published, it seems likely have been between 1915 and 1918 (Nubiola 2005; Nubiola & Sierra, 2001). The text Barnés uses as a prologue goes with a comment on Dewey’s work published by Barnes in his 1917 book Fuentes para el estudio de la psicología (Barnés 1917: 193-200). The end of the prologue, from pages 10 to 15, is repeated again in the article Barnés wrote on Dewey’s pedagogy in 1926 in BILE (Barnés 1926).

5. As noted by Bruno-Jofré & Jover 2009, Democracy and Education was translated by Luzuriaga and published as a series of fascicles by “La Lectura” publishing house between 1926 and 1927.
Table 1. The School and Society
versus La Escuela y la Sociedad (trans. D. Barnés)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The School and Society</th>
<th>La Escuela y la Sociedad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself.</td>
<td>Sólo siendo una realidad el pleno desarrollo de los individuos que la forman puede la sociedad ser verdad para sí misma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the growth of the child’s mind in power and knowledge it ceases to be a pleasant occupation merely, and becomes more and more a medium, an instrument, an organ and is thereby transformed.</td>
<td>Con el desarrollo del espíritu del niño, en cuanto a su poder y conocimiento, cesa de ser una simple ocupación placentera y se convierte cada vez más en un medio, en un instrumento y en un órgano, y de este modo es transformado.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The child must be brought into contact with more grown people and with more children in order that there may be the freest and richest social life. Moreover, the occupations and relationships of the home environment are not specially selected for the growth of the child; the main object is something else, and what the child can get out of them is incidental. Hence the need of a school.</td>
<td>El niño debe ponerse en contacto con más gente y con más niños para que pueda darse la más fresca y rica vida social. Además, las ocupaciones y las relaciones que envuelven el hogar no están especialmente seleccionadas en vista del desarrollo del niño; el principal objeto perseguido es otro, y lo que los niños puedan obtener será puramente incidental. De aquí la necesidad de la escuela.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this school the life of the child becomes the all controlling aim. All the media necessary to further the growth of the child center there.</td>
<td>En ésta, la vida del niño es la preocupación rectora. En ella tienen su centro todos los medios necesarios para el desarrollo del niño.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another instinct of the child is the use of pencil and paper. All children like to express themselves through the medium of form and color. If you simply indulge this interest by letting the child go on indefinitely, there is no growth that is more than accidental.</td>
<td>Otro instinto del niño es el uso del papel y el lápiz. Todo niño desea expresarse mediante la forma y el color. Si os limitáis a condescender este interés, dejando que el niño actúe indefinidamente, no hay desarrollo que sea más accidental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now, keeping in mind these fourfold interests -the interest in conversation or communication; in inquiry or finding out things; in making things, or construction; and in artistic expression we may say they are the natural resources, the uninvested capital, upon the exercise of which depends the active growth of the child.</td>
<td>Ahora bien, recordando estos cuatro intereses –el interés en la conversación o comunicación; en la investigación o hallazgo de cosas, en la construcción o en hacerlas y en la expresión artística- podemos decir que son los recursos naturales, el capital un no descubierto, de cuyo ejercicio depende el desarrollo activo del niño.</td>
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Unless culture be a superficial polish, a veneering of mahogany over common wood, it surely is this -the growth of the imagination in flexibility, in scope, and in sympathy, till the life which the individual lives is informed with the life of nature and of society. When nature and society can live in the schoolroom, when the forms and tools of learning are subordinated to the substance of experience, then shall there be an opportunity for this identification, and culture shall be the democratic password.

Al menos que la cultura sea un pulimento superficial, una chapa de caoba sobre madera común, seguramente habrá de ser esto el desenvolviendo de la imaginación en flexibilidad, alcance y simpatía hasta que la vida que el individuo vive esté informada por la vida de la naturaleza y la sociedad. Cuando la naturaleza y la sociedad pueden vivir en la escuela, cuando las formas y los instrumentos de la cultura están subordinados a la substancia de la experiencia, entonces habrá una oportunidad para esta identificación y la cultura será el pasaporte democrático.

Moreover, if the school is related as a whole to life as a whole, its various aims and ideals culture, discipline, information, utility cease to be variants, for one of which we must select one study and for another. The growth of the child in the direction of social capacity and service, his larger and more vital union with life, becomes the unifying aim; and discipline, culture and information fall into place as phases of this growth.

Además, si la escuela está relacionada en su conjunto con la vida como un todo, sus varias e ideales –cultura, disciplina, información, utilidad- dejan de ser variantes, para cada uno de los cuales se selecciona un estudio determinado. El desenvolviendo del niño en la dirección de la capacidad y el servicio social, y su unión más amplia y vital con la vida, se convierte en la aspiración unificadora, y la disciplina, la cultura y la información se colocan en su lugar como fases de este desenvolviendo.

One thing, then, we wanted to find out is how much can be given a child that is really worth his while to get, in knowledge of the world about him, of the forces in the world, of historical and social growth, and in capacity to express himself in a variety of artistic forms. From the strictly educational side this has been the chief problem of the school.

Nos enorgullecemos de haber señalado cuanto puede proporcionarse al niño de una cosa realmente digna de ser obtenida, del conocimiento del mundo que le rodea, de las fuerzas que actúan en ese mundo, del desenvolviendo histórico y social y de la capacidad para expresarse en una variedad de formas artísticas. Este ha sido el mayor problema de la escuela, desde el punto de vista estrictamente educativo.

At the end of three years, then, we are not afraid to say that some of our original questions have secured affirmative answers. The increase of our children from fifteen to almost one hundred, along with a practical doubling of fees, has shown that parents are ready for a form of education that makes individual growth its sole controlling aim.

Al cabo de los tres años podemos decir que algunos de nuestros problemas originales han tenido una solución afirmativa. El aumento de nuestros alumnos, desde quince a un centenar, próximamente, unido a un aumento de los honorarios, demuestra que los padres están favorablemente dispuestos para una forma de educación que convierta el desenvolviendo individual en su única aspiración rectora.
The everyday work of the school shows that children can live in school as out of it, and yet grow daily in wisdom, kindness, and the spirit of obedience that learning may, even with little children, lay hold upon the substance of truth that nourishes the spirit, and yet the forms of knowledge be observed and cultivated; and that growth may be genuine and thorough, and yet a delight.

La labor diaria de la escuela muestra que el niño puede vivir en ella como fuera de ella y desenvolverse, no obstante, diariamente, en cuanto a sabiduría, bondad y espíritu de obediencia –porque la cultura puede, aun tratándose de niños pequeños, cimentarse sobre la substancia de la verdad que nutre el espíritu, observando y cultivando también las formas del conocimiento, y ese desenvolvimiento será perfecto y genuino, constituyendo, verdaderamente, una iluminación.

Given the many uses of the word “growth” throughout the piece, what made Barnés choose the concept of desenvolvemento? ‘Desenvolvemento’ is clearly closer to the idea of “flourishing” reminiscent of Fröbel’s pedagogy than it is to Dewey’s “growth.” In fact, it seems likely that the influence of Fröbel’s work on Spanish pedagogy in the early 20th century may be explained by the “liberties” Barnés took when translating Dewey’s ideas, which not only changed the meaning, but also had major theoretical implications from the point of view of education. Study of Barnés’s edition clearly shows that he equates the Fröbelian concept of flourishing with the Deweyan concept of growth and development. In his introduction to The education of man, Fröbel made it clear that the purpose of education was to cultivate true humanity, which is none other than the flourishing of the essence in everyone, i.e., of the divine bit that naturally dwells within each individual, his spirit. The rise of this approach to Barnés’s ideas is explicitly acknowledged by him personally.

Amid all this conceptual confusion, Dewey became lost in translation. This confusion became especially noteworthy when Dewey himself tried to differentiate his discourse from Fröbel’s. One of the moments when Dewey makes these differences explicit is in one of the chapters in the second edition of The School and Society, titled “Froebel’s Educational Principles.” In it, Dewey started assessing some of the positive contributions from...

6. “It should not be assumed that man, the humanity is exteriorized in man, constitutes a complete and already defined manifestation, something fixed and stable, an evolutionary end; rather, a being that is forever changing, progressing and developing, perennially alive, always willing to reach successive degrees of his development and perfection, tending toward ends that rest on the infinite and the eternal” (Fröbel 1913: 20-1).

7. “Development as we conceive of it today must be measured from the point of view of the ends to be achieved. There is no general development, only ends to achieve by the gradual development of the means adapted to them. […] Just as the body needs air and food, the spirit needs an average culture in order to develop” (Barnés 1917: 75).

8. Jurgen Oelkers (2000) underscores the discontinuity of Dewey’s pedagogical proposition with respect to Herbart, Pestalozzi and Fröbel, whose theories he had to reject in order make way for his own. This interpretation, however, has been questioned by Bellmann (2004), who sees in Dewey an example of dialectic between continuity and discontinuity with the German tradition. In more general terms, Dewey scholars today debate the presence of idealistic pedagogy and the German notion of Bildung in his pedagogic theory, in what has been called the permanent repository of Hegelian influence on his philosophy. See Garrison 2006; Good 2006; Johnston 2008; and Fairfield 2010.

Fröbel’s pedagogy. He therefore begins by acknowledging but then goes on to delve deeper into the critical points that he believes Fröbel’s educational principles present. Dewey’s criticism focuses on the following aspects of Fröbel’s contribution: (i) the role given to playing games in the child development, as a means and not an end in itself, like part of the elements aimed at growth:

There is every evidence that Froebel studied carefully [...] the children’s plays [...] But I do not see the slightest evidence that he supposed that just these plays, and only these plays had meaning. (MW 1: 83-4)

(ii) The symbolism present in Fröbel’s work, about which he notes that “many of his statements are cumbrous and far-fetched, living abstract philosophical reasons for matters that may now receive a simple, everyday formulation” (MW 1: 84).

(iii) How these two elements, play and symbolism, influence childhood imagination, and how Fröbel presents idealized stimuli that hamper it instead of stimulating it:

The more natural and straightforward these are [the cluster of suggestions, reminiscences, and anticipations that gather about things the child uses], the more definite basis there is for calling up and holding together all the allied suggestions which make his imaginative play really representative. (MW 1: 86)

(iv) The lack of any thematic continuity among classroom activities and everyday life in Fröbel’s proposals:

This continuity is often interfered with by the very methods that aim at securing it. From the child’s stand point unity lies in the subject-matter – in the present case, in the fact that he is always dealing with one thing: Home life. (MW 1: 88)

(v) The methodology to use in planning early childhood education:

Nothing is more absurd than to suppose that there is no middle term between leaving a child to his own unguided fancies and likes or controlling his activities by a formal succession of dictated directions (MW 1: 90).

The second example of the misunderstandings found in Spanish pedagogy regarding Dewey’s ideas is found in Luzuriaga’s translated version of Democracy and Education. The study of this translation focuses on how two key concepts to Deweyan thought are reflected in the Spanish version. The most telling examples involve the concepts of “growth” and “mind.” Table 2 below lists the most significant examples of the texts analyzed. Three main interpretative remarks will follow.

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10. “1. That the primary business of school is to train children in co-operative and mutually helpful living; to foster in them the consciousness of mutual interdependence; and to help them practically in making the adjustments that will carry this spirit into overt needs. 2. That the primary root of all educative activity is in the instinctive, impulsive attitudes and activities of the child, and not in the presentation and application of external material, whether through ideas of others or through the senses; and that, accordingly, numberless spontaneous activities of children […]. 3. That these individual tendencies and activities are organized and directed through the uses made of them in keeping up the cooperative living already spoken of; taking advantage of them to reproduce on the child’s plane the typical doings and occupation of the larger, maturer society into he is finally to go forth” (MW 1: 81-2).
Table 2. Democracy and Education  
versus Democracia y Educación (trans. L. Luzuriaga)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democracy and Education</th>
<th>Democracia y Educación</th>
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<td>While this “unconscious influence of the environment” is so subtle and pervasive that it affects every fiber of character and mind, it may be worthwhile to specify a few directions in which its effect is most marked.</td>
<td>Como esta “influencia inconsciente del ambiente” es tan sutil y penetrante que afecta a todas las fibras del carácter y el espíritu, puede valer la pena especificar unas cuantas direcciones en las que su efecto es más marcado.</td>
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<td>We have explicitly added, however, the recognition of the part played in the joint activity by the use of things. The philosophy of learning has been unduly dominated by a false psychology. It is frequently stated that a person learns by merely having the qualities of things impressed upon his mind through the gateway of the senses.</td>
<td>Sin embargo, hemos añadido explícitamente el reconocimiento de la parte desempeñada por la utilización de las cosas en la actividad conjunta. La filosofía del aprender ha estado indebidamente dominada por una falsa psicología. Se ha afirmado con frecuencia que una persona aprende meramente por tener las cualidades de las cosas impresas sobre su espíritu a través de la puerta de los sentidos.</td>
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<td>The difference between an adjustment to a physical stimulus and a mental act is that the latter involves response to a thing in its meaning; the former does not. A noise may make me jump without my mind being implicated.</td>
<td>La diferencia entre una adaptación a un estímulo físico y un acto mental estriba en que este último supone la respuesta a una cosa en su sentido, y el primero no. Un ruido puede hacerme estremecer sin que intervenga en ello mi espíritu.</td>
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<td>The conception that growth and progress are just approximations to a final unchanging goal is the last infirmity of the mind in its transition from a static to a dynamic understanding of life. It simulates the style of the latter. It pays the tribute of speaking much of development, process, progress. But all of these operations are conceived to be merely transitional; they lack meaning on their own account. They possess significance only as movements toward something away from what is now going on. Since growth is just a movement toward a completed being, the final ideal is immobile. An abstract and indefinite future is in control with all which that connotes in depreciation of present power and opportunity.</td>
<td>La concepción de que el crecimiento y el progreso son precisamente aproximaciones a un objetivo invariable es la última crisis del espíritu en su transición desde una interpretación estática de la vida a otra dinámica. Ella simula el estilo de la última. Paga el tributo de hablar mucho de desarrollo, proceso, progreso. Pero todas estas operaciones son concebidas como meramente transitorias; carecen de sentidos por sí mismas. Sólo poseen significación como movimientos hacia algo fuera de lo que ahora está ocurriendo. Puesto que el crecimiento es precisamente un movimiento hacia un ser completo, el ideal final es inmóvil. Domina un futuro abstracto y definido, con todo lo que significa como depreciación de los poderes y oportunidades presentes.</td>
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The adult uses his powers to transform his environment, thereby occasioning new stimuli which redirect his powers and keep them developing. Ignoring this fact means arrested development, a passive accommodation. Normal child and normal adult alike, in other words, are engaged in growing. The difference between them is not the difference between growth and no growth, but between the modes of growth appropriate to different conditions. With respect to the development of powers devoted to coping with specific scientific and economic problems we may say the child should be growing in manhood. With respect to sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind, we may say that the adult should be growing in childlikeness. One statement is as true as the other.

A mind that is adequately sensitive to the needs and occasions of the present actuality will have the liveliest of motives for interest in the background of the present, and will never have to hunt for a way back because it will never have lost connection.

Thus we have completed the circuit and returned to the conceptions of the first portion of this book: such as the biological continuity of human impulses and instincts with natural energies; the dependence of the growth of mind upon participation in conjoint activities having a common purpose; the influence of the physical environment through the uses made of it in the social medium; the necessity of utilization of individual variations in desire and thinking for a progressively developing society; the essential unity of method and subject matter; the intrinsic continuity of ends and means; the recognition of mind as thinking which perceives and tests the meanings of behavior.
Our first observation is that Luzuriaga’s translation overall is a really bad translation (clearly worse in quality than Barnes’s). For a Spanish native speaker with a lower-intermediate competence in English, the original version of Democracy and Education would be more understandable than Luzuriaga’s translation. This situation makes the fact even more surprising that it is this particular Spanish version that still being published nowadays.

Our second observation is how in this piece – unlike in The School and Society – “growth” is rightly translated as “crecimiento.” How is this possible? Actually, Democracy and Education is the second place where Dewey himself made it clear how far apart his theory was from Fröbel’s. Dewey sees the education process as “a continuous process of growth” (MW 9: 59) that, in the Darwinian line of explaining change, does not have an external, ulterior end to itself. However, the Fröbelian conceptualization of growth as development is completely unrelated to this, being conceived as the opposite, as “the unfolding of latent powers towards a defined objective” (Fröbel 1913: 58). The differentiating line that Dewey draws between his philosophical proposal and Fröbel’s is very clear despite the latter having some positive aspects here as well.11 Dewey’s vision of childhood development and growth soundly breaks away, one reason for which was his adherence to evolutionists’ claims, his finalistic orientation to that growth. In the translation analyzed above, this idea is lost and is replaced by the idea of “flourishing,” which is fundamental to Fröbel’s pedagogical perspective and at the core of what Dewey called traditional education.12 To Dewey, education is growing and developing: he acknowledges other general functions of education, such as management, control and orientation,13 but they are always guided by the attempt to foster more and better growth and development. The context of the work, Democracy and Education, “forced” its audience to make a more careful reading of what Dewey really meant by “growth,” since he devoted two full

11. “Froebel’s recognition of the native capacities of children, his loving attention to them, and his influence in inducing others to study them, represent perhaps the most effective single force in modern educational theory in effecting widespread acknowledgment of the idea of growth. But his formulation of the notion of development and his organization of devices for promoting it were badly hampered by the fact that he conceived development to be unfolding of a ready-made latent principle. He failed to see that growing is growth, developing is development, and consequently placed the emphasis upon the completed product. Thus he set up a goal which meant the arrest of growth, and a criterion which is not applicable to immediate guidance of powers, save through translation into abstract and symbolic formulae” (MW 9: 63).

12. One of the places where he offers a description of this traditional model of education is in Experience and Education (LW 13: 3-62): “The main purpose or objective is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill which comprehend the material of instruction. Since the subject-matter as well as standards of proper conduct are handed down from the past, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience. Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils are brought into effective connection with the material. Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced” (LW 13: 6).

13. Where orientation refers to “the idea of assisting through cooperation the natural capacities of the individuals guided”; control, “conveys rather the notion of an energy brought to bear from without and meeting some resistance from the one controlled”; and lastly, direction is “a more neutral term and suggests the fact that the active tendencies of those directed are led in a certain continuous course, instead of dispersing aimlessly” (MW 9: 28).
chapters of the book (chapters four and five) to establishing a sharp line between his
touches and Fröbel’s. On this occasion, Dewey refines his philosophy to make it easier
for the reader to grasp the background of his pedagogic ideas. This made it possible
for Luzuriaga to get the right translation this time.

Our third remark is that, although “growth” is rightly translated as “crecimiento,”
“mind” got translated by Luzuriaga as “espíritu,” which is closer to “spirit” than
“thought.” Once again, this misunderstanding is reminiscent of Fröbel’s pedagogy
and a consequence of not fully understanding Dewey’s philosophical approach. By
translating “mind” as “espíritu,” it opens up a rift in the theory. While it is true that it
may be one of the possible translations of the word, it is only in the context of “mind”
as opposed to “matter,” as in substance. The option Luzuriaga takes by assuming that
Dewey’s intended meaning of “mind” is somehow an opposite of a prior matter or
substance points to a mistaken interpretation he made of Dewey’s work. And yet, it is
precisely as a reaction against this type of dichotomies that pragmatism was founded.
When Dewey speaks of “mind” he is strictly referring to the human ability to think,
rather than the human spiritual quality that defines a person as a rational soul.

Fröbelian mediation made Deweyan concepts sound familiar to Barnés and
Luzuriaga’s Spanish ears. However, Dewey got lost in translation and as a result,
Spanish pedagogy could not fully appreciate the radically different meaning these
ideas had in the new approach to philosophy and to understanding education that
Dewey’s pragmatism entailed.

2.2. Varieties of Approaches to Dewey

In this section I present the results of the bibliographic study done by which it
is possible to gauge how much attention contemporary Spanish pedagogy pays to
Dewey’s legacy. To do so, I have selected writings that study Dewey’s pedagogical
ideas published in Spain as of the year 1980, regardless of the academic affiliation of
the author (i.e., national or international) or of the language in which the article was
published (whether one of the co-official languages in Spain or some other). I did
not consider any articles on Dewey’s philosophy of education published outside Spain
(i.e., in foreign-based journals or publishing houses) by authors belonging to Spanish
institutions.

As expected, it was found that the purpose of this attention varied from one piece
to another. Subsequent analysis made possible to establish the following thematic
classifications: (i) Approach 1: works that offer a general overview or introduction to
Dewey’s thoughts on education, some even accompanied by a short extract of texts by
the author; (ii) Approach 2: works that study the reception and influence of Dewey’s
work in different geographic contexts (especially considering the case of Spain) and
their relationship to broader currents in education (such as “progressive pedagogy” or

14. Bibliographic evidences of Dewey’s presence in the Spanish contemporary pedagogy were
collected at the Spanish National Library Catalogue, BBDOC CSIC database, REBIUN database,
Dialnet database, TESEO database. Although the vast majority of references were originally published
in Spanish, all contributions titles are presented in English for better understanding.
“the new school”); (iii) **Approach 3**: works that review or reinterpret specific aspects and topics on education, mainly to discuss contemporary pedagogic issues, and in some cases, to compare Dewey’s perspective with that of another author or school of thought; (iv) **Approach 4**: works that propose specific pedagogical practices or analyze existing ones inspired by or in the prism of Dewey’s works.

In global terms, the subject matter most often discussed in the bibliographic sources found is the third one, with studies that revise and interpret concrete elements of Dewey’s work as a way of re-thinking pedagogic questions of contemporary relevance today. This is followed, at 23%, by works that study the reception of Dewey’s pedagogical work in the world and its connection to other currents in education at the time, or inherited from the concrete tradition where Dewey’s new ideas reached. Last come the works that offer a general overview or introduction to his philosophy (12%) and those that link it to concrete practices in education (10%). Finally, to relate the subject matter of the writings and the periods in which they were published – 1980s (5 references), 1990s (13 references), 2000s (26 references), 2010s (25 references) – there is a clear rise in interest, albeit modest in comparison to the attention Deweyan studies receive in Italy and other European countries.

With respect to the analysis performed, some considerations should be made. The first is regarding its form and scope, whereas the second involves the content and approach of the written works in the analysis. Thus, in the first, it should be noted that the list of writings presented here must be read as provisional and under constant revision, since it would be unwise to claim that our analysis includes each and every publication (without exception) of the works on Dewey published in Spain since 1980. Although we can state that we have located many if not most of them, there may still be others we missed. In any case, the nature of the analysis lends itself to periodic updating. In the second point, although the main purpose of this analysis was to quantify the rise in interest in Dewey in contemporary Spanish pedagogy, a global assessment can be made of what this production means. I came up with very

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18. See Andrés 2015; Angelini & García-Carbonell 2015; Barrena 2015; Carreras 2015; Rover & Garcia 2015; Feinberg & Torres 2014; Oliverio 2014; Ayala 2013; Carabajal 2013; Miras 2013; Ruiz 2013; Thoilliez 2013; Cresmas 2012; Rover & Gozálvez 2012; Larrauri 2012; Currie-Knight 2011; Jiménez 2011; Santos 2011; Zampieri 2011; Bravo-Jofré 2010; Fernández 2010; Guichot 2010; Rover, Ruiz & Thoilliez 2010; Rincón 2010; and Trachtenberg 2010.
19. Some of the results of this bibliographic study (up to the year 2012) were integrated in the specialized database that the Centro de Estudios Dewey in España (CEDE), affiliated with the Center for Dewey Studies of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale, is generating in coordination with several Spanish researchers in the field of education, with slightly different criteria than those followed herein. The CEDE, headed by Professors Ramón de Castillo and Julio Seoane, was inaugurated in October 2012 and is affiliated with the Franklin Institute at the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares.
few examples in recent years that have made an in-depth study of the possibilities of Dewey’s ideas in philosophy of education. This is due to two main reasons. One is related to the nature of Dewey’s work regarding the two different “audiences,” philosophical and educational, who were attracted to his writings. Actually, a very useful point for understanding how his ideas were disseminated and received, and how they were and still are being interpreted, is that given the fact that Dewey’s writings take up subject matters that interest audiences (professional philosophers on one hand, teachers and social reformers on the other) that are usually very removed from each other (and particularly in Spain, very much so), the vast majority of Spanish scholars has tended to read and study the part of Dewey’s work that subject-wise interested them the most while ignoring the rest. Although this is understandable to some extent, it is equally true that it commits one of the greatest “errors” Dewey fought against his entire life (in line with the pragmatist tradition he was part of): the separation of theory from practice.

This last consideration lead us to the second reason why Dewey’s work has not been taken seriously in Spain: the nature of the field of the theory of education, namely, the rather unique way this area is articulated in this country. Due to the relevance this last argument has in understanding the particular way in which Dewey’s work has been studied in Spain, it will be developed in the following and final section of the paper.

3. Afterword: Addressing Some of Our Problems

In many of the geographical contexts in which Dewey disseminated his work, the ones on the education side of the fence paid little heed to what Dewey said about philosophy, and vice versa. This situation helps explain several different misinterpretations Dewey’s works have been subject to and have been demonstrated in different studies on the international reception of Dewey’s ideas (Popkewitz 2005; and Bruno-Jofré & Schriewer 2009, 2012). Spain is by no means immune to this problem, as can be seen in the Spanish example given above of how Dewey gets lost, this time, in translation. Our examples are consistent with other works that have shown that Dewey’s ideas were not always well understood in the early 20th century as a result of the sharp rise that other philosophical currents and some forms of religious thought had on the field of education (Bruno-Jofré & Jover 2009). The analysis of the production generated around the study of Dewey’s legacy in Spain over the last thirty-five years shows that the potential of Dewey’s philosophical and educational thought has not been fully explored. Nevertheless, this is consistent with what happened in the past. It is as if the reasons why Dewey was only partially known by scholars and professionals in Spanish education in the ILE circles continued on today in the theory of education in Spain, under new forms of inertia but leading to a similar result in terms of not taking Dewey seriously. As Dewey himself said, we can understand these inertias as habits and customs of thought:

We are always possessed by habits and customs, and this fact signifies that we are always influenced by the inertia and the momentum of forces temporally outgrown but
nevertheless still present with us as a part of our being. Human life gets set in patterns, institutional and moral. (LW 11: 36)

Even so, these inertias are prone to change: “[C]hange is also with us and demands the constant remaking of old habits and old ways of thinking, desiring and acting” (LW 11: 36). It is noteworthy that only around 25% of the contemporary references to Dewey’s thought in contemporary Spanish pedagogy have Democracy and Education as a relevant reference. Despite the growing interest in Dewey’s works since the early 1980s, the main focus of this secondary literature on Dewey has not been on democratic education. This is quite astonishing since in terms of the development of thinking about education for democracy in the 20th century, the figure of John Dewey towers above everyone else. His is the most significant contribution to thinking about education and democracy. This fact has gone unnoticed in most texts on Dewey’s ideas that have been published in Spain over the last thirty-five years. And a more detailed revision of how Dewey defined the field of philosophy of education in Democracy and Education would also be extremely useful in solving some of the core problems that the theory of education is facing today in Spain.

One of the biggest contemporary problems facing the theory of education in Spain is that of conjugating the relationship between theory and practice in education and the nature of pedagogical knowledge that such a relationship can generate. The partial (and rather distorted, as we have seen here) reception of Dewey’s ideas by Spanish pedagogy is written off by some as a missed opportunity (Colom & Rincón 2004) for reactivating the theory of education in the context of contemporary Spanish pedagogy. In Spain, the theory of education as an epistemological and disciplinary field is the result of a deliberate effort at a very particular time in history, of a small community of researchers who decided to make a paradigm shift in how to do “pedagogy.”

20. One of the most accurate accounts of this decision is told by Escámez, who also took part in it: “For two days in the autumn of 1982, in the charming old building of the University of Murcia, on the Calle de la Merced, 1, in a meeting room in the Vice Chancellor’s offices, the following university professors met: Ricardo Marín (General Pedagogy at the University of Valencia), Alejandro Sanvisens (General Pedagogy at Barcelona), Gonzalo Vázquez (General Pedagogy at the Complutense), José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín (Philosophy of Education at the Complutense), José María Quintana (Social Pedagogy at the UNED), José Luis Castillejo (Empirical Introduction to Education Sciences at Valencia), Antonio J. Colom (General Pedagogy at Mallorca), Joaquín García Carrasco (General Pedagogy at Salamanca), Juan Escámez (General Pedagogy at Murcia) and Jaime Sarramona (General Pedagogy at the Autónoma de Barcelona). […] Despite the many differences in their highest academic degree or doctorate and their achievements in professorships under different denominations, these professors, and no others, met in Murcia to share certain concerns and sound out the possibility of starting new directions in the teaching and research of their disciplines. Their concerns were over the naming of the professorships, the suitability of whether or not to intensify the professional exchanges among the attendees, who together comprised the entirety of professors in these disciplines at Spanish universities, the urgency of bringing new language in to the writings on pedagogy more in line with developments in the biological, social and historical sciences of the 20th century, and the need to adapt research and course offerings to the new political and social dynamics of Spain’s transition to democracy. The ensuing heated debate led to two basic majority agreements: the first was to adopt the name of the Theory of Education to replace General Pedagogy, and the other was to hold a yearly work meeting similar to the one that day, to take care of the points of concern. As mentioned, the agreements were majority decisions based on heated debate that logically satisfied most but displeased a few” (Escámez 2007: 219-20).
decided to direct it toward a more technified version. The effort was meant to distance it from “general pedagogy” (heir to the model inaugurated by Herbart and imported into the Spanish university system in the early 20th century), which in these years of transition to democracy was deemed overly speculative and “philosophical” and thus became known as “theory of education.” I am well aware of the fact that this is a hasty sketch of events, and it would be complicated to try to sum up in a few lines the core problems that the theory of education is facing today in Spain, but as some recent analyses indicate (Rabazas 2014; Touriñán 2014), they mostly involve three main points: the thematic dispersion combined with an exclusive localist approach (which ignores more than participates in international debates on philosophy and education), the difficulty in defending its status as an autonomous discipline, and the general questioning experienced overall by the more reflexive humanistic dimension of pedagogical studies. Thus, while the case of the theory of education in Spain is a historical problem that needs to be analyzed historically, the motives and outcomes of this decision were and are epistemological. As such, I also think the answer comes in the shape of an epistemological proposal, conscious of its inheritance and knowledgeable of the needs and problems of today. As Jaume Sarramona pointed out, “[h]istorical and pragmatic explanations aside, the name change from ‘Pedagogy’ to ‘Theory of Education’ has not solved the expectations of its promoters” (Sarramona 2000: 8). Sarramona points to “corporativist” causes to explain how the expectations of what the theory of education should be and their “wish to find a more empirical, less exclusively philosophical underpinning to educational action” (Ibid.) have not been met. However, I believe the problem may be in the shape and direction of that wish by thinking that theory and practice are two substantially contrary things, different and irreconcilable. The theory of education is neither more nor better as a theory of education, it will not generate more or better growth, not in itself as a discipline, not in education as a field of interest, if it is less theory based and more practice based, or less philosophy and more science, or less speculative and more empirical. Perhaps the problem lies in the question itself, and perhaps also in the hope of finding a disciplinary model that normatively closes how supposedly theoretical and practical discourses should be modulated. Perhaps what we need to do is simply to initiate a real conversation in the form of our own reconstruction. A more detailed revision of how Dewey defined the field of philosophy of education in Democracy and Education would also be extremely useful in solving some of the core problems that the theory of education is facing today in Spain. And it is in that sense that Dewey’s bizarre reception among Spanish educational theorists, can be interpreted as a missed opportunity for the development of the field itself.

Thus, if we were able to address our problems by taking Dewey’s works more seriously, the field of educational theory in Spain would most likely improve in the following²¹ ways: firstly, by understanding his activity as an eminently empirical endeavor that does not propose to go beyond the realm of experience, a realm in which there are myriad paths to explore nonetheless; secondly, by committing to seeking out

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improvements, and therefore expecting results to be of interest to other philosophers of education but also to society and the learning and teaching community; and thirdly, by acknowledging that the philosophy of education is an intellectual pursuit that works with abstractions, but this does not keep it from remaining perfectly connected to the matters of education. The argument I am advancing here is that the pragmatism that gave Dewey such good results when exploring a philosophy of education that is deeply educational while still being philosophy may also help solve some of the problems felt in the theory of education in Spain. At the same time, this would also lead us to a more integrated reading of Dewey, rather than strictly philosophical or purely pedagogical. Moreover, such integration is fundamental in Dewey, since philosophy to him has a transformative sense with a certain direction. Indeed, this dual transformative-orientative quality of philosophy is what makes it a deeply educational area.2 Similarly, the educational perspective is what will help philosophy not make the mistake of believing that the practice of philosophy consists of an exercise of itself, made by and for philosophers (MW 9: 338). In fact, for Dewey, what the people involved in developing the philosophy of education need to do is to work for “the introduction of a new order of conceptions leading to new modes of practice” (LW 13: 3). Therefore, rebuilding the theory of education as per Dewey would lead us to understand his activity as (i) an imminently empirical endeavor that (ii) does not propose transcending the realm of experience, and that, however, (iii) can be explored along many different paths, the most characteristic being the conceptual path. It may be well worth our while to try.

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Vincent Colapietro

*Gestures Historical and Incomplete, Critical yet Friendly*

“Thought requires achievement for its own development, and without this development it is nothing. Thought must live and grow in incessant new and higher translations, or it proves itself not to be genuine thought.” – C. S. Peirce (CP 5.595)

**Introduction: Captivating Pictures and Liberating Gestures**

At the center of one of the most famous anecdotes involving a famous philosopher, we encounter what is commonly called in English a *gesture*, in fact, a Neapolitan gesture, though one made by a Turinese Jew at an English university. While gestures carry meaning (9, 69-70), they are themselves carried across various borders, geographical, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and otherwise. Unquestionably, they are readily portable carriers of various meanings, not least of all those bound up with a wide array of human judgments (ranging from contempt and disgust to solicitude and reverence). Whether or not the gesture to which I am alluding would count as one in Giovanni Maddalena’s sense is questionable (a point to which I will return). But there is no dispute about how we would ordinarily identify the animated response by the Italian economist Piero Sraffa to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s intransigent insistence regarding meaning necessarily being a function of logical form. For speakers of English at least, Sraffa’s response is a gesture, indeed, the paradigm of such a communicative or expressive act. So, unlike the incident involving Wittgenstein’s poker (Edmonds & Eidinow; also Monk), that concerning Sraffa’s gestural counterexample directed at Wittgenstein’s adamantine position is enfolded in hardly any controversy. There is little doubt the incident occurred, even less what significance it carried for Wittgenstein.

Even so, it is instructive to set this anecdote in context, especially since it proved to be truly pivotal. It is indeed the point around which Wittgenstein turned from his vision of language as put forth in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to that defended in his *Philosophical Investigation*. Norman Malcolm pairs this story with another anecdote. According to the *Tractarian* account of propositions and hence (at least) this species of meaning, a proposition is a *picture*. It is not so much a pictorial representation as a logical picture, though the pictorial and the logical here might not

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1. All references, if not otherwise noted, will be to Maddalena 2015.
2. This essay has been at once exhilarating and difficult to write. Thinking through this richly suggestive text has been an exhilarating experience. Being critical of a dear friend in a public form has made the task a difficult one. What has greatly added to this difficulty is that I am far from confident that I sufficiently grasp either the main import or most critical details of this extremely subtle text (a text as suggestive and rich as it is subtle and, I must confess, elusive). The author has aptly chosen as his epigram a passage from Peirce: “Crystal clearness […] is in philosophy the characteristic of second rates. The reason is that the strongest men are able to seize an all-important conception long before the progress of analysis has rendered it possible to free it from obscurities and difficulties” (CN II: 84). But this passage needs to be balanced by one from “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”: “It is terrible to see how a single unclear idea, a single formula without meaning, lurking in a young man’s head, will sometimes act like an obstruction of inert matter in an artery, hindering the nutrition of the brain” (EP 1: 127). I am certain that “complete gesture” is not a meaningless formula, but its meaning calls for a variety of analyses by which it can be, as far as possible, freed from difficulties and obscurities. My hope is that my own efforts contribute to this.
be ultimately separable. Wittgenstein hit upon this idea “when he was serving in the Austrian army in the First [World] War” (Malcolm 2001: 68). As he told Malcolm and “several other persons,” he read an account in a newspaper “that described the occurrence and location of an automobile accident by means of a diagram or map.” Wittgenstein took this map to be not only a proposition but also one in which the essential nature of propositions was rendered perspicuous: a proposition is a picture of reality (Ibid.: 68-9).

The complementary anecdote is the one concerning how he came to abandon this picture of propositions, the one to which I alluded at the outset. As Malcolm recounts the story he heard directly from Wittgenstein, one day when

Wittgenstein was insisting that a proposition and what it describes must have the same ‘logical form’ Sraffa made a gesture, familiar to Neapolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt, of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the finger-tips of one hand. And he asked: “What is the logical form of that?” Sraffa’s example produced in Wittgenstein the feeling that there as an absurdity in the insistence [that the proposition must have the form of what it describes or represents]. (Ibid.: 69)

This broke the hold on him of a picture of what a proposition must be, indeed what language could only be. (Ibid: 69)

“A picture held us captive. And,” Wittgenstein in his Philosophical Investigations adds, “we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (Wittgenstein 1968: §115). As it turns out, however, the picture of a picture and that of the proposition as a picture held Wittgenstein’s own mind captive and Sraffa’s gesture broke the hold of that picture.

What, if anything, holds Giovanni Maddalena’s mind captive? If it can be shown that a picture or something else does arrest the movement of his thought, what gestures might I make that would work to loosen the hold of these unacknowledged metaphors and unavowed images? As H. S. Thayer notes, “often in the study of philosophic argument, it is illuminating to watch the use of metaphors and similes. For these serve not only as means of stating arguments; they sometimes operate, if unconsciously, to guide and help sustain the argument in question” (Thayer 1973: 44). Beyond this, they tend to underwrite historically contingent questions, making them appear to be inescapable or necessary. Indeed, they can appear so inescapable as to make historical contingencies appear to be ontological necessities. Part of the task of philosophy is, thus, to exhibit these contingencies for what they are, thereby freeing thought from vitiating fixations.

Here I join Giovanni Maddalena in his keen attention to such frequently ignored features of philosophical writings. But, above all else, this paper is an attempt to

3. In Wittgenstein’s Ladder (1991) Marjorie Perloff shows how the Tractatus needs – at least, invites – to be read in the context of war. The “sublime” vision of logic presented in that work (cf: Wittgenstein 1968: §§ 94-97) possesses its pathos and power only when set against the mundane experience of the soldier (also Monk). As far as he is from Wittgenstein, I wonder if Giovanni Maddalena’s complete gesture is not in its way, however slightly, attached to a “sublime” logic. Are historical practices in their irreducible heterogeneity given their due by him, does he attempt at critical junctures to get back to the “rough ground” (Wittgenstein 1968: § 107) or rather does he work to ascend to an ideal level?
answer these two questions (What might be holding Giovanni’s own mind captive? What gestures might in this connection prove liberating?) – nothing more, nothing, less. Ultimately, this means enacting a series of gestures, some perhaps sharply critical, by which we might loosen the grip of a certain picture of Peirce, also a certain understanding of the historical task of pragmatist philosophers after Kant’s critical turn. However critical, these gestures are intended to be friendly. For Giovanni and I are truly joined in the communal endeavor of deepening philosophical understanding of phenomena, at once, utterly commonplace and deeply significant. In the first instance, we are struggling to discern what stares us in the face; in the second, to offer generalizations attuned to the richness of these phenomena (EP 2: 147-8).

_Completion v. Transfiguration_

Above all else, Immanuel Kant’s critical project holds Giovanni Maddalena’s historical imagination captive. In his judgment, the alternatives are either to abandon or to complete Kant’s project (3). Might there however not be other alternatives (cf. Christensen)? Does, for example, G. W. F. Hegel abandon or complete Kant’s project? Is not the most accurate response to the stark alternatives with which we are confronted: neither – or both! Hegel so radically transformed, by means of an immanent critique, the Kantian endeavor that orthodox Kantians are certainly justified in claiming that Hegel has changed the conversation. But Hegel might counter that the project cannot be completed on its own terms: those very terms require a radical transformation of any philosophical undertaking responsive to the definitive crises of late modernity. The framework is exploded by problems it cannot avoid addressing but cannot effectively address (e.g., the relationship between nature and freedom, that between heteronomy and autonomy, that between imagination and reason, and that between self and other). Hence, Hegel might also go on to insist that his achievement encompasses the completion of Kant’s project in the only workable sense in which this project can be completed. For it decisively drives beyond Kant and it does so in the direction of history, experience, and concreteness.

Building amid the ruins of such a framework, even while ineluctably using materials and incorporating aspects

4. James was emphatic: “The true line of philosophic progress lies, in short, it seems to me, not so much through Kant as round him to the point where now we stand” (James 1975a: 269). This is well known. Far less well known, however, was the mature Peirce’s caustic disparagement of Kant’s monumental book: he characterized the first _Critique_ as “the very chimæra of the history of philosophy, according to the tongues of fame […] but in reality nothing more portentous than a sickly little nanny-goat masquerading as a world-shatterer” (MS 609: 10; quoted in Fisch 1986: 257). While Peirce might have been led to Kant’s critical project by Schiller’s _Aesthetic Letters_, and while he might have devoted several early years to an intense study of the first _Critique_, the mature Peirce moved decisively beyond Kant. I am strongly disposed to think he did so by transforming what he took to be the task of philosophy. When late in his life he looked in the mirror of self-reflection, he has struck by his resemblance not to Kant but to Hegel (CP 1.42; and Colapietro 2013).

5. In _The Meaning of Truth_, James stresses: “The whole originality in pragmatism. The whole point in it, is its use of the concrete way of seeing. It begins with concreteness, and returns and ends with it” (James 1975b: 281-2). As it turns out, however, Hegel’s critique of Kant’s formalism is for the most part in the name of concreteness, just as Marx’s critique of Hegel’s “idealism” was. “How to make our philosophies concrete” is, for pragmatists and others, as urgent as “How to make are ideas clear.”
of the design from the structure previously embodied in these materials, does not commit those engaged in this task of replicating that design.

The *experience* of thinking over, yet again, what has been thought over by one’s predecessors is as much an instance of experience as what we more commonly identified as experience (Russon 2015). The need to do so is, as often as not, inherent in experience itself: there is an experiential urgency to reflect upon some more or less determinate experience and, in the course of doing so, we frequently come to the realization that our inherited concepts provide inadequate resources for this creative task (Diamond). New tools need to be forged; new conceptions need to be fashioned, if we are going to come to terms with the experience in question. We might pour new wine into old bottles, but we would be less than wise to try pouring molten steel into glass containers. “We learn by experience,” Hegel insists, “that we meant something other than we meant to mean; and this correction of our meaning compels us to go back to the proposition [in its original form or in our initial understanding], and understand it in some other way” (Hegel 1981: 39). Even the most radical innovations are continuous with their generative conditions. Such inevitable continuity does however not preclude truly radical innovation. I would accordingly insist here: Witness Hegel. Or, of greater, relevance: Witness Peirce *vis-à-vis* Kant, Schiller, and Hegel, on one side, Locke, Berkeley, and Reid, on the other.

Of course, Maddalena might claim that his attempt to complete both Kant and Peirce’s project entails transformation. On his account, to complete this project is to offer a truly synthetic approach to synthetic reasoning, that is, to break with the analytic paradigm and to offer a novel framework only hinted at by Peirce. In my judgment, however, this would be a reasonable but hardly adequate reply. First, the virtually exclusive focus on analysis and synthesis distorts our understanding of Peirce and, more generally, pragmatism. Second, the truly radical character of Peirce’s philosophical project is missed. His preoccupation is with not the abstract possibility but the concrete *growth* of knowledge. In effect, he replaces epistemology with methodology (or, in his own words, *methodectic* or *speculative rhetoric*, “the highest and most living branch of logic” (CP 2: 333; see Fisch 1986; Santaella 1999; and Bergman 2009). As envisioned by Peirce, the task is not to refute the skeptic, but to assist the growth of knowledge; not to demonstrate the abstract possibility of knowing something no one does or even can actually doubt, but to institute procedures by which concrete opportunities for facilitating paths of inquiry are seized. Third, the essentially historical and, thus, invincibly open-ended character of all human endeavors, including theoretical pursuits, tends also to be missed or, worse, occluded. Take one of Maddalena’s paradigmatic instances of a “complete gesture” – the ritual of baptism. This ritual is a call to the community to assist in the difficult, delicate task of initiating a new being into a form of life. By its nature, it cannot be complete in itself: in inaugurates a historical task of an indefinitely ramifying nature. Its “beginning” is the self-conscious continuation of a living tradition, just as its “end” is the self-resolved commitment to take up a task for the indefinite future.

However this may be, Maddalena is certainly correct to claim, “one cannot understand pragmatism if one’s anti-Cartesianism is not supplement by a profound
anti-Kantianism” (28). But what I am urging is a much more profound anti-Kantianism than anything discernible in *The Philosophy of Gesture*. To be captivated by problems having their origin in the dualism of analysis and synthesis is not anti-Kantian enough.

This begins to become clear when we disentangle the hermeneutic and the philosophical aspects of Maddalena’s undertaking. There is, first of all, the interpretive claim (Peirce falls short) and, then, the philosophical recommendation (we can complete what Peirce failed to complete by adopting a new paradigm of synthetic reasoning). The philosophical prescription is however dependent upon the hermeneutic diagnosis. If the diagnosis is erroneous, the prescription might be ineffective – or worse (for it might exacerbate rather than relieve the condition). On Maddalena’s interpretation, we witness in Peirce’s later thought a decisive drive toward some form “of complete synthetivity” (28). But, also on his interpretation, this drive stops short: Peirce is allegedly too deeply entangled in the Kantian framework to offer a completed form of synthetic rationality. This is part of a broader claim, one directed at not only a single figure in the pragmatist movement but also the entire movement. The pragmatists “never realized that their research pointed toward a complete synthetic pattern, where synthesis is achieved through synthetic tools” (30). Maddalena contends, “their tools remain an analytic way to approach synthetic reasoning” (*Ibid.*).

As an alternative, what I propose is this. What we need is a theory of inquiry based on our practices of inquiry and, hence, on the practical experience of expert inquirers but also merely competent and even simply novice ones. This would be a theory rooted in our experience of doubt but also our experience of overcoming doubt (conducting countless inquiries in an effective manner). Debates about the meaning of terms are idle or worse if they are not linked to the preoccupations of practitioners. The clarification of terms by an inquirer, for the sake of inquiry, is one thing. The definition of terms at the highest level of generality (e.g. What is knowledge? Or What is art?), with little or no regard for the exigencies of practice (and here this signifies the practice of inquiry) is quite another. Methodology in the Peircean sense would replace epistemology in its traditional sense (Ransdell 2000).

I offer these reflections and, above all, my criticisms as a gesture of friendship to one whose work I deeply admire. However they are defined, gestures do indeed carry meaning (9, 69-70). At the heart of any general theory of signs, there is a synecdochic or cluster of such figures of speech. At the center of Maddalena’s purportedly pragmatist reconstruction (or “completion”) of the Peirce project, there is the figuration of the gesture. Gestures by their very nature however are interpretants and objects, for they are generated and generated: they are in one respect the offspring of signs and, in another, the parent of signs, gestural and otherwise. Like all other signs, gestures are invincibly incomplete. Closure is always perspectival and precarious, for it is at bottom the formation of a habit more fully and finely attuned to the dispositions of those agents and object that we encounter in experience.

“Peirce’s progressive shift from Kant to Hegel” (42) was truly a decisive shift, a fateful rupture (hence, decidedly not an absolute breach). Among other things, it was a turn toward concrete forms of historical experience, thus, a turn away from formalist
presuppositions (above all, away from those presuppositions in conjunction with the framing of our questions).

Peirce was not endeavoring to give a pragmatist answer to a Kantian question. Much like Hegel, he was working toward articulating a pragmatist framework of philosophical query (Buchler 1955). While Peirce’s undertaking no less than Hegel’s is unimaginable apart from Kant’s aspirations, efforts, and indeed achievements, it bursts the narrow confines of various inherited frameworks, the Kantian as much as any other.

Gestures Commonplace and Otherwise

Gestures are commonplace. In fact, they are ubiquitous. Not only are they commonplace, but our understanding of them is as well. For the most part, however, this understanding is tacit and situated, not explicit and abstract. Moreover, it is practical, not theoretical. There is nonetheless also such an understanding of gestures in general. That is, we immediately grasp the significance of someone extending a hand upon being introduced to us or the significance of a friend upon leaving turning around and waving an arm. But we also immediately grasp what such acts in general are. Quite apart from being able to define words or ideas in a formal, abstract manner, we often have an effective and, in many instances, a nuanced and subtle comprehension of their meaning. This shows itself in our ability to use these signs not only appropriately but also creatively. Peirce identifies this as the first grade of conceptual clarity. His recognition of this grade of clarity is, in effect, a rebuke of Socrates, at least as Socrates is portrayed in some of Plato’s early and indeed other dialogues. In such works as the *Euthyphro* and the *Republic*, Socrates tries to show one or another interlocutor that that individual does not know the meaning of the words he is using, since he cannot provide a defensible definition of what almost always is a commonplace work. Socrates appears to take the inability to be able to provide a formal, abstract definition of these contested words as a sign of ignorance, but virtually always unavowed ignorance (indeed, ignorance strenuously “denied”). In contrast, Peirce is valorizing our tacit, situated understanding of commonplace terms. Our ability to use them effectively and, of even greater import, creatively is an indication of our grasp of these terms. At the lowest level of clarity, then, we understand both what specific gestures signify and, beyond this, what gestures in general are.

This however does not mean that either the significance of specific gestures or that of gestures in general is simple or univocal. At both levels, our comprehension tends to be subtle and nuanced. Indeed, it needs to be. Our tacit, situated understanding needs to be as flexible, variable, and mobile as are the shifts and shades of significance borne by gestures. In other words, this tacit understanding operates in real time and, as a consequence, a sense of timing (that is, a sense of *kairos* (Smith 1969)) is characteristically displayed by not only the utterer but also the interpreter. Silence is hardly univocal. So, too, the significance of a smile can only be ascertained *in situ*. A seemingly simple expression turns out to be one capable of carrying widely
variable meanings. There are, after all, smiles of refined contempt and ones of spontaneous joy, smiles of bemusement tinged with beneficent indifference and ones of acknowledgment animated by deep identification with another sentient being (Is it truly absurd to smile at a dog who is a companion?).

For the most part, then, our commonplace understanding of gesture operates on the first grade of clarity. For various purposes, however, we might feel compelled to fashion a formal, abstract definition of gesture. The relationship between our commonplace understanding and these theoretical formalizations is hardly straightforward. On the one hand, we can accord our everyday sense such authority that the very attempt to provide an abstract definition comes to be seen as an utterly futile undertaking. On the other hand, we can possess such confidence in our ability to fashion a completely general definition that we ride roughshod over the subtle distinctions embedded in ordinary language (Austin 1990). As Peirce insists, we cannot improve a language unless we reverence it. And we show our reverence for a language by painstakingly attending to the unpretentious genius embodied in our linguistic inheritance, not least of all by sharply focusing on the more or less implicit distinctions and affinities to which a language bears witness. At the most general level, language is logos or an indispensable instrument of that Protean power, for it enables us to gather together what is seemingly disparate but also to set off from one another things apparently identical. Our ability to distinguish this from that is of a piece with our ability to see this as an instance of that (e.g., to conceive a smile as an instance of a gesture and, at a higher level of generality, to conceive a gesture as a genre of actions). Our inability to distinguish this from that means that, in our understanding, they are indistinctly fused together: that is, they are confused. Our inability to ascertain affinities (e.g., our failure to discern that a whale is a mammal) entails that we are completely blind to countless connections and the implications flowing from our discovery of these connections.

Maddalena proposes to offer an abstract definition of gesture rather than first attending to the tacit meanings carried by this commonplace word. More precisely and fairly, he offers such a definition after all too hurriedly canvassing the tacit meanings embedded in everyday language. Even so, one gets the sense – at least, I get the sense – that his efforts are informed by a felt sense for the tacit richness of quotidian words.

At least formally, his utterances indicate a commitment to pragmatism. (In truth, his commitment is more than formal, but I want to press this point as strong as possible, since I take this tendency to be far too prevalent among expositors and advocates of

6. In MS 279 (“The Basis of Pragmaticism,” circa 1905), Peirce writes, “a language is a thing to be revered; and I protest that a man who does not reverence a given language is not in the proper frame of mind to undertake its improvements” (quoted in Colapietro 1989: 4). In this manuscript, Peirce argues that it is a great mistake to attempt reforming English by adopting German expressions out of harmony with it.

7. In Praxis and Action, Richard J. Bernstein suggests: “There is a descriptive, empirical, pragmatic temper manifested in Peirce’s use of the categories. The ‘proof’ or, more accurately, the adequacy of the categories is to be found in the ways in which Peirce uses them to illuminate fundamental similarities and differences in everything we encounter” (Bernstein 1971: 178).
Peirce, not simply Giovanni.) This is nowhere more apparent than in his contention that, “we can say we clarify something when we transform our vague, familiar comprehension into a habit of action, not when we have a good definition” (70). There is however an irony here. While Maddalena formally acknowledges pragmatic clarification as the highest level of conceptual clarity, he practically operates for the most part on the intermediate level of abstract definition. The irony is even greater when we note that, in the passage just quoted, abstract definition is slighted by Maddalena.

For Peirce at least, abstract definition is a crucial tool for conceptual clarification. To rest content with the results attained by means of this tool would, in effect, amount to arresting thought. Even so, pragmatic clarification massively draws upon the tacit understanding of “practical” familiarity but also critically depends upon the explicit formalizations provided by abstract definitions. We clarify something by defining it abstractly and by translating it pragmatically into habits of action. While formal, abstract definitions are often necessary tools to advance the business of inquiry, they are, in Peirce’s judgment at least, never sufficient ones. But to say we need to go beyond them does not imply that we can dispense with them.8

In its most basic sense, Maddalena suggests that a gesture “is any performed act with a beginning and an end that carries a meaning (from gero = I carry on)” (69-70). But he is clear that this is not the sense with which he is principally preoccupied in his book: “we are not just seeking any gesture. Some gestures are only reactions. All gestures carry meaning, but they do not necessarily serve to recognize an identity fully” (70).10 Complete gestures, as Maddalena identifies them, are here tasked with a

8. I am disposed to identify the first grade of conceptual clarity as “dumb smarts” because it is for the most part a linguistically tacit (or inarticulate) form of situated intelligence. In one respect, it is “dumb” or inarticulate (e.g., the experienced equestrian might not be able to express in words what she comprehends in and through her body when engaged while riding in the intricate exchange between herself and her horse). In another sense, however, it is remarkably intelligence and hence articulate. Intelligence is indeed by its very nature articulate, since it involves the capacity to draw distinctions and to draw from them implications – often in the blink of an eye. The slightest shift in the weight of the horse might to the experienced equestrian signal the imminent possibility an immense disaster. The subtle sounds discernible to the ears of the experienced mechanic would be another example of how the situated intelligence of the expert practitioner is definable in terms of articulation in some form. The deft, precise adjustments made by such a mechanic to the auditory clues emanating from the engine reveal that this individual’s expertise resides in both knowing what different sounds mean and knowing how to respond effectively and differentially to the variable sounds. As William James notes in The Meaning of Truth, “you cannot keep hows and whats asunder” (James 1975b: 275; emphasis added), at least in the “universe of concrete facts.”

9. As it turns out, however, this is a strategic question. Occasionally the insistent demand for abstract definitions is a heuristic impediment, not a methodological necessity. Moreover, the fixation on the crafting of such definitions can result in the increasing poverty of a discourse. For example, the extent to which epistemology becomes a quest for a formal, abstract definition of knowledge or aesthetics becomes a quest for such a definition of art, they have become impoverished fields, taking us away from the richness of our epistemic practices in the one case and that of our artistic contrivances in the other.

10. The “only” here is troublesome, as is the word “reaction.” If we replaced the word “reaction” with “response,” I wonder if there would be any warrant for the word “only.” Every gesture is a response and, as such, carries meaning by taking up – both by carrying forward and not infrequently by working against – trajectories of significance carried by the gestures and other phenomena to which the gesture is responding. In other words, gestures are always parts of a continuum and, as such, are themselves continuum. This renders problematic their origins and outcomes. For example, I respond
Herculean labor: they have as their function nothing less than the full recognition of what has proven to be for vast stretches of human history an elusive identity (e.g., the identity of identity itself, what we pragmatically mean by the identity of, say, a human person [see Maddalena, Chapter 6] or the identity of the divine or, more mundanely, that of words). Complete gestures are, in brief, tasked with full recognition of those historically elusive identities.

Though he tends to use the adjective complete, Maddalena also employs perfect in conjunction with gestures. He is explicit about their equivalence: “here ‘perfect’ and ‘complete’ are actually synonymous” (70). For this and other reasons, it is instructive to compare Maddalena’s conception of a perfect (or complete) gesture with Peirce’s description of a “perfect sign.” Given the importance of this comparison, also given how little attention is paid to Peirce’s description of such signs, I will quote one of the most relevant texts at rather great length. In MS 283, Peirce characterizes “an ordinary conversation” as “a wonderfully perfect kind of sign-functioning” (EP 2: 391). He takes pains to explain what he means by a “perfect sign” (MS 283: 279-83; EP 2: note 25). He does so by asking us to consider “the aggregate formed by a sign and all the signs which its occurrence carries with it.” In doing so we come to realize:

This aggregate will itself be a sign; and we may call it a perfect sign, in the sense that it involves the present existence of no other sign except such as are ingredients of itself. Now no perfect sign is in a statical [or inert] condition; you might as well suppose a portion of matter to remain at rest during a thousandth of a second, or any other long interval of time. The only signs which are tolerably fixed [and thus static or steadfast] are non-existent abstractions. We cannot deny that such a sign is real [as distinct from existent or actual]; only its mode of reality [or being] is not that active kind which we call existence. The existent acts, and whatsoever acts changes [by virtue of acting]…

- Every real ingredient of the perfect sign is aging, its energy of action upon the interpretant is running low, its sharp edges are wearing down, its outlines becoming more indefinite.
- On the other hand, the perfect sign is being perpetually acted upon by its object, from which it is perpetually receiving the accretions of new signs, which bring it fresh energy, and also kindle energy that it already had, but which had lain dormant.
- In addition, the perfect sign never ceases to undergo changes of the kind we rather drollly call spontaneous, that is, they happen sua sponte but not by its will. They are phenomena of growth.
- Such perfect sign is a quasi-mind. It is the sheet of “Existential Graphs”…

To your gesture in this situation, but in fact in doing so I am picking up the thread of a conversation commenced long ago. We might also grab the other end of the stick. The death of a friend does not mark the end of our conversation with that individual. For instance, I can still vividly hear John E. Smith’s voice, above all, in questions he would pose, objections he would raise, and qualifications he would insist upon. Without question, this is no substitute for his actual voice. But these auditory illusions are dialogical realities in which the power of the would-do and would-be here as everywhere else outstrips, in a certain sense, actuality.
This richly suggestive characterization of a perfect sign cannot be fully discussed here. For our purpose, we have the space only to highlight several salient traits of such signs and, then, only in a rather cursory manner. First, the materiality of any actual sign entails that the sign is in a sense aging. Second, the inherent dynamism of any sign is of such a nature that it points to the possibility of indefinite rejuvenation. This is most evident in the ability of the sign to be acted upon, however indirectly or mediatelty, by its object. Third, this dynamism also means that the sign is not only ceaselessly but also spontaneously changing. Fourth and finally, the growth of meaning is, among other things, a process of determination, one wherein the sign is becoming less vague, general, or both in some respects (while quite possibly also becoming indeterminate – more vague, general, or both – in other respects). Paradoxically, a perfect sign is, in other words, perfect by virtue of its imperfections, what alone makes possible its perfectability. Absolute perfection is in a pragmatist universe an ontological impossibility, whereas indefinite perfectability is the only tenable form of the highest good. Signs, at least as instruments of reasons, partake of the nature of reason: “the essence of Reason is such that its being can never have been completely perfected. It always must be,” Peirce insists, “in a state of incipiency, of growth” (CP 1: 615). Nothing but the ceaseless growth of concrete reasonable can be made into the *summum bonum*. For example, consider the constitution of a country. A perfect constitution would be one in which its inescapable imperfections were formally acknowledged by building into its very structure procedures by which it can be amended, that is, made better (or more perfect) than it actually is. As such, it would make a virtue of a necessity – its historicity.

Let us return briefly to Peirce’s example of a “perfect sign” – “an ordinary conversation.” What makes this species of sign-functioning or semiosis worthy of such a designation? Its imperfections are likely to come to light in its prolongation. The objects under consideration are, through the mediation of the interlocutors, bringing to bear their weight on the development of their signs, however much the limitations and indeed biases of these interlocutors might distort and conceal various features of the dynamic object. In sum, perfect signs in the Peircean sense cannot be complete or perfect. In contrast, complete or perfect gestures in Giovanni’s sense apparently can attain a form of closure Peirce would find impossible for any instance of semiosis to attain. Should we use Peirce’s notion of semiosis to illuminate what Giovanni intends by gesture or rather should we use Giovanni’s conception gesture to throw light on what Peirce identifies as semiosis? My own leaning should already be clear. In fairness, however, let us return to a more direct engagement with Giovanni Maddalena’s innovative proposal.

**Commonplaces Gestural and Otherwise**

Chapters 6 through 8 of *The Philosophy of Gesture* are devoted to the topics of identity, writing, morality, and education. Maddalena does not intend them to be merely illustrative of his suggestive notion of a complete gesture. Rather he turns to these topics to display the heuristic power of the new tool he has crafted principally
in Chapters 3 though 5. At the conclusion of “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” Peirce turns to hardness, weight, force, and reality as phenomena calling for pragmatic clarification. No matter how perfect are our abstract definitions of these diverse phenomena, as abstract definitions, they are not sufficient. We must break out of the circle of words (cf. Short 2007). Defining one word in terms of others unquestionably has its value. But it also has its limitations, especially for anyone resolutely committed to experimental inquiry. Accordingly, we must break out of the circle of words immerse ourselves in the spirals of experience (Colapietro 2016). Such immersion involves striving to attune our habits more finely and fully to the habits of the beings we encounter in experience. More cautiously put, such immersion encourages us to strive to accomplish this.

The scope of this essay, alas, does not allow me to go into the details of Maddalena’s treatment of the topics taken up in Chapters 6 through 8. I have taken this occasion to focus almost exclusively on what I take to be the heart of the matter, his ingenious proposal (his new paradigm of reasoning and, inextricably interwoven into this paradigm, his new tool of synthesis). If I judge this project to be a failure on its own terms (though this characterization needs to be qualified), if I take the proposal of this paradigm to be most superfluous, that is not as harsh a judgment as it will almost strike most readers. In rendering this judgment, indeed, I stand to Giovanni Maddalena precisely as he stands to Peirce. There is, in his critique of Peirce and, based upon it, his effort to go beyond his predecessor – his endeavor to bring to completion what Peirce failed to accomplish – unmistakable respect for Peirce’s stunning achievements. Failure in a significant respect, even in a definitive way, hardly precludes success in other respects, often ones of the utmost importance. Such success warrants admiration, but, then, so too do certain instances of “failure.”

However it might be with complete gestures in Giovanni’s sense, human endeavors are inevitably incomplete. Of course, one might respond to this claim by asserting there is incompleteness and incompleteness. For example, one might set out to solve a problem and leave it unsolved in the main, not merely in this or that detail. Even so, one’s monumental failure might be more instructive than the minor successes of others. Marx would take this to be true of Hegel in comparison with numerous other thinkers who were more successful in either bringing to completion their own task or comprehending the nature of their endeavor. He deemed it as essential to work through the logic of Hegel’s errors as to appropriate the insights of his predecessor. Indeed, the appropriation of such insights required him to work through the logic of these errors. One could not have the former without undertaking the latter. Analogously, Maddalena seems to be working through Peirce’s failures as a way of completing Peirce’s project. But, then, I too am assumed a task akin to this, only with respect to Giovanni Maddalena himself. This however brings up the question of dealing with him on his own terms. An immanent critique can often be a radical critique, one in which the very terms of the controversy are profoundly altered. Hence, the very formulation of the questions is dramatically modified.

The language of completion and the implication of finality are, in my judgment, to be avoided. Semiosis in Peirce’s sense implies as much. More fully, semiosis as
exemplified in science and, in turn, as approached by Peirce not only in his Existential Graphs but also virtually all parts of his mature philosophy offers, in my judgment, what Maddalena alleges to be missing in Peirce. Complete gestures in Maddalena’s sense does not seem to me to be an advance upon interminable semiosis in Peirce’s sense, not least of all because semiosis so conceived can never be complete.

There is indeed a paradox here. We cannot go beyond Peirce until we have caught up to him (Ketner 1983). But the only way we can even begin to catch up to him is by striving with might and main to go beyond him (Short 2007). Giovanni Maddalena is to be praised for striving to do just this. But, as Kant so memorably noted regarding metaphysics, we would be amiss to take the will for the deed. He is however not to be praised for failing to show in greater detail, also with greater care, that Peirce actually failed in approaching synthetic reasoning in a synthetic manner. In this context, I prefer the adjective *synechistic* to *synthetic*, 11 since it shifts the focus from a methodological activity (the acts, processes, and procedures by which syntheses are achieved) to (in the first instance) a phenomenological task, one that of describing with painstaking accuracy genuine continua and, for that matter, degenerate ones as well. There is no question, especially if we are to be faithful to the spirit as well as letter of Peirce, that we must gather our phenomenological insights and translate them into methodological maxims, directives, and principles. But, in philosophy, we do so most effectively when we move cautiously from phenomenological description to normative reflection.

Phenomenologically, we are confronted first and foremost with continua, ones whose origins and trajectories are typically anything but fully recognizable by us. At any historical juncture of virtually any experimental inquiry, the identification of the origin of a process is provisional, so too that of its termination or simply its trajectory. I take it that what Maddalena is calling complete gestures would count as genuine continua. But it is not clear to me whether he would accept my suggestion about how such continua are to be conceived, in the first instance.

In my judgment, then, the direction in which Peirce’s project most needs to be completed (or carried forward) is not the direction to which Maddalena calls our attention. What we need most of all is a more thickly pragmatist description of experimental intelligence, hence a more fully pluralist portrait. This would encompass a more synechistic approach, but one along the lines already indicated by Peirce’s experiments in formalization (e.g., his “Existential Graphs”) and also by his pragmatist account of experimental inquiry.

11. In fairness to Giovanni Maddalena, his synthetic approach is to a great extent a synechistic approach. But rather than taking his contribution to be completing what Peirce allegedly failed to complete vis-à-vis Kant’s project, I take him to be carrying forward what Peirce so dramatically exemplified — a synechistic approach to normative science and metaphysical inquiry, rooted in a phenomenological and indeed mathematical insights into continuity. When he draws explicitly on Fernando Zalamea’s work on Peirce’s concept of continuity (see especially Zalamea 2012: 50ff.), *The Philosophy of Gesture* gathers a power and focus it does not display when he is trying to show how Peirce needs to be assisted by the philosophical innovation of the complete gesture. He is in effect tracing out not only a distinctively Peircean trajectory but also in substantively Peircean terms. I have no question that Maddalena’s philosophical innovation is an important one, though not for the purpose he has designed it!
Conclusion

A picture captivated Peirce, but did not hold him completely captive. It was the dramatic figure of experimental intelligence principally engaged in the passionate pursuit of novel truths, especially as this pursuit was exemplified by such sciences as physics, chemistry, astronomy, and biology. The Peircean portrait of this arresting figure is, alas, incomplete. What Giovanni Maddalena suggests in the later Chapters of this richly suggestive book is very helpful for how to sketch more fully the portrait of this figure.

Such intelligence is, in its way, an instance of continuity. It is moreover (though more controversially) a creative appropriation of a classical notion, for Peirce’s account of such intelligence is arguably a reworking of Logos, the capacity to gather together what is apparently disparate but also to distinguish what seems essentially identical. Finally, it is a self-consciously historical and communal project. For it concerns affective identification with historically evolved and evolving communities of self-critical inquirers. As such, it must be invincibly open-ended. While the language of closure in a guarded sense might be appropriate here, that of completion in any robust sense is always out of place.

A friend makes a remark. I respond by closing my eyes, then opening them, and turning my head ever so slightly to my left, suppressing the faintest trace of a skeptical smile. My friend perceives my gesture as astutely as if I had shouted a protest. “Hide your thoughts! – Hide the sun and the moon. They publish themselves,” Emerson insists, “to the universe” (quoted by James in McDermott 1978). We subsequently exchange a series of nuanced and subtle facial expressions, however compressed, before either one of us speaks. In the case of Giovanni Maddalena, his brow will often slightly knit, then a smile will ascend from his jaw to his eyes. The Italian face is remarkably adept as a canvas for facial gestures, so my description of a smile beginning beneath the lips and mouth is phenomenologically accurate! To be sure, it is no mean feat to have a smile begin with one’s jaw. But, then, the human face possesses an irreplaceable talent at self-portraiture. The serious point is that our gestures and other signs can carry the meanings of this exchange forward to the point that we reach a deep accord. The conversation is concluded rather than merely interrupted or broken off. But subsequent experience and the experientially rooted reflections on the ongoing course of our situated encounters force us, time and again, to think over what has been considered carefully a number of times.

The cumulative habits of ingenious actors equip these agents with the resources for extemporaneous responses to unexpected turns in a conversation or in the course of experience. Our intelligence and world are of such a character that the exercise of experimental intelligence in the contexts of historical circumstances inevitably get us into trouble, sooner or later. We are thrust by the very exercise of such intelligence into a world for which our intellectual inheritance, at bottom our sanctioned habits, is a hindrance as much as an aid. The very identification of the problems with which we are confronted depends upon theoretical creativity. Our insistence upon framing the problems with which we are wrestling in traditional terms is, indeed, part of...
the problem. Hence, part of the solution is to disentangle us from these terms. As often as not, this means freeing ourselves from certain pictures (e.g., the metaphor of foundations and, inseparably tied to this, that of knowledge as an edifice). We effectively miss the historical moment in which we are caught up. The force of experience demands us to consider candidly what we meant to mean (cf. Hegel 1981).

Peirce is one of the most paradoxical of philosophers precisely because he did not miss the singular character of his own historical moment, while being deeply appreciative of the abiding relevance of the dusty folios of the medieval schoolmen and the even more distant writings of classical thinkers. To some degree, all human self-understanding is however a case of misunderstanding. Peirce did not know quite what he was doing, but he was in this regard no different from any other human agent. The frustrating elusiveness of genuine continuity partly explains this failure, if an inevitable misunderstanding can properly be called a failure.

Giovanni Maddalena’s *The Philosophy of Gesture* is itself an incomplete account of Peirce’s various shortcomings in rendering more self-critical and self-conscious the ongoing task of philosophical inquiry. After Descartes but especially after Kant, the reflexive turn is integral to the responsible execution of this historical task. But the pragmatic turn saves the reflexive stance from degenerating into abstract universality and empty formalism (Smith 1992: Ch. 5). We can trace Sraffa’s gesture to the rough-and-tumble world of Naples, just as we can ascertain the power of this gesture in the capacity of his fingers being brushed under his chin with an outward sweep to dissolve Wittgenstein’s intransigence. In the wave of a hand, there can be magic. A world opens. Impasses and aporias are, in hindsight, spells cast over us by our complicity in allowing some fatal confusion or obscurity to ensnare us. More often than not, pictures are part of this.

To return to a point already anticipated, the question of how to conduct an inquiry replaces the question of whether our efforts at inquiry could ever be successful. In brief, methodology replaces epistemology, but so too does phenomenology replace metaphysics as first philosophy. Those committed to formulating a theory of semiosis (Fisch 1986; and Short 2007) might moreover properly resist allowing this theory to be subsumed under a philosophy of gesture. The general theory of signs fails essentially if it does not encompass a philosophical account of gesture. It is doubtful whether the philosophy of gesture can carry the weight put upon it by Giovanni Maddalena. More precisely, it is questionable whether either his conception of gesture truly captures Peirce’s notion of semiosis or this conception can perform all the tasks to which it is being put. A pragmatist approach to synthetic processes, including rational deliberation, must be more than a synthetic approach. It must also be historicist as well as phenomenological, synechistic, pragmaticistic, normative, and ontological. Giovanni Maddalena does much to illuminate most of these facets. He rather than Peirce – or, more accurately, along with Peirce – misunderstands the nature of his own undertaking. Peirce did not so much fail to complete his project as

12. Of these facets, he does the least justice to the temporal and, more narrowly, the historical features of the ongoing processes and practices falling with the scope of his concern, the most justice to the formally semiotic and irreducibly ontological features.
he failed to envision its scope. The distinctive form of experimental intelligence on display in the history of natural science hardly exhausts the expansive reach of this incomparable capacity. The histories of moral reflection, artistic endeavor, religious worship, political struggles, erotic engagements, and much else provide invaluable clues for our portrait gallery of the more striking members of a vastly extended family. These distinctive forms of experimental intelligence are, in other words, integral parts of an indelimitable continuum, making each of these forms themselves instances of continuity.

More than anything else, our thought needs to be made more dialogical. One of the most important ways of accomplishing this is by working to acknowledge the respects in which it already is dialogical, the depth to which it has been formed in a give-and-take with nothing less than reality. The “synthesis” that renders our thinking truly synthetic is that which makes our thinking more vitally and dramatically dialogical. The perfect sign is perfect only insofar as it possesses within itself the resources for its self-correction. Almost always, such self-correction takes the form of self-transformation. Consider the transformations of our understanding of energy or force in the history of our explorations of the forms of movement in which we are enmeshed.

The power of Peirce’s Existential Graphs resides, at bottom, not in their formalization of a process but in the character of that process. The quasi-interpreter is called by the process itself to respond to the quasi-utterer (cf. Pietarinen 2006). What gestures of inclusion, exclusion, and transformation the quasi-interpreter makes in response to the inaugural gestures of the quasi-utterer determine the drama of self-correction and, hence, self-transformation. These Graphs enable to formalize certain steps in a process of ampliative reasoning and, as a result, enable to identify where we might have taken a misstep. They are tools of self-criticism and self-correction.

In sum, Peirce was not striving to complete Kant’s project. Rather he was endeavoring to transform theoretical rationality into a deliberate capacity, hence one dependent on dramatic imagination and dialogical ingenuity. On this account, as Giovanni Maddalena notes, theoria becomes itself an instance of phronesis. This involves a fuller recovery of one part of Aristotle conjoined to a partial rejection of another part. Moreover, it marks a decisive break with Kant’s critical philosophy, along with a surprising alliance with Hegel’s profound insights, above all, his deeply penetrating insights into the critical role of the experience in carrying out the work of philosophy. Finally, it encompasses a vision of semiosis as dialogue (cf. Ransdell 1976) and, in turn, a vision of dialogue as revelatory of nothing less than the character of reality. That “most wonderfully perfect kind of sign-functioning” is perfect only in that its imperfections are destined to be disclosed in the fullness of time. In the meantime, the only time available to finite, fallible agents such as we are, we are tasked with assisting the growth of signs. For this, we need very often to suspend the dictates of cold justice and to follow the promptings of cherishing love (EP 1: 354).

My greatest fear is that, in this engagement with a dear friend’s book, I have obeyed these dictates and failed to follow these promptings. In such an engagement, the all
too likely result of cold justice is a deep injustice. Not only is a cognate of *philia* the prefix to the word *philosophy* but also *philia* is a word in its own right, designating a form of love at which distinct, yet inseparable, from the love of wisdom. For most of us, philosophical inquiry is not a solitary mediation (however many hours of private thought are consumed by a passionate commitment to philosophical reflection), but a communal undertaking. More often than not, it is an undertaking conjoining us to individuals with whom we have deep attachments.

The human face of “synthetic reason” is, accordingly, a spirited exchange in which the participants are mutually encouraging one another to follow the argument wherever it leads. In the course of such a conversation, we are not infrequently transformed. Our entrance is inevitably tardy (the conversation has been going on long before we arrive on the scene) and our exit tragically premature. Improvised and incomplete gestures are the best we can do. They characteristically draw upon a vast inheritance, are extemporized in a dramatic present, and drive toward an uncertain future. In a word, they are historical. For some purposes, these gestures can be conceived as having a determinate beginning and an equally determinate end, moreover, exhibiting the singular acts by which the gestures are made, the developmental teleology being served, consciously or not, by the gesturer, the densely blended character of any gesture, and indeed much else.

For the defining purposes of Peircean pragmatism, however, they are historical interventions in an ongoing flow of “perfect signs.” The perfection of such signs resides in their perfectibility and, in turn, this perfectibility resides in the ways such signs serve as instruments of self-correction. In other words, the perfection of perfect signs in the Peircean sense is their continual exposure to radical transformation by the experiential realities to which they are responding by generating diverse yet interwoven series of interpretants (cf. 44).

The only synthetic unity ultimately needed is not anything as lofty as the transcendental unity of apperception. It is only the lowly question, “Don’t you think so?” (MS 636: 26; quoted at 13). This simple question allows us to gather what we have been discussing and debating into an explicitly critical focus, but the focus of what can never be anything other than an open-ended exchange. Moreover, it concerns not the formal, abstract possibility of “I think” accompanying any one of my representations, but the situated, concrete need to appeal to the other. It is, in other words, exemplary of tuism – “Don’t you think so?” or, in a less loaded form, “What

13. “Imagine,” Kenneth Burke as us, “that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion has already begun long before any of them go there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your own oar. Someone answers. You answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of the ally’s assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress” (Burke 1941: 110-11; quoted in Bernstein 1971: 221, note 36).

14. Tuism is a word Peirce apparently coined to name the “doctrine that all thought is addressed to a second person [a *thou* or *tu*], or to one’s future self as a second person” (quoted in Max H. Fisch’s
do you think of this?” And it seems especially appropriate to conclude this critical engagement with Giovanni Maddalena’s important book with just this interrogative gesture. This much is certain: what he thinks – how in particular he responds – will carry forward the open-ended task of self-critical inquiry, without any presumption of attaining completion or even approximating consensus. In conclusion, then, this “Reader Loguitur” (see, e.g., MS 598)\(^5\) asks of the author of *The Philosophy of Gesture*, “Your thoughts?”

**References**


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15. Even the most charitable reader is, at some level, talking back to the text being interpreted, posing questions regarding the basic meaning of key terms and countless other matters. That is, even (perhaps especially) the most charitable interpreter must be, in Peirce’s words, a “Reader Loquitur.”


— (1978), *Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to the Nation*, Part Two (1894-1900), edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner & James Edward Cook, Lubbock, TX, Texas Tech University. Cited as CN II.


Gestures in the Making

More than a century ago, reviewing the raging controversy over pragmatism, Jean Bourdeau wrote that “Pragmatism is an Anglo-Saxon reaction against the intellectualism and rationalism of the Latin mind […] It is a philosophy without words, a philosophy of gestures and of acts, which abandons what is general and holds only to what is particular” (Trans. William James, W:MT, 113). Bourdeau certainly missed the point of the first pragmatist revolution, but it can also be argued that, ironically, he would have missed of good part of Giovanni Maddalena’s achievements to “complete” the pragmatist revolution: gestures (more than acts) are the main subject-matter of this book, but this leads by no means to “abandon what is general,” no more than it leads to do away with words, signs and meaning. Quite the contrary.

The title of Maddalena’s book should not mislead: if it addresses the very notion of gesture, in its ordinary sense, it is also an outstanding monograph on knowledge, reality, and philosophy, and it bears a very fundamental and bold claim with it. Maddalena argues that the pragmatists had a new approach to knowledge and reality in general, which many readers of this journal will take for granted, but that, in some important measure, pragmatism also remained an “unfinished business,” an “incomplete revolution.” It is certainly the case that we can think of countless instances where the pragmatists, starting with Peirce, call for a broader account of meaning, where gestures can be included. To take only one example, Dewey had already made clear that the logics-positivist treatment of meaning was too narrow, and, interestingly, he thought that gestures on the one hand, diagrams on the other hand, were left out of the scope of symbols and language:

A minor objection to the use of ‘sentences’ and ‘words’ to designate what have been called propositions and terms, is that unless carefully interpreted it narrows unduly the scope of symbols and language, since it is not customary to treat gestures and diagrams (maps, blueprints, etc.) as words or sentences. (LW 12: 284)²

In Maddalena’s reading, though, the Pragmatists never got fully aware of the way their views departed from the dominant Kantian picture of knowledge, they remained trapped in some of Kant’s dichotomies, and they never managed to make their own originality explicit. The Pragmatists, if we read them carefully, it is argued, not only opposed Descartes but also Kantianism, on three major issues: nominalism, the weakness of the “I think” in unifying reality and finally a certain kind of solipsistic idealism. Maddalena shows that this reading applies to Peirce – sometimes against the letter of some of Peirce’s claims about Kant as well as against prominent contemporary readings – but also to Dewey and even to James and Mead, even if Peirce, understandably in view of Maddalena’s previous publications, is given the lion’s share:

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² CEMS-IMM/EHESS-Paris [mathias.girel@ens.fr].

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This book aims to provide a pragmatist alternative to some crucial aspects of Kant’s philosophy. This alternative has not been explored yet within the contemporary philosophical landscape, not even by classic pragmatists who often involuntarily accept aspects of Kant’s legacy. (3)

The proposed philosophy of gesture, which is meant both as a correction of the classical views and a contribution to contemporary philosophy, is an attempt to foster pragmatist insight toward a closer unification of experience and methods of inquiry, toward a different definition of synthesis and analysis, and toward what [Maddalena] call[s] “a complete synthetic pattern.” (28)

Maddalena endorses thus a radical view, beautifully argued, stressing the role of synthetic patterns in reasoning and others realms, cosmological and moral. The most concise summary of Maddalena’s thesis might be the following: “any synthetic judgment coincides with the operation we have to perform in order to get at it” (46). Gestures are the core of philosophies as well as they are the core of our lives.

To fulfill this program, the book has to provide a new account of synthetic reasoning (“recognizing identity through change”), coming to grips with Kant’s challenge at a fundamental level, and – through a thorough redefinition of synthesis, analysis and vagueness – finds such a tool in the notion of “complete gestures” (“those in which new meanings are synthetically acquired,” 9), which provide the subject-matter of the crucial Ch. 4. They are first exemplified in Peirce’s graphs, then explored in different fields, in ethics, in writing, in creativity and education. The basic insight of the book stems thus from a different conception of continuity and change “as the developing pattern of reality” (134), and uses the notion of gesture as a kind of phenomenological and semiotic structure to provide an account of this synthetic reasoning.

Previously, Chauviré (2008) had stressed the importance of mathematical practice and Peirce’s ground-breaking position in that domain, in a book quoted by Maddalena. This view, shared by Wittgenstein, is also instrumental in the defense of Maddalena’s “a posteriori foundationalism” (“the foundation of mathematics comes through our doing mathematics,” 159). But, here, mathematics is understood as a kind of metaphysical laboratory:

Doing mathematics means already dealing with the reality of universals. There is no surprise that while we are doing mathematics we are constructing a broader metaphysical reality. (51)

It is quite striking that similar synthetic patterns, unexpectedly perhaps, are found in moral life and ethics:

we are not the independent masters of detached reality. Indeed, it is the other way around: we are part of a reality with which we cooperate, as much as we imitate its intention by learning to perform the complete gestures taught by others. (189)

3. All references, if not otherwise noted, will be to Maddalena 2015.
One leaves the book with a different picture of knowledge, of continuity, but also of action in general, Maddalena’s notion of “gesture” replacing the more ordinary notion of “conduct” endorsed by the classical pragmatists.

Part of the success of the book will depend on its ability to meet two challenges in future discussions: 1) will the reader accept to see in the “complete gestures” of Ch. 4 a kind of paradigm for gestures in general? 2) Will s/he accept the amplification of this to others realms of reality? It is tempting to think that the book makes forcefully both points.

Such a comprehensive book of course raises further questions, and I wished to use the present occasion to push the conversation with Maddalena further, on two different but related points.

First, Maddalena offers a tantalizing picture of the Self and of subjectivity:

Our physical, moral, and ontological identity is not a pure, plain continuum; rather, it is continuity between complete gestures that have built, and continue to build, our identity so that we can recognize it. (117)

As a consequence, this seems to leave two ways for our (a posteriori) identity to be grasped: 1) from the perspective of others selves, who address us from the standpoint, and on the background, of the continuity and the publicity of these complete gestures, as they might perceive them. This would be the way our identity is recognized in our circles, in the same way as Ulysses is recognized at the end of the Odyssey (107); 2) from our own stance, so to speak, where we could either disown or endorse gestures that are attributed to us, and sometimes imposed on us. Our voice, here, seems to be implied in the way “we can” recognize this identity. This kind of conversation, or stance, and sometimes this dismissal of the conformist identities that can be forced on us by the present dispensation of society, have always been at the core of meliorism, from Emerson and Mill to James, Dewey and other non-pragmatist thinkers such as Cavell. But this also leads to ask where we can locate such an agency, between the cosmological and the epistemological, where things can be what they are without factoring in our own voice. This is for example a classical problem we face when we try to articulate the insights developed by James in “What Makes a Life Significant” and the basic tenets of his radical empiricism. Maddalena provides several clues at the end of the book about this problem when he deals with “rational instinct” and “heart”:

they work not only as negative alarms but also as acceptations or positive recognizing. Does this function hint at an ontological self? For now it is possible to answer, with all pragmatists, that I am describing a “function.” (149)

In spite of the understandable warnings of the author about the scope of the book, we wish to know more about this function, in the context of the synthetic patterns described here: what is the grammar involved when we do not recognize a gesture as truly “ours”? What is the status of these “unattained but attainable” states of our selves and of our society, described by the meliorists, within the economy of things that is presented here? Can they be accommodated?
The second question is related to the “social.” To make it short, in Dewey, and arguably in Mead, gestures are social from the outset, even before articulated language emerges and before we can master mental concepts. We have a full-blown account of the social, though, when we are able to endorse roles, when action can be not only public or collective but also distributed. Readers in the last century have felt that these philosophies provided important elements to make sense of an “autonomy” of the social, which is rooted in nature but cannot be reduced to a physicalist or biological account of life, which is rooted individuals but cannot be reduced to individual conventions or acts. In the last Chapter, which is crucial since it involves a reshaping of Kant’s practical reason (and of some of major Kantian distinctions, deeply rooted in his architectonics), there is a short discussion of “roles” in Mead, and the long and substantial footnotes 4 (Ch. 4), and 17 (Ch. 8), can be read as evidence that future developments will follow in other writings, but specific accounts of the social realm are scarce in the book. Would Maddalena allow for a specific “locus” of the social, between the world where we are all “sub-creators,” and the practical judgment where we count as moral selves? Or is this something we can dispense with, when we have mastered the logical and semiotic foundation of complete gestures?

References


Enrico Guglielminetti

Complete Gesture &…

… eschatology. Imagine: it’s a sunny morning of January 20, 1961 in Washington D. C. JFK is delivering his presidential inaugural speech. He has just taken his oath of office. All of people is listening to him with attention and admiration (somebody perhaps with envy and hate). It’s his complete gesture (henceforth CG), the CG both of a man and of a nation. Recognition of identity through change \([A=B]\) takes place, from the very beginning of the presidential address, as recognition of the identity (through change) of the whole nation:

> We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom – symbolizing an end as well as a beginning – signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forbears prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago.

The celebrated apex of this gesture comes just before the end: “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” Every gesture like this carries a historical index, as Walter Benjamin would say: freedom – the core business of the nation – is endangered. It’s the now-time of responsibility:

> In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility – I welcome it.

If, as Maddalena suggests, identity is recognition of identity, we can’t imagine a figural (in the sense of Dante and Auerbach) re-presentation of JFK’s identity, without imagining a re-occurrence of this very speech. JFK speaks presidentially, like Jesus breaks the bread and Ulysses strings the bow. Speaking is however, in the case of JFK, a political act. You cannot have/recognize his identity, without having this speech. You cannot have this speech, without having politics. You cannot have politics, without having “both sides” – friends and foes – who should negotiate: “Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.” The question is: what about politics/negotiation in paradise? In other words: if CG carries a historical index (“knowing that here on earth God’s work must truly be our own”), and if CGs define our identity, paradise is to be represented either as erasure of identity, or as repetition of history. Something like that could be said about stringing the bow. Ulysses’ gesture remains in a sense abstract, if we separate it from its very context: the mortal conflict between Odysseus and the young suitors. How could a complete synthetic pattern run the risk of abstraction?

… Dido. “Adgnosco veteris vestigia flammae.” Everyone remembers Dido’s words: “I recognize the signs of the old flame” (Aen. IV: 23). Dido’s identity depends completely on her passion-love for Aeneas. She has, in a sense, no property apart from her relationship with him. What about these strange relational properties (namely, intrinsic properties which are external relations)? The other-wordly (or

* Università degli studi di Torino [enrico.guglielminetti@unito.it].
eschatological) identity/recognition of identity of Dido is unthinkable, without taking into account her passiveness. Are there gestures which are feelings? Does the concept of CG include only the subject’s activities or does it extend also to our passivity? What does a semiotic treatment of these “signs” (vestigia) look like?

... dis-continuity. The theory of CG inherits the pragmatist account of experience based on mathematical continuum. However, experience is above all dis-continuity. It’s hard to say, for instance, that Auschwitz is situated in a continuum of possibilities. The metaphor of drawing a line on a blackboard seems to suggest that possibility (the white surface) precedes actuality (the line). Experience and history, however, hardly work so. Existential possibility can be regarded as a consequence of reality, not the other way around. First comes the gesture, then its shadow (the possibility) is added to it. If we interpret actuality as the pivot, which allows for the transformation of possibility into necessity, our philosophy minimizes the unforeseeable features of reality (also the miraculous ones). So Hegel’s famous criticism of mathematics keeps on being important in philosophy. I would be glad if Maddalena’s theory of CG (which in its essence is a philosophy of freedom and actuality) could become more independent from a scheme of possibility-necessity.

... synthesis. I deeply appreciate the idea of a synthetic philosophy. Synthesis, however, can be interpreted in different ways. Not necessarily synthesis excludes separation. Modernity is the time of separation, and the project of forgetting Kant seems to me dangerous, inasmuch as it implies – or seems to imply – a negative evaluation of modernity. Kantian dualism has obviously its limits, but reminds us that a thought is not reducible to a physical object, and that the world – despite its reasonableness – is always also a place of tension, separation and even madness. A synthetic philosophy need not be a philosophy of continuity and reasonableness. A complete synthetic pattern need not forget the divisions of reality, of which Kant was so aware.

... analysis. Analytic philosophy fails first of all because it doesn’t deliver a real philosophical analysis. Far from reducing physics to a more fundamental philosophical principle (like being, becoming, the form of the Good…), analytic philosophy inherits from physics the basic bricks of reality (space-time points or what have you): physics becomes therefore the true philosophy, while philosophy is reduced to a sterile commentary of physics. We have long since no philosophical analysis. If we bring analysis back to its philosophical meaning, I do not see in principle any contradiction between philosophical analysis and philosophical synthesis.

... words. Philosophy itself has its gestures. In the history of philosophy gestures are probably words, like substance for Aristotle, One for Plotinus, critique for Kant… An illustrated book of philosophy should read the k-words of our discipline as bodily postures. Philosophers could be pictorially represented: everyone with his gesture, with his favourite word, through which s/he makes her/his attempt to grasp and celebrate the “breadth and length and height and depth” of reality and its additions.
Anti-Kantianism, an Anti-Pragmatist Gesture

Giovanni Maddalena’s *The Philosophy of Gesture: Completing Pragmatists’ Incomplete Revolution* is an ambitious, original, and creative contribution to the re-evaluation of the history of pragmatism and its contemporary legacy in various areas of philosophy, ranging from logic and the theory of reasoning to the philosophy of science and art, as well as ethics and the philosophy of education. A reader can only admire the author’s broad and deep knowledge and learning, which extends from the history of philosophy to literature and natural science. Covering an unusually wide spectrum of topics – many of which are, for obvious reasons, discussed only briefly – the book offers a highly competent analysis and further development of Charles S. Peirce’s pragmatism, in particular. Peirce, the founding father of pragmatism, is clearly Maddalena’s most important philosophical hero, and it is largely in Peircean terms that he proposes to move on what he takes to be a revolutionary project in (meta)philosophy.

In this brief comment, I will focus on what I take to be the main problem of the book. In my view, Maddalena gets Kant – and thereby, unavoidably, the pragmatists’ relation to Kant – seriously wrong. There is, it seems to me, a sense in which he finds Kant *too important* for all post-Kantian philosophy, but at the same time he *too easily* and straightforwardly maintains that we could simply get rid of Kant. Although I agree with Maddalena’s judgment about the originality of Kant in contrast to Descartes, I think it is an exaggeration to say that Kant’s project “gives form to the entire mentality of the contemporary world” and that “modernity took its contemporary form” with Kant’s Copernican revolution (3). One could suggest, rather, that (post)modernity still needs to learn a number of important Kantian lessons; in particular, (post)analytic philosophy should take more seriously the Kantian transcendental method. Yet, on the other hand, even if Kant’s role was slightly more modest than Maddalena claims, he is with us (pragmatists) to stay and cannot just be dropped out of any “completed” pragmatism.

In brief, a gesture aiming at a total liberation from the Kantian predicament is a non- or even anti-pragmatist gesture, because pragmatism is, ineliminably, a post-Kantian philosophical orientation and gets its significance from a largely Kantian framework. No pragmatist needs to agree with everything – or perhaps, strictly speaking, with anything – that Kant actually wrote, but the basic critical approach we inherit from Kant cannot be dispensed with. I cannot argue for this general view here, but I will try to indicate where, more specifically, Maddalena’s account of Kant and the Kantian legacy of pragmatism is flawed.

One problem with Maddalena’s conception of Kant is that his statements are far too general to be useful in any detailed assessment of the pragmatists’ (or other contemporary philosophers’) Kantian influences. For example, when he tells us that for Kant “reason is the ‘measure of all things’” (5), he fails to note that what Kant, far from claiming reason to be all-powerful, primarily offers us is a reflexive critique.

* University of Helsinki, Finland [sami.pihlstrom@helsinki.fi].
1. All references, if not otherwise noted, will be to Maddalena 2015.
of reason. Maddalena also misleadingly claims to perceive a link between Kantian morality and ideology, even totalitarianism, attacking Kant’s “intellectualist and self-centred conception of reality based on inner determination and effort” (6). No serious Kant scholar will have much patience with claims like this, as there is nothing “self-centred” in the foundations of Kantian ethics: in one formulation, the categorical imperative of course urges us to treat humanity in others as well as ourselves as an end in itself, never as a mere means. Kantian ethics emphasizing the autonomy of the moral subject is as far from any totalitarianism as an ethical system can be.

While it is of course true that Peirce’s theory of representation differs in important respects from Kant’s and that Peirce, unlike Kant, subscribed to “scholastic realism” (7–8), it is not impossible to locate a Kantian strain in Peirce’s argumentation for scholastic realism as a necessary condition for the possibility of scientific inquiry. In contrast to Peirce, Kant famously maintained that there is a “gap” between human knowledge (and the phenomena it can reach) and reality as such (the “things-in-themselves”) (12). However, this is a problematic metaphysical gap only if we assume a “two worlds” reading of Kant’s transcendental idealism. While this reading is admittedly becoming more popular again among Kant specialists, the pragmatist should in my view (without taking any definite stand on what exactly Kant himself thought) prefer the “one world” (“two aspects”) reading, according to which the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is not a distinction between two separate metaphysical realms or sets of objects but a distinction between two different ways of considering one and the same reality. At least, the “unbridgeable gap” metaphor is problematic and would have to be properly addressed in relation to scholarship questioning the standard two worlds reading of Kantian idealism. There need not be any fundamental “lack of continuity between cognitive processes and reality” (13) in Kant any more than there is in Peirce.

William James notoriously attacks Kantian transcendental idealism in conjunction with his attack on the Hegelian Absolute, but it is simply wrong to say that “the Absolute is intellectualist because it derives from Kant’s intellectualist philosophy” and “dualist theology” (15). From the properly Kantian point of view, the Hegelian idealists’ Absolute – which James rightly and innovatively criticized – is a speculative metaphysical postulation illegitimately transgressing the bounds of human reason.

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of Maddalena’s view on Kant and Kant’s relation to the pragmatists is that he never pauses to reflect on whether the pragmatists’ understanding of Kant was accurate at all. He does not critically consider whether the classical pragmatists who indeed did reject Kant’s strict apriorism and the unknowability of the thing in itself, among many other Kantian ideas (cf. 18–9), actually interpreted Kant correctly. Moreover, and perhaps even more problematically, he simply ignores the bulk of recent scholarly literature that addresses pragmatism’s relation to Kant and the Kantian tradition of transcendental philosophy.3 If you are

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2. I try to explain how and why the pragmatist ought to subscribe something like this one world account of transcendental idealism in Pihlström 2010. For a classical statement of the one world reading, in my view open to a pragmatist rearticulation, see Allison 2004.
3. Among the most recent contributions, one could mention, e.g., Gava & Stern 2016; and (focusing
attacking a certain interpretation of a given philosophical tradition, you should of course seriously consider the scholarly contributions that would be opposed to your preferred line of thought. This is what Maddalena spectacularly fails to do.

Far from accepting Maddalena’s conclusion that “one cannot understand pragmatism if one’s anti-Cartesianism is not supplemented by a profound anti-Kantianism” (28), we should in my view observe that pragmatism actually completes Kant’s transcendental (critical) revolution, and should continue to do so. The claim that the pragmatist “revolution” should be “completed” by going anti-Kantian is to lead pragmatism to an entirely wrong track. It is precisely in its deep Kantianism – albeit reconceptualizing and thus moving beyond while critically preserving Kant’s original views – that pragmatism radically departs from, e.g., mainstream analytic philosophy. Pragmatism and Kantianism are on the same side in the battle against the kind of metaphysical realism (or what Kant would have called transcendental realism) that proposes, for instance, to reveal the fundamental metaphysical structure of the world independently of the conditions of human categorization, representation, and inquiry.

Maddalena could in fact do most that he is aiming to do in his book without claiming to take any radical departure from Kant (or from pragmatism’s Kantianism). He could still discuss reasoning, the concept of gesture, and creativity more or less in the way he does, and he could find intriguing philosophical ideas in literary narrative and explore the relevance of gesture in writing and education, for instance, even without claiming these discussions to be based on any radical anti-Kantianism. Thus, while my remarks above have been sharply critical, their purpose is not at all to undermine the ideas and arguments Maddalena is actually developing in his book. My aim has only been to suggest that he – or the pragmatist inspired by his “philosophy of gesture” – could develop these ideas and arguments without giving up pragmatism’s (undetachable) attachment to Kantianism.

References


more on ethics and aesthetics) McMahon 2014. Of course, Maddalena could not have consulted Gava’s and Stern’s very recent collection, but the basic idea of pragmatism as a naturalized and historicized rearticulation of Kantian transcendental philosophy has been discussed in scholarly literature at least since Murphey 1968.


Lucia Santaella*

A Supplement Instead of a Completion

The thesis defended in Giovanni Maddalena’s book, *The Philosophy of Gesture. Completing Pragmatists’ Incomplete Revolution*, is that the pragmatist project represents a sound way to face the Kantian dilemmas. However, this project was incomplete and to overcome this gap, the author builds the concept of “complete gesture,” based more particularly on the phenomenology and semiotics of C. S. Peirce. In addition to being well-built, the concept is inspiring, and this is clearly demonstrated in its applications in the fields of identity, creativity, morality, and education. However, I find it difficult to accept Maddalena’s finding that the Peircean project is incomplete, and I will try to provide some arguments to support this contention. My arguments take as their starting point the fact that, to fully understand Peirce’s mature pragmatism, one must take into thorough account that it only makes sense in its connection to his normative sciences: logic, ethics, and aesthetics (CP 8.255, EP2: 334-5).

The concern with ethics occupied Peirce’s entire life. However, until the end of the 1880s, he failed to consider ethics as a theoretical science, but only as an art or a practical science. This consideration has changed, on the one hand, because his logic of relatives led him to the conclusion that logic is not self-sufficient. On the other hand, when trying to distinguish pure ethics from morality, he saw the importance of theoretical ethics, and began to suspect a much deeper connection between ethics and logic. In reviewing his pragmatism of 1877-78, Peirce emphasized the role of self-control in logical thinking, postulating, in 1901, that ethics is the foundation of logic. A year later, he would posit that ethics, in turn, is based on aesthetics, this fitting the search of the supreme ideal, *summum bonum* of human life.

With the normative sciences, Peirce was rethinking the aims, purposes, values, goals and ideals that attract and guide our deliberate conduct. Although he used the traditional names, aesthetics, ethics and logic, Peirce sought to give them original meanings. For him, logic takes care of reasoning as a deliberate activity, aiming to discriminate good and bad ways of thinking. It critically establishes the rules that must be followed by reason, but it needs to appeal to the purpose or goal that justifies these rules. “Logic is the study of the means to achieve the goal of thought, but it is ethics that defines the goal” (CP 2.198). The fundamental problem of ethics is not what is right or wrong, but what we are deliberately prepared to accept as an affirmation of what we should do, of what we have in view, of what we seek. Where should the force and effort of our will be directed to? To find out what would be the nature of this seduction or ultimate force of attraction in its purity is what Peirce came to regard as the purpose of aesthetics.

Thus, the indissoluble links between the three normative sciences are expressed as follows: human action is reasoned action, which, in turn, is deliberate and controlled. But all deliberate and controlled action is guided by purposes, goals, which, in turn, should be chosen. This choice also, if the result of reason must be deliberate and

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* Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo [braga@pucsp.br].
1. All references, if not otherwise noted, will be to Maddalena 2015.
controlled, which, after all, requires the recognition of something that is admirable in itself to be desired. Logic as the study of correct reasoning is the science of the means to act reasonably. Ethics helps and guides logic by examining the purposes for which those ends should be addressed. Finally, aesthetics guides ethics since it defines the nature of an end in itself that is admirable and desirable in all circumstances regardless of any other consideration of any kind whatsoever. Ethics and logic are therefore specifications of aesthetics. Ethics proposes what purposes should reasonably be chosen under various circumstances, while logic suggests what means are available to pursue these purposes.

The ideal that Peirce had in mind is the ultimate end toward which human effort must be directed. This is the most supreme ideal on which our desire, will and sentiments should be focused. The ideal of the ideal, the *summum bonum*, which needs no justification and explanation. What could be this goal that, without ignoring that the outside world produces inevitable interferences in the agent’s mind and will, still incorporates the free development of the agent at the same time that ensures that this freedom will not be troubled by unpredictable and unavoidable events in the long run? Furthermore, and most importantly, the quality that attracts the agent’s free development should be the counterpart of an overall aesthetic quality whose other side is the ultimate action that experience exerts on him/her.

The critical review of pragmatism had led Peirce to consider, first, that the pragmatic ideal should not satisfy the desires of any particular individual, but had to face collective human purposes. To answer this demand and fulfill the requirement of being a completely satisfying goal, the ideal should be evolutionary, with its complete significance located in the distant future always concretely postponed. An ideally thinkable future, but materially unattainable because only asymptotically approachable. Pragmatism had discovered that, in the process of evolution, that which exists, more and more, embodies certain classes of ideals that in the course of development show to be reasonable. This ideal was then characterized as “the continual increase of the embodiment of the idea potentiality” (MS 283: 103; EP2: 388, 1906).

As I have already explained some years ago (2001: 197-8), within our minds, ideas are transmitted from one point to another in time by means of thought, that is, by means of immaterial or imaginary signs, as Kent (1987: 158) prefers to call them. But ideas are not yet embodied thoughts, they are “some potentiality, some form, which may be embodied in external or in internal signs” (MS 283: 4). Moreover, the aim of the sign can only be accomplished in the growth of the idea’s potentiality, when its embodiment occurs not only by means of symbols but also through actions, habits and changes of habits. In potentiality there is firstness; in the embodiment in signs, there is secondness; and in the idea there is thirdness, the principle of continuity. The three together compose what Peirce began to consider as the aesthetic *summum bonum*, which coincides with the ultimate pragmatist ideal: the growth of concrete reasonableness. This ideal should take into consideration the role of self-control in the acquisition of new habits as the method through which the pragmatic ideal may be attained.
Since reason is the only quality which is freely developed through the human activity of self-control, in other words, as the essence of rationality is in self-criticism and hetero-criticism, Peirce identified the aesthetic ideal, the ultimate ideal of pragmaticism, with the growth of concrete reasonableness. It cannot be confused either with abstract reasonableness lost in the fog of incorporeal ideals, or with static reasonableness, which, like everything that is static, ends up in oppression. On the contrary, it means reasonableness in constant development, in process, and in transformation. The only thing that is desirable without any ulterior reason, at any time and in any place whatsoever, is to present ideas that are reasonable. Hence we are responsible for the achievement and enlargement of concrete reasonableness; it is by means of our embodied feelings, deeds, and thoughts that reason becomes concrete, heading toward an open end whose destiny we are unable to know in advance.

Reasonableness has no similarity with any form of rationalism, since it refers to a kind of rationality which embodies elements of action and feeling, and incorporates all their mixtures which appear in affection, pleasure, wish, will, desire, commotion, and emotion. Peirce was conscious that there is no a priori guarantee that the aesthetic ideal can be attained. The only rule of ethics is to adhere to the ideal and to expect that it can be approached gradually and in a long course of time (Bernstein 1990). Since deliberate conduct is conduct guided by the aesthetic ideal, human thoughts, actions and feelings should be evaluated in terms of their contribution to the growth of concrete reasonableness in the world (Curley 1969: 103-4). Concrete indicates that reasonableness may be gradually updated by means of our resolute effort toward favoring its growth. This effort is ethical. It is the way by which the goal of the aesthetic ideal is materialized. Likewise, logic is the means through which the ethical goal is embodied (Santaella 1994).

As far as I can see, this development of Peirce’s pragmaticism does not match Maddalena’s statement that in the Monist series (1905-06), Peirce “tried in vain to fully explain” the order that he had in mind (32). It is also dismissive of Maddalena’s claim that Peirce did not complete the view that “ethics and aesthetics judge reality from a cognitive point of view” (138).

Unlike this gap, Maddalena is much closer to Peirce than he imagines, when he builds the concept of complete gesture as “any performed act with a beginning and an end that carries a meaning” (69), and when he states that complete gestures follow the admirable ideal to the extent that they help any particular to achieve the meaning of its own continuum of tradition and purpose. But the real aim of any complete gesture is to push any particular to fit, and thereby to help grow reality as such, passing from embodiment to embodiment, which are the different steps of our synthetic comprehension of reality. (101)

From this, what I can conclude is that Maddalena’s argumentative trajectory to reach his conclusions, although inspired by Peirce, is distinct from the path used by Peirce. However, the conclusions to which they arrive are very similar. Hence instead of filling Peirce’s incompleteness, Maddalena, in fact, found a different route with precious applications to enrich our understanding of pragmaticism and its extreme relevance to the contemporary ethical debate.
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Let me first thank Rosa M. Calcaterra and Roberto Frega, co-directors of the European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy, who were so kind to organize this symposium. I also thank all contributors and Matteo Santarelli who edited the whole work. It is a great honor to me that such distinguished scholars dedicated some thoughts to my work. I am glad also to see such a wide range of comments. I will divide my short responses in three parts. The first focuses on the critique to Kant’s criticism. The second deals with the topic of complete gestures. The third, which includes paragraphs 3, 4, and 5, responds to some scattered questions on the paradigm that I propose. There is no room to answer appropriately to many interesting points raised by friends and distinguished colleagues, therefore my answers have to be taken more as notes for further useful dialogues with people committed to “the communal endeavor of deepening understanding of phenomena, at once, utterly commonplace and deeply significant” (Colapietro 2016: 159).

1. On Scholarship and Kant’s Project

Let us start with Kant’s project and let me answer first to Pihlstrom’s charge of not having being accurate as far as Kant/Peirce scholarship is concerned. Among many interesting notations, with which I will be dealing soon, Pihlstrom holds that I did not pay attention to literature about Kant and pinpoints Gava and Stern’s project as example of this literature about Kant and Peirce. I do not blame him. It is up to the author to take the attention of his readers and, as Daniel Pennac says, it is the right of the reader to abandon a book. 1 So, I think I did not succeed in keeping Sami’s attention beyond the introduction and the first Chapter, otherwise he would have notice that I did pay attention exactly to Gava’s work on Peirce and Kant, and more in general to Kant’s scholarship. 2 Gava’s work is quoted several times and my disagreement with Gava’s reading of Peirce is stated in endnote 11 at page 167 and in endnote 8 at page 171. Moreover, Pihlstrom would have noticed that the rather vague sentences in the introduction have a very technical sequel in Chapter 2, completely dedicated to Hanna’s reading of Kant, and in Chapter 8, as Girel notices in its accurate piece. I would have liked to discuss those technical passages with such a careful Kantian

2. As Pihlstrom observes, Gava’s & Stern’s book (2016) was not published when I wrote the book, but I used as reference Gava 2014. Gava and I discussed the issue of Peirce’s Kantism or anti-Kantism in a seminar at Ecole Normale Supérieure in June 2015. In the book I briefly touch also upon Brandom, Hookway, and Misak as well. Cf. also the treatment of those readings in the introduction of Calcaterra, Maddalena, & Marchetti 2015.
reader as Sami Pihlstrom. I must hope this will happen another time, if this reply moves any interest in him to complete the reading of the book.

More seriously, Sami Pihlstrom real objection goes hand in hand with some of Enrico Guglielminetti’s and Vincent Colapietro’s remarks on the risks of abandoning Kant’s project as such. Here we should be clear about two different perspectives: the philological one and interpretative one.

As for philology, I think there is little doubt about the general anti-Kantism of classic pragmatists. I am glad to see that also Pihlstrom recognizes that pragmatists “did reject Kant’s strict apriorism and the unknowability of the thing in itself, among many other Kantian ideas” (Pihlstrom 2016: 184). I reported that attitude in Chapter 1, and in doing so, I even omitted some of the harshest criticisms. In this respect, Peirce is certainly the more problematic author among pragmatists, since he took his first steps in philosophy from Kantism. However, I learnt many years ago from Vincent Colapietro and from deep studies on Peirce’s late manuscripts, that Peirce did change his position and, as Vincent says in his article, it was a “truly a decisive shift, a fateful rupture” (Colapietro 2016: 162).

In my first Chapter, I really wanted to clarify that this anti-Kantism is philologically evident in the classic pragmatists. Sometimes, this obvious evidence is voluntary obscured by scholars because this anti-Kantism turns pragmatism into a radical alternative to the philosophies that the Western world proposed for the past two centuries. Classic pragmatists were men of science, friends of technological novelties, critical thinkers, but they were so in a deeply original way. They offered an alternative view of modernity, very far from nominalisms and dualisms that often affect contemporary philosophy. It is a way in which aesthetics and ethics have a real impact on logic, in which we have to “break out of the circle of words” (Colapietro 2016: 167), in which tradition and education have to be understood in a richer way.

In the internal debate of the pragmatist scholarship in the late years as well as in the broader philosophical landscape, I witnessed the growth of a poor realism, very similar to a simple naturalistic and scientistic view. A reading of Peirce as ancestor and emendator of the analytic tradition is often allied to this neo-scientist view of reality and science. Of course, I do not want to deny any merit of both Kant and analytic philosophy. I think we owe both of them many decisive steps of our civilization, which is useless to list here. Nor have I thought to get rid of any fruit borne from this tradition of thought. I am only underlying that Kant, idealism, analytic philosophy helped only one part of our reasoning to grow: the analytic one; whereas, beyond any intention, they built up weak synthetic paradigms, often based on the analytic model. This is indeed the content of Chapter 2 in which I accept Hanna’s thesis on the reliance of Kant’s synthesis on the model of analysis. I would say that this model of analysis remains in the conception of reason of the majority of those who elaborated epistemologies during the last two centuries. That is why, to give an

3. As it is well known, Dewey even hinted to Kantism as a philosophical root of German imperialism (see Dewey 1915). Although he might have exaggerated, drawing political implications from more abstract philosophies remains a legitimate practice. Many harsh comments are also in Peirce’s late manuscripts 1908-14 (cf. Maddalena 2003).
answer to Vincent’s question about Hegel, I would hold that also Hegel’s profound
and inspiring transformation falls under the same Kantian conception of reasoning,
even though he pushes it very far into the direction I want to take.

In answering Guglielminetti’s and Colapietro’s worries about the abandonment of
Kant’s project, I reply that I do not want to fall into pre-modernity or anti-modernity
(nor into irrationalism), but it is time to rethink an adequate view of reason in which
synthesis is thought in a richer, original way. A different account of the paradigm of
reasoning that presides over synthesis – along with a paradigm for vague reasoning
– would complete the picture of our reasoning. Therefore, I do not want to abandon
Kant’s project as such but to consider it only as a part of our knowledge and, possibly,
to smoothen its rigidity. Differently from Colapietro and Wittgenstein (but I will come
back to this later on), I do not think it is sufficient to have a methodology of our use
of reasoning. This strategy amounts still to accept a difference between theory and
practice and to privilege the first over the latter, evacuating one the most important
pragmatist insightful anti-dualisms, the one which denies the distinction theory-
practice. In order to come up with a different synthetic pattern we also need a formal
epistemic pattern and the heart of the book The Philosophy of Gesture is the need for
a rationale of a synthetic and a vague part of our reasoning.

One can say with Pihlstrom – and with many other very interesting Kantian
readers as Gava, Spinicci, Esposito, Baggio (all people with whom I discussed my
project during the last years in different international conferences) – that the real Kant
is not the Kant of the Critique of Pure Reason and that his project was not dualist
at all. If the center of it all were the Third Critique, you would have a very different
picture. Fair enough, but I would reply that, at least, classic pragmatists had in mind
the dualist Kant that emerges from the First Critique and they forged pragmatism
according to this reading of Kant. Second, if Kant really thought of a non-rationalist
way of thinking… well, pragmatically speaking, many consequences of his thought
do not agree with this reading.

As for the interpretative path, a good question by Sami Pihlstrom remains: can the
project of the book work without this anti-Kantian part? No, it cannot. The project
wants to say that we developed only the analytic part of our rationality and that the
pragmatist call to the unity between theory and practice, reasoning and action was
an appeal for a different paradigm of syntheticity and for a necessary paradigm of
vagueness. This is why I conceive this book as an attempt to develop what they started.
To lose the anti-Kantian attitude intrinsic to pragmatism means to lose a historical
truth but, above all, the core of an alternative very different from those that we saw
during the twentieth century. Certainly, as Colapietro points out, this alternative
has a Hegelian tone, as classic pragmatists had, but it can elaborate on change and
action with the richness of modern mathematical developments of continuity and
sophisticated phenomenology and semiotics.4 All tools that somehow come from
classic pragmatism in general and from Peirce’s pragmatism in particular, and that
should get this proposal out of the Hegelian spin.

Finally, in a substantial way, I agree with Lucia Santaella and Vincent Colapietro in indicating the goal of pragmatism in the growth of concrete reasonableness and humanity. Lucia Santaella ascribes that growth to the path of normative sciences as drawn by Peirce and well explained by Lucia in her piece. Vincent Colapietro ascribes to Peirce a methodological outcome that makes us historical, practical, dramatic developers of critical knowledge. I can understand their positions and I greatly admire their work and attempts. Nonetheless, I think they miss, or they cannot share, the need for a new pattern of knowledge, of a new definition of the synthetic paradigm. This partial incomprehension explains why they focus on the proposal of gesture more than on the paradigm of which gestures want to be a tool. When Colapietro shortly comments on the need of a different paradigm of reasoning, he points out that he prefers

the adjective synchastic to synthetic, since it shifts the focus from a methodological activity (the acts, processes, and procedures by which syntheses are achieved) to (in the first instance) a phenomenological task, one that of describing with painstaking accuracy genuine continua and, for that matter, degenerate ones as well. (Colapietro 2016: 168)

I agree that this was also Peirce’s attitude and there is no question about the fact that this was Peirce’s aim. Colapietro is one of the greatest readers of Peirce because he understands this point in its deepest implications. But my project is not Peirce’s. This is exactly the point in which our projects depart because he wants to give a precise theoretical description of our practices, while I underline that practices are a (synthetic) theoresis. That is why we can detect their inherent rationality and I think that Peirce, beyond his intentions, elaborated tools apt to this task. Lucia Santaella, instead, affirms that Peirce was already very close to this perspective and that the indication of summum bonum as concrete reasonableness shows this vicinity as well as the distance of Peirce’s project from any form of rationalism. I am profoundly convinced of her conclusion about this latter point, at least as far as the project is concerned. I only hope to provide a better account in order to advance the first.

2. Gestures

As for the proposal of “complete and incomplete gestures” as tools of a new definition of a synthetic paradigm, comments and suggestions are really powerful and interesting.

Mathias Girel’s question whether “complete gestures” can be accepted as paradigm for any kind of gestures and, more critically, Vincent Colapietro’s remark of the Herculean task that gestures have in my account raise the fundamental topic of complete gestures as tools of synthetic knowledge. I think that the acceptance of this proposal largely depends on the semiotic study of mathematics that I presented in Chapter 3 and on the acceptance (at least) of the need for a different synthetic paradigm, which is the outcome of the work of Fernando Zalamea. In an endnote of the book I explain that French philosophers of mathematics as Cavaillès and Châtelet

5. See also Maddalena & Zalamea 2012.
used the same term “gesture” to indicate a new form of mathematical constructivism.\textsuperscript{6} Having had the chance to spend some time in Paris, the last year, in order to present the book at the École Normale Supérieure, I could deepen the reading of those interesting thinkers. The refusal of a-priorism, the underlying of the practical action that gesture implies in creating mathematics, the need of structural rules for these actions, the synthetic power of the outcome of gestures are already present in their work. Cavaillès summarizes this description of mathematics with the wonderful expression: “attraper le geste et pouvoir continuer” (to grasp the gesture and to be able to go ahead). Certainly, as Mathias seems to hint at, most of them keep the gestures within the limit of mathematics while The Philosophy of Gesture wants to broaden gestures to regular experience. Somehow, it is what Châtelet foreshadowed in his work by addressing the border between regular experience and mathematical experience and invoking a broader notion of reality and a different paradigm of reasoning. Moreover, Giuseppe Longo underlines the intertwining between the material conditions of possibility and the conceptual construction of mathematical gesture. Longo traces the history of this phenomenological and semiotic interplay back to the Lascaux caves, where primitive human beings invented the idea of border, a line that holds and limits, both material and conceptual. Longo explores the idea of the universal into the particular through Euclid’s drawing of a line, which is without thickness, Lorenzetti’s paintings, Galileo’s principle of inertia, Riemann surfaces, Grothendieck’s geometry. Mathematical constructions are rooted into a “practice of gesture” that goes far beyond any possible formalization and it is connected with human political and social living. The project of “complete gesture” stands or falls with this philosophical conception of mathematical constructivism.

One crucial objection to my project is one raised by Vincent Colapietro. Isn’t it a paradox that I want to propose a synthetic tool and I describe it analytically? Indeed, it is an ironic paradox, but not an inconsistency. In the book, I ask myself the same question (142). I think that this paradox shows the necessity of analysis as well. Reasoning is a pendulum between different paradigms of reasoning: the analytic, the synthetic, and the vague. Analysis and synthesis are the extremities of the pendulum: we cannot explain synthesis with words except by way of analysis. Otherwise, we have to perform gestures. Performance is not only an illustration (as Colapietro points out) but also an embodiment of syntheticity. I think that Colapietro’s comments help me to state better where I see the novelty of this proposal. For example, when he says that our understating of gestures “is practical, not theoretical” he seems to rely again on a practical/theoretical distinction. I can understand this attitude. Classic pragmatists showed the same cautiousness. And so did I. However, I saw that keeping this attitude implies eventually to accept the rationalist project and, even with many sophisticated adjustments – like Wittgenstein’s and Colapietro’s – it means to stay only within the rationalist, analytic track designed by Kant.

As for indefiniteness and incompleteness, a major criticism by Colapietro is the implied teleology of gestures and their possible completion. Colapietro is right in

\textsuperscript{6} It is important to recall, as Girel does, the important studies on the practice of mathematics in Chauviré 2008.
pointing out the importance of incompletion and indefiniteness of semiosis. Gestures are actions that carry on a meaning, but meaning has not to be neither static nor unique. However, this plurality does not mean arbitrariness: gestures carry on a direction in which we have to look for the interpretative meaning. In this direction, we can find many similar meanings, all of them already implied in the gesture. When Sraffa performed his famous gesture, he wanted to indicate a problem in Wittgenstein’s conception. He translated his gesture in a question: “how can you formalize this?” but there might have been several other translations (“I don’t care at all about your formalization,” for example), all of them gathered around the vague idea of a difference between what you can and cannot formalize. The consequences of the gesture and its interpretation could have been different as well. It determined a profound self-criticism but it could also provoke a simple reformulation of the previous theory. However, you could not interpret that gesture as “your theory was perfect” or “your theory perfectly explains what I have just done.” Teleology does not imply the straitjacket of a univocal interpretation but a direction of meaning.

The gesture I elaborated works on the same continuity of change that Peirce elaborates when he describes a perfect sign (Ch. 3 and Colapietro 2016: 165-6, 171-2). The difference is that there are some ordinary conversations that are more important than others because they let us know something new. Those are complete gestures, like Sraffa’s conversation with Wittgenstein. I understand Vincent’s fear of completion or perfection as a moral statement or as a static final state, but gestures are only conserving the implicit teleology that they receive from their symbolic part. Talking of complete gestures is not thinking about them as eternal. They are only powerful moments and they determine our changes in knowledge and habits but they are in any case passing moments of our lives. The philosophy of gestures explains why certain gestures are so powerful and significant to our knowledge (complete gestures) and others are only accompanying words or are helping us to make our meaning clear. Incomplete gestures have their own synthetic function and their own power. I did not elaborate too much on this, and I tried an elementary version of it playing with the three main kinds of signs (icons, indices, and symbols) whereas a full elaboration should involve all 59049 kinds of signs that Peirce counted on. I was more interested in the change of paradigm and in the main conception of the synthetic tool, but I hope some scholar will undertake such an immense semiotic work.

Besides, I am convinced that Colapietro’s insight on incompleteness finds a more profound account in the need of a vague paradigm of reasoning and in the transition between this latter and the other two paradigms. Vague reasoning is possibly the richest one, the one from which any other reasoning and paradigm of reasoning stem. The incompleteness that we find there is really uborous, but – as I also say in the conclusions of the book – we need a profound research to get to vagueness through a vague tool just like we got to a synthetic paradigm through Existential Graphs and through mathematical gestures.
3. Continuity

Girel, Guglielminetti, and Colapietro ask some important questions on gestures and I will try to reply to them in the remainder of this rejoinder.

1. I return for a moment on Sraffa’s gesture. What is the relationship between gesticulation, or the usual sense of “gesturing,” and my sense of gesture? There is a difference but also a relation between accompanying the words by hands and my idea of gesture as “action that carries on a meaning.” To be precise, gesticulating is an incomplete gesture that carries on meaning and makes us know something new in a very small amount. Gesticulating is an involuntary act that follows our words. However, the root of gesticulating is indeed in acts that try to vehicle a meaning. When I do not succeed in saying something, I try to perform it by hands, namely by iconizing and indicalizing the symbolic function of words. As I explain at p. 78 of the book, the usual sense of “gesturing” is indeed an incomplete gesture that fosters information. Moreover, as Ong taught us, in gesturing we see what remains of an oral culture, which was probably closer to recognize the importance of a real synthetic paradigm based on meaningful actions. Writing greatly helped the development of analyticity, even though there is no symmetry between the two phenomena. We can detect syntheticity in writing as well as in orality, as I pointed out in Chapter 7.

2. Is discontinuity neglected and experience shadowed by my focusing on continuity? Enrico Guglielminetti, whose very interesting philosophy of “adding” has much to do with William James and pragmatism, suggests that in the rupture, in the breaking there is the chance of a real development (and event). This important question gives me the chance to write some words on Peirce’s attempts to formulate a theory of continuity, which would allow for discontinuities. This theory was the bedrock of pragmatism as it is the bedrock of the philosophy of gesture. In his late years, Peirce was trying to show how continuity can be thought of without falling into both idealism and analytic metric, namely how it can include discontinuity without deleting existential discontinuities and without considering Cantor’s and Russell’s paradoxes as ending points of inquiry. Peirce gave some characteristics of this perfect continuum, whose mathematical, topological demonstration has been given only recently by Francisco Vargas, from Zalamea’s school of mathematics. Mathematical demonstration shows the embodiment of possibilities into actual points and accounts for this transition among modalities that I find crucial for synthesis. Continuity and transition among modalities are no straitjackets. Our comprehension moves among modalities, and a “necessary” meaning opens up new possibilities. Here, the articulation of synthesis relies on Peirce’s and Scotus’ interpretation of reality as a comprehensive modal development, of which actuality is only one realization. This does not mean to take out any value to the indeterministic sporting of actuality, which is a fruit of freedom and creativity as all our original gestures are (cf. Peirce’s firstness and tychism).

4. Personality and Sociality

Mathias Girel asks two very interesting questions about the recognizing of identity during changes. Is that mechanical or we “can” decide somehow to endorse or not to endorse a “gesture”? So, what is the role of personality and sociality?

The book wants to underline the case in which complete gestures happen as ideal cases. When gestures are “complete” we are really knowing something new and there is no distance between interior and exterior, personal and social aspect. In the moment of assent to a proposed gesture author and interpreter find their unity (97). I consider this unity as a fulfilment of the pragmatist rejection of dualisms and an embodiment in regular life of Peirce’s rich realism in which exteriority and interiority belong to a whole continuum of reality. However, these complete gestures are rare. More often, gestures are incomplete and in incompletion the drama of personality as individuality emerges in a way that seems to be isolated. It arises when we perform incomplete gestures and it arises when we are about to perform a complete gesture, but we did not perform it yet. We would not be so satisfied when we perform a complete gesture, if it were not the achievement or the event that completes a long struggle. Now, Mathias Girel’s question is whether during this struggle there is an ontological status of personality and sociality. I was cautious in the book and I am cautious now. Certainly, from an epistemic standpoint, our personality is a fruit of previous complete gestures and it is a struggle to achieve new ones. And, certainly, gestures are exterior as interior and, therefore, as I underlined in the book and Girel noticed in his careful reading, they provide a better but not contrastive theory for Mead’s conversation of gestures. If I am not sure about the possibility of an a-aposteriori metaphysics that would account for the ontological side of personality and sociality formed by complete gestures, I am sure that the entire philosophy of gesture confirms that reality is intrinsically communicative. The Self is an answer to an appeal of the social and not an isolated gem that can arbitrary decide. Certainly, the mystery about the source of the assent, about the rational instinct or human heart remains. Peirce somehow answers by saying that all instincts are fruit of a long evolution, but I think that as much as this answer is convincing for explaining the phylogenesis of our communicative Self, I am not sure it accounts for the ontogenesis completely. But this is certainly a good question for any further study on gestures.

5. Heaven

Would our gestures be eternal? Could we say that at least for complete gestures? Would JFK discourse remain in heaven? Guglielminetti correctly asks for a metaphysical and even theological dimension of gestures. I excluded those dimensions from this book not because they are not interesting but because I do not have tools for saying something that is more than a wishful will. Certainly, the entanglement between gestures and ontology or gestures and metaphysics is a task to undertake. For now, I underlined their epistemic value and I considered gestures as temporary tools of reasoning when reasoning wants to detect an identity through change, namely when
it can grasp anything new. As I indicated in the conclusions of the book, I think that a complicated but intriguing a posteriori metaphysics was in the pragmatists’ chords. However, I think I will postpone this study to after the more important research on vague reasoning. For now, heaven can wait.

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Essays
Mitchell Aboulafia*

George Herbert Mead and the Unity of the Self

Abstract. After more than seventy-five years of scholarship on Mead’s notion of the self, commentators still debate the meaning of the term. There are those who argue that it should be understood primarily as a socially constructed “me,” while others claim that the self is a combination of the spontaneous “I” and the “me.” In addition, there are those who emphasize facets of the self that do not fit neatly into either of these two camps. Support for various interpretations of the self can in fact be found in Mead’s work. This article addresses Mead’s uses of the term, guided by two questions: what kinds of unity or continuity are characteristic of selves? And is there a form of unity—a “meta-self”—that can encompass the types of selves that we find in Mead? In response to the second question, it is demonstrated that Mead had a narrative account of the self, one that has the potential to incorporate different kinds of selves, although Mead left his account underdeveloped.

George Herbert Mead failed to make his mark with a singular account of the self. In part this was due to the fact that he never published a book on the topic, only a limited number of articles. His most important book on the subject, Mind, Self, and Society: from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist, was edited and published posthumously, and based on student notes. But this only begins to address the problem. Although we will never know if Mead would have carefully clarified his use of the term “self” in a monograph, we do know that the term has different meanings in the works that are available. Some of these usages can be explained by context and present only minimal difficulties of interpretation. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. There are genuine tensions and challenging questions about the ways in which the term is employed. Mead, for instance, thought that the self must involve some sort of unity, the most famous example of which is the unified self that arises in relationship to a generalized other. However, even here questions immediately arise, for one wants to know how the selves of different generalized others relate to each other, especially given the fact that generalized others differ in their range, complexity, and levels of abstraction. Do more comprehensive generalized others preserve the integrity of the selves of their less encompassing brethren or do they undermine their character?

I will be exploring Mead’s various uses of the term self. I do not believe that we will ever be in a position to provide a univocal definition, if only because Mead himself appears to accept the fact that there are contexts in which the word can and should be used differently. There is, however, an overarching vision that ties his most innovative uses of the term together, including the manner in which he thinks about systems as open systems. But in addition to Mead the theorist of systems and novelty, there is also the Mead who assumes that narrative plays a significant role in unifying the self, although this aspect of Mead’s thought remains almost entirely implicit.

* Manhattan College [mitchell.aboulafia@manhattan.edu].
1. G. H. Mead, (1934), Mind, Self and Society. Henceforth, MSS.
2. Noteworthy books that address Mead’s philosophy and understanding of the self include: Cook 1993; Joas 1985; Miller 1973. For additional resources, see the bibliography for the article, “George Herbert Mead,” in the on-line Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
Mead’s dependence on a notion of narrative can help explain why he so often assumes that there is a unity to the self without making the grounds for this unity explicit.

Two questions guide this examination of Mead’s ideas: what kinds of unity or continuity are characteristic of selves? And is there a form of unity—a “meta-self”—that can encompass the types of selves that we find in Mead? In response to the second question, I demonstrate that Mead had a narrative account of the self, one that has the potential to incorporate different kinds of selves, although Mead left his account underdeveloped. A methodological point before addressing the questions at hand: This article tries to provide a plausible account of how we might understand the unity of the self for Mead. In doing so it draws on a range of his writings and lectures from approximately the last two decades of his life. It is perhaps best understood as a piece of detective work. The clues are the various ways Mead spoke about the self in his lectures and writings. However, because there is no authoritative edition of his collected works—for example, questions have been raised about the accuracy of the presentation of his ideas in the edited lectures—and because Mead’s language can be imprecise, there is no final verdict regarding the questions at hand, although I have sought to minimize the chance of a misreading by appealing to ideas that recur in Mead’s work.

Let us assume that we have an obligation to keep our promises. Let us also assume that the notions of self-assertion, self-respect, and self-realization can have meaning even if one does not believe in an essential self, a substantive self, or a soul. We will accept these claims for the present because George Herbert Mead supports them.

It is interesting to go back into one’s inner consciousness and pick out what it is that we are apt to depend upon in maintaining our self-respect. There are, of course, profound and solid foundations. One does keep his word, meet his obligations; and that provides a basis for self-respect. But those are characters which obtain in most of the members of the community with whom we have to do. We all fall down at certain points, but on the whole we always are people of our words. We do belong to the community and our self-respect depends on our recognition of ourselves as such self-respecting individuals. But that is not enough for us, since we want to recognize ourselves in our differences from other persons. […] [T]here is a demand, a constant demand, to realize one’s self in some sort of superiority over those about us. (MSS: 204-5)

Who or what self seeks to realize him or herself in this fashion? It is not at all obvious how Mead would address this question, and this is no small matter. In this passage we find references to self-realization, self-respect, self-assertion, and the keeping of promises. But what self is realizing itself, what self is an object or subject of self-respect, what self tries to outshine others, what self knows that failing to keep a promise is wrong? Is it the same self at any given time? For Mead, individuals can have multiple social selves, which are linked to groups and communities. Is there a unity or continuity to the self, a type of meta-self, that transcends these social selves, and if so, how are we to understand it?
Perhaps trying to locate any sort of meta or comprehensive self in Mead – one who might find the breaking of promises a violation of his or her integrity – is simply wrongheaded. Mead’s use of the term self has given rise to something of a cottage industry that seeks to explain what the self truly is for Mead. After seventy-five years of Mead scholarship maybe it is time to cease trying to determine what Mead really meant by the term self, let alone whether there is a type of meta-self. For example, we know that the self is often a social and cognizable object, the “me.” At other times it is the combination of the conventional “me” and the impulsive and spontaneous “I.”

Mead is often emphatic about how the self excludes the body, because the self is a cognizable social object. But then he is willing to speak of an unconscious self, which is made up of bundles of habits, and we know that habits are closely linked to bodily dispositions. Mead also tells us that, “As a mere organization of habit the self is not self-conscious. It is this self which we refer to as character.”

It is possible that in using the term self in a variety of ways Mead may have been taking his cue from William James. In the Principles of Psychology James describes different types of selves: “The constituents of the Self may be divided into two classes, those which make up respectively – (a) The material Self; (b) The social Self; (c) The spiritual Self; and (d) The pure Ego.” There is, however, one very significant difference between James and Mead. James’s account of the self or selves is carefully articulated in one of the most influential books in psychology and philosophy of the nineteenth century. Mead’s usages are spread over a corpus of published and unpublished works, and discovering all of them seems to require the efforts of a Sherlock Holmes. (Ah, Mr. Mead, caught yet again with another self!)

However, the fact that Mead used the term in different ways does not undermine the possibility that he may have had a notion of a meta or comprehensive self. As a matter of fact, his willingness to use the term self in so many ways argues for leaving

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3. Mead begins his article, “The Social Self,” with the following assertion. “Recognizing that the self cannot appear in consciousness as an ‘I,’ that it is always an object, i.e., a ‘me,’ I wish to suggest an answer to the question, What is involved in the self being an object?” (1964: 142).

4. On the relationship between the novel “I” and the conventional “me,” see MSS: 209. Mead claims, “The ‘I’ both calls out the ‘me’ and responds to it. Taken together they constitute a personality as it appears in social experience. The self is essentially a social process going on with these two distinguishable phases. If it did not have these two phases there could not be conscious responsibility, and there would be nothing novel in experience” (MSS: 178).

5. Mead tells us that, “It is a structure of attitudes, then, which goes to make up a self, as distinct from a group of habits. We all of us have, for example, certain groups of habits, such as the particular intonations which a person uses in his speech. […] There are whole bundles of such habits which do not enter into a conscious self, but which help to make up what is termed the unconscious self” (MSS: 163). Regarding the relationship of the body to the self, Mead states, “It [the self-M.A.] is a social entity that must be related to the entire body, and only insofar as the self is related to the body is it related to the environment. […] The self involves a unity; it is there in the social process, but there is no self unless there is the possibility of regarding it as an object to itself. It is the center about which the individual is organized, and the body is an integral part of the self […] When we try to regard ourselves independently of our organisms […] we may be put into an asylum. […] We are thus tied to the body insofar as we have a self” (Mead 1982: 148).


the door open to this possibility. It would be difficult to appreciate his commitment to self-realization and self-assertion, for example, if we were to restrict their relevance to selves that exist only in relationship to specific communities. Nor would limiting these notions to the domain of the impulsive and spontaneous “I” do justice to the ways in which Mead employs them. These notions, and others that we will encounter, appear to point to a self that eludes definition solely in terms of the particularity of specific communities, even large ones, and the spontaneity of the “I.”

In my view, Mead was not fully successful in articulating the nature of a meta or comprehensive self, although his insights are fertile, which is one reason why his thought is still vital. Mead, for example, has the potential to assist those seeking to reinvigorate and rethink sentiment theory and the role of empathy in moral development, as well as to challenge simulation theorists. Through Mead’s sensitivity to the ways in which sociality informs self development his work can complement well-known narrative accounts of the self in thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Charles Taylor. It can also complement these accounts because narrative, as we shall see, is an important feature of Mead’s understanding of the self, although he focuses more attention on the intersection of behavior and ontogenesis than these thinkers. But before turning to a discussion of narrative, we need to clarify further Mead’s concerns and his notions about the self.

Dewey tells us in his “Prefatory Remarks” to the Philosophy of the Present that, “When I first came to know Mr. Mead, well over forty years ago, the dominant problem in his mind concerned the nature of consciousness as personal and private.” But Mead was not primarily interested in doing a phenomenology of this consciousness. He wished to explore how the so-called personal was connected to the public and common world. Dewey goes on to say that the idealism of Mead’s early years did not provide Mead with the answers he needed.

Even if it [idealism-M.A.] were true and were accepted as such, it did not explain how states of mind peculiar to an individual, like the first hypotheses of a discoverer which throw into doubt beliefs previously entertained and which deny objectivity to things that have been universally accepted as real objects, can function as the sources of objects which instead of being private and personal, instead of being merely “subjective,” belong to the common and objective universe. (Dewey 1932: xxxvii)

9. For example, regarding self-assertion, Mead states, “We have, of course, a specific economic and social status that enables us to so distinguish ourselves. We also have to some extent positions in various groups which give a means of self-identification, but there is back of all these matters a sense of things which on the whole we do better than other people do. It is very interesting to get back to these superiorities, many of them of a very trivial character, but of great importance to us. We may come back to manners of speech and dress, to a capacity for remembering, to this, that, and the other thing – but always to something in which we stand out above people” (MSS: 205). It should be noted that Mead stresses that superiority need not be understood in a crude hierarchical manner. “This sense of superiority does not represent necessarily the disagreeable type of assertive character, and it does not mean that the person wants to lower other people in order to get himself into a higher standing” (MSS: 205).

10. See, Aboulafia 2011.

One way in which Mead undermines a rigid dichotomy between the me and not-me, which James insists on in his *Principles of Psychology*, and between the private and public, involves articulating how the unique or novel, which is generated by the individual, becomes integrated into a wider community.\(^\text{12}\) Mead thought that societies depend on the novel responses of individuals to the accepted, to the given, in order to change, in a manner somewhat analogous to how eco-systems change if new, yet compatible, organisms or mutations are introduced. These novel responses are the terrain of what he came to call the “I.” However, the question of overcoming a split between the so-called subjective and objective worlds is rendered even more challenging when the integration of the subjective and the objective, the personal and the public, is burdened with a parallel question: how does a self, which has a public dimension, maintain a unity or continuity in the face of the individual’s own novel, personal, responses?\(^\text{12}\)

In part because of Mead’s commitment to novelty, one solution that was not available to him in addressing the unity of the self is the notion that we have one basic fixed role or self that defines us. This is apparent if we contrast Mead with a pre-modern figure, Epictetus.\(^\text{13}\) According to Epictetus, we must all learn to play the role that Destiny has set for us.

Remember that you are an actor in a drama, which is as the playwright wishes; if the playwright wishes it short, it will be short; if long, then long; if the playwright wishes you to play a beggar, [it is assigned] in order that you good-naturedly play even that role; [and similarly] if [you are assigned to play] a disabled person, an archon, or a lay person. For this is what is yours: to play finely the role (πρόσωπον) that is given; but to select [that role] itself is another’s [i.e., the divine playwright]. (Epictetus, *Ench.*: 17)\(^\text{14}\)

Commentators have considered roles as well played for Epictetus where an individual demonstrates universal virtues in carrying them out. But a question arises about whether success in roles should be understood solely in terms of universal virtues or whether there is something specific that allows a role to be successfully realized, for example, is Socrates or Hercules exhibiting some unique personal attributes, in addition to universal virtues?\(^\text{15}\) In a recent article on this topic, Brian Johnson tells us that scholars are divided on this question, with most assuming that universal virtues trump all else, which he refers to as the deflationary account.\(^\text{16}\) Johnson wants to argue for another position.

For Epictetus, then, our humanity appears to be a composite fact because we have a share in λόγος, which connects us to cosmic nature, and because we have a body in a

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12. At the close of the chapter on “The Stream of Thought” in the *Principles of Psychology*, James discusses the split between the “me” and the “not-me.” See James (1950: 289).
13. At times it appears as if Mead adheres to a position similar to Epictetus’s, but we will see that this is not the case. For example, Mead tells us that, “The proudest assertion of independent selfhood is but the affirmation of a unique capacity to fill some social role.” George Herbert Mead, “National-Mindedness and International-Mindedness,” in Mead (1964: 357).
certain place and time, which means that we are susceptible to illness and a variety of material needs and that we must live among others and the consequences of their actions. As a result, our humanity cannot act as sole standard, as the deflationary model would have it, because it has many influences acting upon it; this multiplicity undermines the deflationary model. Thus, Epictetus does not say to agents “Here is a universal (human) standard, apply it to your differing circumstances,” as the deflationary view suggests; rather, he says “The universe needs these different functions, so here are your specific stations.” (cf. I 29.26-28, iii 22.4-8, and iii 24.94-95)17

If one were to ask what is involved in persons fulfilling their stations in extraordinary ways for Epictetus, in addition to the presence of the logos, it is how well they play their roles. And it is role playing all the way down here, for there is no essential, particular, personal self behind a role. However, the fact that there are different roles is problematic for this model because although a particular station should ultimately define us – for example, Socrates as gadfly as opposed to Socrates as father – in our actual lives we are typically called on to perform more than one role.18 Can Socrates remain true to himself by being anything other than a gadfly or a wise man as deeply and as fully as possible? For Epictetus, it would seem not. And his Socrates appears to have much in common with Arendt’s, in spite of the different reasons they might give for why consistency is to be prized.

This principle of agreement with oneself is very old; it was actually discovered by Socrates, whose central tenet, as formulated by Plato, is contained in the sentence: “Since I am one, it is better for me to disagree with the whole world than to be in disagreement with myself.” From this sentence both Occidental ethics, with its stress upon being in agreement with one’s own conscience, and Occidental logic, with its emphasis upon the axiom of contradiction, took their starting point.19

Although the unity here transcends the defining of oneself by a role, the price we pay for this transcendence would be too high for Mead, because it appears to require too much inner harmony. Nevertheless, it is difficult to dismiss the notion that at some level a self must be in agreement with itself, and this is true for Mead, as we shall see. While we don’t yet know how Mead understands this agreement, we do know that because we are called on to play numerous roles, as well as confront our own novel responses, the solution of going more deeply into one role would not be a satisfactory solution to the problem of how to be in agreement with oneself.

The absence of the logos for Mead makes much of the debate surrounding Epictetus moot. As for the question about the relationship of roles to each other, Mead would reply that a role is not a fully developed self. The self exists at a more complex

18. Epictetus “is grappling with an important philosophic problem about how the unity of Stoic virtue maps onto the messy pluralities of real life. He deploys the human role to capture the unity of virtue and specific roles to capture the particularities of daily life” (Johnson 2012: 144).
19. Hannah Arendt (1993: 220) is citing Plato from the Gorgias: 482. For Arendt, agreement with oneself involves an inner dialog. The voices engaged in this dialog must not remain in contradiction, but how much tension can still exist between them, when harmony or agreement is achieved, is a topic for another paper.
level of organization. His whole analysis of the distinction between play and the game is based on this assumption. But if we are not unified by being a specific role all the way down, and if we have no essence, and if we are unable to appeal to an overarching logos to help define us, how then are we to understand the unity or continuity of the self?

The most recurrent solution that Mead gives to the question of the unity of the self involves viewing it as a function of a social group, so that the self is directly linked to the generalized other. In Mead’s words, “The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called ‘the generalized other’.” In these cases the self is the “me,” and it can be understood as a complex set of behaviors or roles systemically organized. We can have multiple selves of this sort. There is an emphasis on the self as an object here, to which one can reflexively relate.

However, Mead now has an obvious problem, which to some extent parallels Epictetus’s problem of multiple and potentially conflicting roles. How are we to understand the relationships between the different generalized others, the different social selves, which individuals presumably possess? Mead was of two minds about the notion of multiple personalities or selves. On the one hand, he thought multiple personalities quite normal, in the sense in which we have different “selves,” identities, based on the organized groups or communities of which we are members. On the other hand, it should be seen as pathological when there is no connection between these personalities or selves. “Multiple personality is the breakup of the personality or self; there is no background for the organization of memory.”

The notion of multiple personality, or what today is often referred to as Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), is a hornet’s nest. There are ongoing debates not only about its etiology, but about whether it should even be viewed as a distinct disorder. We need not concern ourselves with these debates. The question before us is which self breaks into different personalities or selves, according to Mead. Is it just one of a number of different social selves that fractures? To say that a multiple personality refers to a single fractured social self among a multitude of selves would indeed be a peculiar use of the phrase. It would localize the phenomenon too much. From Mead’s vantage point, it would be to suggest that a self that one has in one social setting, say, as a member of a baseball team, could develop a multiple personality that would be confined to that setting. Further, we would then be left with the possibility of multiple multiple personality disorders if more than one of our social selves fractured, that is, if distinct social monads split in their own domains. Mead’s comments on multiple

20. MSS: 149-64.
21. MSS: 154. Mead continues, “The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community. Thus, for example, in the case of such a social group as a ball team, the team is the generalized other in so far as it enters – as an organized process or social activity – into the experience of any one of the individual members of it” (MSS: 154; emphasis added).
22. Mead (1982: 163). Notice that Mead is equating “the personality” and “self” here. He does this in other places, see, for example, p. 210 and note 31 below.
23. It’s worth noting that it is possible to lose a self that we once had, while retaining sensible experiences that were once associated with this self. In such a situation the individual “becomes a different personality.” If we had no memory which identifies experiences with the self, then they would certainly disappear so far as their relation to the self is concerned, and yet they might continue as sensuous or sensible experiences without being taken up into a self. That sort of a situation is presented
personality at minimum open the door to the possibility that there is a unity to the self that transcends individual generalized others and their social selves, a more comprehensive self that might split, that might become schizoid.

As a matter of fact, Mead argues in various places that selves generated in relationship to specific social groups can be united into more comprehensive unities. Here is a passage from his “1914 Lectures on Social Psychology.”

There is a tendency still further to bring all of these different selves within a single self. We get that in the “abstract man,” but there are others; “citizen” may include the other selves. This tendency to organize the different selves is essential for normal social conduct. There are relative degrees of dissociation in all of us. This self which takes in all the different selves is still the self that answers to the others. It is not the primary self but the composite. Out of such selves arise conceptions of the political man, the economic man, the object of charity, etc. 24

Notice that Mead emphasizes that there is a tendency to unify or organize different selves into a single self, which can also be seen in the following remark, if we are willing to equate the notion of a “whole man” with a kind of self. “We legitimately have different selves over against different groups, and there is a natural organization among these which makes us a whole man.” 25 The notion of a more comprehensive or enlarged self is one that Mead discusses in different places, and not only in these lectures. It is often implied in his discussions of various communities. 26 So one answer to what self might be split into multiple personalities is the composite self, a more comprehensive organization of elementary or localized selves. We will return to this suggestion shortly. But first notice how Mead contrasts the social secondary self with the primary self.

All the secondary selves – voter, church member, father – are related just as the different groups in society are related. The organization of this inner social consciousness is a reflex of the organization of the outer world. Secondly, there is a relation between these various secondary selves to the primary self which belongs to action. […] An idea comes to us that does not come from the mouths of the selves that are presenting the case but from the primary self. The new attitude is a suggestion. We may be able to account for it after the act. 27 (Emphasis added)

in the pathological case of a multiple personality in which an individual loses the memory of a certain phase of his existence. Everything connected with that phase of his existence is gone and he becomes a different personality. The past has a reality whether in the experience or not, but here it is not identified with the self – it does not go to make up the self” (MSS: 170; emphasis added).

24. Mead (1982b: 77-8). According to Dmitri Shalin these lectures were actually given in 1912. See, Shalin 2015.

25. Mead (1982b: 74). The term “natural” here does not refer to the biological. Mead is addressing how inner social consciousness relates to “the organization of the outer world” (Ibid.: 74).

26. For example, in MSS: 265, Mead states, “He may belong to a small community, as the small boy belongs to a gang rather than to the city in which he lives. We all belong to small cliques, and we may remain simply inside of them. The ‘organized other’ present in ourselves is then a community of a narrow diameter. […] The boy gets a larger self in proportion as he enters into this larger community.”

In introducing a primary self, as opposed to a secondary self, in these lectures, Mead leaves us with a further difficulty. It appears that not only does the unity of the self or selves exist on different levels, some more comprehensive than others, there are also two selves, primary and secondary. The primary self has attributes of what Mead came to refer to more consistently as the “I,” while the secondary self can be equated with the “me.” However, in spite of often treating the “me” and the self as synonymous—he asserts that the “I” is not the self, even though it shares attributes with the primary self—Mead also viewed the “I” and “me” taken together as the self, or more exactly, as “phases in the self,” a phrase that he uses at the end of the passage below. In other words, the “I” and “me” are not seen as two selves, as the language of primary and secondary selves would suggest, but as phases of one self.

Both aspects of the “I” and “me” are essential to the self in its full expression. […] We speak of a person as a conventional individual; his ideas are exactly the same as those of his neighbors; he is hardly more than a “me” under the circumstances; his adjustments are only the slight adjustments that take place, as we say, unconsciously. Over against that there is the person who has a definite personality, who replies to the organized attitude in a way which makes a significant difference. With such a person it is the “I” that is the more important phase of the experience. Those two constantly appearing phases are the important phases in the self. (MSS: 199-200; emphasis added)

Recall that in addition to the selves currently under discussion, Mead referred to an unconscious self and claimed that the self could be equated with character. One simple way out of this morass of different selves would be to say that Mead or those who transcribed his lectures and edited his work were careless. Or that his appeal to different selves in different contexts only follows the pluralistic usage of the term that we found in James, and there is no notion of a meta-self in Mead’s thought. But this is too easy. There are too many pieces of evidence that suggest that Mead actually did think of us as possessing some sort of meta or comprehensive self. At minimum we are unified as composite social selves, and if not unified at least potentially continuous in terms of the “I” and “me” phases in the self. Returning to that nagging question of how Mead understood multiple personalities will be of assistance in addressing the question of a more comprehensive or meta-self.

The unity and structure of the complete self reflects the unity and structure of the social process as a whole; and each of the elementary selves of which it is composed reflects the unity and structure of one of the various aspects of that process in which the

28. See, for example, the beginning lines of “The Social Self” above, note 3.
29. See, note 4, above. Mead sought to understand the relationship of the spontaneous responses of the “I” to the organized “me.” In my view, it can best be understood in light of Mead’s account of sociality and emergence. For Mead, systems manage to adjust to novel events, for example, when a new species is introduced into an eco-system. There is a state betwixt and between an old system and a new one, which Mead refers to as one of sociality, using the term in a specialized sense. The “me” may be thought of as a system. When the “I” acts in a novel way, the organized “me” may in reaction undergo modification. If it does, a new unified system, a new “me,” emerges. See, Mead on sociality and emergence in The Philosophy of the Present, for example, Mead 1932b: 1-2, 47-9.
30. See, above, p. 203 and notes 5 and 6.
individual is implicated. [...] The phenomenon of dissociation of personality is caused by a breaking up of the complete, unitary self into the component selves of which it is composed, and which respectively correspond to different aspects of the social process in which the person is involved, and within which his complete or unitary self has arisen; these aspects being the different social groups to which he belongs within that process. (MSS: 144; emphasis added)\(^3\)

So perhaps we are done. Even if we acknowledge that the self has phases of the “I” and “me,” thus far it appears that the most comprehensive unity that we can find in Mead, if we include selves that are generated in relationship to past or imagined communities, is the composite unitary self, composed of component or elementary selves.\(^4\) Yet this does not appear to account for all that Mead has to say on the subject. It appears that there is a unity that is potentially more encompassing than the composite self, and digging deeper into Mead’s views on multiple personality will assist in revealing it.

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Mead claims that in persons who are unstable the personality can split into two selves, each with distinct “I’s” and “me’s.”

To a person who is somewhat unstable nervously and in whom there is a line of cleavage, certain activities become impossible, and that set of activities may separate and evolve another self. Two separate “me’s” and “I’s,” two different selves, result, and that is the condition under which there is a tendency to break up the personality. (MSS: 143)

Mead immediately provides the following example, presumably to illustrate his point, but which actually opens up the path to another way of thinking about the self.

There is an account of a professor of education who disappeared, was lost to the community, and later turned up in a logging camp in the West. He freed himself of his occupation and turned to the woods where he felt, if you like, more at home. The pathological side of it was the forgetting, the leaving out of the rest of the self. This result involved getting rid of certain bodily memories which would identify the individual to himself. We often recognize the lines of cleavage that run through us. We would be glad to forget certain things, get rid of things the self is bound up with in past experiences. What we have here is a situation in which there can be different selves, and it is dependent upon the set of social reactions that is involved as to which self we are going to be. If we can forget everything involved in one set of activities, obviously we relinquish that part of the self. (MSS: 143)

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\(^3\) Mead is not distinguishing between “personality” and “self” here and I am following his lead. 
\(^4\) Mead notes that, “A multiple personality is in a certain sense normal, as I have just pointed out. There is usually an organization of the whole self with reference to the community to which we belong, and the situation in which we find ourselves. What the society is, whether we are living with people of the present, people of our own imaginations, people of the past, varies, of course, with different individuals. Normally, within the sort of community as a whole to which we belong, there is a unified self, but that may be broken up” (MSS: 142-3; emphasis added).
To interpret the somewhat tortured language of these passages, it must first be noted that there are at least two usages of the word self. One refers to the interactive unity of an “I”-“me” as a self; the other to a more comprehensive self that can include memories associated with more than one “I”-“me” self. Mead appears to be suggesting that the professor’s personality was split into two “I”s and two corresponding “me”s, and one organized set, one self, was lost when he settled in the West. Further, there is something wrong with this state of affairs. “The pathological side of it was the forgetting, the leaving out of the rest of the self. This result involved getting rid of certain bodily memories which would identify the individual to himself” (emphasis added). But wait. Why is there anything pathological about leaving behind a part of the (more comprehensive) self, which is associated with one “I”-“me”? Why is it not healthy to favor a new self – call it the Western Self – even if it involves forgetting a part of one’s earlier (more comprehensive) self? Why is there a problem with losing memories or their connections, especially if they helped contribute to a personality split, in this case into two “I”-“me” selves?

Mead argues later in the passage that dropping memories is something that we might wish to do. “We would be glad to forget certain things, get rid of things the self is bound up with in past experiences.” From this vantage point losing memories or no longer organizing them as a self need not be viewed negatively. In fact not retaining selves appears to be quite normal. We have different selves, which depend on social interactions and their concomitant memories, and we often drop or displace them when we enter new situations. Presumably the memories associated with them become reorganized or forgotten. Yet Mead referred to the professor’s forgetting as pathological. From this perspective, it does not seem that we should divest ourselves of a dimension of who we were. Mead also tells us that if we “forget everything involved in one set of activities, obviously we relinquish that part of the self.” Notice the last phrase here, “we relinquish that part of the self,” which of course suggests that there was a more comprehensive self, and we have now lost part of it, as well as its former unity.33 So here is the conundrum: Mead’s understanding of the social self would suggest that forgetting “parts” of the self, elementary selves, is at times to be expected, yet there is something pathological about the loss of memory associated

33. And when Mead says that “We often recognize the lines of cleavage that run through us,” to whom does the “we” refer? To one among many social selves? But such selves would not be in position recognize this cleavage. They are objects of which we are aware. Perhaps the “we” refers to the “I” in its role as a “consciousness of” the “me” as an object, which is one of its functions for Mead? But this would presume that the “I” has the capacity to contrast various social selves, because it possesses some sort of macroscopic overview. There may be something to this, although this is not the way in which the “I” is typically presented. It is first and foremost the sphere of action and the impulsive, and might be thought of as related to the “me” as matter to form. “A self is a composite or interaction of these two parts of our natures – the fundamental impulses which make us co-operating neighbors and friends, lovers and parents and children, and rivals, competitors, and enemies; on the other side the evocation of this self which we achieve when we address ourselves in the language which is the common speech of those about us. We talk to ourselves, ask ourselves what we will do under certain conditions, criticize and approve of our own suggestions and ideas, and in taking the organized attitudes of those engaged in common undertakings we direct our own impulses. These two parts are the matter and the form of the self, if I may use Aristotelian phraseology” (Mead 1964, “National-Mindedness and International-Mindedness,” 357-8).
with a split personality, although we are all in a certain sense split personalities with multiple social selves.

There is, of course, a danger of over interpreting a passage of this sort, especially given that it is drawn from an edited work. Nevertheless, I want to argue that Mead’s language about the pathology of forgetting and his highlighting of bodily memories reflects something important about his views. The invocation of the life path of a specific person, with specific bodily memories, opens the door to another possibility for interpreting the unity of the self and for understanding the potentially pathological dimension of a split personality.\(^{34}\)

In spite of Mead’s claims about composite unified selves, there seems to be at least one lacuna in this account of the unity of the self, even if selves involve past or imagined communities, and it relates to our professor of education. Mead assumes that there is a unity to the self or the individual because he takes for granted that we have biographies.

What is accessible only to that individual, what takes place only in the field of his own inner life, must be stated in its relationship to the situation within which it takes place. One individual has one experience and another has another experience, and both are stated in terms of their biographies; but there is in addition that which is common to the experience of all. (MSS: 33; emphasis added)

For Mead, (auto)biography is uniquely human. Animals cannot have biographies. They certainly have memories but they cannot have biographies as we experience them. And the reason is obvious. Other animals are incapable of reflection, which depends on a conscious use of symbols.\(^ {35}\) Our lives can have a unity or continuity because we have the ability to use language to reflect on and organize our memories. We have the capacity to be aware and act, which are functions of the “I,” and we can recall and reflect on the actions of the “I.” When they are organized in relationship to a generalized other, they become a “me.” When they are organized in relationship to memories that interest us, and perhaps anticipated and imagined futures, they become features of a biographical self, as do memories of affective experiences.\(^ {36}\)

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34. Thus far we have found that for Mead: 1) the “me” is the cognizable social self, 2) there is a composite self, which operates at a higher level of unity than more elementary social selves, 3) the “I” is the home of the impulsive, spontaneous, and the novel, 4) the self is the “I” and the “me” in process, 5) the spontaneous or novel responses of the “I” can be integrated into a “me,” creating a new “me,” which involves the processes of sociality and emergence (see, above, note 29), 6) the self is not the body but there is an unconscious self which is made up of bundles of habits, and habits are tied to the body, and 7) the self can be referred to as character. Is this a comprehensive list of factors that relate to the question of the multiplicity of selves and the self’s unity? In addition, there is also the possibility that the “I” might be the source of an encompassing meta-self. This alternative would require that the “I” itself be unified, but this is no longer Mead, at least not the Mead who can also speak of the “I” as the home of the spontaneous, the impulsive, and the source of novelty. Even granting him a great deal of leeway in describing the various functions of the “I,” to appeal to the “I” as the source of a meta-self strains credulity; the “I” as a deus ex machina. This said, if the I is viewed as a “stand-in” for the act, it can be viewed as unifying experience. But this is as an act, not as a meta-self. See MSS: 279.


36. Mead’s comments on history and biography are worth noting. “History is nothing but biography,
We do inevitably tend at a certain level of sophistication to organize all experience into that of a self. We do so intimately identify our experiences, especially our affective experiences, with the self that it takes a moment’s abstraction to realize that pain and pleasure can be there without being the experience of the self. Similarly, we normally organize our memories upon the string of our self. If we date things we always date them from the point of view of our past experiences. We frequently have memories that we cannot date, that we cannot place. (MSS: 135-6; emphasis added)\(^{37}\)

Note Mead’s words, “We do inevitably tend at a certain level of sophistication to organize all experience into that of a self,” and “we normally organize our memories upon the string of our self. If we date things we always date them from the point of view of our past experiences.” Although one could argue that he is talking about a specific social self here, a more natural interpretation is that he is defaulting to a set of assumptions about the individual having a biography, a self, that includes memories of the affective, as well as of actions and events.

Why would we unify our memories in this fashion? No doubt there is more than one reason, and the reasons may differ, as do narratives, from culture to culture. But from a Meadian vantage point, we can look to the continuous experiences of unity that we have owing to circumscribed and composite social selves. These selves would provide compelling exemplars for unifying other aspects of our experience. Perhaps narrative is in part born of a habit to unify experience that is grounded in the recurrent presence of organized social selves.\(^{38}\)

It has become fashionable to speak of the self in terms of a narrative, a life-story. We find philosophers of different stripes, as well as psychologists, across a wide spectrum of traditions doing so.\(^{39}\) Of course this does not prove that this is how we should best understand ourselves. It does, however, give Mead a viable option, one that would not undermine his other assumptions about the self. On the one hand, he could acknowledge an individual’s traits and characteristics, which relate to our impulsive and habitual sides, without claiming that they are a source of unity in and of themselves, because they are not systematically organized. On the other hand, he can still argue that social groups and communities provide the systematic organization necessary for giving rise to selves. But he does not have to stop here. He can also say that individuals link selves together, along with their novel responses to events, to generate biographies, life-stories, narratives. An inability to weave together memories, selves, and the transitions between them leads to a pathological splitting of
the personality, to an incoherent biography, to ultimately no biography at all, which would certainly make being in agreement with oneself an evanescent phenomenon.

Recall the problem that Dewey claimed had engaged Mead in his earlier years: the relationship between private experience, the subjective, and that which is public, objective. Mead went on to provide a genetic account of the self that sought to show how private perspectives are known through reflection, a capacity that arises through a social process. He also sought to provide an account of the mechanisms for integrating novel events into existing systems, which relates to the issue of how “subjective” perspectives can become “objective” ones, that is, how that which is novel and unique can become conceptually accessible to a community. But without considering personal narratives, a significant portion of private experience, which can relate to public life in various ways, would be difficult to fathom. Further, without a “biographical self” it would be difficult to make sense of some of the ways in which Mead speaks about self-realization and self-assertion, for example, our desire “to recognize ourselves in our differences from other persons. […] [which may include—M.A.] manners of speech and dress, to a capacity for remembering, to this, that, and the other thing — but always to something in which we stand out above people.”

It would also be difficult to explain the weight that Mead appears to give to the connection between the obligation to keep one’s word and self-respect in the quotation that began this article. My suggestion is that Mead had an undeveloped narratological account of the self that allowed him to make claims that were in line with his rather robust sense of what is right and proper for a human being to achieve, at least in the modern Western world. Viewing the self in terms of narrative need not challenge Mead’s pluralistic usages of the term self. It complements them by providing an overarching framework that allows us to make sense of how memories and multiple selves are bound together, supplying a unity more comprehensive than the composite social self. It also assists us in making sense of Mead’s claims about the pathological nature of certain kinds of split personality. Whether Mead’s systemic orientation to the self, combined with his sensitivity to novelty, would provide sufficient tools for the development of a satisfying narratological account of the self is interesting question. It is a question for another article, as is the question of whether narrative in its various incarnations, along with other aspects of the individual spelled out by Mead, are sufficient to supply us with a satisfactory account of personhood.

References


40. See note 29 above.
41. MSS: 205. It is possible to interpret Mead as referring only to self-respect and differences from others in a specific community, but this is unlikely given rest of this passage. See note 9 above.


— (1932b), *The Philosophy of the Present*, edited with an Introduction by Arthur E. Murphy, La Salle, IL, Open Court.


Guido Baggio

The Influence of Dewey’s and Mead’s Functional Psychology Upon Veblen’s Evolutionary Economics

Abstract. In the following pages I shall sketch some thoughts on Veblen’s implicit and explicit references to pragmatism and functional psychology, arguing that, besides Peirce and James, the functionalist theories and psychological experiments of the research group led by Dewey and Mead at the University of Chicago set the scene for Veblen’s intellectual revolution. More precisely, whilst Veblen did not mention it explicitly, it is possible to find in his writings of the years 1896-1900 references to Dewey’s notion of the “organic circuit” and to Dewey’s and Mead’s theory of emotion.

This paper has three parts and three aims. In the first part, I outline Veblen’s criticism of economic science and his proposal for a new evolutionary economics, paying particular attention to Veblen’s implicit reference to Peirce’s logic. In the second part, I single out Veblen’s reference to Dewey’s and Mead’s works on functional psychology. In the third part, I will compare Mead’s hypothesis of the genesis of social interests in emotions with the evolutionary economic theory sketched by Veblen.

1. Why is Economics not an Evolutionary Science?

Since the second half of the 19th century, the natural and human sciences were charged with facing fresh questions raised by evolutionary theory. In particular, the human sciences needed to contend with the limits of their pre-Darwinian paradigms and to call into question the methodological and metaphysical assumptions that underlay them. In the United States, William James published the Principles of Psychology in 1890. Whilst James never abandoned his epochè concerning the causes of the phylogenetic evolution of human consciousness, evolutionism influenced his thought profoundly (James 1987). Integrating the results of recent research in physiology and animal psychology with philosophical reflections, James (1955: 2) advanced the idea that the faculty of mind “does not exist absolutely, but works under conditions.” Mind has to be considered as a functional and dynamic element which selects stimuli from reality useful for the achievement of some immediate, as well as remote, ends, influencing the environment in which the subject lives (James 1955: 116 ss.).

James’ work on psychology re-invigorated work on the subject and, following him, John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, both at the University of Chicago from 1894, developed their psychological researches into human behavior undertaken in

* Università Pontificia Salesiana and Università di Roma Tre [guidobaggio@hotmail.com].
1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the international colloquium “Economics and Psychology in Historical Perspective,” held in Paris, December 18-20, 2014. The Author thanks the referees for the precious comments.
2. Tilman (1996: Ch 3) argued over pragmatic influences upon Veblen’s ideas concerning the human mind. James and Dewey’s functional psychology offered a psychological basis for his social theory. In my opinion, however, Veblen has been influenced by the Chicago School of functionalism more than by James’ functionalism, in particular by Dewey’s and Mead’s ideas. Moreover, even if Tilman (1998) points out Dewey’s intellectual debt to Veblen’s idea, his references consist normally in a period later than that considered here.
3. For a critical review of James’s receipt of Darwin’s theory see Franzese 2009.
4. On this aspect see Baggio 2011.
1892 at the University of Michigan, laying the foundations for the Chicago School of Functional Psychology. Furthermore, in 1896 James R. Angell and Addison W. Moore undertook a psychological experiment on attention and habit under the guidance of Dewey and Mead (Angell & Moore 1896).

The spirit of theoretical and methodological innovation which encouraged psychological and sociological studies at the University of Chicago involved all the departments of the University. In this innovative and stimulating environment, Thorstein Veblen, who joined Chicago in 1892 experienced what Hodgson describes as his academic epiphany. According to Hodgson (1998), Veblen’s thought underwent an intellectual revolution during the years 1896-1899, stimulated by a number of debates in biology and social theory he assisted in during that period. It is not by chance that, between 1898 and 1899, he published, besides The Theory of the Leisure Class, a series of articles in which he criticized orthodox economic theories, highlighting their static and abstract nature and obsolescence and claiming for a methodological revolution in economics in favor of a paradigm shift which should heed recent psychology.

In particular, in 1898 Veblen published an article against the taxonomic nature of orthodox economic science. He portrayed economists as “unable to handle its subject matter in such a way as to earn it standing as a modern science” (Veblen 1898a: 373). Veblen accused orthodox economic theories of being short-sighted for merely focusing upon material elements that compound economic institutions. Supported by a symbolic, often ambiguous, use of language, orthodox economics referred to a theoretical model rooted in some metaphysical assumptions which considered nature

5. In particular, according to Hodgson (1998), Veblen elaborated his ideas concerning a non-reductionist evolutionary economics under the influence of Peirce and James as well as being indirectly shaped by Cowey Lloyd Morgan who in 1896 gave a lecture on the author of Habit and Instinct at the University of Chicago. Morgan’s thesis that human evolution occurred mainly at a socio-economic emergent level not explicable in terms of the biological characteristics of the individuals involved influenced Veblen’s ideas on the evolutionary process of the selection of institutions. Lawson (2015: 1019-22) suggests that during his life Veblen changed his reference to evolution theory, passing from referring to a natural selection to a process of behavioral habitation due to his passage from a initial influence by the evolutionary writings of Herbert Spencer (in the Leisure Class) to a more Darwinian one. However, though it has been claimed that in his period in Chicago Veblen was mainly influenced by Jaques Loeb’s reductionist meccanicist Darwinism, to which the influence of Peirce and James joined as a result of Veblens’ moving away from the biological reductionism of Spencer (Hodgson 1998: 417), both a careful analysis of the terms and expressions used by Veblen’s works of these years and a comparison with Dewey’s and Mead’s preceding writings will show some other elements of the influences on his thinking. In particular, the notion of habit is also at the basis of Peirce’s logic as well as Dewey’s and Mead’s functionalism they were elaborating in those very years. On the Darwinist influence on Veblen’s evolutionary economics, see also Raymer 2013.

6. For a reconstruction of Veblen’s analysis of orthodox economics see Nabers (1958: 77-111). For a comparison of Mead’s and Veblen’s ideas, see the third chapter of Tilman 1996; and Fontana, Tilman, & Roe 1992. The work of Fontana et al. is interesting, but it considers mainly Mead’s posthumous works that offer a more sociological and philosophical (and in a certain manner imperfect) interpretation of Mead’s thought. Such kind of reading does not see Mead’s theory of the Self as continuous with his psychological studies and reflections developed since his early collaboration with Dewey from 1890s. Such a comparison would offer a new perspective from which to look at some common elements between Mead’s psychology and Veblen’s first elaboration of evolutionary economics. I work on this point in Baggio 2015.
as the expression of a pre-ordered and aim-oriented structure, and that considered the human agent as an element of this system. Hence economic theories were rooted in a habit of thought that, through an expedient of abstract reason, referred to homo oeconomicus as inserted in a competitive system which elaborates fixed economic laws totally detached from the becoming of reality and of human actions.

From such a perspective, the theory was unable to catch the dynamic and evolving nature of the history of the individual’s economic life, preferring to characterize it as a feat of scientific imagination (Veblen 1899b: 422-3). In other words, in lieu of being the product of a process of adaptation of means and ends subject to the becoming of human evolutionary processes, economics revealed it to be a deductive science which consolidated a mechanism of conservation of equilibrium reflecting a natural law order. This conservative, static representation of reality was legitimated by faith in a progressive cumulative tendency that had not been abandoned with the shift from the pre-Darwinian to the Darwinian perspective. Hence economic theories maintained unaltered the idea that a stability of causal law is the product of a process of gradual amelioration of the phenomena of social and economic sciences. The perspectives of classical economists since Smith could be defined as the perspective of a ceremonial adaptation:

The ultimate laws and principles which they formulated were laws of the normal or the natural, according to a preconception regarding the ends to which in the nature of things, all things tend. In effect, this preconception imputes to things a tendency to work out what the instructed common sense of the time accepts as the adequate or worthy end of human effort. It is a projection of the accepted ideal of conduct. This ideal of conduct is made to serve as a canon of truth, to the extent that the investigator contents himself with an appeal to its legitimation for premises that run back of the facts with which he is immediately dealing, for the “controlling principles” that are conceived intangibly to underlie the process discussed and for the “tendencies” that run beyond the situation as it lies before him. (Veblen 1898a: 382)

One instance of this way of conceiving knowledge was “conjectural history” in the classical treatment of economic institutions, as well as the affective metaphors for money, depicted as “the great wheel of circulation” (Smith 1904: II, 2, 26).

As noted by Veblen, such “figurative,” “metaphoric,” “inscrutable” linguistic forms were used as “ultimate terms” by economists aiming to construct theories such as those of money and wages, referring to their concrete implications just to corroborate their thesis. In so doing, Veblen continued,

the ways and means and the mechanical structure of industry are formulated in a conventionalized nomenclature, and the observed motions of this mechanical apparatus are then reduced to a normalized scheme of relations. (Veblen 1898a: 383)

The scheme becomes “spiritually binding on the behavior of the phenomena contemplated” and the permutations of a given segment of the apparatus are worked out “according to the values assigned the several items and features comprised in the calculation.” This is the “deductive method,” composed of
a body of logically consistent propositions concerning the normal relations of things – a system of economic taxonomy. At its worst, it is a body of maxims for the conduct of business and a polemical discussion of disputed points of policy. (Veblen 1898a: 384)

2. Veblen’s Notion of “Habit” between Peirce’s Logic and James’ Psychology

What are we going to do about it?, asked Veblen. His reply was a plea for a methodological revolution in economics that seems now to be analogous to those implemented by Copernicus in the study of nature and Kant in epistemology. Such a methodological revolution consisted in shifting one’s attention from material elements belonging to economic taxonomy, and clustered under the conceptual category of “capital,” conceived as “a mass of material objects serviceable for human use” (Veblen 1898a: 387), to the human agent as the subject matter of the science. It is the human agent that changes, reflects, evaluates, selects the materials. The accumulation of materials already to hand conditions the utilization of material offered, but such a limitation pertains to what the human agent can do and their method of doing it. And the continuity of development is to be looked for in human material. It is the human agent who is the motor force of the process of economic development that thus needs to be studied by economic science. Such a new approach allows economics to become a social science which can reckon with the research results and studies of other human and natural sciences. The material objects are:

Substantially, prevalent habits of thought, and it is as such that they enter into the process of industrial development. The physical properties of the material accessible to man are constants: it is the human agent that changes – his insight and his appreciation of what these things can be used for is what develops. (Veblen 1898a: 387–8)

Veblen’s notion of “habits of thought” is here very close to Peirce’s notion of “habits of mind.” Whilst we do not find direct mention of Peirce’s theory of logic in Veblen’s writings, we know that Veblen was acquainted with Peirce’s logic for he had assisted in Peirce’s lessons in logic at John Hopkins University in 1881 (Dorfman 1935: 41).

In 1877 Peirce had published The Fixation of Belief, in which he had defined the habit of mind as the result of an act of natural selection consisting in the capacities of human beings to elaborate inferences which validity is verified by their practical applications. In other words, human agents are able to select inferences useful to practical ends through a process of logical evaluation of the possible advantages of certain inferences rather than others. Hence the function of thought is to produce some habits of action and, consequently, the meanings of objects and ideas result from the appreciation of implied practical consequences. As Peirce argued:

We are, doubtless, in the main logical animals, but we are not perfectly so […]. Logicality in regard to practical matters (if this be understood, not in the old sense,
but as consisting in a wise union of security with fruitfulness of reasoning) is the most useful quality an animal can possess, and might, therefore, result from the action of natural selection; but outside of these it is probably of more advantage to the animal to have his mind filled with pleasing and encouraging visions, independently of their truth; and thus, upon unpractical subjects, natural selection might occasion a fallacious tendency of thought. (CP 5.366)

Besides the inferential ability, Peirce’s definition of human being as ‘logical animal’ emphasizes characters influencing a person’s beliefs and way of acting, namely her behavioral dispositions. As Peirce argued in How to Make Our Ideas Clear, “the whole function of thought is to produce habits of action” (CP 5.400). What a thing means is what habit of action it involves, and what the habit is depends on when it causes the person to act, that is when the perception causes the stimulus to action, and how it causes to produce some sensible result, that is some purpose of action. As Peirce puts it, “there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice” (CP 5.400).

The feeling of belief is a more or less sure indication of there being some habits which will determine our actions that are embedded in our nature. What the habit is depends on when and how it causes us to act. As for the when, every stimulus to action is derived from perception; as for the how, every purpose of action is to produce some sensible result. Thus, we come down to what is tangible and conceivably practical, as the root of every real distinction of thought, no matter how subtle it may be.

According to Veblen, in this regard the human agent appreciates the material objects useful to their ends, that is to say, the human agent attributes meanings to things that they select as means for their ends. Veblen too, like Peirce, rejected causal mechanisms, in favor of the active dimension of human thinking and acting. Such active dimension is at the core of the evolutionary advancement of human reasoning in the fixation of beliefs which “guide our desires and shape our actions” (CP 5.371). As Griffin points out, then, Veblen is indebted to Peirce for a social theory of logic “which envisioned the advancement of human reasoning from the tenacity of fixed beliefs to an education of attitudes and methods of science” (Griffin 1998: 750).

If on the one hand Peirce’s logic offered Veblen the notion of habits of thought and the general process of the fixation of beliefs, on the other, James’ psychology offered Veblen the basis for a psychological explanation of the development of habits. In particular, James’ functionalism offered him a psychological explanation of the differentiation of social ends and interests that accompany the changing processes of habits of thought.

8. On the relationship between Peirce’s theory of scientific creativity and evolutionary economics of Veblen see Dyer (1986). For a comparison between Véblen’s ideas and Peirce’s mathematical concerns as well as his alleged belief in laissez faire capitalism see Kilpinen (1999: 192-5). Though I agree with Kilpinen’s idea that Véblen’s conception of rationality refers to Pierce’s logic (Kilpinen 2003: 298-300), I also suggest in this article that his notion of human conscious and intelligent behavior is well rooted in the psychological and anthropological framework of the Chicago functionalism of Dewey and Mead.

9. On Peirce’s thought applied to the methods of fixation of economic belief see the interesting article of Backhouse (1994).
More precisely, James distinguished between habits as *instincts*, effects of an innate tendency, and habits as *acts of reason*, “due to education,” and defined habits as “the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent” (James 1890: 79). At the basis of this distinction is the core of James’ hypothesis about human consciousness according to which the activation of consciousness is due to a “lucky chance,” but by virtue of the hereditary influence of *habits*, in its choice of interests, a more and more unstable nervous system has been determined across generations. Hence consciousness had the power of exerting a constant pressure in the direction of survival, giving the organism the power of acceding to the modes in which consciousness has trained it (James 1983: 54). The development of habits is then strictly related to the moral problem of selecting the correct processes of habitual relationships strenuously resisting wrong alternatives. This is also true in the modification of knowledge processes and in the scientific theory as that of economics. In claiming to favor a ‘reconstruction in economics,’ Veblen referred implicitly to a Jamesian explanation of habits, arguing that:

The canons of knowledge are of the nature of habits of thought, and habit does not break with the past, nor do the hereditary aptitudes that find expression in habit vary gratuitously with the mere lapse of time. What is true in this respect, for instance, in the domain of law and institutions is true, likewise, in the domain of science. What men have learned to accept as good and definitive for the guidance of conduct and of human relations remains true and definitive and unimpeachable until the exigencies of a later, altered situation enforce a variation from the norms and canons of the past, and so give rise to a modification of the habits of thought that decide what is, for the time, right in human conduct. (Veblen 1900: 240-1)

Strongly reinforced by modern sciences, the changes in human life that industrial revolutions have generated, have divested the knowledge of non-human phenomena of that teleological self-directing life that was one imputed to them, reducing this knowledge to therm of opaque causal sequence. As Veblen argued, non-human phenomena have not been supplanted by the equally uncouth denomination of habits, propensities, aptitudes, and conventions, even if these notions are at the basis of a way of considering non-human phenomena in economic science. So it is necessary to shift attention to those human phenomena that appeal the psychological dimension of economic human conduct. And this is possible only if economic science adopts the idea of an undetermined science and an undetermined universe, the object of an explanation that would take steps from an inductive non-a priori approach and consider the evolution of *habits of thought* as the product of a process of adaptation in which some methodological assumptions about different forms of human knowledge are involved.

Veblen’s references to functionalist psychology are present in both *Why is Economics not an Evolutionary Science?* and in *The Preconceptions of Economic Science*. Veblen refers to later psychology as biological, arguing that “the base of

action – and economic action – at any step in the process is the entire organic complex of habits of thought that have been shaped by past process” (Veblen 1898a: 392-3).

Use of notions such as “organic activities,” “propensities,” “aptitudes” suggests not only Veblen’s knowledge of James’ psychology, but also that Veblen was acquainted with Dewey’s work on the reflex arc concept in psychology (Dewey 1896) and probably also Dewey’s (1894, 1895) and Mead’s (1895, 2001) works on emotion as well as with the experiments on attention and habit that Angell and Moore (1896) refined at the University of Chicago in that period. There is no direct mention of these works in Veblen’s writings of these years, nevertheless Veblen’s conception of science and economic rationality seems to have been influenced more by Dewey’s and Mead’s theory of the “organic circuit” rather than James’ functionalism.

3. Veblen’s References to Dewey’s and Mead’s Functionalist Psychology

In The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology (Dewey 1896), the manifesto of Chicago School of psychological functionalism, Dewey proposed a new psychological theory aiming to re-direct the attention of experimental psychology from the ontological mind-body distinction to the ‘organic relation’ between stimuli and response considered from a functionalistic perspective. In particular, he denounced the dualistic perspective of that experimental psychology which considered psychical phenomena statically, and called for an interpretation of human sensations, thinking, and actions as stages of the human act. Rather than a mechanistic explanation of the relation stimulus-response, he advanced the idea of a “sensorial circuit” highlighting the organic nature of the sense-motor process in which stimulus, selection, and motor response are considered as intertwined and interdependent stages instead of discrete and separated elements. According to Dewey, stimuli are not prior to an organism’s capacity to select them, for the distinction between stimulus and response presupposes a dynamic sensorial process through which the perceiving organism becomes aware of the sensible stimulus at the moment at which it is useful for the restoration of an interrupted act.

Whilst Dewey had in 1886 already suggested the idea of an “organic relation” between subject and object sustaining a ‘proto-functionalistic’ psychology (while still framed in an idealistic conceptual background), it was only after the reading

11. In their article Angell and Moore credit both Dewey and Mead with the guidance that provided the interpretation presented in the article.
12. The intellectual relationship between Dewey and Mead has been interpreted in controversial ways, in particular in reference to the foundation of the Chicago School of functionalism. Gary Cook (1993), for instance, considers Dewey to be the founder of functionalism, from which Mead elaborated his social psychology. David L. Miller (1973) has contended that the insights that form the foundation of functionalist psychology are Mead’s, and that Dewey adopted the ideas from his friend and colleague. Miller’s interpretation has been partially confirmed also by Dewey’s daughter (Dewey 1951: 26).

Whilst I have difficulty accepting one side of this contention, it can be reasonably inferred from the crediting of both Dewey and Mead a collaborative effort to develop the key ideas of functionalism. On this point see Baggio (2015: 15-29).

13. According to Andrew Backe (2001: 323-40), Dewey’s own psychology was based primarily upon the neo-Hegelian philosophy of Thomas Hill Green. Backe’s interpretation of Dewey’s psychology leads to
of James’ *Principles of Psychology*, together with the onset of the intellectual collaboration with Mead and the move to Chicago, that Dewey abandoned definitively the idealistic framework in order to embrace the functionalistic experimental approach to psychology. Between 1894 and 1895 he published two articles on the matter of emotions – “The Theory of Emotions: Emotional Attitude” and “The Theory of Emotions: The Significance of Emotion” – in which, using an almost completely functionalist conceptual apparatus, he sketched his own map of an organic theory of emotions.\(^\text{14}\)

Actually, Dewey’s theory of emotion was not his own product solely. Dewey himself admitted his debt to Mead concerning both the description of the relationship between vegetative functions and motor functions, and the hypothesis about non-human emotional attitudes. As he wrote to Angell in 1893:

> Among other things next year, Mead and I are going to try to experiment on mental images, with a view to getting some results on attention and on rhythm. Mead is also trying to work out something on sensation on the biological side. All of us recognize, that sensation, especially its qualitative features, has been the sticking point to a successful statement of idealism. He is trying to see if one could get back of the present qualities and show the sensation as a condensation or precipitation of past organic activities, so that everything which is aesthetic now was once practical or teleological. I do not [if] this brief statement conveys the thought, but it seems to me one of the most important working hypotheses turned up lately.\(^\text{15}\)

When Dewey and Mead arrived at the University of Chicago in 1894, they worked on the formulation of a psychology which would include a theory of consciousness in terms of organic functions. In particular, they elaborated a phylogenetic hypothesis concerning consciousness from the sensory-motor processes, so overtaking both the limits of an idealistic interpretation of sensations and the risks of a reductionist physicalism. In other words, they searched for a psychology which had to be founded empirically. Their research produced a theory of emotion the aim of which was to overcome James’ individualistic theory of emotion through a re-evaluation of the active role natural and social environments play in the emergence of emotions.

In particular, referring to both Darwin’s and James’ theories of emotions, Dewey argued that at the origin of emotion there is the interruption of an act and that the bodily expression of emotion is the expression of some attitudes of action “adjusted to some end” (Dewey 1895: 162). Dewey considered the expression of certain emotional attitudes as the marks of the passing over of emotional attitude into communicative gesture,\(^\text{16}\) arguing that there is a division between movements that are preparatory to

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\(^\text{14}\) Jim Garrison (2003) argues that Dewey’s theory of emotions already presents the basis for the next theory of the reflex arc concept. However, he does not consider Mead’s contribution to Dewey’s functionalism to be so important.


\(^\text{16}\) The notion of communicative gesture will be in the next years at the basis of Mead’s and Dewey’s theory of communicative interaction as the core of social development of meanings and Selves. It has to be noted that according to these authors communication is not intended to be linguistically (or
a set of acts and movements that are useful in themselves as accomplished ends, the first being the expression of attitudes the culmination of which is the performance of the act. As he wrote:

Emotion in its entirety is a mode of behavior [my italics] which is purposive or has an intellectual content, and which also reflects itself into feeling or Affects, as the subjective valuation of that which is objectively expressed in the idea or purpose. (Dewey 1895: 170-1)

In other words, the emotion is aroused when the unification with activity is broken, calling for both a tension of intellectual recognition and the consideration of how to behave towards the object recognized:

The emotion is, psychologically, the adjustment or tension of habit and ideal, and the organic changes in the body are the literal working out, in concrete terms, of the struggle of adjustment. (Dewey 1895: 185)

Dewey referred to ‘behavior’ as a pivotal element for the emotion. In particular, he indicated ‘behavior’ as “the ideal content of emotion” (Dewey 1895: 185). Behavior is then the center of the condensation of organic activities in which emotional attitude creates a tension between some behavioral habits and the ideal situations.18

A two-pages abstract of a paper Mead presented at the third annual meeting of the American Psychological Association of 1894 (Mead 1895), and other fragments on the relation between evolution, the development of intelligence, and the control of emotion, passion, or reflex action testify Mead’s contribution to Dewey’s theory.19 In these papers Mead proposed an explanation of organic activities tracing in their processes the passage from sensori-motor behavioral attitudes to reflections. More interested than Dewey in the biological processes, Mead was engaged from the beginning of his career in searching for a solution to the question concerning the phylogeny of consciousness, and in his contribution to Dewey’s theory hypothesized that it was possible to find the passage from sensorial to symbolic stimulus in the qualitative differentiation of emotional tones expressed in the different instinctive attitudes.

According to Mead, the arousal of emotional tones of consciousness that lie in the physiological reply to symbolic stimuli connected to the rhythmical repetition of propositionally only, and meanings are not seen as mentalistic or ideational (as Pratten 2015 seems to argue), but rather as behavioral (Mead 1904: 377-8, 1934: 78-9; and Dewey 1929: 137). Meanings, in fact, are related to the dispositions to respond to certain vocal gestures which emotional attitudes are primitive expressions.

17. It is interesting to note that Panksepp (2001) has now advanced a similar explanation of the emotions. He addresses the need to complement neurophysiological terms with behavioral, psychological, and cerebral explanations of emotions, in a triangulation which he defines “affective neuroscience.”

18. Some years later, Mead (1936: 392 ss.) defined Dewey’s psychology as a “behavioristic psychology,” distinguishing two ways of elaborating the general point of view of behaviorism. Watson’s approach considers the process in an external way only, and Dewey’s approach “carries with it the various values which we had associated with the term ‘consciousness’.” It is noteworthy that Watson conducted his doctoral studies at the University of Chicago under Angell’s guidance, eventually defining his own behaviorism as “the only consistent and logical functionalism” (Watson 1913: 166).

physiological stimulation. In particular, the rhythmical aspect which is at the basis of human actions, represents the link between symbolic stimuli which have an aesthetic value expressed at the beginning in war and love dances in primitive populations and the instinctive acts at their basis. As Mead wrote:

It is under the influence of stimuli of this general character that the emotional states and their physiological parallels arise. The teleology of these states is that of giving the organism an evaluation of the act before the coordination that leads to the particular reaction has been completed. (Mead 1895: 164)

3.1. Instinct, Behavior, and Social Evolution

Dewey’s and Mead’s works inserted themselves into ongoing debates on the methodologies and notions to be used in the new science of empirical psychology. Since the publication of Theodor Fechner’s *Elemente der Psychophysik* (1860), psychophysics had been proposing a natural method to measure the sensory stimulus-response mechanism, interpreting the intensity of the stimulus with causal physical laws. However, the debate around the psychophysical measurement did not yield useful results and pragmatists were aware of this. In 1885 Peirce and Jastrow published the results of experiments on small differences of sensation that showed the methodological limits of a psychophysical measurement of conscious states. Dewey (1887) also pointed out the limits of a psychophysical measurement in his review of Ladd’s *Elements of Physiological Psychology* (the first American publication on physiological psychology). And in 1894 Mead accused physicists to do not consider the fact that the only way to trace the distinction between the psychical and the physical characters of perceptions was to distinguish “between the world as composed of means and of ends” (Mead 1894: 23; emphasis added), namely between sensations that are means acting as stimuli and “ends or purposes in consciousness” (Mead 1894: 23).

And if the psychological debate was not resolved, a fortiori it was not resolved in economics, as highlighted by Veblen. Analogously to psychophysics’ reduction of the qualitative intensity of sensation to the quantitative magnitude of its physical stimulus, utilitarians reduced happiness to a calculus of pleasure and pain, considering intensity and its duration as the only dimension belonging properly to feeling and that intensity of feeling is the instantaneous state that determines the degree of utility. Hence they determine quantitatively its maximization “by purchasing pleasure, as it were, at the lowest cost of pain” (Jevons 1888: 23) and identifying “the physical objects or actions” with the source of pleasure and pains (Jevons 1888: 37). The background of such an economic framework was a methodological a priori approach to human conduct based upon the hedonistic psychological assumption that actual impulsions are effects of the “obscure” demand of pleasure. As in the psychophysics measurement the qualitative dimension of sensation was reduced to a stimulus-response causal law, in economics

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20. See also Dewey (1894b: 158). The explanation of the rhythmical character of action represents the most important contribution of Mead’s physiological perspective to Dewey’s theory of emotions, according to whom: “all well-arranged or economical action is rhythmical.”
human action was seen as the product of environment causal forces and the individual was seen as a “mechanism of commutation.” One of the consequences was the success of mechanistic and deterministic theories of human economic behavior. As Veblen argued:

The purpose of the valuation process through which the impulse is so conveyed, human nature may, therefore, be accepted as uniform; and the theory of the valuation process may be formulated quantitatively, in terms of the material forces affecting the human sensory and of their equivalents in the resulting activity. In the language of economics, the theory of value may be stated in terms of the consumable goods that afford the incentive to effort and the expenditure undergone in order to procure them. Between these two there subsists a necessary equality; but the magnitudes between which the equality subsists are hedonistic magnitudes, not magnitudes of kinetic energy nor of vital force, for the terms handled are sensuous terms. (Veblen 1899b: 414-5)

According to Veblen, the problem of such a perspective was its ontological assumption of the measurability of such an equality of magnitudes, although such an assumption was based only in a methodological and conceptual need. The associationist psychology at the basis of economic theory was in this respect highly inappropriate since it conceived man as a passive isolated datum:

The human material with which the inquiry is concerned is conceived in hedonistic terms; that is to say in terms of a passive and substantially inert and immutably given nature. The psychological and anthropological preconceptions of the economists have been those which were accepted by psychological and social sciences some generations ago. The hedonistic conception of man is that of a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogeneous globule of desire of happiness under the impulse of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him intact […]. He is an isolated definitive human datum, in stable equilibrium except for the buffets of the impinging forces that displace him in one direction or another. (Veblen 1898a: 389)

Hence psychophysics had contributed to legitimate hedonism (utility) as a ground of legitimacy and a guide in the normalization of knowledge in economics and ethics (Veblen 1899b: 414 ss.).

However, as also Mead suggested already in 1894, physics needed to rethink the logical apparatus through which it looked at perceptual phenomena because, only by changing the logical apparatus, could it defeat its limits (limits that Mead (1903) later would extend to various psychological theories). Analogously, according to Veblen the reference to the notion of “organic activities” would help overcome the mechanistic approach to economic phenomena. He then referred explicitly to the “reflex arc” concept, in line with Dewey’s and Mead’s ideas about organic activity:

The causal sequence in the “reflex arc” is, no doubt, continuous; but the continuity is not, as formerly, conceived in terms of spiritual substance transmitting a shock: it is conceived in terms of the life activity of the organism. Human conduct, taken as the reaction of such an organism under stimulus, may be stated in terms of tropism, involving, of course, a very close-knit causal sequence between the impact and the
response, but at the same time imputing to the organism a habit of life and a self-directing and selective attention in meeting the complex of forces that make up its environment. The selective play of this tropismatic complex that constitutes the organism’s habit of life under the impact of the forces of the environment counts as discretion. So far, therefore, as it is to be placed in contrast with the hedonistic phase of the older psychological doctrines, the characteristic feature of the newer conception is the recognition of a selectively self-directing life process in the agent. (Veblen 1900: 247)

Such a new conception refers to human agents not as calculators of pleasures and pain, but rather as acting teleologically, that is, as “a coherent structure of propensities and habits which seek realization and expression in an unfolding activity,” while desires and attitudes under whose guidance the action take place are: “circumstances of temperament which determine the specific direction in which the activity will unfold itself in the given case” (Veblen 1898a: 390). By “circumstances of temperament,” Veblen means those elements which specify the character of the individual. They are the “products of his hereditary traits and his past experience, cumulatively wrought out under a given body of traditions, conventionalities, and material circumstances” (Veblen 1898a: 390). Also the main reference to temperament here is a pragmatist one, for James speaks of ‘temperament’ in various parts of his Principles, referring to attitudes of human character in terms of “balanced temperament,” “irascible temperament,” “emotional temperament,” etc.

Hence the activity is the substantial fact of the process, whereas the individual is but a single complex of habits of thought, and the same psychical mechanism that expresses itself in one direction as conduct expresses itself in another direction as knowledge. The habits of thought formed in the one connection, in response to stimuli that call for a response in terms of conduct, must, therefore, have their effect when the same individual comes to respond to stimuli that call for a response in terms of knowledge. The scheme of thought or of knowledge is in good part a reverberation of the scheme of life. (Veblen 1899: 143)

Veblen’s references to notions such as “reflex arc,” “organic activity,” and “habit of thought,” confirm that he was acquainted with Dewey’s and Mead’s psychology as the “later psychology” that would enable economic interests to be rooted in a social psychological dimension.

There are, therefore, some important affinities between the two perspectives, namely Dewey’s and Mead’s psychology, and Veblen’s evolutionary economics. What is clear is the role functionalist psychology played in Veblen’s suggestions concerning a new approach to economics.21 What is less clear is the role the theory of

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21. As we find also in Veblen’s 1906 essay “The Place of Science in Modern Civilization,” he refers to the “pragmatic” school of psychologists accepting that “all learning is of a ‘pragmatic’ character; that knowledge is inchoate action inchoately directed to an end; that all knowledge is “functional”; that it is of the nature of use. This, of course, is only a corollary under the main postulate of the latter-day psychologists, whose catchword is that The Idea is essentially active” (Veblen 1919: 5). We totally agree with Kilipinen’s comparison of Veblen’s words on pragmatic psychologists with his suggestion about the possible development of a new conception of human reasoning in such an endeavour as that of Kant’s third Critique (Veblen 1884; see Kilpinen 1999: 196). However, I want to stress the
emotion played in his ideas, even if, as we have seen, the same theory is at the base of organic circuit theory.

Nevertheless, Veblen’s further development of human social agency seem to me to be consonant with Mead’s explanation of the passage from emotion to social interest as well as with the general pragmatist approach to the problem-solving theory of human development.

According to Mead an emotion represents the correlation of instinctive stimuli to aesthetic stimuli and the common basis of the ontogeny and phylogeny of consciousness. Actually, Mead did not explain in his abstract that we analyzed above either the correlation between instinctive and aesthetic stimuli or the link between the latter as social stimuli (war and love dances) and the organism’s response to it. Nevertheless, he did so in a fragment that seems to be the natural extension of the abstract I am analyzing and that Mead probably composed around 1896.22 In this fragment he suggested that, in the excessive emotional content expressed in acts such as those of war and love dances, and their individual expressions as rapine or pathological expressions of the sexual act, “we find in the first place that the distinction between them and other emotional expressions lies in the distinction between interest and passion of one sort or another.”23 Two things have to be explained here, that is, the presence of excessive emotional contents, and their relation to social developments. According to Mead, there is a distinction between ‘interest’ and ‘passion’ (the latter including all kinds of passion), regarding their difference in the expression of the emotional content. Emotional content is present in the former throughout the whole act and cannot be separated from it, whereas in the latter it absorbs the whole consciousness and, if the act is not accomplished, the emotion is still aroused. The progress of more controlled actions consists in transforming potential reflex actions – expressions of strong emotional power – into actions characterized by interest and not by passion. The possibility of further advancement is attained “through the socializing of processes which have been strictly individual up to this point.”24

The distinction between ‘interest’ and ‘passion’ marks the dividing line between individual instincts connected to immediate consummation of needs and the social instincts – e.g the urge to fight is an outgrowth of the process of food consumption, that is, a socializing process of something primarily individual.25

It is noteworthy that at this time Mead was already taking his first steps towards a social perspective in psychology and that, even if Dewey was aware of the need for a “theory of consciously organic activity” to explain the organism’s biological function

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22. Mead’s “Untitled fragment on the relation between evolution, the development of intelligence, and the control of emotion, passion, or reflex action” (George Herbert Mead Collected Papers, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago, Box X, Folder 30).
23. Ibid.: 3.
of adaptation to natural environment,\textsuperscript{26} for his part, Mead was moving in that direction and perhaps this would better contribute to Veblen’s idea of “biological psychology.”

Now, as Veblen argued in line with Mead’s theory, the responding organism is an “agent” whose intelligent behavioral response to stimulus is of a teleological character and that intelligence is “of the nature of an inhibitive selection” (Veblen 1919: 6). The human process of the evolution of habits and dispositions begins hence with the interruption of an act and the reply to social and natural stimuli through an interaction that is not merely mechanical:

Like other animals, man is an agent that acts in response to stimuli afforded by the environment in which he lives. Like other species, he is a creature of habit and propensity. But in a higher degree than other species, man mentally digests the content of the habits under whose guidance he acts, and appreciates the trend of these habits and propensities. He is in an eminent sense an intelligent agent. By selective necessity he is endowed with a proclivity for purposeful action. He is possessed of a discriminating sense of purpose, by force of which all futility of life or of action is distasteful to him. There may be a wide divergence between individuals as regards the form and the direction in which this impulse expresses itself, but the impulse itself is not a matter of idiosyncrasy, it is a generic feature of human nature. (Veblen 1898b: 188-9)

And as Veblen repeated some years later, human instincts leave the field open for adaptation of behavior to circumstances. In man “habit takes on more of a cumulative character, in that the habitual acquirements of the race are handed on from one generation to the next by tradition, training, education” (Veblen 1914: 38-9). Once the habits are acquired under given circumstances and impulses, a given line of behavior becomes habitual and so installed by use as a principle of conduct handed down by community (Veblen 1914: 50). These habits are, in other words, the rules under whose the institutions arise. Institutions, in fact, have the nature of prevailing habits of thought reflecting habits of life embedded in institutional structures of society, they hence are mental attitudes that are settled and prevalent,\textsuperscript{27} being at the basis of men’s ordering their lives.\textsuperscript{28} Economic life is identified with community life, for it contributes to shape conventions and ways of social life. However, economic development also influences the evolutionary processes of culture, shaping a complex organism of habits and personalities.

As Veblen argued, in a sense in line with Dewey’s and Mead’s psychology, economic interest is a social interest as are aesthetic, sexual, humanitarian, and

\textsuperscript{26}This is testified also in Dewey’s review of Lester F. Ward’s \textit{The Psychic Factors of Civilization} in which Dewey claimed that: “The biological theory of society needs reconstruction from the standpoint of the recognition of the significance of intellect, emotion, and impulse” (Dewey 1894a: 210).

\textsuperscript{27}General value of habits are something “common to the generality of men” (Veblen 1919: 239).

\textsuperscript{28}Lawson challenges Hodgson’s depiction of Veblen’s account of habit (Hodgson 2004), according to which the notion of habit, which origin is rooted in the pragmatist philosophers and instinct psychologists, “is a propensity to behave in particular way in a particular class of situations” (Hodgson 2004: 652). Contrary to what Hodgson argues, Lawson (2015: 999-1002) suggests that the ideas of habits and of institutions as settled habits are derived to Veblen directly from Kant’s philosophy. In my opinion, though Veblen was influenced by Kant thought, and in particular by Kant’s \textit{Critique of Judgment}, it is more plausible that his Kantian legacy has been mediated by his Peircean background. On this point see also Griffin (1998: 739-40).
religious interests:

Since each of these passably isolable interests is a propensity of the organic agent man, with his complex of habits of thought, the expression of each is affected by habits of life formed under the guidance of all the rest. There is, therefore, no neatly isolable range of cultural phenomena that can be rigorously set apart under the head of economic institutions, although a category of “economic institutions” may be of service as a convenient captation, comprising those institutions in which the economic interest most immediately and consistently finds expression, and which most immediately and with the least limitation are of an economic bearing. (Veblen 1898a: 393)

According to Veblen, the economic history of individuals and social groups is the product of a cumulative trend of adaptation between means and ends. This strongly contrasted with the utilitarian perspective, according to which society is the sum of individuals. On the contrary, the perspective inversion from an individualistic to a social approach would overcome the idea that economic interests are only individual interests. As Veblen argued, the consequence of the transition to the new conception of human nature construed in terms of functioning is that the newer view formulates conduct in terms of personality, whereas the earlier view was content to formulate it in terms of its provocation and its by-product (Veblen 1900: 248).

4. Conclusion

In the works that Veblen published at the University of Chicago we find a curious blend of Peirce’s logical approach and a pragmatist conceptualization of human conduct that has its roots, besides James’ functionalism, in Dewey’s and Mead’s functionalism. It seems that some of Veblen’s ideas are consonant with what Dewey and Mead were working on at the time. As it has been noted Veblen developed his theory of intelligent human conduct in the behavioral setting of stimulus and response. However, it was not a reductionist approach to human behavior, namely a sort of Watsonian behavioral approach in which reason is reduced to a mere chooser’s rationality (Kilpinen 1999: 199), rather much more a Dewey’s and Mead’s pragmatic behavioral approach to human conduct in wich reflective reasoning is part of the transaction between organism and environment. It is for that reason that I choosed to focus on the period 1896-1900 mainly, because the period represents in my view a high water mark in the influence of Dewey’s and Mead’s psychology on Veblen’s thought. Hence it is possible to better comprehend the theoretical framework Veblen

29. Whilst after 1908 Veblen referred to McDougall’s social psychology, it is plausible to hypothesize that his general interest in social psychology would have been influenced, at least in part, by the pragmatist and behavioristic conceptualization that he developed at Chicago. It is, in fact, thanks to a psychological idea Veblen assimilated in the period 1896-1900 that he found some “familiarity” with McDougall’s social psychology. McDougall rooted individual consciousness in social instinct, highlighting the interaction between social and biological dimensions of the organic circuit. However, as we have seen, some years before Dewey and Mead elaborated the theoretical framework in which McDougall after inserted his work, in particular Mead’s theorizing of the passage from the instinctive to symbolic stimuli as the basis of the qualitative distinction between emotion and interest. See in particular Veblen (1914: Ch.1.); Tworney 1998; and Dugger (1979: 430).
referred to when elaborating his first ideas of an evolutionary economics. It is also easier to understand why he rejected both the individual and society as the ultimate unity of explanation in the social sciences, searching for a balance between these two extremes.

Although he has sometimes used improperly psychological notions such as ‘instinct,’ ‘habits of thought,’ ‘dispositions,’ ‘aptitudes,’ etc., he used these notions as a framework in which insert his reflections upon economic institutions and social change. Moreover, such ambiguity on the use of psychological notions was due to the fact that, at the time, empirical psychology was taking its first steps. It was not a discipline with methodological and conceptual autonomy. Functionalism was still dependent upon natural sciences and metaphysics. One should bear in mind that concepts such as ‘instinct’ and ‘behavior’ at the time meant something different from what they would mean decades after.

Veblen’s evolutionary economics has to be included with Dewey’s and Mead’s psychology among those post-Darwinian non-reductionist interpretations of the bio-psycho-social nature of human conduct. On the one hand, Veblen’s call for a change of methodological paradigm brought in light the fallacy of the fact/value dicothomy; on the other hand, he gave voice to the need for a methodological renewal process beginning from an organic interpretation of human behavior and formation of habits.

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30. Cf. Maybarry (1969: 317 ss.). Tilman (1996: 93) pointed out that the ambiguity of meaning Veblen uses the notion of “instinct” would gathered from the ambiguous use James did in his Principles of Psychology. In effect, James defined instincts as: “the habits to which there is an innate tendency” (James 1890: 68). He also spoke of “instinctive impulses” (James 1890: 198).

31. Hence James’ inferential, rather than ontological, use of the term ‘soul’ in the Principles of Psychology (James 1890: 3-4, 1892: 400).

32. For a discussion of the concept of habit in economic analysis see Waller 1988, and in sociology Camic 1986.


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Moral Particularism and the Role of Imaginary Cases: A Pragmatist Approach

Abstract. I argue that John Dewey’s analysis of imagination enables an account of learning from imaginary cases consistent with Jonathan Dancy’s moral particularism. Moreover, this account provides a more robust account of learning from cases than Dancy’s own. Particularism is the position that there are no, or at most few, true moral principles, and that competent reasoning and judgment do not require them. On a particularist framework, one cannot infer from an imaginary case that because a feature has a particular moral importance there, that it must have that import in an actual case. Instead, for Dancy, cases can yield “reminders,” and a person with a lot of experience (real or imagined) brings a “checklist” of features that can matter to a situation. Using the Nathan-David exchange from 2 Samuel and Martha Nussbaum’s “Steerforth’s Arm” from Love’s Knowledge, I show that this account does not explain all instances of learning from cases. Drawing on recent work on cases, I argue that cases can be educative by serving an exploratory function, probing what one takes to be known and provoking change in the background one uses in evaluating a situation. I then argue that Dewey’s work on imagination in his comments on sympathy and in A Common Faith and Art as Experience enables such a role for cases on a particularist framework. Mark Johnson’s recent work on metaphor further illuminates how Dewey’s account of art can be exploratory. I contend that this account affords an exploratory role for cases consistent with Dancy’s particularism.

Moral particularism is the view that there are no, or at most few, true universal moral principles and that competent reasoning and judgment do not require them. Instead of conformity to a principle, particularists affirm that actions are justified by a situation’s salient features, and deny that a feature must have the same moral import in every situation in which it appears. But, since the reason-giving force of a feature in one situation is not a guarantor of its status elsewhere, particularism seems unable to account for moral learning from cases. In ethics, an imaginary case is a proxy for an actual situation, a description of a hypothetical state of affairs, and consideration of what would be morally required in the case is generally intended to provide action-guidance in a real situation. However, the features of a past or imaginary case are not precisely those of the real situation before us. It is possible that a feature might be salient in one case but not in another, and, on a particularist framework, appealing to cases seems likely to lead us astray.

Jonathan Dancy, particularism’s primary advocate, acknowledges that particularism must accommodate a role for inferring from cases in moral reasoning. Dancy argues that cases, imagined and experienced, yield reminders; they provide a “checklist” of features that might have moral import. Here, I provide reason to think that this role for cases is unsatisfactory by looking at the impact that reviewing cases has in facilitating new moral appreciations. In response, I argue that John Dewey’s work on the imagination along with contemporary elucidations of moral imagination in the

* Capital University [NJackson1331@capital.edu].

1. Walsh (2011: 469) offers a similar definition. See also his introduction in Walsh (2013: 5143). Gendler 2000 also offers extensive treatment of the role of imaginary cases in philosophical inquiry generally, not solely in moral argument.
pragmatist tradition allow for a more robust account of the ability to learn from cases consistent with particularism. Thus, while there are key distinctions between Dewey’s ethics and contemporary particularism, Dewey’s work on imagination affords an alternative particularist explanation of learning from imaginary cases.²

**Particularism, Holism and Narrative Rationality**

Particularism’s fundamental position concerning moral reasons sets the parameters for its approach to cases. Foundational to the dispute between generalism, or principle-bound accounts of morality, and particularism is a dispute concerning the behavior of moral reasons. Here, a reason is a consideration that favors, or makes a case for, an action. For particularists like Dancy, ordinary features of situations (that someone lied, that one borrowed property, etc…) serve as reasons. Underlying particularism is holism, the thesis that, “a feature that is a reason in one case may be no reason at all, or an opposite reason, in another” (Dancy 2004: 73). In *Moral Reasons* (1993), Dancy argues that,

> The leading thought behind particularism is the thought that the behavior of a reason (or of a consideration that serves as a reason) in a new case cannot be predicted from its behavior elsewhere. The way in which the consideration functions here either will or at least may be affected by other considerations here present, […]

and identifies this view as a “holistic view of the behavior of reasons” (*Ibid.*: 60). He contrasts this position with atomism, the thesis that “a feature that is a reason in one case must remain a reason, and retain the same polarity, in any other” (Dancy 2004: 70). If moral principles are in sufficient supply to ground moral reasoning, we should expect to find many atomistic (invariant) reasons, since principles specify features as having invariant moral importance. If most of the features that count for or against an action behave holistically, depending on other features in a situation in order to stand as a reason, we should not expect many moral principles.

Dancy offers several illustrative arguments for holism. First, particularists can envision a large number of cases in which the same feature can serve as a reason for an action, a case against an action, or have no bearing on whether an act is right or wrong. In effect, particularism denies the soundness of “switching arguments,” arguments that isolate a feature and infer that because that feature is sometimes morally significant, it must matter in the same way in any case in which it appears. For example, we might maintain that an action’s causing pain counts against it morally and envision a case in which causing pain is a morally significant feature (torturing innocents, for example). But Dancy invites us to consider his extracting a sea urchin’s

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² Various commentators highlight central aspects of the distinctions between particularism and pragmatism. Some, like Todd Lekan and Gregory Pappas, offer arguments for the strength of Dewey’s ethics over Dancy’s particularism. In particular, these authors draw on Dewey’s work to disclose a role for principles in moral deliberation. Others, like David Bakhurst, consider the possibility of a fruitful intersection between the views. See for instance: Bakhurst (2007: 122-41); Fesmire (2015: 143); Jackson (2016: 215-24); Lekan (2003: 96-102); and Pappas (2008: 51-5).
pin from his daughter’s heel. A painless method of doing so, if available, would have been preferable, but no such method was available. Here, pain does not count against the action’s moral propriety (Dancy 1993: 65). Similarly, Dancy asks us to imagine borrowing a book. Normally, that we borrowed something is reason to return it. But, if we learn the book is stolen, that we borrowed it no longer serves as a moral reason (Ibid.: 60). The same feature can thus be a reason or not, depending upon background features of the specific case. Particularists are confident that the supply of these cases is large enough that, for any given feature, there are cases in which it matters and cases in which it does not. This supply illustrates the context-dependence of moral reasons.

Another argument for holism is that other sorts of reasons are evidently holistic, and there is no need to posit a gulf between moral reasons and other sorts of reasons. For example, in the realm of practical reasons, “that there will be nobody much else around is sometimes a good reason for going there, and sometimes a very good reason for staying away.” (Dancy 2004: 74). Or, take an epistemic example. Normally, being appeared to redly is a reason to accept that something is red. But, if I am aware that I am an inverted spectrum case, then something appearing red is a good reason to believe that it is blue. These cases, and cases like them, are motivation to abandon atomism in the practical and epistemic domains. Other examples of reason-behavior in non-moral spheres are similarly intuitive, and motivate Dancy’s question, “[C]ould it be the case that moral reasons are quite different from all the others in this respect, being the only atomistic ones?” (Ibid.: 76).

A particularist account of learning from cases must cohere with holism. Importantly, such an account must also comport with Dancy’s commitments regarding the structure of moral justification. Given his commitment to holism, Dancy re-visions moral competence. He argues in rejecting the generalist (principled) account of moral reasons, that, “Moral justification is therefore not subsumptive in nature, but narrative” (Dancy 1993: 113). Generalists distinguish between reason-giving practices, descriptions of a situation and what it calls for, and the structure of moral justification. According to Dancy’s characterization of generalism, moral justification has to take the form of subsumption, where a principle or rule provides reason for action. But when we describe a situation, we do not offer a principle under which the action is subsumed. We try, rather, to get another to see a situation as we do, to notice what we notice. Practices of justification, therefore, are distinct from practices of description on a generalist picture.

Particularists reject this distinction between moral description and moral justification. Rather, “to justify one’s choice is to give the reasons one sees for making it, and to give those reasons is just to lay out how one sees the situation, starting in

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3. Albertzart helpfully argues that a certain criticism of thought-experiments in “contrast arguments” is at the heart of Dancy’s particularism. He writes, “There is widespread reliance on the possibility of making progress by extracting what we take to be morally relevant in one particular situation and transplanting it into a new hypothetical situation, and vice versa. The assumption is that if something is morally relevant in one case it must remain relevant, and relevant in a similar way, in any other. This atomism is rarely openly admitted, and, if asked, most moral philosophers would probably deny it. However, many arguments nevertheless implicitly rely on atomism and – suitable rephrased – Dancy’s theory helps to expose this assumption” (Albertzart 2014: 52).
the right place and going on to display the various salient features in the right way” (Ibid.: 113). The structure of justification mirrors the structure of description, and the distinction between justification and description collapses. As a consequence of this collapse, Dancy maintains that the structure of moral justification is narrative, not subsumptive. Descriptions, if we are proceeding aright, “track” the salient features of a situation.

What we describe, if we perceive accurately, are the various salient features of the situation. But, more than just having a list of all of the relevant features, “a full view of circumstances will not only see each feature for what it is but will also see how they are related to one another. Such a view will grasp the shape of the circumstances” (Ibid.: 112). This metaphor of “shape” is central to Dancy’s account of justification and rationality. A good description follows the shape of the situation, which provides moral reasons for action.

Finally, since moral rationality is a matter of tracking a situation’s shape and perceiving its proper description, Dancy maintains that, “Rationality […] is more like the ability to listen to and appreciate a story” (Ibid.: 144). Morally competent individuals are able to have a narrative construal of a situation and perceive what action that narrative supports. Narrative construals that in fact justify an action display the strengths the form allows, namely coherence (Ibid.: 114).

Holism about reasons and narrative rationality undermine reliance on principles and complicate an account of learning from cases. The interplay of features identified by holism is complex and speaks against the possibility of principles insofar as we cannot be assured that a feature will serve as a reason from case to case. The same feature can display different roles in different situations’ narrative shapes. That a feature plays a particular role in one situation’s story is no guarantee that it must have that role in other narratives. This potential for interference from other features presents a problem regarding the possibility of learning from cases, since a feature revealed as important in a past or imaginary case may not have that importance in a future situation. A particularist account of learning from cases must cohere with the commitment to narrative justification and with holism.

Revealing Reasons: Particularism’s Reception Regarding Cases

Particularism motivates a deep suspicion of considering cases, insofar as it exhorts moral sensitivity to the narrative organization of a present case’s features. Dancy writes,

The primary focus of particularism is the particular case, not surprisingly. This means that one’s main duty, in moral judgement, is to look really closely at the individual case before one. Our first question is not “Which other cases does this one best resemble?,” but rather “What is the nature of the case before us?” (Dancy 1995: 63)

4. Bakhurst (2007: 138-9) notes that “particularists frequently invoke aesthetic phenomena [like narrative] to illuminate their position,” but “[…] it remains unclear how seriously we are to take this parallel.” He suggests that Dewey’s work on the imagination might be of aid here, but does not develop this suggestion, instead focusing attention on supposed inadequacies in Steven Fesmire’s argument for artistry as a paradigmatic metaphor for morality.

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Recent work on the role of analogical reasoning and cases in ethics puts Dancy’s particularism in service of limiting the kinds of cases that can legitimately test moral intuitions. Jakob Elster, for instance, cites particularism to suggest that “outlandish cases,” cases that are conceivable but impossible in our world, can only have a limited role in moral argument, since the imagined case will not share the same profile of morally relevant features as those actually confronting us (Elster 2011: 252-3). In response, Joseph Spino maintains that such impossibility is only a concern if it signals a morally relevant difference from the actual case (Spino 2012: 30). Though defending a limited role for cases, Spino cites Dancy in arguing that the fact that the imaginary case is easier to assess than a real case potentially indicates a significant moral difference between the scenarios. Particularist considerations about the malleability of moral reasons across situations motivate caution “[…] when results from imaginary cases are put forth as evidence for drastic changes in our lives” (Ibid.: 31). These appropriations of Dancy aid in providing a taxonomy of imaginary cases in terms of similarity to the actual case and reveal limits of inferring from cases, but they do not afford avenues by which particularists could accommodate a role for abbreviated narratives.

Others call Dancy’s particularism into question on the grounds that it cannot accommodate a role for reasoning from cases. Marcello Guarini, for instance, argues that, “our ability to engage in analogical argumentation and evaluate it depends on the ability to make multidimensional similarity assessments, and such assessments are usefully understood in terms of contributory standards [principles]” (Guarini 2010: 395). That is, analogical reasoning demands the recognition of similarities between cases, and a compelling account of these similarities relies on sharing features that contribute to an act’s overall rightness or wrongness. Benedict Smith similarly warns against accepting any “bald” particularism, in light of the potential for comparative analysis to facilitate moral understanding (Smith 2002: 247). Analogical reasoning between cases fosters a kind of sensitivity to morally relevant features. Considering relevant similarities and differences between circumstances calls our attention to those features explaining why a given comparison is weak or strong, which bolsters moral knowledge. Smith exhorts,

we need to supplement particularism so as to make it flexible enough to accommodate the procedures of analogical reasoning, and the ability to compare and learn from different moral cases, imaginary or otherwise. (Ibid.: 247)

In these treatments of particularism, the necessity of comparison for moral reasoning seems to be in tension with particularism’s call for attentiveness to the present situation.

5. Some of this work actually considers the limitations of inferring from imaginary cases in ethics on a generalist framework, and offers only a cursory treatment or mention of moral particularism. Walsh, for example, defends a limited role for cases, requiring a “contingency clause” that “respects the fundamental contingency of applied ethical problems” (Walsh 2011: 468). In the course of his argument he acknowledges that Dancy’s particularism demands more than a suspicion of cases, writing, “For a particularist, like Jonathan Dancy (1993), moral judgments are particular to the cases in question and we cannot generalise from other cases” (Ibid.: 479).
In these works, either the legitimacy of considering cases calls particularism into question, or particularist commitments severely limit the kinds of cases to which we can appeal. And, neither of these sets of arguments present an account of educative functions of the imagination beyond the potential for revealing some morally relevant feature or principle. Dancy supplies a nuanced rejoinder that particularism can accommodate a role for cases consistent with holism. However, even this treatment is too conscripted, and I look to Dewey’s work to bolster a particularist approach to learning from cases, an approach responsible to the centrality of imagination in experience.

*Dancy on a Particularist Function for Cases*

In articulating a particularist approach to cases, Dancy considers the following appeal:

There is at present a controversy about whether Britain ought to return the Elgin Marbles to Greece. An argument might run as follows. Suppose that an orphan’s estate is under the control of a not particularly conscientious trustee, who for reasons of his own allows a collector to remove part of that estate for a (not really sufficient) payment which the trustee then absorbs for his own purposes. The orphan eventually comes into his estate and attempts to recover his property. Whatever be the legal situation, must we not admit that the collector has some moral obligation to return the property? [...] So the collector ought to return the property. And similarly Britain ought to return the Elgin Marbles. (Dancy 1985: 143)

Admitting that this is reasonable instance of moral deliberation, Dancy maintains that particularism needs to make sense of such arguments. If it cannot, that inability would constitute a serious deficiency. Clearly, having a body of relevant experiences matters to particular judgments; Dancy affirms,

Of course, a comparison with other cases may help us to decide how things are here, just as a long experience of car engines may help us to diagnose the fault this time. But this decision or diagnosis is still essentially particular. It would be surprising if a long experience in garages were no help to a mechanic; it would be surprising if a long and varied moral experience did not serve to sharpen one’s sensitivity for the future. (Dancy 1993: 63)

In lieu of actual moral experience, imagined cases supplement these lessons. The problem is that prior and imagined cases often share very few of the features of the actual case requiring a decision. If what justifies a course of action is the particular shape of the situation produced by the interplay of its various features, what can we take away from that case to inform our future reasoning, considering the context-dependence of moral reasons? Particularism requires an account of how moral experience can inform decision-making consistent with holism.

Generalists, on the other hand, seem to have an easy answer. They reject reasons-holism, and thus can say that a case highlights a principle. There’s some feature (or a collection thereof) that always counts for or against the rightness of an action, and
imaginary case bring this feature to the foreground. Thus, cases reveal principles that connect a feature with moral rightness or wrongness.

Of course, this conception relies on rejecting holism. Granting that moral reasons behave holistically, this interpretation of the role of cases closes. Dancy asks what role generalism could afford imaginary cases, given holism. Generalists’ failure here is twofold. First, if cases are supposed to be action-guiding, one must ask if the imaginary case is a reliable guide to the actual case. But an imaginary case is an abbreviated narrative with unspecified background features. The incompleteness of the imagined case means that we cannot be sure that whatever features do the justificatory work in it will function the same way in the actual case. They might be frustrated in the actual case by features un-specified in the imagination. Thus, one cannot infer that because a feature matters in an imaginary case it must matter in the same way in an actual situation. Second, even if we learned from the imaginary case that a collection of properties has moral relevance, we can be assured that it has relevance in the actual case only if we already know that the actual case has that same collection and no more morally relevant features. But, if we already knew that, then we would know the “moral make-up” of the actual case, defeating the purpose of turning to imagined cases (Dancy 1985: 149).

While Dancy suggests that generalists lack a satisfying reply, he recognizes the impetus for particularists to respond to these worries as well. That is, one cannot say “so much the worse for imaginary cases.” He writes,

Our duty as philosophers of ethics is to make sense of the discoverable patterns of moral reasoning; if we cannot do this it is a fault on our side, a fault in the philosophy rather than in the reasoning. (Ibid.: 149-50)

But, the commitment to holism means that a feature identified as important in one case might not be salient, or it might be salient in a different way, in a second case. Various background features might prevent that feature from serving the same function case to case. In an abbreviated narrative, features serve a particular role in organization. Even if the same features are in the real case, the real case has other features that may affect the moral import of shared features.

In response, Dancy suggests that cases can reveal that a particular property or feature can matter morally. Here, Dancy presents particularism in conciliatory mood, acknowledging that cases produce principles, but principles understood differently from a generalist view:

The suggestion I want to make is that a moral principle amounts to a reminder of the sort of importance that a property can have in suitable circumstances. (Dancy 1985: 150)

The case reveals a collection of features that exhibit moral importance. One learns of a particular feature that it can serve a particular function in the larger narrative that justifies actions, not that it must serve that role. This view, he thinks, accounts for our use of imaginary cases,
we can hope that an imaginary case is an abbreviated sketch of a case where a property can be seen to be important […] This is especially so in the case of some parables of the New Testament, or the morals attached to Aesop’s fables. (Ibid.: 151)

Since, in an imaginary case, a particular feature is morally important, we can infer that it can be morally important elsewhere. And, since principles amount to reminders that a feature can be important, Dancy maintains that this understanding of imaginary cases makes sense of the thought that we glean principles from consideration of particular cases.

Dancy offers the image of a store of principles as a kind of “checklist” of oft-important features (Ibid.: 150). The morally experienced person, who has a variety of cases and principles understood as reminders at hand,

is at an advantage when coming to a decision in a particular case. He wants to be sure that he does not miss the importance or relevance of any relevant property. A panoply of moral principles, understood in the way suggested, can function as a sort of checklist for this purpose. (Ibid.: 150)

Someone who has considered a variety of cases or has a store of experience is in a better position to know the sorts of things that might matter and how they might matter. Having in mind a checklist of features and the moral import they often display can aid moral reasoning, directing one’s attention to those often-important features.

In what follows, I question the adequacy of this checklist image and argue that Dewey’s work on the imagination affords a more robust particularist understanding of the role of cases in moral learning.

“\textit{You are the man}” and Loving Steerforth: Imagination Reconsidered

Brief reflection on instances of learning from cases reveals the inadequacy of Dancy’s checklist image. Considering cases can change our appreciation of a situation’s appropriate description without reminding one that a feature can matter in a particular way. Here I consider two cases that call into question Dancy’s approach.

The first case is a familiar classical example. In 2 Samuel, the prophet Nathan confronts King David over his lechery. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife, and then sent Uriah to the front lines of an ongoing war, assured of Uriah’s death. At this point, Nathan confronts David:

The Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a very many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him.

Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.” (2 Samuel 12:1-6)
Famously, David becomes angry and demands that the rich man be punished. Nathan responds, “You are the man!” and David subsequently feels contrition. Using the language of narrative rationality, David comes to appreciate the narrative shape of his situation only by acquaintance with the shape of another situation.

One test for the adequacy of Dancy’s approach to cases is to ask, what feature(s) did the imaginary case highlight? In this case, of what was David reminded? Many of the shared features are those that David had to appreciate already in order to undermine Bathsheba and Uriah’s relationship. For instance, the difference in power and the vulnerability of Uriah were evident in David’s initial appreciation of the situation; otherwise he would not have been able to perform the act. The features furnished by the case are already present in David’s appreciation. Since the case spurs new moral appreciation of the action without revealing missing features in the actual situation, Dancy’s approach to cases is inadequate.

The inadequacy is more striking in other cases, especially those that less resemble parables. For instance, Martha Nussbaum visits her own interaction with Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*, particularly the James Steerforth character. Troubled by her daughter’s attraction to Steerforth, she re-considers the novel. At first, she recalls Steerforth as morally bankrupt: “as I remembered it, it was Dickens’ intention to make the reader judge Steerforth from the moral point of view” (Nussbaum 1990: 335). However, in the process of re-reading the novel she feels the “power” of Steerforth’s presence, and, like the character David Copperfield, she comes to feel love for Steerforth. Nussbaum says of the experience of reading,

Steerforth’s gesture stirs us, as it hauntingly does, not because we see beyond it into something else, but because it is made, for us, a sensuous reality, because, by the spell of erotic and incantatory language we are brought, ourselves, into the charmed world of love. (*Ibid.*: 350)

The reassessment of Steerforth, from a character unworthy of admiration to an object of love, stems from sustained engagement in the literary world constructed by Dickens. The narrative he offers invites readers to adopt a particular point of view – Nussbaum calls this love’s point of view – which Nussbaum argues contrasts with the moral point of view.

By arguing that we are brought to a new point of view, Nussbaum denies that she missed any particular salient feature on her first reading. Instead, through the experience of re-reading, she comes to appreciate a description of Steerforth through Copperfield’s excited eyes. Given Nussbaum’s description of coming to adopt a new point of view, there are two competing appraisals of Steerforth, two competing “shapes” of the situation. Literature often invites one to organize experience in accordance with a perspective shaped by the author, and Nussbaum, especially in more recent work, echoes Dewey’s contention that this imaginative engagement with artworks and literature enables new appreciations.⑥ While one may, like Nussbaum in the case

6. In a more recent work Nussbaum draws on Dewey and Rabindranath Tagore to argue that literature helps develop the imaginative capacity to “see the world from the viewpoint of other people” (Nussbaum 2010: 44, 102-11). Her comments echo Dewey’s contention that, “They [arts and literature]
of David Copperfield, be able to list properties that make Steerforth objectionable, the novel as a whole presents a very different organization of the relevant features. The checklist image is not adequate to the task of explaining Nussbaum’s reassessment of Steerforth. This account exemplifies learning from a case, as does the 2 Samuel example, and starkly suggests that cases do not merely furnish reminders. After drawing on contemporary work on imaginary cases to identify a particularist myopia regarding their potential functions, I turn to Dewey’s work on the imagination to articulate an alternative role for imaginary cases consistent with Dancy’s particularism.

**Particularist Myopia and the Educative Functions of Cases**

Recent work on thought experiments and imaginary cases enables a functional distinction in their educative roles. Though perhaps not precisely mirrored in Dewey’s corpus, this distinction calls attention to a need for particularism to accommodate an “exploratory” function of cases, distinct from calling attention to features’ potential moral importance. Dewey’s work on imagination yields a response that comports with holism.

Working on the relationship between thought experiments and moral theory in a Wittgensteinian tradition, Cora Diamond delineates two approaches to imaginary cases. The first approach treats cases as “well-posed problems,” the second as “exploration problems.” In a well-posed problem, the description given requires, on pain of irrationality, a determinate conclusion without questioning either the parameters of the case or the background an individual brings to the case. In treating a problem as well-posed, we seek to determine what “canons of reasonableness” dictate as the appropriate practical outcome (Diamond 2002: 236). Exploration problems, however,

may be set up in such a way that assumptions underlying the initial understanding of the problem need to be questioned if the problem is to be resolved. The function of the discussion of such a problem may be precisely to probe what we take to be known. (Ibid.: 241)

Such problems are supposed to reveal that the assumptions or background conceptions brought to a situation need to be changed, and to facilitate development of that background. Exploration problems resemble cases like that of Nussbaum’s re-reading of Dickens. Her imaginative involvement in the world of David Copperfield undermines her previous view that Steerforth is not an admirable character, changing her initial assessment. In familiar language, the case can serve to undermine an accepted appreciation and to facilitate a new appraisal in virtue of reassessing background assumptions.7

reveal a depth and range of meaning in experiences which otherwise might be mediocre and trivial. They supply, that is, organs of vision” (MW 9: 247).

7. To illustrate, Diamond considers the ring of Gyges tale from Plato’s Republic as both a well-posed
Others working on thought-experiments and cases have highlighted similar functional distinctions. For instance, in offering a helpful taxonomy of fictive narrative philosophy, Michael Boylan distinguishes between open-ended and closed cases:

Cases are fictive presentations that are structured so that the reader is enjoined to come up with his own response at the end. Some cases are open-ended so that the author is really interested in stimulating autonomous thinking within broad boundaries that limit the reader’s evaluation. Others are closed; structured for right answers. (Boylan 2013: 73; emphasis added)

Per Boylan, closed cases offer a “conscripted vision of the world,” demanding a listener respond from a particular framework rather than question the background assumptions one brings to a case (Ibid.: 74). In Dancy’s treatment of cases, the imaginary situation supports a distinct course of action in virtue of a certain collection of features, but holism undermines the inference that the real situation supports the same action. However, open-ended cases promise an avenue around this pitfall. The results of “autonomous thinking” engendered by considering a case can facilitate new appraisals or mold the frameworks we use to evaluate cases.

Imaginary cases thus admit multiple educative functions. Well-posed or closed problems assess what the commitments of particular framework dictate given a situation’s features, while other cases spur revision of the background conceptions used to understand the situation. In the kind of moral reasoning under consideration, Dancy’s treatment of arguing from cases resembles the treatment of cases as closed or well-posed problems.

On Dancy’s analysis, the facts of the actual case are settled; our perplexity is a symptom of not being able to comprehend the appropriate description of various relevant features. To address this perplexity, one employs an imaginary or past case that resembles a present one, but with an easier-to-grasp practical conclusion. As in a closed case, canons of reasonableness drive one to a particular, definite conclusion in terms of appropriate responses. Generalists infer that since that response is appropriate in the imaginary case, it should be appropriate in the real one. But this treatment conflicts with holism. Thus, the use of such cases must be restricted for particularists, as one sees in limiting the role of cases to yield “reminders.”

In essence, Dancy treats cases as collections of features bearing a narrative shape more or less similar to an actual case. The operative features and their particular relationships comprise this shape. Thus, Dancy thinks cases reveal a feature’s potential function in a larger description. Think of a case as a “mine” for potentially relevant features; individuals with more experience have more knowledge of such features. The lesson of one situation is that its features can play the role they do, and

and an exploration problem. Conceived as an exploration problem, the ring of Gyges functions as a sounding board for one’s conception of the moral life itself, and various arguments in the Republic following book II undermine the sophist’s response. The case cannot be appreciated without undermining pre-conceived notions of justice: “our canons of reasonableness are supposed to be taken by us to determine a unique solution. But the assumptions with which we understand the situation need to be changed” (Diamond 2002: 236).
that information might be helpful in a real case. This treatment of cases views them as “closed”; we are to look for what the morally competent individual would see, and infer from her vision of the situation that some overlooked features matter.

But this approach does not account for the phenomenon of learning from imaginary cases, as evidenced by the cases of 2 Samuel and Nussbaum’s reconsideration of Steerforth. To bolster the approach to cases, I suggest that particularism requires an account of their exploratory function. Dewey’s comments on the imagination, especially in the context of his comments on sympathy and his analysis of imagination in *Art as Experience* and *A Common Faith*, expand a particularist account of learning from cases.

**Dewey on Imagination**

Contemporary interpreters of Dewey’s ethics appreciate the centrality of imagination in his work. In his discussion of Dewey on moral imagination, Thomas Alexander argues that the imagination “constitutes an extension of the environment to which we respond. By reading the possibilities of the present, the present situation is itself transformed and enlarged,” which facilitates the discovery of new ideals enabling resolution of situations with conflicting values (Alexander 2013: 197). Steven Fesmire characterizes a Deweyan account of moral competence in terms of “moral artistry,” “[highlighting] the role of an expansive imagination that enables sensitivity to social bearing and consequences, intervenes widely and deeply in experience, and brings diverse elements together in a unified experience” (Fesmire 2003: 110). Fesmire emphasizes that, for Dewey, “art is paradigmatic of all experience,” and that the imagination enables us to perceive relationships between a situation’s features and possibilities (Fesmire 2015: 204, 135). The primacy of aesthetic qualities of experience and deliberation in Dewey’s work motivate looking to his analysis of the imagination in art to illuminate its function in moral contexts.

Dewey’s work on moral imagination, per Fesmire, exemplifies two intertwining and simultaneously operative aspects: an account of moral imagination as “creatively tapping into a situation’s possibilities,” and “empathetic projection” as “the animating mold of moral judgment” (Ibid.: 65, 132-3). The first theme includes Dewey’s treatment of dramatic rehearsal, a stage of deliberation wherein one imagines taking possible courses of action and what would follow upon those actions.8 On Dewey’s account, deliberation occurs when habits of action are frustrated. When this happens, “We give way, in our mind, to some impulse; we try, in our mind, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow” (LW 7: 275). We carry out various courses of action through representation in imagination and see what experiences they produce. Particularists might understand this rehearsal as a method, an epistemic tool, for appreciating the salience of an action’s relationship to future events and experiences.9

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8. See the following for more extended treatments on deliberation and dramatic rehearsal: Caspary (2006: 367-93); Fesmire 2003, especially Chapter 5; and Pappas 2008, especially 98-108.
9. One lesson particularists might glean by focusing on dramatic rehearsal as a temporally complex imaginative “trial” of a course of action is that the function of moral imagination is necessary to
However, cases like those in 2 Samuel and in Nussbaum’s work do not appear to produce new appraisals by the imaginative rehearsal of one’s own possible actions. For Dewey, imagination facilitates our appreciation of salient features beyond rehearsing possible lines of action. There is a danger that focusing on dramatic rehearsal as an imaginative temporal extension of a course of action unhinged from sympathy will ignore the mystery that Dancy highlights.

Still, particularists can look to Dewey’s work on the imagination to articulate a role for exploratory or open-ended cases. Recall that Fesmire identified two themes in Dewey’s work on the imagination, “creatively tapping into a situation’s possibilities,” and “empathic projection.” Interaction with art and imaginary cases requires this latter operation of imagination to be educative.

The theme of “empathetic projection” derives from Dewey’s discussion of sympathy. Regarding empathetic projection, the empathetic individual is one who has the ability to “take on” another point of view, and to construe a situation from another’s perspective. Dewey writes, “sympathy carries thought beyond the self […] [it renders] vivid the interests of others” (Ibid.: 270). To be sympathetic is, “to put ourselves in the place of others, to see things from the standpoint of their purposes and values” (Ibid.: 270; emphasis added). This ability facilitates new descriptions as a different perspective provides different concerns, limitations, and aims. By taking on another point of view, we construe a situation differently, possibly unsettling our initial descriptions. This role of empathic projection suggests that the same collection of features is open to different narrative structures, and that these different shapes are accessible and can be subject to evaluation.

Moreover, Dewey sees this operation of the imagination in ordinary communication insofar as it has an aesthetic dimension: Dewey writes,

To be a recipient of communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified […] one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another’s experience in order to tell him intelligently of one’s own experience. All communication is like art.

(MW 9: 8-9; emphasis added)

Empathetic projection is thus ingrained in Dewey’s account of communication itself. Since communication is like art and is educative in virtue of this similarity, one should look to Dewey’s account of art to articulate an account of moral learning from appreciate the salience of a situation’s relationship to past and future situations. One shortcoming of particularism, then, for which the pragmatist tradition offers resources, would be in understanding the practical necessity of the imagination for revealing moral features of situations that involve continuity with past and future situations. This analysis potentially alleviates worries that particularism renders the moral life too episodic. Davis (2004: 74-5) develops this point in Rules and Vision: Particularism in Contemporary Ethics, illustrating how Socrates’ final moments in the Crito require Socrates to connect his present action to his past actions. And, plausibly, the temporal complexity of dramatic rehearsal can help Dancy’s particularism regarding this charge, as it might reveal disunity between past and future experiences.

10. In addition to offering this account of a habit of sympathy, Dewey maintains that sympathy is necessary for moral judgment, claiming, “Sympathy is the animating mold of moral judgment […] because it furnishes the most efficacious intellectual standpoint” (LW 7: 270).
imagined experience. For Dewey, aesthetic imagination has a central role in genuine experience, including moral deliberation. As commentator Duane Cady writes, “For Dewey, the opposite of the aesthetic is the arbitrary and a routine submission to conventional practices and procedures” (Cady 2005: 51). Dewey sees the operation of imagination as a pre-requisite for understanding a situation at all; he contends in Democracy and Education that the imaginative is, “a warm and intimate taking in of the full scope of a situation,” and develops his account of imagination in other works, especially A Common Faith and Art as Experience (MW 9: 244). Dewey’s analysis in these works illustrates the workings of imagination in experience more broadly, and offer outlines of imagination in experience applicable to moral reasoning.11

In Art as Experience, Dewey maintains, “imagination is the chief instrument of the good,” consisting in a “presentation of ideals” (LW 10: 350). In A Common Faith and Art as Experience, Dewey articulates an educative function for poetry, literature and art. The “moral function” of such imaginative productions is captured by the unification of concrete facts and ideals. In A Common Faith, Dewey (LW 9: 49) writes,

The aims and ideals that move us are generated through imagination. But they are not made of imaginary stuff. They are made of the hard stuff of the world of physical and social experience […] The new vision does not arise out of nothing, but emerges through seeing, in terms of possibilities, that is, of imagination, old things in new relations.

This understanding of the imagination as re-organizing actual experienced features of situations affords an exploratory role for cases and a more robust understanding of their role in moral learning than Dancy’s checklist image allows.

Dewey recognizes the educative phenomenon of learning from imaginative productions, writing that aesthetic experiences of works of a variety of kinds of art, not merely imagined cases, can yield a, “sense of disclosure and of heightened intelligibility of the world” (LW 10: 295). In his account of this sense of disclosure, Dewey writes, “in both production and enjoyed perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed” (Ibid.: 294). He denies that this transformation is exhausted by a disclosure of new properties, writing,

Tangled scenes of life are made more intelligible in esthetic experience: not, however, as reflection and science render things more intelligible by reduction to conceptual form, but by presenting their meanings as the matter of a clarified, coherent, and intensified or ‘impassioned’ experience. (Ibid.: 295)

These references to the work of the imagination here do not involve projecting into situations features that they lack. Nor does imagination reduce “tangled scenes” to “conceptual form,” or what Dancy might consider a non-narrative list of relevant features. Thus, the function of imagination for Dewey is not limited to representing possible courses of action, nor exhausted by reducing a complex situation to its constitutive elements.

11. Dewey affirms that “all conscious experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality” (LW 10: 276).
In an imaginary case, as in empathetic projection, we imaginatively participate in organizing experienced materials in accord with a perspective. We participate in an activity in which the elements are organized and contribute to an experience of fulfillment. By interacting with a work of art, an individual appreciates the organization of experience afforded by that work. As discussed below, this participatory quality of art enables a broader understanding of cases than Dancy allows.

Art as Challenge: Interaction with Art and Exploration

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey echoes his suggestive comments in *A Common Faith*, writing, “possibilities are embodied in works of art that are not elsewhere actualized; this *embodiment* is the best evidence that can be found of the true nature of the imagination” (LW 10: 279). Dewey continues to define imagination in terms of the interaction of two “modes of vision,” one inner and one outer, such that, “an imaginative experience is what happens when varied materials of sense quality, emotion, and meaning come together in a union to mark a new birth in the world” (*Ibid.*: 272). Regarding the two kinds of vision, outer vision is the report of the sense modalities, a list of perceived facts, while inner vision “seems wraith-like,” and is formed by “ideals” (*Ibid.*: 273). Imaginative interaction of the two modes of vision culminates in a narrative-structured experience.

Dewey analyzes imagination as the interaction of these modes of vision where the ideal and the material available to express it interact. Outer vision includes the materials presented by a situation, its features. Inner vision includes the appreciation of ideals as mentioned in *A Common Faith*. In that work, imagination is the vehicle by which ideals form out of experienced material, yielding a vision of possibilities to direct action. The same experienced features can exemplify different narratives, depending upon the organization provided by these ideals. Inner vision provides organization to a collection of features provided by outer vision.

Key to the educative function of art, for Dewey, is that imaginative productions form a challenge to those who interact with them. We see new narrative and organizational structures when interacting with artwork, and this interaction illuminates a particularist understanding of learning from cases. In the work of art,

> meanings imaginatively summoned, assembled, and integrated are embodied in the material existence that here and now interacts with the self […] [The artwork is] a challenge to the performance of a like act of evocation and organization, through imagination on the part of one who experiences it. (*Ibid.*: 278; emphasis added)

These comments on the educative function of artworks clarify the role Dewey sees for cases like 2 Samuel or Nussbaum’s experience (1990). In an artwork, as in a case, various features are unified by an organization, in Dancy’s terms, a narrative “shape.” Observers interact with this organized unity, not just a list of individual elements. This interaction consists in an activity of organizing experienced elements, as one does in empathetic projection, or, Dewey thinks, in ordinary communication. This action then
effects new organizations of other situations. Dewey elaborates,

While the perception of the union of the possible with the actual in a work of art is a
great good, the good does not terminate with the immediate and particular occasion in
which it is had. The union that is presented in perception persists in the remaking of
impulsion and thought. (LW 10: 351; emphasis added)

By interacting with an artwork, observers participate in an act of organizing individual
elements, and in doing so re-create that organization with different elements from
their own experience.

This “remaking of impulsion and thought” is an exploratory function. Reverting
to Dancy’s vocabulary is useful, since the notions of “ideal” and “inner vision” might
invite confusion. In a work of art, a collection of features is given organization or shape
by an author or artist. By interacting with this shape, Dewey thinks, one is “challenged”
to produce a like act of organization out of materials (features) in a concrete situation.
Instead of revealing features, the case-as-artwork becomes provocation to mold the
actual set of features in accordance with a case’s organization. In addition to cases
showing that a particular feature can matter, they also demonstrate the coherence of a
narrative form that organizes those features.

Consider the 2 Samuel example again. Dewey might explain David’s learning
as follows: when Nathan presents the tale, he presents an abbreviated narrative that
David encounters as an actual situation with a particular narrative organization. David
is the king, and interacts with the tale as one who must exercise some authority in
the case. The practical organization of the case yields a conclusion that the rich man
was unjust. The subsequent “you are the man” elicits a “like act of organization.” The
narrative presented with the elements of the rich man and the poor man “fits” David’s
case. The act of organization provoked by Nathan’s story yields a description of the
case with the strengths of narrative.

On this analysis, an artwork’s function can be exploratory; it challenges an initial
construal of a situation by exploring what we take to be known. The case does not
yield new features nor does it demonstrate that other features can function differently.
It does not demonstrate what canons of reasonableness dictate given a collection of
features. Instead, it alters “inner vision” or those background conceptions individuals
bring to a situation that give it shape. Cases-as-artworks mold “inner vision” through
imaginative participation, and individuals bring the background formed by interaction
to other situations; they are challenged to a like act of organization. Dewey’s account
of the educative function of the imagination in art allows an expansion of the role of
cases and the conclusions they warrant.

Developments of Dewey: Mark Johnson, Metaphor and Moral Argument

The treatment of artwork as educative suggests that, taken as artworks, imaginary
cases provoke new organizations of familiar materials. Mark Johnson’s work drawing
on Dewey’s analysis and recent developments in cognitive science clarifies how a case
can serve this end. An ethics responsible to human nature, Johnson argues, embraces a central role for imagination and supports “conscientiousness” as a moral ideal, a quality resisting principle-bound ethics and exhibiting “the mental and emotional flexibility to imagine new solutions and new ways of going forward that resolve pressing moral problems” (Johnson 2014: 216). Johnson draws on recent research in cognitive sciences to critique rule-bound accounts of morality, suggesting instead: “moral deliberation is an activity of transformative thinking that reconfigures the situation by ordering the materials of that situation into a new gestalt” (Ibid.: 118). In an earlier work, Johnson develops an account of the necessity of “imaginative framing devices” like metaphor for moral understanding, and maintains that imagination provides narrative elements that structure experience (Johnson 1994: 170). Johnson’s work on metaphor illustrates how interaction with artwork and cases is potentially educative and exploratory, and enables an articulation of the use of imaginary cases consistent with Dancy’s particularism.

Research in cognitive sciences shows “how abstract thinking traffics mostly in metaphor, and how our reasoning is grounded in our bodily (sensory-motor) experience” (Johnson 2014: 196). Johnson argues, in accord with Dewey, that synthesizing or making sense of experience is an imaginative activity and “that narrative structure provides the most comprehensive synthetic unity that we can achieve” (Johnson 1994: 170). Moreover, Johnson echoes Dancy’s claim that justification and description coincide when he argues,

The way we frame a given situation will determine what we ought to do about it, and our semantic frames typically involve metaphorical concepts. Consequently, our reasoning about these situations will typically be based on metaphors. (Ibid.: 52)

Here, metaphor refers to structures, relations and vocabulary from one domain mapping onto another.

In a central example, Johnson examines an individual’s moral understanding of marriage under different metaphors. While details of the case are unimportant, what is important is that marriage can be described using different narrative structures; it can be understood as a journey, a commodity exchange, an organic unity, etc. Each device is projected from a different domain onto the description of marriage. What an individual discovers is that these metaphorical frames allow better and worse descriptions of marriage and its difficulties; Johnson writes of someone exploring these different descriptions that,

He is trying out each possible explanation to see how it “feels,” how it makes sense of his experience. And as he performs this test he is glimpsing possible structurings of his marriage. (Johnson 1994: 61)

In Dancy’s terms, the metaphor employed reveals different shapes for the same situation. Different domains afford different narrative structures that can be applied to a target domain, in this case, marriage.
Importantly, the narrative elements of one domain can enable synthesis and description of the features of a situation within another domain without denying holism of reasons. Instead, the patterns and vocabulary of one domain give shape to the features of another by,

the mapping that constitutes the metaphor [...] the mapping consists of the entities, events, states, structures, causes and relations that are projected from the source domain [...] to the target domain. (Ibid.: 55)

These structures do not necessarily suggest that because some feature matters in one domain or situation that the same feature must or might matter in another. Another example will help illustrate this pragmatist alternative to a particularist understanding of cases. Imagine a family in which a grandfather suffers from cancer. After much struggle, multiple courses of treatment, and periods of remission and sickness, the grandfather decides to quit chemotherapy treatment knowing this decision will hasten death. For the most part, his family understands his decision and prepares themselves accordingly. The twelve-year-old grandson, however, finds this decision confusing. His grandfather’s “fight” with the disease he regards as brave, and the decision to stop treatment he sees as giving up.

Given the grandchild’s experiences of his grandfather’s previous struggles with cancer, he sees cancer as an enemy, the physicians, nurses, and family members as combatants, and the elimination of cancer as the objective. The combat metaphor enabled a narrative construal of the situation by providing certain characters (the hero, the enemy, etc.), but also suggests that the grandfather’s choice is cowardly, “giving in” to the enemy, accepting defeat, and so on.

Suppose the child’s parents have a stock of literary and actual examples of people who have bravely faced death. Death is not an “enemy” in their stories; rather, it is an especially unsettling moment because it marks an uncertainty in a journey. By making use of some examples (e.g., Hamlet’s soliloquy, Socrates’ final moments), they give new narrative organization to the grandfather’s case. In particular, they provide a story engaging the grandchild. Through this exploration and imaginative participation in the parents’ stories, the child participates in a different method of organizing the situation. The narratives offered by the parents employ a different metaphor, imbuing the situation with a different shape.

Crucially, the child is not to infer that because the journey metaphor affords a particular moral appraisal in an imaginary case that it must do so here. Through further inquiry, the grandchild can test the competing construals afforded by different metaphors and see which is stronger. Dewey (LW 10: 273) writes,

The peculiar quality of the imaginative is best understood when placed in opposition to the narrowing effect of habituation [...] The imaginative endures because, while at first strange with respect to us, it is endurably familiar with respect to the nature of things.

In this case, the child is used to understanding actions in combat terms. The imaginary cases provide ways to unify the same elements of the situation differently. This new
organization yields a different appraisal of the grandfather’s action, one which might afford a stronger, enduringly familiar, narrative.

In consulting different metaphors, we see not that some feature or other matters, but that some experienced metaphorical frameworks, aims, characters and vocabularies can structure and facilitate descriptions. An imaginary or past case might reveal that a feature is important, or it might reveal that a given vocabulary or metaphor can yield a coherent description. In the 2 Samuel case, David learns that his own activity can be understood using the vocabulary of theft and the characters of the rich man and the poor man. The imaginary case provided narrative elements that imbue the situation with a new shape, undermining the initial appraisal. An application of metaphor can yield a coherent narrative, changing the background conceptions that we initially used to organize a situation.

Art, Moral Reasoning, and Consistency with Particularism

Recall that Dancy’s focus pertains to the role cases can have as instances of moral reasoning. Dancy identifies the appeal to cases as a form moral argument, and the challenge is to make sense of that form of inference from a particularist point of view. I have argued that Dewey’s work on imagination allows an understanding of cases as revealing different narrative “shapes” that might apply to a concrete situation. Here, I briefly explicate how cases understood as artworks inform moral reasoning in a manner consistent with Dancy’s particularism. Dewey’s analysis coheres with the commitment to narrative justification, does not rely on “importing” features into concrete situations, and does not deny holism, the fundamental position underlying particularism.

In rejecting principle-bound accounts of justification, Dancy affirmed that justification has a narrative structure. The narratives are comprised of a situation’s salient features. The appeal to cases as revealing narrative elements to be used in a concrete situation comports with Dancy’s account of justification. The success of a description can be read as an endorsement of the helpfulness of its narrative elements in organizing a situation’s features. And, as an argument for a certain narrative structure, the “conclusion” of a case need not be limited to the claim that some feature may contribute to the overall case for or against an action. Instead, cases can show that different vocabularies and metaphorical structures, elements of “inner vision,” give rise to different descriptions or shapes of a situation.

In his own example of the orphan and malevolent trustee, Dancy does not tell the reader what feature turned out to be important; no analysis shows how that case drove an understanding of what Britain ought to do with the Elgin Marbles. The case did, however, reveal that in a metaphor of familial and legal relationships, the actions of the trustee were unjustified and vicious. That narrative displayed a unity, had the strengths afforded the form, and employed the vocabulary of family and legal relationships. The structures and characters employed in the imaginary case afford a narrative description of the actual case. That one could describe the situation without the analogy shows merely that other narrative descriptions of the case are available.
My suggestion is that Dewey’s analysis of the imagination allows particularists to see the imagination as the “experimental ground” for narrative structures and devices that may or may not turn out to “fit” a situation at hand. There is no need here to deny the narrative structure of justification. Instead of revealing that a certain property or collection of properties can be salient, exploration contributes to our abilities to offer different descriptions of concrete situations. Examining cases can probe and develop background conceptions and dominant metaphors brought to a situation by an observer. Since the function of the imagination is to explore structures that afford new narrative descriptions of situations, the analysis here comports with Dancy’s claim that justification is narrative in structure.

Crucially, consistency with particularism demands that appeal to the imaginary case does not “import” features to the real case that are not there. Some might think that Dewey’s view of the imagination is incompatible with particularism on this point. He sometimes writes as if the imagination imbues a situation with properties that are not “in” the concrete situation:

the reality of ideal ends as ideals is vouched for by their undeniable power in action.
An ideal is not an illusion because imagination is the organ through which it is apprehended. For all possibilities reach us through the imagination. In a definite sense, the only meaning that can be assigned the term “imagination” is that things unrealized in fact come home to us and have the power to stir us. (LW 9: 43)

However, the “things unrealized in fact” need not be additional features of a situation; the imagination need not operate by imputing saliences to situations that they do not have. Recall, Dancy argues that situations exhibit a practical shape, a narrative structure. The imagination as the unification of ideal and real can be understood as the unification of different narrative structures with a particular set of features. Since the imagination can disclose different “shapes” for the same set of features, it can operate by revealing different narratives about the same situation. These different shapes can be subject to evaluation. Cases as arguments show that a different metaphorical structure can be fruitful.

Consider the Nathan-David exchange again. Perhaps David’s position of power inured him to construing his own action as theft; instead he might have seen the situation as the just or normal actions of a monarch. Nathan’s abbreviated story offers a competing narrative shape for the situation. Through participation in that act of organization, David returns to his own situation provoked to re-organize its actual features.

Similarly, Nussbaum’s initial encounter with Steerforth left her disliking the character, worrying about her daughter’s love for Steerforth since there must be nothing admirable about him. By imaginatively participating in the story, Nussbaum comes to appreciate a different shape. There are no new, previously unnoticed features in her second reading of the novel, but through the “incantatory language” of the novel, she re-organizes its elements. By participating in the novel’s organization, she meets the challenge to a like act of organization, undermines her initial appraisal, and comes to a new appreciation of the situation without introducing or omitting elements.
Finally, since holism, the position that features need not have the same moral import in every situation, is the leading thought behind particularism, the analysis offered here must cohere with this commitment. Dewey’s approach to imaginary cases does not require any feature or collection of features to have invariant moral import. As moral argument, the case does not show that because a collection of features in one instance justifies an action, that the same collection will matter elsewhere. Instead, since a particular narrative organization works in one case, one knows that those characters, vocabulary and general metaphoric structure can function to make sense of a collection of features. Because those narrative elements work in the imagined situation, they might yield an understanding of a second case. While it may be unintended, Dewey’s account of artwork as “eliciting a like act of organization” can make sense of the use of cases in moral learning and reasoning on a particularist framework. Thus, Dancy’s particularism, using Dewey’s analysis, can provide a robust account of learning from cases, and is not limited to considering cases solely as sources of “reminders.”

References


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Bookreviews
Michela Bella


Nowadays philosophers as intellectuals are strongly encouraged to be more active on their cultural scene and particularly to direct their efforts towards creating or reconstructing possible bridges of communication. As is well known, some of the distances between intellectual worlds are often matters of ‘styles of writing,’ as well as socio-historical controversies which can be reconsidered in a different light at successive generational readings. In this view, both historical and theoretical tools are important for ‘rereading’ and ‘rethinking’ theories which undeniably have had great “influence and impact on our culture and institutions.” The very harsh critiques that Pragmatists received from all over the world, especially in the first half of the 20th century, may be more the result of obstinate misunderstandings than of concrete incommunicaibility. As an example, John Dewey criticizes the ‘wishful thinking’ caricature of William James’s work as arising from the lack of imagination of his readers (LW 15: 15). Robert A. Schwartz made a serious attempt to re-think and re-activate the interest for some of the issues raised by James in *Pragmatism. A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (James 1907). His theoretical efforts are influenced by Nelson Goodman’s and W. V. O. Quine’s epistemologies and he is truly sympathetic to Pragmatism and the American philosophical tradition. Despite his original intention to explore classical American Pragmatists’ main themes, considering their implications for contemporary issues in ‘epistemology,’ ‘language’ and ‘metaphysics,’ Schwartz decided to narrow and deepen his analysis; he focused upon the book by the author who may be recognized worldwide as the “spokesperson” of Pragmatism, being “the intellectual pivot of the movement, looking back to C. S. Peirce and pointing ahead to Dewey” (4). Bearing Peirce and particularly Dewey in mind, his work may thus be read as an intense conversation with James about his Pragmatist account of ‘inquiry,’ ‘language’ and ‘truth.’

The primary goal of Schwartz’s lecture-by-lecture commentary on James’s 1907 work is “to explain and explore the implications of Pragmatic ideas, not to defend or criticize them” (5). Carrying on his analysis, he points out that he “looks ahead, not back”; that is to say that his way to rethink issues James unfolded throughout his presentations is to consider them in the light of more contemporary debates. Evidently, each chapter of Schwartz’s book focuses upon one lecture of *Pragmatism*, and from titles of the chapters the reader can understand the line of his interpretation of James’s lectures. This choice is a revelation of his intense personal involvement with James’s views, and that is what makes this book so challenging for Pragmatism scholars.

Before addressing the first lecture, there is a brief chapter in which the author recollects the themes he considers to be in the background of the Pragmatists’ ideas. As is well known, their approach to philosophical inquiry was that of the scientific method – according to James the empiricist tendency was the most diffused mentality of his times – being also deeply influenced by A. Bain’s psychology and C. Darwin’s theory of evolution, which suggested “both the biological and the mental continuity of species” (10). Despite this, the Pragmatists’ anti-Cartesianism and fallibilistic stance,
their attention to behavior as well as their insistence upon functions, should not be easy labelled or misunderstood. More specifically, Schwartz acknowledges James’s original interest in individual experiences with respect to Peirce’s and Dewey’s work, and shares the mainstream interpretation of his study of the function of our minds in his *Principles of Psychology* (James 1890) as in deep continuity with his epistemological and metaphysical positions. Interesting references to Peirce and Dewey, and contextual connections for instance to T. Kuhn, J. L. Austin and Quine, are pertinently given throughout the book, which also offers cross-references to James’s other main works.

Commenting on James’s most famous lectures, and staying future-oriented, the author aims to corroborate his view of James as “an epistemic and meaning holist” (115) as well as a fallibilist, a radical pluralist and a “pragmatist instrumentalist” (86). In this view, ‘The Place of Values in Inquiry’ is a deep reading of James’s first lecture of *Pragmatism*. The influence of ‘temperaments’ or ‘sentiments,’ he argues, “cannot be ignored without distorting the nature of objective inquiry” (20). Schwartz suggests here close similarities with Quine’s and Goodman’s references to ‘aesthetic preference’ and ‘philosophic conscience.’ Moreover, if James is talking about different ‘philosophies of inquiry,’ in this respect then his view can also be compared to Kuhn’s “Paradigms, as James’s ‘philosophies,’ are not themselves theories but approaches to a domain that sets the concepts employed, the way problems are formulated, the evidence taken to be relevant […] Scientists have faith in the paradigms they work within” (23). Of course, the problem here is not “to step over the line of values, preferences and temperaments that have epistemic legitimacy” (23) and how such a position may resist the possible collapse between “objective inquiry” and “subjective bias.” Schwartz is well-aware of all these difficulties, but also of James’s ‘pragmatic theory of inquiry’ which is rooted in the possibility for philosophies to be valuable and challenged on rational grounds.

In the second chapter, ‘The Pragmatic Maxim and Pragmatic Instrumentalism,’ James’s meaning of Pragmatism is in focus. Schwartz underlines convergences as well as differences with Peirce and Dewey as internal nuances of the common Pragmatist project. The fifth chapter, ‘Ontological Commitment and the Nature of the Real,’ is particularly interesting in terms of its elucidation of Schwartz’s general interpretation of James’s view. The author argues that James’s goal in his fifth lecture is to “explicate the nature of human inquiry” both according to his “web-of-belief model of inquiry” and in support of his epistemic holism. The point Schwartz wants to make here is that “the very idea of an inquiry-independent, preexisting complete world of facts awaiting description and explanation is a myth” (79). So in talking about actual inquiry, James states that “knowledge grows in spots” (James 1907: 82), and the way in which the practice of science develops is rather conservative. As far as possible, preference is given to old beliefs, which sometimes means also contesting or even dismissing evidence which supports new beliefs. The meaning of a new belief is pragmatically found in the consequences engendered by its acceptance into an older system of beliefs. This tells us that science and the concepts it employs are living things continually threatening to “expand and contract along unpredictable paths” (80). But then, how can we explain
the longevity of some of our ideas? As is well known, James offers here an historical-genetic hypothesis in which common sense, science and critical philosophy are the three main stages of the historical evolution of human understanding. They are three different ways of categorizing experience which have developed in different times and according to different and changing needs. Such a hypothetical reconstruction should first and foremost be considered as an alternative to either Plato’s world of ideas or whatever theory claims the perfect correspondence of concepts and the structure of the world. James’s theory rather emphasizes the convenience of common sense concepts as tools which prove to be still useful in our dealing with ordinary experiences; he also underlines the important role played by linguistic use in preserving these relatively old concepts. The three stages of knowledge, in fact, are continuous since they did not come about abruptly; but each one, bursting the limits of previous classification, have offered a new systematization of experience according to different exigencies. In this respect, to a certain extent reality is plastic and does not impose too strict limits on our possibility to organize it by using different conceptual schemes. Incidentally, Schwartz considers James’s view of ontology “uninformative,” just like Quine’s, when he replied to the ontological question “What is there?” by: “Everything.” In other words, “there is no sensible answer to the question independent of a background category scheme into which the answer fits and gains meaning” (81). This is the most interesting aspect of what there is, that is to say our creative contribution to answering the ontological question. The complexity of our conceptual systems is mainly due to the historical stratification of meanings: we can never restart from a zero point, we always have to deal with productions of human history. Even “concepts and kinds that seem natural are not natural by nature. Their naturalness is due to their history of constant and continuous use” (81).

The author then carefully analyzes James’s arguments regarding the evolving nature of concepts. These latter spring from our efforts to posit continuity according to practical-aesthetical exigencies, as we have mentioned. We need both to give a logical order to reality and to get a predictive grasp on it. Schwartz evidences the distinction made by James between the development of common sense concepts and that of scientific concepts in respect to the issue of experiential continuity. More specifically, considering the concept “thing,” he points out two different ways in which we posit conceptual continuity to fill in discontinuities. We may interpolate present and past experiences, which is the common sense view: everyday objects endure over time and place; also, we may have scientific objects which are “products of analogical extrapolation” (84). The world of scientific theoretical entities, which are employed in theories, are extrapolated “beyond the common sense world.” There is an important point about James’s instrumentalist view that Schwartz aims at making here. He wishes to clarify that James’s and Dewey’s pragmatism cannot be placed within the realist/anti-realist dichotomy debate: James is a “Pragmatist instrumentalist” and, as such, his own challenge to classical semantics “does not entail an ontologically significant distinction between apples, automobiles, and atoms” (90). To avoid anti-realist misunderstandings, James used to define himself a “natural realist.” Nonetheless, the use he makes of the word ‘real’ is “contrastive”
and Schwartz thinks that it is consistent with Austin’s idea that “the attempt to find a characteristic common to all things that are or could be called ‘real’ is doomed to failure; the function of ‘real’ is [...] to exclude possible ways of not being real” (85). Already in his Principles of Psychology, he presented the case of hallucinations, arguing that assertions incompatible with the “otherwise known world” give rise to our suspicion that something is unreal. However, in Some Problems of Philosophy, James pragmatically defines what is ‘real’ as anything of which “we find ourselves obliged to take account of in any way” (James 1911: 101) and then clarifies his idea that conceptual systems, such as mathematics, logic, aesthetics and ethics are different “realms of reality,” each one showing a “peculiar form of relation” (James 1911: 102). The point is that these systems are not perfectly closed off or complete, but that they can interpenetrate somehow. All these vocabularies are fundamental tools which help us to deal in the most agreeable way with different domains of reality.

As becomes evident, radical pluralism is the framework for James’s “Pragmatic instrumentalist” view, and we can also make reference here to Perry’s consideration that “pluralism [...] is indistinguishable from ‘radical empiricism’.” James is a constructivist, and Schwartz wishes to make definitively clear that Pragmatist constructivism does not in any way mean anti-realism, not even for theoretical entities posed by science. Pragmatists rather enlarged their definition of reality to include perceived objects, for instance, instead of reducing it to only scientific objects. Moreover, he argues that although James’s radical empiricism argues for useful discourses to be grounded in experience, he is aware that “in the context of inquiry the ‘given’ is a myth” and holism should prevail. James is not pretending to define once and for all valuable concepts by reducing them to “experience or reports of observation” (86). The Pragmatists’ work of the demystification of language, although it challenges classical semantics and classical copy theories of truth, does not need to establish any ontology as privileged. In fact, every system of reality has an ontological background, and ontology has to “work” just by letting its system work. In this respect, James’s radical pluralism founds the difference between James’s “constructivist, pragmatic account of inquiry” (87) and the anti-realist instrumentalist picture of a unique world.

The fact that different and contrasting systems of concepts exist obliges us to reconsider our meaning of truth. Following E. Mach, W. Ostwald and other scientific logicians, James insists that theories are but functional descriptions of reality; they are conceptual shortcomings leading us from some parts of experience to other parts of experience. There is no ringing conclusion possible, no absolute point of view offering absolute criteria to decide which type of thinking is absolutely true. As philosophers, all that we can state is that each conceptual system shows itself to be more functional in a particular sphere of life, but no one system is completely sufficient under all different respects; they can be compared in relation to their use, not to any static idea of truth as a “simple duplication by the mind of a ready-made and given reality” (James 1907: 93).

This work perfectly fits the current revaluation of James as a relevant interlocutor in contemporary epistemological conversations, as well as an important defender of scientific research and freedom. The book is very interesting also because of Schwartz’s attempt both to follow James’s arguments and, at the same time, to integrate them with his own comments and references. Unfortunately, some very interesting comments are just passingly mentioned but not extensively analyzed. As to Analytic references, some classical names are missing. For instance, there is only one indirect reference to Hilary Putnam, as if the author prefers to privilege more direct readers of James, as Dewey or explore different associative paths. Steven Meyers\(^2\) complains about the absence of A. Whitehead among the authors Schwartz refers to in his book and considers this lack as a consequence of the great influence of Goodman on his philosophical perspective. Schwartz’s intention to make a selective and very focused reading of those points in *Pragmatism* “which seem to bear directly” on contemporary Analytic problems, in the line of Dewey, cannot be considered equally consistent for this reason. Dewey’s position when reviewing James’s work, more than one hundred years ago, is not the same as that of Schwartz’s today; overall, Meyers remarks that Dewey was cautiously making some observations at great length without performing any decisive selection of contemporary problems. Meyers’s point aims at warning against the misleadingly precise and univocal interpretation of the history of ideas, and the apparently uncontroversial overlapping of present and past meanings that interpretative issues may assume for Analytic philosophers.

In conclusion, despite his preferences as interpreter, Schwartz succeeds in avoiding to canonize James’s words in isolation from their context. He is very confident with James’s texts and particularly convinced of the importance of some aspects of James’s *anti-intellectualist* stance. As Schwartz sees it, with James the risk is a vulgar and rather superficial understanding of his discourse, which must be distinguished from any antagonism to whatever intellectual effort to make serious scientific research. James aims at patiently displaying – through his restless efforts of demystification of meanings – crucial implications of the Pragmatic conception of experience. Rethinking *Pragmatism* is itself a work of continuous demystification of James’s words and reorientation of references, the same project that its author had been carrying on all his life. One may say that James’s beautiful style of writing has been somewhat misleading for many readers, because his words seem to be as easily-flowing as his ability to express them; but they still require and represent serious “rumination.” Schwartz succeeds not only in conveying his ideas concerning interesting similarities between James and some Analytic philosophers, but also in stressing the peculiar controversies and originalities within James’s Pragmatism.

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George Santayana is not one of the most famous, yet one of the few whose huge oeuvre offers different ways to explain his main notions in connection with a number of possible topics within philosophy. At first sight it takes a real challenge to choose Santayana as a central topic in contemporary research but later one can realize that the spaciousness of the Santayanan oeuvre can provide new opportunities of its interpretation in every time. Daniel Moreno with his doctoral dissertation on Santayana and later with the first, Spanish version of his Santayana the Philosopher (Santayana filósofo. La filosofía como forma de vida) proves that there is something in Santayana that would be or can be interesting in the 21st century too. Moreno gives an incredibly rich survey about the main characteristics of Santayana’s philosophy, but his book is more than a simple historical treatise, because he follows the conception of those philosophers who consider philosophy as life-practice, as a possible “form of life.”

Moreno’s work displays a precisely shaped conception of the unity of Santayana’s life and work, and he confirms from the first pages to the end that we have to treat Santayana’s works – poems, novel, essays, philosophical writings – and life together as an oeuvre. I have to confess that I strongly sympathize with his conception. Contemporary researchers of philosophy as art of living or philosophical living give an advantage to new approaches in studying Santayana. It is not a secret that Santayana’s philosophy has its roots in the ancient Greece, where philosophy was generally regarded as the crucial directive in one’s life. Contemporary theories, those of M. Foucault and A. Nehamas, affirm the importance of the role of self-writing and they suggest that philosophy be seen as a way of life. Within such a context, Moreno’s book is a new contribution to this kind of philosophy.

Moreno read Santayana’s latest works first and after reading Irving Singer’s George Santayana: Literary Philosopher1 he tried to see Santayana from a different point of view, regarding him as a poet too. Thus, the early works of Santayana found Moreno in the moment when he was already trained by Santayana’s style and the structure of notions and concepts. I think that this order has a crucial importance on Moreno’s book and views. He considers philosophy as a form of life but he does not mention aesthetic features in it, or the ethical ideal of aesthetic living (as Foucault in connection to ancient Greek practices, or R. Shusterman in connection to the philosophy of Foucault). Santayana denied every attempt to isolate aesthetics; he felt that aesthetic interest is not separable from many other interests and he created an aesthetic ontology. There is no place to Santayana’s paradoxical feelings towards aesthetics in Moreno’s book, thus he does not treat the importance of imagination in Santayana’s early writings. The examination of The Last Puritan in the Chapter 4 can compensate us somehow for the lack of discussing aesthetic problems. One can see here that Moreno recognizes sensitively the aesthetically valuable features of

* Széchenyi István University, Hungary [horvath.nora@sze.hu].
Santayana’s novel. I have a feeling that Chapter 4 is the most important chapter for supporting Moreno’s claim formulated in the Introduction where he concludes that “one needs to read Santayana from the inside” (xxi). Chapter 4 on Santayana’s novel is the realization of the pursuit of this characteristic method of Moreno. According to Moreno in The Last Puritan “Santayana can critique transcendentalism as much as Platonism from the inside, from within” (132). And I am sure that Moreno can examine Santayana in the best way “from the inside” through The Last Puritan. Though Moreno says that “there is a general consensus among his [Santayana’s] critics that [A General Confession] is the best exposition of the person he was,” Moreno later adds that an autobiography is not the proper way to reconstruct the author’s private world. Instead of the turmoil memories, there are other tools to reveal one’s personal feelings or thoughts. In accordance with Santayana, Moreno emphasizes that The Last Puritan “belongs, together with Dialogues in Limbo, its literary cousin, as much as for its dialogic structure as for its tackling the intellectual status of illusion, to the Santayanan oeuvre in which Santayana is assertive in showing up without a mask” (130). Singer mentioned in his book that Horace M. Kallen considered The Last Puritan as the true image of Santayana and that Persons and Places was only a shield. Moreno refers to the thin fence between reality and fiction very often and suggests that the limit between them is not truly important: “what is considered real is in part invented and the invented is in part real” (127) – says Moreno in connection with Santayana’s opinion in Interpretations of Poetry and Religion. Santayana’s letters confirm the importance of such an approach. He was aware that he invested in The Last Puritan everything that he knew and thus his novel was more than a literary work (130).

Chapter 4 (entitled exactly Philosophy and Novel in the Last Puritan) is the link to Chapter 1 (Philosophy as a Form of Life) – (with a retrospective effect) and an important antecedent to Chapter 5 (Spiritual Testament). The interconnections would be demonstrable with a title: How to love in barbaric times? But instead of this, in the last chapter Moreno asks: How to live in barbaric times? This subchapter gives a perfect analysis of different kinds of love in Santayana’s works and I think Moreno has very important observations here about love and friendship. We do not have to forget that these are the main social links among people in The Last Puritan too. Thus the refined analysis on the ideal and real love in the end of Moreno’s book (157) shouts for a central place where Moreno discusses Oliver’s strange attitude towards love. It is not difficult to find an interesting link between Oliver’s dilemma on love and Santayana’s philosophical questions in The Libertine. Moreover, the philosophical problem of the ideal and the real is a continually returning subject in Santayana’s writings, in connection with Dante, Lucretius, and Michelangelo, not to mention different parts of The Sense of Beauty on love. Chapter 1 and 5 give a frame to Moreno’s picture of Santayana and within the limits of a personal philosophy and a spiritual testament Moreno is able to display every thread of Santayana’s thoughts linked in his crucial terms like “essence, metaphysics, religion, matter, and spirit” (xxii). It is obvious that Moreno agrees with Mossie M. Kirkwood, Anthony Woodward, and Henry Levinson that spiritual is an essential element in Santayana.
This definitive opinion revealed itself in Moreno’s declaration on *The Last Puritan* too when he says that the “particular relation between reality and fiction connects directly with the point of view of the *spirit*, as it is presented in *The Realm of Spirit*. From the perspective that it reaches, history, truth, fiction, and illusion are all situated in the same level” (127). Through Moreno’s examination of Santayana one can realize that the opposition of terms like ideal and real, or ancient and modern can offer a good philosophical net to keep the seemingly controversial but complementary ideas of Santayana’s philosophy.

“My own line of argument in this book supports the view that Santayana was a thinker who was an heir to modern thought […]. The criticism of science and liberalism, the growing prominence that the spiritual acquires in his ouevre, and the search for alternatives in Oriental and Hellenistic traditions are symptoms of a personal choice in the face of what is experienced as the disintegration of the modern world. Given this situation, Santayana maintained a characteristic spiritual equanimity and detachment, with few disturbances, which became so enviable and untenable for other individuals” (23) – says Moreno and he does not want to put Santayana into strict categories. He has eyes to every little nuance of Santayana’s terminology and keeps in mind his own conscious unifying method. For example, in the first chapter Moreno accurately scrutinizes every label that usually hinders the objective examination of Santayana’s philosophy. Descriptions of *ironic nihilism*, *Platonic materialism* and *spiritual atheism* give the fundamental tone to the whole book.

According to Moreno, Santayana can be a “philosophical bridge between Europe and the United States.” Moreno wants to show a Spanish point of view to the audience in his book but (because of the fact that the Spanish Santayana wrote in English) the exclusive knowledge of the Spanish cultural background would not be enough to reveal every meaning of Santayana’s texts. In Santayana’s philosophical heritage (“on the one side”) there is “William James and John Dewey; on the other side, Lucretius and Spinoza” (xi). According to this, there is another possible role to Santayana: being a philosophical bridge between past and present. Affirming this Moreno insists that Santayana opposed to dominant opinions of his own age. For example, he showed “quietude in the face of agitation,” “peace in the face of vanity” and “simplicity in the face of complexity” (3). These attitudes are in a close relation with Santayana’s political behaviour. In my view mentioning thinkers like John Henry Newman is one of the strengths of Moreno’s book. And that is why the Spanish point of view is not enough to examine Santayana’s ideological choices. “Santayana furthered the work of such men-of-letters as Thomas Carlyle and John Henry Newman with his Oxford Movement who, in the nineteenth century, were active critics of liberalism and industrialization for the bankrupt spiritual values associated with them, and who defended a Catholic Conception of Anglicanism…” – says Moreno (95). The appreciation of Newman means the same to Oscar Wilde and to Santayana. They had the same opinion on Newman’s educational ideal that linked past and present and gave a hopeful strategy to every contemplative mind that felt some aversion towards modernity, industrialization and aggressive utility. Moreno mentions Newman under the title “*Political Philosophy*” but I have a strong feeling that Newman’s ideal
of education has a closer relation to Santayana’s views. I lack the presentation of Newman’s thoughts on the ideal attitude because somehow Santayana’s lifestyle was an exemplification of Newman’s recipe. In 1864 in the *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* Newman emphasized the advantages of contemplative attitude, knowledge for its own sake and retiring from the world as positive choices in modern times. It was Newman’s respect towards the ancient philosophers (and not only his Christianity) that lays the foundation of his movement and thus Newman became the hero of a cult that turned against modernism. Moreno doesn’t mention that in Santayana’s antipathy towards the American values there is his negative judgment of American universities and his motivation was the same as Newman’s who supported the rebirth of ancient virtues in modern education – Newman was an advocate of ancient values, and most of these values were Platonic. And here is another topic that would provide another occasion to rethink Santayana’s many-sided oeuvre that could be seen as a unity if we assume Moreno’s point of view. We do not have to forget the title of Moreno’s book: he does not want to leave any doubt that Santayana was a philosopher and (as I mentioned earlier) Moreno asserts that philosophy as a form of life must have its place within serious philosophical treatises.

At the end of Moreno’s book there is a rich listing of secondary sources and another selection of Spanish-language sources. One could have the feeling that Moreno read everything from and about Santayana in Spanish and in English too. His intention has substantiated: “There I read [in Zaragoza] and in English, under the sound guidance of Ignacio Izuzquiza Otero (University of Zaragoza) – all that Santayana had ever written. This was a task apparently not too laborious but one that obscured a very difficult effort indeed: to become familiar with all the sources both primary and secondary, in English as well as Spanish – and this is perhaps one of the strongest points of my focus” (x). Thanks to Charles Padron’s translation, the result of Moreno’s huge research can be a part of the international discourse on Santayana.
Wojciech Małecki*


It is a historical truism that every thinker who made any impact on the field of philosophy also received his or her fair share of criticism, and it would therefore be surprising if Richard Rorty, at one time “the most quoted American philosopher,” did not. 1 But to merely say that he did would be an understatement. For Rorty happened to belong to the exclusive club of thinkers whose reception consists mostly of attacks. To be fair, throughout his career, he held academic positions at America’s top institutions, published his work with top presses and in top journals, was a sought-after keynote speaker, an op-ed author for the *New York Times*, and even had a certain number of followers and sympathizers. But their number had always been small in comparison to the number of those following other philosophical superstars, including such bêtes-noirs as Foucault or Derrida. No field was overtaken by his ideas, there was no army of Rortyans to support him, and most of the quotations that made him the most quoted American philosopher also made him the most criticized one. Practically all of his commentators recognized his originality, imagination, and erudition, and practically all of them also thought him completely wrong, independently of which philosophical quarter they represented.

As a philosopher, Rorty straddled the territory in between three philosophical traditions: pragmatism, continental, and analytic philosophy, but he was embraced in none and criticized by representatives of all three, including by heavy-hitters such as Hilary Putnam, Nancy Fraser, and John Searle. As a public intellectual, he was a vocal supporter of the ideal of social justice, which he shared with the contemporary Left, but he was at the same time fiercely critical of identity politics, a position usually associated with the right pole of the political spectrum. Partly as a result of this, he was again embraced neither by the Left, nor the Right, nor the Center, nor by any other significant part of the spectrum.

All this is said here, not in order to romanticize Rorty into a philosophical or political martyr or an “unhonored prophet of some social or intellectual revolution whose time has yet to come,” 2 but to stress the boldness of the project taken on by Curtis’s in this new book, and to stress also the fact that attempts to defend Rorty such as his do not necessarily have to be insular projects that only committed Rortyans can profit from. Rorty was, after all, a widely-known thinker who was widely-criticized, often by other widely-known thinkers and in the context of some of the most-widely known debates of his time. In the right hands, a defense of Rorty could then become something of interest to anyone interested in the philosophical debates that rocked the philosophical world in the late-twentieth century, some of which in many ways have set the coordinates for the current ones. Curtis seizes that opportunity with very

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* University of Wrocław [wojciech.malecki@uwr.edu.pl].
good results, focusing on the debate concerning whether liberalism can accommodate “the challenge of pluralism,” (9, 12). His book is actually, by his own admission, an attempt to take a stand against those who think that it cannot and that it therefore has to go (ix). If Curtis makes so much of defending Rorty, this is mainly because he thinks Rorty’s version of liberalism is best-suited to fend off the aforementioned criticisms – and the best version overall.

Consistent with that goal, Curtis begins his book by laying out in the introduction what the challenge of pluralism consists in and explaining why other attempts by liberal theorists to address it have proven ineffectual. The challenge is, roughly, that pace its founding fathers, rather than being an ethically and culturally neutral framework that springs from the dictates of universal reason and allows potentially all ways of life to peacefully coexist in society, liberalism is itself an ethically-charged, culturally specific way of life, and as such it is often incompatible with some of the ways of life which it is in principle supposed to help flourish and which are generally no less “reasonable” than liberalism itself. To argue, then, that contemporary societies should be liberal is to risk appearing “intolerant, and therefore oppressive, imperialistic, and ethnocentric” (21).

The most popular way to save liberalism from such accusations has been, quite predictably, to purge it as much as possible of anything culturally or ethically specific: to thin it out so as it could become as compatible as possible with all the known ways of human life. The results include conceptions such as political liberalism and modus vivendi liberalism. The problem with both, argues Curtis, is that they are unstable between a position in which their supposedly thinned-out liberal procedures work but only at the price of smuggling in some thick cultural or ethical content through the back door, and one where the process of purification is completed but only at the cost of making that content-free position no longer a version of liberalism.

Unhappy with a choice between hypocrisy and a de facto abandonment of liberalism, Curtis chooses to bite the bullet. He frankly admits that liberalism is a culturally-specific way of life, and that there is no other way to follow it than to actually live it, something which demands developing a specific set of dispositions, habits, and attitudes, and cannot be achieved merely by abiding to a set of “abstract principles.” The only honest and workable form of liberalism turns out to be, at least for Curtis, virtue liberalism – of the kind of proposed by Stephen Macedo and Rorty himself.

While there are many specific features of Rorty’s brand of virtue liberalism that Curtis finds appealing, the one which stands out in light of the pluralist challenge is that while Rorty has no qualms about declaring his preferred liberal ethos superior to any other way of life, he does not try to argue that his preference is backed by universal, transcultural rationality. He abandons “the traditional philosophical quest for neutral foundations for liberalism, and […] boldly admit[s] that liberalism is indeed ‘ethnocentric’: an idiosyncratic, parochial cultural development of Enlightenment Europe, and no less defensible for being that” (21). That Rorty is able to do so (to be a firm believer in liberalism while at the same time accepting its contingency), is made possible by his “anti-authoritarianism,” a position he developed outside of political
philosophy per se, as a result of his interventions in the philosophy of language and epistemology.

Chapter 1 cursorily surveys that work, discussing its roots in classical pragmatism, the work of Wittgenstein, Davidson, and Sellars as well as its critical reception among Rorty’s contemporaries (McDowell and Putnam) in order to provide some background for understanding what anti-authoritarianism amounts to. And what it amounts to is a recasting of Rorty’s anti-representationalism where the rejection of the view that truth consists in correspondence to the way things really are is framed as “a protest against the idea that human beings must humble themselves before something non-human, whether the Will of God or the Intrinsic Nature of Reality.”

According to Rorty, the epistemic imperative of justifying one’s beliefs once and for all (whether in science, politics, morality, or in any other domain of human life) by checking them against “reality as it is in itself,” is a mere expression of an atavistic “sado-masochistic” urge to kneel before a non-human authority. Anti-authoritarians, on the contrary, do not feel that urge, which is because they do not believe in such authorities. For them, justification is a “social game” whose “constraints are contingent and practice-based, as opposed to necessary and metaphysical” (53). The only epistemic authority they can imagine and recognize is the community of their “fellow-inquirers.”

Once he has laid out how he understands the anti-authoritarian component of Rorty’s anti-authoritarian liberalism, Curtis turns, in Chapter 2, to the liberalism part per se. What Rorty shares with most other liberals is his ideal of society as one where “discussion of public affairs will revolve around (1) how to balance the needs for peace, wealth, and freedom when conditions require that one of these goals be sacrificed to one of the others; and (2) how to equalize opportunities for self-creation and then leave people alone to use, or neglect, their opportunities,” and what he shares in particular with virtue liberals, as Curtis quite convincingly shows, is his emphasis that that ideal cannot be achieved without the citizens of liberal society adopting a certain set of attitudes and dispositions. What Rorty adds to the typical catalogue of liberal virtues, and what at the same time connects his political philosophy to his interventions in epistemology and metaphilosophy, is what Curtis calls “the liberal civic virtue of irony,” and which is best described as internalized anti-authoritarianism.

Rorty’s famed liberal utopia is, then, a society that (a) exemplifies the aforementioned ideal common to most liberals; and (b) whose citizens are, in addition, commonsensically anti-authoritarian. It is precisely this meta-virtue that allows Rorty’s ideal citizens to both be committed to liberalism and to admit that that commitment is contingent, as contingent as any other political commitment for that matter. When confronted with somebody whose commitments conflict with their own, such liberals do not invoke any non-human authority that would allegedly stand on their side, providing them with a metaphysical seal of approval, nor do they a priori

abstain from trying to convince their interlocutor to liberalism on the grounds that there is no non-contingent ground on which this can be done. Instead, they simply invite her to imagine what being a liberal might be, and to see if she likes it. Their civic virtue of irony provides them with “critical open-mindedness”, that is, “a sense of one’s fallibility and finitude, which can nevertheless be combined with an ability to be steadfast in one’s currently best-justified judgments.”

While in this and the preceding chapter of the book, Curtis does make some attempts to strike at Rorty’s critics, he launches a concerted counterattack only in Chapters 3 to 5, titled, respectively, “Critics: From Left to Right,” “Rorty versus Taylor,” and “Rorty, Religion, and Public Liberalism.” Always fair and patient with his targets (and most of the time managing not to cross the fine line between fairness and pedantry), Curtis generally manages to get the better of them, pointing to the inaccuracies of their readings of Rorty as well as various problems with their own positions. He ends on a positive and applicatory note in Chapter 6, where, drawing on Rorty’s own suggestion that science fiction is “the most […] imaginative and most fruitful genre of long-term political deliberation,” he provides a reading of Aldous Huxley’s utopian novel Island as a more concrete illustration of a Rortyan utopia than Rorty himself ever penned.

It is beyond the scope of this review to assess whether Curtis’s book will convince his fellow virtue-liberals to go down the Rortyan road, but there is no doubt that they should profit from reading it, as would anyone interested in the philosophy of liberalism. Most importantly, however, the book is a success as a work of Rorty scholarship, and on many levels. First, it could serve as a good introduction to Rorty’s specific brand of liberalism for lay readers as Curtis does a fine job at clarifying Rorty’s basic ideas and drilling through the crust of misinterpretations that have been sedimented on these ideas in secondary literature. But even those who have a good grasp of Rorty’s basic ideas and who can seen through the misinterpretations themselves can profit from the book too, beginning with small things like Curtis’s playful, yet in its specific sense accurate, parallel between Rorty and Thomas Aquinas (4) and ending with his novel idea of inscribing Rorty in the tradition of virtue liberalism. Curtis himself stresses that that gesture is his attempt at redescribing Rorty in the tradition of virtue liberalism. Curtis himself does not touch on.

To give you an example from my field, I have for years realized that one of the things that distinguish Rorty’s literary theory and aesthetics from the work of his contemporaries is that he puts a strong emphasis on the psychological predispositions

8. For a detailed account of Rorty’s conception of redescribing the work of a given philosopher as a hermeneutic strategy see my, “On a Man Who Died from Reading Too Much Heidegger, or Richard Rorty as a Reader,” Contemporary Pragmatism, 11, 1 (2014), 115-29.
of readers of literature rather than on the methodologies of interpretation (to Rorty’s mind, in order to be a good reader first of all you have to have a certain inclination toward texts). But thanks to Curtis’s talk about Rorty’s virtue liberalism and virtue epistemology (54), at some point in reading his book, I had a micro-epiphany, realizing that Rorty might be redescribed as a virtue aesthete too. Suddenly, I began to see connections between various dots in Rorty’s literary theory and aesthetics that I previously had never thought of, and some new dots began to emerge as well. Then, in a still wider perspective, I began to notice a network of lines crossing between Rorty’s aesthetics and the other areas of his thought, all of which appeared to me to be connected in virtue of their emphasis on, well, virtue. Fresh as this impression is, and I cannot guarantee that, when the post-epiphanic dust settles down, the account of Rorty as a virtue aesthete will stay with me for good. But a kind of ephiphany that was for certain: it allowed me to see what I have been working on for years in a new light, and see some novel vistas of inquiring into it. Judged in Rorty’s own terms, this is precisely what redescriptions are for, and even if we put Rorty aside, such experiences are simply valuable in themselves for any specialist in any field.

Curtis’s book possesses many other virtues, but it is not entirely free of vices, at least one of which is a function of a particular virtue. What I mean is that Defending Rorty

is generally quite well-researched, referencing both Rorty’s classics and quite obscure, smaller pieces, which makes certain omissions it contains more glaring than it would have been the case with a less informed study. Let me mention just two. It is rather baffling that Chapter 6, which reinterprets Huxley’s utopian fiction Island as a concrete description of a Rortyan liberal utopia (one that Rorty’s own work apparently lacks) does not even mention “Looking backwards from the Year 2096”— nothing less than Rorty’s closest attempt at… describing this kind of liberal utopia in concrete terms, and at the same time Rorty’s only attempt at political fiction, with a nod toward Edward Bellamy’s famous socialist utopia Looking Backward: 2000-1887.

Second, Defending Rorty never refers to the Rorty volume of the Library of the Living Philosophers, something which I mention here not out of mere pedantry, but because that collection contains some of Rorty’s final, at least biographically, statements on his main ideas, including a few that are critical for Curtis’s analyses. I believe, for example, that having spent so much time in his book discussing Rorty’s

10. The America of the year 2096 depicted in Rorty’s narrative definitely ‘reminds one in several respects of Rorty’s liberal utopia as it is portrayed in his other works. Namely, a country in which communal life is organized around the notion of fraternity (an equivalent of Rorty’s solidarity), and in which the primary source of moral instruction is not philosophical ethics, but ‘Scripture and literature’— since fraternity is universally conceived of as a matter of sentiments (‘an inclination of the heart, one that produces a sense of shame at having much when others have little’), and not of rational argumentation. ‘Political discourse,’ moreover, is devoid of overly theoretical digressions about principles, and reduced to finding practical measures that would ‘prevent the re-emergence of hereditary castes – either racial or economic’.” Wojciech Malecki, “‘Nine chances out of ten that things will go to hell’: Rorty on Orwell, Silko, and Narratives of the Dark Future,” in Randy Auxier & Krzysztof Skowronski (eds.), Richard Rorty and Beyond, Lexington Press, forthcoming; the quotations within the quotation are from Philosophy and Social Hope, 248-9.

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notion of irony, Curtis should have at least mentioned Rorty’s reply to J. B. Schneewind, included in the said volume, where Rorty openly disinherits his trademark character of “the liberal ironist,” judging his portrayals of that figure in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, as “badly flawed” and “misguided.”

But these are merely quibbles, and whatever other problems I might have with Curtis’s book, my general judgment, which I would like to leave the reader with, is that it is perhaps the most defensible defense of Rorty’s political philosophy ever written, and certainly one of the most refined, patient, comprehensive, and stimulating works on that subject available.

12. Richard Rorty, “Reply to J. B. Scheewind,” in *Ibid.*, 506. As Rorty explains, “I conflated two quite different sorts of people: the unruffled pragmatist and the anguished existentialist adolescent. I made it sound as if you could not be an antifoundationalist and a romantic self-creator without becoming a Sartrean, ever conscious of the abyss. But one can be both and remain, as far as philosophy goes, a placid Deweyan – someone who is nominalist and a historicist, but not much troubled by doubt either about philosophical doctrine or about her own moral or political outlook. It was a mistake to suggest (as I did at p. 87 of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*) that all ironist intellectuals were afflicted with such doubts.” (*Ibid.*)

13. I would like to thank David Wall for reading the penultimate draft of this review.