

The Oxford Handbook of Dewey, ed. Steven Fesmire

Abstract for Introduction:

In *The Oxford Handbook of Dewey*, leading scholars help researchers access particular aspects of John Dewey's thought and navigate the rapidly developing literature. Contributors interpret, appraise, and critique Dewey's philosophy under the following headings: Metaphysics; Epistemology, Science, Language, and Mind; Ethics, Law, and the Starting Point; Social and Political Philosophy, Race, and Feminist Philosophy; Philosophy of Education; Aesthetics; Instrumental Logic, Philosophy of Technology, and the Unfinished Project of Modernity; Dewey in Cross-Cultural Dialogue; The American Philosophical Tradition, the Social Sciences, and Religion; and Public Philosophy, Practical Ethics, and Public Policy.

Introduction

Steven Fesmire

John Dewey (1859-1952) was the foremost figure and public intellectual in early to mid-twentieth century American philosophy, working principally from the University of Chicago (1894-1904) and Columbia University (from 1905). He remains the most academically cited Anglophone philosopher of the past century, and he is among the most cited Americans of any century.¹

Dewey's star as a cultural icon remained high for some years after his death. For example, he joins Jane Addams and W.E.B. Du Bois as the only twentieth century philosophers to be honored with US postage stamps. Nevertheless, although Dewey has endured for well over a century as a towering figure among theorists housed in university schools of education, by the 1960s he and other American pragmatists such as Charles S. Peirce and William James were, with notable exceptions, dismissed among most professional Anglophone philosophers. What was of enduring worth in the classical pragmatists was presumed to have been incorporated into the purportedly more rigorous and exacting approach that had emigrated from Central Europe in the 1930s to 1940s. Anglophone philosophy concurrently grew isolated from contemporary conflicts, disparities, divisions, and drift, while philosophers who remained committed to dealing

with urgent problems too often reached for intellectual tools which had not been critically reformed to meet the circumstances at hand.²

Generations of intellectuals have found an inspirational taproot in Dewey's notion that there is a public role for grown-ups who deliberately step back to critique the comfortable assumptions that color, shape, and prejudice our thinking. Dewey held that philosophy is impertinent when approached as a form of verbal conquest and scholasticism restricted to supposedly timeless and placeless core problems manufactured by an esoteric class of symbolic technicians. Philosophic criticism advances when it deepens and perpetuates goods that are justified by open reflection, or when it helps us to mediate shared difficulties (1925/1929, LW 1:299–302; cf. 1916, MW 9:338). He famously summed up this spirit of public engagement in “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy”: “Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems” of humanity (1917, MW 10:46).

Contents and Goals

The Oxford Handbook of Dewey reflects exponential growth of interest in Dewey and American pragmatism across academic areas and philosophical traditions during the past three decades. As its chapters attest, the renascent interest in Dewey and pragmatism has produced a highly articulated framework for clarifying and extending contemporary philosophy's achievements while critiquing its deficiencies.³ Some contributors to this volume would applaud Hilary Putnam's proposal of a third, Deweyan enlightenment, analogous to the Platonic and eighteenth century ones (2004, 5-6ff). Other contributors would deem such proposals overly idealistic, especially if decoupled from research to correct Dewey's own covert biases and limitations. If the volume nevertheless has a unifying theme, it is the conviction that a critical embrace of

Dewey merits a central place in philosophical research, and that philosophy's recent past is not the best guide to its future.

The thirty-five chapters of the *Handbook* are written by leading scholars across topical areas. No comparable team has ever been assembled to engage and critique Dewey's philosophy in a book of this scope. Scholarly emphases and trajectories of course differ from author to author—sometimes markedly so, as with Hammer's and Haskins' chapters on Dewey's aesthetics. In order to clarify and develop reflective tensions and differences, contributors have been asked to take and defend positions as they engage, inspire, and chart a course for emerging research “to determine the character of changes that are going on and to give them in the affairs that concern us most some measure of intelligent direction” (1930, LW 5:271).

The *Handbook* is written principally with an audience of researchers in mind: specialists, scholarly non-specialists, graduate students, and undergraduates. It is distinct from a “companion” volume in that it is designed to help researchers access particular aspects of Dewey's thought and navigate the enormous and rapidly developing literature. Researchers seeking a companion to the *Handbook*, or readers relatively new to Dewey, may wish to consult a recent comprehensive introduction such as my *Dewey* (2015) in the Routledge Philosophers series, David L. Hildebrand's *Dewey: A Beginner's Guide* (2008), or Stéphane Madelrieux's *La philosophie de John Dewey* (2016).⁴

One measure of the success of any handbook is the extent to which it inspires and facilitates even better research. Accordingly, although each chapter includes some synthesis, exegesis, and summation by way of exploring the current scholarly landscape and orienting readers within contemporary discussions, the overall approach is not that of veterans describing

the passing scene to novices. Contributors aim in each chapter to help other researchers *participate* in current scholarship in light of prospects in that area.

A rigid formal structure designed *a priori* in the editor's armchair would be too taut to meet the *Handbook's* goals, while an anarchic assemblage would be too slack and redundant to effectively analyze particular aspects of Dewey's philosophy. Accordingly, the final circumscription and honing of topical areas was determined through dialogue with and between contributors. Traditional philosophical signposts such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics are retained in chapter and section headings, leaving it to contributors to reveal and assess Dewey's radical reframing of a philosophical tradition from which he parted company in his search to promote a recovery of philosophical engagement with practical human questions of experience, knowing, moral life, and art.

Beginning with Philip Kitcher's framing chapter calling for a transformation of philosophical research, contributors interpret, appraise, and critique Dewey's philosophy under the following headings: Metaphysics; Epistemology, Science, Language, and Mind; Ethics, Law, and the Starting Point; Social and Political Philosophy, Race, and Feminist Philosophy; Philosophy of Education; Aesthetics; Instrumental Logic, Philosophy of Technology, and the Unfinished Project of Modernity; Dewey in Cross-Cultural Dialogue; The American Philosophical Tradition, the Social Sciences, and Religion; and Public Philosophy, Practical Ethics, and Public Policy.

The Future of Philosophical Research

Dewey frequently argued that much that is nominally called philosophy does not express the love of wisdom, if "by wisdom we mean not systematic and proved knowledge of fact and truth, but a conviction about moral values, a sense for the better kind of life to be led. ...As a moral term it

refers...not to accomplished reality but to a desired future which our desires, when translated into articulate conviction, may help bring into existence” (1919, MW 11:44). In a 1950 letter, he added that “wisdom is judgment about the uses to which knowledge should be put. ...[P]ractical philosophy today is largely in academic doldrums—its ‘professors’ rarely make even an attempt to use it in its application to life's issues to say nothing of developing it so it can and will apply” (1950.04.10 (20434): John Dewey to Earl C. Kelley).

In “Dewey’s Conception of Philosophy,” Philip Kitcher recommends to twenty-first century philosophers the radical transformation that Dewey advocated a century ago in his watershed essay “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy” (1917). Kitcher reconstructs, reconciles, and draws inspiration from Dewey’s seemingly conflicting assertions about philosophy and its distinctive role in progressive social inquiry and practice. “Better it is for philosophy to err in active participation in the living struggles and issues of its own age and times,” Dewey wrote, “than to maintain an immune monastic impeccability, without relevancy and bearing in the generating ideas of its contemporary present” (1908, MW 4:142).

Metaphysics

The more confidence we have that, from the widest angle, the world has one set of general characteristics rather than another, the more we try “to direct the conduct of life ...upon the basis of the character assigned to the world” (1925/1929, LW 1:309). Consequently, given the persistent tendency to damn as outcasts those who claim that existence has unauthorized traits, metaphysics was especially fertile ground for Dewey as a cultural critic.

Thomas M. Alexander, in “Dewey’s Naturalistic Metaphysics,” explores the development of Dewey’s cultural naturalism, culminating in *Experience and Nature*’s “robust version of nonreductive naturalism that emphasized process and creative emergence.” In contrast with

British empiricism's conception of a receptive mind behind a veil of ideas, Dewey argued that our encounters with the world are creative. In Alexander's view, recognizing inquiry as one specialized kind of transaction rescues us from the intellectualist's fallacy, whereby philosophers have reduced all experience to knowing.

In "Dewey, Whitehead, and Process Metaphysics," William T. Myers explores divergent perceptions of Dewey's metaphysics among scholars and clarifies the traits of existence that Dewey took to be generic. Myers then offers an overview of Alfred North Whitehead's speculative process metaphysics and probes commonalities with Dewey on the mind/body problem and the starting point of inquiry.

Epistemology, Science, Language, and Mind

"I'm the one in the car with the map in his lap, ...often at the expense of seeing the actual landscape it depicts rolling past on the other side of the window," Mike Parker wrote in *Map Addict* (2009, 2). Like Parker, philosophers tend to be more map-oriented than terrain-oriented. There are consolations of such retreat from the ambient buzz, but at our *philosophic* best we do not escape from existential peril into symbolic formulations and remain there. From Dewey's standpoint, the problem for philosophical method comes when we fail to review and revise the symbolic formulations (i.e., the maps) that guide us, reclining instead on familiar symbols cut loose from experimental feedback. Ultimately what mattered to Dewey was for philosophy to contribute to wiser practices, and he believed it could not do this unless it became more naturalistic and empirical so as to improve upon the stubbornly recurrent assumption common to most historical idealisms and realisms, of an unaffected mind that mysteriously "knows" an unaffected world.

“Arguably, American pragmatism was the first self-consciously Darwinian movement in Western philosophy,” Vincent Colapietro asserts in “Pragmatist Portraits of Experimental Intelligence by Peirce, James, Dewey, and Others.” Colapietro explores their reconception of human reason as active and not inherently limited, yet subject to distortions and failures.

David Hildebrand and Joseph Margolis critique Robert Brandom and other linguistic pragmatists for supposing that it improves upon Dewey to perpetuate the idea that experience is essentially cognitive, a notion that stands on its head one of the very things Dewey is most concerned to reject. In a close and tightly argued reading of Brandom, Hildebrand explores the promises and limitations of linguistic neopragmatism in “Dewey, Rorty, and Brandom: The Challenges of Linguistic Neopragmatism.” He concludes that Dewey’s “melioristic, experiential starting point remains central and, indeed, indispensable to *any* pragmatism wishing to connect with everyday ethical, social, and political realities.”

Leading up to a critical encounter with Brandom and the Pittsburgh School of pragmatism, Margolis in “Pragmatist Innovations, Actual and Proposed: Dewey, Peirce, and the Pittsburgh School” explores the classical pragmatists’ “preference of flux over fixity, the deep informality of inquiry and judgment, Darwinian and post-Darwinian treatments of the continuum of the animal and the human, the treatment of the epistemological problem in terms inherently opposed to Kantian transcendentalism and Fregean rationalism, the abandonment of teleologism, essentialism, and fixities of any substantive or methodological kind.”

Peter Godfrey-Smith’s “Dewey and Anti-Representationalism” critiques Dewey’s similarities to contemporary anti-representational positions in philosophy of mind and epistemology. A highlight of the chapter is an analysis of Dewey’s discussion of cartographic maps in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Godfrey-Smith criticizes Dewey’s use of false

dichotomies, and he limits and qualifies Dewey's deflationary account of the link between accuracy and use. Nevertheless, Godfrey-Smith implies that maps are good models of at least some important sorts of symbol-mediated thinking and communication so that an analysis of them helps to reveal projective, provisional, active, and constructive dimensions of specifiable sorts of inquiry.

Ethics, Law, and the Starting Point

Dewey argued that we can intelligently deal with problems and direct ourselves toward desirable goals, both individually and collectively, without transcendental standards that hide from inspection even as they pretend to guarantee the validity of judgments. The chief aim of ethical theory, in his view, is to systematically work through and generalize about situations in which the way forward is not well lit, when multiple paths beckon, and when incompatible goods and colliding duties "get in each other's way" (1932, LW 7:165).

Akin to Mill's notion in *On Liberty* of moral life as "experiments of living" (cf. Kitcher 2011), though unhampered by Mill's associationist psychology, Dewey approached our moral lives as cooperative, embodied, imaginative experiments in living. For Dewey, mind is constituted through social communication, so social pressures cannot simply be eliminated as extraneous undesirables. But neither—in contrast with Hegel's organicism—is mind "truly" to be identified with the larger social whole. Millian "negative freedom," taken on its own, does not shed light on how we can better learn to meet situations that destabilize, engage, and stimulate deliberate readjustment. In Dewey's moral psychology, in contrast, people reach out to grasp, assimilate, and transform subject matter that may nourish and consummate their life projects. He took steps toward a theory of ethical inquiry that emphasizes colloquy over detached soliloquy, a situational/systems outlook over hyperindividualism, creative flexibility

over moral bookishness, and embodiment over emotionless separation from the intimacy of our own yearnings. A contemporary need, emphasized by Kitcher (2011) and Norton (2015), is for more cooperative diagnoses of problems and more collaborative deliberation. We are in need of more comprehensive conscientiousness in ethics, law, and politics.

Mark Johnson, in “Dewey’s Radical Conception of Moral Cognition,” explores implications of Dewey’s naturalistic, social-psychological, reconstructive, fallibilist, and imaginative conception of moral cognition. Johnson argues that this conception squares well with recent work in moral psychology and cognitive neuroscience. We are adaptive biological organisms, and our embodied interactions are central to the emergence of any meaning, which recruits basic somato-sensory processes. Specifically, in Dewey’s idiom, we get brought up short by troublesome circumstances (the problematic situation), we search for ways to deal with the need that has arisen, and our inquiry culminates (hopefully) in some relatively satisfactory way to reestablish relative equilibrium. This *need-search-consummation process* can be further clarified by scientific work on our embodied need for return to homeostatic equilibrium or to a dynamic trajectory or flow.

Cheryl Misak, in “Dewey on the Authority and Legitimacy of Law,” grapples with “My Philosophy of Law,” a neglected essay by Dewey on the nature, authority, and legitimacy of law. This essay deserves to be standard reading in philosophy of law, or wherever legal theorists and ethicists are making sense of what it means to “get things right.” Misak draws on Peirce, James, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. to argue that Dewey offers “a truly promising account and justification of the law as a series of provisional punctuation points in a democratic process of inquiry.”

In “Beyond Moral Fundamentalism: Dewey’s Pragmatic Pluralism in Ethics and Politics,” Steven Fesmire builds on Dewey’s unpublished and published reflections on ethics to suggest that a vital role for contemporary theorizing is to lay bare and analyze the sorts of conflicts that constantly underlie moral and political action. Instead of reinforcing moral fundamentalism *via* an outdated quest for the central and basic source of normative justification, Fesmire argues that we should foster theories which, while accommodating monistic insights, better inform decision-making by: opening communication across diverse elements of moral and political life, placing these elements in a wider context in which norms gain practical traction in non-ideal conditions, and expanding prospects for social inquiry and convergence on policy and action.

Gregory F. Pappas, in “The Starting Point of Dewey’s Ethics and Sociopolitical Philosophy,” culminates the ethics section with a metaphilosophical bridge to politics. What should be philosophy’s starting point? If we reply with some kind of empiricism, then what does it *mean* for philosophers to take experience seriously, and what are the implications for ethical and sociopolitical problems? According to Pappas, Dewey’s proposal is more radical than his twenty-first century allies who join him in advocating for “a shift from traditional approaches centered on ideal theories and abstractions toward a more nonideal contextualist, problem-centered, and inquiry-oriented approach.” “For pragmatism,” Pappas writes, “there are as many problems of injustice as there are problematic situations suffered in a particular way.”

[Social and Political Philosophy, Race, and Feminist Philosophy](#)

When we open up decision-making to diverse voices and standpoints, it becomes more difficult to reject others’ concerns out of hand. In this way, Dewey observed, democratic discourse can operate as a public check on exclusivity and kneejerk partiality, though an imperfect and often

inelegant one. In some ways analogous to the more specific feminist ideal of intersectionality spotlighted by the Women's March on Washington in January 2017, Dewey's idea was that democratic communication maximizes the chance that we might find mutually workable paths forward that respect legitimate interests, evaluations, and evolving identities of different individuals, institutions, and groups. He eschewed overreliance on top-down expert-driven decisions and championed participatory processes that engage communities in social learning.

Dewey and Addams rejected the still-prevailing notion that there are only two alternatives to conservatism as an approach to social action: the tepid half-measures and sugar of the liberal reformist, or the reactive wand-waving and vinegar of the revolutionary. If perceiving the need for radical changes makes one a radical, then as Dewey wrote in the middle of the Great Depression, "today any liberalism which is not also radicalism is irrelevant and doomed" (1935, LW 11:45). Yet Dewey's was a radicalism for those with the courage and patience to secure the "democratic means to achieve our democratic ends" (332). Or as Addams earlier made the point in her 1922 book *Peace and Bread in Time of War*: "Social advance depends as much upon the process through which it is secured as upon the result itself" (Addams 2002; quoted in LW 15:195).⁵

A distinctive feature of Dewey's and Addams's pragmatic progressivism was insistence on the inseparability of what we mean to do (ends-in-view, in Dewey's idiom), how we are going about it (means), and what we have actually done (ends). Moral and political intelligence necessitates a feedback loop in which we dramatically rehearse alternatives *ex ante* prior to acting on them irrevocably, then review and revise *ex post* in light of intended and unintended consequences.

Shannon Sullivan, in “Dewey and Du Bois on Race and Colonialism,” converses with W.E.B. Du Bois to critique Dewey’s views of colonialism and race during the First World War. Sullivan charts a course for research to help correct the systemic injustices of white privilege concealed by our unacknowledged racist conceptual filters. By detecting the conceptual whiteness—“a white perspective that tends to ignore, overlook, and make invisible matters of race and racism”—in the 1910s writings of the great philosopher of the progressive era, Sullivan strives to disclose the indefensible not only in Dewey but also in the contemporary “souls of white folk.” Sullivan’s analyses may “help contemporary pragmatists avoid similar complicities in future work on Dewey.”

Lisa Heldke, in “Dewey and Pragmatist Feminist Philosophy,” explores Dewey’s mixed record as a feminist theorist and appraises his influences in, and prospects for, feminist philosophy. After canvassing Dewey’s influence on feminist work in epistemology, philosophy of education, and sociopolitical philosophy, Heldke argues that the conceptual resources of pragmatist feminist philosophy “could be put to further good use, particularly in feminist metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory.”

In “Dewey’s Pragmatic Politics: Power, Limits, and Realism About Democracy as a Way of Life,” John J. Stuhr explores Dewey’s central ontological, logical, and political commitments as a prelude to reassessing the ideal of democracy as a way of life. Stuhr proposes that a “pragmatism for realists” requires additions to and reconstructions of Dewey’s account in light of three issues: “relations of power embedded in experimental inquiries; practical limits to the effectiveness of democratic means for democratic ends; and, the gap between tribal political realities and Deweyan inclusive ideals.”

In “Dewey, Addams, and Design Thinking: Pragmatist Feminist Innovation for Democratic Change,” Judy D. Whipps concludes the section by examining philosophical and methodological resources in Dewey and Addams for strengthening the experimental and democratic approach of contemporary design thinking, “a method of problem-solving based in understanding the values and needs of people.” Whipps draws from Addams and Dewey to contribute a pragmatist feminist perspective to experimental design thinking, including a focus on power and privilege in the design process.

Philosophy of Education

Dewey’s basic pedagogical idea was that kids learn better when they organically assimilate knowledge in an active, personal, imaginative, and direct way. The increasingly dominant industrial model of content delivery and retrieval, in contrast, lacks any sense of students or teachers as live creatures actively exploring, navigating, reaching, and making. For Dewey, both students and their teachers are active and cooperative players in who they are becoming and in the world they are helping to make.

Nel Noddings explores curriculum, educational aims, and the vital contemporary import of interdisciplinary studies in “Dewey and the Quest for Certainty in Education.” She draws from Dewey to argue that extremes of mere training, on one hand, or elite intellectualism, on the other hand, do not lead to experimental knowledge that helps us live better.

In “Derridean Poststructuralism, Deweyan Pragmatism, and Education,” Jim Garrison critically explores Derrida’s philosophy of education in the historical context of Saussure, Husserl, and Heidegger. Garrison identifies areas of accord between Derrida and Dewey, including their mutual rejection of the metaphysics of presence and their openness to difference.

He then discusses “Dewey’s empirical pluralism and perspectivism” as “an alternative to Derrida’s quasi-transcendental apriorism.”

Maura Striano argues in “Dewey, the Ethics of Democracy, and the Challenge of Social Inclusion in Education” that Dewey’s democratic approach to moral and sociopolitical inquiry anticipated many key issues within contemporary debates on human growth and development in the struggle for social justice and inclusion. “Dewey’s approach,” she urges, “suggests significant guidelines for contemporary democratic education in times of anxiety, disaffection, and distress.”

Leonard J. Waks argues in “Dewey and Higher Education” that, although Dewey wrote “relatively little about higher education, he had a well-developed and largely unexplored conception of the university.” Waks builds on Dewey’s three-stage account of the logic of inquiry to explain Dewey’s conception of higher education, especially with respect to teaching, service, and research. In addition to explaining Dewey’s neglected critique of the university, Waks blazes a trail for contemporary educational researchers by extending that critique to twenty first century higher education.

Andrea English and Christine Doddington, in “Dewey, *Aesthetic Experience*, and Education for Humanity,” explore implications of Dewey’s conception of aesthetic experience for formal educational settings. With a special emphasis on the role of the teacher, they conclude that three of Dewey’s insights have special import for educational policies that address contemporary educational crises: “the value of teachers, the role of art as an ethical-political force, and the special place of philosophy of education in the cultivation of our shared humanity.”

Aesthetics

Dewey strove to set forth the possibility and method by which techno-industrial civilization might be humanized. He intended this as an antidote to fatalistic acceptance that ordinary experience must be mostly characterized by subordination of present experiences to remote extrinsic goods. Without the methods of science, Dewey argued, we drift at the mercy of natural forces. But without lives rich in aesthetic consummations, he portended, we “might become a race of economic monsters, restlessly driving hard bargains with nature and with one another, bored with leisure or capable of putting it to use only in ostentatious display and extravagant dissipation” (1920, MW 12:152).

Dewey argued that artistic production and aesthetic experience reveal human experience in its full developmental potential. Experiences that are refined in the arts reveal the potential for the rest of our experiences to grow and be fulfilled. Such experiences serve as model, inspiration, and hope for establishing social and material conditions that improve the odds that our intellectual, moral, and everyday experiences may become as aesthetically complete as those peak experiences we justly celebrate in the fine arts. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey clarified his “instrumentalist” theory of inquiry in light of his lifelong emphasis on the felt significance of immediate experience: “I have from time to time set forth a conception of knowledge as being ‘instrumental.’ Strange meanings have been imputed by critics to this conception. Its actual content is simple: Knowledge is instrumental to the enrichment of immediate experience through the control over action that it exercises” (1934, LW 10:294).

Casey Haskins, in “Dewey's *Art as Experience* in the Landscape of Twenty-first Century Aesthetics,” explores *Art As Experience* as a vital resource for post-postmodern aesthetics, especially for “multidisciplinary discussions of ‘everyday aesthetics,’ the aesthetics of

embodiment, and the dialogue between pragmatist and other traditions such as Adornean Critical Theory.” Such aesthetic theorizing occurs, Haskins argues, “on a *landscape* of different possible linkages between belief and behavior,” a Deweyan metaphor which invites dialogue about the nature of art and aesthetic theory.

Dewey took himself to be *respecting* art by revealing its naturalness; playing the cello was to him a *real* expression of nature, not virtually real. So he would likely, rightly or wrongly, interpret Adorno’s critical theory of art as retreating from the real, and he would equally likely take issue with Adorno’s concerns about the autonomy of art as a sanctuary. Indeed his own use of the word sanctuary is consistently negative, as a hermetically sealed space violating the principle of continuity, as when he criticized the idea of schools as “a fenced-off sanctuary” (LW 8:58-59), or rejected the then-popular view of science as a sort of religious sanctuary “set apart; its findings were supposed to have a privileged relation to the real” (1929, LW 4:176).

But does Adorno’s critical aesthetics notice something fundamental about aesthetic modernism that Dewey’s cultural naturalism misses? Espen Hammer, in “Dewey, Adorno, and the Purpose of Art,” explores this question and makes the case for Adorno’s conception of modern art as “radically separated from the everyday and able to offer insight only in an indirect, self-negating manner.”

[Instrumental Logic, Philosophy of Technology, and the Unfinished Project of Modernity](#)

Dewey remains a powerful ally today in the fight against deadening efficiency, narrow means-end calculation, “frantic exploitation” (LW 5:268), and the industrialization of everything. He was a scalding critic of blind and ill-considered “technology as it operates under existing political-economic-cultural conditions” (1945, LW 15:190). A Dewey-inspired pragmatic approach rejects the persistent tendency to pit human intelligence in an antagonistic relation to

nature, asks us to get clearer about our ends and values, and reflects on which technological innovations are functional or dysfunctional means to our most valuable ends. He argued that the operative method of intelligence is our best means to find out how far we can go in the direction of amelioration so that we are able to contribute to whatever progress is possible, but he held that there was nothing inevitable about progress toward greater and more widely shared human fulfillment, regardless of how rigorously experimental our method may be.

Larry Hickman, in “Dewey, Pragmatism, Technology,” articulates Dewey’s pragmatic philosophy of technology in contrast with positivism, Heidegger, Ellul, and critical theory. Hickman then situates Dewey’s work within the context of contemporary work by Ihde, Latour, Verbeek, Feenberg, and Pickering. Dewey’s account, Hickman argues, “is applicable beyond what are commonly regarded as the technosciences, even for example to logic and religion. It comprises a set of proposals for a continuing reconstruction of culture by means of systematic, regulated inquiry.”

In “Dewey’s Chicago-Functionalist Conception of Logic,” F. Thomas Burke explores Dewey’s view of logic “as a study of how abductive, deductive, and inductive forms of inference best work together in the course of inquiry.” Burke spells out Dewey’s functionalist approach in the context of mainstream contemporary logic, which has been deeply influenced by Russell’s competing structuralist approach.

In the early 1940s, Dewey worked intensively on a culminating book, which he envisioned as a historical critique of philosophy’s lost opportunities. “The working motto of one and all” modern philosophies, he asserted, is to “get everything out into the open where it can be seen and examined” (2012, 169). This incomplete manuscript, or perhaps some less fragmented revision of it, was lost in 1947. About a decade ago, Phillip Deen recovered the infamous “lost”

manuscript while combing the Dewey Papers at Southern Illinois University. Deen edited and published the book under Dewey's working title, *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy* (2012). Dewey's "new" book radically reconstructs what Hammer, in a different context, calls "the framework of rationalized modernity" (this volume). In "Dewey, Habermas, and the Unfinished Project of Modernity in *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy*," Deen explores the book's scholarly and contemporary relevance in relation to critical theory's account of scientific-technological reason.

Dewey in Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Dewey's two and a half years in Japan and China (1919-1921) offered him an East-West comparative standpoint to examine Euro-American presuppositions. In subsequent work, he took steps in the direction of a global philosophical outlook by promoting a fusion of aesthetic refinements with democratic experimentalism. Yet even a century on, we have barely begun to take in an emerging global philosophical culture that includes unfamiliar questions, angles, idioms, and emphases. In a sense, Dewey's pragmatism did not "grow up" in the United States; it originated there, and it is now growing up through cross-cultural dialogue.

Roger Ames, in "Dewey and Confucian Philosophy," argues that "American pragmatism might serve as a vocabulary to promote a positive dialogue" between the United States and China "at a moment in history when such a conversation is imperative." Ames compares "the central Confucian notion of relationally constituted persons (*ren* 仁)" with Dewey's conception of individuality. He also explores "the centrality of moral imagination in Confucian role ethics and in Deweyan ethics" and concludes that "these two traditions share the idea of a human-centered religiousness."

Naoko Saito, in “Two-Way Internationalization: Education, Translation, and Transformation in Dewey and Cavell,” explores anxieties of inclusion, which are “experienced when we have to live with dissent and are exposed to discordant, disturbing voices.” Building on Cavell’s reflections on the experience of untranslatability, Saito argues that we must go beyond a politics of inclusion that merely recognizes and respects separate values without mutual destabilization and transformation. Dewey’s own tendency to speak in a universal voice needs a corrective in this respect. She writes: “With the processes of self-criticism it so readily instills, translation is a metonym of such transformative experience.” In light of this, “an alternative route to political education is explored, with the emphasis on two-way internationalization through the art of translation.”

Is Confucian democracy an oxymoron? Could it work in China? Situating her inquiry within the setting of Dewey’s historical visit, Sor-hoon Tan argues in “Experimental Democracy for China: Dewey’s Method” that “Dewey’s emphasis on experimentation in social reforms and his fallibilism regarding the political institutions of democracy open up new possibilities for China’s democratization, and suggest where one might look to discover the indigenous conditions – the varied experiments being conducted in local governance and civil society – from which a Chinese democracy might be born.”

[The American Philosophical Tradition, the Social Sciences, and Religion](#)

James Campbell, in “John Dewey’s Debt to William James,” clarifies Jamesian themes that recur in Dewey’s corpus, including “Dewey’s melioristic, pragmatic account of social practice; his emphasis upon the importance of habits in organized human life; his presentation of the role of philosophy as a means of improving daily life; his recognition of the social nature of the self; and

his call for a rejection of religious traditions and institutions in favor of an emphasis upon religious experience.”

In “Mead, Dewey, and Their Influence in the Social Sciences,” social scientist Daniel R. Huebner shares groundbreaking research on the relationship between Mead and Dewey and on their very considerable influence. Huebner documents Dewey’s and Mead’s work “to develop functional and later social psychology, social reform efforts, educational theory, the social history of thought, and other aspects of pragmatist philosophy.” Dewey’s influence also extended to “the sociologists and anthropologists at Columbia, institutional economists at Chicago and elsewhere, and later European social theorists.”

In “Idealism and Religion in Dewey’s Philosophy,” Randall E. Auxier and John R. Shook explore the development of Dewey’s shift from organicist idealism to his mature naturalistic view that “experience is ontologically continuous with nature.” In conversation with James, Peirce, Royce, and Santayana, Auxier and Shook argue that *A Common Faith* “exemplifies this metaphysics as it explains the ethical growth of communities through religious experience.”

Erin McKenna and Scott Pratt draw contemporary analogies to Dewey’s controversial volume *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915) in “Philosophy and the Mirror of Culture: On the Future and Function of Dewey Scholarship.” Dewey argued that Kant provided a “practical aid” to German absolutist politics, a commitment he reaffirmed in 1943. McKenna and Pratt argue that, just as Kantian commitments mirrored and informed German culture, so the American linguistic turn in philosophy—exemplified for them by Robert Brandom’s linguistic pragmatism—mirrors the rise of President Donald Trump’s emotivist politics. McKenna and Pratt urge instead “a recovery of a Deweyan pluralist philosophy of resistance and freedom” that is democratic, fallibilistic, attuned to issues of power, and responsive to situated knowledge.

They conclude by examining emerging trends in Dewey scholarship that offer a practical aid to democratic pluralism.

Public Philosophy and Practical Ethics

Dewey argued in *Individualism, Old and New* (1930) that as industrial civilization developed, philosophers and other intellectuals were among the many individuals who lost any coherent social function. By facing problems and helping to guide inquiry into them, intellectuals could recover a public function. As seen for example in the work of environmental pragmatist Andrew Light (Light 2017), who served in 2013-2016 as Senior Advisor and India Counselor to the U.S. Special Envoy on Climate Change, philosophers can help both experts and the public to engage problems in a way that aids deliberation and social learning so that change is directed more intelligently and less haphazardly than it otherwise might be.

Michael Sandel has observed that our philosophy of the public is implicated in all of our public philosophizing. It determines our aims and shapes our public discourse (Sandel 1998). In his philosophy of the public, Dewey held that the appropriate vocation of public intellectuals is *not* the construction of dogmas for “the people” to follow, as though foregone conclusions and an aura of absolute assuredness must replace experimental, fallibilistic, and participatory social inquiry in a pinch. In contrast with Walter Lippman, Reinhold Niebuhr (1932), and many twenty-first century liberal intellectuals, Dewey did not think an enlighten-the-masses outlook revealed us at our philosophic or moral best (see 1927, LW 2; cf. Rogers 2008).⁶

Like Addams, Dewey warned against a double-standard when it comes to justifications for inflaming people to value political ends irrespective of the results of the social means we use to achieve them (1939, LW 13:229). Such an approach undercuts democratic education, and it anti-pragmatically divorces means from ends. Dewey sounded a very different note than the so-

called political “realist” who today offers the name Trump as incontrovertible proof that we can ultimately expect very little of the public. We have, Dewey held, long been running an educational experiment in low expectations, and the dismal results have been self-fulfilling (cf. Fesmire 2016). The answer to failures in democracy is to reorganize to expect *more* of public intelligence, not less (see 1927, LW 2; cf. 1935, LW 11:39). In Dewey’s view, we must educate and communicate with the aim of creating a cultural context in which, in Eddie Glaude, Jr.’s words, we “become the kind of people that a democracy requires.”⁷

Noëlle McAfee leads off this section. In “Dewey and Public Philosophy,” McAfee argues that Dewey would criticize the non-democratic public philosophy latent in much recent public philosophizing. Such work “usurps the role of a public to identify problems and their sources and skips over any need for public deliberation on what should be done. ...[P]ublic problems are best fathomed by the public itself, which may enlist experts or governments to fix the problems but alone is the best judge of what needs to be addressed and whether the remedy is successful.”

In “Dewey and Environmental Philosophy,” Paul B. Thompson and Zachary Piso explore environmental themes in Dewey’s philosophy. Despite Dewey’s conspicuous silence about environmental controversies that were central to contemporaries such as John Muir and Aldo Leopold, and in sharp opposition to cherry-picking misinterpretations of him as a scientific technocrat, Thompson and Piso “conclude that an environmental philosophy oriented by Dewey’s notion of organism-environment interaction provides promising approaches to interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and environmental justice.”

In the volume’s concluding chapter, “Dewey and Bioethics,” Micah Hester draws from his background in medical humanities and clinical ethics—theorizing through practice, not

merely deducing from prior principles—to appraise Dewey’s “soft” particularism in moral philosophy in the context of contemporary conditions of wellness and affliction. In contrast with inhumane, atomistic, and merely mechanical approaches to healthcare, Hester builds on Dewey to defend a conception of healthcare as an art which uses science to heal living individuals.

At the close of *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy*, Dewey made what he called a “cynical” suggestion that the “writing class” suffers from an inferiority complex. We place our own cognitive activities atop a value hierarchy while relegating practical activity to second-class status, as compensation for the fact that our wider social surroundings consistently place narrowly practical activity above knowing (Dewey 2012, 345). Philosophy should instead, he urged, speak to living.

Soon after his 90th birthday, John Dewey (1859-1952) was feted at his alma mater, the University of Vermont. Too tired to rise and speak to the crowd in Burlington, he simply said: “I’m thankful for the privilege of living on this good planet, Earth. But living on this Earth has become the supreme challenge to mankind’s intelligence” (1975.05.25? [22283]: Herbert W. Schneider to American Humanist Association). He urged philosophers to sympathetically meet problems with fresh hypotheses and to help interpret, evaluate, and redirect our confused cultures.

By what standard, then, would Dewey himself have appraised this handbook associated with his name? Whatever the quality of a philosophical work’s schematic form, or of its erudite chewing of a “historic cud” (1917, MW 10:47), or of its promise for manufacturing academic citations, by Dewey’s standards it is *philosophically* valuable insofar as it interprets the

contemporary scene and sheds light “upon what philosophy should now engage in” (1949, LW 16:361).

Works Cited

Citations of John Dewey’s works are to the thirty-seven-volume critical edition published by Southern Illinois University Press under the editorship of Jo Ann Boydston. In-text citations give the original publication date, series abbreviation, followed by volume number and page number. For example: (1934, LW 10:12) is page 12 of *Art as Experience*, which is published as volume 10 of *The Later Works*.

Series abbreviations for *The Collected Works*

EW *The Early Works* (1882–98)

MW *The Middle Works* (1899–1924)

LW *The Later Works* (1925–53)

Citations of Dewey’s correspondence are to *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-2007*, published by the InteLex Corporation under the editorship of Larry Hickman. Citations give the date, reference number for the letter, and author followed by recipient. For example: 1973.02.13 (22053): Herbert W. Schneider to H. S. Thayer.

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Notes

¹ According to Google Scholar. Of course, such comparisons break down when applied to figures who did their work prior to academic professionalization. Of such academic superlatives, Dewey had this to say in a letter to Scudder Klyce: “The thing I don't care about is . . . your tendency to compare persons as to their greatness and goodness. It may be some defect in me but it does [not] interest me; it seems like a children's game. I confess I don't care how great or how good Christ or Buddha [were] || anyway, especially as we don't know anything about them. And about our contemporaries of whom we know more, it seems both hopeless and childish. That's the impression the Nobel prize makes on me; this sorting people out for prizes is of the mental age of twelve” (1915.07.05 (03542): Dewey to Scudder Klyce).

² Irwin Edman observed in the 1950s that postwar existentialists found Dewey “too hopeful,” analytic philosophers found him “too large and vague,” theologians and metaphysical idealists found him “too earthbound and secular,” and doctrinaire conservatives did not “find in him fixed dogmas” (Edman 1955, 34). Dewey's heyday among professional philosophers was waning by the 1930s, and in that respect the rise of analytic philosophy completed a process that had begun earlier. See Campbell 2006. Also see the discussion of Campbell's 2006 book in *The Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 43, no. 2 (2007): 404–10.

³ Dewey wrote in a 1940 letter: “The word ‘pragmatism’ I have used very little, and then with reserves” (1940.09.06 [13667]: Dewey to Corliss Lamont). Pragmatism is, minimally, the critical attempt to replace received beliefs with inquiry. Dewey held that the enriching and generative possibilities of human existence go unrealized except through action (Greek *pragma*), and he expanded and rigorously systematized Peirce’s and James’s pragmatism as a means for reconstructing philosophy and intelligently redirecting culture to meet life’s evolving difficulties. In opposition to a popular sense of the word pragmatism, Dewey’s writings ring with criticisms of shallow American practicality and acquisitiveness.

⁴ Readers seeking introductory works on Dewey may wish to consult (in alphabetical order): Boisvert 1998; Campbell 1995; Fesmire 2015; Hildebrand 2008; Madelrieux 2016. For additional scholarly essays ranging over much of Dewey’s philosophy, see: Cochran 2010; Hickman 1998; Shook and Kurtz 2011. For helpful online articles on Dewey’s philosophy, consult the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. For general collections of Dewey’s works beyond the critical edition, see Hickman and Alexander 1998 and McDermott 1981.

⁵ Dewey said that Addams and Hull House underscored for him the ever-growing happiness to be “found simply in this broadening of intellectual curiosity and sympathy in all the concerns of life” (LW 5:422).

⁶ Journalist Walter Lippman, whose philosophy of the public Dewey famously critiqued in *The Public and its Problems* (1927), later presented his very influential philosophy of the public in *The Public Philosophy*. “It is a practical rule,” he wrote, “that the relation is very close between our capacity to act at all and our conviction that the action we are taking is right. This does not mean, of course, that the action is necessarily right. *What is necessary to continuous action is that it shall be believed to be right. Without that belief, most men will not have the energy and*

will to persevere in the action. Political ideas acquire operative force in human affairs when, as we have seen, they acquire legitimacy, when they have the title of being right which binds men's consciousness. Then they possess, as Confucian doctrine has it, "the mandate of heaven."⁷ (Lippman 1955, 135). Reinhold Niebuhr echoed Lippman in an implicit critique of Dewey in 1932 that "[c]ontending factions in a social struggle require morale; and morale is created by the right dogmas, symbols and emotionally potent oversimplifications. These are at least as necessary as the scientific spirit of tentativity. ...No class of industrial workers will ever win freedom from the dominant classes if they give themselves completely to the 'experimental techniques' of the modern educators" (Niebuhr 1932, xv).

⁷ Eddie Glaude, Jr., public lecture, Green Mountain College, Poultney, Vermont, April 2017. Cf. Glaude 2007 and 2016.