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Doing Dewey

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Doing Dewey

By Carol Rodgers

In this article I describe and analyze my experience as a teacher of, and a teacher who does, Dewey. In the process I hope to draw a picture of what it means to strive for integrity between theory and practice. I talk about why it matters to work from a theory of education, especially in an age where “clinical practice” is vaunted and theory is viewed as expendable, even as a slightly shameful waste of time. I focus on particular Deweyan principles, primarily the principle of reflection, and illustrate how that theory manifests itself in my practice. I argue that “doing Dewey” is an enactment of philosophy. Finally, I hold that a theory of teaching cannot be separated from the self who practices it.

I do not mean to provide a blueprint for how everyone should teach. Rather, I want to share the principles that have shaped my practice: reflection, experience, interaction, continuity, the logical and psychological, care, community, an end-in-view, and democracy, and hope that it speaks to others.

The article is divided into two parts. The first part describes my practice in two graduate courses, one an introduction to Dewey and the other a course on learning and teaching (a.k.a. “621”). I try to avoid a “how to” description of each course, and instead speak across courses, focusing on Deweyan principles in play. In the second part, I consider my efforts to do Dewey from a place that feels deeply rooted not only in his work, but in myself. I see my teaching as nested: Dewey writes about reflection; students reflect on subject matter and on their learning; and I reflect on their reflections, and, in turn, on my teaching. Reflection is the golden thread.

Description of Practice

Although the Dewey seminar is a face-to-face course, and Understanding Learning and Teaching an online course, they adhere to a similar structure: 1) a grounding experience; 2) sharing of the experience; 3) readings and discussion; 4) a lecture that integrates student discussion with my understanding of the readings; and 5) a reflection on the activities and learning.

First, however, I do several community-building activities. I need a group to work as a community that takes responsibility not only for their individual learning, but for each other’s learning. In Chapter 4 of Dewey’s *Experience and Education*, he speaks of “social control.” By social control Dewey (1938) does not mean mind control or social engineering. Rather, he speaks in terms of individual freedom within the context of a democratic community: “[I]t is not the will or desire of any one person which establishes order but the moving spirit of the whole group” (p. 54). He goes on to say that “education is essentially a social process. This quality is realized in the degree in which individuals form a community group” of which, he points out, the teacher is a part (p.

58). Success depends on a concerted effort to achieve a community, but it also depends on the individual efforts of each member.

I do a variety of things to build this initial sense of community and the “moving spirit of the whole group.” Like many teachers, I ask for introductions but try to have them connect to the course. For example, I ask students share a time in their lives when they learned something that caused them to feel “bigger,” more powerful and competent, or “wiser.” We then dissect the stories to see what they tell us about what it means to learn something. Interestingly, few of the stories come out of an experience at school. This raises the question, why, which is something we pursue for the rest of the course.

I also do theater games, like the “cocktail party” of self-introductions (accompanied by food). In this game students introduce themselves from several different angles – as a teacher, a student, a learner, a family member, an athlete, a reader, then more complex categories, like a person of color, of faith, of an ethnic group. It ends with students talking about the origins of their names. This serves as a vehicle for students to get to know each other and each other’s names (which I insist they memorize). But it also raises fundamental questions and assumptions around identity, reminding them of the complexities of themselves and their classmates, as well as of their own students.

Another activity vital to the group’s sense of ownership is the creation of group norms. Each student is invited to contribute, as each has been in both functional and dysfunctional groups and comes with the lived knowledge of what works and doesn’t in a group. Usually the exercise is all that is necessary to keep students mindful of our stated parameters of civility and responsibility. In all these ways I am adhering to a commitment to a democratic process where “the school itself shall be made a genuine active community life, instead of a place set apart in which to learn lessons” (Dewey, 1915, p. 10).

Experience

Students tell me over and over again that it is the experiences I offer them that most help them to make sense of the course ideas, and relate these ideas to “real life.” It matters to me that students see their learning as critical to their growth as human beings, their participation in a national and global democracy, and their place in the natural world. When Dewey wrote *School and Society* (1915) and *Democracy and Education* (1916), I believe it is this connection that he was referring to.

In the Dewey course we engage in an extended study of the habits of the moon. We explore the movements of the earth, moon, and sun through observations, which are recorded in a “Moon Journal”, and in-class discussions. In the *Understanding Learning and Teaching* course, I offer learners six different but connected experiences that they engage in with others in their lives, and describe and analyze online. The experiences include reading a poem, drawing a leaf, looking

at student work, doing descriptive feedback, and observing and describing a learner (descriptive review) over an extended period of time. Each of these experiences serves as ground – rich soil – in which the ideas of the course might take root, be felt, and be tested.

Some of these experiences (the moon, poetry, the leaf) allow students to participate in learning something “from school.” All of them ask students (most of whom are teachers) to slow down and see the world, their students, their students’ work, and their own prejudices and assumptions. All of the experiences connect directly to the readings, allowing students to read with questions of their own already ignited rather than with a list of questions that I want them to answer. As Dewey (1915) writes in *School and Society*, owning one’s questions is key to the whole endeavor in inquiry:

True, reflective attention ... always involves judging, reasoning, deliberation; it means that the child [or the adult] has a question of his own and is actively engaged in seeking and selecting relevant material with which to answer it, considering the bearing and relations of this material – the kind of solution it calls for. (p. 94)

This kind of engagement gives students something to say, and as Dewey says, “There is all the difference in the world between having something to say and having to say something” (p. 35).

Thus the starting point in my teaching is always an experience. It grounds learners, generates questions, makes them “itch” to see what the “experts” have to say (in the readings), and gives them evidence with which to test their interpretations. They can test their ideas and those of the experts not only in reference to their own experiences, but to those of their classmates.

Experience is the starting point for learning and teaching, which is another way of saying it is the beginning of reflection. The structure of the course experiences, of the courses themselves, and of my whole theory of teaching and learning, is shaped by my understanding of Dewey’s notion of reflection.

Reflection

Reflection is bookended by, and inseparable from, experience. Reflection begins with experience (both immediate and recollected) and it ends with some new action taken. This action, in turn, comprises the next experience. But Dewey’s notion of experience is complex and bears further explanation.

Dewey contends that an experience, no matter how educative it might potentially be, is essentially inert, without value, unless it is reflected upon, that is, unless it is turned over and over again, looked at from above and below, taken apart and reconstructed, in search of meaning. This whole enterprise is enriched if done with others. The process of reflection, which can also be

understood as inquiry, involves several steps: experience, description, interpretation and analysis, and intelligent action (Rodgers, 2002; Rodgers, 2006a; Rodgers, 2006b; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Interaction & Continuity

Dewey's (1938) criteria for experience are two: there must be interaction and continuity. Interaction is the transaction that takes place "between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, from people to objects to ideas" (p. 43). It is in interaction that the internal aspects of who we are combine with the external, "objective" factors of experience or what David Hawkins (1974/2002) would term the "it," or "the stuff of the world." It is in this interaction ("Thou-It," Thou connoting the learner) that we engage in becoming human. Interaction engages and extends our humanness.

Although students cannot touch the moon, or manipulate it in any way, they interact with it through observation and documentation. They actively search for the moon, trying to figure out where to look; they look for "moon schedules" of its rising and setting on the internet; they draw it, noticing its angle above the horizon, what part of the sky it is in, its shape and whether or not it is upright or tipped; they note the time of day or night. In short, the "facts" – the data – they gather are the fruits of their interactions with the "it." In class there is further interaction. Data are shared on the board, in the telling, in the acting out – with their bodies, with small planets of Styrofoam, and through drawing – of what they have seen and of their assumptions. They interact with and interrogate their assumptions, testing them against others' and against newly gathered observations and hypotheses. They also, of course, interact with each other and with me. It is a constant back and forth among all these elements and it feels very alive, or, as Maxine Greene (1978) might say, "wide awake." Interaction also serves literally to keep students awake, as they actively construct meaning, becoming agents of their own learning, rather than passively absorbing facts.

Alongside interaction is continuity. Dewey notes that continuity, the other aspect of experience, results, first, when a problem

grows out of the conditions of the experience being had in the present, and ... is within the range of the capacity of students; and, secondly [when] it arouses in the learner an active quest for information and for production of new ideas. The new facts and new ideas thus obtained become the ground for further experiences in which new problems are presented. The process is a continuous spiral. (1938, p. 79)

The series of unfolding questions that result from students' inquiries into their perceived reality and the reality that they are piecing together through their observations is evidence of continuity.

An example comes from the leaf activity in 621. Students gather a pile of fallen autumn leaves from outside and are instructed to spend at least half an hour drawing one leaf. (They also read Scudder’s account of “The Student, the Fish, and Agassiz,” 1879.) As they do, they begin to notice things they had never noticed – veins, holes, color variation. They notice how hard it is to render a particular color or to accurately portray the shape they perceive but can’t quite capture. They note that even as they draw, the leaf changes – it curls or tears, or simply changes as their perception of it changes. After drawing, they are instructed to put their leaf back in a pile of similar leaves to see if they can find theirs, which they invariably do. Immediately they begin to make connections to their students and what it means to really see their students and their learning. They also make connections to math and to science, even to poetry. Their perception grows and, even years later, former students tell me that they never look at a tree full of leaves in quite the same way. It is this kind of altered perception of the world—a wider awareness—that I am aiming for.

When both interaction and continuity are present in experience, then we can refer to it as an “educative” experience. The job of the teacher is to create these series of experiences for students, what Dewey calls “situations.” He writes, “The immediate and direct concern of an educator is . . . with the situations in which interaction takes place” (1938, p. 45). A situation promises something like a chemical reaction between learner and the world. For students, interaction with the “it” and each other generates a series of questions that must be pursued, not because we have to “cover” it in our curriculum, but because students yearn to know. For me it matters that I am excited about the situation and look forward to the interaction, eager to see what will happen. The excitement

I feel at students’ discoveries helps me to resist the temptation to tell them the answers as they struggle, for example, to work out the complex motions of the moon.

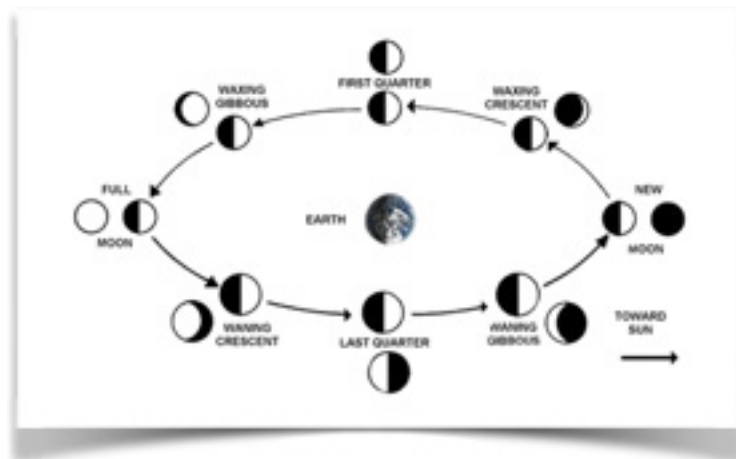
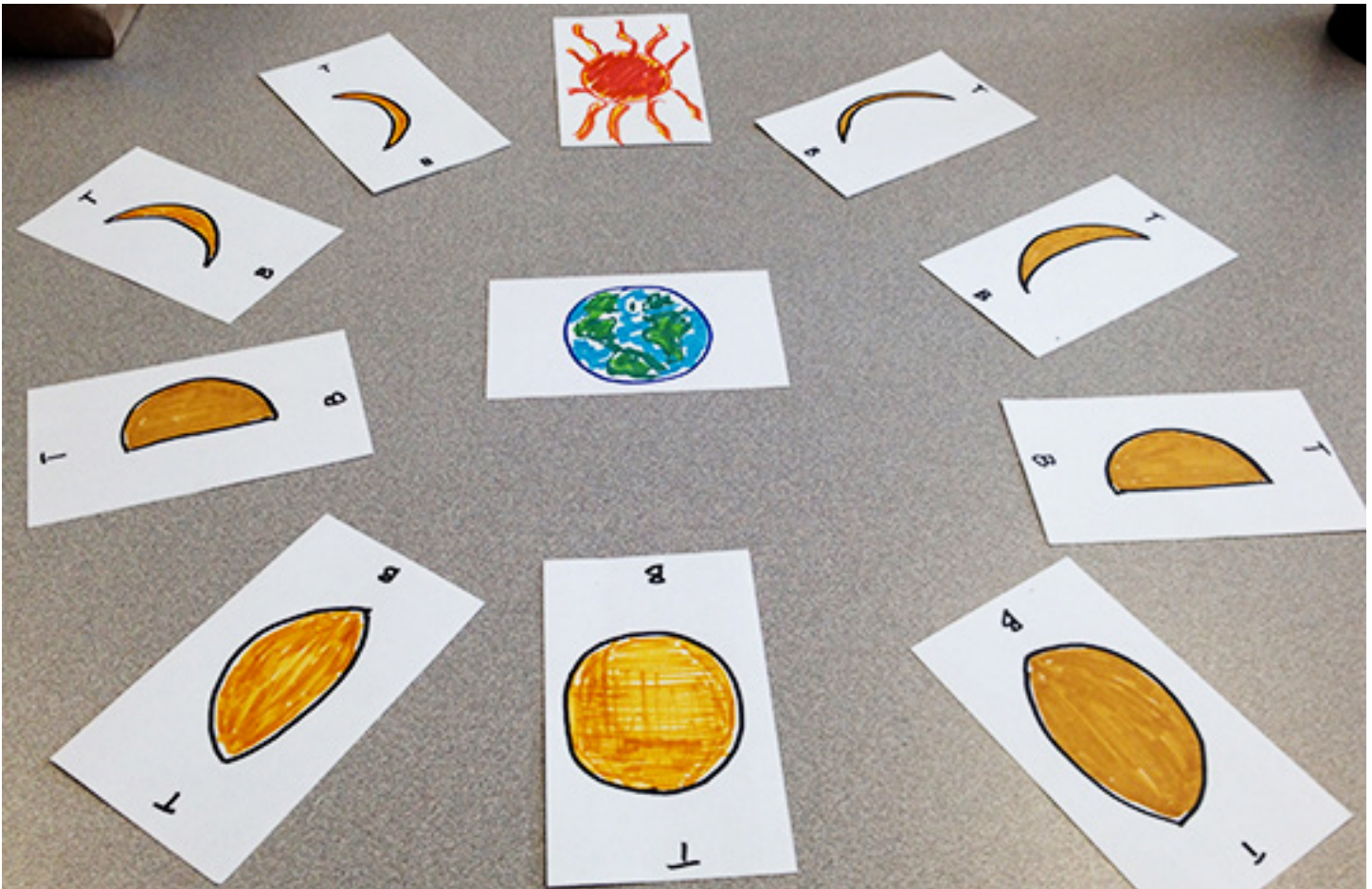


Figure 1. The phases of the moon as they are often portrayed in textbooks (retrieved from the internet; source unidentified).

called the “logical”) rather than a beginning. Again, learning begins with experience, or with what Dewey called the psychological.

Figure 2. Students’ own “logical” arrangement of the moon’s phases.



Description

Description follows experience, and takes place in class as students share their stories of the experiences they have engaged in. The phase of description happens on two levels: within the experience and after. Within the experience includes, for example, drawing the moon and noting location, angle, direction, and time; or drawing the leaf (see Figures 3 and 4). After the experience involves the pooling of the data of experience with others. The first is reflection-in-action and the second reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983). Description is iterative in nature, and moves seamlessly into analysis and interpretation and back again, as more data are required for a more refined analysis.

It is description – staying with the object of our attention (the moon, the leaf) – that is often so hard both for learners and teachers, whose modus operandi is to keep moving, to “cover.” To stay with the unknown, writes Dewey (1933), is often uncomfortable: “To be genuinely thoughtful, we must be willing to sustain and protract that state of doubt which is the stimulus to thorough inquiry, so as not to accept an idea or make positive assertion of a belief until justifying reasons have been found” (p. 16). Description disciplines the mind to stay with. This is what we do with the moon, with the leaf, with a child’s work, with a child, pacing ourselves to their rhythms rather than rushing, artificially, through to an answer, a grade, or a label. We have to sit with the discomfort of not knowing.



Figure 3. Moon observations.

Description can be a richly humanizing enterprise, as it is often in the act of describing one’s experience that connections are made – those Aha! moments of insight. As a teacher, staying with a person through their description can be difficult, especially when their thinking seems flawed or tortuous or stumbling. Staying with their thinking means not rescuing them with answers, and it means learning about them as learners. This is when the teacher’s experience diverges from the learners’. They are learning, say, a poem while she is learning them, or as Dewey (1938) puts



Figure 4. Leaves from the 621 Leaf Album, 2014

it, “The problem of the pupils is found in the subject matter; the problem of teachers is what the minds of the pupils are doing with the subject matter” (p. 275).

Once enough evidence has accumulated from the descriptive turn, the third phase of reflection, analysis (organizing information) and interpretation (deriving and ascribing meaning), naturally follow. This toggling between description and analysis is a sign of ongoing inquiry. It is in the analysis phase of reflection that reference sources – textbooks, the internet, maps, diagrams, graphs, and tables – become useful, both to be consulted and constructed. When students have questions, they want answers, and so these references suddenly become useful.

Taken together, the sequences described above comprise reflection, which can also be thought of as a continuous experiment in coming to understand subject matter, transforming it in ways that help broaden perception and awareness and “more conscious living,” as Dewey says. It is a dynamic, and very human, process.

An end-in-view

Contrary to what opponents of progressive education, and those who misunderstand Dewey’s views, believe, allowing student learning to guide teaching does not mean allowing students to determine the curriculum. It is a point that Dewey made over and over again. Education is a “both/and” proposition: both the child and the curriculum, society and school, democracy and education, experience and education. It is the teacher’s job to determine the end point, what Dewey (1938) refers to as the “end-in-view,” and how to get there. She uses students’ learning as the guide for her decisions, but she does not abandon the curriculum. In determining the experiences (situations) students will engage in, she discerns the beginning of their knowing (their “edge”), but also the projected endpoint.

In the Dewey class, for example, with our study of the moon, my ends-in-view are clear: an understanding of rising and setting, day and night, the seasons, the phases of the moon, the rotation and revolution of the Earth and the moon, the “tipping” of the moon, its height in the sky according to season, and eclipses. These are my moon “standards” (exactly the same as those in the Common Core standards). In addition, I wish to engender a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world, and to create a relationship of familiarity, awe, and affection with it. Finally, I wish to put learners in touch with the power of their own ideas (Meier, 2002; Schneier, 2001). I keep these ends clearly in view and they help me to decide what is important to pursue and what is not.

So doing Dewey, as Dewey himself would emphasize, is neither a matter of teacher-centered teaching nor student-centered teaching. It is both of these together, and neither of these alone. I have found it helpful to think metaphorically of learners as a river and the teacher as its banks. The river is where the energy is. It is a moving force, under its own power. The banks of the river give shape to its direction and are necessary to its ability to move. No banks, no flow. But the

banks are also shaped by the river. While the banks lead toward a particular destination, the river may also take unanticipated diversions, spend time spinning in unseen whirlpools, carve whole new paths through the landscape. Still it is always headed toward the ocean – the “end-in-view.” It is also my aim that by the end of the course students will have their own, new oceans in mind.

The role of the teacher is to create situations that move learners from interaction with the world (experience, emotion, the psychological) to an intellectual reconstruction and reorganization of it (the logical), in a way that opens up new questions (continuity). This trajectory also describes the journey of reflection – from raw experience, to examination of it in description, to discerning its meaning through analysis and interpretation, to intelligent action based on new (always tentative) understandings. The situation must be infused with intellectual tensions that are challenging and exciting enough to spur inquiry (“I can figure this out!”), but not so overwhelming that they debilitate (“I’ll never figure this out!”).

Other Activities

Several other activities are effective in “doing Dewey.” Close readings, pervading ideas, and descriptive feedback – each grounded in Dewey’s notion of reflection and each a shared, communal enterprise – provide avenues for bringing learning to conscious awareness in the company of others. In *Democracy and Education* (1916) Dewey writes,

What [the individual] gets and gives as a human being, a being with desires, emotions, and ideas, is not external possessions, but a widening and deepening of conscious life – a more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings. (p. 369)

A “more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings” is what these activities are meant to provide.

Close Reading

One of the most effective practices in making sense of Dewey’s words is to do the disciplined work of close reading. My technique for close reading comes from the work of Margaret Himley, Patricia Carini, and their colleagues at the former Prospect School and Center (2011), where they started with close readings of children’s writing. The process I use attends to words, phrases, and sentences, their possible meanings, and connections to other ideas and works of the author. It is embedded in the larger picture of reflection. Beginning with the description of an author’s words, close reading commits to seeing (describing) what is there before deciding what the text means (analysis and interpretation). In order to perceive fully all that is there, it helps immensely to describe what one sees. And I have learned, in reading Dewey in particular, that I always “see only a little and partially” (Carini, 2001), but also see more each time. Inevitably, once one starts this process, one bumps up against assumptions that are not always borne out by the text. This

is when students begin to grapple with the meaning of the text. I tell them I want grappling. I have found that students often gloss over the readings, missing entirely both the words and the meaning. They often leap to accounts of their own experiences with just a hint of Dewey's ideas. While I seek to have students make sense of the readings in reference to experience, it is quite another thing to twist the words of readings to fit one's pre-existing assumptions.

My students sometimes bristle under the discipline that close reading demands. They initially find sticking so closely to the words of the text tedious and time-consuming. They want to "get on with it!" – or at least have me tell them what they should understand. But it is not long before they begin to see that in the act of looking closely and then constructing meaning from close looking that they begin to grasp what a writer is saying. And, in the building of meaning themselves, they come to own it. They begin to see the benefits of staying with the text and their questions, their "unsettledness," and I observe that they soon begin to impose this discipline on themselves.

Pervading Ideas

In *The School and Society*, Dewey (1915) briefly mentions learners' "pervading ideas" in the context of a discussion on imagination. "Imagination," he writes, "is not a matter of an impossible subject-matter, but a constructive way of dealing with any subject-matter under the influence of a pervading idea" (p. 91). As I understand it, a "pervading idea" is one that has grabbed a learner and won't let her or him go. It is a necessary precursor to "reflective attention" where "the child entertains results in the form of problems or questions, the solution of which he is to seek for himself" (emphasis added, p. 92). After reading each book, I have students construct a visual depiction of the reading's main ideas, the connections among these ideas, and especially the connection to their own "pervading ideas." The aim is not to drill the readings into students, but to give them a way of interacting with them that both engages their own questions, intelligence, and imagination, and consolidates the concepts found in the readings. Each student draws a very different picture – sometimes a concept map, but just as often a metaphor, or even a three-dimensional construction of their understanding.

One student – a quilter – whose pervading idea was the literal and metaphorical "stitch and the hand," crafted a book of images gathered from her childhood school exercise books in Italy. She traced her own learning history – its continuity – making sense of it in the context of Dewey's notions of making and doing (1915). The class stood around the table as she shared her drawings and stitched images and described her insights, visibly moved by the connections she was making – the literal stitching together of her identity as a learner.

In the final pages of *How We Think*, Dewey (1916) writes of the "heightened intensity of value" when the learner and her subject matter "seem to come together and unite." He goes on to explain the emotional dimension to this union: "There is ... a definite opposition between an idea or a fact grasped merely intellectually and the idea or fact which is emotionally colored because it is felt to be connected with the needs and satisfactions of the whole personality" (p. 277). Pervading ideas

have this quality of connection to the whole personality, its emotions, its quests, and its questions. Like close reading, the exploration of pervading ideas is a “widening and deepening of conscious life – a more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings” (1916, p. 369).

Descriptive Feedback

The final activity of most classes is descriptive feedback. Descriptive feedback is “a reflective conversation between teacher and students wherein students describe their experiences as learners, with the goals of improving learning, deepening trust between teacher and student, and establishing a vibrant, creative community on a daily basis” (Rodgers, 2006a, p. 209). As an act of description, it fits into reflection as a form of gathering evidence of what and how we are learning and teaching. What matters is that we are in it together, jointly trying to figure out how to do it better.

I tell students that I cannot gather all I need to know about their learning through my observations; they also need to tell me what is working for them and what they need that they are not getting. This dialogue helps me to know what next steps to take, but it also gives students a sense of their responsibility for their own and each other’s learning. While it is not an evaluation of my teaching, my teaching is certainly implicated. Feedback also provides time and space and regard for each voice and, if I am to believe students’ feedback, a sense of agency and empowerment within a democratic community.

Embodying Philosophy

I have described my efforts to bring Dewey to life, and teach in a way that students will not merely read about his ideas, but feel them in their bones. However, if someone were to read this essay and try to do what I do, I am not at all sure that they would experience what I experience or that their students would learn what mine do. One might be tempted to extract from this description a list of “best practices,” but as disembodied “best practices” they are empty of me. That is, practices are hollow unless they are imbued with the unique humanity of the teacher and students who inhabit them. In addition, practices alone, empty of the values from which they spring – the larger ideas of the purposes of education, or a notion of what it means to be human – can become fads that come and go according to the whims of others, from school committees to superintendents to textbook developers.

Dewey scholar David Hansen (2004), in his essay, “A Poetics of Teaching,” writes that the difference between a teacher and a layperson is greater than knowledge and skill alone. “Rather,” he writes, “the difference comes down to vision, to a sense of the significance of what it means to undertake educational work, and to a sense that it is the person in the role of teacher, not the role itself, that educates” (p. 131). In a similar vein, Dewey (1916), in *Democracy and Education*, writes of the fusion of interest and self. He distinguishes between work that is done for “ulterior selfish end(s)” (money, reputation, or virtue) and work in which the self is present:

The moment we recognize that the self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action, the whole situation clears up. A [person's] interest in keeping at his [or her] work in spite of danger to life means that his [or her] self is found in that work.

He goes on to say that, “In fact, self and interest are two names for the same fact; the kind and amount of interest actively taken in a thing reveals and measures the quality of selfhood which exists” (pp. 361-362). I am passionate about Dewey because I discover my self in his words. While I do not face “danger to life” in my work, many of my students who are teachers fear for their professional lives if they teach from themselves, or they teach in environments that stifle those selves or, over time, deaden them.

A fusion of self and interest can be understood as “philosophy.” “[T]he source from which philosophies spring,” writes Patricia Carini (2012) “is a burning human desire” (p. 155). My own burning human desire is to understand what makes us human, and to understand how to teach and live in ways that best extend that humanness, both my students’ and my own. Without such a philosophical commitment, Carini argues, I would “suffer the pain of being without anchor, adrift, bereft, a plaything of fate” (p. 156), trying this technique and that to see what might “engage” students, make them happy, without a clear vision of why it matters in the first place that they be engaged.

Philosophy, Dewey (1916) points out, can be understood as “thinking which has become conscious of itself” (p. 336). It is, as he says, that “widening and deepening of conscious life” (p. 369), an expansion of awareness. As such, for me, this work we call teaching can be understood as work of the spirit – what inspires – that which breathes life into my practice. It is, I believe, the essence of reflection and why “reflective practice” cannot and should not be reduced to a marketing term or a bullet point for teacher education or professional development.

David Hansen (2004), explicating Dewey, writes, “World and objects, which include the self, are coterminous” (p. 171). This means that if the situations that I construct in my classroom are right, human beings are in the making, right before my eyes. I find this a thrilling and moving thought, and an even more thrilling experience. Still, I often get it wrong. I miscalculate where students are, where the edge of their learning is, I begin at the wrong place, or I see the edge and they are not ready to go there. Or I miss the strengths they bring and I respond inappropriately. But the point was never to be “completed” as a teacher. I, too, am always in the making.

I close with the story of Peter, a student in my Dewey seminar, whose work embodied what Dewey sought to realize. Peter is a jazz pianist, math teacher, and band teacher in a high school in western Canada. For his final project, he wrote a four-part choral piece that mimics a full cycle of the moon. The words to the piece (see Appendix) trace the history of our conception of the moon, from the experience of early humankind, to the meanings of myth, to the discoveries of science.

As Peter wrote in his reflection, “Our current experience is not an end in itself, but only sets the stage for our next experience, propelling our knowledge ever forward in a continuous cycle” (Sicotte, 2014, p. 4). The words, score, and music were accompanied by a written reflection, entitled “An Experience of the Moon: Dewey Sings.” In the introduction Peter writes,

While our modern understanding and study of music has used an increasingly theoretical framework, it is at its heart, something that one listens to and experiences. Understanding may be deepened through theory and dialogue, but only when first based on a foundation of experience in listening and performing. Much profound music has been created, performed and improvised without a theoretical framework. And yet, truly great musicians not only remain connected to their embodied experiences with music, they also study its patterns and complexities in the hope of more fully understanding how and why it works. (2014, p.1)

As I listened to Peter’s project, I sat back in my chair in tears, in awe of the human capacity to literally make sense, to create, to communicate, to add joy and beauty and value to the world, and to be deeply moved by it.

To teach well requires an intentionality that is born of thinking, inquiring, talking, discussing, experimenting, reading, crying, laughing, screaming, giving up, and resolving to carry on anyway. For me this is all contained in a word – reflection. To teach is a deeply human activity, perhaps the most human. It is an organic Mobius strip of theory/philosophy and practice, two edges, two sides that are continuous, that are one. Dewey more than anyone has been my guide and companion on this journey. He has been the banks to my river, and I am grateful to be fully engaged in that journey.

Appendix

Whispers on the Moon

I am a great light
Beacon of the night
Glowing, gleaming bright

I am Selene, beauty of the dark sky
Unlit before, now glowing,
With the light of my golden crown,
My radiance lights the path of my gleaming chariot across the sky.

I am Lordly Khonsu, traveller of the night,
Patiently marking the time while the sun hides.
My shapes divine the wisdom of the stars
And bring meaning to the seasons.

I am Soma, ambrosia of heaven, nectar of gods
From my cup spills courage and life
As the gods drink deeply of my wisdom I wane away
Only to fill myself again, triumphant.

Luna, Celestial rock, hurtling through the sky at breakneck pace
Twenty-seven days mark your phase from new to full and back
Mwezi, reflector of the sun's radiance
Puller of tides, your gravity bulges the seas.

Qamar, beaten and pummeled by meteors, scorched by sun and frozen by space
You hide your dark side from us as you slowly revolve
Fengari, from our lonely place of watching, you rise through the sky
And sink back to the horizon each day as we rotate relentlessly through space

You are the Moon, we know you well and yet not at all.

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