

Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Education

SEARCH:

John Dewey

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John Dewey (1859-1952) was a pragmatic philosopher, psychologist, and educator commonly regarded as the founder of the progressive education movement. Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont on October 20, 1859. His father was a grocer and Civil War Veteran, his mother a strong-willed evangelical Congregationalist noted for her work with the city's poor. John was a shy and self-conscious boy, and as a man, he never entirely lost these qualities. In 1875, he enrolled in the University of Vermont where he took his BA degree. Although his interest in philosophy emerged as an undergraduate, he was uncertain about his future. He taught high school for two years in Oil City, Pennsylvania, and then one more year back in his hometown of Burlington where he arranged for private tutorials in philosophy with his former teacher H. A. P. Torrey.

Doubtful of his own ability, Dewey sent two essays to W. T. Harris, editor of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, asking if they showed any talent. Encouraged by Harris's acceptance of these papers, Dewey applied to the graduate program in philosophy at the newly established and innovative Johns Hopkins University. His acceptance did not include a fellowship, so he had to borrow \$500 from an aunt to pay tuition.

At the time, the Johns Hopkins philosophy department was not highly regarded. Three young lecturers carried out the teaching duties. The first was G. Stanley Hall, who became a distinguished child psychologist. Second was Charles Sanders Peirce, the brilliant, if eccentric, originator of philosophical pragmatism. The third was George Sylvester Morris, a Hegelian. Dewey did not seem particularly interested in the work of Peirce, and the psychology of Hall did not greatly attract him at the time. His passionate desire for organic unity led him to study with Morris, and he completed a dissertation on Kantian psychology under Morris's direction.

Eventually Hall received the only available professorship in philosophy, so Morris left for a position in the philosophy department at the University of Michigan. After several difficult months of unemployment, Dewey joined his mentor in 1884 at Michigan as an instructor. He spent the next decade there, except for one year at the University of Minnesota. During these years, Dewey wrote, although with decaying conviction, in the Hegelian tradition of idealism as he found it expressed by British Idealists such as Thomas Hill Green.

At Michigan, Dewey was active in the Student Christian Association and was a member of the First Congregational Church where he taught Bible classes. Dewey's interests in social, political, and economic issues grew increasingly radical as he continued to struggle with issues of unity and religion. He also formed a close personal friendship with the young sociologist George Herbert Mead after Dewey hired him in 1891. Collaborating with Mead further piqued Dewey's interest in the social nature of the mind and the self. In his eulogy for Mead decades later, Dewey would call their friendship "one of the most precious possessions of my life" (LW 6: 22). He married the self-reliant and politically progressive Alice Chipman in 1886. She seems to have awakened Dewey's

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deeply ingrained sense of social justice and encourage his entrance into the world of public affairs. Many years later Dewey would say, "the forces that have influenced me have come from persons and from situations more than from books" (LW 5: 155). He even agreed to edit a weekly magazine with a socialist orientation called Thought News, though it never reached publication. During this time, Dewey's interest in education found stimulation through his membership on a committee that evaluated the state's high schools.

In 1894, Dewey moved to the University of Chicago to head the department of philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy. Mead joined him shortly afterwards. Significantly, Dewey did not join a church in Chicago. It was at this time that Dewey began to consider the philosophy of education in a serious and systematic way. In 1896, he founded the University Laboratory School now better known as the "Dewey School." The latter title is unfortunate given all of those that were influential in contributing not only to the running of the school, but the ideas developed there. Foremost among these were Ella Flagg Young, the first women president of the National Education Association. Dewey freely acknowledged her influence on his educational thinking, especially "the translation of philosophic conceptions into their empirical equivalents." The Laboratory School was not a model institution; rather, it truly lived up to its name. It was a place for educational experiments in the genuine etymological sense of experiment, that is, to make a trial of something. Theories and practices were developed, tested, criticized, refined, and tried again. Experimentalism became increasingly important as Dewey's philosophy matured. For him, not only were these experiments falsifiable, but in a contingent evolving world, their generalizability was always subject to revision. There is no end of inquiry for Dewey; nonetheless, he believed it the best way to render human experience intelligent.

The Laboratory School was not the only site for educational research in Chicago at that time. Jane Addams and her work at Hull House, for which she eventually received the Nobel Prize, greatly influenced Dewey. Rosalind Rosenberg writes, "for Dewey, Hull House was a laboratory and an example of what he was trying to accomplish in education" (p. 34). Dewey visited Hull House even before moving to Chicago. Upon his arrival there, Dewey actively participated in the life of Hull House. There he met some of the most influential early feminists whose involvement in the political issues of the day caused by massive immigration, the social and economic effects of urbanization, and rapid technological advance exercised considerable influence. He also mixed with workers, trade unionists, and political radicals. Some of his most influential educational works emerged out of these laboratories including "My Pedagogic Creed" (1887, EW 5: pp. 84-95), The School and Society (1900, MW 1: pp. 1-109), and The Child and the Curriculum (1902, MW: pp. 271-291). These works not only set out Dewey's practical pedagogy, but they also outlined the psychological and philosophical principles upon which it relied. These principles devolved from the trial and error experiments that occurred within and without the walls of the Laboratory School.

Dewey left Chicago for Columbia in 1904 because of a controversy over the administration of the Laboratory School. By then, he was a nationally prominent philosopher and educator. The Journal of Philosophy, then newly founded at Columbia by F. J. E. Woodbridge, soon became a frequent forum for the discussion of Dewey's ideas. Teachers College, Columbia was a magnet for educators around the world. Dewey's affiliation with this institution contributed to his continuing interest in educational issues and helped assure the dissemination of his theories throughout the world. Democracy and Education appeared in 1916 and quickly became a classic work in the philosophy of education.

Dewey never cared for rote memorization of facts, formulas, or mere job training. He did not, however, think educators should ignore issues of social control and classroom discipline or the control implicitly contained in the academic disciplines and skilled practices. He recognized that freedom implies both negative freedom, or freedom from constraint, as well as positive freedom, or freedom for something, some value, some goal. Freedom for requires personal discipline. His 1938 Experience and Education was written to correct the excesses of those progressive educators who seemed to think "almost any kind of spontaneous activity inevitably secures the desired or desirable training of mental power" (LW 8: 153).

Ensconced in the journalistic capital of the nation, Dewey began to write for influential popular

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magazines such as the New Republic and The Nation. Constantly before the public eye for decades, Dewey was the most public university based philosopher of the 20th Century. This uncloistered scholarship is consistent with both his personal commitments and his educational philosophy.

Dewey soon gained an international reputation. In the years 1919 to 1921, he lectured in Japan and China. His reception in China was stunning; having survived Maoist communism, his educational theories remain influential there today. He also visited schools, carried out educational studies, or made educational reports in Turkey, Mexico, South Africa, and Russia. In 1937 at the age of 78, Dewey presided over a commission in Mexico that found Leon Trotsky "not guilty" of the crimes alleged by Stalin in the Moscow trials. Dewey voted several times for the Socialist party in the 1930's. Nonetheless, he clearly recognized that orthodox communism as practiced in the Soviet Union was inconsistent with his commitment to fully participatory democracy. For him, the dictatorship of the proletariat was simply dictatorship. Dewey officially retired in 1930, although he continued as professor emeritus until 1939; thereafter, he remained amazingly active until his death in his New York home on June 1, 1952.

Dewey's philosophy of education is extraordinarily comprehensive. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote:

If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental disposition, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow-men, philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education. Unless a philosophy is to remain symbolic—or verbal—or a sentimental indulgence for a few, or else mere arbitrary dogma, its auditing of past experience and its program of values must take effect in conduct (MW 9: p. 338).

At first, this may seem nonsense. How can the general theory of education possibly encompass the entirety of philosophy? Dewey's answer would go something like the following. Societies reproduce themselves in only two ways, biologically and culturally. Education is the site of cultural reproduction. One's general theory of education is her theory of what is culturally valuable enough in thought, feeling, and action as to deserve transmission to the next generation. What Dewey offers is philosophy as education.

In Dewey's philosophy, loving and creating surpass mere knowing. "Philosophy" means, "love of wisdom;" it derives from the Greek *philein* (to love) and *sophia* (wisdom). Dewey insisted that wisdom is not "systematic and proved knowledge of fact and truth, but a conviction about moral values [It] refers not to the constitution of things already in existence . . . but to a desired future which our desires, when translated into articulate conviction, may help bring into existence" (MW 11: p. 44). It is our fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, that, through action, brings into existence future values. That is why philosophy in its etymological sense is the general theory of education.

Dewey is a philosopher of reconstruction who reconstructed his own thinking several times in the course of his life. Dewey would want his readers to approach his philosophy with the same critical and creative attitude. Rather than attempting to state exactly what that philosophy is, and how the orthodox should follow it, it is better to introduce some of the central themes of Dewey's philosophy. This approach allows the reader to decide how to construct, or better still, reconstruct Dewey's educational philosophy, into an edifice that satisfies the needs of the reader's time and place.

Dewey was a very private man; however much he may have explored what was surely a spacious psychological interior, he shared little of it with others. One of the few places Dewey did discuss some of the personal as well as intellectual influences on his philosophy was in the essay, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism" (LW 5: pp. 147-160). We will draw on this essay to help us trace the influences on Dewey's development. One of the earliest influences was that of T. H. Huxley who Dewey read during his undergraduate days at the University of Vermont. Huxley was Dewey's introduction to Darwinian thinking. Dewey remembered deriving "a sense of interdependence and interrelated unity that gave form to intellectual stirring that had been previously inchoate" (p.

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Habermas and the
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147). Dewey dated the awakening of a distinctive philosophic interest from this time. The theme of dynamic, open, evolving unity, ranging from the unity of the organism to the unity of a work of art, remained a guiding principle of his philosophy as education. In some important sense, Dewey was an organic holist from the beginning. The influence of Darwin eventually led Dewey to embrace an experimental naturalism wherein human nature is perceived as a part of nature. Dewey's antidualism went very deep.

Darwinian thinking greatly influenced Dewey's philosophy. It was where he first acquired the notion that a human being or community is like a highly complex natural organism that must function within its environment. Successful functioning requires the organism to adapt itself either passively to an existing environment to meet its needs and desires, or actively to transform the environment. Indeed, Dewey thought, "The entire process of education may properly be regarded as a process of securing the conditions that make for the most complete and effective adaptation of individuals to their physical and moral environment" (see MW 6: pp. 364-365). In an ever-evolving universe, education is an endless experiment wherein educators aid students in creating ways of actively transforming themselves to secure the most complete and effective adaptation possible. There are no fixed and final laws of education; things are different in different nations and localities or the same place at different times. An educational generalization that holds in one place or for one group of people at one time may not hold for another at another place or another time.

Dewey explicitly rejected "Social Darwinism" with its self-serving and antidemocratic rhetoric about the survival of the fittest. The question is always, fit for what? Dewey learned from Huxley that even laissez faire economists must weed their garden if they want lovely flowers. Reflective creatures such as we can come to know the environmental contingencies that determine conduct. Through creative inquiry, we can transform the world according to our desires. We can create a world where everyone is fit to survive and thrive, not just those who excel at crude capitalism. Human beings often determine the conditions of selection, and there need not be any single scale of success.

The community needs individuals to perform a large array of vital functions if it is to thrive. That a given community elects to reward only a small number of those functions, say, entrepreneurial success, is a condemnation of that society. As a neo-Darwinian, Dewey knows the key to survival is diversity not homogeneity; he knows the racist is simply scientifically wrong. Dewey acknowledged individual differences and inequality in the physical and cognitive performance of various tasks, but a democratic community is primarily concerned with moral equality. Dewey remarks, "moral equality means incommensurability, the inapplicability of common and quantitative standards" (MW 13:299). For Dewey, every individual has a unique potential, regardless of any given physical or psychological inequality. The goal of education is to aid every individual to achieve their unique potential that they may make their unique contribution to society. The result is an aristocracy of everyone:

Democracy in this sense denotes, one may say, aristocracy carried to its limit. It is a claim that every human being as an individual may be the best for some particular purpose and hence the most fitted to rule, to lead, in that specific respect. The habit of fixed and numerically limited classifications is the enemy alike of true aristocracy and true democracy (MW 13: pp. 297-298).

The only way Social Darwinism can gain a foothold is by convincing the community that there are only a very few hierarchies. Social Darwinism has remained influential in the political lives of almost all capitalistic nations. It fails to understand the community as a functionally complex organism in a complex, diverse, and ever-changing environment.

Many overlook the effect of the Romantic poets on Dewey; that is a mistake (see Goodman, 1990). In "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," Dewey recalled that the University of Vermont prided itself on its philosophical tradition, especially that of "the speculative and dubiously orthodox seas of German thinking—that of Kant, Schelling, and Hegel," though the venture "was largely by way of [Samuel Taylor] Coleridge" (LW 5: pp. 147). In another reflection on philosophy at the University of

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Humanist

Vermont, Dewey notes, "Coleridge in common with the German school which he represented conceived social institutions as essentially educative in nature and function" (LW 5: p. 190). A nations schools were, for Dewey, the most obviously important of the educative institutions. Broadly speaking, he embraced Hegel's thesis of the primacy of Sittlichkeit (etymologically related to the Latin Sitten, or custom), the idea that the practices and institutions of the community express the most important norms central to the construction of its members identity, over Kant's Moralität (related to the Latin mores, or general moral principles). Sittlichkeit revolves around our moral obligations to the healthy functioning of a community of which we are a part. On the other hand, in Moralität we have an abstract, principled obligation to actualize something that ought to exist not because of participation in a community, but because of our individual, fully decontextualized, and rational will. Dewey, though, was wary of too great an identification between a culture's social institutions and the state. He rejects Hegel's identification of the community and the state along with the idea that the central role of the community is to express the Idea of Spirit as a manifestation of Absolute rational necessity connecting humankind to the world. Dewey entirely naturalizes Hegel, but it is an emergent naturalism and not a reductive materialism. He thought the "subordination of the state to the community" essential in a democracy (p. 193).

Dewey gratefully acknowledges the influence of George Sylvester Morris and the British Hegelians. Dewey never cared much for Kant, his dualisms, or his devotion to the a priori. Dewey thought it important that Morris "came to Kant through Hegel instead of to Hegel by way of Kant" (p. 152). The appeal of Hegelianism, for Dewey, lay in its demand for unity. In spite of the artificiality of Hegel's dialectic Dewey thought, "Hegel's synthesis of subject and object, matter and spirit, the divine and the human, was, however, no mere intellectual formula; it operated as an immense release, a liberation" (LW 5: p. 153).

Dewey makes much of the fact that Morris "used to make merry over those who thought the existence of this world and of matter were things to be proved by philosophy. To him the only philosophical question was as to the meaning of this existence" (p. 152). This wry observation holds as well for Dewey himself. In a certain sense, Dewey was a naïve realist who thought we cannot fail to experience reality, if we are experiencing at all. Where we could go wrong is in our interpretations about its meaning, or our inferences regarding the connections among our experiences of reality. From the very real experience of flying by flapping our arms in a dream, we must not foolishly infer that we can do the same in other situations.

In "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," Dewey identified "four points that seem to stand out" in his "intellectual development" (p. 156). The first one he mentions is "the importance that the practice and theory of education have had for me" (p. 156). Education holds a central and synthetic place in Dewey's philosophy. According to him, "This interest fused with and brought together what might otherwise have been separate interests—that in psychology and that in social institutions and social life" (p. 156). Dewey steadfastly asserts his philosophy as education by proclaiming that "philosophizing should focus about education as the supreme human interest in which, moreover, other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head" (p. 156). Let us examine the fusion of psychology and social life here while taking up some of the many other interests later.

Early in his career, Dewey articulated what he calls "The ethical postulate." It reads:

IN THE REALIZATION OF INDIVIDUALITY THERE IS FOUND ALSO THE NEEDED
 REALIZATION OF SOME COMMUNITY OF PERSONS OF WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL IS A
 MEMBER; AND, CONVERSELY, THE AGENT WHO DULY SATISFIES THE COMMUNITY IN
 WHICH HE SHARES, BY THAT SAME CONDUCT SATISFIES HIMSELF (EW 3: 322).

Note this is a postulate. It is not a postulate in the sense of a taken for granted truth as the basis for reasoning, but as a condition necessary for further operations and requiring further experimental inquiry to determine its consequences. It is a contingent and falsifiable statement that Dewey thought well warranted throughout his career. It is a statement of his reconstructed understanding of Hegel's Sittlichkeit. Dewey thought that the best kind of community for social

Education
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Violence and
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Philosophy of
Education Luiz
Henrique Dutra
Universidade
Federal de S.
Catarina-Brazil

L

Leisure Elie
Cohen-Gewerc
Levinsky College,
Tell Aviv, Israel

Locke and
Philosophy of
Education Dwight
Goodyear Fairleigh
Dickinson
University

Lyotard and
Philosophy of
Education
Michael Peters
University of
Auckland

self-realization was a participatory democracy, which we will take up later. Here, our task is to connect this early statement about social life with Dewey's later psychology.

For Dewey, to have a mind is to participate in the socio-linguistic practices and institutions of the community that express the most important norms, ideas and actions central to the construction a mind. Language is crucial to Dewey's naturalized account of the emergence of mind: "Through speech a person dramatically identifies himself with potential acts and deeds; he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in a contemporaneously enacted drama. Thus mind emerges" (LW 1: p. 135). One acquires a mind by entering the social drama of society, recognizing the roles other play, and playing roles others can recognize. Dewey makes a distinction between "individual minds" and "just individuals with minds" (p. 169). The latter are simply docile and conforming reproductions of the existing social order. Because of conformity to existing social institutions, they have failed to recognize their unique individual potential. Hence, they are unable to make their unique contribution to the realization of some community as indicated by the ethical postulate.

Dewey, as we have seen, is concerned with both negative and positive freedom in the relation between the individual and the community. Educators are responsible for disciplining the individual to understand and appreciate the existing norms and practices of a culture. However, they should to do so in such a way as to realize unique individual potential. This implies educating the individuals creative and artistic ability as well as their ability to engage in critical inquiry and, if necessary, carry out the reconstruction of the existing social order to evolve a better society in the future.

The second influence on his intellectual development that Dewey acknowledges is his concern over "the intellectual scandal of dualism in logical standpoint and method between something called 'science' on the one hand and something called 'morals' on the other" (LW 5: p. 156). This concern led to his elaborating a position he called "instrumentalism." Educators usually acquire their familiarity with Dewey's instrumentalism from his, *How We Think* (1910, MW 6: pp. 177-356); revised version (1933, LW: pp. 105-352), although a far more complete and detailed account is offered in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. That Dewey's *How We Think* does not provide his entire theory of inquiry is understandable since he wrote both versions specifically with the needs of educators in mind (see LW 12: p. 3).

The first version acknowledges, "My fundamental indebtedness is to my wife, by whom the ideas of this book were inspired, and through whose work in connection with the Laboratory School, existing in Chicago between 1896 and 1903, the ideas attained such concreteness as comes from embodiment and testing in practice . . . [A]nd to Mrs. Ella Flagg Young, then a colleague in the University, and now Superintendent of the Schools of Chicago (MW 6: p. 179). This acknowledgement underscores the fact that the Laboratory School really was a site of practical experimentation carried out in collaboration with other researchers with whom Dewey exchanged ideas.

In *How We Think*, Dewey presents a version of his logic, or theory of inquiry, for educators. Dewey did not separate thinking and feeling from acting. In *How We Think*, Dewey presents a five-step analysis of effective inquiry. The first step involves the occurrence of a problem. Like other pragmatists, Dewey thought all inquiry began with a genuine doubt. Peirce showed that Cartesian doubt was insincere; we cannot place ourselves in doubt at will, we are thrust into doubt when our habitual ways of acting fail us in some situation. The initiation of inquiry occurs when we feel a disruption in activity and do not know how to go on. Actually, Dewey is quite clear that the "unsettled or indeterminate situation might have been called a problematic situation. This name would have been, however, proleptic and anticipatory" (LW 12: p. 111). Elsewhere, in "Qualitative Thought," the most crucial single essay for understanding Dewey's aesthetics, he observes that "intuition precedes conception and goes deeper" (LW 5: p. 249). Earlier, in "Affective Thought," Dewey wrote that "reasoning is a phase of the generic function of bringing about a new relationship between organisms and the conditions of life, and like other phases of the function is controlled by need, desire and progressive satisfaction" (p. 106). For Dewey, reason, or better still the "general method of intelligence," was practical reasoning, and practical reasoning is always

reasoning for some value, some desired object, some "end-in-view" that arises in some specific context.

Next comes the specification of the problem. Dewey remarks, "It is a familiar and significant saying that a problem well put is half-solved. To find out what the problem and problems are which a problematic situation presents to be inquired into, is to be well along in inquiry" (LW: 12.112). To achieve this, data is selected (it is never "given," for Dewey), structured, its conditions specified, operations carried out, and consequences noted. In most cases there are no rules governing the selection of data or the determination of conditions and consequences. This does not mean that students cannot refine their selectivity or sharpen their intuitions through reflective practice. Among the good habits of inquiry that Dewey thought we could teach, or at least reinforce, are curiosity, orderliness, alertness, and flexibility.

The third step involves introducing a supposition, a hypothesis, or a suggestion that, if correct, would solve the problem. The construction of hypotheses involves the creative use of imagination to develop possible solutions. It also requires careful analysis of data. Further, the hypothesis must be testable. Formulating a hypothesis is not an entirely ruled governed activity, but it does require self-control, skill, and precision. Students must learn to distinguish between carefully constructed hypothesis and wild guessing based on uncontrolled emotions, whimsical imagination, and wishful thinking.

Fourth, the hypothesis requires elaboration as to possible consequences. It must be compared to other hypotheses to determine its relative value among them. Inferences and implications need drawing out. Is the data quantifiable? If so, how? Does quantification help or hinder? Measurement and quantification is never an end in itself, only a means to solving the problem. Inquirers should ask if qualitative techniques might work better. Is it possible to generalize the hypothesis? All this calls for finesse as much as technique.

Having elaborated the hypothesis by a course of reasoning it is time to test it experimentally. The inquirer must carry out operations that establish conditions in accordance with the dictates of the hypothesis to see if the idea actually works out and the consequences intended occur. If they do, then there is warrant for believing that the idea or course of action is true, or as Dewey preferred to put it, has "warranted assertibility" (LW 12: p. 15). Elsewhere, Dewey states, "[T]his is the meaning of truth: processes of change so directed that they achieve an intended consummation. Instrumentalities are actually such only in operation" (LW 1: p. 128). Dewey emphasized not only the falsifiability of scientific claims to truth, he allowed for their complete contingency.

Because Dewey praises the achievements of scientific methodology and experimentalism in both versions of *How We Think* and other works, many have mistakenly critiqued him for being scientific. One such critic was Laurence Buermeyer, himself an instrumentalist and a pragmatist. Buermeyer thought Dewey five "steps" too linear and simple to capture the true complexity of inquiry. Dewey agreed and suggests that Buermeyer "was handicapped by the fact that the analysis which he takes as the subject of his criticism was written for pedagogical purposes rather than for strictly logical ends" (MW 13: 61). In his response, Dewey makes it clear that the "steps" are not "chronological" or even absolutely distinguished. The "steps" are just useful distinctions within one body of inquiry; we separate them as we may the heart, lungs, and circulatory system. The distinctions are useful only for analysis, explication, and pedagogy. That does not mean the pedagogical distinction is not important.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey is clear that method is not separable from subject matter. For him, method, or structure, is structure for a purpose: "Method means that arrangement of subject matter which makes it most effective in use. Never is method something outside of the material" (MW 9: 172). When the use is pedagogical, we should arrange the subject matter to make it most effective for teaching others. Dewey clearly states, "The subject matter of the learner is not . . . identical with the formulated, the crystallized, and systematized subject matter of the adult" (p. 190). The same holds for any pedagogical situation. That is, "the teacher should be occupied not with subject matter in itself but in its interaction with the pupils present needs and capacities. Hence simple scholarship is not enough" (p. 191). Subject matter knowledge alone does

Nietzsche's
Schopenhauer and
Education *Peter*
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Peirce and
Philosophy of
Education *Phyllis*
Chiasson *Peninsula*
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Washington.

Perelman and
Philosophy of
Education *Renato*
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not make a good teacher. Teachers teach subject matter to students. It is a triangle enclosing a pedagogical space. Just teaching the subject matter does not mean one is teaching well. To teach well, the teacher must connect the subject matter to the needs, desires, interests, stage of cognitive development, etc. of the student, within the physical, social, and political context that the students and teachers find themselves. Good teaching requires moral as well as cognitive perception of the needs and abilities of the student. It also requires a complete and confident command of the subject matter to reconfigure it to meet the needs of every individual student. When Dewey wrote *How We Think* he repeated a strategy he used often; he wrote pedagogically. That is, he adapted his subject matter for his audience to meet their needs and interests. Ignoring the pedagogical component that pervades much of Dewey's work leads many to misunderstand it terribly. They misunderstand it because they misperceive the audience a given work addresses.

Recall that Dewey thought his instrumentalist logic could bridge science with morals. Dewey insisted that "rationality is an affair of the relation of means and consequences, not of fixed first principles as ultimate premises" (p. 17). The consequences that most concern us are values, including moral values. A complete discussion of the relation between science and morals is beyond the confines of an encyclopedia entry. Dewey explicates most of the connections in his, *Theory of Valuation* (LW 13: pp. 189-251) where he explicates the role of inquiry in distinguishing immediate, unreflective values from those values worth retaining upon reflection because their consequences contribute to human flourishing. Students who learn to use the five steps found in *How We Think* are better able to distinguish objects of immediate desire from the truly desirable. For Dewey, the key to freedom is intelligence. If we can become aware of the contingencies of our environment that control our conduct, then we can alter those contingencies thereby altering ourselves. The most important contingencies derive from the community in which we live and actualize ourselves.

In his 1938 *Logic*, Dewey gave his most complete definition of inquiry:

"Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituents distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole" (p. 108). Individuals or societies are not in a situation like flies are in a jar. Situations are an intimate, interconnected functional relation involving the inquirer and the environment. The resolution of a problematic situation may involve transforming the inquirer, the environment, and often both. The emphasis is on trans-formation. Dewey insisted that "science itself is but a central art auxiliary to the generation and utilization of other arts" (LW 10: 33).

The third influence identified by Dewey in "From Absolutism to Experimentalism" is the "biological conception of the psyche" as found in the *Psychology* of William James (LW 5: 157). Combined with his neo-Darwinianism, James confirmed Dewey's naturalism while appealing to his desire for organic unity. Dewey observes, "Many philosophers have had much to say about the idea of organism; but they have taken it structurally and hence statically. It was reserved for James to think of life in terms of life in action" (p. 158). The etymology of pragmatism flows from the ancient Greek *pragma*, meaning act, deed, affair, although pragmatists are most interested in intelligent action. The crucial idea connecting biological functioning with mental functioning, for James, is habit. This continuity breaks down the modern dualism between mind and body. James borrows this idea from his close friend Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce (1887-88/1992) thought that "learning, which is the preeminent ingredient and quintessence of reason, has its physiological basis quite evidently in the most characteristic property of the nervous system, the power of taking habits" (p. 264). From his reflections on habit, James (1890/1950) draws a valuable pedagogical principle:

The great thing, then, in all education, is to make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible as many useful actions as we can The more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism [habit], the more our higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work (Vol. I, p. 122).

Purely cognitive psychologists who separate mind from body and thought from feeling can never

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arrive at such a powerful conclusion. One only has to look at the almost exclusively cognitive curriculum in most schools to realize James's immensely powerful, though simple, principle, is still under appreciated. Usually we confine the body to gym class; elsewhere emotions are the source of disciplinary problems teachers must suppress. The result often destroys the desire to learn. We may understand much of Dewey's educational philosophy as the result of experimenting with the conditions and consequences of applying James's principle.

Dewey's understanding of the functioning of habit is not mechanical and rationalistic. He writes, "Rationality . . . is not a force to evoke against impulse and habit. It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires. 'Reason' as a noun signifies the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions" (MW 14: p. 136). For Dewey, 'Reason' is not an antecedent force which serves as a panacea. It is a laborious achievement of habit needing to be continually worked over" (p. 136). The laborious achievement of a working harmony among diverse desires is an aesthetic comprehension of rationality.

James succeeded in developing a functional psychology that overcame the dominant idea of the mind as a substance. As James V. Wertsch (1985) has observed "much of [Lev] Vygotsky's admiration of William James stemmed from the fact that the latter had rejected substantialism" (p. 200). It is here that Russian and North American psychology, including recent developments in educational psychology, meet. Dewey (1911a/1978) provides the following definition of a function, "Any process sufficiently complex to involve an arrangement or coordination of minor processes which fulfills a specific end in such a way as to conserve itself is called a function" (MW 6: p. 466). He continues, "The sum total of functions, in their reciprocal adjustment to one another constitute life, which accordingly, is defined in the same way as a function" (p. 467). These functionally coordinated living processes develop naturally from and with the rest of nature. At the University of Chicago, Dewey and his colleagues succeeded in developing this biologically based functional psychology to the point that today it is the most prominent presupposition in most kinds of North American psychology.

Besides habit, Dewey's biologically based functional psychology emphasizes action, need, desire, and interest. Again, the relation of the individual to her or his world is functional, we may separate them for methodological purposes, but we cannot understand what motivates someone without understanding them as an active functional unity of organism and environment. That is the clue to understanding Dewey's definition of interest: Any concrete case of the union of the self in action with an object and end is called an interest" (LW 7: p. 290). Organic, functional interdependence is also the key to understanding Dewey's theory of internal motivation:

Because an interest or motive is the union in action of a need, desire of a self, with a chosen object, the object itself may, in a secondary and derived sense, be said to be the motive of action It is true enough when we take the whole situation into account that an object moves a person; for that object as a moving force includes the self within it. Error arises when we think of the object as if it were something wholly external to the make-up of the self, when it operates to move the foreign self (pp. 291-292).

The transactional functional unity of the self (organism, knower, subject, and mind) and the world (environment, known, object, and body) is Dewey's full solution to Cartesian dualism. It is also an original contribution to understanding educational motivation.

Development, including educational development, for Dewey did not involve an unfolding of latent potential. Indeed, Dewey rejected the very notion of latent potential:

To say that an apple has the potentiality of decay does not mean that it has latent or implicit within it a causal principle which will some time inevitably display itself in producing decay, but that its existing changes (in interaction with its surroundings) will take the form of decay, if they are exposed to certain conditions not now operating (MW 8: p. 11).

For the apple to realize its potential it must engage in definite interactions, or better still,

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Shook* **Oklahoma
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transformative transactions, with its surroundings. This viewpoint has immense implications for physical, psychological, and moral development. Acorns do not become oak trees because that is their latent potential, their immanent telos. Rather, what acorns become depends on the transactions they engage in. Acorns often become food for squirrels that need and desire them to survive. For acorns to become oak trees, they must engage in many harmonious transactions with air, water, soil, and sunshine. The same holds for a human being. If they are to grow healthy and strong, they too need to engage in harmonious transactions, especially with other human beings.

Regarding the fourth influence on him, Dewey notes, "The objective biological approach of the Jamesian psychology led straight to the perception of the importance of distinctive social categories, especially communication and participation (LW 5: 159). The connection is easy to see; James (1890/1950) writes, "Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent" (p. 122). We acquire our habits from our habitat, especially our social habitat. Significantly, the first chapter of Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* is titled "Habits as Social Functions" (p. 15).

We have already seen that, for Dewey, to have a mind is to participate in the discourse practices of a community. Together, Dewey and Mead worked out the notion that to have a self is to take the role of others in interpreting one's acts. Both the mind and self is entirely social, although, as noted earlier, one may come to have an "individual mind" if they do the hard work of critical reflection on, caring connection with, and creative transformation of their culture.

On such a philosophy, the "other" is always already present within our "selves." One way to understand freedom is to think of it as being open to the possibility of telling an original story of our lives. We will never acquire the vocabulary, grammar, spelling, or plot lines necessary for telling an original story from those who are just like us. Pluralism and difference is the key to becoming an individual mind, not just an individual with a mind. We need others to become free. A pluralistic democratic community that encourages dialogues across differences best meets this need. Dewey's ideal of a participatory community is one of pluralistic community. This position is different from that of Habermas. There are no transcendental ideals of "rational" communication, only the meliorist hope in a value that may function as an "end-in-view" to guide inquiry in the quest to realize desirable consequences in the particular situation we find ourselves.

For Dewey, education is a social function. Until we know what sort of society is best, we do not know what sort of education is best. Dewey develops two criteria for evaluating any society. They are, "How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association?" (LW 9: p. 89). Oppressive societies, such as those devoted to Social Darwinism, eliminate diverse interests in favor of the special interests of the powerful few. Such societies are maladaptive because they are unable to respond agilely to environmental change. Diversity provides alternatives, thereby funding freedom. We should deliberate upon all modes of life intelligently, even if ultimately we reject them as unable to satisfy our needs and dreams. The danger in a society having narrow interests is that instead of attending to the interests of others and the possibilities they express, the prevailing purpose becomes, as Dewey puts it, "the protection of what it has got, instead of reorganization and progress through wider relationships" (MW 9: p. 91). Isolationism reduces freedom because it reduces our capacity to imagine the alternative possibilities that aid free choice and action. Isolationism is self-oppression. Dewey concludes:

The two elements in our criterion both point to democracy. The first signifies not only more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest, but greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control. The second means not only freer interaction between social groups But change in social habit — its continuous readjustment through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse" (p. 92).

By the standards of freedom, creativity, and dialogue, pluralistic democracy is, for Dewey, the best possible society we know of for sustaining growth. We may wonder what Dewey means when he says that the first element signifies mutual interests as a factor in social control. These lines should clarify:

The reasonable act and the generous act lie close together. A person of narrow sympathy is of necessity a person of confined outlook upon the scene of human good. The only truly general thought is the generous thought (LW 7: 270).

It is worth noting that sympathy for Dewey has a logical function. It limits universal generalizations in the social and moral sciences. This logical limitation may also serve to encourage democratic and pluralistic dialogue at the limits.

Dewey understood democracy as moral, economic, and educational, not just political. His pluralistic conception of democracy leads him to the following definition of democracy:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The 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, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to breaking down barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (MW 9: p. 93).

The governmental structure assumed by a democracy is of secondary concern. It does not matter as long as it promotes communication. Conversation for Dewey is about creating and sharing meaning; it is about growth. We may secure and continue the conversation in many diverse ways, and diversity is the key to creative conversation; it is also the key to good classrooms.

For Dewey, democracy is the most logical form of government. Further, he asserts that democracy is the best way to pursue logic. Dewey affirms that for logic, "The final actuality is accomplished in face-to-face relationships by means of direct give and take. Logic in its fulfillment recurs to the primitive sense of the word: dialogue. Ideas which are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but [monological] soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought" (LW 2: 371)). Dewey's etymology here is correct, Logos derives from the ancient Greek for speech or word. He believes that, "Logic is a social discipline Man is naturally a being that lives in association with others in communities possessing language, and therefore enjoying a transmitted culture. Inquiry is a mode of activity that is socially conditioned and that has cultural consequences" (LW 12: pp. 26-7) By adding different voices to a conversation, we may alter the conditions of rational inquiry; we may also reconstruct social conditions. So, also, will the canons of rationality. Dewey holds a communicative theory of rationality and democratic social action.

The goal of Dewey's philosophy as education is to release the human potential for growth. Growth through freedom, creativity, and dialogue is, for him, the all-inclusive ideal, the greatest good. For example, in *Democracy and Education* he asserts, "Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself" (MW 9: 58). For Dewey, the capacity to cultivate growth is the criterion for evaluating the quality of all social institutions.

Dewey believes that democracy is the social structure that contributes most to freeing intelligence to grow, and, therefore, education should be democratic. He writes:

The aim of education is to enable individuals to continue their education the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth. Now this idea cannot be applied to all the members of a society except where intercourse of man with man is mutual, and except where there is adequate provision for the reconstruction of social habits and institutions by means of wide stimulation arising from equitably distributed interests. And this means a democratic society (p. 107).

Dewey favors a planned over a planning society. He thought an education that emphasizes community, communication, intelligent inquiry, and a reconstructive attitude can best serve the citizens of an ever-evolving world. For him, it is clear that a democratic society is the best choice in the long haul.

Dewey's philosophy is far from exhausted. In the last twenty years, there has been a great renewal

of interest in his philosophy as education. Richard Rorty's (1979) reliance on Dewey in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* is a landmark. The publication of an authoritative biography by Robert B. Westbrook (1991) has greatly aided this renaissance. Steven C. Rockefeller (1991) also provides an in depth study of the more personal side of Dewey, one which concentrates on Dewey's religious thought.

We may conveniently divide the new scholarship on Dewey into two kinds. The first identifies and develops themes already present in Dewey's work, though previously overlooked. Examples include: Larry Hickman's (1990), *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology* shows that there is an implicit philosophy of technology in Dewey's work that plays a central role in his entire philosophy, including his philosophy of education. Hickman is the director of the Center for Dewey Studies at Carbondale. Thomas M. Alexander (1987) did the groundbreaking work on Dewey's struggle in the last decades of his life to develop an aesthetics that would unify his entire philosophy. There are many direct applications of Dewey's aesthetic to education in Jim Garrison (1995) *The New Scholarship on Dewey* and Phillip W. Jackson (1998), *The Lessons of Art*. Jim Garrison's (1997) *Dewey and Eros* has identified the crucial role played in Dewey's educational philosophy by the classical Greek concept of educating eros, or passionate desire, to desire the good in Dewey's theory of education.

The second kind of work constituting the new scholarship involves creative extensions and reconstructions of Dewey's philosophy. The development of a transactional theory of literary interpretation by Louise M. Rosenblatt (1978) is a fine instance. Another good example is Charlene Haddock Seigfried's (1996) criticism and creative reconstruction of Dewey in initiating her program of feminist pragmatism. Finally, Hans Joas (1996) has used Deweyan pragmatism to develop a theory of creative action that he claims unifies communicative, interpretive, and instrumental action, thereby, going beyond the work of Habermas.

It will require an entire generation of research to integrate this new scholarship into a practical philosophy of education. That, however, seems appropriate given that Dewey is a philosopher of endless reconstruction in an ever-evolving, never-ending world. There is no rest for those who live by means of creative action.

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