



# DEWEY STUDIES

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**Mission:**

*Dewey Studies* is a peer-reviewed, online, open-access journal of the John Dewey Society, dedicated to furthering understanding of John Dewey's philosophical work and enlivening his unique mode of engagement with the vital philosophical questions of our time.

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# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO *DEWEY STUDIES*

Leonard J. Waks



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**W**elcome to *Dewey Studies*, a new online journal of the John Dewey Society. *Dewey Studies* is the first scholarly journal devoted to John Dewey's life, work, and legacy. The William James Society publishes *James Studies* and the Charles S. Peirce Society publishes *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Indeed,

much of the most important work on John Dewey has been published in the latter journal. Peirce, James, and Dewey are the 'big three' classical American pragmatists. Because of Dewey's broad influence in many fields of the humanities and professional studies, more current scholarship is devoted to Dewey each year than to the other two. Surely the work on, as well as arising from, Dewey's corpus deserves a dedicated journal. *Dewey Studies* provides it.

We in the John Dewey Society frequently say that the Society stands as a 'three legged stool'. The three legs are (i) critical inquiry into pressing educational and cultural issues, (ii) educational theory and research of a progressive nature, and (iii) studies of the Dewey corpus and its influence. As a society, however, we have historically emphasized the first two legs of our stool. The reasons for this are quite clear.

The Dewey Society, founded in 1935, was the first organization dedicated to an American philosopher. It was not, however, intended as a vehicle to advance the ideas of Dewey. Like the Thoreau Society (founded in 1941), the Dewey Society was founded to advance a cause, not a system of ideas. The Thoreau Society aimed to advance the idea of wilderness and to preserve wild spaces. Thoreau was a model, not a 'great figure' on a pedestal. The Dewey Society's stated mission is "keeping alive John Dewey's commitment to the use of critical and reflective intelligence in the search for solutions to crucial problems in education and culture." The founders were responding to right-wing attacks against progressive developments in American life. They saw Dewey as a model in progressive social thought and action, not primarily as a model for professional philosophy.

Because many of the problems addressed by the Society's founders involved attacks against public education, and because the Society subsequently held its meetings in conjunction with professional societies devoted to education, a second unstated mission, encouraging educational research studies with a progressive slant, emerged.

For the last several decades the Society has held its meetings in conjunction with the American Educational Research Association. Until 2011, the Society sponsored a Special Interest Group in Dewey Studies at AERA. That group in turn sponsored an annual Dewey Lecture and Dewey Symposium as well as panels of peer-reviewed conference papers. The Society no longer controls that Interest Group, because new AERA rules prohibit control of its internal groups by an outside organization. But the Dewey Society remains an affiliate member of AERA and

cooperates informally with the AERA Dewey Studies Group. These activities strongly reinforce the Society's mission in the fields of educational theory and research.

The Society has published the journal *Education and Culture*, now in its thirty-second volume, as a home for research and scholarship on Dewey's educational works and activities. It also publishes an online journal, *The Journal of School and Society*, to address pressing issues in educational policy.

Dewey's corpus, however, extends far beyond educational theory and policy. Many of his most important works, including *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, Ethics, Experience and Nature, The Public and its Problems*, and *Art as Experience*, address other topics. The John Dewey Society has organized many lectures and panels on these works, but until now had no vehicle for publishing scholarship on such works and the issues radiating from them beyond the field of education. These issues have been taken up not only by philosophers but also by political theorists, psychologists, and scholars in many other disciplines. The *Dewey Studies* journal aims to fill that need. To avoid competition with the Society's other journals, Dewey Studies will generally not publish articles narrowly focused on education.

We are undergoing a 'renaissance' in Dewey scholarship. The Dewey Society, the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, and other societies and scholars are now organizing symposia and conferences on topics associated with John Dewey. *Dewey Studies* seeks to publish the best current work on Dewey, including work arising from such meetings, and to review new books on Dewey. We aim to become the preeminent journal globally for Dewey studies. Please submit manuscripts and query the editors about ideas for publishing special issues or conference panels.

# INTRODUCTION TO *DEWEY* *STUDIES*

JIM GARRISON



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Sponsored by the John Dewey Society, *Dewey Studies* represents the first journal ever dedicated exclusively to scholarship on the philosophy of John Dewey.<sup>0</sup> Because there has been so much work on Dewey's philosophy of education, *Dewey Studies* will deliberately extend to all aspects of Dewey's work outside of his philosophy of education narrowly considered. The founding of *Dewey Studies* is an important moment in the history of both the Society and Deweyan scholarship.

The visitor to the John Dewey Society homepage is provided the following brief history:

The John Dewey Society grew out of a series of discussions held in 1934 and 1935. Originally called "The Association for the Study of Education in its Social Aspects," the name was changed to the John Dewey Society in early 1936. The John Dewey Society exists to keep alive John Dewey's commitment to the use of critical and reflective intelligence in the search for solutions to crucial problems in education and culture.<sup>0</sup>

The Society was founded on Dewey's spirit *not* as a venue of Dewey studies. The interested browser can click on "history" under "About us" to find the following:

In the February 1936 issue of *The Social Frontier*, the name choice was explained:

<sup>0</sup> In authoring this article, I contacted the following former John Dewey Society past-presidents listed in the order in which they served: David Hansen, Larry Hickman, Lynda Stone, Deron Boyles, and Kathleen Knight-Abowitz to solicit insight into the founding of the journal. I also contacted president-elect A. G. Rud. The current president, Leonard J. Waks was not contacted because he is the inaugural editor-in-chief. All of them endorsed the idea of *Dewey Studies*. As one of them put it, "HmMMM, where has a journal like this been all this time?" They also offered useful ideas for the composition of my Introduction. I borrowed from every one of them. Their influence is scattered throughout the work without citation. I want to thank them for their help. Errors that remain are all my own.

<sup>0</sup> Retrieved from

<http://www.johndeweyociety.org/board-of-directors-and-officers/history/>, at 10:58 a.m., January 5, 2017. Due to the largess of Daniel Tanner, a past-president of the Society, every new member receives a copy of Tanner's *Crusade for Democracy: Progressive Education at the Crossroads*, which provides a fine history of the early decades of the Society.

The new society was named for John Dewey, not because the founders wished to devote themselves to an exposition of the teachings of America's greatest educator and thinker, but rather because they felt that in his life and work he represents the soundest and most hopeful approach to the study of the problems of education. For more than a generation he has proclaimed the social nature of the educative process and emphasized the close interdependence of school and society. Presumably, without being bound by his philosophy, the John Dewey Society will work out of the tradition which John Dewey has done more than any other person to create. Such an organization is badly needed in America today.<sup>0</sup>

The John Dewey Society is still much needed for all of these reasons.

Since its founding in 1976 until very recently, *Education and Culture* has been the society's only publication. It "takes an integrated view of philosophical, historical, and sociological issues in education."<sup>0</sup> Meanwhile the much more recent *Journal of School & Society* (founded 2014) provides "a space for free interchanges among scholar-practitioners towards the development of knowledge which can provide direction and meaning for educational projects, contexts and classrooms of all kinds."<sup>0</sup> Both of these publications have and will continue to serve the historical mission of the Society very well.

However, in recent years the Society and its membership are publically identified with scholarship focused specifically on John Dewey. It is a sign of the robustness of the Society that it can maintain two first-rate journals devoted to its historical mission while expanding its reach to founding the first journal committed entirely to scholarship on the work of John Dewey. By defining a space solely devoted to Dewey scholarship outside education, the Society also helps the *Journal of School & Society* and *Education*

<sup>0</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.johndeweyociety.org/board-of-directors-and-officers/history/>, at 10:59 a.m., January 5, 2017.

<sup>0</sup> Retrieved from the journal's website, <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/eandc/>, at 11:01 a.m., January 5, 2017.

<sup>0</sup> Retrieved from the journal's website, <http://www.johndeweyociety.org/the-journal-of-school-and-society/>, at 11:35, January 5, 2017.

*and Culture* better define their own mission in the minds of the members of the Society as well as their many other readers.

There has been a long and unbroken line of scholarship on Dewey's philosophy of education, especially in the field of education, beginning no later than his first published work of length on the topic, *The School and Society* (1899). Philosophers of education have several first rate journals with an international readership. These journals often contain papers about Dewey's philosophy of education and commonly other aspects of Dewey's philosophy as they apply to education. It would be hard to find an issue of any of these journals that did not have a least one article that makes some use or at least reference to Dewey, even if only to oppose him. However, if the other aspects of Dewey's philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, logic, epistemology, and such find expression in these journals, they are uncomfortably "shoehorned in" as enlightening tangents to educational topics.

Meanwhile, there are dozens if not hundreds of educational journals worldwide that often feature articles about Dewey or at least frequently contain papers referring to his work in some way or another. There is simply no need for a journal dedicated to publishing work exclusively on Dewey's philosophy of education. There is, however, a demand for a journal in which educational topics are perhaps an edifying tangent to the study of other aspects of Dewey's holistic philosophy. Educators, the philosophical community, and the other disciplines and fields influenced by Dewey will be better for the founding of *Dewey Studies*.

Turning to the broader philosophical reach of Deweyan studies it is important to realize that pragmatism, including Deweyan pragmatism, was never dominant in North American universities. Philosophy professionalized at the *fin de siècle* of the nineteenth century. The American Philosophical Association was established in 1900. The *Philosophical Review* was established in 1892 and the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods* in 1904. The model was that of the great German research universities and the emphasis was on appearing scientific, meaning disengaged from everyday cares, concerns, and practices.

In conjunction with the general epistemological orientation of modern philosophy, a large comprehensive philosophy, such as pragmatism, eager to engage everyday social, political, economic, educational, existential, historical, and religious issues with a strong reformist slant was incompatible with the times. Significantly, Dewey's first publication was in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* founded in 1867 not by academic

professionals, but people (i.e., the St. Louis Hegelians) who were actively involved in politics, business, the trades, and such.

The influx of logical positivists escaping fascist Europe during the 1930's established linguistic oriented philosophy in North American graduate schools. The linguistic philosophy of Cambridge and Oxford, especially as found in the work of the later Ludwig Wittgenstein, supplemented this orientation. What came to be called "analytic philosophy" has dominated American philosophy departments ever since. Analytic philosophy is compatible with the logical, objectivist, scientific orientation detached from everyday practical concerns and social reform that has dominated academic philosophy in North America from the start.

Much of the contemporary interest in Dewey was spurred by the publication of Richard Rorty's 1979 *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. This work draws Dewey together with the later Wittgenstein and the continental philosopher Martin Heidegger (who also had more impact on North American departments of philosophy than the thought of Dewey).

However helpful in reviving interest in Dewey, Rorty and the neopragmatists that followed him such as Robert Brandom and John McDowell remain loyal to the linguistic turn in philosophy and therefore slight the role of experience in Dewey's classical pragmatism. The debate between classical and neopragmatism is far from over and we may expect some of it to play out in the pages of *Dewey Studies*. Rorty famously said, "James and Dewey were not only waiting at the end of the dialectical road which analytic philosophy traveled, but are waiting at the end of the road which, for example, Foucault and Deleuze are currently traveling."<sup>0</sup> There is *William James Studies* and now a *Dewey Studies* to help us get further down the road wherever it may lead.

The Center for Dewey Studies published *The Collected Works of John Dewey* (1967-1990) in thirty-seven volumes under the directorship of the late Jo Ann Boydston who also edited and independently published *The Poems of John Dewey* (1977). Under the directorship of Larry A. Hickman, the Center also published: *The Correspondence of John Dewey* in four electronic volumes (completed in 1997), an electronic edition of *The Collected Works*, and *The Class Lectures of John Dewey*. The Center for Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University is unstaffed as of January 1, 2017. The Center was in the process of electronically transcribing, proofreading, and editing Dewey's *Lectures in China* at the time of

<sup>0</sup> Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xviii.

its closing. A large array of scholarly resources is in place due to decades of fine work at the Center. It will remain the premier archive for scholarship on Dewey, but for now at least it is no longer actively functioning as a staffed center of active research that regularly hosts visiting scholars.<sup>0</sup> *Dewey Studies* arrives just in time to help fill the void left by the Center's reduction to a passive archive.

Fortunately, over the last two decades under the guidance of Larry Hickman, the Center for Dewey Studies has collaborated in the formation of numerous Dewey Centers worldwide, including: Germany (Cologne), Italy (Calabria), France (Paris), Ireland (Dublin), Poland (Krakow), and China (Shanghai) among others. It is propitious that *Dewey Studies* goes into publication just as Dewey scholarship becomes truly global in scope.

At the conclusion of his autobiographical essay "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," Dewey insists:

I think it shows a deplorable deadness of imagination to suppose that philosophy will indefinitely revolve within the scope of the problems and systems that two thousand years of European history have bequeathed to us. Seen in the long perspective of the future, the whole of western European history is a provincial episode.<sup>0</sup>

*Dewey Studies* should serve as a vehicle for escaping philosophical provincialism. No one knows the future of Deweyan studies, but surely it will be an adventure.

The establishment of a journal entirely dedicated to the full range of Dewey's expansive philosophy *sans* education is long overdue. As one of those I consulted (see fn. 1) indicated: "Dewey has been anxiously guarded by educational theorists . . . . But Dewey's work has never belonged to education or any other singular professional field." Very true! Beyond the field of education, Dewey's thought remains influential in fields and disciplines as diverse as psychology, political science, social theory, culture studies, ethics, logic, metaphysics, aesthetics, anthropology, neuropragmatism, and many more. He truly pursued the love of wisdom wherever the journey took him. *Dewey Studies*

<sup>0</sup> I would like to thank Thomas M. Alexander who, along with Paula Anders McNally, has served as co-director of the Center (since the retirement of Larry Hickman in 2015), for his review and correction of the foregoing paragraph.

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), LW 5:159.

will provide a forum for scholars from many fields and disciplines to report results from their own pursuits.

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# THE NATURE PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN DEWEY

JOHN SHOOK



John Dewey's pragmatism and naturalism are grounded on metaphysical tenets describing how mind's intelligence is thoroughly natural in its activity and productivity. His worldview is best classified as Organic Realism, since it descended from the German organicism and *Naturphilosophie* of Herder, Schelling, and Hegel which shaped the major influences on his early thought. Never departing from its tenets, his later philosophy starting with *Experience and Nature* elaborated a philosophical organon about science, culture, and ethics to fulfill his particular version of Organic Realism.



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**D**ewey's philosophical worldview, early and late, was an organicist Nature Philosophy. Classifying this philosophical system as a pragmatism, or a naturalism, is one-sided and misleading. Treating Dewey first and foremost as a pragmatist is contrary to his own understanding of his philosophy and the systematicity to his worldview. The

pragmatist themes in his work on education, science, and culture are predicated on his deeper metaphysical tenets. There is no pragmatist principle required for justifying any of Dewey's metaphysical views, but the contrary dependence of his type of pragmatism on his metaphysics is pervasive and complete. All characterizations of Dewey's philosophy as this or that sort of pragmatism (or instrumentalism, or experimentalism, etc.) are premature until his metaphysics is fully appreciated.

Nor was Dewey principally a naturalist. He did not presume that "nature" has a default or self-explanatory status, he did not think that idealism could be easily dismissed, and he did not assign to science the sole responsibility for understanding reality. There is no naturalistic principle needed for justifying Dewey's metaphysical tenets, but those tenets are necessary for his philosophy's transformation of naturalism. All classifications of Dewey's philosophy as one or another type of naturalism (empirical naturalism, pragmatic naturalism, etc.) are subsidiary to the correct elaboration of his metaphysics.

Explaining the metaphysical roles for his worldview's tenets, and his justifications for those tenets without apriori intuitions, transcendental deductions, or practical postulations, is the story of his Nature Philosophy.

### **Nature is Reality**

Dewey critically reconstructed the conception of nature. Without that reconstruction, naturalism's promise to fulfill realism with science's knowledge only reverts to dualism, since what really matters in experience must be consigned to an unnatural status. Any rationalism—including scientific naturalism, materialism, physicalism, and so forth—only engenders dualisms. Knowledge, from whatever privileged source, cannot delimit reality, and reality cannot depend on knowing. Dewey therefore asserts that what can be known is surely real but it is not more real, and what is basically real must enable knowledge. To ensure the tightest ontological bond between the processes of knowing and enviroing matters eliciting that knowing, mentality cannot be somewhere else apart from worldly matters. For example, the way that something external is separated in space from a brain (a fact of great import for most naturalisms) could not play a crucial role in Dewey's account of inquiry. He renounced any epistemology grounded on mechanistic causality, sensationalism, or representationalism. In Dewey's Nature Philosophy, naturalism enjoys scientific warrant,

but a valid naturalism must also answer to a normative view of knowledge, not the other way around.

There must be no discontinuity between mentality and materiality. In a phrase, the most realistic philosophy shall be the most idealistic, and the most idealistic philosophy shall be the most realistic. This is the key to Dewey's resolution of the realism-idealism dispute and his elaboration of a complete philosophical organon. His worldview was no ordinary idealism, or materialism. Idealism attributes all normativity to mentality, demoting any other reality to a dependence on mentality's organizing activity or consigning it to unreality. Materialism denies that fundamental reality has its own organizing capacity, relieving mentality of normativity or rendering it epiphenomenal. Idealism and Materialism therefore agree that Realism's mind-independent reality cannot possess an inherent capacity to organize and regulate itself. This "inert" Realism accordingly requires a metaphysical insertion of structure to make anything else happen, as some initial "first cause" in the form of a supernatural mind, platonic forms, mathematical equations, or an energetic start for the universe.

There is an oft-overlooked fourth option: an "organic" Realism asserting that basic reality has intrinsic organizing capacities. Nature is *naturing*, and *nurturing*. If reality—all of it—does possess intrinsic features conducive to organization, then the notion of "mind-independent reality" is left meaningless, because mentality can arise from reality's basic processes and participate in any of reality's processes. Organic Realism is not Idealism, however, since it asserts (with Materialism) that nothing real depends on actual mentality making it what it is—most of reality need not fall within mentality's acquaintance at any given time. Organic Realism is not Materialism, either, since it asserts (with Idealism) that everything real must in principle be somehow amenable to mentality's engagement. Organic Realism disagrees with Idealism, Materialism, and Inert Realism by holding that robust mentality can arise from basic material conditions, where conducive circumstances permit within the universe. Furthermore, Organic Realism does not require a "first cause" to structure the universal course of events, so it is compatible with reality having no beginning and needing no explanation.

Dewey's Nature Philosophy exemplifies this Organic Realism. He arrived at this worldview by the early 1890s, before C. S. Peirce or A. N. Whitehead produced their versions. In fact, Dewey was the first American to affirm what would be later labeled as the "ecological" approach to psychology and cognition during the twentieth century. In *Outlines of a Critical Theory of*

*Ethics* (1891) Dewey argued that the individual cannot be constituted to be independent from its surroundings. Quite the opposite is the case: “environment enters into individuality as a constituent factor, helping make it what it is. On the other hand, it is capacity which makes the environment really an environment to the individual. The environment is not simply the facts which happen objectively to lie about an agent; it is such part of the facts as may be related to the capacity and the disposition and the gifts of the agent.” (EW 3: 302-303) Dewey denied an ontological divide between environment and agent: “each in itself is an abstraction, and that the real thing is the individual who is constituted by capacity and environment in relation to one another.” (EW 3: 303) Although having priority in America, Dewey’s worldview had a rich German legacy.

Prior to Dewey, J.G. Herder and F.W.J. Schelling advanced Organic Realism in their original systems of *Naturphilosophie* in order to explain mind’s knowledge of the world in terms of mind’s activity transforming nature from within, not without. They in turn credited Spinoza’s monism and embraced its implications for pantheism, faulting his worldview only for its uncritical incorporation of mechanistic naturalism. As Frederick Beiser recounts, the issue revolved around reality’s basic dynamism:

With the evident breakdown of mechanism, would it be possible to sustain Spinoza’s monism and naturalism? Clearly, these doctrines would have to be reinterpreted according to the latest results from the sciences. For Herder, this meant first and foremost reinterpreting Spinoza’s single infinite substance so that it was now living force, the force of all forces, “*die Urkraft aller Kräfte.*” Such a move guaranteed the unity and continuity of nature because there was no longer any dualism between the mental and physical, the organic and inorganic. If we assume that matter is living force, then we are no longer caught in the classic dilemma of dualism versus materialism. For we can now explain both mind and matter as different degrees of organization and development of living force.<sup>0</sup>

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<sup>0</sup> Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 183. See also Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 145-149.

The first volume of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind, 1784) expressly defended the origin of life on earth from non-life. The energies of living things are not essentially different from energies in the physical environment, but their effects and consequences are distinctive. Expressing that unity-in-difference in a philosophical way, undertaken by Herder and then Schiller, could supply insights into the relationship between the mind and the world. Herder's next book, *Gott, Einige Gespräche* (God, Some Conversations, 1787) further proposed that the universe's vital Force was nothing other than God, and Schiller similarly sought an ultimate living reality in *Von der Weltseele* (On the World-Soul, 1798).<sup>0</sup>

Herder and Schiller appreciated Kant's suggestion in *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften* (Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science, 1786) that matter occupies space because it only consist of opposed forces (attractive and repulsive forces), and the shifting balances among forces yields that dynamism to what we call material bodies. If the world fundamentally consists of endlessly novel blendings of shifting forces, rather than aggregates of matter only moving and accumulating into shapes due to external energies, then basic reality is far more similar to the organic, and holistic explanations take priority.<sup>0</sup>

As biologists during the late 1700s proposed theories about self-constructive organic life, the philosophical issue of matter's passivity regained importance. Could organic life rely on, and even arise from, the active causality inherent to a dynamic materiality? The biological theory of abiogenesis—that life might arise from non-life—was demonstrably wrong where organisms birth more of their species, but biologists also pondered how an organism grows from matter around it, and how the first organisms arose from nothing but matter. Growth is far easier to explain if basic materials are dynamically capable of selective affinities or repulsions. The confirmations from elemental physics and chemistry of such dynamism (combustion, electricity, magnetism, and so on) by the 1780s and 1790s promised a new philosophy of science, which in turn heralded the advent of a new metaphysics.<sup>0</sup>

<sup>0</sup> Consult Miklos Vassanyi, *Anima Mundi: The Rise of the World Soul in Modern German Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).

<sup>0</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, p. 62. On Kant, see Jennifer Mensch, *Kant's Organicism: Epigenesis and the Development of Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>0</sup> See Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), and Robert J. Richards, *The Romantic*

The greatest obstacle to that new metaphysics was also supplied by Kant.

### Natural Purpose

Kant's stance in *Critique of Judgment* (1790) against anything self-organizing or purposive in nature did not derail *Naturphilosophie*, since his preference for mechanistic explanation as the exclusively realistic way to understand nature seemed arbitrary and unjustified to Herder, Schelling, Goethe, Hegel, and several other idealists.<sup>0</sup> His claim that something unassembled cannot be understood only begs the question in favor of mechanistic methodology—we also intimately understand purposive activity. For Kant to say that our intimate grasp of assembling objects permit us to think that natural objects are truly mechanistic, but that our intimate grasp of attaining ends forbids us from thinking that any natural objects are truly purposive, lacks rational justification. Either both modes of explanation understand what reality is actually doing, or they are both “as-if” regulative ideas. *Naturphilosophie*, respecting the progress of the sciences, all of the sciences, accordingly accepted both modes of explanation, and proposed that complex natural processes (such as life) are simultaneously mechanistic and purposive. Nothing purposive is derived or constructed from mechanism, because mechanism does not have explanatory priority or ontological exclusivity. Instead, mechanical chains of causes depend on unifying wholes, such as the living processes of organisms.<sup>0</sup>

More scientifically realistic than Kant's transcendental idealism, *Naturphilosophie* offered a naturalistic way to explain how knowledge is possible. The reason why knowledge is conditioned by the knower is because the knower is directly conditioned by what becomes known: the knower is already immersed in the knowable world as a constituent dynamic entity engaged with similarly energies. Hegel, following Herder and Schelling, disputed Kant's denial of objective reality to natural purposiveness. In Schelling's hands, and Hegel's as well, no veil of phenomena, and no metaphysical consciousness, separates mentality from externality—knowing already encompasses the

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*Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>0</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>0</sup> F. W. J. Schelling, “Introduction” (1799) to *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Keith Petersen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 200.

knower and the known.<sup>0</sup> If this worldview is a ‘transcendental’ or ‘absolute’ idealism, it is as naturally realistic as possible after jettisoning the unknowable thing-in-itself, as Beiser details:

First, Schelling continues to identify the absolute with nature in itself or the *natura naturans*. This is his formula for the absolute in itself, the indifference pole of the subjective and objective, and not only one pole or appearance of the absolute. Second, Schelling continues to identify the doctrine of absolute idealism with the standpoint of *Naturphilosophie*, which, he says, expresses not one side but the whole principle of subject–object identity. Third, Schelling does not abandon but develops in detail his program for the “*physical explanation of idealism*,” which will derive the self-consciousness of the Kantian–Fichtean ‘I’ from the powers of nature as a whole.<sup>0</sup>

That physical explanation of idealism’s demand for the unity of knowing mind and known world Nature’s powers are continually active and productive, on Schelling’s theory. As productivity, whatever is produced only appears to be an object with its own qualities. In truth, products themselves still change for the duration of their existence, and their qualitative factors pass into further products sooner or later, while nature as a whole is never ceasing to develop and evolve.<sup>0</sup> Beiser describes the resulting *Naturphilosophie*:

All of nature, then, is a giant natural purpose that consists in myriad smaller natural purposes. According to this concept, there is no fundamental difference in kind between the ideal and real, the mental and physical, since they are only different degrees of organization and development of living force. Mind is very organized and developed matter, and matter is less organized and developed mind. It is important to see that such an organic concept does not abrogate the mechanical, whose laws remain in force as

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<sup>0</sup> Daniel O. Dahlstrom, “Hegel’s Appropriation of Kant’s Account of Purposiveness in Nature,” in his *Philosophical Legacies: Essays on the Thought of Kant, Hegel, and Their Contemporaries* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 163-178; John Laughland, *Schelling versus Hegel: From German Idealism to Christian Metaphysics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), p. 45.

<sup>0</sup> Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 559.

<sup>0</sup> Schelling, “Introduction,” pp. 207-208.

much as ever; but it does see the mechanical as a limiting case of the organic. While the organic explains the parts of nature with respect to the whole, the mechanical simply treats these parts in relation to one another, as if they were somehow self-sufficient. The mechanical explains a given event by prior events acting on it, and so on ad infinitum; the organic explains why these parts act on one another in the first place.<sup>0</sup>

For this *Naturphilosophie*, a suitably naturalistic account of mind's own development under entirely natural conditions can maintain the unification of knowing self and known world, that unification which Materialism cannot deliver, Dualism abandons, and Idealism distorts. Forging that non-dualistic account cannot be assigned to the empirical sciences, or to *a priori* reasonings. As Schelling foresaw, and subsequent philosophy of nature illustrated, naturalism would remain unsettled by sciences using different explanatory methodologies and philosophers appealing to divergent conceptual analyses. A mechanistic scientific paradigm (in physics, say) can inspire mechanistic programs in other sciences, advancing materialism but retarding a unified theory of mind and knowledge. Scientific naturalism is more philosophical by attempting to adjudicate among scientific methodologies, proposing compromises where it can, but it cannot guarantee that the sciences together would yield a theory of knowledge with their own resources.

Philosophy of nature, with its wider scope than scientific naturalism, has the responsibility for discerning what is fundamental to all successful science, searching for a conception of nature best accounting for science's progress. When philosophy of nature also requires that a conception of nature drawn from the sciences adequately accounts for mentality and its knowing capacities, then Nature Philosophy is undertaken. Like Herder and Schelling, Dewey held that this Nature Philosophy will be an Organic Realism of the most dynamic sort, although he abandoned their stance that nature as a whole has purpose. The common premise to Idealism, Materialism, and Inert Realism is the assumption that reality is most regular and already regulated for appreciation by knowers. In *Experience and Nature* (1925), Dewey rejects that common premise and all rivals to Organic Realism in no unclear terms:

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<sup>0</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, p. 157.

Concerned with imputing complete, finished and sure character to the world of real existence, even if things have to be broken into two disconnected pieces in order to accomplish the result, the character desiderated can plausibly be found in reason or in mechanism; in rational conceptions like those of mathematics, or brute things like sensory data; in atoms or in essences; in consciousness or in a physical externality which forces and overrides consciousness. (LW 1: 47)<sup>0</sup>

The philosophical remedy is the least philosophical and the most empirical: “experience in unsophisticated forms gives evidence of a different world and points to a different metaphysics” (LW 1: 47).<sup>0</sup> What is reality like? “For every existence in addition to its qualitative and intrinsic boundaries has affinities and active outreachings for connection and intimate union. It is an energy of attraction, expansion and supplementation.” (LW 1: 187) This is the natural habitat for mentality.

### **Natural Intelligence**

For Dewey, mind is unified with nature—there is nothing unnatural about mentality. Nature does not intrinsically consist of mind, because nature does not have any intrinsic consistency. Dewey had no metaphysics of substance or essence; reality does not consist of anything homogenous. Mind does not intrinsically consist of nature, because there is nothing that mind consists of. Dewey had no psychology or phenomenology for mentality in or for itself. All the same, mind is unified with nature.

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<sup>0</sup> Citations to *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882–1953*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969–1991) use these abbreviations: *The Early Works* (EW), *The Middle Works* (MW), or *The Later Works* (LW), followed by volume and page number.

<sup>0</sup> Arguing that Dewey had no metaphysics, because those generic traits only pertain to experience, is contrary to his stated views and to logic. Dewey expressly locates generic traits in fundamental reality, not just what happens to be experienced as existing, for the separation between reality and what is experienced is precisely what Dewey wants to eliminate, not the entire idea of experience itself, by whatever name ‘experiencing’ is given. His *Nature Philosophy* concerns reality, and that is why generic traits must show up in experience. If that point is granted, then one can appreciate how experience is entirely natural, and quibbling over whether Dewey has a metaphysics becomes moot. For a contrary view, see Charlene Haddock Seigfried, “Ghosts Walking Underground: Dewey’s Vanishing Metaphysics,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 40 (2004): 53-81.

Lacking an interest in reducing one to the other, Dewey offered a different mode of unity for mind and nature. That unity defies dualism not by postulating monism, but by affirming traits common to both mind and nature. Those generic traits found among all natural events—such as change, movement, dependency, and contingency—cannot be universals or free-standing properties, so no ontological “stuff” or *Urgrund* could be derived or constructed from them. Generic traits are not objects of scientific knowledge—no science is responsible for detecting or confirming them, as any scientific inquiry (and any other human endeavor) only presupposes them and relies upon them. Whatever happens to exist displays for naïve observation those persistent traits, but there is nothing real composed solely of those traits, those traits cannot point to any deeper mode of reality, and there is nothing taking ontological priority by possessing only those traits. Dewey never proposed a dual-aspect ontology or a property-dualistic ontology, he dismissed any Spinoza-style metaphysics, and he rejected metaphysical absolutism in all forms. But mind is thoroughly unified with nature.

The second chapter of *Experience and Nature*, titled “Existence as Precarious and Stable,” expressly announces Dewey’s Nature Philosophy of Organic Realism:

Nothing but unfamiliarity stands in the way of thinking of both mind and matter as different characters of natural events, in which matter expresses their sequential order, and mind the order of their meanings in their logical connections and dependencies. Processes may be eventful for functions which taken in abstract separation are at opposite poles, just as physiological processes eventuate in both anabolic and katabolic functions. The idea that matter and mind are two sides or “aspects” of the same things, like the convex and the concave in a curve, is literally unthinkable. (LW 1: 66)

Dewey’s Organic Realism specifically proposes that “natural events” are the philosophically ultimate constituents of nature, presupposed by all successful sciences while permitting the mentality-naturality unification.

That to which both mind and matter belong is the complex of events that constitute nature. This becomes a mysterious *tertium quid*, incapable of designation, only when mind and

matter are taken to be static structures instead of functional characters. (LW 1: 66)

This mind-nature unity is not a secret kept from mind, or a mystery penetrated by mystical states or pure reason. Not only can ordinary minds come to understand this unification with nature, intelligence can appreciate and value that natural unity. Unintelligent philosophies deny or devalue that unification, and disrupt intelligence's pursuit of its proper work. An intelligent philosophy preserves that unity by constructing a rounded-out worldview that does not fail to include intelligence itself. This kind of philosophy, what we have labeled as Nature Philosophy, fosters a "reflexive" worldview keeping intelligence intelligible so that it does not become a mystery to itself. A wisely intelligent philosophy additionally encourages intelligence to highly prioritize its methodical application, not for its own sake or the sake of contemplation, but for its contributions to everything else capable of being valued. This kind of philosophy can constitute an "organon"—a comprehensive philosophy of knowing and living that includes logic itself.

Dewey's prolegomena, *Experience and Nature* (1925), introduces his version of Organic Realism. The full organon is elaborated in the core triad of works: *Art as Experience* (1934), *A Common Faith* (1934), and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938). Twenty propositions capture this organon's essential features.

### I. Metaphysics for Mind

1. There are several generic traits common to all existences which provide fundamental categories for ontology.
2. Among the fundamental categories for ontology are function, sociality, growth, and purpose, which are all as real as anything else.
3. Mind—whether at levels of sentience, intelligence, intellect, or reason—shares in some characteristics common to all existence and has an integral cosmic standing and significance.
4. The complex functions of mind are embodied in creative engagements with environing contexts, which includes other life.

### II. Intelligence is Social

5. Intelligence is manifest in proficiency of conduct, however categorized as technological, cultural, or moral.
6. Reflective, logical, and theoretical matters are not independent from other matters for intelligence's practical concern.
7. Human life is thoroughly natural, including the development of personhood, social life, and cultural institutions.
8. Philosophy should help constitute an organon of and about knowledge concerning all intelligible matters.

### III. Nature is Beneficent

9. Nature has regular patterns and cycles which, while chaotic and unpredictable at times, can sustain causal conditions for good things and good living.
10. Laws of nature are intelligible aspects of nature, not ontologically distinct from the course of natural events or supernaturally imposed upon nature.
11. The intelligibility of nature is itself part of nature, and our capacity for intelligence is part of that intelligibility.
12. Although nature is perilous, nature's intelligibility beneficially supports the pursuits of social intelligence to fulfill ends and realize ideals.

### IV. Morality is Universalizable.

13. Human individuality is developed through participation in social intelligence's realization of ideals through cultural advancement, where communication and art are predominant.
14. Voluntary self-improvement and self-control are key moral virtues consonant with freedom, social progress, and civic order.
15. Cultural/moral progress through intelligence increases the intelligibility of nature and increases the degree of unity with nature's intelligibility.

16. Personal morality is unified with social ethics, and communing and communication can enlarge that unification to potentially encompass all peoples.

#### V. Ethics is Harmonizing

17. Ethics for each individual is coordinate with growing harmony with nature.

18. There is nothing to fear from cosmic malevolence, predestined fate, or death, and there is no afterlife.

19. One's growth in intelligence is proper participation in the development of cosmic intelligibility and harmonization.

20. Though life is short and full of struggle, one's reasonable life has the support of the growing cosmic order and the significance of contributing to that order.

These twenty propositions were not due to his convergence with the pragmatisms developed by Charles Peirce and William James in the late 1890s and early 1900s. They are not the products of Dewey's own development of what he called "experimentalism" during the late 1890s and early 1900s. Rather, they are among his earliest philosophical doctrines driving his emerging system, dating from his undergraduate and graduate years, and they animate his writings during his first decade (1884–94) as a philosophy professor.

In 1894, the year that he left his first professorship at the University of Michigan to go to the University of Chicago, he published an article titled "Reconstruction." Thanks to the advance of both biological and physical science, and the modern scientific spirit itself, all reality is nothing but energy:

Now we see the universe as one all-comprehensive, interrelated scene of limitless life and motion. No bound can be put to it in imagination or in thought. No detail is so small that it is not a necessary part of the whole; no speck is apparently so fixed that it is not in reality a scene of energy. (EW 4: 102)

Another article from that time, "The Superstition of Necessity" (1893), reduced 'necessity' to a logical relation, rendering the idea of 'part' dependent on a 'whole'. There are no causal necessities in

nature, and there are no rigid basic units awaiting assembly into wholes. Only a provisional explanation resorts to connecting a chosen cause with its necessary interesting effect, to be replaced when a complete explanation discovers the dynamic whole that develops those supposed ‘parts’ (EW 4: 20-21). In Schiller’s words, “all the laws of mechanics, whereby that which is properly only the object of the productive intuition becomes an object of reflection, are really only laws for reflection. Hence those fictitious notions of mechanics...”<sup>0</sup>

Dewey retained this understanding of dynamical and holistic reality in his later works. Its view of causality implies, for philosophy of science, not only that mechanical ‘necessity’ has limited explanatory value, but also that science cannot rest upon theories explaining separate objects linked by external necessities. Nature Philosophy infers that mechanistic paradigms falsify reality, ‘explaining’ only hypostatizations instead of nature. Mechanical accounts work well enough for limited purposes where controlled conditions permit, as befits their subsidiary role within purposeful engagements with nature. It is mechanism, not purpose, which only exists for the knowing mind: “only a philosophy which hypostatizes isolated results and results obtained for a purpose, on a substantiation of the function of being a tool, concludes that nature *is* a mechanism and only a mechanism” (LW 4: 198). What does not require the projection of mind is the natural existence of “a cumulative integration of complex interactions” or, put another way, “the integration of a multitude of processes toward a single outcome” (LW 4: 197). Those traits of wholes maintaining their integrity are not imposition of design by a spectator mind, but rather the natural processes from which mentality itself is born and through which mentality has productivity.

Dewey’s Organic Realism therefore finds that everything needed for purpose—with natural histories, integrations, qualities, contingencies, finalities, and ends as its evident characters—is an objective feature of reality (LW 1: 82-84, 264.) Although purpose may not predominate over all of nature and nature as a whole has no purpose, it remains the case that nothing about nature is alien to purpose, nature can cooperate with purpose, and practical intelligence has a natural home. These principles were also central to *Naturphilosophie* and its blossoming into German Organicism, the worldview which nurtured Dewey’s entry into his philosophical career.

### **German Organicism**

<sup>0</sup> Schelling, “Introduction,” p. 203.

While an undergraduate student at the University of Vermont during 1875–79, Dewey was immersed in one of the rare American outposts of German idealism, romanticism, and organicism. The professor of philosophy, H.A.P. Torrey, required students to read Marsh's edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* and *The Remains of the Rev. James Marsh*. When Herbert Schneider and other Columbia colleagues presented Dewey with a copy of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* at a birthday party late in life, Dewey recalled that the book "was our spiritual emancipation in Vermont." He added that "Coleridge's idea of the spirit came to us as a real relief, because we could be both liberal and pious; and this *Aids to Reflection* book, especially Marsh's edition, was my first Bible."<sup>0</sup>

Coleridge declared that religion must agree with reason, prioritized practical reason over speculative reason, and equated religion's truths with the practical judgments of human life.

But if not the abstract or speculative Reason, and yet a reason there must be in order to a rational Belief—then it must be the Practical Reason of Man, comprehending the Will, the Conscience, the Moral Being with its inseparable Interests and Affections—that Reason, namely, which is the Organ of Wisdom, and (as far as man is concerned) the Source of living and actual Truths.<sup>0</sup>

Religious truth is truth evident within our lives or it is nothing at all. Coleridge affirmed that "Christianity is not a Theory, or a Speculation: but a *Life*; not a *Philosophy* of Life, but a life and a living Process."<sup>0</sup>

Although Coleridge's Christian faith was traditional, his philosophical tenets were liberal, freeing Christians from outdated Protestant theology. Coleridge's intense study of Schelling reverberated throughout his works. Both Cartesian dualism and

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<sup>0</sup> Dewey as quoted by Herbert W. Schneider in Corliss Lamont, ed., *Dialogue on John Dewey* (New York: Horizon Press, 1959), p. 15. Consult James A. Good, *A Search for Unity in Diversity: The "Permanent Hegelian Deposit" in the Philosophy of John Dewey* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 104-105.

<sup>0</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, with a preliminary essay by James Marsh (Burlington, Vermont: Chauncey Goodrich, 1829), p. 115. See Charles I. Armstrong, "Organic Vagaries: Coleridge's Theoretical Work" in his *Romantic Organicism: From Idealist Origins to Ambivalent Afterlife* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 51-80.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Lockean empiricism could be overturned, Coleridge asserted, not only on philosophical grounds but on scientific grounds as well. He wrote in *Aids to Reflection* that “the dogmatism of the Corpuscular School, though it still exerts an influence on men’s notions and phrases, has received a mortal blow from the increasingly dynamic spirit of the physical Sciences.”<sup>0</sup>

Vermont’s university became an outpost of religious and philosophical liberality amidst the doctrinaire Calvinism of Congregationalism, thanks to James Marsh’s presidency from 1826 to 1833. During his training at Andover Theological Seminary, Marsh had rejected arid intuitionist empiricism and embraced German idealism. He was among the first American scholars to read Kant, Herder, and Schelling in their original German, not far behind Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s similar precedent in England. At Vermont, Marsh embraced Coleridge and Herder openly, transforming the University of Vermont for generations to come. Marsh’s philosophy colleague Joseph Torrey, H.A.P. Torrey’s uncle, composed the memoir of Marsh for the volume *The Remains of the Rev. James Marsh* in 1843, relating Marsh’s introduction of Coleridge’s philosophy to America with his 1829 edition of Coleridge’s *Aids to Reflection*.<sup>0</sup> According to the elder Torrey, “The position of Coleridge, that the Christian faith is the perfection of human intelligence, was one which he adopted from the fullest conviction of its truth.”<sup>0</sup> During the 1860s and 1870s, H.A.P. Torrey inherited his uncle’s philosophy chair and ensured that the liberal Christianity of Coleridge and the philosophy of Marsh was venerated by university students, and Dewey was among the most receptive.

In 1941, fifty-five years later, Dewey remembered that formative influence of Torrey’s tutelage and Marsh’s philosophy. In Dewey’s recollection, Torrey privately admitted his pantheism to Dewey (LW 5:148), a potentially scandalous confession only to be shared among sympathetic friends. As for Marsh, Dewey particularly recalled how Marsh was conveying an Aristotelian view more than a Kantian view (LW 5: 185). Dewey made special

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<sup>0</sup> Ibid., p. 239. Consult Paul Hamilton, *Coleridge and German Philosophy: The Poet in the Land of Logic* (London: Continuum, 2007).

<sup>0</sup> Consult John Beer, “James Marsh’s Edition of 1829 and the American Reception,” in the Introduction to *Aids to Reflection* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. cxvi-cxxviii. See also Samantha Harvey, “Coleridge’s American Revival: James Marsh, John Dewey and Vermont Transcendentalism,” *Symbiosis: A Journal of Anglo-American Literary Relations* 15 (2011): 77-103.

<sup>0</sup> Joseph Torrey, “Memoir of the Life of James Marsh,” in *The Remains of the Rev. James Marsh* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1843), p. 119.

note of that Aristotelianism because of its large role in Germany's organicism, which in turn guided Dewey's appreciation for the scientific worldview that organicism made possible. Marsh's collected essays in *The Remains* elaborate a sophisticated natural philosophy and proto-scientific psychology. Life displays nature's universal powers in an integrated form:

We are constrained, in endeavoring to form a conception of the one principle of life, which thus organizes itself in the harmonious development of its manifold organs and functions, to represent it to ourselves as a power that, in relation to its organism, is *all in every part*, interpenetrating all its organs in the *totality of its vital energy*, working in all towards the same end, limiting the measure and adapting the form of each of its distinguishable agencies to every other, and thus effecting the *unity of the whole* in the manifoldness of its parts.<sup>0</sup>

Speaking specifically to human agency, Marsh declares: "As in nature, every power and every principle of living action has its distinctive character and produces its appropriate fruits, so in the moral world there is the same unvarying relations between our principles of action and the consequences which flow from them."<sup>0</sup> It is impossible for the will to do anything by itself, and hence it cannot be anything by itself. "As the most obscure and hidden powers of nature cannot act without producing distinguishable results according to fixed and invariable laws, so the human will can act outwardly and put forth a power for the attainment of any end, only by an agency combined with that of nature, and in conformity with its laws."<sup>0</sup> Reasoning itself is a manifestation of life's natural powers.

In its immediate relation to the understanding and will, that is, to the personal self and self-consciousness, it [reason] is the law of our nature, given to us, and working in us, as the organic power of life works in the organization and growth of a plant, or of our bodily systems, independently of our own personal contrivance or purpose. ... It is the actuation in us, of that universal power which is the real

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<sup>0</sup> Marsh, *The Remains of Rev. James Marsh*, p. 210, italics in original.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., p. 429.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., p. 430.

ground and actual determinant of all living action, and one with the power and life of nature.<sup>0</sup>

Dewey appeals to Marsh in one of his earliest articles, “Soul and Body” (1886) to support his view that “soul” and “body” are related as “function and organ, as activity and instrument” (EW 1: 112) just as Aristotle proposed. Marsh states:

We recognize the body, each as his own body, and the life of the body, as *his own life*. It belongs to him, as a part of his being, as the *outward form and condition* of his *existence in space*. ... It is not merely an *organ*, or material *mechanism*, to be conceived as distinct from our personal self, but *it is our proper self as existent in space*, in the order and under the laws of *nature*.<sup>0</sup>

A more naturalistic description of the soul could not be desired—after comprehending the activities of the bodily individual in their full significance, there is nothing left over, there remains nothing for an inner “psychical” or “spiritual” self to be. Dualism is insupportable.

As for his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins, Dewey’s professor of philosophy was the most knowledgeable exponent of German Idealism in America during the 1870s, George Sylvester Morris. Morris was no transcendental idealist in the wake of Kant, nor an adherent of Hegel’s sprawling system. He regarded himself as an absolute idealist, but his system is best classified with organicist absolutism, because Morris filtered Hegel through his own philosophy professor’s worldview: Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg.<sup>0</sup> The leader of Germany’s Aristotelian revival from his position at the University of Berlin, Trendelenburg offered an attractive alternative to Hegelian dialectics. Dewey’s homage to Morris did not fail to mention that decisive guidance:

Although Trendelenburg had incorporated within his own teaching the substantial achievements of that great philosophical movement which began with Kant and closed with Hegel—the ideas, for example, of the correlation of

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., p. 361.

<sup>0</sup> Marsh, *Marsh, The Remains of Rev. James Marsh*, pp. 256-257, italics in original.

<sup>0</sup> Good, *A Search for Unity in Diversity*, pp. 110-112. The fuller narrative about Dewey, Morris and Trendelenburg is in John R. Shook, *Dewey’s Empirical Theory of Knowledge and Reality* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), pp. 23-26.

thought and being, the idea of man as a self-realizing personality, the notion of organized society as the objective reality of man—he had taken a hostile attitude to these positions as stated by Hegel and to the method by which they were taught. While Professor Morris was never simply an adherent of Trendelenburg, he probably followed him also in this respect. At least, he used sometimes in later years to point out pages in his copy of Hegel which were marked “nonsense,” etc., remarks made while he was a student in Germany. It thus was not any discipleship which finally led Mr. Morris to find in Hegel (in his own words) “the most profound and comprehensive of modern thinkers.” He found in a better and fuller statement of what he had already accepted as true, a more ample and far-reaching method, a goal of his studies in the history of thought. (EW 3: 7)

Trendelenburg’s Aristotelianism exemplifies all twenty tenets of Dewey’s Nature Philosophy. Trendelenburg’s own education descended from Schelling, as Frederick Beiser recounts:

Though Trendelenburg would constantly refer to Plato and Aristotle as the sources for the organic worldview, it is not from them that he first learned about it. Before he began his studies of classical philosophy in Leipzig in 1824, he would have heard about it probably sometime in 1823, from the lectures of his teacher in Kiel, Johann Erich von Berger. Berger was an enthusiastic student of Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, which had attempted to revive the classical ideas of Plato about nature. The young Schelling was an admirer of Plato’s *Timaeus*, and even wrote in his early years a commentary upon it; it is not going too far to say that this was the inspiration for his *Naturphilosophie*. Thus Schelling was the ultimate source of Trendelenburg’s knowledge of the organic worldview. Though Trendelenburg would often take issue with Schelling in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, he still had major debts to him, however indirect.<sup>0</sup>

Morris’s own recollection of Trendelenburg, published in 1874, enumerates the tenets of this Nature Philosophy. Morris first credits German idealism’s founding by Leibniz, who identified

<sup>0</sup> Beiser, *Late German Idealism: Trendelenburg and Lotze* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 32-33.

matter with active force.<sup>0</sup> Morris then recounts Trendelenburg's understanding of the crucial metaphysical role to be played by this dynamic view of the world.

Modern science is demonstrating with ever increasing completeness the universality of motion in nature. ... On the other side, thought depends in all its phases on the ideal counterpart of motion. ... The terms and processes of the abstract or logical understanding, such as distinguishing, combining, classifying, inferring, its ideas, such as causality, finality, all imply ideal or constructive motion, the counterpart of external motion. Motion, then, would seem to satisfy the first of the requirements for the desired principle mediating in knowledge between thought and being, the requirement, namely, that it be common to both thought and being.<sup>0</sup>

As for the place of vital life in the world, Trendelenburg assigned it no lesser status, as Morris highlights:

The notion of purpose, inherent end, as manifested in organic existence, is for Trendelenburg the second fundamental notion in philosophy. Motion—the efficient cause—forms the basis and becomes in the organic sphere the material of purpose—the final cause—and thus philosophy and nature are carried up above the purely mathematical and physical realm into the organic and ethical. There is differentiation, but not opposition. The real categories receive a new and profounder significance, but do not disappear, when permeated by and in the realm of the organic.<sup>0</sup>

With mind reconciled with reality, philosophy must harmonize with science:

Trendelenburg's positive aim was the establishment of a philosophical theory which could stand the test of comparison with the results of modern science, nay, more, which should be confirmed by and, so far as practicable, founded on those results. Recognizing fully the necessity of

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<sup>0</sup> George S. Morris, "Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg," *The New Englander* 33 (April 1874): 287-336, at 295.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 319-320.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

experience for all concrete knowledge, respecting the various positive sciences as sovereign within their respective spheres, he sought in philosophy the common band which should unite these sciences, and not a speculative principle which should produce them a priori. Philosophy was to be, in some sense, the one eye overseeing them all, the one mind comprehending them in their mutual relations and as parts of one ideal whole; it was to recognize in the case of each science, whether concrete or abstract, its place and use in the whole organism of knowledge; it was to be consummated in an “organic conception of the universe” of thought and being. But philosophy was not to dictate to positive science what its methods or its results should be; it should not attempt to control scientific fact.<sup>0</sup>

Without citing the precise source, Morris translates another passage of Trendelenburg as follows: Philosophy “furnishes principles for the beginnings of the special sciences, establishes harmony among their results, and maintains a living rapport among them ; she is thus at once a priori and a posteriori; the latter, became it is in the other sciences that she finds her material, and the former, since she must go beyond and above the material thus furnished in order to seize and exhibit the living band that unites the whole.”<sup>0</sup> Morris halts his translation of Trendelenburg and adds in his own voice, “Philosophy must then bear a due relation to the real and to the ideal; she can be neither purely empirical nor purely a priori. Ideal-realism will be her proper name.”<sup>0</sup> Trendelenburg’s vision for philosophy’s proper task remained central to Dewey’s mature philosophical organon of his Organic Realism.

Dewey received a double dose of organicism while a student at Johns Hopkins, thanks to his other philosophy professor, G. Stanley Hall. (Although Dewey took logic with Charles S. Peirce, yet another American philosopher who imbibed deeply from Schelling, that encounter apparently had little effect.) By the 1870s, neurology and physiological psychology were growing confident that purpose can be a respectably scientific explanation alongside mechanism. Hall’s graduate course on psychology used Wilhelm Wundt’s preminent textbook, *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (1880), which relied on purposive

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<sup>0</sup> Ibid., pp. 297-298.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., pp. 316-317. Consult Gershon Rosenstock, *F. A. Trendelenburg: Forerunner to John Dewey* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 1964).

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., p. 317.

functionality to explain the workings of the nervous system, an organicist approach already familiar to Dewey.<sup>0</sup>

To overcome the dualism of mind and body without elevating mind itself to an Absolute or reducing the mental to a physical substance, Wundt had sought their underlying dynamic unity. During 1865–68 he concentrated his studies on logic and philosophy of nature, taught courses on the logic of natural science and philosophical results of natural science, and published a book on physics and causality. In subsequent decades Wundt described his monism as extremely broad because it follows the example of Spinoza, and he acknowledged that Schelling's key idea of development was important to his own work.<sup>0</sup> He accordingly developed his own version of Nature Philosophy, defending the natural reality of purposive processes, simultaneously neurological and psychological, exhibited by living organisms.

Dewey's early article "Soul and Body" (1886), already mentioned in its connection with Marsh, repeatedly cites Wundt to assert that physiological psychology finds "the psychical immanent in the physical; immanent as directing it toward an end, and for the sake of this end selecting some activities, inhibiting others responding to some, controlling others, and adjusting and coordinating the complex whole, so as, in the simplest and least wasteful way, to reach the chosen end." (LW 1: 96)

### **Experience and Nature Philosophy**

Dewey elaborated that psycho-physical unity upheld by organicism in subsequent decades. By the time that he composed *Experience and Nature*, he refers to "body-mind" as the proper characterization of complex organisms, where neither body nor mind can exist without the other.

Unless vital organizations were organizations of antecedent natural events, the living creature would have no natural connections; it would not be pertinent to its environment nor its environment relevant to it; the latter would not be usable, material of nutrition and defense. In similar fashion, unless "mind" was, in its existential occurrence, an organization of physiological or vital affairs and unless its

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<sup>0</sup> John R. Shook, "Wilhelm Wundt's Contribution to John Dewey's Functional Psychology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 31 (1995): 347-369.

<sup>0</sup> Saulo de Freitas Araujo, *Wundt and the Philosophical Foundations of Psychology* (Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2016), p. 93, 128-130.

functions developed out of the patterns of organic behavior, it would have no pertinence to nature, and nature would not be the appropriate scene of its inventions and plans, nor the subject-matter of its knowledge. (LW 1: 217-8)

The underlying unity of organism is a metaphysical unification for Dewey in the sense that bodies having organization are evident and undeniable, both ontologically and epistemically prior to any inquiry or theorizing about them. Organization cannot be rightly denied by any science or philosophy because Dewey classifies it as a commonly found and generic trait of existence (LW 1: 196).

This empirical metaphysics, characterized by further statements such as “the reality *is* the growth-process itself” (LW 1: 210) grounds a nature philosophy asserting that nature and mind share deep commonalities, thereby explaining nature’s congeniality for mind:

The world is subject-matter for knowledge, because mind has developed in that world; a body-mind, whose structures have developed according to the structures of the world in which it exists, will naturally find some of its structures to be concordant and congenial with nature, and some phases of nature with itself. The latter are beautiful and fit, and others ugly and unfit. Since mind cannot evolve except where there is an organized process in which the fulfillments of the past are conserved and employed, it is not surprising that mind when it evolves should be mindful of the past and future, and that it should use the structures which are biological adaptations of organism and environment as its own and its only organs. (LW 1: 211)

This Organic Realism dooms its rivals’ notions of mind and matter: “The vague and mysterious properties assigned to mind and matter, the very conceptions of mind and matter in traditional thought, are ghosts walking underground.” (E&N 74)

What is real, not just what is experienced, is the basis for body-mind. Body-mind, according to *Experience and Nature*, does not emerge from experience, as if Dewey thought that experience exhausts reality in an agreement with Idealism. If Dewey really held that body-mind only emerged from experience, he could have easily said so, but he did not. (Notice that his logical claim that the subject-object distinction only arises within experience, often confused with the mind v. body distinction by Dewey interpreters, is not the same as his ontological claim about body-mind.) Dewey

was no Idealist, because he consistently denied that “experience” is a candidate for ontological priority over nature itself. What is that nature of reality? “Qualitative individuality and constant relations, contingency and need, movement and arrest are common traits of all existence.” They are “the traits and characters that are sure to turn up in every universe of discourse” and “ineluctable traits of natural existence” (EW 1:308). It is necessary to add, despite Dewey’s most explicit avowal here, that those generic traits are not merely traits of experience, or traits found in experience: precisely as they are universally experienced, they are first and foremost traits of existence. In the revised first chapter for the 1929 edition of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey boldly stated the stance of Organic Realism: “experience is of as well as in nature.” Trying to forestall a dualistic interpretation of this view, he added: “It is not experience which is experienced, but nature stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways are experience; they are what is experienced. Linked in certain other ways with another natural object—the human organism—they are how things are experienced as well. Experience thus reaches down into nature; it has depth.” (EW 1: 12-13)

Few statements by Dewey have seemed more pregnant while so ambiguous. An ontological interpretation would credit nature as “it is” with some sort of substantial experiential character, as if we knew what experience is intrinsically like and attributed that to qualities or properties imbuing natural entities, but Dewey never endorsed that notion. Aside from its generic natural traits, what gets experienced possesses no inherent “what-it-is-like-ness” to separate it off from anything and everything else in existence. How and why matters do matter as experienced does involve a sentient organism, but that is a matter of contingent relations, not essential categories. Sentience is not responsible for the existence of what is experienced or for the generic traits of experienced things.

Dewey never held that experience is contained within, or constitutes, minds. Quite the opposite: the ‘subjective’, the ‘self’, and ‘consciousness’ occurs within experience as one of its partial manifestations, while the subjective-objective difference arises within experience where it can be noticed and managed. (LW 1: 23-24, 179-180)

Due to the broad commonality between mentality and naturality, what mindful conduct accomplishes has the complicit engagement of nature’s processes in every respect, in an evident or hidden fashion. That commonality and complicity is what Dewey

is pointing to when he speaks of that ‘unity’ of mind and universe, which in turn requires that all mental capacities serve that interactivity. Naturalism can fulfill this requirement so long as it stays perspectival and pluralistic.<sup>0</sup> Since thought and reflection are activities as phases of interactions with and through nature, a dichotomy between nature’s own ways and intelligence’s directed ways has no ultimate standing for a wisely intelligent philosophy. Intelligence cannot be unnatural, and intelligence’s guidance of activity cannot be against nature. Unintelligent ways are unnecessarily destructive, to be sure. Describing some activity as “human” lends it no honorific or exalted status. Intelligence is ennobling, but not all-empowering. Guiding an activity intelligently actually makes but a miniscule difference to the immensities of nature, and that difference only makes a difference to organic forms where they are living. As Dewey reminds us, the power “Intelligence will [n]ever dominate the course of events” (LW 1: 325-6). Still, mind’s “power and achievement” still “implies a unity with the universe that is to be preserved” (LW 1: 313). Once again, Organic Realism locates normativity in nature, in the preservation and enlargement of mind-nature unity, which can only be pursued through intelligence.

Our desires and ideals, in themselves, are not automatically true to nature and they may become false to nature, betraying our unity within nature. An unintelligent philosophy would permit that betrayal. Loyalty to our natural home calls for intelligence—so that meeting needs and fulfilling ends are effectively accomplished in concert with nature. Intelligence is no mere means to achieving values, and values are not immune from intelligent revision. That much would be admitted by an intelligent philosophy. A wisely intelligent philosophy goes further: the exercise of intelligence itself is the naturally human process of deepest import for anything else worthy of commitment and devotion. To the extent that significant ends are objects of devout commitment, those ends must receive transmutation through intelligence to be intelligible—to be humanly realizable.

From Dewey’s early period to his final works, his educational and ethical theories explained why the significance of personal learning and moral growth must not be reduced to preparations for future stages of this life. The ongoing development of intelligent life constitutes its own justification, no matter how limited one’s individual contribution may be. Dewey’s

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<sup>0</sup> For a classification of Dewey’s worldview alongside contemporary alternatives, see John R. Shook, “Varieties of Twentieth Century American Naturalism,” *The Pluralist* 6 (Summer 2011): 1–17.

*Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891) identifies the ultimate interests of life:

As society advances, social interest must consist more and more in the free devotion to intelligence for its own sake, to science, art, and industry, and in rejoicing in the exercise of such freedom by others. (EW 3: 319)

This “free devotion of intelligence” is necessary for the enjoyment of anything else worthy of human life. If there is a *summum bonum* for Dewey’s Organic Realism, it is liberated intelligence. Intelligence is never just *about* nature—intelligence is nature in its most potent forms. Intelligence is all the freer for engaging with the cooperative aspects of its natural home, which Dewey called “God” in *A Common Faith*.<sup>0</sup> The creative choices and pursuits of intelligence, which are productively powerful as anything rather than subordinate to necessity, is Dewey’s resolution of the problem of freedom in a natural world.<sup>0</sup> And one’s participation in the development of intelligence is nothing less than an incorporation into the growth of the greatest good to reality itself.<sup>0</sup> Dewey’s realistic worldview can organically fulfill Kant’s postulates of God, Freedom, and Immortality in a most natural way.

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<sup>0</sup> John R. Shook, “A Unity with the Universe: Herder, Schelling, and Dewey on Natural Piety,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, edited by Donald Crosby and Jerome A. Stone (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

<sup>0</sup> Dewey’s article “Philosophies of Freedom” (1928) says of freedom: “... we may say that a stone has its preferential selections set by a relatively fixed, a rigidly set, structure and that no anticipation of the results of acting one way or another enters into the matter. The reverse is true of human action. In so far as a variable life-history and intelligent insight and foresight enter into it, choice signifies a capacity for deliberately changing preferences. The hypothesis that is suggested is that in these two traits we have before us the essential constituents of choice as freedom: the factor of individual participation” (LW 3: 96)

<sup>0</sup> To be part of the *summum bonum* of reality cannot imply that one has achieved a state of ultimate value, or that intelligence possesses intrinsic ultimacy, two extravagancies which Dewey denied (LW 14: 77).

# JOHN DEWEY AND ALBERT C. BARNES: A DEEP AND MUTUALLY REWARDING FRIENDSHIP

GEORGE E. HEIN



Albert C. Barnes and John Dewey were close friends for more than three decades. Each influenced the other: Barnes's educational activities were based to a large extent on Dewey's educational writings, while Dewey's conception of aesthetics was strongly influenced by Barnes. Dewey's *Art as Experience* is not only dedicated to Barnes, but also includes numerous references to Barnes's analysis of paintings. Their voluminous correspondence as well as their published work confirms both the intellectual context of their relationship and the pleasure they derived from each other's company. Yet, most references to this association describe it in negative terms: that Barnes took advantage of Dewey's good will or naïveté, and that the intellectual benefits of the relationship were one sided. A thorough analysis of the written record, especially their extensive correspondence but also their public affirmation of their intellectual debt to each other, demonstrates that this significant friendship contributed mutually to their ideas and provided personal satisfaction for both men.



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## Introduction<sup>0</sup>

**A**lbert Coombs Barnes, physician, collector, businessman and most important, educator, and John Dewey, philosopher and public intellectual, were intimate friends for over thirty years. They shared ideas, interests and actions, exchanged close to 2,000 letters and travelled together for pleasure and professional activities. The record of their intertwined lives is documented in their correspondence and in their mutual acknowledgements in their respective published works of what they learned from each other. Yet, this rich and mutually rewarding friendship has puzzled almost everyone who has written about it.<sup>0</sup>

In this essay, I examine their personal relationship, why the two men became such good companions, and as what they learned from each other. I do not address the complex question of the origins of Barnes's aesthetic theory. Instead, I intend to illustrate how the educational program Barnes initiated in his Foundation was influenced by Dewey's writing and why Dewey, in turn, admired Barnes's efforts at the Barnes Foundation and was indebted to Barnes for his understanding of visual aesthetics. They found common ground in their motivations and actions, as well as in their developing ideas.

Barnes and Dewey each repeatedly acknowledged their debt to the other. Barnes dedicated his major aesthetic treatise, *The Art in Painting* to Dewey, "Whose conceptions of experience, of method, of education, inspired the work of which this book is a part."<sup>0</sup> In return nine years later, Dewey dedicated *Art as Experience* "To Albert C. Barnes in Gratitude."<sup>0</sup> In addition, in the preface to this famous treatise, Dewey devotes almost half of the text to an extraordinary paean in praise of the educational work of the Barnes Foundation:

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<sup>0</sup> This article is based on the Second Violette de Mazia lecture sponsored by the Violette de Mazia Foundation at the Barnes Foundation on May 22, 2016. I am especially grateful for the assistance provided by Ross Lance Mitchell, Director of Barnes-de Mazia Education and Outreach Programs at The Barnes Foundation, and Barbara Ann Beaucar, Archivist at the Barnes Foundation, for their invaluable assistance in preparing for the lecture. I also want to thank Mary Maher and Emily Romney for their help in preparing this manuscript.

<sup>0</sup> For exceptions, see Dennis (1972) and Carrier (2007).

<sup>0</sup> Albert C. Barnes, *The Art in Painting*, 1st edition. (Marion, PA: The Barnes Foundation, 1925).

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience, The Later Works of John Dewey: 1925–1953*, Vol. 10, edited by JoAnn Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1987). Originally published 1934. Hereafter referred to as LW 10.

My greatest indebtedness is to Dr. A. C. Barnes. The chapters have been gone over one by one with him, and yet what I owe to his comments and suggestions on this account is but a small measure of my debt. I have had the benefit of conversations with him through a period of years, many of which occurred in the presence of the unrivaled collection of pictures he has assembled. The influence of these conversations, together with that of his books, has been a chief factor in shaping my own thinking about the philosophy of esthetics. Whatever is sound in this volume is due more than I can say to the great educational work carried on in the Barnes Foundation. *That work is of a pioneer quality comparable to the best that has been done in any field during the present generation, that of science not excepted.* I should be glad to think of this volume as one phase of the widespread influence the Foundation is exercising.<sup>0</sup>

Considering the advances in physics and biology during Dewey's lifetime which he analyzed in several of his published works, the penultimate sentence is particularly striking. Although Dewey frequently acknowledged his debt to others, there is nothing comparable to this intense and detailed tribute in the introductions, prefaces or dedications in any of his other 36 volumes of Dewey's complete works published by the Center for Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University.

Despite this record, philosophers and others who write about Dewey have repeatedly considered this friendship, if they describe it at all, as peculiar or one-sided based on stereotypical characterizations of the two men. Dewey is generally recognized as a kindly, patient, and gentle academic who suffered odd characters and seldom expressed personal criticisms. Barnes, on the other hand, is described as crude, pugnacious, uncompromising, and eventually offending everyone with whom he interacted. Like all stereotypes, these portraits, although reflecting qualities that both men exhibited, obscure the richness and mutually gratifying qualities of their intense and fruitful relationship.

Some writers even resort to presenting a contradictory portrait of Dewey's character in order to denigrate his relationship with Barnes. Most striking in this regard is Sydney Hook's extensive eulogy of Dewey in *Commentary*. Hook notes that:

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<sup>0</sup> LW 10, viii. Emphasis added.

Few people knew how shrewd a Yankee Dewey was. He knew when he was being buttered up, he knew how self-interest concealed itself behind public interest . . . Nevertheless there was a simplicity and trustfulness about him, almost calculated naivety in his relations with people whose ulterior motives were rather transparent.”<sup>0</sup>

Later in the article he describes Dewey’s relationship with Barnes in uncompromising negative terms: “Dewey’s goodness was so genuine, constant, and sustained, even under provocation, that I sometimes found it somewhat oppressive . . . It was almost with relief that I discovered a serious shortcoming in him. That was his indulgent friendship for Albert C. Barnes.”<sup>0</sup> Others have also attributed Dewey’s relationship with Barnes to some kind of weakness. Ryan, in reference to some of Dewey’s peculiar relationships, including that with Barnes, writes:

Dewey had a taste for the company of oddballs of all sorts, and the seeming gullibility of which his friends complained may have been less a real failure of judgment than a policy of giving possible charlatans the benefit of the doubt.<sup>0</sup>

Even those who want to find redeeming value in their friendship use remarkable language in discussing the two men’s relationship. In an article arguing that philosophers could benefit from following Dewey’s example of forging strong relationships outside the “parochial exclusivity of academe,”<sup>0</sup> discusses Dewey’s “disreputable alliances (such as that with Barnes)” as one of several relationships that, “made it possible for him continually to renew himself personally as well as professionally.” In a doctoral dissertation dedicated to Barnes’s aesthetics, Megan Bahr (1998), who spent a year at the Barnes Foundation taking their courses and had access to the foundation archives, states:

From reading most of the secondary literature . . . It is hard to imagine what it was about Albert C. Barnes, M. D., that

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<sup>0</sup> Sidney Hook, “Some Memories of John Dewey,” *Commentary* 14, no 3 (1952): 246-247.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>0</sup> Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, Co., 1995), 207.

<sup>0</sup> David Granger, “A ‘Scientific Aesthetic Method’: John Dewey, Albert Barnes and the Question of Aesthetic Formalism,” in, D. C. A. Cunningham, et al., “Dewey, Women, and Weirdoes: of the Potential Rewards for Scholars Who Dialogue across Difference,” *Education and Culture* 23, no 2 (2007): 53.

a prominent intellectual like John Dewey would find to like and admire . . . But these . . . [reports] . . . greatly underestimate the genuine affection and admiration that Dewey clearly felt for his friend . . . The truth is that Dewey in fact spent relatively little of their thirty-four-year friendship in the company of Barnes. And most of his visits with the doctor clustered around specific projects on which the two men collaborated.<sup>0</sup>

The last two sentences are rather naïve since even a cursory review of the record documented in their letters generates a list of at least 40 times they met over the course of their friendship despite both men's extensive travel itineraries. Not only did they visit each other frequently in their respective homes, New York City and Merion, Pennsylvania, but documented trips together include a road trip to New England in 1918, two voyages to Europe in 1925 and 1930,<sup>0</sup> a journey by train to the west coast in 1930 and another to Black Mountain College in 1936. In addition, Dewey and his wife repeatedly urged Albert and Laura Barnes to join them when they spent two years in China, and Barnes was one of the handful of people present at Dewey's private second marriage at his apartment in New York.<sup>0</sup> Perhaps the most surprising treatment of this relationship and its mutual significance for their work on aesthetics is to ignore it completely, as Abraham Kaplan does in his twenty-six-page introduction to the Center for Dewey Studies edition of *Art as Experience*.<sup>0</sup>

### Dewey's Interest in Experience, Education and Action

Dewey's philosophy emphasized the significance of experience. He not only used the term in the title of three major works, including *Art as Experience*, but repeatedly invoked experience as the only basis for all knowledge and understanding of life. He also attributed his own intellectual development to experience,

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<sup>0</sup> Megan Bahr, *Transferring Values: Albert C. Barnes, Work and the Work of Art*. Unpublished PhD Diss., University of Texas (1998), vii-viii.

<sup>0</sup> The literature that discusses their relationship frequently mentions three or more trips but only two, in 1925 and 1930, are documented. Dewey's activities during the various dates suggested for a third trip indicate that he could not possibly have had sufficient free time to include a European journey in those years.

<sup>0</sup> *New York Times*, "Dr. John Dewey, 87, to Wed Widow, 42," (December 11, 1946), p. 64.

<sup>0</sup> Abraham Kaplan, "Introduction," in LW 10.

especially experience with other human beings, more than to learning from literature. In his only autobiographical statement he wrote:

Upon the whole, the forces that have influenced me have come from persons and from situations more than from books—not that I have not, I hope, learned a great deal from philosophical writings, but that what I have learned from them has been technical in comparison with what I have been forced to think upon and about because of some experience in which I have found myself entangled. . . . I like to think, though it may be a defensive reaction, that with all the inconveniences of the road I have been forced to travel, it has the compensatory advantage of not inducing an immunity of thought to experiences—which perhaps, after all, should not be treated even by a philosopher as the germ of a disease to which he needs to develop resistance.<sup>0</sup>

Another characteristic of Dewey's philosophy relevant to his relationship with Albert Barnes is his emphasis on the importance of education in society and in his goal to develop a philosophy that would be relevant to a general public. Dewey is widely known both for his writings on education and their influence on the progressive education movement and his effort to put his educational ideas into practice through the laboratory school he founded as chair of the joint departments of psychology, philosophy and pedagogy at the University of Chicago from 1896-1904.<sup>0</sup> In *Democracy and Education*, he states:

If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, towards nature and fellow men philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education.<sup>0</sup>

And he later emphasized the role of education in his philosophy in the autobiographical essay mentioned above:

Although a book called *Democracy and Education* was for many years that in which my philosophy, such as it is, was

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<sup>0</sup> LW 5: 155 (“From Absolutism to Experimentalism”).

<sup>0</sup> “There is no major systematic Philosopher who has looked so long and carefully at education [as has Dewey]” D. Hawkins, “Teacher of Teachers,” *New York Review of Books*, Vol. X, [4] February 29, 1968, pp. 25-29.

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 338.

most fully expounded, I do not know that philosophic critics, as distinct from teachers, have ever had recourse to it. I have wondered whether such facts signified that philosophers in general, although they are themselves usually teachers, have not taken education with sufficient seriousness for it to occur to them that any rational person could actually think it possible *that philosophizing should focus about education as the supreme human interest* in which, moreover, other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head.<sup>0</sup>

Commentators on Dewey's philosophy have repeatedly noted that the central tenets of his philosophy were based on doing and reflecting, connecting immediate experiences with past ones and associating them with their possible consequences. Applying thinking to action, recognizing problems and doing something to address them is significant for him. Thus, it is hardly surprising that he was repeatedly drawn to people whose passion was for some kind of educational activity and who, like Dewey, went to great length to support their beliefs through action. Barnes's major activity for the last 30 years of his life was using his constantly growing art collection to establish an educational program.

Dewey is also known for his faith in democracy<sup>0</sup> and his consistent support of political activities that would promote democratic practice. Several of these relationships, such as his friendship with Jane Addams, were with people who devoted their lives to bold action in support of progressive causes. Others include prominent progressive educators.

One noteworthy example of Dewey's attachment to activists is his relationship with and championing of F. M. Alexander, the creator of his eponymous Method. Alexander, like Barnes, was a difficult man who ferociously pursued his goal of teaching people the value of mind-body relationships through his method of gentle physical guidance. Dewey was an avid pupil of the Alexander method and urged his family and close friends (including Barnes) to take lessons with Alexander.<sup>06</sup> Dewey

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<sup>0</sup> LW 5:156 ("From Absolutism to Experimentalism"). Emphasis added.

<sup>0</sup> A major biography of Dewey is aptly titled "John Dewey and American Democracy. See Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press, 1991).

<sup>0</sup> Evelyn, the Dewey's oldest daughter, writing to her parents, reports "Fred [her brother] is even buggier than dad on Alexander." See "Evelyn Dewey to John & Alice Chipman Dewey" (1918.12.08 (02302)). Barnes tried the Alexander treatments, but was not impressed.

recognized in Alexander a person who worked consistently to realize an educational goal: to help people attain better posture through a technique that required accepting the possibility that mind and body were not isolated, but that the former could influence the latter through specific actions. Not only did Dewey experience the value of Alexander lessons for his own physical wellbeing, but through his studies with Alexander he came to realize that these activities provided empirical evidence challenging the classical separation of “mind” and “body,” one of the major dualisms that Dewey opposed. Dewey wrote introductions to Alexander’s books and met with Alexander at least twice on trips to Europe after Alexander returned to England in 1919.

Jo Ann Boydston, the founding editor of the *Collected Works of John Dewey* and for many years director of the Center for Dewey Studies, makes a case for understanding Dewey’s relationship with Alexander that is similar to my description of his relationship with Barnes. After noting commentators usually describe Dewey’s relationship with Alexander as “some kind of aberration” on Dewey’s side, she writes:

I would like to suggest two possible reasons for this lack of sympathy, understanding, and acceptance by Dewey’s followers. The first is that they have mis-read his personality and the second is that they have mis-read his work.

The mis-reading of Dewey’s personality stems from an image of Dewey that many philosophers use—however unwittingly—to disparage his relationship with Alexander. Dewey’s softheartedness, his well-known willingness to write forewords, prefaces, introductions, book blurbs, kind reviews, and encouraging words, sometimes led him into a kind of soft-heartedness, making him the victim of flamboyant characters, intellectual conmen, and sycophantic arrivistes. This supposed naïveté of Dewey is a myth. That he was gentle, benevolent, obliging, and encouraging is true, but that he would allow himself to be duped is calumny. To find Dewey naïve, one must overlook

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Unless otherwise noted all correspondence cited is from *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-IV)*, *Electronic* edition, edited by Larry A. Hickman (Charlottesville VA: InteLex Corporation).

the essential core of self-reliance and self-confidence that underlay his assumed manner.<sup>0</sup>

Evidence that Dewey was insightful about Barnes's character and not easily duped can be found in his correspondence. For example, in the years following the end of the first World War Dewey supported the work of Salmon Levinson, a Chicago lawyer and old friend who was actively promoting the "Outlawry of War Movement."<sup>0</sup> Dewey thought that Barnes might be persuaded to contribute to this effort and he was well aware that Barnes could support the movement financially. This is what he wrote to Levinson as a method for approaching Barnes:

I wish you would send all of your printed material to A. C. Barnes, 24 North 40 Street, Philadelphia, accompanied with a letter saying that you are sending the literature at my request, and that if he is interested, you would be very glad to receive criticisms and suggestions from him regarding the carrying on of an educational publicity campaign.

I am suggesting the way the letter should be written because he is in a position to be of a great deal of assistance, if he wants to be, but he is somewhat difficult to manage, and would be likely to shy at any suggestion of financial or other personal support, but not at the idea of making some practical suggestions and criticisms. Then, if he got interested, he might volunteer the other kind of aid himself.

Sincerely yours, | John Dewey<sup>0</sup>

In Albert Barnes, Dewey found not only a person who was devoting his life to education, explicitly and repeatedly stating that

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<sup>0</sup> Joanne A. Boydston, "John Dewey and the Alexander Technique," address at the International Congress of Teachers of the Alexander Technique, August 1986. <http://www.alexandercenter.com/jd/deweyalexanderboydston.html> Accessed October 19, 2016. Boydston includes Albert Barnes in her list of shady characters she mentions later in her article. The full record of the Dewey-Barnes relationship documented in the archives of the Barnes Foundation was not available to her at the time she gave this lecture.

<sup>0</sup> Although the effort had support from significant figures, including Senator Borah, and culminated in the Kellogg-Briand pact ratified by 14 countries, it obviously had little impact on the post-war rearmament of most of the countries that signed the pact and certainly didn't delay the next World War.

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Salmon O. Levinson," 1923.11.28 (02797).

his education activity was based on Dewey's work, but also an individual who was his intellectual equal, a man who had read an enormous amount, could state his opinions clearly and loved to discuss them. Barnes and Dewey also shared a commitment to political and social action in support of progressive causes, including civil rights. Finally, not least in importance, they simply had a good time together; they enjoyed each other's company.

### **Albert Barnes as Educator**

Barnes was proud of his humble origins, his efforts to educate himself and his ability to learn from experience. In a letter he wrote to Alice Dewey, he gave a detailed description of his early years and his interest in education:

. . . In short, I was living by experimenting with what made up human nature. From eleven I've made my own bread and butter and never had to struggle to do it because I simply did—that is really did—what I thought was the fitting thing to do under the circumstances . . . . My principal interest has always been education first for myself, then for the less fortunate around me, then in the education of the public in general . . . From the time I was eleven until now I've been vitally interested in education—particularly that kind of education that looks upon experience as the best teacher. Mr. Dewey has best stated my beliefs in *Democracy and Education*, but neither there or in his other writings does he bring out with enough emphasis the principle that makes the world stationary—almost: I mean the domination of the spirit of imitation on all classes, from the intellectual to the peasant.<sup>0</sup>

Years later, he emphasized again how he had learned from experience in an exchange of letters with Dewey concerning the possible contribution to aesthetic theory of German academics who had emigrated to the United States in the 1930's.

Many years ago, when I was painting, I was also playing semi-professional baseball, and two nights each week I was boxing . . . The kind of stuff that Schaefer-Simmern sent you made up the subject matter of what I read and heard talked about [when I was studying in Germany]. It was not

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<sup>0</sup> "Albert C. Barnes to Alice Chipman Dewey," 1920, © Barnes Foundation Archives.

of the slightest use to me either for the understanding of painting or knowing how to do it myself. In fact, it jarred the kind of thinking and habits that had become ingrained in me by a preoccupation with science. As I look back, I am absolutely sure that I learned more about painting, music and how to go about doing things in a practical world from my experiences on the baseball field and in the boxing ring . . . I hope that the reduction of your philosophy to such “trifling” affairs as baseball and boxing will not shock you.<sup>0</sup>

Born to a poor Irish Protestant family in Philadelphia, Barnes graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1892 at age 20 with a medical degree and then, as he did not have the financial means to set himself up as in an independent medical practice, spent several years searching for a profession. He travelled to Germany to study at Heidelberg and Berlin,<sup>0</sup> where he attended lectures (including some in philosophy while working in odd jobs to support himself. During these years he also learned German. (Later he also acquired French). He came back to the United States and secured a position with the Mulford pharmaceutical company and persuaded them to hire a German pharmaceutical chemist Herman Hille.<sup>0</sup> The two men worked for the company during the day and in their own laboratory at night, where in 1902 they developed a silver protein based antiseptic and registered its name, Argyrol.

This was a period when silver based antiseptics were being brought to the market with some frequency to address the relatively new medical acceptance of germ theory. It was known that various metals, such as silver and mercury in solutions or suspensions destroyed bacteria, now recognized as the causal agents of many diseases. To preserve the actual formulation from

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<sup>0</sup> “Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey,” 10.28.1946, © Barnes Foundation Archives. Henry Schaefer-Simmern (1896-1978) was a German art educator who emigrated to the United States in 1936. He met and corresponded with Dewey, who wrote a foreword to Schaefer-Simmern’s *The Unfolding of Artistic Activity* (1948). Dewey was impressed by Schaefer-Simmern’s recognition that perception was a complex activity and his experimental work in which he asked non-artists to draw. Dewey believed that Schaefer-Simmern had “completely broken away” from his German background: see for example “John Dewey to Arthur F. Bentley,” 1946.09.16 (15609).

<sup>0</sup> In a letter to Alice Dewey he claims he earned enough money for this trip by spending a year gambling, “I was a bookmaker on the race tracks at Washington and Saratoga and played baccarat, poker and faro every night.” See “Albert C. Barnes to Alice Chipman Dewey,” 1920, © Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>0</sup> See J.W. Alexander, “History of medical uses of silver,” *Surgical infections*, 10 (2009): 289-292.

potential competitors, Barnes never patented his product, but fiercely defended his trademark throughout the years of producing and selling Argyrol. He subjected Argyrol to clinical trials in hospitals in New York, Philadelphia, London and Berlin (not a requirement for bringing a new medicine to market at that time)<sup>0</sup> and sent announcements of the laudatory statements from these trials along with Argyrol samples to physicians. Its relative mildness compared to more corrosive silver nitrate as well as his shrewd marketing strategies resulted in Argyrol becoming spectacularly successful, and Barnes became a rich man in a few short years.

His work force was always small, probably no more than 20 employees at one time. Early Barnes showed remarkable concern for his workers and developed enlightened concepts concerning management of an industrial workforce. He employed “Negro” workers (to use the common term of this period) at a time when men of color seldom got such work; instituted an 8-hour work day before this was common, and introduced some profit sharing with his employees. He was particularly troubled by the fact that his factory workers appeared to lead undisciplined lives, often missing work because they had been arrested for various minor offences or simply did not show up. He was not satisfied with this situation, so he determined to improve their lives as well as develop a more efficient and stable work force through an educational program. Beginning in the early years of the business, probably around 1908, the company provided two hours of reading and discussion of social issues most days of the week for all the workers.<sup>0</sup> Barnes himself was a voracious reader and he supplied a range of books on psychology, philosophy, social commentary and later, aesthetics for his educational efforts with his workers. He also established a lending library for the employees.<sup>0</sup>

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<sup>0</sup> FDA’s modern regulatory functions began with the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drugs Act that prohibited interstate commerce in adulterated and misbranded food and drugs.

<sup>0</sup> It is not clear from the available records whether these early educational efforts occurred every work day or only several times a week.

<sup>0</sup> A hint at the breadth of this library comes from a letter Barnes wrote to Dewey in 1926 “Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey,” © Barnes Foundation Archives, when Alice Dewey was ill and on a rest cure. Barnes sent her a selection of books that he thought might interest her and asked that they be returned because he had borrowed them from his lending library for his workers. The package included *Samuel Pepys; Diary*, edited by Richard Le Gallienne, *The Heart of a Woman*, by Georgia Douglas Johnson, *The Triumph of the Egg*, by Sherwood Anderson, *Notebook of Anton Chekov*, *Xingu*, by Edith Wharton, *The Cook’s Wedding* by Chekhov, *Stray Bird* by Tagore, *Memoirs of my Dead Life* by [George] Moore, and *The Love Nest* by Ring Lardner.

Unfortunately, he only described these early efforts in detail much later; there is little documentary evidence for the early years of his educational efforts. As he began seriously to assemble his art collection,<sup>0</sup> he included aesthetics as part of the educational program and even hung some of his paintings in the factory. When Barnes chartered his foundation in 1922 he created a more formal educational program in aesthetics, based on his collection, but he always considered it an outgrowth of the original educational activities he had begun decades earlier.

Whenever called upon to state his profession, Barnes opted for “educator.” Both his Légion d’Honneur membership document (1922) and his passport (1937) identify him as “educator.”<sup>0</sup> His systematic educational efforts for others began early in his career as a business man developing pharmaceutical products, even before he focused entirely on the idea of educating through a program in aesthetics with his collection serving as the curriculum.

### **The Origin and Growth of the Barnes-Dewey Friendship**

Barnes was intensely interested in philosophy and psychology,<sup>0</sup> and in 1916 hired a young philosophy instructor, Laurence Buermeyer, as a “secretary”; that is, as a person to guide his reading of philosophy. Noting Barnes’s interest in Dewey’s work, Buermeyer suggested that Barnes might enjoy auditing one of Dewey’s classes at Columbia. This was not unusual for outsiders at that time. Barnes had been particularly impressed by *Democracy and Education* shortly after it was published in 1916, so he signed up to attend Dewey’s bi-weekly graduate seminar “*The Moral, Political and Logical Writings of John Stuart Mill* Alternate Tu., 4:10-6. in the fall semester 1917”.<sup>0</sup> He was an enthusiastic participant and after only one session wrote about the seminar to his friend, Judge Robert von Moschzisker:

If you would like to see Dewey in action, go with me to Columbia University . . . The subject is John Stuart Mill, but that is only a point of departure . . . The seminar

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<sup>0</sup> In 1912, Barnes commissioned his friend from high school, the painter William Glackens, to go to Paris with a credit of \$20,000 and purchase contemporary paintings for him. The results of this trip originated the collection now assembled at the Barnes Foundation.

<sup>0</sup> My thanks to Barbara Beaucar, Archivist at the Barnes Foundation, for sharing copies of these documents with me.

<sup>0</sup> He claimed that his business acumen was derived from applying William James’s psychology to his sales strategy.

<sup>0</sup> Catalogue, 1917-18, Columbia University, p. 11.

consists of ten men who sit around a big table with Dewey at the head . . . Since the death of William James, Dewey has been the unquestioned head of American philosophic thought . . . I feel sure that you would enjoy it and that you would get some practical benefit.<sup>0</sup>

Before the semester was over, Barnes invited Dewey and his wife to visit him overnight and view his collection. John and Alice went to Marion near the end of the semester and Dewey clearly enjoyed the weekend. He wrote a thank you note with a typical Dewey approach to evaluating an experience:

I want to thank you for the extraordinary experience which you gave me. I have been conscious of living in a medium of color ever since Friday--almost swimming in it. I can but feel that it is a mark of the quality of your paintings that there has been no nervous exasperation or fatigue accompanying this sensation.<sup>0</sup>

Barnes also attended the spring semester 1918 seminar, again coming to New York every second Tuesday by train for a late afternoon class on ethics.<sup>0</sup> At times, he also combined these trips with additional ways to meet with Dewey.

Dear Mr. Dewey:

You told me that the next seminar would be on Tuesday, February 12th, which is a holiday. If there is no session on that day, I shall be obliged if you will send me word so that I may be spared the trip to New York. But if we have the session, and you are free from noon until four o'clock, it would be a good opportunity to pay the proposed visit to the studios of Glackens and Prendergast.

If you will meet me down-stairs at the Brevort (5th Ave. corner 8th Street) at 12.30, we can have a little lunch, and then go across the square to the studios.<sup>0</sup>

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<sup>0</sup> "Albert C. Barnes to Judge Robert von Moschzisker," Oct. 13, 1917 ©Barnes Foundation Archives.

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey to Albert Barnes, 1918.01.22 (03762).

<sup>0</sup> Almost every reference to Barnes's attendance at the seminars assumes that they were a weekly event. Some report fanciful stories that Barnes regularly fell asleep (because the seminar met right after lunch, which it did not), and/or that he was driven to New York weekly by his chauffeur, with scant evidence to support them.

<sup>0</sup> "Albert Barnes to John Dewey," 1918.02.04 (03765). The elegant Brevort hotel and Parisian café was patronized by New York notables. The academic

The summer of 1918, provided additional opportunities for Barnes and Dewey to cement their budding friendship. As it became clear that the war in Europe was reaching its final stage and the United States and its allies were beginning to plan a post-War realignment of power in Europe, they decided to engage in a sociological field study. The Polish community in Philadelphia was lobbying for the return of the Polish monarchy to power in their homeland after the war. Barnes and Dewey determined to find out why this community was so conservative (unlike their Polish-American counterparts in Detroit and Chicago). Barnes provided the funds to rent a house near the Polish section and Dewey provided graduate students to do the research. Dewey wasn't in Philadelphia until late in the summer and Barnes, who would occasionally drop in on the students, didn't think they worked hard enough.

But, perhaps the most significant outcome of the study for the two men's relationship is that in August they took a road trip to Manchester, Massachusetts, to report their findings to Edward M. "Colonel" House, President Wilson's influential advisor. Barnes picked up Dewey in New York in his elegant Packard two-seater roadster on his way from Merion and they drove to Worcester, stayed there overnight and went on to the Boston North Shore the next day. After a brief meeting with House, Dewey went on to visit his son and daughter-in-law (and a new grandchild) at the home of his daughter-in-law's parents in Concord, Massachusetts. Dewey's letter to his wife gives a feel for the joy of the trip, as well as the outcome of the study:

Mr. Barnes is going to meet me with his roadster and take me to Manchester, Mass, where I am going to try to see Col House. . . Mr. Barnes was going to New Eng somewhere, some lake to go fishing with Mr Glackens, and I am glad to have the ride, as I can stand a little change and fresh air. This will give me a chance to see the Baby, for which thank heaven. . . It is just what was fairly obvious from the start, the alliance between the parish priests, the politicians, and other influences which keep the Poles ignorant and away from things in order to control them.<sup>0</sup>

In the fall of 1918, Dewey and his wife spent the semester in Berkeley, California where he lectured at the University of California. In February 1919, they sailed to Japan and after three

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calendar at Columbia University for 1917-18 lists February 22 as a holiday, but not February 12.

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Alice Chipman Dewey," 1918.08.03 (02185).

months, during which Dewey gave a series of public lectures,<sup>0</sup> they sailed to China where they lived for more than two years. During the years in East Asia, Barnes and Dewey kept up a vigorous correspondence. Barnes reported on events in the U. S., sent books to Dewey and told him about his own activities.<sup>0</sup> Although unable to meet during this time, they continued to strengthen their relationship. The end of the War allowed Barnes to return to Europe regularly and, given the relative value of dollars to any European currency, to buy paintings aggressively.

During this period, Barnes was developing his plans for creating an educational foundation. Early in the process, he urged Dewey to develop a course on aesthetics, using Barnes's collection to back it up:

I have a suggestion in your academic line which I believe is practical and much needed: . . . You hold a seminar at Columbia on life itself and its aesthetic phases. All the material you need is in *Democracy & Education*, Santayana's *Reason in Art*; it would[include] William James, McDougall, *Creative Intelligence* . . . we'll have some Renoirs here to show the meaning—real meaning, not bunk—of the terms, drawing, color, values, etc. . . . I would be glad to cooperate each week in getting the plan in practical shape. Don't say it won't work—I know it will, I've tried it for years with people who never went to any college but a work-shop. Of course I eschewed [technical] terms and I was handicapped by the absence of what you could put into it.<sup>0</sup>

Dewey took several months to answer, either because the letter was delayed or he because he needed to think about this offer, but he declined:

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<sup>0</sup> Published as *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, 1920.

<sup>0</sup> Barnes also supported their journey in other ways. When John and Alice Dewey were leaving for the trip Barnes lent them \$500 because they worried that they might not have sufficient cash to last them. Evelyn, who took care of finances back in the United States, returned the money to Barnes shortly after they arrived in China. "I told Evelyn to send you back the five hundred you were kind enough to let me have. We have been very well taken care of, both in Japan and China, and didn't need the funds as it turned out, but the accommodation on your part was just the same." Found in "John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes," 1919.9.15 (04103).

<sup>0</sup> Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey, August 20, 1919 © Barnes Foundation Archives.

I was interested in your suggestion about a seminar in esthetics. But I can't rise to my part in it. I have always eschewed esthetics, just why I don't know, but I think it is because I wanted to reserve one region from a somewhat devastating analysis, one part of experience where I didn't think more than I did anything else. . . . I feel about [esthetics] precisely as the average intelligent man feels about all philosophical discussion.<sup>0</sup>

But after Dewey and his wife returned from this long stay abroad and the two men resumed their visits and continued their correspondence, discussions about aesthetics appear in their letters. Referring to a sentence in *Human Nature and Conduct*<sup>0</sup> Barnes writes:

Dear Mr. Dewey: Page 22—"Desire for flowers comes after actual enjoyment of flowers"--this, I'm afraid, is not all wool. Substitute any other object--automobile, fine clothes, pictures, etc., --and you have the same rose under another name. My experience--here, in this shop, with normally well-endowed, well-meaning people, shows that the underlying guiding principle is our old friend imitation. They desire because others have them and the prerequisite pleasure is, most often, non-existent.<sup>0</sup>

Dewey's response begins a theme that he repeats for the next ten years: acknowledging the relevance of Barnes' criticism, but urging Barnes himself to publish his ideas:

Dear Barnes, The formal or legal reply to your point is that the man in question doesn't really desire flowers, he desires to be like others . . . But I'm not fool enough to think this answers your real point. I haven't answered it anywhere in the book. Its not my gift, or it is my limitation that I cant really do it. . . . But why the devil don't you do it? Why should the responsibility fall on me especially?<sup>0</sup>

Not long afterwards, Barnes did write his own treatise on aesthetics, *The Art in Painting*, first published by the Barnes

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<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Albert. C. Barnes," 1920.01.15 (04091).

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1922).

<sup>0</sup> "Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey" 1922.03.03 (04131).

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes," 1922.03.05 (04132).

Foundation, early in January, 1925. The book came out just two months before the opening ceremonies for the Foundation in March 1925 and was its first major publication. The next year Harcourt Brace took over publication followed by second (1928) and third (1937) editions. The book presents Barnes's formal theory of aesthetics, focusing on "plastic form," the manner in which a painter uses color, line, space and light as a means to create a work of art. Although seldom discussed today, the book was well received, gained important reviews and sold well for years.<sup>0</sup> A review by Leo Stein, although generally positive, was a great disappointment to Barnes because Stein criticized him for using aesthetics in the service of pedagogy: "the chief defect of his work is a consequence of his [active interest] in education."<sup>0</sup> Barnes responded angrily, since this was an attack on the core of his career as an educator.<sup>0</sup> Their friendship took years to recover after this affront.

Barnes and Dewey continued their joint activities in the late 1920's, a period during which Barnes attempted unsuccessfully to influence art education in the Philadelphia schools and aesthetics education at the University of Pennsylvania, and other universities across the country. Dewey frequently attempted to moderate some of Barnes's angry exchanges with school administrators and university personnel when they wouldn't do exactly what Barnes had proposed.

### Art as Experience

Early in January 1930, Dewey was invited to give the first William James lectures at Harvard University in the spring semester 1931, honoring the late philosopher/psychologist, with no limitation on the subject. Contrary to the views he had expressed a decade earlier, Dewey decided to talk about aesthetics and within a few weeks of accepting the invitation he sent the titles of most of the ten proposed lectures in a letter to Sidney Hook.<sup>0</sup> At the same time, he was making plans for a trip to Los Angeles in response to an invitation to present an address at the dedication ceremonies for the

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<sup>0</sup> A Harcourt Brace editor estimated the book had sold 14,000 copies by 1952. See *William Schack Papers, 1891-1963*, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, [Reel 2917], Donald Brace to William Schack, May 13, 1952.

<sup>0</sup> Leo Stein, "The Art in Painting," *New Republic* 45[574] (December 2, 1925): 56-57.

<sup>0</sup> See George E. Hein, *Progressive Museum Practice: John Dewey and Democracy* (Walnut Creek, CA: West Coast Press, 2012), 144-146.

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Sidney Hook," 1930.03.10 (05729).

new UCLA campus on March 30, 1930.<sup>0</sup> He invited Barnes to join him on that trip and they departed on March 22. On the return trip they stopped for a few days of sightseeing in Santa Fe, Mesa Verde, and Taos, New Mexico, where Barnes bought Santo paintings, jewelry and pottery. It's hard to imagine that they didn't discuss aesthetics on these long train journeys.

In the summer of 1930, Dewey spent his vacation time reading aesthetics literature. In September, he writes to Barnes:

I think I've analyzed Ducasse's theoretical premises. In one sense it wasn't worth the trouble; in another, it has by contrast helped clear up my mind on some points. His account is mostly based on taking words one by one, & then hitching them together--Prall--the Calif. man has a genuine feeling & his book is of an entirely different class. I've read Parker for the first time--he strikes me as the victim of a theory who now wishes to communicate the disease to others.<sup>0</sup>

During that fall, he makes numerous trips to Merion to discuss the lectures with Barnes and he decides once again to accompany Barnes on a trip to Europe to look at pictures and also visit his daughter Lucy who is living in Vienna with her Austrian husband. Barnes's constant theme is that Dewey needs to experience pictures rather than only read about visual aesthetics:

Your "I got a real release and can start much freer from technical philosophy than I could before having the talks with you" is my text for this sermon. Too much philosophy and too little natural reaction to experience, and a too limited experience, is exactly what is the matter with aesthetics from Aristotle to Santayana to Parker to Ducasse. You can cure all that and do an incalculable service to education in art if you will maintain that release and get your own experience as a live animal.

But you'll have to stay alive from October 25th to December 1st. I can feed you stuff so fast in the Louvre and in the galleries at Vienna and Berlin that you ought to pant like a greyhound after a race when you get on the boat at Bremen.<sup>0</sup>

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<sup>0</sup> "Philosophy and Education," in LW 5:289-298.

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes," 1930.09.19 (04267).

<sup>0</sup> "Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey," 1930.10.16 (04298).

Dewey acknowledges Barnes's assistance in developing his lectures. In a letter from aboard the ocean liner, he writes to Corrine Frost, a frequent correspondent: "I shall be in Paris tomorrow; Mr & Mrs Barnes--of the Barnes Foundation--the finest collection of pictures in the US--came over with me. He is helping me with my Harvard lectures."<sup>0</sup> Barnes continued to provide advice to Dewey and send him material to use in the lectures. Even after Dewey had begun residence in Cambridge in the spring of 1931, Barnes sent additional material. Dewey wrote in response: "Dear Al, Thanks for your helpful contributions. I made two lectures of the material on Form—rhythm and balance . . . I keep your book at my side and make frequent use of it."<sup>0</sup> Barnes even came to Cambridge to visit while Dewey was giving the lectures over several months. David Riesman, whose father had been a classmate of Barnes in Central High School in Philadelphia and was a longtime family friend, was an undergraduate at Harvard that year. He recollected that visit some years later:

"My parents were close friends . . . of the late Dr. Albert C. Barnes who came to see me when I was a senior in Harvard College and wanted me to spend the next year travelling around Europe buying paintings with him. . . . I remember one day he came and yanked me out of bed and said, 'Let's go see Jack.' 'Jack' was, of course, John Dewey. He took me over to John Dewey who was lecturing at Harvard and slapped him on the back with a whack that I thought would send him across the room."<sup>0</sup>

It took Dewey an unusually long time to convert the William James lectures into a publishable manuscript. Barnes wrote repeatedly and urged him to complete the book. The correspondence illustrated in the exchange below reflects both their growing intimacy as they tease each other while continuing their discussion about aesthetics:

Dear Jack,  
Your pleasant letter was like a springtime breeze laden with the perfume of flowers. It was so nice that I shall refrain from reminding you that you are an utterly shameless

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<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Corrine Chisholm Frost" 1930.10.29 (09280).

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes," 1931.03.09 (04292).

<sup>0</sup> David Riesman. In Robert B. Williams, *John Dewey: Recollections*, (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), 132.

person in having not yet put your Harvard lectures in shape for the printer.... I am sending you herewith what was to be the first chapter in the book on Renoir.... It occurred to me that that chapter might be useful in that part of your Harvard lectures which deals with plastic art; if it is, you are at liberty to use it.<sup>0</sup>

Dear Al,

Your letter of sweetness & light came last week just as I was leaving. ...I loved your piece on vision & form-- You ought to publish it, then I could borrow instead of stealing. Your statement about traditions & their relation to the vision of the artist & of ourselves is the best you've ever made--'Hell, its perfect.'<sup>0</sup>

In her analysis of Dewey's relationship with F. M. Alexander, Boydston points out that not only have critics mis-read Dewey's personality, they have also mis-read his work in not recognizing the evolving influence of Alexander's ideas on some of Dewey's most important works, especially *Experience and Nature*. To substantiate the latter claim, she refers readers to "the outstanding scholarly study by Eric McCormack" which traces the development of that influence. Unfortunately, no such careful analysis of Barnes's influence on Dewey's visual aesthetics has as yet appeared. But even a superficial comparison of some passages in Barnes's *The Art in Painting* with similar sections of *Art as Experience* suggests how much Dewey relied on Barnes for his understanding of visual art. Dennis,<sup>0</sup> who argued that Dewey has no personal emotional feeling for visual art, illustrated some of these in his essay that appeared over 40 years ago. As Carrier<sup>0</sup> points out, it is sometimes difficult to decide from a selected passage whether it comes from Dewey or from Barnes. A comparison of Dewey's short references to particular painters in *Art as Experience* reveals that in almost every instance, he echoes the analysis that Barnes provided in *The Art in Painting*.

For example, Barnes criticized Botticelli for his "overreliance" on line at the expense of other components of plastic form, "[Botticelli's] line builds a series of arabesques of

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<sup>0</sup> "Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey," 1932.11.16 (04339).

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes," 1932.11.23 (04305).

<sup>0</sup> L.J. Dennis, "Dewey's Debt to Albert Coombs Barnes," *Educational Theory*, 22 (1972): 331-332.

<sup>0</sup> D. Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2007).

much charm . . . but that is pure decoration because it . . . stands out in isolation instead of being merged with the other plastic elements;" while Dewey writes, "[In] Botticelli, the charm of arabesques and line . . . may easily seduce a spectator...[and] will then result in an overestimation of Botticelli in comparison with other painters." Of Chardin, Barnes writes, ". . . each unit strikes the eye with a sense of the rightness as to its . . . contribution to the form as a whole;" while Dewey echoes, "Chardin renders volume and spatial positions in ways that caress the eye." Barnes believed that some artists emphasized religious sentiments to the aesthetic detriment of their compositions and criticizes Murillo (among others) for this tendency asserting, "Difficulty is often encountered in appraising justly a painter who habitually accentuates human values, religious, sentimental, dramatic in terms not purely plastic. Raphael sins grievously in this respect as do Fra Angelico . . . Murillo . . . Turner;" while Dewey states, "The sentimental religiosity of Murillo's paintings affords a good example of what happens when a painter of undoubted talent subordinates his artistic sense to associated 'meanings' that are artistically irrelevant."

### **Significance**

A more accurate characterization of the rich, intense intellectual and personal friendship between John Dewey and Albert Barnes is worth documenting for its own sake. To develop an understanding of Dewey's philosophy it is particularly important to consider personal as well as professional associations, since he emphasized the significance of experience as an essential component of ideas. Dewey frequently referred to his own experiences in response to an activity with an intellectual component. After his first visit to Albert Barnes's gallery, and presumably exposure to Barnes's lectures about art, he wrote in a thank you note:

I want to thank you for the extraordinary experience which you gave me. I have been conscious of living in a medium of color ever since Friday—almost swimming in it. I can but feel that it is a mark of the quality of your paintings that there has been no nervous exasperation or fatigue accompanying this sensation.<sup>0</sup>

A full elucidation of the consequences of their deep friendship also requires a thorough analysis of the manner in which

<sup>0</sup> "John Dewey to Albert Barnes," 1918.01.22 (03762).

they influenced each other and how the two friends' aesthetic theories evolved through their interactions. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but a few scholars are beginning to recognize how their development of aesthetic theories were shaped by both their personal friendship and their evolving conceptions of pragmatic aesthetics.<sup>0</sup>

Acknowledging the influence Albert Barnes's educational program had on Dewey also suggests a possible answer to a question that has puzzled some distinguished scholars: why there is so little discussion of education in *Art as Experience*. This issue was first raised by Herbert Read in his classic *Education Through Art* and (1956). He remarked in a footnote:

I regard it as one of the curiosities of philosophy that when John Dewey, late in life, came to the subject of aesthetics . . . he nowhere in the course of an imposing treatise, established a connection between aesthetics and education.<sup>0</sup>

Philip Jackson (1998), "share[s] Sir Herbert's puzzlement" and suggests not only that Dewey:

may have chosen not to discuss the educational implications of his theory of arts chiefly because he had not yet thought them through to his own satisfaction.

In addition, Jackson surmises,

To embark on such a project at his stage of life and without a school of his own . . . was more than he was willing or

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<sup>0</sup> In a paper delivered at the New England Pragmatist Forum David Granger (2015) discusses the aesthetic formalism of John Dewey and Albert Barnes and analyzes the similarity and differences of their views. A recent doctoral dissertation by Alexander Robins (2015), aims to demonstrate the development of the aesthetic theory of the Barnes program as the result of the interaction of Dewey with the group of teachers at the Barnes Foundation that included, (in addition to Barnes) Thomas Munro, Laurence Buermeyer and Mary Mullen. Robins also suggests that Dewey played an active role in developing the wall arrangements and overall pedagogy that form the basis for the Barnes Foundation curriculum. There seems to be no written record that Dewey was involved in Albert Barnes's thoughtful and ever changing placement of pictures, furniture and other objects in the galleries. Dewey considered his title as Director of Education as honorary; he never taught any classes at the Foundation.

<sup>0</sup> Herbert Read, *Education Through Art*, Third (Revised) Edition (New York: Random House, 1956), 245.

able to do . . . He thus left that task for others to accomplish.<sup>0</sup>

A simpler explanation is possible. *Art and Experience*, published three years after his lectures and after considerable discussion of its content with Barnes and others who were engaged in a major aesthetics educational effort reads like a finished project, similar to many of Dewey's major works. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s the Barnes Foundation had a thriving multi-year educational program with classes attracting up to 100 students at a time, coupled with ongoing efforts to expand the program to a number of universities. Dewey specifically mentions the educational work of the Barnes Foundation as a prime example of the kind of art education he has in mind.

I also find it hard to believe that Dewey didn't have the energy to put his ideas into practice. Although *Art as Experience*, came out late in his life (he was 71 when he gave the Harvard lectures on which it was based) he took on major intellectual and physical efforts in later years, including at age 78 chairing The American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky (known colloquially as "The Dewey Commission") that involved a strenuous trip to Mexico and supervising the writing of a 600-page report of the commission's findings. A possible solution to this conundrum is that Dewey felt no need to test his ideas of aesthetic education since he had a model available to him: the Barnes Foundation with its successful, rational method of aesthetic education.

### Conclusion

Dewey never wavered in his view that Barnes, using his art collection as the curriculum for the progressive education program at his foundation, was doing outstanding educational work. Dewey believed that Barnes had demonstrated a way in which aesthetic education could enrich students' lives and strengthened their ability to engage with the world in a positive manner needed to support a democratic society. I am frequently impressed to meet alumni of the Barnes Foundation educational programs who inform me that the training they received there "changed their lives" or "made them see the world differently."<sup>0</sup> Dewey never changed his opinion

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<sup>0</sup> Philip Jackson, *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), xii-xiii.

<sup>0</sup> Unfortunately, although this unique educational program based on Barnes's ideas has been in continuous activity for more than 100 years, no research to

of the significance of the educational work at the Barnes Foundation. In his Foreword to *The Art of Renoir*, Dewey gives a brief summary of his understanding of the educational program at the Barnes Foundation based on “observation and interpretation of what is observed.” He concludes:

Since my educational ideas have been criticized for undue emphasis upon intelligence and the use of the method of thinking that has its best exemplification in science, I take profound, if somewhat melancholic, ironic, satisfaction in the fact that the most thoroughgoing embodiment of what I have tried to say about education is, as far as I am aware, found in an educational institution that is concerned with art. . . . It is a reward, as well as an honor, to be associated with an educational institution that is engaged in vital education.<sup>0</sup>

And Dewey accepted Barnes’s character and even teased him about it. As Dewey was about to send Barnes a final manuscript of *Art as Experience*, he wrote to Barnes and informed him that the dedication would read:

Dear Al,  
Having been appointed, if I read the correspondence aright, an umpire, I hereby decree and determine, subject to confirmation by the proper authorities, that the proper reading of the dedication is:

To  
Albert C. Barnes  
A genius and in  
affection also  
who often makes himself  
God damned uncomfortable  
by the way in which he  
Expresses and suppresses it.  
It is nice that Henry Hart wants to dedicate his book to you-  
he has got the start on me in time of publication but not in  
idea.

Affectionately | Jack<sup>0</sup>

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support this anecdotal evidence has been attempted.

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, foreword to *The Art of Renoir*, by A. C. Barnes and V. De Mazia (New York: Minton, Balch & Co, 1935) x.

<sup>0</sup> “John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes,” 1933.11.18 (04324).

Barnes remained his gruff, mocking self throughout their friendship. Dewey's second marriage in 1946, shortly after the end of the Second World War was a quiet event in his apartment with probably less than 20 people in attendance, including Albert Barnes. But the press was represented and New York Times (1946) reporters wanted a statement from Barnes. The article announcing the marriage noted Dr. Barnes's presence and reported:

Dr. Albert Barnes of Haverford, PA, art connoisseur and head of the Barnes Foundation, a friend of Dr. Dewey, greeted newspaper men with the remark: "What is this, the Nuremberg trial? Where's Drew Middleton and Quentin Reynolds?"<sup>0</sup>

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<sup>0</sup> *New York Times* "Dr. John Dewey, 87, to Wed Widow, 42," December 11, 1946, p. 64.

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# THE “DEWEY-LIPPMANN” DEBATE AND THE ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION IN THE TRUMP AGE

LANCE MASON



This paper examines the “Dewey-Lippmann debate” and its enduring significance for contemporary democracy, which currently suffers from deep political polarization within a fractured media landscape. The examination begins with communication theorist James Carey’s original characterization of Lippmann as a positivist seeking a world of objective, accurate information in contrast to Dewey, who identifies the contingent, constructed nature of knowledge achieved through processes of communication. This analysis re-examines Lippmann’s and Dewey’s positions in light of subsequent arguments that challenge Carey’s conclusions. It will be argued that, while Carey’s critics are correct that Lippmann held a more nuanced position on democracy than Carey acknowledges, they also largely misunderstand his Dewey-inspired arguments about the meaning making functions of communication. By highlighting the role of the habits of communication in Dewey’s democratic analysis, this paper points toward suggestions for bolstering participatory democracy while simultaneously fostering a less polarized culture.



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In the 1980s, communications theorist James Carey offered an analysis of modern democracy that he characterized as the “Dewey-Lippmann debate” in order to frame two divergent conceptions of democracy<sup>0</sup>. In his analysis, Carey depicts Walter Lippmann’s democratic vision as one dominated by experts who utilize scientific objectivity to prescribe policy for the masses. According to Carey, Lippmann offers a positivistic view of knowledge, in which he regards communication as a form of transmission geared toward accurately transferring information. In contrast, Dewey’s view of democracy was a more contingent vision formed through citizen participation in discussion and inquiry. Carey argues that Dewey locates another role for communication beyond mere transmission – it is also a way for participants to construct meaning through the process itself. Carey identifies this as a “ritual view of communication,” which is “directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs.”<sup>0</sup> In Carey’s reading of Dewey, the purpose of news and journalism is not to accurately depict reality, as with Lippmann, but to offer narratives that activate inquiry among affected groups, or “publics.”

Carey’s analysis of the “Dewey-Lippmann debate” has been appropriated by scholars arguing for a stronger participatory democracy against the elitist conceptions attributed to Lippmann.<sup>0</sup> However, more recently others have challenged the legitimacy of Carey’s analysis and, subsequently, the practicality of the Deweyan democratic model. Communications theorist Michael Schudson delivers the sharpest criticism, arguing that Carey misrepresents Lippmann’s position on the role of experts, who were “not to replace the public, but rather experts were to provide an alternative source of knowledge and policy to the parties and pressure

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<sup>0</sup> James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>0</sup> See Richard J. Bernstein, “Creative Democracy – The Task Still Before Us,” *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (2000): 36-49; Carl Bybee, “Can Democracy Survive in the Post-Factual Age?: A Return to the Lippmann-Dewey Debate about the Politics of News,” *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 28, no. 1 (1999): 28-66; Tony DeCesare, “The Lippmann-Dewey ‘debate’ Revisited: The Problem of Knowledge and the Role of Experts in Modern Democratic Theory,” *Philosophical Studies in Education* 43 (2012): 106-116; Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995); and John Durham Peters, “Democracy and American Mass Communication Theory: Dewey, Lippmann, Lazarsfeld,” *Communication* 11 (1989): 199-220.

groups.”<sup>0</sup> Schudson criticizes Carey’s Dewey-inspired articulation of a culture of direct communication and political participation, stating that although Lippmann removed the public from direct decision-making, this is the “step representative democracies around the world have taken and managed.”<sup>0</sup> Schudson contends that Lippmann’s democratic model is both reasonable and viable given the complex requirements of modern society.

Other scholars directly critique facets of Dewey’s democratic conception. Sociologist Mark Whipple asserts that Dewey “largely failed to reconcile his democratic ideal with the empirical constraint of large-scale organizations.”<sup>0</sup> Such criticisms have been echoed in education research. Westhoff argues that Dewey failed to explain how direct communities could expand and link up to form the “Great Community.”<sup>0</sup> Schutz posits that Deweyan democracy is viable only in local contexts and is impractical as a larger social model.<sup>0</sup> Similarly, Stanley believes Dewey’s response to Lippmann was “both obscure and inconclusive” and that Dewey “never adequately addressed the practical problems that Lippmann raised regarding the core assumptions of liberal democracy.”<sup>0</sup> While Stanley credits Dewey’s focus on developing critical capacities in education, he judges Dewey’s larger social analysis to be inadequate. Overall, the above accounts are at least partially sympathetic to Dewey’s position, yet they agree that Dewey’s model was never adequately articulated nor reconciled with the size, scope, and complexity of modern society.

Recent political developments, including the U.S. Presidential victory of Donald Trump, along with concerns about “fake news” and political polarization, arguably give reason to

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<sup>0</sup> Michael Schudson, “The ‘Lippmann-Dewey Debate’ and the Invention of Walter Lippmann as an Anti-Democrat 1986-1996,” *International Journal of Communication* 2 (2008): 1040.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 1033.

<sup>0</sup> Mark Whipple, “The Dewey-Lippmann Debate Today: Communication Distortions, Reflective Agency, and Participatory Democracy,” *Sociological Theory* 23, no. 2 (2005): 156.

<sup>0</sup> Laura M. Westhoff, “The Popularization of Knowledge: John Dewey on Experts and American Democracy,” *History of Education Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1995): 27-47.

<sup>0</sup> Aaron Schutz, “John Dewey and a ‘Paradox of Size’: Democratic Faith at the Limits of Experience,” *American Journal of Education* 109 (2001): 287-319.

<sup>0</sup> William B. Stanley, “Education for Social Reconstruction in Critical Context,” in *Social Reconstruction: People, Politics, Perspectives*, ed. Karen L. Riley (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 89-110.

reconsider the prevailing conception of democracy. Schudson is correct that representative democracies have removed citizens from daily decision-making in ways that are largely consistent with Lippmann's position. However, concerns about a several decades-long decline in real wages, growing inequality and social unrest in both the United States and abroad call into question Schudson's implicit assumption that American democracy is thriving under the current model.

This paper argues that the criticisms surrounding Dewey's conception of democracy can be addressed by returning to Carey's original framing of the "Dewey-Lippmann debate." Though some of the critiques leveled against Carey are valid, his focus on the role of communication helps to illuminate Dewey's vision of the "Great Community" that has been subject of criticism. Carey, unlike his critics, understood from Dewey that the strength of a democracy depended not only on its formal institutions, but also on the everyday behavior of its citizens. Under-conceptualizing the importance of routine interactions has arguably proven to be a key factor in the degradation of contemporary democracy.

While Dewey did not offer a straightforward prescription for the problems of democracy, it will be argued that this was a deliberate and justifiable move. Dewey instead offered avenues of inquiry to be pursued experimentally,<sup>0</sup> which has been interpreted by some critics as being vague and unfocused. By attending to Deweyan habits, particularly the habits of communication, the role of local publics in the formation of the "Great Community" can be illuminated, while also identifying potential implications for both contemporary political movements and the institution of schooling. Contrary to arguments that Dewey's model of participatory democracy is impractical, this paper will argue that Dewey offers a practical way forward as the project of neoliberal democracy, which posits market logic as the only valid template upon which to model social life, continues to be challenged by the citizens of the United States and other countries.

The examination will begin with a contextualization of the historical period for the debate, after which Lippmann and Dewey's respective visions for democracy will be considered. This will be followed by a response to Dewey's critics that will also suggest directions for addressing the aforementioned contemporary social challenges.

### **Social Order, Technocracy, and Progressivism**

<sup>0</sup> See Cleo Cherryholmes, *Reading Pragmatism* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a time of rapid change and massive upheaval in the United States. The country was rapidly industrializing and urban centers were exploding with population growth, while new inventions from electricity to the automobile were facilitating changes in the dynamics of business, social interaction, and daily living. These new inventions connected to earlier developments, including the telegraph and the continued expansion and commercial integration of railroads. This made conditions ripe for the growth of massive corporations that could harness efficiency through larger economies of scale. Under these conditions, the parochial political systems of local communities were increasingly inadequate both for regulating interstate commerce and for dealing with massive social changes.

Robert Wiebe, in his book *The Search for Order*, argues that the above factors led to the Progressive movement and ultimately to an expanded federal government. Wiebe identifies the “bureaucratic approach”<sup>0</sup> as a central feature of progressivism, whose proponents were middle class reformers looking to unify society by creating a stronger central government through an increased use of the “scientific method.” According to Wiebe, progressives advocated the scientific method as a national substitute for the nineteenth century character-oriented common knowledge of the community:

The ideas that filtered through and eventually took the form were bureaucratic ones, peculiarly suited to the fluidity and impersonality of an urban-industrial world. They pictured a society of ceaselessly interacting members and concentrated upon adjustments within it. Although they included rules and principles of human behavior, these necessarily had an indeterminate quality because perpetual interaction was itself indeterminate...Thus the rules, resembling orientations much more than laws, stressed techniques of constant watchfulness and mechanisms of continuous management.<sup>0</sup>

This progressive rationale of a national society based on bureaucratic efficiency, according to Wiebe, provided the thrust for

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<sup>0</sup> Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920* (New York: Strauss & Giroux, 1967), 145.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

piecemeal political reforms that were implemented slowly over the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Other research problematizes Wiebe's monolithic characterization of progressivism, but identifies many of the same cultural dynamics at work during this era. In *Rebirth of a Nation*, Jackson Lears describes this era as a time when notions of rebirth and regeneration animated the social spirit and intellectual thought of reformers, political leaders, and media correspondents.<sup>0</sup> Within this time of great upheaval, Lears pinpoints competing, though often intersecting, trends within progressive thought. These trends can be broadly categorized as a managerial version of progressivism, which was embodied in concepts such as Taylor's notion of scientific management. This form of progressivism largely aligns with Weibe's analysis. The second trend of progressivism had a more populist orientation, which worked to "empower ordinary citizens and curb plutocratic rule by promoting antitrust legislation, railroad regulation, public ownership of utilities, popular election of U.S. Senators, and other measures designed to invigorate democratic citizenship."<sup>0</sup> These two strands of progressivism are difficult to separate, as they coalesced at various points.

However one characterizes progressive thought in the early twentieth century, World War I (WWI) emerges as a pivotal event for both Dewey and Lippmann. Wiebe pinpoints WWI as a turning point for arguments advocating people-centered democracy. The war demonstrated the growing power of the national government to assert power over the people by using mass media to craft allegiance to the war agenda. The citizenry's ostensible gullibility in the face of war propaganda, along with steadily decreasing voter turnout in national elections – from around 80% in the 1890s to under 50% in the early 1920s – signified a widely perceived crisis of democracy.<sup>0</sup> The democratic writings of both Lippmann and Dewey emerged out of this sociopolitical milieu. In the post-WWI American landscape, the themes tackled within what is now characterized as the "Dewey-Lippmann debate" were commonplace in national discussions of the challenges facing modern democracy in the 1920s.

### **Lippmann on Democracy**

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<sup>0</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of the Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009).

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>0</sup> Weibe, *The Search for Order 1877-1920*.

In his later writings, Lippmann expresses a concern with the potential consequences of majority rule that is reminiscent of Tocqueville:

Those who believed in democracy have always assumed that the majority should rule. They have assumed that, even if the majority is not wise, it is on the road to wisdom, and that with sufficient education the people would learn how to rule. But in Tennessee the people used their power to prevent their own children from learning, not merely the doctrine of evolution, but the spirit and method by which learning is possible. They had used their right to rule in order to weaken the agency which they had set up in order that they might learn how to rule. They had founded popular government on the faith in popular education, and then they had used the prerogatives of democracy to destroy the hopes of democracy.<sup>0</sup>

Lippmann references the matters surrounding the Scopes Trial of 1925, in which John Scopes was put on trial for teaching evolution in the public school system in violation of Tennessee state law. This example is instructive, as it indicates the end-road of Lippmann's increasingly negative stance toward the decision-making ability of average citizens that first emerged in the 1920s. Lippmann's later writings expressed increasing disappointment with the ability of average citizens to comprehend the complex dimensions of social issues and take effective action. This example also demonstrates how Lippmann's earlier experiences shaped his view of democracy. Lippmann observed the decision-making process of everyday citizens and it was, in his estimation, unbalanced, unpredictable, and dangerous to the stability of liberal democracy. He was also cognizant of the steady growth of government bureaucracy over the preceding decades that had made government more complex. This only reaffirmed his hesitancy about more direct forms of democracy.

Evidence of Lippmann's more pessimistic turn toward the possibilities of majority rule became clear in the early 1920s with the publication of *Public Opinion*. To understand why this was the case one must examine Lippmann's experiences surrounding the First World War. As an editor of the *New Republic* magazine

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<sup>0</sup> Walter Lippmann, "Should the Majority Rule?" in *The Essential Lippmann: A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy*, eds. Clinton Rossiter and James Lare (New York: Random House, 1963), 7.

during the lead-up to World War I (WWI), Lippmann and other progressives at the magazine were firm supporters of America's entry into the war. They believed it was America's opportunity to take a new leadership role in the world by spreading the democratic way of life. Progressive support for the war was grounded in hope for facilitating social progress through the spread of democracy.<sup>0</sup> Progressives envisioned the 19<sup>th</sup> century celebration of rugged individualism being cast aside in favor of a new social understanding of the individual as part of the community. Advocates hoped that once this understanding was accepted by the culture, the government and economy would be reformed to reflect a more direct form of democracy and Americans' interest in acts of governance at both the local and national levels would be revitalized. This faith allowed many progressives to downplay concerns about the centralization of power articulated by more pessimistic theorists of the era such as Max Weber.<sup>0</sup>

The realities of WWI shook the faith of many progressives, including Lippmann. In 1917, he left the *New Republic* to become a spokesperson for the War Department and also worked for the State Department. From the inside, Lippmann was able to see how the U.S. government used propaganda to promote and maintain support for the war. In the *New Republic* after the war, Lippmann stated:

The deliberate manufacture of opinion both for export and for home consumption has reached the proportion of a major industrial operation.... When the story is told, it will cover a range of subjects from legal censorship to reptile press, from willful fabrication to the purchase of writers, from outright subsidy to the award of ribbons.... The art of befuddlement engages able men and draws large appropriations.<sup>0</sup>

Lippmann was disturbed at how easily the public was manipulated and how those in power had perfected the "art of befuddlement." This experience frames his conclusions about the possibilities of democracy throughout the rest of his career. His primary concern

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<sup>0</sup> David Noble, "The New Republic and the Idea of Progress, 1914-1920," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (1951).

<sup>0</sup> See Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

<sup>0</sup> Lippmann cited in Heinz Eulau "Wilsonian Idealist: Walter Lippmann Goes to War," *The Antioch Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1954): 101.

becomes finding a way to control a government that was becoming “a self-perpetuating oligarchy and an uncontrollable bureaucracy which governs by courting, cajoling, corrupting, and coercing the sovereign but incompetent people.”<sup>0</sup> From this analysis, the ideas outlined in *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public* can be understood as practical ways to maintain some measure of pluralism within a system that was quickly becoming dominated by elites, as Lippmann recognized the growing influence of special interests on public opinion.

By the 1920s, Lippmann openly rejected his former faith in democracy, claiming it “prevented democracy from arriving at a clear idea of its own limits and attainable ends,”<sup>0</sup> In his view, the world had simply become too complicated for any one group to be responsible for it. In a complex world mediated by mass communication, the deep understandings forged by direct engagement were no longer functional for the average citizen. Instead, much of their social and political knowledge was formed through what Lippmann called ‘stereotypes’: “In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.”<sup>0</sup> In Lippmann’s estimation, these stereotypes created an insurmountable barrier for most citizens, who were generally more concerned with leisure and recreation as opposed to social and political affairs. With his conception of stereotypes, Lippmann implicitly acknowledged that citizens acquired knowledge through an act of construction, which at least partially defies Carey’s characterization that he advocated a “spectator theory of knowledge.”<sup>0</sup> However, Lippmann believed that the average citizen had neither the capacity nor the interest to overcome the stereotypes promoted by mass media.

Lippmann’s solution, however, was not to turn over decision-making to any particular group of experts. Rather, he envisioned a balance of power based upon decisions made by a plurality of groups. Primary explication of a particular issue would be in the hands of the expert group in most direct contact with the

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<sup>0</sup> Walter Lippmann, “How Can the People Rule?” in *The Essential Lippmann: A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy*, eds. Clinton Rossiter and James Lare (New York: Random House, 1963), 19.

<sup>0</sup> Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), 138.

<sup>0</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (Blacksburg, VA: Wilder, Publications, 2010), 48.

<sup>0</sup> Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, 82.

situation. Lippmann referred to these expert groups as “insiders.” These insiders, rather than dealing with abstractions, would be in direct contact with matters, affording them a detailed and nuanced understanding. This move addressed the problem of having decisions guided by stereotypes. Lippmann states, “only the insider can make decisions, not because he is inherently a better man, but because he is so placed that he can understand and can act.”<sup>0</sup> Lippmann advocated a central role for contextual decision-making, defying many characterizations of his position while reflecting the influence of pragmatism on his thinking. This influence allowed him to distance his position from traditional elitist conceptions:

Aristocratic theorists...like the democratic theorists...miss the essence of the matter, which is, that competence exists only in relation to function; that men are not good, but good for something; the men cannot be educated, but only educated for something.<sup>0</sup>

Lippmann devised a conception of government run by various insider groups, each dealing with matters in which they were most competent. In this way, no one group attained a controlling share of power. These groups would be responsible for distilling issues for public consumption, helping the public to stay informed and to participate in matters such as voting. Through exchanges of information and public debate between insider groups, the public would stay informed while insider groups negotiated priorities among social concerns, leaving deeper analysis and solutions to the insiders closest to the matter. These groups would offer consultation and advice on policy matters to political bodies such as Congress.

The role of the public would be to judge “whether the actors in the controversy are following a settled rule of behavior or their arbitrary desires.”<sup>0</sup> This is consistent with Carey’s characterization of Lippmann promoting a passive citizenry. It was the job of Lippmann’s public to detect partisan opinions that would taint solid policy decisions and to offer their support or opposition to policies, thereby influencing the direction of insider decisions and actions. The role of education would be to increase the number of citizens able to join the ranks of expert insiders, while

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<sup>0</sup> Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, 140.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

teaching the requisite skills necessary to make judgments about insider positions to all citizens.

In this model, one of the most important functions for the public would be to intervene in times of crisis when expert insider decisions had failed. Lippmann explained:

In this theory, public opinion does not make the law. But by canceling lawless power it may establish the condition under which law can be made. It does not reason, investigate, invent, persuade, bargain, or settle. But, by holding the aggressive party in check, it may liberate intelligence. Public opinion in its highest ideal will defend those who are prepared to act on their reason against the interrupting force of those who merely assert their will.<sup>0</sup>

In this formulation, the chief duty of the public would be to interject during times of crisis to hold excessive power interests in check; ensuring that balance would be maintained within the decision-making process of expert insiders.

In summary, Lippmann's democratic solution composed of various groups of experts in context demonstrated that he understood that knowledge was both constructed and contextual. Nevertheless, he remained pessimistic about the possibility of a more participatory democracy. His concern about mass media's ability to manufacture consent suggests that Carey's characterization of Lippmann's view of communication is correct – Lippmann envisioned communication primarily, if not singularly, as a form of information transfer. Though Lippmann's analysis is formidable, his solution called for a citizenry that would overtly act only during moments of crisis. This demonstrates that he did not fully conceptualize the consequences of his insights about knowledge construction, as will be elaborated upon in the next section. This inconsistency in Lippmann's thinking explains, though does not entirely justify, Carey's assertion that Lippmann does not hold a constructed theory of knowledge. Ultimately, Lippmann under-conceptualized how average citizens could acquire the competencies necessary to function effectively as citizens through participatory communication. This would be left for Dewey to articulate in his response to Lippmann.

### **John Dewey and Habits of Communication**

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<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 59.

Dewey was also profoundly affected by the events of the First World War. Like Lippmann, Dewey was optimistic about the possibilities of spreading democracy throughout the world, leading him to offer modest support for America's entry into WWI. He later came to regret this decision.<sup>0</sup> During the war, Dewey became disillusioned by the conduct of the American government at home, which used mass media to manufacture support while cracking down on public dissent.<sup>0</sup> When the League of Nations failed to become a reality, Dewey began to reexamine his position. Yet unlike Lippmann, Dewey retained faith in the possibility of a more direct form of participatory democracy.

Dewey respected Lippmann's analyses, calling *Public Opinion* "perhaps the most effective indictment of democracy as currently conceived ever penned."<sup>0</sup> Dewey recognized that Lippmann's concerns were very close to his own. He also understood, in contrast to Carey's assertion, that Lippmann was not arguing for a political system narrowly controlled by a small group of elites. In his review of *The Phantom Public*, Dewey stated:

In effect Mr. Lippmann's argument is a powerful plea, from a new angle of approach, for decentralization in governmental affairs; a plea for recognition that actual government, whether or not we like it, must be carried on by non-political agencies, by organs we do not conventionally regard as having to do with government.<sup>0</sup>

Dewey argued that Lippmann's proposals would offer improvements to the existing state of affairs, but believed a more robust solution was possible that entailed a more vigorous dissemination of decision-making.

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<sup>0</sup> See Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>0</sup> See John Dewey, "Conscription of Thought" in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), MW 10:278-280; and John Dewey, "In Explanation of Our Lapse" in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), MW 10:292-295.

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, "Public Opinion" in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), MW 13:337.

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, "Practical Democracy" in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), LW 2:217.

Dewey (1927/1946) articulated this vision in his book *Public and Its Problems*. Here, Dewey identified many challenges to the formation of a stronger democratic culture, including the complexity of public issues, public apathy, increasing distractions that turned people away from civic matters, and ever-increasing mobility of populations that was uprooting local communities. However, where Lippmann declared these issues insurmountable due to modern conditions, Dewey believed the power of participatory communication could address issues of apathy, capacity, and capability among citizens.

Dewey's understanding of communication allowed him to offer a more dynamic conception of the public than Lippmann. Lippmann's conceptualization anticipated a public constructed by contemporary mass media: A static conglomeration of all citizens from which polling derives "public opinion" as a recognized social construct. This identifies the public as a unitary mass, while pinpointing communication as the transmission of information. In this conception, opinions are understood as pre-constructed, fixed, and the possession of isolated minds. Such conceptions are rooted in classic liberal theory, which identifies individuals as isolated and rational decision makers out to maximize individual preferences. Lippmann's inability to see past the limits of this liberal conception ultimately constrained his analysis of democracy and its potential under different social circumstances.

By contrast, Dewey asserted that publics form only because of shared communication: "events cannot be passed from one to another, but meanings may be shared by means of signs. Want and impulses are then attached to common meanings."<sup>0</sup> Through social communication, participants are able to construct meaning and increase their understanding of the indirect consequences of social and political action. In Dewey's vision, the public was not singular, but rather consisted of overlapping groups that formed in response to particular issues or problems. These publics were understood to be active and contextual, with the meaning of a public found in "what it can do, where it can go, how better it can operate."<sup>0</sup> Unlike Lippmann's conception, which posited an isolated psychological and cognitive notion of construction, Dewey's conception of the public demonstrated a more profound understanding of the social construction of knowledge and its democratic implications. In Dewey's formulation, opinions could

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press Books, 1946).

<sup>0</sup> Paul Stob, "Kenneth Burke, John Dewey, and the Pursuit of the Public," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38, no. 3 (2005): 237.

not be understood in isolation from the communicative processes that produced them, as “every act of communication requires an individual to give form to what had previously been formless, and in doing so changes the attitude of that person toward his or her own experiences as they relate to the experiences of others.”<sup>0</sup> To Dewey, it is social experience, or in Deweyan terms the *transactional* experience, through collective communicative action where the public and, thus, public opinion is formed within particular contexts. Such formations transcend the conception of individual, isolated minds posited by classic liberal theory and hold profound implications for the possibilities of participatory democracy.<sup>0</sup>

In Dewey’s conception, the public was in eclipse due in no small part to civic apathy, along with what was a growing predilection for distraction and amusement. These were concerns for Dewey as well as Lippmann, though Dewey located the problem not within psychological constructs, but rather within culturally constructed habits, particularly the prevailing habits of communication. Dewey asserted:

Knowledge is a function of association and communication; it depends upon tradition, upon tools and methods socially transmitted, developed and sanctioned. Faculties of effectual observation, reflection and desire are habits acquired under the influence of the culture and institutions of society, not ready-made inherent property.<sup>0</sup>

In Dewey’s conception of habit, he provided an embodied understanding of behavior where “every act affects a modification of attitude and set which directs future behavior.”<sup>0</sup> For Dewey, habits were not a matter of passive socialization, but rather resulted from active engagement on the part of participants within environments in order to thrive within them. From Dewey’s perspective, the widening prevalence of disengagement in public affairs was an active response to removing decision-making from localities and concentrating power in centralized bodies. These developments were fostering a more bewildered public, because

<sup>0</sup> Nathan Crick, *Democracy and Rhetoric: John Dewey on the Arts of Becoming* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010), 67.

<sup>0</sup> See John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999); and John Dewey *Liberalism and Social Action* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2000).

<sup>0</sup> Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 158.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 159.

local connections to forming civic knowledge were being severed, while the power to enrich understandings through shared communication was not understood or substantively employed.

For Dewey, democracy consisted of more than merely formal, institutional mechanisms, it was also a “personal way of individual life” that was expressed not only in civic affairs, but “in all the relations of life.”<sup>0</sup> Dewey urged an inversion of prevailing thinking on democracy as static and unchanging, stating “instead of thinking of our dispositions and habits as accommodated to certain institutions we have to learn to think of the latter as expressions, projections, and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes.”<sup>0</sup> Understanding this perspective explains why Dewey thought that the emerging mass culture of the era encouraged problematic habits that worked against shared communication while promoting passivity in civic affairs. As long as communication was viewed and practiced as a unidirectional transfer of information, rather than a shared process where meaning was constructed through participation, the public would remain “shadowy and formless, seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance.”<sup>0</sup>

Dewey contended that the insiders of Lippmann’s analysis, particularly scientists, philosophers, and academics, best exemplified human intelligence in action. This was not because they possessed superior intelligence, but because they had acquired specialized habits through exclusive training. These habits included carefully examining issues, openly sharing and building knowledge through exchanges with peers, testing conclusions and modifying their understandings based on results. These intelligent habits of inquiry and communication represented a refined version of what Dewey argued should be imparted to all citizens as constitutive habits of a re-emergent public sphere.

Where Lippmann would divide power among specialized groups and improve education to bring more people into their ranks, Dewey suggested extending these intelligent habits to the entire population. People in local communities did not require the same specialized knowledge as scientists, Dewey argued, but they needed to understand how scientists acquired knowledge. They also needed to participate directly in informal inquiry processes through public discussion and deliberation. As Carey explains,

<sup>0</sup> John Dewey, “Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us,” in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), LW 225.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid, 225.

<sup>0</sup> Dewey, *Public and Its Problems*, 142.

“inquiry...is not something other than conversation and discussion but a more systematic version of it.”<sup>0</sup> While Dewey explicitly distinguished inquiry from mere conversation, Carey is correct to recognize the two concepts along one continuum. With the assistance of formal education and experience, Dewey argued, the intelligent habits of inquiry for everyday citizens could become more systematic, although perhaps never as rigorous as expert methods. Through their own application of social communication, localities could put public issues through their own process of inquiry.

Experts also played a role in Dewey’s formulation. The job of experts would be to distill facts for the public to evaluate.<sup>0</sup> Where Lippmann’s experts would inform central decision makers, Dewey’s experts would instead inform the citizenry. Through modern communication, experts could provide continual information to local communities where issues could be discussed and debated in order to inform government action. As broader issues involved more local communities, these groups could use modern technology to facilitate cross communication and mutual inquiry, where “different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups,”<sup>0</sup> exchanging information and building shared understandings toward the aim of broader political action. This, in essence, is a brief outline of Dewey’s vision of the “Great Community.”

Dewey further explained why a democratic citizenry must be continuously involved in public affairs:

Opinions and beliefs concerning the public presuppose effective and organized inquiry. Unless there are methods for detecting the energies which are at work and tracing them through an intricate network of interactions to their consequence, what passes for public opinion will be “opinion” only in its derogatory sense rather than truly public, no matter how widespread the opinion is... Opinion casually formed and formed under the direction of those who have something at stake in having a lie believed can be *public* in name only.<sup>0</sup>

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<sup>0</sup> Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, 82.

<sup>0</sup> Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 202.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 177.

Where Lippmann positioned citizens as spectators to a decision-making process performed by experts and politicians, Dewey contended that the formation of public opinion was dependent upon participatory communication by citizens themselves, as such opinions were not the possession of isolated minds. Rather, the process of inquiry in the public would be achieved primarily through conversation and deliberation where people exchanged knowledge and ideas and built shared understandings through the communicative process. Dewey posited that for people to understand public issues, they must be active participants in the formation of potential solutions, as well as participants in the judgments of their effectiveness in operation. Anything less would be subject to manipulation by special interests, as citizens would not have developed the habits of inquiry necessary to fulfill their functions when called upon. Dewey further explained, “emotional habituations and intellectual habitudes on the part of the mass of men create the conditions of which the exploiters of sentiment and opinion only take advantage.”<sup>0</sup> In Dewey’s evaluation, the best way to guard against the accumulation of power and public manipulation was to activate full and free communication among the citizenry, which would continuously foster intelligent habits of inquiry. He rejected Lippmann’s notion of citizens that become active only during crises, as communicative inquiry requires an ongoing process that was central to the habit-forming functions of the public. To call upon citizens only occasionally was, in Dewey’s evaluation, a guarantee that citizens would not have the necessary habits of communication to respond adequately when needed.

Lippmann’s recommendation of calling upon citizens only in crisis is evidence that he did not fully embrace a pragmatist view of mind as transactional and active, but rather at least partially held a Cartesian view of minds as isolated, in which opinions were conceptualized as pre-constructed and ready-made for implementation. Dewey’s conception of mind and public opinion, by contrast, is largely consistent with contemporary deliberative democratic research, which asserts that “preferences are not fixed in advance; they can be informed with balanced briefing materials and expert knowledge and transformed through deliberations.”<sup>0</sup> This understanding demonstrates Dewey’s bi-level conception of

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<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>0</sup> Noelle McAfee, “Three Models of Democratic Deliberation,” in *Democratizing Deliberation*, eds. Derek W. M. Barker, Noelle McAfee, and David W. McIvor (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2012), 24.

agency,<sup>0</sup> in which habitual action precedes reflective thought. For complex understanding to emerge, Dewey asserted that citizens must engage in democratic communication, from which reflective activity emerges secondarily as disruptions occur and participants are compelled to adjust their habits. Habitual activity and subsequent reflection hold potential to broaden and complicate the opinions and beliefs of participants as they develop more flexible habits through continuous situational adjustments within the communication process. This explains Dewey's focus on participatory action by citizens as a pre-condition for a re-emergent public, a point he summed up succinctly by stating, "the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy."<sup>0</sup>

Because of his emphasis on communicative engagement, Dewey also concluded that a distant government could never adequately serve localities as well as the judgment of local people, stating "tools of social inquiry will be clumsy as long as they are forged in places and under conditions remote from contemporary events."<sup>0</sup> Dewey echoed Lippmann's assertions regarding contextual analysis but carried this reasoning to a more philosophically consistent and politically radical conclusion by arguing that citizens themselves should be directly involved in decision-making in local contexts. Where Lippmann used an analysis informed by pragmatism to adjust the prevailing state of liberal democracy, Dewey pushed for the possibility of profound transformation by arguing for a new level of participation in government by everyday citizens that was fully consistent with the pragmatist conception of knowledge and mind.

## **Discussion**

### **Responding to Dewey's Critics**

Dewey has been criticized for lacking specific details as to how his democratic vision could be enacted. It is true that Dewey never provided a specific recipe for democracy. While critics are correct that Dewey did not provide a specific blueprint for large-scale implementation of the "Great Community," their expectation of specificity misunderstands Dewey's arguments about the experimental and contextual nature of democratic communication. Dewey anticipated such critiques in *Public and Its Problems*:

0 Whipple, "The Dewey-Lippmann Debate Today: Communication Distortions, Reflective Agency, and Participatory Democracy," *Sociological Theory* 23, no. 2 (2005).

0 Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, 146.

0 Ibid., 181.

The prime condition of a democratically organized public is a kind of knowledge and insight which does not yet exist. In its absence, it would be the height of absurdity to try to tell what it would be like if it existed.<sup>0</sup>

For Dewey, the particulars of his democratic vision must be enacted through experimental inquiry within particular contexts. To argue for narrow specifics is to misunderstand Dewey's experimentalism in application to social and political affairs, and to demand from Dewey static conceptions of knowledge and mind that his experimentalism challenges.

Nevertheless, much of what Dewey argued at the end of *Public and Its Problems* helps to clarify his vision of democracy as the "Great Community." Against the above criticisms, Dewey offers a guiding principle of free and full communication among the citizenry and participation in civic affairs. Dewey envisioned communication as the key way citizens make meaning, and as a way to forge the communicative habits necessary for democratic participation. Consequently, he provided a place to start in forging his democratic vision – local communities and direct face-to-face interaction. Dewey posited a "rooted cosmopolitanism"<sup>0</sup> that recognizes the democratic habit-forming functions of local communities and direct communication, which serve as preconditions for the emergence of the Great Community. By highlighting shared communication in local contexts, the roadblocks inhibiting free and full communication and participation could begin to be addressed.

In the past generation, research on democracy has supported many of Dewey's assertions while challenging the conclusions of many of his critics. Dewey's critics assert his model of democracy is impractical for large-scale society, but recent research suggests many of the problems of modern democracy can be attributed to the assumption that politics must be centered at ever-greater levels of government. Democracy scholar Harry Boyte argues that the relocation of politics in the state, increasingly evident throughout the twentieth century, "reversed 2,000 years of history about the meaning of politics."<sup>0</sup> This relocation of politics in the state is now understood as the norm,

<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>0</sup> Bernstein, "Creative Democracy – the Task Still Before us," *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (2000): 221.

<sup>0</sup> Harry C. Boyte, *Civic Agency and the Cult of the Expert* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2009), 8-9.

with Dewey's arguments about democracy as a way of life now identified as radical and unrealistic. It was this positivistic turn toward expert political knowledge embedded in state institutions, according to Boyte, that began to marginalize civil society. Boyte states "expert claims to unique authority based precisely on outsider ways of knowing eroded the civil fabric of society."<sup>0</sup> While neither Lippmann nor Dewey would be pleased with the current state of American democracy, only Dewey fully conceptualized the danger of encroaching expert knowledge superseding that of everyday citizens.

Recent scholarship on deliberative democracy reinforces some of Dewey's conceptual points while addressing his critics. In their research on democratic deliberation, Fagotto & Fung find four benefits of deliberative processes: 1) They strengthened the fabric of local communities by helping to build trust and encourage positive social interactions; 2) They improved public judgment by helping participants better understand issues, including opposing viewpoints; 3) They improved communication and accountability between citizens and local officials; 4) They addressed insufficient governmental resources by allowing localities to tap a broader range of resources from within communities.<sup>0</sup> These benefits support Dewey's conception of communication as a meaning-making process. By becoming participants in shared communication processes, citizens improve their knowledge about issues and become better judges of policy, all while bettering understanding differing opinions and being able to better hold politicians accountable. Research within social education on deliberative processes have also found that working through issues discursively improves understandings for both students and citizens, while increasing recognition and sympathy for other perspectives.<sup>0</sup> All of this suggests that criticisms about the

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<sup>0</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>0</sup> Elena Fagotto and Archon Fung, "Sustaining Public Engagement: Embedded Deliberation in Local Communities," in *Democratizing Deliberation*, eds. Derek W. M. Barker, Noelle McAfee, and David W. McIvor (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2012), 139-145.

<sup>0</sup> See Kathleen Knight Abowitz, *Publics for Public Schools: Legitimacy, Democracy, and Leadership* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2013); Diana Hess, *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Paula McAvoy and Diana Hess, "Classroom Deliberation in an Era of Political Polarization," *Curriculum Inquiry* 43, no. 1 (2013): 14-47; Walter Parker, "Public Discourses in Schools: Purposes, Problems, Possibilities," *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 8 (2006): 11-18; and Walter Parker, "Listening to Strangers: Classroom Discussion in Democratic Education," *Teachers College Record* 112, no. 11 (2010): 2815-2832.

impracticality of direct political participation on a large-scale miss the mark. Although town hall forums are not practical on a national scale for every issue, participation in deliberative forums at the local level foster more knowledgeable and engaged citizens – even on matters of national scope. Dewey’s emphasis on transactionally constructed knowledge through communication and experimentation becomes crucial, because research suggests that direct participation on every issue is not necessary. According to the above evidence, periodic participation in deliberative forums, if normalized as a form of citizen participation, would vastly improve both culture and politics and begin to address many of the concerns of modern democracy. From a Deweyan perspective, the habit-forming functions of periodic participation would make citizens better prepared to engage critically with mass media, while preparing participants to play more vocal and active political roles at times when greater participation becomes more crucial, such as during elections or times of crisis.

### **Participatory Democracy in the Trump Age**

With the election of Trump, it would be easy to conclude that Lippmann was correct in his base assertion that the average citizen does not have the capability to participate in governance. But this would ignore all of the conditions under which such votes were cast, while downplaying the real possibilities that currently exist for improving the intelligence and efficacy of average citizens.

Ostensibly, Dewey’s desire for full and free communication among and between the citizenry has been achieved by the Internet, but understanding Dewey’s arguments for the potential of participatory democracy require a deeper look at this conclusion. Within Dewey’s call for greater social and political participation was also a plea for a change in habits among citizens. The result, from Dewey’s perspective, could be thick communities of citizens who could harness electronic communication to exchange ideas and concerns with other groups, thereby fostering permeability and flexibility within overlapping associations.

In contemporary society, by contrast, the Internet is used to create personalized media experiences for customers. Informal associations are now centered largely on leisure and recreation rather than shared social concerns. If Dewey could survey the contemporary media terrain, he would likely be dismayed that 21<sup>st</sup> century media technologies have been forged under the habits of atomized, competitive individualism; the same cultural attitudes that Dewey worked to challenge during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century.<sup>0</sup> While these ideas have been continuously present within the culture since Dewey's time, they have only grown more prevalent with the rise of neoliberalism and its continued bolstering by a Right-wing media network that depicts any kind of collective action or public good as antithetical to American ideals. In a country that embraces the myth of meritocratic achievement and the dog-eat-dog competitive ethos of neoliberalism, even as social mobility has floundered and real wages have declined, it should come as no surprise that new media technologies have accelerated political polarization. The stereotypes of mass media that initially concerned Lippmann have also been greatly amplified by the echo chambers of social media and partisan news sources. To stem this tide, avenues for cultivating different habits must be forged that cut into the escapist behaviors and polarized attitudes currently prevailing within the culture that cut across partisan lines.

Dewey's arguments can point the way forward toward a more robust democratic society. One avenue begins with his conception of publics, which arise due to shared concerns. While Internet media environments have bolstered political polarization, they also make it easier for affected publics to organize for political and social action. The early days of the Trump administration have been met with massive protests from American citizens. Resistance and civil disobedience can be readily incorporated into Dewey's framing of publics when the state is not adequately responding to citizens' concerns<sup>0</sup> and these forms of action may prove to be necessary throughout the Trump years.

While such movements may be needed at present, they could also serve to further divide the culture if attempts are not ultimately made to engage the opinions of diverse others. In Dewey's democratic theory, involvement in social and political movements can further the deliberative quest among participants, as the collective action against injustice should lead to searches for more fruitful policy alternatives. However, it is imperative for contemporary progressives to take a full accounting of what has led to the current democratic malaise if polarization trends are to be reversed. Leftists will need to not only recognize the role that the political Right has played in emphasizing cultural differences in order to drive a wedge between liberal and white working-class voters, they must also highlight the role that the Democratic Party has played and continues to play in eroding faith in liberal ideas

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<sup>0</sup> See Dewey, *Individualism Old and New*; and Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*.

<sup>0</sup> Melvin Rogers, "Dewey and his Vision for Democracy," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 7, no. 1 (2010): 69-91.

among working-class whites. It is worth noting that many of the most damaging legislative initiatives of the past generation, including NAFTA and the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, were passed by the Clinton administration. These realities, along with Obama's more recent support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, allowed Donald Trump to position himself as the people's champion in a way that was convincing to many.

Although Trump's deft use of Right-wing media will give him some measure of cover, the bankrupt nature of his policies will become increasingly apparent to ordinary citizens over time. This presents both immense danger and extraordinary opportunity. Trump's attacks on the vulnerable could help expose his ineptitude and moral failings if opposition is firm and consistent. If resistance wanes, this could easily lead to even greater repression by an administration that recently publicly asserted that the power of the executive branch supersedes that of other branches, which is clearly not consistent with the U.S. Constitution.

For now, the usually passive American population has been stirred into action, and this could be used to foster a long-term shift toward a less apathetic, deliberative culture. In the immediate short-term action of resistance lie the seeds of a slower, more thoughtful search for better alternatives. In that search, new habits can be cultivated that lead us toward a more democratically active society if the desire for easy solutions or viewing mainstream liberal politicians as saviors can be resisted. The arduous journey of fighting Trump's "shock-and-awe" executive orders and policy measures for the next few years will make quick solutions unlikely, which may help to forge more deliberate habits among protestors and dissenters. A deliberative culture would also require everyday citizens to begin to engage in difficult discussions with the people in their proximity. It will also be necessary for teachers, professors, and other members of the public to become more overtly politically engaged, something that may be encouraged by the continued attack on the public sector which is likely to become more pronounced during the Trump presidency. If the culture is to become more permanently politically active, the first step must be changing cultural habits toward more regular, substantive social interaction, and such changes must necessarily begin in our public places and institutions.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Carey's critics are at least partially correct in defending Lippmann from some of Carey's more definitive

assertions. Specifically, Lippmann does not hold an entirely objective view of knowledge as Carey asserts. Rather, he understands that citizens construct knowledge out of the information they encounter. Lippmann's primary concern is that political issues had become divorced from direct experience, leading individuals to construct understandings through stereotypes as opposed to forming their own knowledge through direct experience.

However, in contrast to his critics, Carey correctly perceives that Dewey holds a more profound understanding of how communication can address the challenges of modern democracy. Dewey's transactional conception of knowledge leads him to understand that participation in processes of shared communication can begin to address Lippmann's concerns of stereotypes by helping citizens forge connections between direct experiences and the larger world; facilitating both meaning making and affirmative action regarding social and political issues.

Recent political and social developments have arguably signaled the final failures of representative democracy under neoliberal capitalism. Dewey's vision for a more participatory form of democratic living may point the way toward a more hopeful future. Though the picture of that future is not clear, it will necessarily involve greater participation from citizens, which begins with fostering a deliberative culture at a time when so many have begun to question the prevailing state of affairs.

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# THE MIND IS NOT THE BRAIN: JOHN DEWEY, NEUROSCIENCE, AND AVOIDING THE MERELOGICAL FALLACY

DERON BOYLES & JIM GARRISON



The purpose of this paper is to argue that however impressive and useful its results, neuroscience alone does not provide a complete theory of mind. We specifically enlist John Dewey to help dispel the notion that the mind is the brain. In doing so, we explore functionalism to clarify Dewey's modified functionalist stance (biological psychology) and argue for avoiding "the mereological fallacy." Mereology (from the Greek μέρος, "part") is the study of part-whole relations. The mereological fallacy arises from confusing the properties of a necessary subfunction with the properties that derive from the unity of the whole functional coordination. We conclude that the mind is a complex distributed biological-sociocultural function that is not simply located anywhere and, therefore, is not completely in the possession of any one (person, place, or thing): it occurs wherever it has consequences.



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**Introduction**

From the popular press to academic journals, neuroscience appears to be enjoying a steady expansion of coverage. Newspapers headline “cutting edge research” in neuroscience. Corporations like Lumosity continue to promote the idea that the brain is a muscle and, for a monthly fee, will offer puzzles to increase “brain function.” Instead of the familiar questions these examples illustrate regarding what the mind does (thinks, feels, cognizes, imagines, remembers, etc.), we shift the focus to query where it is located so as to avoid “the mereological fallacy.”<sup>0</sup> The mind is not some *thing* located in the brain or any place else. It is a complex distributed biological-sociocultural *function* occurring wherever it operates in a complex world without within.<sup>0</sup> We must avoid the mereological fallacy of confusing the properties of necessary subfunctions such as those studied by neuroscience with the properties that derive from the unity of the whole functional coordination of an agent’s transactions with its environment.

Perhaps surprisingly, the classical educational philosopher and pragmatist John Dewey helps us recognize that the excessive claims of some cognitive neuroscientists involve a timeworn dualism:

The advance of physiology and the psychology associated with it have shown the connection of mental activity with that of the nervous system. Too often recognition of connection has stopped short at this point; the older dualism of soul and body has been replaced by that of the brain and the rest of the body. But in fact the nervous

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<sup>0</sup> We borrow the phrase from Maxwell R. Bennett and Peter M.S. Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003). John Searle calls this the “fallacy of composition. See John R. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology: Reflections on Free Will, Language, and Politics of Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 76.

<sup>0</sup> We must not confuse biological-sociocultural functionalism with philosophical functionalism, which we will soon see is its antithesis. The concept of a “world without within” comes from an essay by J.E. Tiles. He argues that Dewey’s reaction to Bertrand Russell’s book, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, was to basically reject the problem assumed; that is, a separation between internal and external worlds. It simply was not a problem, on Dewey’s view. As Tiles notes, “Dewey’s whole philosophy suggests in effect that we do better to reconstruct our conception of the relationship between the mind and the world so that the problem does not arise.” See J.E. Tiles, “Dewey’s Realism: Applying the Term ‘Mental’ in a World without Within,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 31, no. 1 (Winter, 1995): 137-166, 137.

system is only a specialized mechanism for keeping all bodily activities working together.<sup>0</sup>

The connection of neurology with mental functioning is immensely important as long as we do not confuse the nervous system with the mind. There is an even more fundamental error here toward which Dewey gestures.

Mereology (from the Greek μέρος, “part”) is the study of part-whole relations. The mereological fallacy arises from confusing the properties of a necessary subfunction with the properties that derive from the unity of the whole functional coordination. Cognitive neuroscientists and their votaries commit some version of the mereological fallacy when they confuse a part (e.g., the brain) with the larger whole involved in mental functioning. Humans are a psychophysical union. We may say of human beings that they reason, emote, consider, and self-reflect. We may not say of the human brain the same things.

Although Dewey does not use the word “mereology,” he clearly identifies the fallacy:

The dualism is found today even among those who have abandoned its earlier manifestations. It is shown in separations made between the structural and the functional; between the brain and the rest of the body; between the central nervous system and the vegetative nervous system and viscera; and, most fundamentally, between the organism and the environment. For the first of each of these pairs of terms—structure, brain, organism—retains something of the isolation and alleged independence that used to belong to the “soul and the mind,” and later to “consciousness.”<sup>0</sup>

That somehow the mind could function without the large internal organs of heart, lungs, kidney, and such (i.e., the viscera) expresses the curiously disembodied thinking of many in cognitive neuroscience. Understanding mental functioning involves comprehending the *part* (i.e., brain or neural system) *within* the larger nervous system, viscera, and body as well as the environment, perhaps especially the social environment.

### **The Travails of Philosophical Functionalism**

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<sup>0</sup> MW 9:346.

<sup>0</sup> LW 13: 324.

The following provides a useful working definition of philosophical functionalism, which dominates contemporary theories of the mind in psychology, sociology, and beyond:

Functionalism is a philosophical theory (or family of theories) concerning the nature of mental states. According to functionalism psychological/cognitive states are essentially functional states of whole systems. Functionalism characterizes psychological states essentially...by their relations to stimulus inputs and behavioral outputs as well as their relations to other psychological and nonpsychological internal states of a system.<sup>0</sup>

Philosophical functionalism assumes the *internal* configuration of the system determines a mental state and not its physical or perhaps nonphysical (psychic?) substance.

Turing machine functionalism provided the first and still classic example. Hilary Putnam first proposed the idea that the mind is a Turing machine; that is, an abstract finite state digital computer that transitions from one state to another according to specific recursive rules (i.e., the code or program).<sup>0</sup> This theory identifies mental states with computer or machine states, as the following illustration indicates:

Suppose a barometer displays an unusually low reading and upon seeing this George takes steps appropriate to wet weather. The barometer indicator standing where it does is not anything mental; the rainy weather (actual or prospective) is not anything mental. What is mental is the way the barometer indicator functions to influence George's actions as stormy weather would influence his actions. No one gets rained on or windblown by a barometer (even one indicating unusually low pressure);

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<sup>0</sup> Thomas W. Polger, "Functionalism as a Philosophical Theory of the Cognitive Sciences," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 3, no. 3 (2012): 337-348, 337. For one indication of the detailed analyses of functionalism, see Martin Mahner and Mario Bunge, "Function and Functionalism: A Synthetic Perspective," *Philosophy of Science*. 68, no. 1 (March, 2001): 75-94.

<sup>0</sup> Hilary Putnam, "Minds and Machines," in Sidney Hook, ed., *Dimensions of Mind* (New York: New York University Press, 1960).

nevertheless the barometer prompts in George action which anticipates his being rained on or windblown.<sup>0</sup>

Here, action involves dispositions to act plus mental states understood as internal functional configurations of some system.

Putnam ultimately abandoned not only Turing machine state functionalism, but also all other forms of philosophical functionalism. Chapter 5 of his widely influential *Representation and Reality* is titled: “Why Functionalism Didn’t Work.”<sup>0</sup> He outlines his basic ideas in the first chapter on intentionality. Putnam gives three reasons why philosophical functionalism fails. We will not only discover all three operating in Dewey’s social psychology, but will find them prefigured in biological functioning.

First, philosophical functionalism treats meaning atomistically as an isolated state and a set of rules (e.g., a program) for moving from one isolated state to the next. However, according to Putnam, meaning is holistic. This implies that meaning cannot be captured by words or sentences that are merely “given by . . . a rule which determines in exactly which experiential situations the sentence is assertable.”<sup>0</sup> Holism also “runs counter to the great tendency to stress definition as the means by which the meaning of words is to be explained or fixed.”<sup>0</sup> His example is the history of the word “momentum” in physics; “number” would work as well.

Second, meaning is partially normative. That is, “deciding to interpret someone one way rather than another is intimately tied to normative judgments.”<sup>0</sup> Most commonly, this means a principle of “charity” that assumes “general intelligence” on the part of the speaker. There is an ancient report that the Pythagorean who discovered the proof of irrational numbers did so while at sea and his colleagues threw him overboard to drown because it destroyed their norms of rationality. Later mathematicians expressed greater charity regarding the meaning of number—including real numbers, imaginary numbers, and, quite recently, Chaitin’s number.

Finally, and most devastatingly, “*Our Concepts Depend on Our Physical and Social Environment in a Way That Evolution (Which was Completed, for Our Brains, about 300,000 Years Ago)*

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<sup>0</sup> Tiles, 142-143.

<sup>0</sup> Hilary Putnam, *Representation and Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

*Couldn't Foresee.*<sup>0</sup> This position leads to semantic externalism; the notion that psychological functioning is dependent on the environment. “The semantic externalist postulates necessary connections between the content of our thinking and the external world.”<sup>0</sup> Such considerations devastate those like Noam Chomsky and Jerry Fodor who are committed to strong psycho-functional innateness theories of mind.<sup>0</sup> How could the language of thought contain “carburetor” before its emergence in culture?

Consider, however, that “changes in a community’s ‘procedures’ for using a lexical term do not usually count as a change in the meaning of the item [e.g., momentum or number].”<sup>0</sup> Indeed, “[I]f semantic representations in the brain are developed from experience, just as words in public language are . . . there is no reason to think that a given representation (described syntactically) will not come to be given *different* meanings by different groups.”<sup>0</sup> There is no reason to think that the mental language is the same as the cultural language, or the “language” of the brain (i.e., semantic representations, or states and procedures) needed to establish meaning identity. Therefore, we should not suppose brain states uniquely match up with meanings of any kind. This is a version of Putnam’s famous multiple realizability argument, which leads to a non-reductive (or emergent) materialism that closely resembles Dewey’s emergent naturalism.

Putnam also developed a “direct realism” that emphasizes the way people actually experience the world and rejects the notion of mental representations as intermediaries between “inner” mind and the “outer” world. This view has much in common with Dewey, who writes: “The material and spiritual, the physical and the mental or psychical; body and mind; experience and reason; sense and intellect, appetitive desire and will; subjective and objective, individual and social; inner and outer; this last division underlying in a way all the others.”<sup>0</sup> For Dewey the Darwinian, human nature is a part of nature. There is no dualism of the knower and the known, the mind and the world, or the inner and the outer.

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<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>0</sup> Timothy Williamson, “Skepticism, Semantic Externalism, and Keith’s Mom,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* XXXVIII, no. 1 (2000): 149-158, 149.

<sup>0</sup> See Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (New York: Martino, 1957/2015); and Jerry A. Fodor, *Psychosemantics: The Problem of Meaning in the Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Bradford Book, 1989).

<sup>0</sup> Putnam, *Representation and Reality*, 15.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>0</sup> LW 16: 408.

While there are serious problems regarding knowledge, how we know the world is not so different from how we eat it.

### **Dewey's Functionalism: Biological Psychology**

In many ways, American functional psychology and sociology originated in the work of Dewey and his colleagues James Angell and George Herbert Mead at the University of Chicago in the 1890s. Unlike philosophical functionalism, classical functional psychology investigates thought, feeling, and action in terms of the organism's active adaptation to its environment. The classical statement was Dewey's "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology."<sup>0</sup>

In a past-presidential address to the American Psychological Association titled "The Need for Social Psychology," Dewey affirmed:

From the point of view of the psychology of behavior all psychology is either biological or social psychology. And if it still be true that man is not only an animal but a social animal, the two cannot be dis severed when we deal with man.<sup>0</sup>

In this section, we concentrate on biological psychology, which includes the brain and other neurophysiological functions as well as all the biological functions of the body that the brain coordinates and depends upon. Social psychology involves abstract, arbitrary, linguistic meanings that Putnam argues are holistic, externalist, and normative.

Dewey the Darwinian identifies "experience with a living function."<sup>0</sup> Psychological functioning is an emergent living function. Experience is what happens to sentient beings as they transact with their environment, which seems to exclude plants and sponges much less Turing machines. It is a continuation of emergent physical and chemical transactions. The familiar example is water. Hydrogen is combustible, oxygen sustains combustion, and H<sub>2</sub>O puts out most types of fires.

Let us inspect some of the characteristics of any living function. Dewey claims: "Any process, sufficiently complex to involve an arrangement or coordination of minor processes, which

<sup>0</sup> EW 5: 96-109. In 1943, a committee of seventy eminent psychologists polled by the editors of *The Psychological Review* voted this essay the most important contribution to the journal during its first fifty years.

<sup>0</sup> MW 10: 63.

<sup>0</sup> MW 13: 377.

fulfills a specific end in such a way as to conserve itself, is called a function.”<sup>0</sup> Functions are exceedingly complex: “Any operative function gets us behind the ordinary distinction of organism and environment. It presents us with their undifferentiated unity, not with their unification. It is primary; distinction is subsequent and derived.”<sup>0</sup> Dewey rejects the organism versus environment dualism asserting that “a living organism and its life processes involve a world or nature temporally and spatially ‘external’ to itself but ‘internal’ to its functions.”<sup>0</sup> Food, water, and a mate are external to our epidermis, but unless they become internal to our functioning, the Darwinian imperatives of survival and reproduction become impossible to satisfy. No organism is simply located in space or time. We may say the same for psychological functions. This is the biological matrix of semantic externalism.

Dewey observes: “An organism may be studied just as organism (physiology, anatomy) separately from study of its surroundings. But at every point the connection with environment—or a prior unity of function is presupposed and implied.”<sup>0</sup> We may study lungs, heart, and blood circulation apart from the chemical properties of the surrounding air, but we cannot hope for an adequate understanding without reference to the oxygen and carbon dioxide cycle involving the fauna and flora of the planet. The same holds for studying the brain as a subfunction of psychological functioning. *We commit the mereological fallacy in psychology just as we do in biology when we confuse a useful methodological simplification for the purposes of inquiry for the whole of a complex physical, biological, and social function.*

What Dewey says next explains the parallels we have been drawing between organism-environmental transactions and mind-body transactions:

Exactly the same state of things holds for psychology. We inquire separately into the states and processes that are referred to the subject. This does not mean that they *exist* separately. A tree may be subject-matter of legal inquiry, as property; of economic science as productive of saleable commodities; of horticultural art; of botany; of physics and chemistry; of geography; of trigonometry; even as geological subject-matter. So it may be studied as

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<sup>0</sup> MW 6: 466.

<sup>0</sup> MW 13: 377.

<sup>0</sup> LW 1: 212.

<sup>0</sup> MW 13: 381.

psychological subject-matter; as perceived, remembered, imagined, conceived, longed for, enjoyed, etc.<sup>0</sup>

None of these functions exist separately any more than an organism exists separately from the environment, the lungs from the chemical properties of air, or the brain from the body and the larger physical, biological, and social environment.

Dewey claims: “Habits are the basis of organic learning.”<sup>0</sup> The neurosciences including brain research have much to offer educators that wish to understand the organic basis of learning. From birth, we have species-specific neurophysiological instincts, or so-called “first nature.” Habits are “second nature:”

Habits may be profitably compared to physiological functions like breathing, digesting. The latter are, to be sure, involuntary, while habits are acquired . . . . Habits are like functions in many respects, and especially in requiring the cooperation of organism and environment.<sup>0</sup>

Dewey observes that like “the functions of breathing and digesting, habits are not complete within the human body . . . . [F]unctions and habits are ways of using and incorporating the environment in which the latter has its say as surely as the former.”<sup>0</sup> He later remarks, “habits endure, because these habits incorporate objective conditions in themselves.”<sup>0</sup> As with innate biological functions, habits are biological subfunctions of a transactional world without within. They involve the brain, but the brain is only a subfunction of habitual functioning.

Habits, for Dewey, are dispositions to act evincing emotions; they are generalized forms of response to a given certain class of stimuli.<sup>0</sup> They are organic universals serving as instruments of existential inference while prefiguring formal logical implication. Even our formal theories of inquiry arise “as an articulate expression of the habit that is involved in a class of inferences.”<sup>0</sup> “The universal is not primarily logic, but is factual,

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<sup>0</sup> MW 13: 381.

<sup>0</sup> LW 12: 38.

<sup>0</sup> MW 14: 15.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>0</sup> MW 14: 32.

<sup>0</sup> LW 12: 20.

habitual.”<sup>0</sup> “This concrete logic of action,” Dewey believes, “long precedes the logic of pure speculation or abstract investigation, and through the mental habits that it forms is the best of preparations for the latter.”<sup>0</sup> “Thought carried on by anyone,” he insists, “depends upon his habits.”<sup>0</sup> Habits become “articulate” when we acquire the habits of linguistic usage in the domain of social psychology.

Habits coordinate neurophysiological sensory-motor activity with environmental conditions. They involve the biochemistry of neurotransmission. A neuron’s resting electrical charge is negative inside and positive outside; firing reverses the potential. The primary synaptic transmitters are an excitatory transmitter glutamate and an inhibitor gamma-aminobutyric acid. Donald Hebb developed the idea that “Cells that fire together wire together.”<sup>0</sup> Demonstrating association in the brain occurs when neurons receiving information from stimuli fire simultaneously. Terje Lømo and Tim Bliss’s long-term potentiation allows us to “translate neural activity generated by environmental stimuli into changes in synaptic efficiency . . . to record and store information.”<sup>0</sup> There is no doubt that the brain is the primary site of this activity. We may study habits using functional magnetic resonance image (fMRI) and the like and draw important conclusions based on cognitive neuroscience. It is a useful methodological simplification that creates no mischief as long as we avoid the mereological fallacy. However we must never forget that there is much *external* to the neurophysiology of a habit that is nonetheless *internal* to its functioning. We must never lose sight of the larger functional *whole* of which a habit is a subfunction. Habits are not entirely “in” the brain or even the body. They distribute their functioning throughout a world without within.

### Dewey’s Theory of Intentionality

In his essay, “Dewey’s Realism: Applying the Term ‘Mental’ in a World without Within,” J. E. Tiles connects Dewey’s participatory realism with his criteria of mental functioning.<sup>0</sup> A similar relation exists between Putnam’s “direct realism” and his meaning

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<sup>0</sup> MW 13: 389.

<sup>0</sup> MW 1: 93.

<sup>0</sup> LW 8: 171.

<sup>0</sup> See Joseph LeDoux, *Synaptic Self* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2003), 79.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>0</sup> Tiles, *op. cit.*

externalism. Tiles begins by observing that the word “intention” derives from “the Latin, ‘*intendo*’ meaning ‘point [at],’ ‘aim [at],’ ‘extend [toward].”<sup>0</sup> Tiles observes that “signs, for example words [propositions, symbol strings, and such], can help to clarify the notion of an intentional state or act as well as the importance of the condition that it refer to or be ‘about’ something (normally) beyond itself.”<sup>0</sup> A mental state or act such as reasoning, imagining, reacting emotionally toward an object “is not intentional, i.e., is not a mental state or act, by virtue of any inherent properties it may have but by virtue of its referring or being about its object or objects.”<sup>0</sup> Hence, it is possible to speak of signs as having mental properties, which, surprisingly, is precisely Dewey’s position.

Tiles calls attention to the following passage in which it is the function that is mental not some substance supporting the function:

But a thing which has or exercises the quality of being a surrogate of some absent thing is so distinctive, so unique, that it needs a distinctive name. *As exercising the function we may call it mental.* Neither the thing meant nor the thing signifying is mental. Nor is meaning itself mental in any psychical, dualistic, existential sense. Traditional dualism takes the undoubted logical duality, or division of labor, between data and meanings, and gets into the epistemological predicament by transforming it into an *existential dualism*, a separation of two radically diverse orders of being. Starting from the undoubted existence of inference, or from a logical function, “ideas” denote problematic objects so far as they are signified by present things and are capable of logical manipulation. A probable rain storm, as indicated to us by the look of the clouds or the barometer, gets embodied in a word or some other present thing and hence can be treated *for certain purposes* just as an actual rain storm would be treated. We may then term it a mental entity.<sup>0</sup>

As we indicated earlier, Tiles asks us to imagine “George” noticing the barometer displaying an unusually low reading and taking appropriate action, perhaps taking an umbrella with him. Compare

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<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>0</sup> MW 13: 56-57.

this situation with the one depicted by Levin of believing it is going to rain as a machine state regarded as a disposition to take one's umbrella with them given the weather report. The philosophical functionalists are right that the platform upon which mental functioning is actualized is irrelevant, but wrong to simply locate mental functioning as "internal" to anything (body, brain, mind, or whatever).

"What is mental," to emphasize Tiles' point again, "is *the way* the barometer indicator functions to influence George's actions as stormy weather would influence his actions."<sup>0</sup> We might say the same for the clouds. We will later consider the psychological difference between barometers and clouds. The point is that the barometer "may be taken to 'mean' severe weather," regardless of whether anyone notices it; that is because the relation that "connects the state of the barometer to the state of the weather, obtains objectively and independently of being recognized."<sup>0</sup> Of course, it requires a creature with sufficient intelligence to recognize the relation. What comes next is critical: "Compared to the account of 'mental' based on the criterion of intentionality, Dewey has displaced the term so that, instead of applying primarily to a state or 'act' of George, it applies . . . to a *function* of the barometer."<sup>0</sup> Remember, Putnam thinks it is a mistake to "postulate that desires and beliefs are 'functional states' of the brain."<sup>0</sup> On Dewey's account, the brain, a neural network, a state of a computer, etc., are only subfunctions of a complex distributed function in which, as Tiles states it, "the term 'mental' gets pushed out into the world," but not "divorcing it from, and treating it as independent of, subjects or agents."<sup>0</sup> Dewey's criteria replaces the "relatively simple two-term schema" to which intentionality usually appeals with "a three-term schema."<sup>0</sup> "Instead of a subject or agent whose state or act refers to something beyond the subject or agent," Tiles observes, "we have a subject or agent whose act is to *take* something beyond itself as referring to something else beyond itself."<sup>0</sup> This taking and using is a function of Darwinian intelligence operating so as to coordinate

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<sup>0</sup> Tiles, 143.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>0</sup> Putnam, *Representation and Reality*, 7.

<sup>0</sup> Tiles, 143.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

the organism with its physical, biological, and as we are about to see, its social environment.

### **Dewey's Functionalism: Social Psychology**

Dewey deems that “modification of organic behavior in and by the cultural environment accounts for, or rather is, the transformation of purely organic behavior into behavior marked by intellectual properties.”<sup>0</sup> “When things have a meaning for us,” Dewey notes, “we *mean* (intend, propose, purpose) what we do: when they do not, we act blindly, unconsciously, unintelligently.”<sup>0</sup> Instead of responding to stimuli, say a cloud, in terms of our first or second nature, we may respond because we grasp the cognitive meaning of the stimuli within a given situation; we literally have an *idea* (concept) of what needs doing; therefore, we act with intention. He remarks on “the especial function of language in effecting the transformation of the biological into the intellectual and the potentially logical.”<sup>0</sup> Linguistic functioning supervenes upon habitual functioning: “Any habit is a way or manner of action, not a particular act or deed. When it is formulated it becomes, as far as it is accepted, a rule, or more generally, a principle or ‘law’ of action.”<sup>0</sup> Articulate habits enable cognitive functioning.

For Dewey, to have a mind in the sense of abstract cognition is to have linguistic meanings: “Mind denotes the whole system of meanings as they are embodied in the workings of organic life; consciousness in a being with language denotes awareness or perception of meanings; it is the perception of actual events, whether past, contemporary or future, *in* their meanings, the having of actual ideas.”<sup>0</sup> This is Dewey’s semantic holism. For him it is “association, communication, participation” that “define mind as intellect: possession of and response to meanings.”<sup>0</sup> To understand any language, we “have to be able to re-instate the

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<sup>0</sup> LW 12: 49. Michael Cole’s work on cultural psychology is an important *part* of psychology. He makes good use of Dewey. See Michael Cole, *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>0</sup> LW 12: 34.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>0</sup> LW 1: 230.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

whole social context which alone supplies the meaning.”<sup>0</sup> This is the social component of Putnam’s semantic holism.

Dewey states: “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.”<sup>0</sup> Here is an example:

A requests B to bring him something, to which A points, say a flower. There is an original mechanism by which B may react to A’s movement in pointing. But natively such a reaction is to the movement, not to the *pointing*, not to the object pointed out. But B learns that the movement *is* a pointing; he responds to it not in itself, but as an index of something else. His response is transferred from A’s direct movement to the *object* to which A points . . . .<sup>0</sup>

Linguistic meaning involves the functional coordination of A and B with the object O in a shared context of action. It requires taking the attitude of the other in the transaction.<sup>0</sup> B must *take* “the movement” of A and *use* it as a surrogate of the object to which it refers. As Dewey indicates, “there is something present in organic action which acts as a surrogate for the remote things signified.”<sup>0</sup> That something is the habit that serves as the embodied interpretant of the meaning function. Like other habits, linguistic habits incorporate something, perhaps a conspecific, *external* to the living creature’s existence yet nonetheless *internal* to its (meaning) functioning. However, “The nervous system is in no sense the ‘seat’ of the idea. It is a mechanism of the connection or integration of acts.”<sup>0</sup> Here we may appreciate what the biological matrix contributes to semantic externalism.

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<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 140. Those familiar with the slab game in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* know exactly what Dewey is up to here. Many have commented on the multiple similarities between the later Wittgenstein and Dewey, including such prominent philosophers such as W. V. O. Quine and Richard Rorty. Rorty rightly adds Heidegger to the mix.

<sup>0</sup> Mirror neurons facilitate taking the attitude of others. They fire much the same as the neurons of someone you see gesturing. Try yawning expansively at a social affair (see Robert Provine, “Yawning,” *American Scientist* 93 (2005): 532-539). Neurology is an important *subfunction* of mental functioning.

<sup>0</sup> LW 1: 222.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*

Notice the meaning function is a three-term schema; the same schema Tiles uses to depict Dewey's theory of intentionality. In the context of the social construction of meaning we have two agents that *take* and *use* each other to refer to a third thing they *make* in common. More precisely: *The two subjects and the object emerge simultaneously in the social transaction.* They create each other as well as the common object within the emergent social-construction.

Dewey remarks: "For a meaning is a method of action, a way of using things as a means to a shared consummation . . . . Meanings are rules for using and interpreting things; interpretation being always an imputation of potentiality for some consequence."<sup>0</sup> Dewey's example involves rules of the road. He describes how traffic officers hold up their hands while blowing a whistle. It is not just an "episodic stimulus," because it "embodied a rule of social action;" i.e., a habit.<sup>0</sup> Its meaning involves socially coordinating the movements of persons and vehicles: "Its essence is the rule . . . the standardized habit, of social interaction . . . . This meaning is independent of the psychological landscape."<sup>0</sup> The rule, the meaning, is not just some brain state; it also has an objective and intersubjective as well as neurophysiological subfunctions (i.e., a habit). What we grasp when comprehending meaning is an objective *norm* of functionally coordinated action that, once rendered conscious, may be expressed symbolically using verbal gestures, writing, pointing, and such.

In Putnam's terms, meaning involves normative judgments requiring charity regarding the intelligence of our co-participants. Bring me a flower might involve agreement in action over a rose, a plastic rose, a rose window, and so on.<sup>0</sup> The difficulties are evident in games where referees not only interpret the rules, but also bend them within the "spirit of the game." Some linguistic communities are more rigid in their norms and rules (e.g., science and mathematics) than are others such as literature and poetry. The customs, laws, rules, norms, and such of a community inscribe

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<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>0</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>0</sup> After *Representation and Reality*, Putnam took a strong turn toward Deweyan pragmatism. Perhaps the chief debate of the 1990s in North American Philosophy was between two Deweyan pragmatists: Putnam and Rorty over realism and nominalism. Both got it wrong from a Deweyan perspective, although Putnam was much closer. See David L. Hildebrand, *Beyond Realism and Antirealism: John Dewey and the Neopragmatists* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003).

themselves upon the bodies of individuals as habits of practice. Further, as with a traffic officer, the power of enforcement always accompanies the rules and norms. Normative interpretation is an ongoing affair, a constant struggle over power, and perhaps the most amazing act a sentient being can perform.

**Conclusion: Where is the Mind?**

We should avoid the mereological fallacy. Having a human mind requires having a human brain functioning in a human body continually transacting with its physical, biological, sociocultural environment. Lacking any of these, we lose mental capacity. Where is the mind? We argue that the question is misplaced, as it were, and indicative of the very problem Dewey helps us solve. The answer to the question, nonetheless, is: wherever intentional functioning occurs. *The mind is a complex distributed biological-sociocultural function that is not simply located anywhere and, therefore, is not completely in the possession of any one (person, place or thing); it occurs wherever it has consequences.*

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH LARRY A. HICKMAN

LARRY A. HICKMAN



Larry A. Hickman is Emeritus Professor of philosophy at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where he was the director of the Center for Dewey Studies from 1993 until his retirement in 2015. His monographs include: *Modern Theories of Higher Level Predicates* (1980); *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology* (1990); *Philosophical Tools for Technological Culture* (2001); and *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism* (2007). His edited volumes include *Technology and Human Affairs* (1981); *Reading Dewey* (1998); *The Essential Dewey* (with Thomas Alexander) (1998); and *The Correspondence of John Dewey* (1999, 2001, 2005). He has also authored many articles on technology, environmental philosophy, critical theory, pragmatism, education, film studies, and philosophy of religion.

This interview was conducted via email in the Spring of 2017. Hickman's responses have not been altered in any way.



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*Q: How did you first come to philosophy as a vocation, and what drew you to it?*

Undergraduate philosophy courses whetted my curiosity about big ideas. In graduate school, I found a copious banquet at which I could savor the many delights of a large, pluralistic department. I couldn't, and can't, imagine a better profession than one that involves reading, writing, teaching, and assessing the works of writers whose ideas have changed the world.

*Q: What was your first encounter with Dewey? Were you immediately drawn to Dewey's thought?*

My study of C. S. Peirce led me to James and Dewey. My appreciation of Dewey's work, and pragmatism more generally, deepened when John J. McDermott became my colleague at Texas A&M in the mid 1970s. It became even more profound when I began to understand Dewey's account of technology as an overlooked key to his work.

*Q: Do you have a favorite Dewey text?*

There are so many. I carry several with me in my Evernote app. Probably the one I quote most often is from his 1939 lecture "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," where he says that "democracy is belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness. Every other form of moral and social faith rests upon the idea that experience must be subjected at some point or other to some form of external control; to some 'authority' alleged to exist outside the processes of experience." I also like his remark that "Art is the sole alternative to luck."

*Q: How has philosophy as a discipline changed since you first started?*

When I began, analytic philosophy was dominant and the APA was organizationally monolithic. There were almost no women or people of color in the profession. Since then the APA has become more pluralistic and opportunities for communication across professional interests and national boundaries are increasing. The profession still has a poor record when it comes to people of color and women (and, sadly, there continue to be reports of philosophers who are charged with sexual harassment), but there has been some progress in those areas.

*Q: How has Dewey (or pragmatist) scholarship changed since you first started? Is there a relationship between changes in pragmatist scholarship and changes within philosophy generally?*

When I began teaching, pragmatism was marginalized. There was, however, a small but energetic group of people who were editing critical editions and publishing first rate scholarship. Their efforts eventually paid off in terms of a revival of interest in Peirce, James, and Dewey, to be sure, but also figures such as Jane Addams and others. And there was Richard Rorty's famous plea at his 1979 Eastern APA presidential address that the philosophers should pay more attention to the pragmatists. Now, it seems, everyone wants to be a "pragmatist" of some sort or other.

*Q: What is your proudest accomplishment as a philosopher, thus far?*

I would point to my collaboration with the editorial staff of the Center for Dewey Studies that led to the publication of electronic editions of Dewey's *Collected Works* and his *Correspondence*. There was also collaboration with Donald Koch and the Dewey Center staff that led to the publication of Dewey's *Class Lectures*. Under this heading I also want to say that I am proud of the accomplishments of some of my former students.

*Q: Is there anything about your career thus far that you regret or would change if you could?*

Yes. Life without regrets is a life unlived. I wish I had had the time to take on the considerable task of writing a book on Dewey's 1938 *Logic*.

*Q: Do you have a project that you are working on or plans for the near future?*

I am currently working with a lay Buddhist organization, Soka Gakkai, on educational issues and I am on the board of Soka University of America. I am writing, lecturing, and preparing a new book.

*Q: Is there a certain direction that you think Dewey (or pragmatist) scholarship is headed? Are you excited by this trend, or worried by it?*

In one sense I am encouraged by how Dewey's insights are being applied to what he called "the problems of men [and women]." That would include issues in environmental philosophy, philosophy of technology, social and political philosophy, problems of economic and racial justice, and the various arts, including architecture. On the other hand, I see a gradual drift away from careful reading of his texts and appreciation of the historical and cultural context in which he and the other pragmatists worked.

*Q: If you could correct one misconception that people have about Dewey or pragmatism, what would it be?*

Probably one of the most persistent of the false ideas about the pragmatic theory of truth is that its sole or primary test involves personal satisfaction. Even some well-known philosophers have gotten that wrong.

*Q: Are there any "non-pragmatist" philosophers whose work you find compatible with or parallel to Dewey's?*

That is difficult question, since it is difficult to say who is a "non-pragmatist" philosopher in this age of syncretism. Nevertheless, Bruno Latour comes to mind. He is not known as a pragmatist, but Andrew Feenberg tells me that he read a lot of Dewey. I'll also mention Steven Shapin, Juergen Habermas, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Bernard Williams, to name a few. If I may stretch the disciplinary boundaries somewhat, the list should include Amartya Sen.

*Q: If you had to pick one philosopher who embodied everything Dewey stood against (an Anti-Dewey, so to speak) who would it be?*

"Everything" is a big word. Nevertheless, I'll mention three. House Speaker Paul Ryan's favorite philosopher Ayn Rand represents the opposite of Dewey's political philosophy. The late Derek Parfit's non-naturalism sets him in opposition to Dewey's ethics. Probably the champion "anti-Dewey" of all time was Mortimer Adler, whose views on metaphysics and education Dewey held in very low regard.

*Q: Do you have a favorite anecdote or bit of trivia about Dewey (or another pragmatist)?*

In 1943 the FBI investigated Dewey. The agent reported that “Subject. . . apparently does nothing but write.” He also reported that “Subject’s writings are numerous, involved and complicated. Reading him is a task. . .” Some of my students have said something similar.