

PRAGMATISM and DIVERSITY

DEWEY IN THE CONTEXT OF LATE
TWENTIETH CENTURY DEBATES

**Edited by JUDITH M. GREEN,
STEFAN NEUBERT,
and KERSTEN REICH**





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Pragmatism and Diversity

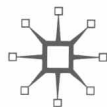
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Debates

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PRAGMATISM AND DIVERSITY

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We dedicate this volume to the memory of our colleague, the late
Michael Eldridge, whose intellectual spirit, courage, and open-mindedness
will be missed.

List of Contributors

Notes on Editors

Is John Dewey still an appropriate philosopher for our time? The comprehensive answer to this question that the eight authors give in this volume is that with regard to diversity—a core and intersectional topic of our time—John Dewey’s pragmatism is still a strong and vital philosophical tradition that offers many important resources and contexts to improve our thinking. The book develops philosophical discussions about actual challenges of democracy and diversity from the perspectives of pragmatism and constructivism. The contributors engage in conversations with pragmatist thinkers from earlier periods and proponents of other philosophical traditions—as well as with each other—in order to reconstruct Deweyan pragmatism and its perspectives on democracy and cosmopolitanism in ways that are attuned to our lived experience of diversity as well as our hopes for a diversity-appreciating democratic future. Such conversations have spurred them to reflect on differing experiences of human living together that challenge us to rethink the meaning of and the means to achieve diversity, solidarity, democratic community, and cosmopolitan universality, guided by practical exemplifications of these ideals in thinking and action that suggest how we as culture-immersed individuals and members of diverse democratic “publics” can desirably adjust our lifeways and our institutions, at local and global levels. Their differing standpoints in experience and their differing focal concerns allow them to engage with diverse authors from other times, other places, and other theoretical backgrounds. In method and results, these conversations display the potentials of new versions of philosophical debate that emphasize difference-inclusive collaborations rather than abstract theoretical claims of universalistic univocity—a new way of doing public philosophy through the efforts of such diverse communities of inquiry, rather than the separate works of solitary individuals.

Notes on Contributors

James Campbell is a Distinguished University Professor at the University of Toledo. He has been a Fulbright Lecturer at the University of Innsbruck (1990–91) and the University of Munich (2003–04). He is the author of over 60 papers. Campbell is editor of *Selected Writings of James Hayden Tufts* (Southern Illinois University Press) and author of four books: *The Community Reconstructs: The Meaning of Pragmatic Social Thought* (University of Illinois Press), *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence* (Open Court), *Recovering Benjamin Franklin: An Exploration of a Life of Science and Service* (Open Court), and *A Thoughtful Profession: The Early Years of the American Philosophical Association* (Open Court).

Michael Eldridge (1941–2010) taught at Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina, from 1989 to 1995, and at the University of North Carolina Charlotte from 1995 until his retirement from full-time teaching in 2008. He was internationally known for his advocacy of American pragmatism and his tireless promotion of democracy and education as a way of life. Among his many publications are *Transforming Experience—John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism* (Vanderbilt University Press); "Social Reconstruction and Philosophy," *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*, edited by John Ryder and Krystyna Wilkoszewska (Rodopi, 2004); "John Dewey," *Biographical Encyclopedia of British Idealism*, William Sweet, gen. ed. (Bristol, UK: Thoemmes-Continuum Press, 2007).

Jim Garrison is Professor of Philosophy of Education at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. He is the author of many book chapters and refereed papers as well as two books, including *Dewey and Eros* (1997). He is also the editor or coeditor of five others, including *The New Scholarship on Dewey* (1995) and *William James and Education* coedited with Ronald L. Podeschi and Eric Bredo (2002), which was translated into Chinese in 2005. Jim is a former president of the Philosophy of Education Society and past-president of the John Dewey Society.

William J. Gavin is Professor of Philosophy, University of Southern Maine, Portland, Maine. He achieved his PhD in Philosophy at Fordham University in 1970. Among his many publications are *In Dewey's Wake: Unfinished Work of Pragmatic Reconstruction*, edited by William J. Gavin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003); *William James and the Reinstatement of the Vague* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); *Context over*

Foundation: Dewey and Marx, edited by William J. Gavin (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1988).

Judith M. Green is Professor of Philosophy and Codirector of Women's Studies at Fordham University. She is the author of many book chapters and refereed papers as well as a book-length work, *Deep Democracy: Community, Diversity, and Transformation* (Rowman & Littlefield). Her second book *Pragmatism and Social Hope: Deepening Democracy in Global Contexts* was published by Columbia University Press in 2009.

Larry A. Hickman is Director of the Center for Dewey Studies and Professor of Philosophy at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He is the author of *Modern Theories of Higher Level Predicates* (1980), *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology* (1990), and *Philosophical Tools for Technological Culture* (2001), as well as the editor of *Technology as a Human Affair* (1990), *Reading Dewey* (1998), *The Essential Dewey* (with Thomas Alexander, 1998), and the three volumes of *The Correspondence of John Dewey* (1999, 2001, and 2005). He has published dozens of essays on a wide variety of topics, including education, environmental ethics, gay and lesbian rights, medieval logic, American pragmatism, and film criticism. Larry is a former president of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy.

Stefan Neubert is Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Cologne, Germany. He achieved his habilitation at the University of Cologne in 2010. He is the Director of the Office for International Relations, and member of the executive committee of the Dewey Center at the University. His research focuses on interactive constructivism, Deweyan pragmatism, philosophy of education, and the theories of culture and communication. He is the author of over 25 papers and a book on the philosophy of John Dewey, and coeditor of four books in German, including two on Dewey and interactive constructivism that have been translated into English for publication in 2006.

Kersten Reich is Professor at the University of Cologne, Germany, and the founder of interactive constructivism, a brand of constructivism that stands in close proximity to pragmatism (especially Deweyan pragmatism). He is Director of the Dewey-Center at the University of Cologne. He is the author of over 70 papers and the author or editor of 21 books, including two on Dewey and interactive constructivism that have been translated into English.

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CHAPTER 1

Editors' Introduction

Diversity is both an inevitable aspect of twenty-first-century living and a powerful challenge to older philosophical traditions that still assume as normatively universal a set of values, ways of thinking, institutions, and habits of living that emerged within earlier eras of more homogeneous cultures, less developed technologies, and more accepted forms of linguistic, legal, religious, economic, political, and military domination. In recent years, new styles of philosophical discourse, including deconstruction, postmodernism, feminism, postcolonialism, and critical race theory, have persuasively challenged these universalist assumptions. In doing so, they have revealed the important human differences that these universalist assumptions have marginalized and the silences that they have imposed both on individual dissenters and on whole cultural life-worlds whose languages they refuse to hear and whose experience they discount. Because these new discourses spring from long-denied, newly empowered dimensions of diversity in human experience that express loyalties to the past as well as fears and hopes for the future, some of their proponents have resisted projects involving collaboration across differences as dangerous to their newly won recognition and to the distinctive characteristics of the voices for whom they seek to secure hearings.

However, experience-based appreciation of the mutually educative potential of diverse standpoints as well as sober concern about the perils of our present times—hydra-headed forms of war and terrorism, the coercive impacts of globalization, the growing gap between the rich and poor worldwide, and the impacts of climate change fostered by technological developments—have led other thinkers to turn to contemporary forms of pragmatism and cosmopolitanism. In these two perspectives they have found hospitable intellectual gathering places for urgently needed cross-difference conversations that may reflect and give substance to a shared vision of democratic diversity, which they view as a necessary guide for the kinds

of reconstructive interactions that can generate world-changing energies within our diverse global contexts. Widely influential proponents of these two strands of democratic thought, including Richard Rorty and Juergen Habermas, have drawn on earlier thinkers like John Dewey to reaffirm the commitment to democracy that marked the revolutionary beginnings of modernity in various cultures and countries, while also arguing for the importance of progressively transforming democratic ideas and institutions in order to reflect the emergence of new qualities, opportunities, and challenges in the way we live now.

The editors of this volume believe that in the context of these debates and global developments, it is helpful to reconstruct the necessary philosophical horizons in which modern debates on democracy, diversity, and participation are located, even if sometimes in face of pressing current issues and interests those comprehensive frames are forgotten or neglected. One of the most important components in reconstructing the philosophy of democracy is the legacy of Deweyan pragmatism. Among the reasons for this conviction, we reckon the following:

First, Dewey understands democracy as a way of life, that is, as something that is realized in action. Institutions are necessary, but the heart of democracy is interaction, transaction, and communication. Contemporary approaches to the challenges to and developments in democracy have to come up to this claim.

Second, Dewey intimately connects democracy with participation as well as diversity in human life-experience. This is especially relevant for present-day discussions about, for example, claims to inclusion and programs to overcome discrimination in all fields of social living.

Third, Dewey connects the micro-cosmos of human face-to-face interactions and the macro-cosmos of social and political institutions on a local as well as global scale through his subtle theory of the role of democratic publics and the necessity of a vital civil society.

Fourth, Dewey was a philosopher of reconstruction in the sense that he proposed that we must always be open to processes of change and try to use them as challenges for growth on a personal as well as societal level. His philosophy emphasizes the unavoidable tension in human experience between what he called the precarious and the stable to show how processes in social life are intertwined with experiences of contingency. Therefore democratic solidarity, to use Richard Rorty's philosophical term, has to be reconstructed as change goes on.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some aspects of Rorty's version of neo-pragmatism and Habermas's version of critical theory show many affinities

with the Deweyan tradition despite their many differences. Rorty's imaginative reconstruction of Dewey's work has inspired many contemporary debates while at the same time striking other contemporary pragmatists as lacking important features of the original, giving rise to the need for a post-Rorty reconstruction of pragmatism. Likewise, although Habermas's "pragmatist turn" in critical theory brought these once-rival discourses into conversation, many of those attached to his earlier program (and sometimes Habermas himself) seem to have missed the curve where Kant's insights feel the full gravity of diversity in living experience and his cosmopolitanism gets pulled in a new direction. Nonetheless, Rorty and Habermas have stimulated a global network of philosophers to participate in efforts to reconstruct interlinked versions of pragmatism and cosmopolitanism as diversity-appreciating spaces for collaborative conversations. Such exchange can foster the growth of a body of fruitful insights into what democracy must mean for us now if it is to guide feasible and desirable changes in our institutions, in our habits of living, and in currently dangerous global concentrations of economic, political, cultural, religious, and military power.

As participants in this global network, the eight authors in this volume engage in cross-difference conversations with other thinkers from earlier periods and other philosophical traditions, as well as with each other, in order to reconstruct pragmatism and cosmopolitanism in ways that are more attuned to our lived experience of diversity as well as our hopes for a diversity-appreciating democratic future. Such conversations have spurred these thinkers to reflect on differing experiences of our shared humanity that challenge us to rethink the meaning of and the means to diversity, democracy, and cosmopolitanism. The conversations have been guided by practical exemplifications of these ideals in thinking and action that suggest how we, as culture-immersed individuals and members of diverse democratic "publics," can desirably adjust our life-ways and our institutions, at local and global levels. Their differing standpoints in experience and their differing focal concerns allow them to engage with diverse thinkers from other times, other places, and other theoretical backgrounds in a multidimensional common project that goes beyond the scope of any single thinker, however gifted. In method and results, these conversations display the potential of new versions of pragmatism and cosmopolitanism that emphasize difference-inclusive collaborations rather than abstract theoretical claims of universalistic univocity—a new way of doing public philosophy through the efforts of such diverse communities of inquiry, rather than the separate works of solitary individuals.

Toward that common end, James Campbell engages in a transhistorical conversation with six diverse American pragmatists from the early years

of the twentieth century for the purpose of rethinking the meaning of diversity for democracy. In his chapter, he explores the ideas of William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Randolph Bourne, Horace Kallen, and W. E. B. DuBois on the topic of democracy. In particular, he considers their ideas on the means for, and possibilities of, establishing a multicultural democracy. In each of their cases, there is something that contributes to a clearer understanding of diversity: the importance of the self, the fundamental role of education, the dangers of “homogenization,” the importance of openness to change, and so on. Writing many generations after these thinkers, Campbell notes that America has not yet fully achieved its shared democratic ideal by becoming the equal, free, and inclusive society they advocated. However, he points out that pragmatism offered them a philosophical framework for engaging one another in cross-difference conversations, and that “its particular approach to the key issues of nature, experience, possibility, and community” makes it “especially adaptive to change and open to the suggestions of multiple perspectives,” in our time as well as theirs.

William J. Gavin continues the conversation by bringing the contemporary American philosopher Martin Jay into a discussion of the epistemological as well as the political senses of diversity that a more diversity-attentive version of pragmatism must respect. With Jay, Gavin argues that the broad concept of “experience” that is the touchstone of Deweyan pragmatism should be fractured into discrete categories that are helpful in understanding differing contexts, but that cannot be meaningfully unified. Gavin argues further that we should think pluralistically about diverse kinds of situations, including those he evokes as “the Kafkaesque” and “the tragic,” which cannot be approached in terms of a problem-solving model of Deweyan inquiry without serious distortion. On the political level, Gavin argues, diversity is more than a problem—it is a good and a goal to be upheld and preserved, though it always carries a tragic dimension as an aspect of the democratic ideal that is ever-incomplete, requiring us to continuously renew our Jamesian “will to believe” in it beyond the present facts of its actualization if we are to continue our efforts. Thus, Gavin argues, the diversity of experiences as well as our aspirations toward democratic diversity both require pluralizing Dewey’s pragmatist methods to include existentialist and phenomenological philosophical approaches that foster adjustment in ourselves to situations in which we encounter human limits, losses, and failings that call for honesty, acceptance, and witnessing, rather than efforts to change what is beyond our limits.

While responding that inquiry’s limits and powers can only be known through experiences of trying them, Larry A. Hickman argues that in the absence of an effective faculty of “reason” that can disclose timeless truths

about these matters, we must take diverse contexts into account in the process of inquiring toward universal norms of humanly fitting forms of life. Hickman advances this view in conversation with Chantal Mouffe, focusing on the contextualism/universalism debate about the status of democratic political norms that has developed in, and with reference to, the works of such diverse thinkers as Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, Juergen Habermas, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Michael Walzer, and Richard Rorty. After highlighting important insights on both sides of the debate, especially those related to democratic forms of life, Hickman considers two attempts to carve out a "third way" between the two positions. Agonistic pluralism, as advanced by Chantal Mouffe, is a nonrationalist understanding of the political constructed on a Derridian-type account of undecidability in which social division constitutes a field in which new objects and relations between objects become thinkable. Experimentalism, as advanced by John Dewey, provides for a genetic analysis of political norms as arising out of experimental practice, rather than "reason," and as potentially universalizable across otherwise quite diverse cultural contexts. In response to Mouffe, Hickman suggests that several of Dewey's texts offer an earlier, complementary, and ultimately preferable guide for living that can foster the emergence of objective, conflict-reducing, potentially universalizable democratic norms in experimental practice. He offers a pragmatist approach to the omnipresence of social-cultural contexts and influences within the activities of human selves that focuses on the inseparability of the ethical from the political. It builds, among other things, on the transformative importance of educative experiences for individuals and their cultures—the objective, experience-based, progressive warrantability of the belief in democracy and its practices as experimentally universalizable across diverse cultural contexts.

Judith M. Green's contribution begins with her suggestion that, in spite of differences in focus and in philosophical methodologies, diverse contemporary cosmopolitanisms share a broad set of ideal goals as well as a long and complex history that they appropriate with different patterns of emphasis. She argues that contemporary pragmatist cosmopolitanism can help us to critically analyze and bridge these differences in ways that allow diverse cosmopolitans to collaborate more effectively in helping to transform the global crisis of our times. After critically re-reading Seyla Benhabib's account of legal cosmopolitanism to show why bridging these differences matters, Green outlines key features of contemporary pragmatist cosmopolitanism in relation to the shared cosmopolitan heritage, as well as to works by classical American pragmatist thinkers—especially John Dewey, Jane Addams, Alain Locke, and Martin Luther King, Jr.—whose insightful transformations of the earlier cosmopolitan tradition lead her analysis here in a different direction than

Benhabib's and those of many other influential contemporary cosmopolitan thinkers. Finally, applying her contemporary pragmatist cosmopolitan approach, Green analyzes and proposes intellectual and practical strategies for transforming our current fourfold global crisis that also contrast with those of Samuel Huntington, George Bush, and other American "conservatives," as well as with those of Tony Blair and Barack Obama. Green's overall argument shows why transforming our current global crisis in ways that advance shared democratic cosmopolitan ideals requires active, ongoing interventions by individuals, intentional communities, and various institutions of civil society, as well as social movements, nongovernment organizations, and governments at all levels.

Michael Eldridge concurs with Hickman and Green that the process of evolving universal democratic norms through experiments in diversity-embracing life-ways and institutions requires "practice," concerning which Dewey and other pragmatists can offer valuable insights. He focuses in his discussion on a particular recent version of pragmatism, namely the approach of Robert Talisse and his characterization of Deweyan pragmatism as "neither pragmatic nor viable." Eldridge believes that Talisse makes this claim in order to advance his case that Charles Sanders Peirce's epistemic version of pragmatism offers preferable guidance for a theory of democracy. Eldridge sets out to challenge Talisse's proposition. He observes that Talisse borrows conceptual tools from John Rawls to argue that Dewey's allegedly substantive conception of democracy as a way of life is a "comprehensive doctrine" that cannot accommodate "reasonable pluralism." Moreover, Talisse adds, contemporary Deweyan pragmatists like Larry Hickman and Charlene Haddock Seigfried limit the scope of the diverse viewpoints with which they are willing to engage in collaborative inquiry in order to sustain the belief that it will reach eventual consensus, including Jeremy Waldron's "every last individual." Because a Deweyan conception of democracy cannot meet these Rawlsian liberal tests, Talisse suggests preferring Peirce's focus on the kinds of epistemic habits and social institutions that guide the seeking of truth and giving of reasons for one's views to others as a preferable way to advance democratic theory. To settle the question of whether Talisse reads Dewey correctly, Eldridge engages in a close reading of texts to show that Dewey supported the same kind of diverse, deliberative democratic inquiry that Talisse advocates, though Dewey believed that it might on occasion require selective use of coercion within wider, mutually educative practices of inclusion that can democratically reconstruct both the views of participants and their institutions. Eldridge notes, however, that Dewey's view of inquiry was broader than Talisse's, aiming toward discovery or reconstruction of more adequate beliefs and practices to meet the purposes in living that motivate particular

inquiries, rather than the justification of hypothetically adopted beliefs as true. Eldridge concludes that Dewey's version of pragmatic inquiry is more effective as a guide to the kind of public philosophy that aims to resolve lived problems in situations in which diversity is both a problem and a resource. Dewey's conception of democracy is a multifaceted pragmatic resource that we can employ in various ways in our efforts to extend democratic practices that help us live well.

In the globalizing world of the twenty-first century, issues of pluralism, the Other, and democracy are of immense concern. At the dawn of this century, discussion regarding the relation between the "Same" and "the Other" is for many readers associated with the work of Emmanuel Levinas, who also contributes to discussions about democracy. Meanwhile, no name is more associated with democracy than that of John Dewey. Jim Garisson argues in his article that pluralism, sameness, and otherness are essential to Deweyan democracy and focuses on a necessary dialogue with Levinas to explore affinities and differences between both approaches. He discusses why Dewey's cosmopolitan vision of the democratic community is, when suitably modified by interactive constructivist considerations, deeply desirable for our world today.

Entering the conversation from a different national-historical context and with somewhat different theoretical sensibilities, Stefan Neubert and Kersten Reich generally agree with their American colleagues about the value of Dewey's critical-pragmatic approach to ameliorating modernity-induced problems in living that have been both rationalized and obscured by modern philosophy. Yet, they reconstruct and extend the implications of Dewey's approach somewhat differently in their Cologne program of interactive constructivism. In their chapter, they reconstruct Dewey through an encounter with contemporary philosopher-sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. First, they show important connections and complementarities between Bauman's critique of the modern "quest for order" and Dewey's rejection of modern philosophy's "quest for certainty," noting that Bauman focuses more on modernity's "dark side," whereas Dewey focuses on a critical reconstruction to harvest modernity's gains and accomplishments while overcoming its problematic aspects. Then Neubert and Reich use Bauman's strong emphasis on the ambivalence of progress to bring out more subtle aspects of Dewey's critique of societal developments, both contrasting and fruitfully interconnecting Bauman's retrospective focus on the experiences of modernity's victims with Dewey's prospective and reconstructive critique of the cultural contradictions of capitalism. Lastly, they draw out implications of such a critical interworking of Bauman's and Dewey's perspectives for current issues, for example, concerning the role of experts in public decision

making and democratic communication within a (post-)modern “knowledge society.” In the process, they demonstrate the fruitfulness of this book’s “public” philosophical method of fostering cross-difference conversations that test and critically expand our understanding of the experiences and issues that must guide our pursuit of diverse democracy as an ethically and politically preferable reconstruction. They show the ambivalent relation between what Bauman calls solid and liquid forms of modernity and argue that we—as contemporary pragmatists and constructivists—should be aware that our approaches from the start are involved in this tensional context.

Kersten Reich concludes the collection of chapters in this book by drawing on Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Richard Rorty to aid us in assessing how well Dewey’s reconstruction and extension of the meaning and methods of democracy hold up in twenty-first-century conditions of difference within and between communities. Reich notes that Foucault’s analysis of power has shed new light on the conditions of democracy, emphasizing that discourses are never free of power. Then Reich shows that Bourdieu gives us a somewhat different perspective than Dewey on social complexity and its consequences on democratic diversity. Finally, he argues that Rorty’s account of postmodernity points to new contexts of democratic living together and new ambiguities in reconstructing democratic consensus. Reich concludes that Dewey’s basic criteria for democratic development—as expressed in his globally influential 1916 work, *Democracy and Education*—are still a powerful conceptual tool that can be productively reconstructed for our own times with contributions from these three and other democratic theorists. As other participants in these conversations have noted, Dewey’s theory of democracy was never intended to be a timeless and unchanging doctrine, but rather a useful contribution to ongoing, inclusive, collaborative processes of seeking continuously improvable perspectives that reflect diverse, sometimes troubling experiences. It can guide the emergence of better (if always in some ways tragic) ways of living together as members of increasingly diverse communities whose best hope of responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century is constructing norms and practices of democratic participation.

The book concludes with a conversation among the authors in which they clarify points of difference as well as similarity in their visions of the meaning and methods of democracy in contemporary contexts of diversity. They discuss ways in which the differing theoretical standpoints of pragmatism and constructivism can productively inform each other. They explore issues, experiences, and some core questions that they believe should be included in future cross-difference “public” philosophical conversations about democracy and diversity.

All references to Dewey's writings use *The Collected Works of John Dewey*. The critical edition of the *Collected Works* has been provided by the Center for Dewey Studies, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (USA) under the lead of Jo Ann Boydston. It consists of the following three sections:

The Early Works (EW 1–5): 1882–1898. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press/London & Amsterdam: Feffer & Simons.

The Middle Works (MW 1–15): 1899–1924. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

The Later Works (LW 1–17): 1925–1953. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.