



A publication of
*The John Dewey Society for the
 Study of Education and Culture*

C O N T E N T S

1

Editorial

Jon G. Bradley

2

Pragmatism,
 Perspectivism and
 Education: A
 Critique of
 Habitual Social
 Constructivism

Edward J. Grippe

15

Membership
 Nomination

Whatever pundits may feel and notwithstanding the gyrations of politicians and pressure groups, the face of elementary and secondary classrooms will radically change over the next ten years. This major face-lift will occur naturally and quite apart from any outside regulation or influence. Simple and unrelenting demographics dictate that overwhelming numbers of contemporary practitioners will shortly retire. New teachers will have to be found, in increasing numbers, so that the classrooms of North America will be staffed by competent professionals.

At another time of a great and unanticipated upheaval, Dewey addressed the founding convention of the Teachers' League of New York (February 28, 1913). Perhaps somewhat prophetically, he observed: "We all know that it is said over and over ... that if we could achieve a thoroughly professional spirit, permeating the entire corps of teachers and educators, we should have done more to forward the cause of education than can be achieved in any other way".

Unfortunately, Dewey's lament is as timely today as it was ninety years ago! For the most part, North American teachers, in a spiritual kind of way, are really no further ahead. Classroom teachers are not [legally] considered "professional" as are, for example, nurses, accountants, lawyers, or doctors. While one may debate long and hard, and no doubt passionately, the status of public school teachers in contemporary society, the hard practical reality is that until such time as teachers themselves demand the accolades of professionalism (however defined), the present state of "trades-man-ship" will no doubt continue.

Lack of a spirit, status, and/or standing carries limitations and these restrictions, whether self or externally imposed, guide

and drive educational development.

Dewey, I think, recognized that status could not be externally conferred upon teachers. The request and the demand had to come from, in the first instance, teachers themselves. Then, and only then, would the larger society react to this spiritual request. Such a quest, in turn, would lead to discussion, debate, and growth.

It is a shame that there are no special ceremonies and/or rights of passage that mark the conferring of the sacred "right to teach". Too often, the awarding of an elementary or secondary school teaching credential is a spiritually bereft occasion.

The role of the classroom practitioner should be a special one within our society. Perhaps it is time that educators themselves recognized, as Dewey strongly suggested, that their own personal and collective professional spirit commences with an initiation that recognizes the complexity of their undertaking and its centrality within an evolving democratic society.

Dewey was right! It is time to establish a professional spirit in classroom practitioners and one way to begin this journey is by the use of ritual and ceremony in education. Maybe another opportunity re-presents itself at the beginning of this new millennium for a professional spirit to emerge?

Jon G. Bradley
 Editor
 jon.bradley@mcgill.ca

Pragmatism, Perspectivism and Education: A Critique of Habitual Social Constructivism

Edward J. Grippe

This article reviews the source writings of John Dewey and Richard Rorty in order to clarify the related and contemporary educational thought concerning Pragmatism as well as the theory of Social Constructivism. In the course of this reexamination, I question whether either theory can function adequately as support for the 'Collaborative Learning Model' and its reliance on consensus to insure pluralism through the emergence of diverse viewpoints in an open classroom dialogue.

1. Introduction

How one sees the enterprise of education depends upon several factors: whether it is an additive or creative process, (or something combination of the two); how one values and places reason and logic in interpersonal exchanges; if one should put the emphasis on consensus or conversation; whether human nature is fixed, evolutionary or revolutionary; if the world is discovered or made; whether language is semi-transparent or opaque, and so on. Of course, the choice of which options are true or work on depends one's perspective. But is one's perspective also a matter of education, or are they fixed? And if perspectives can be altered by education, is it a matter of persuasion akin to religious or political conversion, or is it a matter of uncovering or recovering a natural or metaphysical given? And the answer to this last question, is it also open to revision? And if so by what measure should one judge

whether it is wise to hold fast or adapt one's perspective on this meta-theoretical issue? If the answer to this is "What works!" is the measure then the commitment is made for a form of pragmatism. But does Pragmatism in either of the hands of John Dewey and Richard Rorty deliver on the promise for autonomous (self-deciding) and socially connected thinkers, who actively construct rather than passively receive knowledge over a lifetime? The habitual answer is "Yes", however, I will argue in this paper that Pragmatism, Old and New has been and is the wrong path for American education to take due to (1) a fault with the perspectivism grounding Pragmatism on a meta-theoretical level, and (2) the hidden paternalism in the pragmatic approach.

2. Pragmatic anti-foundationalism and Solidarity

Richard Rorty, in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and in his several subsequent works, has championed the view that there is an open-ended conversation at any level of human intercourse. His pragmatic account will not allow for any *final vocabulary*—a final word or worldview in which to couch forever a given subject. Those who claim this ultimate authoritative status must hold that their words precisely correspond in some timeless and universal way to some grounding aspect of the intellectual, material or spiritual world. To this special use of language Rorty objects most strenuously. He believes that to claim this ability is the illegitimate attempt to remove oneself from the culture, place, time and even the particular idiom one uses to utter or write down these ideas—in short, to escape process—and to pronounce from a privileged position, as disinterested expert, a timeless truth. These sentiments echo a major "hero" of his, John Dewey, who wrote of these intellectual traditionalists: "They think they are sustaining the cause of impartial, thorough-going and disinterested reflection when they maintain the traditional philosophy of intellec-

tualism—that is, of knowing as something self-sufficient and self-enclosed. But in truth, historic intellectualism, the spectator view of knowledge, is a purely compensatory doctrine which men of an intellectual turn have built up to console themselves for the actual and social impotency of the calling of thought to which they are devoted" (Dewey, 1920, 117).

Rorty extends John Dewey's claim that language is not a medium of intellectualized communication among individuals. Rather he sees language as a pragmatic tool necessarily employed by the user. Implied here is a challenge to rationality as commensurate—thought measurable by a fixed standard of reason that would be a prerequisite for a convergence of ideas around a common and stable truth—which traditionally has been taken to be at the heart of communication. Rorty asserts that cannot take place. One may have, in the words of David L. Hall in his *Richard Rorty: Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism*, "little more than a vague supplement to the language of another." Rorty attributes interpersonal agreements to the longevity, or entrenchment, of a social practice, and not to any justifying bedrock reality.

"We can get [commensuration] not because we have discovered something about "the nature of human knowledge" but simply because when a practice has continued long enough the conventions which make it possible—and which permit a consensus on how to divide it into parts—are relatively easy to isolate" (Rorty, 1979, 321).

Thus, *consensus*, in the sense of an agreement formed around a central, foundational and objective truth, is out of the question for such a pragmatist. For any assertion of understanding a common truth that transcends one's current cultural-linguistic embeddedness is to claim an eternally privileged access, by means of this special use of language, to a free-standing, static reality—that is to attempt to escape altogether the human condition. Here again, Dewey supports Rorty. In his

Democracy and Education, Dewey states that to seek a distinct realm of fixed reality is to be locked into “routine ways, with the loss of freshness, open-mindedness, and originality”. Such a seeker makes a passive accommodation to the environment, one that is without reference to the ability of the individual to modify his/her surroundings. Furthermore, in his 1929 essay “Escape from Peril” Dewey emphasizes the poverty of thought, like that of the ancient Greeks, which glorified the invariant at the expense of change.... They bequeathed the notion, which has ruled philosophy ever since the time of the Greeks, that the office of knowledge is to uncover the antecedently real, rather than, as is the case with our practical judgments, to gain the kind of understanding which is necessary to deal with problems as they arise (Dewey, 1960, 16-17).

In accord with Dewey, Rorty maintains that all that can be hoped for is a contingent agreement among interested parties for practical action based on what is perceived to be a common need experienced over time. And such agreements are mere resting places as we engage our environment in an ongoing human experiment.

“Solidarity” is the term Rorty often uses as an alternative to consensus. Solidarity denote the just mentioned free association of minds whose diverse beliefs contingently share a common pragmatic purpose with those individuals who seem to have a similar rhetoric employed in their narrative account of the world, the self, and society (Rorty, 1991, vol. 1, 21). It is formulated upon the accumulated wisdom (Dewey’s “funded experience”) of a specific culture. The preference for this group’s themes is not a matter of discovered truths about pre-set nature or humanity *per se*, for, as was already noted, to become involved in the finding or fixing of truth(s) is to miss the point (Rorty, 1989, 5). To use the term “truths” is merely to use a term of commendation for the preferred set of beliefs that have been a result of “intelligent transactions” and found to be of useful value in the

experience of one’s socio-historical group or solidarity.

Thus, solidarity should be viewed by those engaged in “the conversation of humankind” as an agreement about a contingent metaphor, (narrative, or language-game) made over time (for as long as it works) by those who freely enter into it. It is fluid because it is based on the process of invention (individual and collective) and not a static result of an adherence to an “externally” or “internally” given philosophical principle, which Rorty, in the spirit of Dewey’s anti-metaphysical stance, continuously argues has never been proven and, he believes, does not exist. Therefore, when Rorty speaks of philosophy, he means by this term not a specific discipline, but rather an open-ended manner of conversing across traditional (and intuitively drawn) practices; a Heraclitean process.

“(P)hilosophy is not a name for a discipline which confronts permanent issues, and unfortunately keeps mistating them, or attacking them with clumsy dialectical instruments. Rather, it is a cultural genre, a “voice in the conversation of mankind” (to use Michael Oakshott’s phrase), which centers on one topic rather than another at some given time not by dialectical necessity but as a result of various things happening elsewhere in the conversation. . . or of individual men of genius who think of something new. . . or perhaps of a resultant of several such forces. Interesting philosophical change. . . occurs not when a new way is found to deal with an old problem but when a new set of problems emerges and old ones begin to fade away” (Rorty, 1979, 264).

Again, it is stressed by Rorty that no individual, group or culture ever has the last word on any subject. According to him, any offer of new metaphors as a means of reinterpretation of past vocabularies (e.g., as Newton redefined the language-game of physics handed down from Aristotle) cannot itself be the ultimate pronouncement in the human conversation (consider Einstein’s

contesting Newton’s theories, or Stephen Hawking’s challenge to Einstein, and so on). There is always the opportunity to challenge old ways of speaking and to create a novel narrative, a new language-game or metaphor that can be of use to mankind as it adapts to current conditions. In this context, resistance to the accepted utility of the newly introduced language-game would constitute a holding fast to the outmoded way of speaking. In a more sinister mode, a pragmatist such as Rorty could see it, at best, as an attempt by the modern-day “high priests” of philosophy, or any specific discipline, at paternalistically imposing upon other language-users a particular vocabulary (theirs) as superior in its linkage to a fundamental natural power or rational authority. At worst intellectual imperialism threatens if one does not take care to avoid dogmatic assertions. However, Rorty contends that once people are dissuaded from the illusion that there is a permanent, unchanging standard, ground, or authority, be it of rational, supernaturally transcendental, or even natural origin (a point of contention with Dewey than will be covered later), which will make the sentences they utter right (or wrong), then an era of unfettered pragmatic conversation will ensue, where the focus will be placed upon how to get what we want through the forward use of creatively productive imagination, rather than reactionary search for a (nonexistent) permanent groundwork of supports for what, intellectual traditionalists paternalistically claim, we ought to believe and consequently rightly want. Implied in this hope is that once this era begins, a healthy climate for diverse opinions will be assured.

3. Deweyan Pragmatism’s Educational Implications

This leads into the sphere of education in American democracy and the current concern over the role of the educator in the pluralistic classroom. There is a movement born in the early

Twentieth Century, and it is being practiced at the start of Twenty First Century to free the learning environment of the classical teacher-centered paradigm of learning; a passing-down of fixed skill-based knowledge to students who incorporate it more or less adequately into their practices in anticipation of future application (Dewey, 1920, 183-184) Once liberated, educators can introduce a new paradigm where understanding is a collaboration in the classroom in which participants' diverse viewpoints and values are engaged in an open forum where the experience of the teacher might be more "funded" than her students, but her capacity to grow is not more advanced, merely of another mode.

"Normal child and normal adult alike, in other words, are engaged in growing. The difference between them is not the difference between growth and no growth, but between the modes of growth appropriate to different conditions" (Dewey, in Price, 1962, 486).

Patricia Cross, an educational researcher, has focused on the benefits that "community" offers in a learning environment such as the modern classroom. With the emphasis on learning over traditional instruction, Cross stresses several elements that are or can be incorporated into current instructional models. Student-teacher interaction is a strong point of this approach (Cross, 1997, 7, point 1). The approach contains several elements of what Dewey and Rorty have suggested. Rather than trying to measure the adequacy of a student's response to a pre-established and fixed body of knowledge, she argues that a creative student-centered dialogue should be fostered in order to empower the student as a valued and unique source of information, and to open the classroom to the creative thought processes. In this setting the teaching professional is a facilitator, managing the dialogue and incorporating its outcome(s) within a disciplinary or cross-disciplinary context, with the aim of rendering the

student ". . . capable of further education: more sensitive to conditions of growth and more able to take advantage of them." (Dewey, 1920, 185).

The teacher-as-facilitator model exists at various college programs that utilize this empowering approach. Learning, as just described, must take place in a course where the teacher cannot be "the expert", *the unquestioned* judge of what is right and acceptable within the field of discussion (Cross, 10, point 2). He/She is a partner in the joint effort to construct understanding. Others in the class will have a better background than the teacher in, say, music, computer technology, or biology. With the proper introduction of the students to this increasingly accepted setting for the Twenty-first Century classroom, the atmosphere for collaborative learning and student "ownership" of the lesson will be strong, leading to a creative and intelligent conversation (in the Dewey-Rortyan sense of the term) that focuses on the subject and bridges the chasms on such social constructs as class, race, ethnicity and gender.

This spirit of collaboration could be carried out, for example, if regular and numerous events and field trips to expand the community of learning beyond the classroom were incorporated into the traditional curriculum. Discussions led by people actively engaged in thought and actions which reflect the multi-disciplined experience that is part of everyday life, and trips carefully designed to do the same through a variety of mediums, will afford the students informal ways to interact and to apply their intelligence and abilities to the ideas being expressed and to the task at hand (Cross, 1997, 10, point 1) at a level of conscious deliberation. This would serve to peak interest in the individuals and to encourage an interdependence among pupils and thereby increase involvement in the community's (school) activities (Cross, 1997, 10, point 3) while, at the same time, create the social occasion for students and educators to test their respective Zone of Proximal

Development (*ZPD*) is where learners in a social situation are offered concepts slightly ahead of their level of understanding) with the other group's perspectives and knowledge (Cross, 1997, 20). In this way the process of intellectual development will shift from the teacher as the inculcating agent of knowledge to the students (individually and collectively) as the vehicle for their own understanding, thus providing the model for the pursuit of the Deweyan goal of responsible lifetime learning as experience.

Despite the hopeful tone presented by Cross, I hold that there is a problem with the philosophical underpinnings, i.e., the instrumentalism and experimentalism at the heart of Social Constructivism, which may have an adverse impact on Deweyan collaborative learning. While the general points which Cross offered, such as Dewey's emphasis on "development from within" (Cross, 1997, 14), as opposed to the imposition of uniform structures from an external source (Dewey in Price, 487) and, lifelong learning (Cross, 1997, 15-17) and Clinchy's "connected learners" (Cross, 1997, 19), were insightful and instructive, the underlying assumptions are incoherent, due to an internal inconsistency of both the Old (Deweyan) and the New (Rortyan) Pragmatism.

4. Dewey's Esthetasized Naturalism

If it is assumed that learning is an "individual process of constructing meaning from information and experience, filtered through each individual's unique perceptions, thoughts and feelings" (McCombs in Cross 1997, 12), and that "Constructivism contends that learning is a process in which learners construct understanding" (Cross, 1997, 12), that is, if "learning, properly understood, is transformational rather than additive" (Cross, 1997, 13); intellectually developmental rather than mechanistically habitual (Dewey in Price, 484), then the educator is the means by which the student, offered new information

and the concomitant tools for processing it, adjusts his/her “construct” or “web of beliefs” to fit or to reject the new data and tools. Thus “Learners must construct their own knowledge; it cannot be given to them” (Cross, 1997, 14) Yet Constructivism, as derived from Descartes, also “assumes that there is an ‘answer’ out there in world and through research akin to that used in the objective scientific, we will eventually discover what it is” (Cross, 1997, 17). This last claim for the ultimate, albeit non-dogmatic, objectivity of reality which holds unsupported speculation in check seems to fly in the face of the idea that learning is construction, a matter of fabricating, rather than discovering what is so, say through the research of “experts” in matters of hypotheses-making and experimentation. For to discover something implies the uncovering of what is already there. It could be argued that someone will do the discovering ahead of others, be better executing the method, and will be in the role of expert or authority on the matter, as long as the arrived-at hypothesis works (i.e., “. . . giving our present experience the guidance it requires.”). Thus it seems that Cartesian Constructivism’s belief in the method of discovery the givens of an objective world tends to undermine Cross’s use of it to bolster student-centered learning. And it does not to accord with Dewey’s understanding of the scientific model which support his concept of “experience” (Dewey, 1920, 95-97)

Dewey was greatly influenced by Charles Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*, especially where it challenged the traditional notion that change and origin were somehow defective and unreal (Murphy, 63). Process is crucial to his pragmatic approach. Thus experience, as a uniquely human form of change, is the capacity to do something in response to environmental conditions beyond passively undergoing certain things, conjoined with a capacity acquired by doing something, as opposed to disposing of it in a mechanical way. This is what Dewey

terms a “natural transition.” And the mode of natural transition that is proper to human beings is the esthetic experience. Contrary to common expectation, an individual’s merely enduring moments in time or undergoing certain events does not constitute experience as Dewey means it. Rather it is “a clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to and form every normally complete experience” (Dewey, 1979, 46). This is an acquired habit, one that greatly enhances the life process. Hence, life itself, when well lived is esthetic in this way. It is the goal and fluid substance of Deweyan “growth”. Thus, education as esthetic experience (i.e., “of material fraught with suspense and moving toward its own consummation through a connected series of varied incidents.” (Dewey, 1979, 42-43) is an end for itself. To seek any other end is to drift into inauthenticity either through acquiescence to some external authority, or to assent to an outcome by rote habit, thereby falling short of fulfillment found in the artistic unity of the dramatic interplay of people and events.

From this understanding of experience Dewey offers a science of the “new empiricism”. Drawn from the well of traditional and societal knowledge and skills, whereby the individual is funded with a *perspective* that offers approach(es) to and engagement with an antecedently existing, rich and multifarious world that have yielded satisfactory outcomes. Yet Dewey recognized that the fund of past solutions are merely working hypotheses that are yet open to the scrutiny afforded by scientific method, and not a settled catalogue of foundational truths. In this respect, intelligence and consciousness are coextensive. When readjustments in our environment are not needed, we are not called to notice, we fall back on habits that are familiar and long established. Intelligence is not present. But when an irritant enters into our field of awareness, thought emerges, like a pearl in a clam, in the use of

symbols in the form of language,. These symbols are meaningful when, Dewey argues, their deliberate employment in a given pattern has yielded acceptable or desired consequences, those that are important to us, when translated into action that yields a shared experience.

“Solving a problem amounts, in this way, to acting upon the environment in order to bring about some consequence—to a rearrangement of our habits so that impulse can achieve its goal of smooth release” (Price, 470).

If we are wedded to this or that language construct and the problem gets solved, then we are reinforced in our habit of thought. It is only when the solution eludes habitual approaches that, again, intelligence is summoned. However, when one takes past habits of thought as fixed and settled, then the hypothetical nature of all language use is overlooked. A stubborn clinging to old theories of action in the face of a recalcitrant environment is like the proverbial putting of new wine into old skins. Thus Dewey concluded that just as in science, knowledge must be a dynamic relation between representational thought and an overt action, rather than a passive recognition of an enduring world: “Things are what they are experienced to be.” The static nature of the Platonic real or Cartesian given must be discarded in favor of the contingencies of pragmatic reflection-action dialectic. Therefore, in the spirit of the experimental method of science, a reconstruction of what passes for social knowledge must be ongoing.

In this light, the suggestion that it would be well to have expert educators from a variety of fields in the class to team-teach (instruct/model for) the student-novices the experimental method, rather than letting the novices lead themselves (in random attempts at learning), has limited appeal. Appeals to experts is regressive, merely a disguise for the traditional lecture-recitation approach. Of course, this sort of petition misses Dewey’s point entirely. As he writes, “Intelligence is not something

possessed once and for all. It is in constant process of forming, and its retention requires constant alertness in observing consequences, an open-minded will to learn and courage in re-adjustment” (Dewey 1920, 96-97). Learning is not random, but is always guided by the facilitator as the representative of his/her discipline. Nevertheless, Dewey’s advice applies equally to the teaching professional as well as to his/her students, for the “truths” of any given professional discipline or method are not static, but are themselves subject to challenge and change over time. So the will of the facilitator ought to remain as alert, open and courageous as s/he expects the students’ will to be when facing the challenge of a new problem.

Perhaps with this in mind, Cross turns to Social Constructivism as support for the student-centered learning model over the traditional lecture-recitation modes of instruction. She states that “Social constructivism contends that learning is not so much about discovering an objective “truth” that lies somewhere “out there” in the reality of the world, as it is about a process of making sense of the vast amount of information that surrounds us” (Cross, 1997, 18). Hence, collaborative learning, under this theory, has a solid place in education. It also conforms to Dewey’s “experience” as well as the vocabulary of Rorty’s New Pragmatism. As Harvey S. Wiener writes in his article “Collaborative Learning in the Classroom: A Guide to Evaluation”:

“An instructor who understands and believes in knowledge as a social construct will see group reporting as an important means of advancing knowledge in the classroom. On the other hand, an instructor willing to experiment with group work but clinging to the *Mirror-of-Nature-metaphor* will find it hard to avoid using the group as anything other than a microcosm of the lecture hall” (italics added) (Wiener, 1986, 59).

In a supporting quote from Bruffee, offered to us by Cross, we are told

that “(w)e construct and maintain knowledge, not by examining the world but by negotiating with one another in communities of knowledgeable peers” (Bruffee in Cross, 1997,18). But here we seem to have a type of “knowing” that Dewey and Rorty would embrace: where the knower gives meaning to an experienced event. All knowledge is local, focal, and changing, with no universal truth or antecedent objective fact to discover (as the Deweyan rejection of metaphysics as meaningless and appeal to scientific naturalism seems to suggest).

5. Habitual Pragmatism: the Politicising of education

But why is this not a type of *virtual* knowledge, where the educational process becomes political, with the term “communities of knowledgeable peers” converted to solidarities of majority opinion concerning their environment. Plausibly, this could be the case because under pragmatism, old or new, the notion of environment is a construct, in the sense that terms like “environment” and “world” are theoretical entities (Dewey’s secondary or “reflected experiences”), that is symbolic “habits” whose application is hypothetical at best. The so-called direct or “primary experience” with objects (sparrows, caps and gowns, granite rocks, etc.) is already theory-laden, or funded, for no knower is a passive spectator to his/her life. (Dewey, 1960, 71, 171, 196) Any attempt to have these experiences involves either a participation in an already accepted societal construct or a pragmatic reconstruct of our mode of encounter. The choice is to be habitual or to be creative. But for the reconstructed notion to gain a foothold in the community, it must be lobbied for. Those who are deemed “knowledgeable” are either those who win the approval of the individuals currently in power or of the preponderance of his/her peers, again assuming that there can be no reference to an independent metaphysical grounding or foundational reality.

Dewey’s claim that there is an antecedent reality prior to the experience of it has the appearance of a Kantian *Thing-in-itself*. For to what other standard could one appeal? The “world”, “reality” or even “facts” are esthetic values that just do not happen to be currently under challenge. This funding of the conversation would allow for social interaction, but leave the field of discussion open to a Darwinian (or as Rorty prefers—Mendelic) competition for “semantic authority” over the virtual environment of “cultural space” (Rorty in R. Goodman, 128). A struggle over who gets to assign meaning for the whole would ensue, where persuasion (the synonym for “negotiation” in the absence of a grounding standard) and coercion, rather than convergent reason, will be the mode of policy-making leading to action. Even the educational safeguards that Dewey envisioned would be absent. For we have, with Bruffee, moved from an examination of the independent and substantive world so as to accurately determine how it can be beneficially reconstructed (to have knowledge is to forecast the consequences of manipulating *things in the world* to which they are deeply attached), to what commonly is held to be *plausible and desirable for those within a given solidarity* to which one happens to belong or to which one is persuaded to join. That is, to where the phrase “things in the world” is reduced to a social construct (Dewey, 1910, 77-111), a cognitive strand in a contingent web of belief, and not an encounter with determinant forces beyond and against a given language community or solidarity.

The implication for education is as Bruffee writes: “What happens when we learn something is we leave a community that justifies certain beliefs in a certain way and join another community that justifies other beliefs in other ways. We leave one community of knowledgeable peers and join another” (Bruffee, 1982, 105). The difference is subtle but significant. With the former,

inquiry produces an unfolding knowledge of antecedently existing objects 1 (i.e., constructivism—the social process of knowledge), a close correspondence between language and world. With the latter, inquiry engenders the objects of knowledge (i.e., social constructivism—the knowledge of social processes, or the politics of culture), and they cohere well or do not, without appeal to any alleged independently existing objects as normative standards. While the knowledge of social processes can be covered within the social process of knowledge and there can be the possibility of consensus therein, the converse relationship can yield only a contingent public agreement where a solidarity can form around some currently dominant definition, but never a consensus where minds are said to meet (see endnote 6, below). The lobbying of and for ideas prevails over informed consent when convergent consensus is ruled out in favor of solidarity. This is so because reason becomes but one perspective in the conversation of humankind, for *its* meaning, too (this claim extends even to the basic principles of logic for both Dewey and Rorty) is either derived from the fund of a societal storehouse (e.g., unchallenged Western tradition) or else it is currently up for grabs in a Darwinian struggle over memes, rather than the medium in which that conversation occurs, when understood from the fully unfolded Pragmatic perspective.

The connection to collaborative learning models seems to be as follows. With Social Constructivism as an underlying theory, education (as Dewey defines it: the process by which any society perpetuates itself—(Dewey, 1916, 3-4) would be susceptible to a political struggle over rival interpretations about the meaning of collaborative learning either within or among various factions of interested societal institutions. Settling these contentions by means of a popular vote would establish a model of decision-making that corresponds to Perry's "lower stage" of intellectual

development (Cross, 1997, 15-16). In response to this there could be the "midlevel stages" reaction to agree to disagree, in effect to allow that "everyone has a right to their own opinion" (Cross, 1997, 16). Again, such a position would be a step below the desired "advanced level" of truth seen within a context (Cross, 1997, 17). But of course, the context must be grounded in some factual constancy, as Santayana suggests 2 to escape the kind of relativism offered by a habitual Social Constructivism. Otherwise, there would be no possibility of achieving the consensus advocated by Bruffee and Cross, unless consensus itself is to be redefined so as to be in line with current thinking in a given group, society or culture.

This *seems* to leave some form of Constructivism as an option. However, if some type of collaborative is to involve students in more than the *appearance* of student-centered learning, it must be cognizant of avoiding the trap of masking traditional learning in a new guise. As Wiener warns, "Many teachers who attempt collaborative learning but abandon it are frequently trying to achieve the same ends in groups that they tried to achieve in the more familiar lecture-recitation session . . ." (Wiener, 1986, 59) He goes on, in the same vein, to reject Socratic dialogue. I believe this to be a mistake. In lumping the Socratic method with the classical teacher-centered approach, Wiener misunderstands the Socratic Method, thus reducing the teaching options to two: the Classical teacher-centered dogmatic lecture-repetition model or creative-collaborative model of Social Constructivism. But there is a third choice that can be made: either a reconstructed Dewey Instrumentalism or that of Socratic Ignorance.

Properly understood, Socratic Ignorance allows for pluralism in a communal search for knowledge *via* a process of elimination of positions that are internally inconsistent, self-contradictory, or unsound while

simultaneously encouraging an open-ended pursuit of well defined webs-of-beliefs. This is not inconsistent with Thomas Kuhn's notion of "evolution-from-what-we-do-know" found in his masterwork *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1970, 171). Socrates' claim in Plato's *Apology* that "I know that I know nothing" ought to be taken seriously by educators who see it as their calling to encourage learning and to learn in the process, rather than to acquire knowledge. Holding and proselytizing a point of view, even the postmodern claim that there can be no objective truth, is to assert more than one does or ever can know.

Consider the following: to say there is no truth is to make a claim for the truth of this statement, and such a position is in self-contradiction. It is better to claim, as Rorty does, that there are incommensurate webs of belief that stand as competing "truths" within a given individual, group or society. This is not an exceptional claim unless it is added that all "truths" are of equal value until one is (or a set are) embraced as true in the here and now, a claim that is often taken by American educators eager to endorse in a misguided way the just cause of equality. This would allow for the rival statements "There are rival, incommensurate truths", and "There are universal truths", as well as "There is no truth" to stand on the same epistemological footing until a political choice for one or the other is made, an assertion that a skeptic, a relativist, or an absolutist would not brook (each rejecting at least one of these statements as misguided or meaningless). Ironically, this observation apparently supports the position for opinions of incommensurate value. But, as already noted, we have rejected as self-contradictory the claim that there is no truth.³ So then some opinions are *not* of equal value. Of course, this does not determine which current or future construct is the truth (if one exists), but this emphatically is not the task of the Socratic-inspired educator who holds

that there are objectively worse, and hence objectively better, opinions, but does not claim to have knowledge of reality in some absolute and effected manner. Yet neither does the realization that human truth is a construct necessarily reduce it wholly to a matter of subjective postulation or popular opinion.

Dewey would agree with what was just said, and yet reject the Platonic grounding of Socratic Ignorance in metaphysics as speculative. So let us renew the possibility that a Deweyan world view might have the key. Incommensurate opinions are working hypotheses, subject to inquiry as to their settings, relations, and consequences. Revision or rejection is always a live option on the basis of their current pragmatic utility. As Dewey offers in Chapter 5 of his *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, referring to the carpenter as the prototype of all men of action: "It is only by these processes of active manipulation of things in order to realize his purpose that he discovers what the properties of things are." (Dewey in Barrett and Aiken, 326) Dewey was loathed to advance general theory for its suggestion that disparate situations have some essential and fixed core, and in a related fashion he rejected the notion derived from the ancient Greek esthetic that there were immutable values that transcend the changing world. Nevertheless, he argued that in some way values were natural, and that science, the height of intelligent behavior, was a tool in their manifestation and advancement: "Why should we not proceed to employ our gains in science to improve our judgment about values, and to regulate our actions so as to make values more secure and more widely shared in existence?" (Dewey, 1929, 42) It follows that if the proper method were used then there could be a reasoned paring of some set of incommensurates in favor of another, say in the area of human communication

As Maxine Greene notes, supporting Dewey's sense of value in her words of warning:

"Both Dewey and (Hanna) Arendt paid attention to the problem of impersonality and to the empty sociality taking over from community. Both spoke of business, consumerism, and (in time) of bureaucracy. Action and the sense of agency were crucial for both; their writings urged readers to appear before one another, to allow something to take shape between them, a space where diverse beings could reach towards possibilities.

Both knew that dialogue and communication were focal and, when conceivable, face-to-face communication, with persons addressing one another as who, not what they were. It is the lack of authentic communication, Dewey wrote, that led to the "eclipse of the public." He pointed out that Americans had at hand "the physical tools of communication as never before, but the thoughts and aspirations congruent with them are not communicated and therefore are not common. Without such communication, the public will remain shadowy and formless, seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance" (1954, p. 142) . . . Dewey may have anticipated the predicaments of a computerized society with the public transmuted into an audience or listeners interested in consumption of ideas as well as goods. He might not have been surprised by the crotchety, of insulting telephone calls to the talk shows, by the prayerful heaves at evangelists' meetings, the shouts at rock concerts, the hoots and screams at football games. Certainly, people are entitled to make all sorts of sounds, to express themselves in multiple ways; but when the "thoughts and aspirations" Dewey sought are subsumed under noise and sound bytes, teachers are challenged to pay heed" (Greene, 1998 5-6).

Impulses must be clothed in some value construct that leads to authentic communication. The function of philosophy, in Dewey's hands, is to arrange the assortment of values and ideals found within a given society in the light of their consequences relative

to the harnessing of change that is human progress. Those value constructs that do not yield new possibilities for resolving conflicts within the cultural environment, and that do not facilitate a resolution of the problematic into determinate situations are to be rejected regardless of their past effectiveness and their traditional standing in the community. This, for Dewey, is the power of a naturalistic empiricism to set objective positions without appeal to metaphysical groundings.

Ironically, with the claim that, as a result of the rise of Darwinian evolutionary theory, objectivity and spiritual purpose grounded in traditional worldviews had vanished (and with them the hope of fixed or certain morality), authentic communication—and with it education in both the broad and narrow sense—becomes a victim of this Nietzschean perspectivism, an *interpretation* of "reality" that may be found at the heart of Dewey's worldview as well. When he states, "the generic insight into existence which alone can define metaphysics in any empirically intelligible sense is itself an added fact of interaction, and is therefore subject to the same requirement of intelligence as any other natural occurrence . . ." (Dewey in Copleston, 376), Dewey creates for his worldview an internal contradiction that undoes his naturalistic science and unmasks the New Pragmatism of Rorty as sophistic persuasion.

6. Perspectivism: Dewey reconstructed

All endorsements for education approaches, such as "value free", "results-oriented", "collaborative learning" and the like, come out of a perspective about human nature and related epistemological theories. But what may be overlooked is that perspectivism, if it is to be consistent, is a meta-theoretical perspective itself. To be authentic in itself, a Nietzschean perspectivism must admit its own contingency as an interpretation on human life and experience. To the

best of my knowledge, Dewey does not see his educational theory as the mobius strip that it is. For when he states the following (about those who have observed eclipses of the sun without the benefit of Einstein's theory of deflection of light by mass—an apt metaphor for all observations, including his own) Dewey entangles himself in his own commentary: “Perhaps they would not even have noticed if the theory had not been employed as a guide or road to observation of them. But even if they had been noticed, they would have been dismissed as of no importance, just as we daily drop from attention hundreds of for which we have no intellectual use. But approached by means of theory these lines of slight deflection take on significance as large as that of the revolutionary theory that led to their being experienced” (Dewey, 1958, 6).

If our perspective determines what we can “see” and what falls out of our vision, then we seem embedded in that perspective until persuaded otherwise, as Bruffee suggests above. But what causes us to confidently move in an environment of our own making, through theory creation and application, an environment where the mention of objectivity is allowed (Dewey, 1960, 229), but where there can be no chance of attaining such a god's-eye absolute perspective, or intellectual Archimedean point? Since Dewey asserts that all putative metaphysical entities lie beyond the scope of experience rendering it humanly impossible to refer to them in any way, all views concerning educational theory that can be traced back to a metaphysical source must be discounted. His suggestion for an alternative to the metaphysical muddle would be the “expertness of taste”. And this esthetic expertise results from “the constant exercise of thinking,” the refinement of which is the “formation of new purposes and new responses” (Dewey, 1916, 49) to ongoing changes in the environment. He goes on to say that the employment of refined taste is the sole antidote to “the domina-

tion of belief by impulse, chance, blind habit and self-interest”. (Dewey, 1960, 262) Hence, the blind perpetuation of society is not the true goal of education. In contrast, the best, in fact the moral life for *any* individual is the life of intelligence, i.e., of freedom and control over one's experience. But that means that for Dewey the experts of taste (and I suggest that in this anti-metaphysical and political context one ought to read “taste” as ideology) must conclude that the best society is democratic in structure, given that any thoughtful person acting would judge as preferable this whole of conduct over all possible alternatives. (Price, 473) This is a value judgment that places the individual's freedom as crucial in any communitarian setting where the creative capacity of the individual is seen to be of one piece with not only the creative progress of humankind but with that of Nature as well. (Tillich, 109) And this belief appears to be at the heart of Social Constructivism. As Dewey has stated:

“to call an object a value is to assert that it satisfies or fulfills certain conditions. Function and status in meeting conditions is a different matter from bare existence (of the enjoyment of something). The fact that something is desired only raises the *question* of its desirability; it does not settle it” (parenthetical material added) (Dewey, 1960, 260).

He goes on to say a few pages later that if “taste” is “an appreciation at once cultivated and active,” then arbitrariness associated with the terms common usage falls out. It seems to follow that the individual's liberty to think, inquire and discuss that is core to progressive democratic social organization, are the integral, rather than bare subjective, ingredients for the free circulation of intelligence. Dewey believes it is central “because the essence of the democratic principle is appeal to voluntary disposition instead of to force, to persuasion instead of coercion....” (Dewey in Singer, 125) Yet absent any appeal to something like a Kantian transcen-

dental ego, what would the meaning of “essential” be other than nominal (“‘Meaning’ is, however, in Dewey's use multivocal. Things have meaning or even ‘essences’ when we take them as signaling consequences that are important for us. . . .” (R. A. Putnam in Kim and Sosa, 120-1), not to mention the term “voluntary” And what would be the character of persuasion *vis-à-vis* the individual?

Without some common ground where comparisons against an objective moral standard can be made, external and internal views of the democratic enterprise would be free-floating assertions of cultural ways of life, where persuasion would take on the character of a religious conversion to a cultural ideal instead of an awakening to some universal or transpersonal truth. The education of the individual would be an inculcation of those ideals that perpetuate a society's value patterns. The call to progressivism without appeal to the “metaphysical law of progressive evolution in which accumulation produces higher and higher forms and values” (Tillich, 109) would be creativity as impulse, that is random acts at worst driven by the blind *connati* for adaptive survival, the antithesis of intelligent action.

In fact, Dewey holds that human nature is continuous with Nature, following the Darwinian stain in his thinking. One way to expound this continuity is as follows:

“we may think of these members of other species (the amoebae, the spider, the squirrel, etc.) as sharing with us something called experience—something not the same consciousness or thought, but something of which consciousness or thought are more complex and developed forms” (Rorty in Saatkamp, 5).

Dewey maintains that human experience is composed of two factors: impulse and pattern. Impulse, the life force of the human creature, has no intrinsic directedness. The manifestation of that impulse is a pattern, a construct that gives direction and a goal, and all patterns are entirely

acquired. Dewey begins Chapter IV in *Democracy and Education* with the words “In directing the activities of the young, society determines its own future in determining that of the young.” Growth is both the power to develop and the plasticity (“the capacity to retain and carry over from prior experience factors which modify subsequent actions”) to adapt to surroundings. It takes a leap of faith, however, to get from Dewey’s definition of growth to the assumption underlying Social Constructivism: that creative freedom channeled by and through social interaction will result in not only a sense of equality, but also the construction of a *better* social order. Whose perspective of “better” are we inclined towards as we, the social interlocutors, work through our diverse perspectives in a group session where communal satisfaction in the form of a value agreement, the intended consequence of deliberation, must be of a political nature, lacking the dispassion usually associated with science? There can be no prejudice-free points of view in a Deweyan world. Even the valuation of growth is the promotion of an end Dewey himself deems desirable (Copleston, 378). If we agree, it would have to be as a result of a persuasion as conversion rather than the attainment of rational consensus—as was noted above on page 4 in the discussion concerning solidarity—in line with James’s assertion that “ ‘the true’ . . . is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as ‘the right’ is only the expedient in our way of behaving.” (James, 106) Thus, looked at in this way, it is but a step from Dewey’s Instrumental Experimentalism to Rorty’s Poetic Pragmatism. With an emphasis on *historicism* (“the doctrine that there is no relation of ‘closeness to fit’ between language and the world . . . ” (Rorty in Saatkamp, 3), and the rejection of *scientism* (“the doctrine that natural science is privileged above other areas of culture, that something about natural science puts it in closer touch with reality than any other human activity”

(Rorty in Saatkamp, 4) Rorty reconstructs Dewey in what the former claims to be a more consistent pragmatism, by avoiding the dogmas of empiricism that linger in Dewey’s worldview, recognizing that science is itself a contingent web of belief as Nietzsche’s Perspectivism implies. (Rorty in Saatkamp, 1-15)

7. Pragmatic Paternalism

Nevertheless, one may question, along with Dewey, Rorty and Bruffee, the elite absolutist point of view—that there are context-independent truths to be passed down from generation to generation by those (the few) who know (i.e., the lecture-recitation model), while, as the Greene quote hints, not falling-in with the context-embedded subjectivism. It ought not be construed by a critical thinker that truth can be wholly subsumed into the subjective or the situational in reactive rejection to the absolutist position by making “premature-ultimates” out of constructs such as “democracy” “creativity” “poetic self-actualization”, “moral virtue”, and so on. Rorty makes logical errors when he states that “the theory that, as Dewey said, ‘growth itself is the only moral end’ is the moral theory it now pays us to have, for we have seen the unhappy results of trying to divinize and externalize a given individual social practice or form of individual life” (Rorty in Saatkamp, 14), for he falls into the fallacious arguments *From Ignorance and Question Begging*. And if he pragmatizes logic, as he does, Rorty’s position collapses into being another non-privileged perspective. The simple dichotomy between dogmatic proclamations or the iconoclastic assertions of poetic individual or collective creativity takes on the appearance a power struggle amongst memes for cultural space (Rorty in R Goodman, 128) because of its being a false division due to its incompleteness of scope. As I have suggested, there may be an alternative, Socratic, or objectivist position to take (yet non-Platonic, of the *Republic*, in nature).

In this view, truth can be both context-dependent *and* open to the *possibility* of transcultural, transtemporal, and/or panpsychic constructs in a *principled way*.⁴ Consensus, and not merely a solidarity, on principle can be reached concerning American education: a desire for autonomous (self-deciding) and socially-connected thinkers, who actively construct rather than passively receive knowledge over a lifetime. This consensus ought to exclude *strong paternalism*—that we may do something to a person without his/her informed and free consent for his/her own good—as antithetical to the ends of a coherent democratic education policy. Of course, under the objectivist view, the consensus can be on-going, always leaving open the possibility for greater clarity, or at least (and more likely) the elimination of that which is not clear or coherent. It might be further noted that attention should be paid to the logical structure and semantic consistency of the opinion offered by the students (as well as to the those of the educator’s him/herself, who is not above illogical and inconsistent noise-making), not only to their diverse and subjectively based opinions. This is perhaps nothing new. Yet in the context of the present educational milieu, and in the spirit of Gadamer, it needs play again.

Ironically, collaborative learning based on Deweyan-Rortyan pragmatism runs counter to these principles in the light of their challenge to the possibility of transcultural logic. It is my contention that their adherence to pragmatism leads to strong paternalism as much as does the lecture-recitation dogmatism (which erroneously claims itself merely to be an attempt to apply *weak paternalism* to eliminate a person’s *involuntary ignorance* of what is). Reminiscent of the well-intentioned, but misguided paternalism found in the Dawes Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in late nineteenth century, that undermined Native American tribal values in an effort to integrate these indigenous peoples into the mainstream of

American culture 5, is Rorty's attempts to escape the limitations and drawbacks of ethnocentric socialization, call Democratic Conformism, by Tillich (103-112).

By allowing the uninitiated to be "shepherded into the light by the connoisseurs of diversity" the stranger and the disenfranchised are raised, according to Rorty, to the point where they can be "treated just like the rest of us." Here, there is the appearance of inclusiveness. The inner circle expands its ranks in an ever-widening circumference once the *proper* education in democratic values of tolerance and diversity is introduced (inculcated?) to those currently on the fringe. Nevertheless, the expectation is that "the other" will already be close to, or be readily redefined into, our image and likeness (as defined by this democratically conformist solidarity). If they are too removed from "our" criteria for solidarity, too independent of the principles democracies advocate, those in question will appear as "mad" (Rorty's term) as Loyola or Marx, and the anti-democratic cultures their rephrasing spawned (Rorty 1991 vol. 1, 182-183) As Norman Geras correctly observes, "If, as Rorty insists, the force of any 'we', any sense of moral community, must depend on the contrast with a human 'they', on enclosing something smaller and more local than the human race; if someone's just being part of humankind gives at best a weak reason for treating them generously, at worst no possible basis at all for imaginative identification and moral concern; then you can make 'we' larger, but you cannot make it large enough to get rid of the aforesaid ethnocentric curse" (Geras, 1995 76-77).

Some portion of the "They" always will be spurned as *pariah* by the pragmatic society that feels justified in the repudiation of their autonomy through arguments based on self-defense against their malfeasance (i.e., by appeal to the *harm principle*—one may restrict a person's freedom to prevent that person from harming

other non-consenting parties). This seems truly arbitrary when it is realized that Rorty endorses the pluralistic insight shared by the Pragmatist, William James and the Psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud (1989, 38-39) to the effect that there is "a certain blindness in human beings" which prevents many from seeing that "the private poems of the pervert, the sadist, or the lunatic (are) each as richly textured and . . . continuous with our own activities." So it would appear that the supposed preservers of what is of most value in a diverse, liberal culture undermine the principles upon which they claim to stand once they function in the twin roles of guiding shepherds and defenders. For it is at the moment the Rortyan anti-foundationalist, amplifying Dewey's anti-metaphysical stance, proclaim as universally valuable (for "us" as well as "them") that which they claim is merely contingent, that they undermine pluralism and act as strong paternalists. And it is in the strenuous defense of those values which they concede are as equally contingent as any real or perceived threat to a liberal society that their actions turn capriciously cruel and self-destructive, due to reflexive intolerance.⁶ Again, turning to the author of *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind* for a telling insight, in his worry that a loss of foundational constraints under Rorty's liberal take augurs potentially cruel and often "bizarre results", Geras writes: "But I am more interested here in how Rorty would have us turn back from what his softened consequence otherwise seems to permit and threaten. We may not treat the child like an animal because . . . well, because it is not 'our' tradition to do so. This is to command the form, having evacuated it of its content. It is to give the tradition itself as a reason after rejecting the reasons of the tradition. It is first to put forth, as your own view, matter challenging, casting aside, the component principles and arguments of another given view; which latter you then uphold never-

theless as being, quite generally, 'our' vie" (Geras, 1995 82).

Community is a fellowship based on a sense of compassion and trust, as well as on acts of tolerance and creativity. Without the authentic communication of and about these values and practices a contingent assemblage of people situated in one locale (or around a set of concepts) is no better at being a community than an *ad hoc* prison community. A solidarity is aimed at a pragmatic "getting what one wants" and not at a communal search for objective truth, however illusive it may be. But in the absence of the objectivist's hope for some real and anchoring principle(s) (open to dialectic discussion and greater clarification), the democratic values mentioned above can be fragmented into competing narratives, and turned into their semantic opposites while retaining their grammatical structure, as happened when the McCarthyites used their alleged (and unprincipled) defense of terms such as "democracy", "freedom" and "justice" to conspire, and in practice to deny, innocent people of these same democratic rights and expectations. Without the Socratic supposition of the possibility of an abiding truth around which consensus can form and true communication can take place, the Pragmatism, Old and New, are on the equally unprincipled terrain of "spinning" meaning to serve some limited solidarity called "us". In the absence of stabilizing, transtemporal and transcultural principles imbedded in all language use (Gadamer, 1977, 61-68), or a T. Negelian deconstruction of pragmatism, there must be an advocacy of rhetorical skill training over and above the development of critical thinking as the primary goal of education. For how else can a Rortyan solidarity get what it wants in the struggle against equally contingent yet incommensurate cultural ideals but through the successful manipulation of a language-game? And this is possible only by means of the acquisition of the skills of a rhetorician, "virtue" being reduced to merely

another quill in the linguistic scabbard of the New Pragmatist. But any type of skill training, even in the rhetorical arts, conforms to the rejected model of additive education due to its propensity for cultural paternalism of the strongest sort.

8. Conclusion

Therefore, it seems that a true, open, non-paternalistic conversation about American education cannot be *either* an anti-foundationalist proposition or a pre-set given. These undesirable alternatives ought to be the limits for a spectrum of (infinite?) options under a principle. The model to which I am alluding is, of course, Aristotle's *Doctrine of the Golden Mean*.⁷ Excess and deficiency were conceived by him as the limits for a range of positions possible that strike a balance, given the context, between the extremes. Move beyond the limits of Aristotle's thought to the desirability to include in a broad-based and open-ended discussion the meaning of the principle itself, in our case that for American education under the meta-principle of, say, "the Promotion of the General Welfare", and one makes progress toward Collaborative Learning as Socratic Constructivism.

However, it becomes obvious upon a minute's reflection that this meta-principle could also be called onto the carpet and judged under a still higher principle, say "The Good". But it must stop somewhere, and it is at this point that an anti-metaphysicalist such as Dewey that leads to the anti-foundationalism found in the views of Rorty would challenge the whole process as ungrounded (and unstoppable to the point of a meaning-denying infinite regress) except contingently in the solidarity of the American experience. Yet to acquiesce on this point is to return to the realm of political rhetoric where "truth" is determined by verbal manipulation. But one does not have to acquiesce if one does not claim to know in advance what the General Welfare or The Good is, only that something like a consensus-forming truth must be the case if one is to

ever avoid the excesses of dogmatism and the deficiencies of relativism.⁸ Of course, this is precisely the point of view of Socratic Ignorance. As Socrates says in the *Meno*:

"Some things I have said of which I am not altogether confident. But that we shall be better and braver and less helpless if we think that we ought to enquire, than we should have been if we indulged in the idle fancy that there was no knowing and no use in seeking to know what we do not know. . ." (Plato in Jowett, 1920, 366).

In conclusion, the coming to know, or learning, is not to be thought of as a mere cloning of ideas from one generation to another, from a traditional lecturer to the current crop of students. Nor can it be solely or primarily a competition, as among species, of culturally embedded *memes* for the high ground of meaning. For this must be accomplished by restricting the possibility and scope of a student's judgment through the truncation of conversation into discretely isolated, incommensurate, and antagonistic solidarities, as is done in advertising campaigns. Rather, the metaphor most apt is that learning, like sexual reproduction, is a process of continual birthing of ideas *via* a process of *interpenetrating* dialogue between people of (perhaps radically) different backgrounds. As Hans Georg Gadamer notes, diversity is a blessing of world perspectives that, through disclosive dialogue, opens each sincere participant to expansion of their horizon by absorption of the other's perspective into their own. The play-off of each other's initial inclinations gives birth to the unfolding understanding of the topic at hand in a new way, *because* there is an intercourse of ideas. To merge both Tillich and Geras's insights to the metaphor, we must be able to discern moral development from an imposter posing as progress, if only by the recognition of the imposter when it is presented. The language-game in play is not the possession of one party or another, but the medium that lies between them. And in teaching it is the dialectic collaboration of student

with student, and students with teachers, and the class with the wider community, which yields an ever widening, innovative, and hopeful consensus for all concerned.

ENDNOTES

1. The practical arts, as Dewey says, assumes mechanical unity and consistency established in the universe. Otherwise discoveries made today would not count tomorrow, inventions could not be patented, the best-laid plans might go astray, all work might be wasted, and the methods of experts could not be adjusted more and more accurately to their task. (Santayana, 1962, 370)

2. The great error of dogmatists, in hypostatizing their conclusions into alleged pre-existing facts, did not lie in believing that facts of some kind pre-existed; the error lay only in framing an inadequate view of those facts and regarding it as adequate. (Santayana, 1962, 380)

3. Parenthetically, any educator who has been charged to grade student papers in which there was some Internet source of dubious scholarship can well appreciate the need for a critical review of ideas.

4. Often, in Ethical theory, moral judgment is seen as context dependent and objectivist, as when the operative principle is "Promote the General Welfare" and a rule of "Tell the Truth" is in question. This may happen if by person A telling the truth to person B (an individual willing to use this truthful information to kill person C), B will kill C. If A is aware of the relation of her truth telling and B's intent, then in the name of promoting the general welfare, A ought not, in this context, to tell the truth. This choice by A both allows for an exemption to a general rule (thus avoiding the pit-fall of the absolutist view) while maintaining the principle that undergirds the rule (this avoiding the excesses of subjectivism). As Terrance McConnell states: "It seems plausible, then, to

hold that moral judgments are context-dependent. But the objectivist can allow this; the objectivist need not be an absolutist. The objectivist can allow that exceptions to moral rules are possible, as long as those exceptions can be identified in a principled way" (McConnell, 1997, 5). It is but a small step to reapply these basic ideas to the field of education.

But, of course, if there is only truth as a social utility, with no possibility for appeal to a foundational standard, then the objective/subjective distinction falls away. Turn we must to what will work today. Dewey claims that when competing utilities (habits of action) clash, intelligence emerges. But as my argument suggests above, that pragmatism clashes with itself; we ought to re-evaluate the foundations of Social Constructivism.

5. Compromise between any majority opinion and minority assertions are political adjustments to the tension, which arises due to the divergence of their opinions. If these differences arise from incommensurate world views, and if Rorty's take on hermeneutics—that it is a matter of becoming acquainted with strangers through a conversation where such terms as "we" and "us" function not as inclusive terms but as boundary markers demarcating the part of the "conversation" which fits one's particular bias from the part which does not, and reinterpret the "exotic" back into to the now expanded idiosyncratic narrative of the self-assertive group identity (Rorty, 1979, 360)—in conjunction with his adoption of Thomas Kuhn's theory on paradigm shifts (or as Bruffee puts it, "We leave one community of knowledgeable peers and join another")—yielding the position of internally coherent yet mutually exclusive language-games which touch, when they do, only on the periphery—then there is never a possibility of a true meeting of the minds. Compromise would then take the form of either a clever use of terms that serve to merely cover-over

the real cleavage between the parties to the dispute, leaving the underlying tensions undissipated, or the unlikely, yet possible, form of a wholesale Kuhnian conversion by one party to the other's vocabulary—which, of course, is not a compromise but an abandonment of one's original position. The ongoing struggles over racial issues in the United States since the granting of full citizenship to a portion of the African American population (males) through the adoption of the fifteenth amendment to the U. S. Constitution in 1870 suggests, however, that even in a democracy, legislation, court cases, verbal adaptations to the law, and the passage of time will not suffice to convert a person's way-of-life to some "alien" and, for many of those even moderately entrenched in that cultural position, unwelcomed social paradigm.

In a Rortyan-inspired universe, any external devices for social policy changes, like those just mentioned, in the hands of a paternalistic government become coercive tools which force outward compliance in public behavior (e.g., in jobs, housing and education), thereby achieving the effects of compromise as defined above, without the consent of the parties affected. What then are deemed by the current solidarity as politically incorrect speech-acts are suppressed, forced underground to the level of private mutterings and idiosyncratic beliefs. Collaborative interaction is thereby truncated, behind masks of cooperation, in the name of solidarity.

I do not believe that these are the only alternatives to, in particular, the racial divide, or to ethnic, gender or any other contentious debate. However, I can see no other option available to Rorty, and though him, Dewey. Hence, for democracies and democratic institutions (such as public schools) explicitly or implicitly based on Old or New Pragmatism, I cannot envision a resolution to the poten-

tially destructive tension between creative individualism and an enforced public policy of tolerance.

6. Parker J. Palmer captures the educator the modern sense of *The Aristotelian Mean* when the author writes:

To correct our obsession with objective knowledge, I stressed subjective engagement.

To correct our excessive regard for the power of the intellect, I stressed the power of emotions to freeze, or free, the mind.

My intent was to rebalance the scales. But in a polarizing culture it is hard to do that without slamming the scales in the opposite direction. In arguing for the neglected pole, I may be mistaken for someone who excuses poor technique, urging teachers just to "be themselves"; who believes there are no standards for truth, just "whatever you think it is"; who doesn't care about the content of your thoughts, just as long as you "share what you feel." It is obvious—I hope—that these are distortions of what I have said. But we distort things this way all the time because we are trained neither to voice both sides of an issue nor to listen with both ears. . . . It is rooted in the fact that we look at the world through analytic lenses . . . In a phrase, we think the world apart. (Palmer, 1997 1)

I tend to agree with Palmer when he states that we should think synthetically (both/and). However, Palmer then argues against the analytic (either/or) mode of thought in an analytic fashion. It would seem more consistent if he would allow for the desired rebalance via the dialectic play between analysis and synthesis, a method of on-going discussion Socrates was fond of employing in "friendly dialogues" such as the *Crito* and the *Meno*.

Palmer's quote by the Nobel Prize-

winning physicist Niels Bohr speaks to this point: “The opposite of a true statement is a false statement., but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth.” Please note that Bohr does not claim that the opposite of a profound truth is any other statement. He preserves the notion of “profound truth” (Palmer’s term) while allowing for the existence of paradox. Palmer echoes Socrates famous claim of ignorance when the former writes of a personal paradox: “The knowledge I have gained from thirty years of teaching goes hand-in-hand with my sense of being a rank amateur at the start of each new class.” (Palmer, 1997, 2)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bruffee, Kenneth A. (1982). “Liberal Education and Social Justification of the Belief” in *Liberal Education* 68.

Cross, K. Patricia. (1997). The Cross Papers Number 2: “Opening Windows on Learning” in *League for Innovation*.

Dewey, John. (1910). “The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays” in *Contemporary Thought*. Henry Holt and Company.

Dewey, John. (1920). *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Dewey, John.(1958). *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover Publications.

Dewey, John. (1960). *The Quest for Certainty*. New York: Capricorn Books.

Dewey, John. (1979). *Art as Experience*. New York: Paragon Books.

Gadamer, Hans Georg. (1977). *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Geras, Norman. (1995). *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind*. London: Verso.

Greene, Maxine. (1998). “Teaching as Possibility: Light in Dark Times” in *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice*.

Grippe, Edward J. (1998). *A Critical Inquiry into Richard Rorty’s Philosophy of the New Pragmatism*. Ann Arbor: UMI

Hall, David L. (1994). *Richard Rorty: Prophet and Poet of the New Pragmatism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

James, William. (1979). *Pragmatism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jowett, M. A. (1937). *The Dialogues of Plato: Volume I*. New York: Random House.

Kim, Jaegwon and Ernest Sosa. (1995). Editors. *A Companion to Metaphysics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kuhn, Thomas S. (1970). *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. Chicago; University of Chicago Press.

McConnell, Terrance. (1997). *Moral Issues in Health Care*. (second edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Palmer, Parker J. (1997). “The Hidden Wholeness: Paradox in Teaching and Learning”. *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*, (6, 5).

Rorty, Richard. (1979). *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rorty, Richard. (1989). *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rorty, Richard. (1991). *Philosophical Papers Volume I: Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Singer, Beth J. (1999). *Pragmatism, Rights and Democracy*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Santayana, George. (1962). “Dewey’s Naturalistic Metaphysics” in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: Volume I*. William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken. (editors). New York: Random House.

Tillich, Paul. (1972). *The Courage to Be*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Weiner, Harvey, S. (1986). “Collaborative Learning in the Classroom: A Guide to Evaluation” in *College English*, (48, 1).

Edward J. Grippe can be contacted at egrippe@ncc.comnet.edu

Membership Nomination

The life-blood of an organization such as the John Dewey Society is a large and healthy membership base. As well as providing the financial resources necessary to maintain an active and extensive regime of publications, lectures, and symposia, the members also supply those critical and essential sparks of creativity, insight, and drive that allows all members to freely share notions and ideas.

Quite frankly, without an adequate fee paying membership base, your JDS would be hamstrung in its ongoing attempts to provide quality academic and professional events throughout the year. So, encourage your colleagues and graduate students to become active members in the John Dewey Society.

The range of activities outlined by your Board for the 2001-2002 scholastic year is quite exciting. Powerful sessions are slated for both AERA and ASCD and your two Society periodicals are offering colleagues and friends of the JDS professional space to discriminate their ideas. Please, approach friends, colleagues and those who you feel might benefit from belonging to an organization whose avowed goal is to promote the free exchange of ideas within a democratic setting.

Name of Nominee

Postal Address

Institution

e-mail

Forward all membership nominations to Peter S. Hlebowitsh, 256 Lindquist Center North, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242-1529. For those of you more electronically inclined, contact Peter directly with membership nominations at: peter-hlebowitsh@uiowa.edu.

Name of Nominee

Postal Address

Institution

e-mail

Forward all membership nominations to Peter S. Hlebowitsh, 256 Lindquist Center North, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242-1529. For those of you more electronically inclined, contact Peter directly with membership nominations at: peter-hlebowitsh@uiowa.edu.



McGill

Jon Bradley
Faculty of Education/McGill University
3700 McTavish Street
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H3A 1Y2