

Editor's Note

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

David Granger

Greetings, readers! Spring is finally here and that means it's time for a new issue of *Education & Culture*. This latest edition of the journal features several articles that use Dewey's social and political philosophy to illuminate the myriad ways in which forces beyond the school and classroom continue to create major challenges for an education that might prepare students for democratic life in our increasingly complex twenty-first century world. The task before us is a challenging one, indeed. However, the contributions of our latest authors might help us to forge a fruitful path through the many perils and possibilities that lie ahead.

We begin with Atli Harðarson's "The School as a Democratic Workplace: The Political Dimensions of Dewey's *Democracy and Education*." In this thoughtful and timely piece, Harðarson points out that when Dewey's *Democracy and Education* is interpreted through the lens of his many other writings on democracy, the result is a compelling argument for workplace democracy for teachers and, its counterpart, a petition against policies that inevitably reproduce social hierarchies in the workplace. Such policies, Harðarson submits, likely have a deleterious effect on the attitudes and habits of both teachers and students. As he thus concludes, "[Dewey's] arguments raise questions about school management that are highly relevant today, when the most common view of educational aims favors prescriptivism and a culture of control." Bill Gaudelli and Megan Laverty continue this theme in stressing the need for a kind of pedagogy that provides learners with the tools for genuine agency so that we might begin to make sense of and effectively address current and future social ills. While social studies education would seem to be ideally positioned to do this work, the authors worry that "the field has become increasingly isolated and internally fragmented," in part due to recent policy initiatives that "systematically omit social studies from frontline consideration" and exacerbate its historically recurrent crisis of purpose. In response, Gaudelli and Laverty appeal to Dewey in proposing several recalibrations of social studies education that give teachers "the ability to socially situate their inquiries," while conveying to students "the importance of engaging in their own processes of inquiry and reflection" regarding the problems and possibilities of social life.

"Sophic Education: Where is Your Treasure?," by Tyson Anderson, provides a revealing look at the larger cultural context behind the more obvious foreground of recent "upheavals in education." After exploring a number of crucial events or landmarks in the historical development of this context, especially those resulting in a gradual fragmentation of experience and our concomitant malaise of "educational

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materialism,” Anderson appeals to a kind of “‘sophic’ education.” This “sophic education,” the seeds of which can be found in, among other places, our “foundational myths and thinkers,” might (again) open us to “the multidimensionality of existence” while resisting “reductionism in its various seductive forms.”

Scott Stroud’s “Creative Democracy, Communication, and the Uncharted Sources of Bhimrao Ambedkar’s Deweyan Pragmatism” explores the possible influence of Dewey and his “rich account of democracy” on one of his former students and the eventual “architect of independent India’s constitution.” Through Ambedkar and his “creative appropriation of Dewey,” we see certain pragmatic themes in a new and potentially revitalizing light. In particular, we see them through what Stroud envisions as possible connections between Dewey’s notion of “creative democracy” and Ambedkar’s mature exposition of Buddhism, which some have subsequently described as “a democratic and rational faith for all people.” Either way, the result, Stroud offers, is a “unique form of pragmatism constructed by its most prominent Indian advocate to address the unique forms of injustice prevalent in south Asia.”

We then end the issue with two book reviews. The first is Johnnie Blunt’s review of Sarah Stitzlein’s timely and compelling *American Public Education and the Responsibility of Its Citizens: Supporting Democracy in the Age of Accountability*. Our second book is Jake Oresick’s very informative *The Schenley Experiment: A Social History of Pittsburgh’s First Public High School*, thoughtfully reviewed by Laura Gabrion.

Until next time.

—David Granger  
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