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# CREATIVE DEMOCRACY, COMMUNICATION, AND THE UNCHARTED SOURCES OF BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR'S DEWEYAN PRAGMATISM

Scott R. Stroud

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the contours of the Indian pragmatist Bhimrao Ambedkar and his reconstruction of Buddhism in the 1950s. As a student of John Dewey at Columbia University, young Ambedkar was heavily influenced by the pragmatist ideas of democracy and reconstruction. Throughout his life he would continue to evoke Dewey's words and ideas in his fight against caste injustice in India. This article explores the possibility that Ambedkar could have been influenced by Dewey's work, "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us." In exploring the intriguing evidence that points toward such an influence, Ambedkar's *The Buddha and His Dhamma* emerges as a site of pragmatist reconstruction of Buddhism and as a personal democratic guide to action.

Bhimrao Ambedkar is well known as the architect of independent India's constitution, the document that created the world's largest democracy on January 26, 1950. Ambedkar is also famous for his vigorous advocacy on behalf of India's so-called "untouchables," those groups of people that reside beneath and outside of the ancient system of hereditary castes in Hinduism. His activism and political efforts secured rights and respect for millions of lower-caste Indians before (and after) his death in 1956. Even though Ambedkar was an untouchable, forbidden from learning the ancient language of Sanskrit (and the philosophical texts it opened up in the Hindu tradition), he managed to learn English in his early education and gained the patronage of an enlightened ruler, the Gaikwad of Baroda. This prince funded Ambedkar's education at Columbia University from 1913 to 1916, a place where he learned economics and other disciplines from some of the greatest American minds available. Over a decade later, Ambedkar remembered these teachers fondly: "The best friends I have had in my life were some of my classmates at Columbia and my great professors, John Dewey, James Shotwell, Edwin Seligman and James Harvey

Robinson.<sup>21</sup> John Dewey, the figure most associated with American pragmatism at that time, seemed to possess a greater importance for young Ambedkar than these other teachers. Eleanor Zelliot concludes that “John Dewey seems to have had the greatest influence on Ambedkar.”<sup>22</sup> What would become crucially important is the form that this influence took on Ambedkar—it was not a general or abstract force in his life. Instead, the texts and words of Dewey influenced Ambedkar in such a way as to inform his activities and his own communicative utterances. For instance, K. N. Kadam describes Dewey as a pivotal figure in Ambedkar’s development: “Dr. Ambedkar took down every word uttered by his great teacher [Dewey] in the course of his lectures; and it seems that Ambedkar used to tell his friends that, if unfortunately Dewey died [all] of a sudden, ‘I could reproduce every lecture verbatim.’”<sup>23</sup> Ambedkar’s second wife, Savita Ambedkar, reported that Ambedkar could even “perform a convincing imitation of Dewey’s distinctive lecture style.”<sup>24</sup>

Dewey seemed to seep into Ambedkar’s words and mannerisms in a way that no other influence did. K. N. Kadam argues that “unless we understand something of John Dewey, one of Dr. Ambedkar’s teachers at Columbia University, it would be impossible to understand Dr. Ambedkar.”<sup>25</sup> This influence of pragmatism on Ambedkar from Dewey was so deep that Arun Mukherjee warns us against examining Ambedkar’s thought “in isolation, without paying attention to his dialogue with Dewey.”<sup>26</sup> What Mukherjee points out is a complex relationship between Dewey’s ideas, words, and philosophy, and Ambedkar’s appropriation of these resources. Mukherjee’s analysis of Ambedkar’s famous undelivered speech, “Annihilation of Caste” (1936), unearths an extensive appropriation of Dewey’s work by Ambedkar:

Ambedkar’s writings mark his affiliation with Dewey through extensive quotations from Dewey’s work. So deeply embedded is Dewey’s thought in Ambedkar’s consciousness that quite often his words flow through Ambedkar’s discourse without quotation marks. Ambedkar not only borrowed concepts and ideas from Dewey, his methodological approach and ways of argumentation also show Dewey’s influence.<sup>7</sup>

Scholars have explored this phenomenon and have called it “echoing,” since it uses the words and phrases of Dewey’s texts in an appropriative fashion woven into Ambedkar’s own context and arguments.<sup>8</sup> The principle that can be drawn from these studies is simple: when Dewey influences Ambedkar, one should inevitably be able to identify which specific Deweyan text Ambedkar draws from in his reconstructive use.

The story of Dewey’s influence on Ambedkar, and Ambedkar’s creative appropriation of Dewey, is complex and far too detailed to be covered in any one study. Yet, from the incremental steps of past research, we are filling in the lacunae in our understanding of Ambedkar as expressing a Deweyan pragmatism. We know for sure that Ambedkar was influenced by Dewey’s rich account of democracy. This much is apparent in his beloved personal copy of Dewey’s *Democracy and*

*Education*.<sup>9</sup> As indicated by his own annotations inside the book, he acquired it on January 6, 1917, during the year he spent in London after his time at Columbia University.<sup>10</sup> Beyond this text's exposition of democracy, heavily used by Ambedkar in the 1930s, this article asks a different question: could Ambedkar have been influenced by the essay "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us" later in his life?<sup>11</sup> Having been delivered in 1939, it was after Ambedkar's verified contact with Dewey. It is one of Dewey's most intriguing and accessible short works, and it is significant as a mature exposition of Dewey's notion of everyday democracy, a theme that he foregrounded in early writings, such as his 1888 work, "The Ethics of Democracy," and his well-known 1916 book, *Democracy and Education*. Others have written admirably on Ambedkar's later attempt to rewrite Buddhism as a democratic and rational faith for all people, as well as the parallels of his thinking with pragmatic themes.<sup>12</sup> The aims of this article are limited. Instead of exploring the larger-scale relation between pragmatism, Buddhism, and Ambedkar's works, I ask a question of the specific influence on Ambedkar's later work. Is there any evidence to suggest that "Creative Democracy" influenced specific parts of Ambedkar's later exposition of Buddhism? In exploring this possible connection, we can gain an incrementally greater hold on the unique form of pragmatism constructed by its most prominent Indian advocate to address the unique forms of injustice prevalent in south Asia.<sup>13</sup>

### BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR AS PRAGMATIST

Understanding Ambedkar as a pragmatist means seeing the unique influence of Dewey's pragmatism on him, as well as the way vital Deweyan concepts and distinctions had an impact on Ambedkar's own philosophical thought. We know that Ambedkar was clearly influenced by Dewey from his education in New York to his final years. The vectors of influence start with the books he read and engaged with, both during his education and after his return to India. Building upon a list of course titles from Ambedkar's transcript, as well as materials contained in the Columbia University archives, I have determined that Ambedkar took three semester-long courses from John Dewey.<sup>14</sup> These included Dewey's Philosophy 231: "Psychological Ethics and Moral and Political Philosophy" in the fall of 1914 and Dewey's two-semester series, Philosophy 131–132: "Moral and Political Philosophy," in 1915–1916.<sup>15</sup> The content of these courses influenced Ambedkar's thinking, as evidenced by his evocation of Dewey on the difference between force and energy in a review of Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Social Reconstruction* in 1918. This distinction can be clearly traced back to Dewey's lectures in Philosophy 132 in the spring semester of 1916.<sup>16</sup> Ambedkar employed Dewey's distinction to identify a problem that he would explore the rest of his life: what are the moral limits on an activist's or reformer's use of force? Ambedkar saw India being drawn toward pacifism or quietism at this stage, and he knew that this would disable reform. Yet, as he would come to realize in the 1920s and 1930s

when orthodox Hindu reformers such as Gandhi would stake their lives and projects in opposition to Ambedkar's desires to reform the caste system, nonviolence can be as immorally coercive as foreign ideologies that proffered violence, such as British colonial domination and atavistic Russian communism. Ambedkar started with a Deweyan question about what sorts of force can be constructive in reform efforts, and he adapted his Indian pragmatism from these extremes.

Ambedkar was also deeply influenced by Dewey's books, such as *Democracy and Education* and the 1908 *Ethics* (co-authored with James H. Tufts). Judging from the annotations in his copies of these texts, I have concluded that Ambedkar saw in them a particular framework of reconstructive pragmatism. Looking at what he highlighted and emphasized in his copy of *Democracy and Education*, the following three themes are prominent: the importance of tradition and education in sustaining society, the imperative of reconstructing the past to create a better future for a community, and the meliorative relationship between dispositions in individuals and the constitution of democratic communities.<sup>17</sup> From his copy of the 1908 *Ethics*, one sees the following constellations emerge from his many annotations: Ambedkar grasped the importance of seeing morality as a movement from individuals guided by customary morality to a state of individuals using reflective morality, and the value of the distinction between rules and principles in religious and moral matters.<sup>18</sup> All of these lessons would prove useful when Ambedkar began his various attempts at reforming a Hindu system that for millennia held it as a religious constant that humans were divided into ranked castes based upon their birth.

These themes will appear in overt or implicit form in many of Ambedkar's writings and speeches in the 1930s through the 1950s. But it is important to emphasize that Ambedkar did not have contact with Dewey after leaving Columbia in the summer of 1916. I have not been able to find any mention of Ambedkar in Dewey's collected correspondence, nor have I identified any letters between Ambedkar and Dewey. Ambedkar was excited to see Dewey when he returned to New York in June 1952 to receive an honorary degree from his alma mater, but Dewey died as Ambedkar was en route on June 2, 1952. When he arrived in New York, Ambedkar wrote to his wife, Savita, back in India: "There are many old friends who have gathered around me and [are] helping me in all sorts of ways. I was looking forward to meet[ing] Prof Dewey. But he died on the 2nd when our plane was in Rome. I am so sorry. I owe all my intellectual life to him. He was a wonderful man."<sup>19</sup> Ambedkar always seemed to keep a respectful distance from his pragmatist guru, but the forces of influence held him in a steady orbit nonetheless.

## THE QUESTION OF "CREATIVE DEMOCRACY"

If we assume it is possible and profitable to trace the texts that influenced the vast corpus of Ambedkar's writings and speeches, and we start with the hint that Dewey

was one of the leading influences on the Indian caste reformer, we can ask an interesting question: was Ambedkar exposed to or influenced by Dewey's short but powerful essay "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us?" This essay was written by Dewey and read by Horace Kallen on Dewey's eightieth birthday celebration in New York on October 20, 1939. It is a remarkable work, largely because it engages the idea of democracy in a period of growing violence, hostility, and prejudice associated with Hitler's rise to power and aggression in Europe. Dewey extends his worries about habits and predispositions toward others that destroy communities based on shared interests. But given that this essay was presented and published so long after Ambedkar's verified contact with Dewey, why should we think that Ambedkar might have been exposed to it, let alone influenced by it?

If one looks at Ambedkar's correspondence, one comes across an intriguing exchange from 1954. The order of the letters is unclear at points, but enough details exist to indicate that Ambedkar wrote a series of letters to an "untouchable" student studying in London, V. B. Kadam, between August and October 1954.<sup>20</sup> Ambedkar had written to Kadam previously in November 1953 and June 1954, mostly to request the purchase of books from London booksellers. In a letter most likely from August 24, 1954, Ambedkar asks Kadam to procure a specific work of Dewey's: "I had with me a copy of a very valuable book called 'Democracy' by John Dewey. It is, I think, lost. It's an old book quite out of print."<sup>21</sup> Ambedkar gives an intriguing reason for reacquiring this book that he supposedly lost—"I am writing a book on Democracy in India for this I need very much Dewey's book. It is a very small pamphlet. It could easily be copied out. Can you do it? I know if you have the necessary leisure. It can't take more than two days. I shall be glad if you can. The pamphlet you will find in the British Museum." Of course, there is no text of Dewey's with the exact title of "Democracy." Eleanor Zelliot speculates that Ambedkar could be referring to Dewey's book *Democracy and Education*, but this suggestion will not get us very far, since Ambedkar's copy of that work is dated 1917 and remains in his collection of books.

Kadam apparently copied something out, following Ambedkar's vague directions as best he could, and sent a handwritten manuscript back to India. Ambedkar's letter to Kadam on September 5, 1954, confirms his receipt of this copy, but laments that "the essay you have copied out is not the essay of Dewey which I wanted." He then writes that "There is another essay of his on democracy. It is in the British Museum. Of this I have no doubt. To enable you to identify it is a reply to Sir Henry Maine's book called *Popular Government* which was an attack on democracy. Dewey's is a reply to it. You will see reference to Maine on the opening page of the essay."<sup>22</sup> Ambedkar apparently desperately needed this unnamed book, so he emphasized the way to acquire it in painful detail to Kadam: "If you go to the Museum and look through the catalogue of books by Dewey, you are sure to get it. Do try." Eventually, Kadam locates, copies, and sends Ambedkar what was desired on September 17, 1954—Dewey's 1888 work, "The Ethics of Democracy."

Ambedkar replies that he has “received the manuscript of John Dewey’s ‘Ethics of Democracy.’ Thank you for copying it for me. I am glad my memory is as good as it is. I am keeping your copy. You can have it when you return.” He also discusses again his work on some book related to democracy in this late letter, claiming it will “have a great sale in India for the Indians are now greatly interested in democracy.”

There are many mysteries enshrined in this tantalizing—and incomplete—series of letters. What book on “Democracy” was Ambedkar writing? Among Ambedkar’s unpublished writings, there are none that quite fit the description of a book solely on democracy. He left unpublished writings comparing the Buddha to Karl Marx, as well as an exploration of revolution and counterrevolution over the course of Indian history, but these do not seem to be focused on democracy per se. In the unpublished preface, dated April 6, 1956, to his posthumous masterpiece from 1957, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar only mentions these two other books by name—“*Buddha and Karl Marx*; and . . . *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India*. They are written out in parts. I hope to publish them soon.”<sup>23</sup> It is conceivable that he was working on other books that would not call for a mention in his revisioning of the Buddha’s story. K. N. Kadam even claims that “Dr. Ambedkar had himself intended and planned to write on ‘The Philosophy of John Dewey,’ though perhaps at a rather late stage. It is most unfortunate that whatever he had written on the subject is lost.”<sup>24</sup> There is the possibility that whatever book Kadam is referring to on Dewey was also the book Ambedkar was recalling as dealing with democracy. There is also some chance that Ambedkar had completed a portion of this book by the time of his untimely death. Nanak Rattu, the personal secretary to Ambedkar in his last few years of life, does not mention such a book in his memoirs, but he does mention one of the ancillary tragedies of Ambedkar’s death. Some two decades after Ambedkar’s passing, his second wife, Savita, lost control of their residence at 26 Alipur Road in Delhi due to a complex situation involving debt and possible intimidation on behalf of a landlord. Rattu reports that Savita Ambedkar was disallowed entry into her part of the large complex in January 1967, and when she finally was allowed in, observed that many of the precious belongings of Ambedkar were lost or had been mistreated. Rattu narrates perhaps the most horrible outcome for scholars of Ambedkar:

The worst was that they removed countless precious documents and important papers, nicely kept in the several racks of a big store room and recklessly dumped [them] in an open yard opposite the shed in a most shameful manner, not realizing the importance of these. . . . In addition the store room contained manuscripts of his several writings, copies of his speeches, a large number of important paper cuttings dating back to 1927 and a few framed photos. . . . But alas! These were destroyed and reduced to waste paper due to the reckless handling and due to the rain the same night.<sup>25</sup>

What documents were destroyed out in that yard in the rain? What manuscripts were lost forever due to these temporary struggles over finances and debt? There is the chance—albeit small—that there was a manuscript among that haphazardly removed stash of documents constituting Ambedkar's attempt to sketch out his own theory of democracy, or to explain the philosophy of Dewey to his Indian audiences. We shall never know, unless confirming evidence concerning the existence of such a work-in-progress comes to light.

What we do know from these letters is that Ambedkar sought, and eventually received, a copy of Dewey's work, "The Ethics of Democracy."<sup>26</sup> But we also know that Ambedkar received another essay by Dewey in 1954 from Kadam, a hand-copied work whose original title was never named in the correspondence, but that we can presume had enough of a relationship to the theme of democracy that Kadam felt confident in copying it out as a response to Ambedkar's initial but vague inquiries concerning a Deweyan work on democracy. Might this have been Dewey's 1939 essay, "Creative Democracy"? Possibly. If so, Kadam's copying this work out and sending it to Ambedkar would be one way that Ambedkar could have been exposed to it. Another path of exposure and influence is also broached in these letters. Ambedkar constantly requested that Kadam send back books from London that he desired. In the letter from September 8, 1954, which evoked Maine's attack on democracy as a further clue about the identification of the Dewey work sought, Ambedkar also asked Kadam to buy him a list of three books in London. The final book in this list was *The Philosopher of the Common Man—Essays in Honor of John Dewey to Celebrate his Eightieth Birthday*, the 1940 volume that contained a range of essays celebrating Dewey and his thought.<sup>27</sup> After essays by Albert C. Barnes, John Herman Randall Jr., and Hu Shih, the book concluded with one work of Dewey's—his "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us" address. Even if Kadam sent another essay in his first attempt at locating the text Ambedkar wanted, Ambedkar could have still paged through the "Creative Democracy" address in the form of this book that we know he specifically requested from Kadam.

### CHARTING THE POSSIBLE INFLUENCE OF "CREATIVE DEMOCRACY" ON AMBEDKAR

A larger—and perhaps more fruitful—question can be asked beyond whether Ambedkar possessed this essay: is there any reason to think he may have been influenced by "Creative Democracy"? This is a more difficult question than tracking the mere possession of the work, since one can possess a text and not read it, and one can read texts and not be influenced in any observable way by them. But Ambedkar is a very unique case. It also causes us to think about what it may mean to be influenced by a source. Is this a matter of gaining ideas one might not have had otherwise? Or shifting and vague emphases that may be perceivable in one's

original work? Or explicit acknowledgment that one is in debt to specific ideas from another source? Although one can find Ambedkar citing Dewey by name in his works in the 1930s, the last operationalization of influence (e.g., “claims of influence are reasonable only at those points where a figure explicitly cites an influencing figure”) is too strict—we can be influenced by others and not be explicit about it, or not be explicit about it at every point or instance of influence. Alternatively, abstract matters of ideas and emphases in a work may or may not be causally attributable to a past source; one could get these ideas elsewhere, and at any rate, it is difficult to argue for such attributions with any level of decisiveness. With Ambedkar, however, our job is easier. Even in places where Dewey is not cited by name, we can identify when Dewey makes a mark on Ambedkar. As previous work has shown, there will be specific textual traces in Ambedkar’s work that should allow us to identify what Deweyan text is drawn from and appropriated by the Indian reformer. This technique of examining Ambedkar and his appropriation of the exact passages and phrases from Dewey has been demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt by many past studies that chart his use of Dewey’s exact text from *Democracy and Education*, *Ethics*, and *Experience and Nature* in his various speeches and writings.<sup>28</sup> These can be called “echoes,” since they are identifiable even if not explicitly acknowledged as Deweyan in source. The remainder of this article will consider the question of whether there are any such textual traces or “echoes” of “Creative Democracy” in Ambedkar’s work, and whether there are influences in his writings after September 1954 that may show its influence. Unlike the extensive echoing of *Democracy and Education* in his works such as “Annihilation of Caste,” the influence charted here may be more subtle. But this is still a useful question to ask, one that has not been asked before about his later work, and one that makes sense of his correspondence and its mysteries in the 1950s.

The surest path in exploring a possible consequence of Ambedkar being exposed to “Creative Democracy” in 1954 is to identify textual traces in works later than 1954 that use the phrases and text from this Deweyan work. This is how one can identify the influence of *Democracy and Education* in works such as his 1936 text, “Annihilation of Caste,” and his testimony to the Southborough Committee in 1919. While there are not the same sort of indisputable traces left on Ambedkar from “Creative Democracy,” there are still traces that we can make sense of or ignore. To ascertain the value of paying attention to these subtler traces, let us ask what is significant or unique about Dewey’s “Creative Democracy.” This will then allow us to examine if those traces emerge in Ambedkar’s work past 1954, and whether they are absent from earlier texts.

“Creative Democracy” is notable not simply for its continuation of Dewey’s emphasis on democracy; many of his texts did this. What seems fairly specific to this work is the way that Dewey renders democracy as *a way of life*. Dewey claims that democracy is “a way of life” no less than eight times on the final pages of the

essay.<sup>29</sup> At one point, he emphasizes the applicability of this phrase to individual action by further describing it as “a personal, an individual, way of life.”<sup>30</sup> He clearly wanted to offer a challenge to *each* individual, to each person, to instantiate the core of democracy in his or her being, and not to defer the battle for democracy to remote institutions or governmental chambers. He implores his audience, through Kallen as reader, that

democracy is a personal way of individual life; that it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the relations of life.<sup>31</sup>

Here we see Dewey spelling out what he means by “a way of life”—it is a certain habituated pattern of action, or of using one’s intelligence in guiding the formation of our orientations or dispositions toward others. Democracy primarily concerns our attitudes and habits of approach to other individuals in our community; like his argument in “The Ethics of Democracy,” Dewey again strenuously resists the idea that “democracy” only implies abstract decision-making procedures or elite institutions of government. To the contrary, Dewey is quite clear that formal and informal institutions within a given society should be seen as reflections of the individual attitudes that are prevalent:

Instead of thinking of our own dispositions and habits as accommodated to certain institutions we have to learn to think of the latter as expressions, projections and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes.<sup>32</sup>

The struggle for democracy, according to “Creative Democracy,” is a fight for the formation of the right attitudes and habits among democratic citizens.

For Dewey, these attitudes must comprise a “working faith in the possibilities of human nature” and a belief in radical equality among people “irrespective of race, color, sex, birth and family, of material or cultural wealth.”<sup>33</sup> One could have equality in formal laws, but Dewey notes that this does not secure a democratic *community*—that is only “put in force in the attitudes which human beings display to one another in all the incidents and relations of daily life.”<sup>34</sup> Since much of our everyday lives involves communicative interaction with others, it is not surprising to see Dewey operationalize these habits of democracy in terms of how we communicate with others. Referring to the rise of National Socialism in Germany, he states that “To denounce Naziism [*sic*] for intolerance, cruelty and stimulation of hatred amounts to fostering insincerity if, in our personal relations to other persons, if, in our daily walk and conversation, we are moved by racial, color or other class prejudice; indeed, by anything save a generous belief in their possibilities as human beings.”<sup>35</sup> Dewey’s point here is easy to misinterpret as *solely* a criticism of fascism and intolerance. It is that, clearly, but it is more. In an important passage, Dewey condemns attitudes that restrict the free movement of thoughts and communicative utterances among individuals:

Intolerance, abuse, calling of names because of differences of opinion about religion or politics or business, as well as because of differences of race, color, wealth or degree of culture are treason to the democratic way of life. For everything which bars freedom and fullness of communication sets up barriers that divide human beings into sets and cliques, into antagonistic sects and factions, and thereby undermines the democratic way of life. Merely legal guarantees of the civil liberties of free belief, free expression, free assembly are of little avail if in daily life freedom of communication, the give and take of ideas, facts, experiences, is choked by mutual suspicion, by abuse, by fear and hatred. These things destroy the essential condition of the democratic way of living even more effectually than open coercion which—as the example of totalitarian states proves—is effective only when it succeeds in breeding hate, suspicion, intolerance in the minds of individual human beings.<sup>36</sup>

What we see here is very interesting. Democracy is fixed to individual attitudes, and these attitudes are not guaranteed by the presence of certain governmental structures in a given society. Dewey seems to be condemning those who hate other members of their society for various bigoted or biased reasons, *as well as* the other members who use the fact of this hatred to hate those putative bigots. Both of these instances of enmity degrade communal unity and prevent the “freedom and fullness of communication.” Such an orientation also divides society into different sets of “right” and “wrong,” or “good” and “bad,” individuals. Of course, Dewey is not saying that fascism or intolerance is acceptable; he is saying that vicious ways of opposing it will have their own cost in communal relations now and in future situations. Democracy becomes a hope on such a reading, one controlled “not merely by faith in human nature in general but by faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished.”<sup>37</sup> It fundamentally requires the “habit of amicable cooperation,” or the disposition to “treat those who disagree—even profoundly—with us as those from whom we may learn, and in so far, as friends.”<sup>38</sup> This way of treating one’s discursive enemies means having faith in their corrigibility and intentions, along with one’s own capacity to grow and learn in unexpected ways. Dewey emphasizes this point, as well as the hint that he is not simply talking about Nazis and fascists, when he indicates that

A genuinely democratic faith in peace is faith in the possibility of conducting disputes, controversies and conflicts as cooperative undertakings in which both parties learn by giving the other a chance to express itself, instead of having one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other—a suppression which is none the less one of violence when it takes place by psychological means of ridicule, abuse, intimidation, instead of by overt imprisonment or in concentration camps.<sup>39</sup>

Communication, guided by our attitudes toward others, can have a force as destructive as physical violence or coercion. “Creative Democracy” is a notable work

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primarily because it stands out as emphasizing this point and its very personalized implications for reflective individuals trying hard to reshape their societies in the face of hatred and inequality.

Are there any places in Ambedkar's corpus where such an operationalization of democracy as a way of life oriented toward habits of free communication with friend and enemy can be found? Identifying such traces of works that we know that Ambedkar had access to would be some support for the claim that "Creative Democracy" and its way of fleshing out democracy had some influence on him. Indeed, the phrase "way of life" appears nowhere in Ambedkar's beloved Deweyan work, *Democracy and Education*.<sup>40</sup> It appears only once in the 1908 *Ethics*, but it resides in a quotation from Hegel.<sup>41</sup> Compared to these other works that we know Ambedkar possessed and read, "Creative Democracy" presents a new spin on the old Deweyan idea that democracy is a matter of how we live our lives, and not simply a descriptive term for how certain special decisions are made by those with power. Where might we find this phrase in Ambedkar's corpus, especially after the period when he may have stumbled upon the text of "Creative Democracy" through Kadam's help? Might he have connected the idea of our attitudes toward others to free and constructive communicative practices, as Dewey does in "Creative Democracy"?

One interesting place where this phrase emerges in Ambedkar's writings in the 1950s is in his magisterial posthumously published book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* (1957). The composition and revision of this book occupied the final years of Ambedkar's life, with Vijay Mankar's chronology indicating a starting date of 1951 and a finalization of the manuscript in February 1956.<sup>42</sup> Ajay Skaria points to a completion date of March 1956 and claims that "Ambedkar worked feverishly and obsessively to complete the book," giving us some indication that much of the work on this text lay toward the end of whatever range its composition spanned.<sup>43</sup> Sangaharakshita also finds evidence in casual mentions in a speech from December 25, 1955, that there was still much to be completed in the book—Ambedkar warned his audience he might need another year to finish it.<sup>44</sup> It seems clear that Ambedkar's pace of work on this book became increasingly hurried in the period spanning 1954 to early 1956. Finding hints in this work of the influence of "Creative Democracy" would be a gain, not only to those tracking Dewey's influence on Ambedkar, but also to those seeking an enhanced understanding of Ambedkar's reconstructed Buddhism. Taking our lead from the hermeneutic principle I enunciated earlier—specific Deweyan texts will leave specific textual traces in Ambedkar's texts—we ought to be able to identify the echoes of Deweyan texts in Ambedkar's late work *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.

Making this story more intriguing is the fact that Ambedkar produced a first draft of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, titled *The Buddha and His Gospel*, for private circulation among scholars for feedback well before the later version was finalized. He only had 50 copies of this initial draft printed.<sup>45</sup> Determining when this first draft was produced is difficult. His personal secretary, Nanak Rattu, indicates in his memoirs

that Ambedkar gave him the manuscript of this initial version for retyping on November 2, 1951.<sup>46</sup> Thus, *The Buddha and His Gospel* must have been finalized in its draft form by the end of 1951 and published in a limited run during the following months, a time period in line with Ambedkar's mention to Prime Minister Nehru, in a letter dated September 14, 1956, that he had spent "five years over it" on the book eventually titled *The Buddha and His Dhamma*.<sup>47</sup> Ambedkar was surely thinking through and planning, if not writing, this early draft before 1951, a fact hinted at in his 1948 preface to a reissued book on Buddhism by P. Lakshmi Narasu, when Ambedkar admits that "I am myself working on a Life of Buddha."<sup>48</sup> This early draft—composed before the exchange with Kadam—gives us a chance to further explore the possible influence of "Creative Democracy" on Ambedkar's reconstruction of Buddhism.

Examining a rare copy of Ambedkar's early draft, *The Buddha and His Gospel*, I found no uses of the phrase "way of life" among its 596 pages.<sup>49</sup> When one looks through *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, revised during and after the exchange with Kadam in 1954, the phrase "way of life" appears over twenty times. In a newly added section (Book IV: Religion and Dhamma), a part titled "The Buddhist Way of Life" alone contains ten repetitions of the sentence "This is the Buddhist Way of Life." One of the most interesting uses of the phrase "way of life" occurs in another newly added section to *The Buddha and His Dhamma* not evident in the earlier text, *The Buddha and His Gospel*. In a new section dealing with the topic of nonviolence (*ahimsa*), Ambedkar goes to great lengths to reconstruct the concept of *ahimsa*. For Ambedkar, the notion of *ahimsa* held by the likes of Hindu reformers such as Gandhi seemed harmfully conservative. Gandhi, after all, based his nonviolent methods on orthodox Hinduism and famously did not go as far as Ambedkar wanted in renouncing caste.<sup>50</sup> Ambedkar also worried about Indian forms of nonviolence being too conducive to quietistic acquiescence as early as 1918 in his review of Russell's *Principles of Social Reconstruction*.<sup>51</sup> Yet extreme notions of *ahimsa* as absolute nonharm also seemed to worry Ambedkar so much that he added a section on this topic to one of his final works. In talking of this operationalization of nonviolence in new passages in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, he calls it "an extreme Doctrine. It is a Jain Doctrine. It is not a Buddhist Doctrine."<sup>52</sup> Ambedkar argues that the Buddha comes close to defining *ahimsa* in a different fashion than did the Jains: "He has said: 'Love all so that you may not wish to kill any.' This is a positive way of stating the principle of Ahimsa. From this it appears that the doctrine of Ahimsa does not say 'Kill not.' It says 'love all.'"<sup>53</sup> The Buddha, on this reading, "meant to make a distinction between will to kill and need to kill."<sup>54</sup> If an agent were forced to kill or harm another, that was allowable under the Buddha's moral system. But one ought not constantly possess the *will* or *attitude* that focuses on harmful force as one's most prominent tool in solving conflict. According to Ambedkar, Brahminism (e.g., orthodox Hinduism) has in it the "will to kill" and Jainism emphasizes "the will never to kill"—only Buddhism allows for a "middle path" in its reading of *ahimsa* as love.<sup>55</sup>

It is at the end of his new exposition of the Buddhist concept of *ahimsa*, added most likely after his exchange with Kadam, that Ambedkar echoes a vital Deweyan distinction. Ambedkar writes, “To put it differently the Buddha made a distinction between Principle and Rule. He did not make Ahimsa a matter of Rule. He enunciated it as a matter of Principle or way of life.”<sup>56</sup> This is an invocation of Dewey’s (and Tufts’s) distinction in the 1908 *Ethics* between rules and principles, in which the former are rigid, specific, and negative pronouncements, whereas the latter are flexible guides to thinking through action in a range of concrete situations. There, Dewey spelled out the difference as follows: “Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing things. But principles are intellectual; they are useful methods of judging things.”<sup>57</sup> Ambedkar was also clearly aware of this distinction—he marked it in his personal copy of the 1908 *Ethics*, and he “echoed” the Deweyan passage containing this distinction verbatim in the text of his 1936 work, “Annihilation of Caste.”<sup>58</sup> But in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, the Deweyan distinction is conjoined with a new phrase not evident in Ambedkar’s past employments of Deweyan passages and ideas—“way of life.” This phrase (indeed, the whole section) is absent from the 1951 draft, *The Buddha and His Gospel*. It is also, of course, remarkably consonant with the phrases and ideas that Dewey uses in emphasizing the personal aspect of democracy in his “Creative Democracy” address.

I want to argue that the use of “way of life” in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* is an important clue to the mystery surrounding the Kadam correspondence, especially given its connection to *ahimsa* as a flexible principle of love. One can perceive the possible influence of “Creative Democracy” in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* when one begins to triangulate this principle of love with other pieces of advice for one’s communicative behaviors.<sup>59</sup> Like Dewey, Ambedkar places more and more emphasis on the habitual or attitudinal source of human misery and injustice: Ambedkar claims that for the Buddhist, “Salvation must be sought by each for himself by his own effort.”<sup>60</sup> The religious quest of the Buddha is put in Deweyan terms of the habits of reflection and inquiry in the later version of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*: “His religion is a discovery in the sense that it is the result of inquiry and investigation into the conditions of human life on earth and understanding of the working of human instincts with which man is born, the moulding of his instincts and dispositions which man has formed as a result of history and tradition and which are working to his detriment.”<sup>61</sup> In another section only present in *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, the connection of religion to the mental dispositions of individuals is made explicit. Ambedkar claims that “religion must not only preach but must inculcate upon the mind of man the supreme necessity for being righteous in his conduct.”<sup>62</sup> At another point, the Buddha criticizes the purging of karma, indicating that such religious efforts are useless if “there is no training of the mind to turn bad disposition into good disposition.”<sup>63</sup> Ambedkar even emphasizes the centrality of attitudes in the Buddha’s meliorative program: “A good disposition is

the only permanent foundation of and guarantee of permanent goodness,” concluding, “That is why the Buddha gave the first place to the training of the mind which is the same as the training of a man’s disposition.”<sup>64</sup>

What one can see emerging in specific parts of *The Buddha and His Dhamma* is a vision of Buddhism—with all of the complex epicycles Ambedkar highlights—that emphasizes the meliorative function of disposition at the individual level above all else. One also sees in these parts of the text a rereading of *ahimsa* as a principle or way of life. These discussions or emphases are absent or not sustained in the 1951 edition of *The Buddha and His Gospel*. In the new section titled “Ahimsa” in the later version of this work (most likely added after the period of correspondence with Kadam), Ambedkar defines *ahimsa* as “loving all,” as opposed to a standard reading of it as simply being activity that does not involve violence (*himsa*). *Ahimsa* becomes a positive and personal sense of caring for others. Elsewhere in *The Buddha and His Dhamma* we see Ambedkar make a point stunningly similar to Dewey in “Creative Democracy”—this love must extend to our enemies and opponents.<sup>65</sup> In describing the Buddha’s early teachings on meditation, we see an attempt to overcome binary divisions among individuals: “When we think of living things, we begin with distinction and discrimination. We separate friends from enemies, we separate animals we rear from human beings. We love friends and domesticated animals and we hate enemies and wild animals. This dividing line we must overcome and this we can do when we in our contemplation rise above the limitations of practical life.”<sup>66</sup>

In the more doctrinal parts of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar glosses the commands of the Buddha in a way that emphasizes a treatment of one’s opponents in a fashion similar to Dewey’s argument: Ambedkar writes, “Cherish no anger. Forget your enmities. Win your enemies by love.”<sup>67</sup> This section is not present in the earlier version of this text, *The Buddha and His Gospel*. As if to dismiss any doubt that he wanted to connect the reconstruction of *ahimsa* to a meliorated and compassionate treatment of enemies, Ambedkar bluntly states at another point the Buddha’s advice to those seeking justice and enlightenment: “In short, he told them ‘Love your enemies.’”<sup>68</sup> This love is not detached from communicative practices, a point Ambedkar makes in explicating the Buddhist notion of “right speech” (*Samma Vacca*) in a section added to the later text, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*:

that one should speak only that which is true; that one should not speak what is false; that one should not speak evil of others; that one should refrain from slander; that one should not use angry and abusive language towards any fellow man; that one should speak kindly and courteously to all; that one should not indulge in pointless, foolish talk, but let his speech be sensible and to the purpose.<sup>69</sup>

Truth telling is combined with an injunction not to harm or abuse others through language. Love is instantiated in our linguistic actions as well as in our physical

interactions with others. This is very similar to Dewey's point in "Creative Democracy" about the subtle forces that can be marshaled in speech that aims to silence, cow, or harm those we judge as worthy of such deserts.

What my previous discussion shows is simple: considering the emphasis on personal ways of living in the revised text of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, as well as a placing of individual attitude and disposition at the center of the Buddhist dhamma, it is hard not to see the traces of a distinctive part of "Creative Democracy" in this text that Ambedkar hurriedly finalized before his death in 1956.<sup>70</sup> Many of these traces—for instance, the telltale phraseology of "way of life"—are also mostly or wholly absent from the draft of this work, *The Buddha and His Gospel*, completed by Ambedkar at the end of 1951. Something changed late in his life, around or after the time of his intriguing correspondence with Kadam in 1954. Does this certainly prove that Ambedkar had "Creative Democracy" in his hands as he composed the final version of *The Buddha and His Dhamma*? These traces do not serve as *conclusive* evidence of influence, unlike the extensive use of Deweyan text in his other works, but they do serve as evidence for the claim that this change in Ambedkar's later arguments is likely due to the influence of "Creative Democracy." Paying attention to this evidence, instead of simply ignoring these letters and this textual change, allows us to envision a way to complete or fill out the storyline involving Ambedkar, Kadam, and the Deweyan texts possibly unearthed after their exchange in 1954. It also shows us a way to emphasize Ambedkar's later works as a continuation of his efforts to employ a distinctively Indian form of pragmatism, one that extends and supplements the philosophy he imbibed from Dewey in New York and from afar through his books.

Might Ambedkar have been influenced in more general ways by Dewey's texts than in these specific instances and places? Of course this is possible—if not very likely—given all of the specific places in important works where Ambedkar draws on identifiable Deweyan texts. This project stays away from more general claims, leaving them for other analyses; instead, it focuses on the type of question of influence that we can attempt to give a clear answer to: was there evidence that Ambedkar was exposed to certain texts by Dewey, and can we see clear evidence of these texts (and not others) at specific places in Ambedkar's own works? My exploration here has given us the best historical case for why we might hypothesize that Ambedkar may have been exposed to "Creative Democracy," and the strongest textual case that its unique ways of characterizing the democratic problem made a traceable influence on Ambedkar's late work. It is, admittedly, a probabilistic case, but it is stronger than the hypotheses that Ambedkar acquired these ways of speaking and writing from another, unknown, Deweyan text or from other unspecified sources altogether. Perhaps someone will highlight another confirmed vector for Ambedkar's inclusion of habits of communication *along with* a notion of democracy as a personal "way of life" in his last major work, but I submit that my reading here makes sense of something we haven't explored before: why Ambedkar's *The*

*Buddha and His Dhamma* presents a unique and synergistic emphasis on loving one's enemies and speaking in ways that instantiate this love as a personal way of life.<sup>71</sup> Going beyond this historical analysis of possible influence, we see the larger conceptual point that has yet to be added to our stories of the global reach of American pragmatism: however he received it, Ambedkar took Dewey's pragmatist ideas contained in his texts, along with Dewey's goal of constantly enhancing community through our own activities and attitudes, and merged it with the longstanding dialogue in south Asia focusing on *ahimsa* to enunciate a distinctively Indian form of pragmatism grounded in a rational and emancipatory reading of Buddhism.

## NOTES

1. *Columbia Alumni News*, 1930, 12. For more on Ambedkar's life and education, consult Christophe Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Fighting the Indian Caste System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Gail Omvedt, *Ambedkar: Towards an Enlightened India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004). For more on Ambedkar's influence on the Indian constitution, see Martha C. Nussbaum, "Ambedkar's Constitution: Promoting Inclusion, Opposing Majority Tyranny," *Assessing Constitutional Performance*, ed. Tom Ginsburg and Aziz Huq (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 295–336; Keya Maitra, "Ambedkar and the Constitution of India: A Deweyan Experiment," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 9, no. 2 (2012): 301–320.
2. Eleanor Zelliot, *Ambedkar's World: The Making of Babasaheb and the Dalit Movement* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2013), 69.
3. K. N. Kadam, *The Meaning of the Ambedkarite Conversion to Buddhism and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Popular Prakashan, 1997), 1.
4. Christopher S. Queen, "A Pedagogy of the Dhamma: B. R. Ambedkar and John Dewey on Education," *International Journal of Buddhist Thought and Culture* 24 (2015): 12. Also see Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1996), 84.
5. K. N. Kadam, *The Meaning of the Ambedkarite Conversion to Buddhism and Other Essays*, v.
6. Arun P. Mukherjee, "B. R. Ambedkar, John Dewey, and the Meaning of Democracy," *New Literary History* 40 (2009): 368.
7. *Ibid.*, 347–348.
8. Scott R. Stroud, "Pragmatism and the Pursuit of Social Justice in India: Bhimrao Ambedkar and the Rhetoric of Religious Reorientation," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (2016): 5–27; Scott R. Stroud, "Pragmatism, Persuasion, and Force in Bhimrao Ambedkar's Reconstruction of Buddhism," *Journal of Religion* 97, no. 2 (2017): 214–243. Also see Mukherjee, "B. R. Ambedkar, John Dewey, and the Meaning of Democracy."
9. Queen, "A Pedagogy of the Dhamma," 12–13.
10. Scott R. Stroud, "What Did Bhimrao Ambedkar Learn from John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*?" *The Pluralist* 12, no. 2 (2017): 78–103.

11. John Dewey, "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 14, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988).

12. For those interested in the larger question—is Ambedkar's reading of Buddhism as a whole compatible with or similar to pragmatist readings of religion and science?—consult Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 2003) and Valerian Rodrigues, "Making a Tradition Critical: Ambedkar's Reading of Buddhism," in Peter Robb, ed., *Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993). These accounts speak more to the general nature of Ambedkar's vision of Buddhism as a secular, humanistic, and scientific faith. Here I am interested in whether we can see a specific Deweyan line of influence in certain textual details of his presentation of this vision of Buddhism.

13. Ambedkar, along with 300,000 of his followers, famously converted to Buddhism at Nagpur on October 14, 1956, a few weeks before his death on December 6, 1956. For more on the contours of this mass conversion, see Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1990), and Scott R. Stroud, "The Rhetoric of Conversion as Emancipatory Strategy in India: Bhimrao Ambedkar, Pragmatism, and the Turn to Buddhism," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 35, no. 3 (2017): 314–345.

14. Frances W. Pritchett, "Courses Taken at Columbia." Online: <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00ambedkar/timeline/graphics/courses.html>; *Columbia University Bulletin of Information: Division of Philosophy, Psychology, and Anthropology Announcement 1914–1915* (New York: Columbia University, May 30, 1914); *Columbia University Bulletin of Information: Division of Philosophy, Psychology, and Anthropology Announcement 1915–1916* (New York: Columbia University, February 27, 1915). Also, see Scott R. Stroud, "Pragmatism, Persuasion, and Force in Bhimrao Ambedkar's Reconstruction of Buddhism," 221–223.

15. The Columbia Bulletins explain that odd-numbered courses are offered in the first semester, whereas even-numbered courses are offered in the second (spring) semester. Dewey is also listed as teaching Philosophy 292/Education 210: "Philosophy and Education in Their Historical Relations" in the spring of both 1915 and 1916, although it does not appear on Ambedkar's transcript. Philosophy 179–180 is also listed on Ambedkar's transcript in 1915–1916 but it was offered by William Pepperrell Montague, a realist opponent of Dewey's pragmatism.

16. For details on the notes from this class, as well as the evidence for a clear line of influence in Ambedkar's early book review from 1918, see Stroud, "Pragmatism, Persuasion, and Force in Bhimrao Ambedkar's Reconstruction of Buddhism," 217–223.

17. Stroud, "What Did Bhimrao Ambedkar Learn from John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*?" For a different take on the reconstructive elements in Ambedkar's rewriting of Buddhism, see Christopher S. Queen, "Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation," *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 45–72.

18. Scott R. Stroud, "The Influence of John Dewey and James Tufts' *Ethics* on Ambedkar's Quest for Social Justice," *The Relevance of Dr. Ambedkar: Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Pradeep Aglave (Nagpur University Press, 2017), 33–54.

19. Nanak Chand Rattu, *Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar* (New Delhi: Amrit Publishing House, 1997), 35.

20. His letters can be found in a variety of places and sources. The letters that I refer to here can be found in the *B. R. Ambedkar Papers*, Microfilm Roll No. 1, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

21. Eleanor Zelliot also gives the date of this letter as August 24, 1954; see *Ambedkar's World: The Making of Babasaheb and the Dalit Movement* (New Delhi: Navayana, 2012), 230–231.

22. Ambedkar is referring to the arguments given in Henry Maine, *Popular Government* (London: John Murray, 1886), a work that Dewey identifies and refutes in his 1888 work, “The Ethics of Democracy,” *The Early Works of John Dewey*, vol. 1, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969).

23. Bhimrao Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, ed. Aakash Singh Rathore and Ajay Verma (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxviii.

24. Kadam, *The Meaning of the Ambedkarite Conversion to Buddhism and Other Essays*, v.

25. Rattu, *Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar*, 202.

26. Dewey, “The Ethics of Democracy.”

27. *The Philosopher of the Common Man: Essays in Honor of John Dewey to Celebrate His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Sidney Ratner (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940). Dewey's address was published in other forms before this book, however. It appeared four days after the celebration in the *Washington Post* on October 24, 1939, and in the proceedings of the National John Dewey Conference, *John Dewey and the Promise of America*, Progressive Education Booklet No. 14 (Columbus, OH: American Education Press, 1939), 12–17. For more details on the history of Dewey's address, see the textual commentary in *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 14, 459–466.

28. For an exhaustive exploration of exact passages and paragraphs appropriated or “echoed” from specific Deweyan works in Ambedkar's writings and speeches, see Mukherjee, “B. R. Ambedkar, John Dewey, and the Meaning of Democracy” and Stroud, “Pragmatism and the Pursuit of Social Justice in India.” For Ambedkar's clear appropriation of the principles/rules distinction (and associated passages) from the 1908 *Ethics*, see Stroud, “The Influence of John Dewey and James Tufts' *Ethics* on Ambedkar's Quest for Social Justice.”

29. Dewey, “Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us,” 226–229.

30. *Ibid.*, 226.

31. *Ibid.*, 226.

32. *Ibid.*, 226.

33. *Ibid.*, 226.

34. *Ibid.*, 226.

35. *Ibid.*, 226.

36. *Ibid.*, 227–228.

37. *Ibid.*, 227.

38. *Ibid.*, 228.

39. *Ibid.*, 228.

40. Dewey used this phrase in a range of other works, of course. Here, I prioritize works that we know Ambedkar possessed, cited, or had access to, as this is a reasonable premise underlying claims of intellectual influence.

41. John Dewey, "Ethics," *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 5, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 208.

42. Vijay Mankar, *Life and the Greatest Humanitarian Revolutionary Movement of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: A Chronology* (Nagpur, Blueworld Series, 2009), 614.

43. Ajay Skaria, "Ambedkar, Marx and the Buddhist Question," *South Asia* 38, no. 3 (2015): 451.

44. Sangaharakshita, *Ambedkar and Buddhism* (Glasgow: Windhorse Publications, 1986), 149. This detail is confirmed in Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, 482.

45. Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, 489.

46. Rattu, *Last Few Years of Dr. Ambedkar*, 59.

47. Bhimrao Ambedkar, "Letter 168," *Letters of Ambedkar*, Surendra Ajnat, ed. (Jalandhar: Bheem Patrika Publications, 1993), 191.

48. Bhimrao Ambedkar, "Preface to the Third Edition," in P. Lakshmi Narasu, *The Essence of Buddhism*, 3rd ed. (Bombay: Thacker, 1948), ix.

49. The copy I examined is from the private collection of Ramesh Shinde in Mumbai. It is identical to copies held in the libraries of Siddharth College in Mumbai and Milind College in Aurangabad. None of these copies includes a publication date, and the text was only printed on one side of each page so as to allow space for written comments on specific passages and to facilitate later revisions.

50. Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Fighting the Indian Caste System*.

51. Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916). The review of this book can be found in Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, "Mr. Russell and the Reconstruction of Society," *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 2014).

52. Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 11 (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1992), 346.

53. *Ibid.*, 346.

54. *Ibid.*, 346.

55. *Ibid.*, 347.

56. *Ibid.*, 347.

57. John Dewey, "Ethics," 301, italics removed.

58. This distinction originally occurred in Dewey and Tufts's *Ethics* from 1908. See John Dewey, "Ethics," 301. Ambedkar highlighted this line in his own copy of the 1908 *Ethics*, and he used this distinction earlier in Bhimrao R. Ambedkar, "Annihilation of Caste," *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 1 (Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 1989), 75. For more on Ambedkar's reception of *Ethics*, see Stroud, "The Influence of John Dewey and James Tufts' *Ethics* on Ambedkar's Quest for Social Justice."

59. The presence of the synergy between democracy as a caring way of life *and* as implying personal habits of communication in Ambedkar's last major work may be the best reason

to prefer “Creative Democracy” as a possible influence on Ambedkar rather than another Dewey text that also uses “way of life” in reference to democracy—Dewey’s 1939 book, *Freedom and Culture*. This short book could have been the work copied out by Kadam and sent to Ambedkar, but the evidence seems to lean more toward “Creative Democracy.” It is not present among the verified books surviving from Ambedkar’s personal library at Siddharth College and Milind College, whereas “Creative Democracy” is certainly contained in a book clearly requested by Ambedkar in his correspondence with Kadam. “Creative Democracy” also contains “democracy” in the title, a specific clue that Kadam might have used in his search for a vague text “by Dewey” and “on democracy.” *Freedom and Culture* uses “way of life” three times, but none in the personal and communicative employments that we see in “Creative Democracy.” “Creative Democracy,” on the other hand, offers the thematic connection of communicative habits along with democracy as a “way of life,” thus inclining me toward it as a more likely source of influence.

60. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in *Writings and Speeches*, vol. 11, 218.

61. *Ibid.*, 217–218.

62. *Ibid.*, 284.

63. *Ibid.*, 285.

64. *Ibid.*, 285.

65. E.g., Dewey, “Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us,” 227–228.

66. Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, in *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 11, 12.

67. *Ibid.*, 359.

68. *Ibid.*, 574.

69. *Ibid.*, 125.

70. For the question of Ambedkar’s reading of Buddhism and its compatibility with pragmatism and science, see Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* and Rodrigues, “Making a Tradition Critical: Ambedkar’s Reading of Buddhism.” In this article I am mainly interested in a smaller part of this larger story, that is, the tracing of a specific line of influence from Dewey to Ambedkar’s presentation of this vision of Buddhism.

71. These emphases are largely or wholly absent from the earlier draft, *The Buddha and His Gospel*, but a more careful exposition of these differences must wait for another time.

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