

# Oxford Handbooks Online

**Archaeology**

**Business and Management**

**Classical Studies**

**Criminology and Criminal Justice**

**Earth Science**

**Economics and Finance**

**History**

**Law**

**Linguistics**

**Literature**

**Music**

**Neuroscience**

**Philosophy**

**Physics**

**Political Science**

**Psychology**

**Religion**

**Sociology**

**Browse All**

Close

gmatist Philosophy of Education

**Randall Curren**

e Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Education

**Edited by Harvey Siegel**

nt Publication Date:

Oct 2009

bject:

Philosophy, Social and Political Philosophy, Epistemology

ine Publication Date:

Jan 2010

:

10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195312881.003.0027

Read More

- [View PDF](#)

## Pragmatist Philosophy of Education

### Abstract and Keywords

This article considers pragmatic approaches to philosophy of education and philosophy. It distinguishes the philosophies of education advanced by pragmatists and evaluates the reliance of these philosophies on distinctively pragmatist methods or doctrines. It suggests that what the pragmatist vision of a science of ethics would seem to condemn most in the present landscape of philosophy of education is recourse to speculative philosophy that impairs the effectiveness of arguments for educational reform by burdening them with unnecessary and contested theoretical baggage, when what is needed is evidence and analysis.

Keywords: philosophy, education, pragmatic approaches, science of ethics, speculative philosophy, educational reform

THERE are different ways of doing philosophy in general, and different ways of doing philosophy of education in particular. Many are broadly analytical, in the sense that they are predicated on the idea that philosophical problems can and should be addressed at least in part through methods of logical, linguistic, epistemic, and normative analysis, including diverse and more or less formal methods of articulating the structure of theories, institutions, practices, and other objects of inquiry. Within this loosely defined analytic style of philosophy, there are countless substantive disagreements and diverse methodological standpoints on the utility and propriety of drawing on empirical research, literature, the history of philosophy, and analytical apparatus from other disciplines. This methodological diversity has many sources, including most importantly the nature of the objects of inquiry and questions at issue. Philosophy of education, being a philosophy of something, where that something is a domain of human *practice*, is a subfield of philosophy in which many of the questions at issue have a practical edge, and many of the most useful answers that might be given would be no less *informed* than philosophically adept. Abraham Edel, a pragmatist and student of John Dewey (1859–1952), argued many years ago that analytic philosophers of education should integrate “the empirical, the normative, and the contextual (especially the socio-cultural) *within* the analytic method” (Edel 1973, p. 41).<sup>1</sup> This has largely come to pass, though it would be overly optimistic to suppose that

philosophers of education have uniformly adopted the most promising approaches characteristic of other subfields of practical philosophy.

(p. 490)

Pragmatist philosophy and analytic philosophy are not fully disjoint forms of philosophy. There are, and have long been, analytic pragmatists, beginning with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), the founder of pragmatism and preeminent logician of his day, and analytic neo-pragmatists, including Hilary Putnam (1995), Susan Haack (1993), and Robert Brandom (1994, 2000). Varying degrees of sympathy for pragmatist ideas have been evident in instrumentalist accounts of scientific theories, deflationary theories of truth, functionalist theories of mind, and fallibilism and contextualism regarding epistemic justification, all of which have been debated in analytic philosophy for decades—so much so that one might be forgiven for thinking that the viable remains of pragmatism were long ago absorbed into the mainstream, the postphilosophical pragmatism of Richard Rorty (1931–2007) notwithstanding.<sup>2</sup>

In the preface to their landmark *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, Herbert Feigl and Wilfred Sellars acknowledged Peirce as having “more to say to us than many who are writing today” (Feigl and Sellars 1949, p. vi). In his introduction to the volume, Feigl wrote that:

Empiricism, Skepticism, Naturalism, Positivism, and Pragmatism [disregarding some of William James's own tender-minded deviations] are typical thought movements of the worldly, tough-minded variety. Respect for the facts of experience, open-mindedness, an experimental trial-and-error attitude, and the capacity for working within the frame of an incomplete, unfinished world view distinguish them from the more impatient, imaginative, and often aprioristic thinkers in the tender-minded camp. (Feigl 1949, p. 3)

Feigl wrote with regard for pragmatism as a source of the flowering of analytic philosophy, and went on to identify Peirce's *pragmatic maxim* as a useful formulation of the criterion of (factual) meaningfulness advocated by logical empiricists (known in the era of the Vienna Circle as logical positivists):

If we cannot possibly conceive of what would have to be the case in order to confirm or disconfirm an assertion, we would not be able to distinguish between its truth and its falsity. In that case we would simply not know what we are talking about. C. S. Peirce's pragmatic maxim, formulated in his epoch-making essay, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” has essentially the same import.... If and only if assertion and denial of a sentence imply a difference capable of observational (experiential, operational, or experimental) test, does the sentence have factual meaning. (Feigl 1949, p. 9)

In the paper Feigl refers to, Peirce presents his pragmatic analysis of meaning as an alternative to the Cartesian standard of *clear and distinct ideas*, and aims to chasten metaphysics and apriorism

in much the way that other empiricists have (see Kloesel 1986, p. 257ff). Years later, in “What Pragmatism Is,” he refers to himself as a positivist and leaves no doubt as to why:

[Pragmatic analysis] will serve to show that almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics is either meaningless gibberish...or else is downright absurd; so that all such rubbish being swept away, what will remain of philosophy (p. 491) will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences. (Peirce 1905, p. 171)

Bertrand Russell's announcement of a parallel assault on misguided metaphysics, in “On Denoting,” would strike many as tame by comparison (Russell 1905).<sup>3</sup>

If pragmatist philosophy and analytic philosophy have shared considerable common ground, it is nevertheless true that the pragmatist and analytic movements have had different and distinctive histories. Most obviously, pragmatism was in the early decades of the twentieth century a widely discussed public philosophy, allied with the progressive and legal realism reform movements, and engaged with matters of urgent social and political concern.<sup>4</sup> Crucial to this was a rejection of *a priori* endorsements of universal principles or values, and a meliorist or reform-minded embrace of an evolutionary and experimentalist conception of social, political, and legal institutions.<sup>5</sup> The adequacy of institutions would be judged on the basis of their consequences in the existing social context. Through decades in which analytic philosophy was precluded from social commentary by its epistemological focus and meta-ethical noncognitivism—that is, the view that moral judgments are devoid of propositional content—pragmatism about values was understood to entail a kind of progressive cognitivism that preserved a role for philosophy in reasoned social criticism. Most important for our purposes here, pragmatism was closely associated with American philosophy of education through much of the twentieth century, owing very much to the dominating influence of John Dewey.

The main questions to be addressed here are: What distinguishes the philosophies of education advanced by pragmatists? What reliance do these philosophies place on distinctively pragmatist methods or doctrines? Does pragmatism have something distinctive to offer contemporary philosophy of education?

## 1. Pragmatism: Meaning, Truth, and Inquiry

Pragmatism was conceived at the “Metaphysical Club,” where Peirce first presented his pragmatic maxim, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the 1870s. The group that convened philosophical discussions there included William James, the mathematician Chauncey Wright, Oliver Wendell Holmes and two other lawyers, the historian John Fisk, and the “scientific theist” Francis Abbott. The evolution studies of Charles Darwin and the empiricism of John Stuart Mill were influential in this group through Wright, who was

himself known to Darwin for his work on evolutionary adaptation in plants (Wiener 1949, p. 31).

Peirce brought to this group the perspective of a chemist, physicist, mathematician, and logician, and formulated his maxim in a way that spanned matters of (p. 492) fact or experimental methods, relations of ideas or formal systems, and human practices broadly. He began from Alexander Bain's definition of *belief* as a disposition to act or "rule for action," which suggested to him the fundamental pragmatist doctrine that thought ("rational cognition") and action ("rational purpose") are in some sense inseparable.<sup>6</sup> Embedding this in a hard-nosed naturalism about human nature, which accepted the fact of biological, social, and institutional evolution, he and his pragmatist followers came to regard thought and ideas as instrumental and properly measured by instrumental success. This was understood in a way consistent with an embrace of experimental empiricism in science and human affairs, and an understanding of axioms through their deductive consequences in formal systems. Empirical hypotheses have observational consequences, legal rules and institutional policies have consequences for human well-being, and mathematical and logical propositions have inferential consequences. Peirce's pragmatic maxim treats these consequences as not only the *measure* but also the *meaning* (and *limits of meaning*) of the hypotheses or beliefs in question. If a belief is a behavioral disposition or habit, what could a belief's content consist of but the hypothesis that certain consequences would accompany the believer's actions in the various circumstances that could arise? An assertion without discernible consequences through which it could be tested would be empty words.

Axioms implicitly defined within their systems in this way lose any claim to *a priori* synthetic (descriptive) certainty, as those of Euclidean geometry did when geometries grounded in alternative axioms were invented. Governments and their laws lose any claim to self-evident authority. Science, which might have been thought to rest on unshakeable certainties, is seen to be the experimental and fallible enterprise that it is. This realism about the sciences did not diminish it in the eyes of the pragmatists, despite the conclusions Peirce drew in applying his account of belief and meaning to the nature of truth and reality. Let us note his formulation of the account in "How to Make our Ideas Clear," and trace its application to judgments of truth and reality:

[T]he whole function of thought is to produce habits of action.... What the habit is depends on *when* and *how* it causes us to act. As for *when*, every stimulus to action is derived from perception; as for the *how*, every purpose of action is to produce some sensible result. Thus, we come down to what is tangible and practical, as the root of every real distinction of thought, no matter how subtle it may be; and there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. (Kloesel 1986, p. 265)

Consider, then, my belief that the loaf I've baked is smaller than a breadbox, and my related belief that a breadbox is a good place to store bread. What do these beliefs come to, according to Peirce? Most obviously, that I may try to place the loaf in a breadbox, if I have one at hand, expecting to see that the loaf will fit inside with the box closed, and expecting to find that if I return a day, or two, or three later, and feel and taste the bread, that I will find it not unpleasantly stale or nibbled by mice, but wholesome and intact. Less obviously, the belief that the loaf is

smaller than a (p. 493) breadbox would entail expectations about what I would observe if I set about measuring the two—expectations about the possibility of finding a container into which the loaf would fit but the breadbox would not, and so on. The meaning of a belief is in this way cashed out as a function of possible actions and anticipated outcomes.

What happens when one subjects assertions about truth and reality to pragmatic analysis? If beliefs about truth have any meaning, it would be because they, too, are testable, and their meaning would be reducible in some sense to the methods and consequences by which they are tested. However, testing the belief, “It is true that *p*” would seem to be no different from testing *p* itself. Faced with this, one could regard assertions of truth as redundant or devise some other deflationary or metaphysically cautious account of the language of truth. Peirce holds, rather more contentiously, that “the ideas of truth and falsehood, in their full development, appertain exclusively to the scientific method of settling opinion” (Kloesel 1986, p. 272). He then holds that:

[T]he processes of investigation, if only pushed far enough, will give one certain solution to every question to which they can be applied.... Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside themselves to one and the same conclusion. This great law is embodied in the conception of truth and reality. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. (p. 273)

It is in this way that truth and reality come to be defined by pragmatists in terms of agreement within a community of inquiry, but it need not have been so. The conclusion is a *semantic* analysis of the terms “true” and “real,” and it is not entailed by Peirce’s pragmatic maxim, or even the conjunction of the maxim and his “great law” concerning the eventual convergence of scientific opinion.<sup>7</sup>

It is the pragmatic method of analysis that Peirce and James both identify as the heart of pragmatism, so much so that Dewey remarked that in reading *Pragmatism* (James 1907), “one frequently gets the impression that he conceives the discussion of the other two points [the nature of ideas and truth; the nature of reality] to be illustrative material, more or less hypothetical, of the method” (Dewey 1908/1990, p. 377). The method, James says, is “The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, ‘categories,’ supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts” (James 1907, pp. 54–55). It is a “method” much in harmony with earlier forms of empiricism, and distinguished from them primarily by the insistence that knowledge is a product not of passive perception, but of active interventions in the world that leave a mark on it.

In this brief introduction to pragmatism, we find five elements that became recurrent themes of the movement: (1) a rejection of apriorism and certainty, and a corresponding embrace of fallibilism, empirical and experimental methods, and the ideal of a community of scientific inquiry; (2) a naturalistic and evolutionary (p. 494) perspective on reality in general and human nature in particular; (3) an associated instrumentalism about thought,

language, knowledge, values, and institutions; (4) an associated account of meaning, deployed as a tool of philosophical analysis, in the form of the pragmatic maxim; (5) accounts of truth and reality as products of inquiry.

To these we may now add, with qualification: (6) a commitment to secular democratic individualism or liberal democracy. Although James had pronounced democratic sympathies, the same could not be said of his European followers (Wiener 1973). Moreover, there is nothing in the five primary elements of pragmatism that would compel an embrace of democracy; nothing that would preclude a naturalistic, evolutionary, instrumentalist embrace of a quite *undemocratic* Social Darwinism, or Social Spencerism, as some would have it.<sup>8</sup> The social “Darwinist,” Herbert Spencer, defined the pedagogical doctrines of progressive education more than anyone else (Cremin 1961, p. 91; Egan 2002), and it is far from evident that the adoption of pragmatist commitments would have given him any reason to revise his social and political views. An instrumentalist or consequentialist view of institutions becomes progressive in an egalitarian or social democratic way only if one adopts an egalitarian view of what kinds of consequences matter. Dewey did just that in adopting an egalitarian and eudaimonistic form of consequentialism, a liberal individualist vision of social experimentation as a vehicle of individual flourishing and social progress, and an associated developmental conception of democracy (Dewey 1916, 1939/1989; Gouinlock 1986; Held 1987, pp. 85–104; Campbell 1995). Dewey conceived of democracy as a form of social life in which “cooperative intelligence” can freely operate through social experimentation and progressive adjustments of goals and policies in light of collective deliberation grounded in the experience of every member of society. It is the form of social life that provides the best setting for continued individual “growth”—for the “liberation of powers,” yielding “a progressive growth directed to social aims”—according to Dewey, and he proposed the same test of adequacy for other institutions, including schools (Dewey 1916).<sup>9</sup> In this vision, the empirical spirit of pragmatism is tethered to democracy through a conception of the processes of democratic social life modeled on the norms of a scientific community, and the idea that participation in those norms is conducive to personal growth. Though not quite inevitable, the union endured and commitment to democracy became a staple of American pragmatism.

## 2. James, Dewey, and the Philosophy of Education

It is in the work of William James that we first encounter a semblance of what might be thought of as a pragmatist philosophy of education. James was (p. 495) induced to deliver a series of lectures to the teachers of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1892, and these appeared together as his *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* in 1899. Elements of pragmatism had been evident in his writings on cognition as early as 1885, and one sees some evidence of pragmatist ideas in these lectures, though one also finds elements of the educational ideas of Locke and Spencer. Although the originating premise of the lectures is that they would draw pedagogical lessons from James's monumental *Principles of Psychology* (James 1890/1983), he remarks in the opening lecture that “there is no ‘new psychology’ worthy of the name. There is nothing but the old psychology which began in Locke's time, plus a little physiology of the brain and senses and theory of evolution, and a few refinements of introspective detail” (James 1901, p. 15).

Pragmatist ideas are most evident in the lectures on “The Child as a Behaving Organism,” “Education and Behavior,” and “Native Reactions and Acquired Reactions,” where James asserts that the stream of consciousness that fills our waking hours has the primary function of producing action. “[M]an,” he says, “is primarily a practical being, whose mind is given to him to aid in adapting him to this world's life” (James 1901, p. 24). He argues that this view of the mind has the virtue of being most consistent with the physiology of the brain and an evolutionary view of our place in the animal kingdom. It follows that education is “the organizing of *resources* in the human being, or powers of conduct which shall fit him to his social and physical world,” or, more simply, “*the organization of acquired habits of conduct and tendencies to behavior*” (p. 27). By way of illustration, James describes the child's “training in good manners” (pp. 34–35) and cites the educational ideal of the German universities of his time: to turn men into “efficient instrument[s] of research” (p. 28).

The limitations of this instrumentalism about the mental life and its training are especially apparent in the lecture on the acquisition of ideas, which James describes as “inner objects of contemplation,” gathered in experiences, and abstracted and grasped in relation to one another by the mind (pp. 88–89). Education is said to “fill the mind little by little, as experiences accrete, with a stock of such ideas” (p. 88), and an educated mind is said to be “the mind which has the largest stock of them, ready to meet the largest possible variety of the emergencies of life” (p. 89). Advice for teachers enters with the suggestion that children are disposed to assimilate different kinds of ideas at different ages: “sensible properties of material things” during the first seven or eight years of life, and only later in adolescence “the more abstract aspects of experience,” such as the sciences and “moral relations” (pp. 89–90). James borrows from Herbert Spencer—and, broadly speaking, Jean-Jacques Rousseau—in encouraging the teacher to “feed” the growing mind what it “shows

a natural craving” for at each age (p. 90)—namely, activities of making and doing to develop knowledge of the “material world” in the early years, and “verbal material” or “verbal reproduction” after the onset of adolescence “even in the natural sciences, so far as these are causal and rational, and not merely confined to description” (p. 91).

(p. 496)

To his credit, James criticizes progressive educators who would too long immerse children in hand work, keeping them from the more abstract studies “the mind craves” (p. 92), but there is much in this little lecture and its companions to disappoint and lower expectations about the educational import of pragmatism. The conception of the natural sciences and how to teach them is not recognizably that of a pragmatist, who might be expected to display some enthusiasm for experimental methods, and rather less enthusiasm for “verbal reproduction.” The account of learning stages is an echo of Spencer's immensely influential principle of putting the concrete before the abstract, the empirical before the rational (see Egan 2002, esp. pp. 18–19). The narrowness of its vision of what is learned in the early years—“sensible properties of material things”—is remarkable, and barely comprehensible except as a reflection of Locke's account of *simple ideas* as the building blocks of all knowledge.<sup>10</sup> If anything, James's view exhibits *less* of the pragmatist's characteristic focus on conduct than Rousseau's stage theory. In Rousseau's version the stages are not defined by the acquisition of concrete or empirical ideas versus abstract or rational ideas, but by a series of forms of motivation: the child is first moved by pleasure and pain, later by consideration of what is useful in achieving chosen ends, and finally by a consideration of what is right and wrong. All told, it would be an immense stretch to find a pragmatist philosophy of education in James's *Talks to Teachers*. The little work expected of pragmatism yields barely more than an abstract characterization of education as training calculated to produce desirable habits.

The image of a characteristically pragmatist philosophy of education—an image well entrenched through the later twentieth century—is predicated almost entirely on Dewey's philosophy of education.<sup>11</sup>

Dewey's philosophy of education is shaped by three fundamental commitments: a naturalistic and evolutionary conception of human nature and human affairs; a high regard for the methods and norms of experimental, scientific inquiry; and a conception of democracy as a form of social life consistent with individual growth, experimentation with new social forms, and collective control of society's evolution. Building on prior developments in pragmatism, Dewey regards mind as a function of a complex organism and ideas as tools that facilitate human activity and the management of experience (Dewey 1910/1978, 1925/1958). The various further products of mind, including languages, theories, institutions, cultures, and the personalities that presuppose all of these, are similarly tools or instruments grounded in the biological nature of human beings, equipping us to better manage what we experience, and to exercise further control of ourselves and the development of our societies. Our freedom owes much more to the cultural resources that enable us to evaluate, define, and direct our actions than to any natural gifts we might have. Philosophy, being a product of mind and cultural resource of the kind in question, is understood to be a tool for examining how we think, for furthering

our development, and for responding to the public's problems and advancing the work of social reconstruction. Education, broadly construed, is the means through which such tools of inquiry and growth are disseminated, and it (p. 497) is for this reason the most fundamental vehicle of social reconstruction. In this scheme, philosophy becomes both an educative endeavor and one to which philosophy of education is central. It is also a scheme in which the methods of philosophy of education become at least in part *experimental*, as Dewey's did through the operation of his Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. The results of the experiments conducted there contributed to such publications as *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897/1972), *The School and Society* (1900), and *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902).

If the influence of Peirce's conception of philosophy is apparent here—his view that “what will remain of philosophy will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the methods of the true sciences”—his conceptions of thinking and inquiry are similarly apparent in Dewey's account of the nature of (effective) inquiry presented in *How We Think* (1910/1978). According to this account, effective thinking or inquiry can be analyzed as a five-part sequence. We (1) begin from an emotional response to an unsettling situation, (2) move on to an intellectual response, (3) generate a hypothesis that promises a resolution of the felt tension, (4) examine the hypothesis by reasoning and identification of consequences that flow from it, and finally (5) test the hypothesis empirically by arranging to observe whether the anticipated consequences actually occur. Dewey understood this experimentalist account of thinking to apply to the examination of *value* as well as more obviously testable matters. He held that one participates in a kind of character education in learning the norms of inquiry that regulate effective thinking and the behavior of scientific communities, and in submitting to those norms in the process of testing forms of conduct and coming to understand their consequences.

In light of this account of effective thinking and associated notion of character formation, Dewey holds that an educational institution is one in which individuals learn and use the skills of experimental inquiry, observing the norms of open communication characteristic of scientific communities. These norms include:

willingness to hold belief in suspense, ability to doubt until evidence is obtained; willingness to go where evidence points instead of putting first a personally preferred conclusion; ability to hold ideas in solution and use them as hypotheses to be tested instead of as dogmas to be asserted; and (possibly the most distinctive of all) enjoyment of new fields for inquiry and of new problems. (Dewey 1939/1989, p. 112)

In schools, this implies engaging students in developing both the skills and the attitudes essential to scientific inquiry, which are necessarily exercised in the context of a *community of inquiry*. Science is not a solitary affair, but one essentially involving cooperation with other investigators, who ideally observe not only the norms noted above but also those pertaining to honest, respectful, and intelligent dialogue. Dewey holds that classrooms should themselves be communities of inquiry in which students will come to exhibit the requisite skills and virtues. He also holds that this is essential to individual growth, or open-ended, self-directed (p. 498) development—holding out “growth” in this sense as an ideal compatible with Darwinian evolution, unlike the Aristotelian ideal of flourishing, which involves the idea of fulfilling the potential

entailed by a fixed species-essence. He further insists that this is vital to democracy: "Until what shall be taught and how it is taught is settled upon the basis of formation of the scientific attitude, the so-called educational work of schools is a dangerously hit-or-miss affair as far as democracy is concerned" (Dewey 1939/1989, p. 115).

What democracy requires above all is improving the quality of public discourse, and seeing that the free flow of information is not impeded by divisions of class, occupation, or sect, so that society itself operates according to the norms of scientific inquiry. Operating in this way, it becomes a mode of social organization conducive to the growth of its members, as well as effective in pursuing public projects and "flexible readjustment of its institutions" through cooperative inquiry and social experiments (Dewey 1916, p. 99). Put somewhat differently, democracy as Dewey conceives it would provide individuals with a basis for controlling their own development, and provide societies with the means to collectively control their own evolution. The requisite "freer interaction between social groups" (p. 86) was pursued by Jane Addams and other participants in the progressive *social settlement* movement, which allowed people of diverse fortunes to live in close proximity, learning from each other and pursuing common projects. Engaging diverse students in working together in schools was similarly a goal for schools. Dewey argued that the separation of vocational and academic education, the former producing "mere skill in production" and the latter "a knowledge that is an ornament and a cultural embellishment," must be eliminated in favor of "a course of study which should be useful and liberal at the same time" (pp. 256, 258).<sup>12</sup> He also argued strongly for co-education of males and females, and opposed the splitting off of religious communities into separate schools.

In applying these ideas, Dewey took the problems of education in the formative years of the American public school system as a point of departure. These included the loss of opportunities for informal education associated with industrialization, new mass media that made it easier to saturate the public with propaganda, and the rapid evolution of society that threatened to make current ideas and skills obsolete. The first problem was to be addressed, along with other pervasive shortcomings of traditional schools, by eliminating the separation of schooling and life. Dewey held that learning, which is functional and thus highly motivated in life, can be made much more so in schools with the right combination of "child-centered" observance of natural forms of learning and "teacher-centered" selection of curricula responsive to student needs and interests. This would require the elimination of drilling and other forms of information delivery that fail to engage students in active inquiry, and the elimination of narrow vocational training, in favor of forms of inquiry learning that combine practical and academic components. The third problem is also largely addressed through these means, since no one would be consigned to a narrow curriculum of manual skills that could easily become obsolete. Everyone would learn the skills of experimental inquiry and the (p. 499) critical and reflective skills and attitudes those entail, and they would be taught to grow and continually adapt. The second problem would also be addressed through the development of these skills, which Dewey took to be essential to robust public debate, and through eliminating the authoritarian management of classrooms, which invited passivity and conformity. Cooperative inquiry would

henceforth be encouraged, instead of suppressed as a form of cheating, and cooperation with the school's purposes would be achieved largely through voluntary acceptance of the norms of activities gladly engaged in.

Writing in 1938, Dewey surveyed the trajectory of the progressive education movement and took some pains to distinguish his own educational vision from both progressive and “traditional” schooling. At its core, progressive education holds that schools should educate the “whole child” through methods that allow learning to occur in accordance with natural patterns of learning, which is to say in a natural sequence and manner, and motivated and guided by the child's natural desire to learn (Zilversmit 1993, p. 18). Dewey shared much of the progressive embrace of natural patterns of learning, but insisted that teachers still have a role to play in selecting curricula and establishing classroom norms of inquiry and cooperation (Dewey 1938). The shared commitments are evident in Dewey's desire to diminish the separation of learning from life, of academics from self-directed activity; in his embrace of learning through inquiry; in the room he leaves for child-directed learning; and in his endorsements of the basic progressive, Spencerian, and Rousseauian principle that the educator “has to find ways of doing consciously and deliberately what ‘nature’ accomplishes in the early years” (Dewey 1938, p. 74).

### 3. Pragmatist Philosophy of Education *in Extremis*

Dewey's educational ideas remain influential at several foci of advocacy, including the community of inquiry and cooperative learning models (Lipman 2003; Slavin 1995), Lawrence Kohlberg's just community model of moral education (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg 1989), and various related models of classroom management and discipline. More generally, it is no exaggeration to say that progressive educational ideas can be counted on to reassert themselves as new and revolutionary every few years, as the insistence on the *naturalness* of basing literacy instruction on "whole language" has done for at least a century and a half now.

Setting aside the enduring influence of Dewey's philosophy of education, and the educational ideas of the progressive movement, there remains the question of whether there is a distinctively pragmatist approach to philosophy of education.

(p. 500)

Let us note, first, that in the survey just concluded we found little evidence of the pragmatist method of analysis, embodied in the *pragmatic maxim*, playing any role in producing substantial results in philosophy of education. We saw it deployed in James's lectures to little effect, and we can reasonably ask whether an unflinching deployment of it would not suggest most obviously a form of *behaviorism*. Peirce offered a variety of formulations of his basic conception of meaning, but the one announced in "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" is exhibited in dispositional analyses of traits such as hardness. Applied to persons, this yields logical behaviorism, or the view that mental attributes are behavioral dispositions. E. L. Thorndike, a student of James's and colleague of Dewey's, endorsed the latter's instrumentalism and developed the theory of operant or instrumental conditioning, later reworked by B. F. Skinner. The prospects along this path are no longer inviting, and it is not surprising that philosophers of education sympathetic to pragmatism now repudiate them.<sup>13</sup> The application of Peirce's method of analysis to formal systems lends support to a different kind of mental functionalism, also embraced by logical empiricists and computational modelers, as well as pragmatists or pragmatic sympathizers such as Sellars and Brandom. Regarding the terms in a formal system as implicitly defined within the system (*a la* Peirce), one can model beliefs and other mental items as defined by functional roles in a "system" that explains what a person does. There is a more generous conception of empirical significance at work here, and it is certainly progress to abandon logical behaviorism in favor of cognitive models, but at this level of abstraction we are still very far from doing philosophy of education.

Suppose we regard pragmatism not as a method of analysis, as Peirce and James did, but as a philosophical orientation defined (as it was at the end of section I) by experimentalism, evolutionary naturalism, instrumentalism, and pragmatist theories of meaning, truth, and reality. Would this yield Dewey's philosophy of education, or might it just as readily lend itself to a behaviorist view of education? The answer, surely, is that it requires a great deal of selectivity and oversight to accept Dewey's philosophy of

education as the essence of what pragmatism yields in the domain of philosophy of education. It is organized around some pragmatist themes, but it would be quite a leap to regard it as typical of what one could construct from pragmatist starting points. It does not depend fundamentally on any *distinctively* pragmatist doctrines, and it does depend on a good deal that is not essentially pragmatist—above all, the legacy of Rousseau, filtered through a tradition of pedagogical experiments and the writings of Spencer.

Reviewing the canonical elements of pragmatism, and allowing the addition of democracy, those that are evident in Dewey's educational thought are: (1) an embrace of experimental science; (2) a naturalistic view of human nature; (3) an embrace of democracy. What is noteworthy about these commitments is that they are now so widely shared that holding them does not mark one as a pragmatist. The early pragmatists were among the revolutionaries who adopted a broadly naturalistic, scientific, and (sometimes) liberal democratic outlook, but they were not the only ones, and we are now nearly all naturalists and democrats. (p. 501) Most of us accept the fact of evolution, though we may doubt that the transient existence of species has the revolutionary implications for philosophical methodology that Dewey supposed. Most of us are advocates of secular liberal democracy, though we may not favor Dewey's particular conception of democracy as a form of society modeled on scientific communities. We all accept that cognition is embodied and situated—that bodies and societies provide contexts for thinking and learning.<sup>14</sup> Whatever we think about science, we are all or nearly all fallibilists. It is thus hard to see anything distinctively pragmatist in a commitment to Dewey's starting points. By contrast, the doctrines that do remain distinctively pragmatist—such as Dewey's insistence that inquiry does not reveal an independently existing world, but instead alters and makes it what it is in the interaction—play no significant role in his philosophy of education.

There continue to be advocates of pragmatism in philosophy of education, but it is debatable whether they have absorbed the basic pragmatist message about how to do philosophy any more than other philosophers of education have. It is not unusual for contemporary neo-pragmatists or pragmatist sympathizers in educational theory to echo Dewey's themes—the misbegotten quest for certainty, misguided authoritarianism in classroom management, learning through inquiry, art in the education of the whole person, and the wisdom of abjuring fixed ends in education—yet to do this without particular attention to the empirical methods, context, and consequences recommended by pragmatism. What distinguishes neo-pragmatism in philosophy of education today is not its practical edge but its recourse to pragmatist sources and an associated and problematic embrace of systematic philosophy as the key to doing deep or truly philosophical practical philosophy (see, e.g., Arcilla 1995; Burbules 1995; Neiman 1995; Standish 2003). Misbegotten attempts to glean educational lessons from metaphysics and epistemology are not the exclusive province of neo-pragmatism, but the underlying methodological tendency has surely been encouraged by an exaggerated estimation of the extent to which Dewey simply *applied* pragmatism to education.<sup>15</sup>

Several decades ago, analytic philosophers became impatient with the state of meta-ethics and the obstacle it posed to philosophical engagement with practical affairs. Some dove directly into analytical engagement with practical issues, some turned to work in normative ethical and political theory more or less engaged with applications, and others made new attempts within meta-ethics to find a rational basis for regarding morality as reason-giving. These developments gave rise to a variety of ways of pursuing engaged ethical, social, legal, political, and educational philosophy, more or less grounded in systematic analyses of such concepts as desert, well-being, and integrity, more or less grounded in normative theories of ethics and justice, and more or less systematically grounded in relevant empirical sources. The pragmatist focus on context and consequences in evaluating institutions, laws, and policies is not inconsistent with such approaches to practical philosophy, provided they are indeed serious about getting the facts right and do not ignore the current common wisdom in moral theory that consequences matter. If my characterization of the patterns of contemporary neo-pragmatism in (p. 502) philosophy of education are correct, then it follows that to the extent contemporary analytic philosophers of education adhere to Edel's advice to integrate "the empirical, the normative, and the contextual (especially the socio-cultural) *within* the analytic method" (Edel 1973, p. 41), it is *within* analytic philosophy that the basic pragmatist message about how to do philosophy of education lives on. This is no longer Dewey's "time when America was still a symbol of the dawn of a better day and was full of hope infused with courage," but it is within the vigorous and informed debates of analytical liberalism, cast in terms fit for a wider public and policy arena, that there is promise of something reaching "beyond the confines of technical philosophy" (Dewey 1949, p. xiv).

What the pragmatist vision of a science of ethics would seem to condemn most in the present landscape of philosophy of education is recourse to speculative philosophy that impairs the effectiveness of arguments for educational reform by burdening them with unnecessary and contested theoretical baggage, when what is needed is evidence and analysis. It is hard to imagine that, in the circumstances we face today, Dewey would have prized the transmission of his ideas, or attempts to find some educational import in contemporary pragmatist theories, over direct normative investigations of corporate influences in schools (Brighouse 2007), racially integrated schooling (Blum 2007), or interventions to prevent forced marriages of school age girls (McAvoy 2008).<sup>16</sup> If philosophy is a tool, then let it be sharp and efficient in cutting to the chase.

## References

Addams, Jane. (1902/2002). *Democracy and Social Ethics*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1910/1990). *Twenty Years at Hull House*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Arcilla, René. (1995). *For the Love of Perfection: Richard Rorty and Liberal Education*. London: Routledge.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Bayles, Ernest. (1966). *Pragmatism in Education*. New York: Harper & Row.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Blum, Lawrence. (2007). "The Promise of Racial Integration in a Multicultural Age." In *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*, ed. Randall Curren (pp. 266–82). Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Brandom, Robert. (1994). *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (2000). *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Brighouse, Harry. (2007). "Channel One, the Anti-Commercial Principle, and the Discontinuous Ethos." In *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*, ed. Randall Curren (pp. 208–20). Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

(p. 505) Burbules, Nicholas. (1995). "Authority and the Tragic Dimension of Teaching." In *The Educational Conversation: Closing the Gap*, ed. J. Garrison and A. G. Rud Jr. (pp. 29–40). Albany: State University of New York Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Campbell, James. (1995). *Understanding John Dewey*. Chicago: Open Court.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Cremin, Lawrence. (1961). *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957*. New York: Knopf.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Curren, Randall, ed. (2007). *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (2008). "Inferentialism Goes to School." In *Philosophy of Education 2007*, ed. B. Stengel (pp. 125–27). Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Deegan, Mary Jo. (1988). *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Dewey, John. (1897/1972). *My Pedagogic Creed*. In *Early Works of John Dewey, 1882–1898, vol. 5: 1895–1898*, ed. J. A. Boydston (pp. 84–95). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1900). *The School and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1902). *The Child and the Curriculum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1908/1998). "What Pragmatism Means by 'Practical'." In *The Essential Dewey, Vol. 2: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*, ed. L. Hickman and L. Alexander (pp. 377–86). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1910/1978). *How We Think*. In *The Middle Works, 1899–1924, Vol. 6: 1910–1911*, ed. J. A. Boydston (pp. 177–355). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1916). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1925/1958). *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1929). *The Quest for Certainty*. New York: Minton, Balch.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1938). *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1939/1989). *Freedom and Culture*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1949). Foreword. In *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism*, by Philip P. Wiener (pp. xiii–xiv). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Edel, Abraham. (1955). *Ethical Judgment: The Use of Science in Ethics*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1973). “Analytic Philosophy of Education at the Crossroads.” In *Educational Judgments*, ed. James Doyle (pp. 232–57). London: Routledge.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Egan, Kieran. (2002). *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Feigl, Herbert. (1949). “Logical Empiricism: Positivism, Not Negativism.” In *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Herbert Feigl and Wilfred Sellars (pp. 3–25). New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— and Wilfred Sellars, eds. (1949). *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Garrison, Jim, and Alven Neiman. (2003). "Pragmatism and Education." In *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Education*, ed. Nigel Blake, Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith, and Paul Standish (pp. 21–37). Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Gouinlock, James. (1986). *Excellence in Public Discourse: John Stuart Mill, John Dewey, and Social Intelligence*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Haack, Susan. (1993). *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1996). "Pragmatism." In *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy*, ed. N. Bunnin and E. P. Tsui-James (pp. 643–61). Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Held, David. (1987). *Models of Democracy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

(p. 506) Holmes, Oliver W. (1881). *The Common Law*. Boston: Little, Brown.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

James, William. (1890/1983). *The Principles of Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1901/1983). *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Incorporates the 1899 work *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*.)

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1907). *Pragmatism*, ed. F. Burkhardt and F. Bowers. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Kloesel, Christian J. W., ed. (1986). *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition, Vol. 3, 1872–1978*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Lipman, Matthew. (2003). *Thinking in Education*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Llewellyn, Karl. (1930). "A Realistic Jurisprudence—The Next Step." *Columbia Law Review* 30: 431–65.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

McAvoy, Paula. (2008). "Should Arranged Marriages for Teenage Girls be Allowed? How Public Schools Should Respond to Illiberal Cultural Practices." *Theory and Research in Education* 6(1): 5–20.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Migotti, M. (1988). "Recent Work in Pragmatism: Revolution or Reform in the Theory of Knowledge?" *Philosophical Books* 29: 65–73.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**

- **Search JSTOR**

Mounce, H. O. (1997). *The Two Pragmatisms: From Peirce to Rorty*. London: Routledge.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Neiman, Alven. (1995). "Pragmatism: The Aims of Education and the Meaning of Life." In *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education*, ed. W. Kohli (pp. 56–72). New York: Routledge.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Peirce, Charles. (1905). "What Pragmatism Is." *Monist* 15(2): 161–81.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Pound, Roscoe. (1910). "Law in Books and Law in Action." *American Law Review* 44: 12–36.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

— (1911). "The Scope and Purpose of Sociological Jurisprudence." *Harvard Law Review* 24: 591–619.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Power, F. Clark, Ann Higgins, and Lawrence Kohlberg. (1989). *Lawrence Kohlberg's Approach to Moral Education*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Putnam, Hilary. (1995). *Pragmatism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- 

- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

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

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1991). *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Russell, Bertrand. (1905). "On Denoting." *Mind* 14: 479–93.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Schmitter, Amy, Nathan Tarcov, and Wendy Donner. (2003). "Enlightenment Liberalism." In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Randall Curren (pp. 73–93). Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Slavin, Robert. (1995). *Cooperative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Standish, Paul. (2003). "The Nature and Purposes of Education." In *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Randall Curren (pp. 221–31). Oxford: Blackwell.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Thayer, H. S. (1968). *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Veblen, Thorstein.(1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Macmillan.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

West, Cornel. (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

White, G. Edward. (1980). *Tort Law in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

White, Morton. (1947). *Social Thought in America: The Revolt against Formalism*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

(p. 507) Wiener, Philip P. (1949). *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

—— (1973). "Pragmatism." In *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. P. Wiener (pp. 551–70). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

Zilversmit, Arthur. (1993). *Changing Schools: Progressive Education Theory and Practice, 1930–1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- 
- **Search EBSCO**
- **Search JSTOR**

## Notes:

- (1.) Edel (1908–2007) was a doctoral student in philosophy at Columbia University in the 1930s, during the final years of John Dewey's teaching career there. His book *Ethical Judgment: The Use of Science in Ethics* (1955) is characteristic of pragmatist ethical theory, in its regard for morality as a human product in a contingent and changing world, and its view that *a priori* absolutes must be set aside and everything tested by experience, using science and its methods.
- (2.) See Rorty 1979, 1991. Some accounts of the nature of pragmatism find a cleavage between *reform* and *revolutionary* pragmatism, and see little plausibility in Rorty's attempts to claim the authority of those in the former camp for his own revolutionary variety. See Migotti 1988; Haack 1996; and Mounce 1997. The earliest pragmatists, Peirce and William James (1842–1910), regarded pragmatism as an analytical methodology, not a substantive philosophy, but their views differed in ways that gave rise to more or less revolutionary doctrines within pragmatism, with the revolutionary elements descending from James and his disciple, the English literary humanist Ferdinand (F. C. S.) Schiller (1864–1937).
- (3.) For further discussion of the similarities and connections between pragmatism and logical empiricism and positivism, see Wiener 1973. Morton White details the “scientific outlook” shared by Dewey, Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841–1935), and other pragmatists, and refers to the writings of positivists and operationalists as “half-critical, half-supporting” (White 1947, p. 5). For good general histories of pragmatism, see Wiener 1949 and Thayer 1968.
- (4.) In addition to progressive education and progressive law, the movement embraced “social settlement” in distressed communities as a form of direct action to facilitate social improvement. See Addams 1902/2002, 1910/1990; Deegan 1988.

(5.) On the hostility of progressive reform theorists to abstract principles and “formalism,” see White 1947. “Formalism,” as White describes it, is in many respects the very foe attacked by pragmatists: an outlook that treats logic, deduction, and *a priori* principles as a substitute for experience, historical understanding, and an application of scientific methods. The reform-minded legal realists of the early twentieth century adopted characteristic pragmatist stances in: (1) criticizing legal principles of the nineteenth century, for their insensitivity to contemporary conditions and for being barriers to social progress; (2) holding that the meaning of legal rules or principles is determined, not by their intuitive moral content or derivation from higher principles, but by the practice and consequences of applying them. See Pound 1910, 1911; Llewellyn 1930. Industrialization and consequent changes in the nature of employment had, in fact, profoundly altered the kinds of cases coming before courts and the relationships between the litigants, with the result that principles designed for accidents between strangers frequently produced devastating outcomes for workers. A good example of this was the application of the principle of *contributory negligence* to disabling injuries arising from workplace hazards. Workers who had complained of hazards that were not their fault, not remedied, and from which they suffered were denied compensation on the grounds they were aware of the hazards and chose to stay on the job, thereby exposing themselves to the risks that eventuated in their injuries. For documentation of this and other examples, see White 1980. Holmes, though very much a pragmatist in his analysis of law (Holmes 1881), did not join the ranks of the reformers until his famous dissent in *Lochner v. New York*, a 1905 decision that, in the name of freedom of contract, struck down a law limiting the work week of bakers to 64 hours.

(6.) Peirce referred to Bain as the “Scottish ancestor of pragmatism” (Wiener 1949, p. 68). Focusing on pragmatism as a tradition of American cultural criticism, one might identify Ralph Waldo Emerson as another “grandfather” of the movement (West 1989).

(7.) Nor does anything follow about the nature of *truth* from the defeasibility of *evidence*, the proposition that evidence is never so conclusive as to produce certainty. All that follows from defeasibility is that we can't be absolutely certain of the truth of what we assert. It is often held (by nonphilosophers) that philosophers have shown that nothing is absolutely certain—that it is always possible that new evidence may force us to revise our beliefs—and it is just as often held that it follows from this that there is no “absolute truth.” This is a *non sequitur*, and it lends nothing but obscurity to the issue to append the qualifier “absolute” to “truth.”

(8.) Herbert Spencer used the expression “survival of the fittest” before and more persistently than Darwin did, and unlike Darwin he used it in opposing public schools and defending ruthless capitalist exploitation of the poor. His conception of adaptation was Lamarckian, moreover, so it is doubly unjust to call the repugnant view he popularized “Social Darwinism” (see Egan 2002, pp. 23ff).

(9.) The reference to individual powers being both liberated and directed to social aims signifies a fusion in Dewey's thought of the individualistic liberty of Mill with a more collectivist Hegelian notion of freedom as voluntary constraint by the norms of cooperative endeavors.

(10.) Spencer's principle seems to be a crude application of the Lockean premise that simple ideas must be gathered through experience before the mind can work upon them to produce "conceptions of a higher and more abstract order," as James so succinctly puts it (James 1901/1983, p. 89).

(11.) One may credit Dewey's collaborator, George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), and his various intellectual descendants, with secondary roles.

(12.) Morton White finds evidence of a direct influence of Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) in Dewey's appraisal of ornamental learning (White 1947, p. 98).

(13.) Jim Garrison and Alven Neiman may be right in saying that "Thorndike's victory internationally is one of the major reasons most educators completely ignore pragmatism," but they give no indication of recognizing the extent to which Thorndike's behaviorism embodies a pragmatist approach (Garrison and Neiman 2003, p. 26).

(14.) It is worth noting that pragmatists err in assuming that Descartes' mind-body dualism precludes a role for the body in the affairs of the mind. See Schmitter, Tarcov and, Donner 2003, pp. 78–79, and related references.

(15.) In the 1960s, when analytic philosophy of education was getting under way, Harper & Row launched The Philosophy of Education Series, consisting of texts "furnish[ing] authentic presentations of major contemporary philosophies as they relate to, or impinge upon, educational practice" (Bayles 1966, p. x). The series began with a volume on pragmatism by the series editor, and included others on idealism, existentialism, and realism. Philosophers of education look back in horror on the age of "isms," but the assumption that one can find educational "applications" in just about *any* work of philosophy has been harder to shake.

(16.) For commentary on a recent attempt to find educational import in Brandom's inferentialist pragmatism, see Curren 2008.

**Randall Curren**

Philosophy, University of Rochester

Randall Curren is Professor and Chair of Philosophy and Professor of Education at the University of Rochester. His works in philosophy of education, ethics, legal and political philosophy, and the history of philosophy include *Aristotle on the Necessity of Public Education* (2000). He is the editor of *A Companion to the Philosophy of Education*

(2003) and *Philosophy of Education: An Anthology* (2007), and co-editor of the journal *Theory and Research in Education*.

- Oxford University Press

Copyright © 2017. All rights reserved.

