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John Dewey, Historiography, and the Practice of History.

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John Dewey, Historiography, and the Practice of History

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by

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ABSTRACT

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John Dewey was America's foremost authority on many of the critical issues in the twentieth century. Dewey dedicated his professional career as an expert on the major branches of philosophy.

A neglected aspect of Dewey's philosophy is his writings on historiography, the philosophy of history, and his influence on American historians. Dewey affected several generations of historians from the Progressive historians to the practical realists of today.

This study evaluates Dewey's pragmatism as a legitimate strain in American historiography. James Harvey Robinson and Charles Beard claimed Dewey as an influence. Later historians such as Richard Hofstadter and Joyce Appleby insist his methods make for more responsible-minded historians.

There is enough material from American historians to assert that Dewey and Deweyan pragmatism influenced and still impacts historians into the twenty-first century.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In January of 1933, Charles Beard addressed the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Beard, a Progressive historian, put forth a thesis radical in nature for the 1930s. The American iconoclast said in, "Written History as an Act of Faith" that all history writing was faith-based. "History is chaos and every attempt to interpret it otherwise is an illusion," said Beard to an audience in Urbana, Illinois.[1] He had been one of America's most daring historians, questioning the motives of the Founding Fathers in their reasons for drawing up the Constitution. Near the end of Beard's career, he began to struggle with the economic determinism. The fact that non-economic factors might have played a role in the Founders' decision to draft the Constitution had an insurmountable effect on Beard's thinking about determinism's role in historical method.[2] He let out his frustrations with his early work's short comings and opted to embrace relativism as his methodology.

Fellow Progressive John Dewey took notice of his friend's change in behavior. Dewey had worked beside Beard at Columbia. What disturbed Dewey about Beard's and other historians' relativism was that it was not akin to scientific methods. Indeed, the Progressives originally prided their movement because of its rational scientific method. Dewey answered Beard and other relativists in 1938 in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Dewey had written about history before on many occasions, but the few pages he dedicated to historical methodology in

[1] Charles Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," *American Historical Review* 39 (1934): 219-231.

[2] Richard Hofstadter, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 312-313. Traditional Marxists started to question the role of cultural factors on the proletariat. Beard was no doubt, aware of this turn.

his logic were critical of the profession. In those few short pages he asked critical questions about the mode of historical research with precision and clarity. It is the contention of this thesis that John Dewey had a profound impact upon the American historical profession. However, Dewey's impact upon the field of history is largely ignored or forgotten altogether.

When John Dewey died in 1952, he stood out as America's most prominent public intellectual.[3] Dewey wrote about and influenced many issues of his day from the hyphenism issue in race debates to how best to implement philosophy into factory workers' lives. In fact, Dewey wrote such an extensive amount of material on such a wide variety of fields that it takes up thirty-seven volumes. Additionally, five more volumes exist that contain his correspondence and most essential writings.[4] Unlike other influential thinkers whose voluminous writings are forgotten with time, Dewey continues to spawn new followers as it seems that his pragmatism is still relative today. Case in point: each year numerous secondary sources appear that credit Dewey with a new insight.[5]

Nobody in academia today can match Dewey's popularity during his lifetime. Yet, there are still parts of his philosophy that deserve further exploration. Dewey's philosophy of history is one area that deserves further examination, not only because it has been neglected since shortly after his death but also because many modern American historians consider pragmatism a measuring rod for accuracy and fairness. Of the three American founders of pragmatism, John

[3] Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), 819. Russell considered Dr. Dewey, as he called him, America's greatest philosopher.

[4] Jo Ann Boydston, ed., *The Collected Works of John Dewey,* 37 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-1991); Larry Hickman, ed., *The Correspondence of John Dewey*, (Charlottesville, Va: Intelex Corporation); Larry Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, eds. *The Essential Dewey* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

[5] Searching "John Dewey" on *Project Muse,* delivers more than one-thousand articles dealing with him.

Dewey's legacy,[6] next to William James, is the most profound. His popularity is yet another reason to investigate the promise of pragmatism and how it relates to history.

Dewey writes that history is primarily an action also educative in nature. There is not a better example of this than Dewey's use of history as a teaching tool during his tenure as a Director at the University of Chicago's Laboratory School for children. Conclusively, the subject matter for history, according to Dewey, is people. As Dewey saw it, people inhabit history; people write history and are affected by the use or abuse of history. Consequently, Dewey understood history to be a matter of human agency.

In order not to fall into the trap of crediting Dewey for something he did not intend, this thesis will focus on his primary writings and those of his most influential students.[7] Using this approach will be sufficient, as Dewey wrote a prodigious amount about history and its philosophy to bring together a coherent view of his historiography. Furthermore, the writing he provided on history and about history in other subject matter demonstrates that he wielded influence on American historians. No detailed evaluation of Dewey's historiography has been attempted. Although he is credited with influence among historians during his era, he is at times overshadowed by the arrival of Progressive historians. Presently, there is not a single major work dedicated to Dewey's philosophy of history.

Today's historians who attempt a synthesis between accuracy and fairness can learn from Dewey's insights into history. For the purpose of this thesis, four main schools of thought need

[6] The term pragmatism is thrown about in a cavalier fashion. Unfortunately, pragmatism is defined historically, instead of philosophically by most historians. There are different brands of pragmatism, hence its three main founders. Dewey's is the most accepted form, probably because he expounded his ideas the most during the twentieth century.

[7] Two of Dewey's most influential students, who also wrote about his theory of history are, John Herman Randall, Jr., and Sidney Hook. Hook, known as a Marx scholar, was Dewey's most famous pupil. Both wrote on Dewey's philosophy, with Randall having written the most concise explanation of historical naturalism.

discussion in conjunction with pragmatism. The first, cultural history, seeks to give human agency prominence in history, instead of a strict structural approach that focuses on economics and politics as prime factors in reasons for human action. A second major approach, postmodernist history, tends to be inclined towards relativism with its focus on history's partnership with powerful authorities such as the state. Although postmodern historiography does not hold as prominent a position as it did in the 1970s, it nonetheless still garners exceptional influence in debates, particularly in race and gender history. The third more general school is the conservative approach represented by Russell Kirk in mid-century, Stephen Tonsor and Eric Voegelin in the seventies, and current historians such as John Lukacs and Gertrude Himmelfarb.[8] Finally, the fourth school, the pragmatic school encompasses, historians such as Richard Hofstadter, Margaret Jacob, Joyce Appleby, and Lynn Hunt who seek a more pragmatic approach, (although Hunt regards herself as a new cultural historian) but do not necessarily identify themselves as pragmatists or as followers of Dewey's philosophy.[9] Although pragmatism is not an acknowledged school of thought in contemporary historiography, it is frequently praised for its value during periods of crisis in methodology.[10] Dewey asked that historians synthesize their methods for a more responsible approach. He proposes a humane history in association with a usable past.

It is the contention of this thesis that Dewey intended to offer historians the chance to be more logical and humane in their research. He put strong emphasis on methodology instead of on a *particular* philosophy of history. Pigeonholing Dewey into the narrow genre of scientific

[8] Kirk, although a PhD, practiced the profession outside of academia. Tonsor and Voegelin were both academics who are regarded as unimportant outside of academic discourse. Lukacs and Roberts are considered to be good historians, but they ignore modern debates in the field of history.

[9] Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New cultural history* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), passim.

[10] Joyce Appleby and others, *Telling the truth about history* (New York: Norton, 1994). 283-291. In the final chapter of *Telling the Truth about History* the authors defend a "pragmatic" stance in history as opposing postmodernism. They are not the first historians to do so.

historian, wielding his scientific method as a magic wand, is too constricted. His philosophy of history is not easy to categorize. Dewey's version of pragmatism goes by four distinct names, all essentially the same and yet also different. *Instrumentalism* is the most accepted version, which is in essence pragmatism in action (method). The other three terms, *naturalistic empiricism*, *empirical naturalism*, or *naturalistic humanism* are all interchangeable. The aforementioned terms mean, for our purpose, that Dewey believed that progress is evident in the world around us and traceable in history. From that he demonstrated that facts and most evidence could be verified empirically. Dewey's empirical naturalism is methodologically based and a reaction to the relativism and determinism of his era. Ironically, these labels only came to be used late in his career.[11]

When Dewey wrote about the subject of history, he used this term in a fluid way. For instance, as seen in Dewey's writings on education and epistemology, there are vital pieces to his historical methodology linking his total picture collectively. It is important to remember that Dewey's philosophy of history materializes in books about other subject matter. His philosophy of history is not a philosophy per se but an action (method). Dewey may have imagined that historians would one day join scientists by putting on lab coats in laboratory-like setting.

The second aspect of Dewey's history that is worth understanding is his appreciation for a Hegelian vision of the unity of history. Dewey carries a permanent "Hegelian deposit" with him throughout his career, as James Good posits in a recent work. The permanent mark of Hegel surfaced in Dewey's desire for unity in history. Indeed, Dewey is one of the last analytic

[11] For a reference point; Dewey's later works period was from 1925 until his death in 1952. Dewey scholars consider his later works to be his most mature phase. His middle works period lasted from 1899-1924. The middle works period contains an abundant amount of material on history including his supposed break with neo-Hegelian philosophy.

philosophers of the twentieth century to believe in the usefulness of overarching philosophic systems. However, during the First World War he claimed to have broken with Hegel outwardly, but inwardly his years at Johns Hopkins as a graduate student under the training of many neo-Hegelians stayed with him for life.[12]

Finally, Dewey's philosophy is known for his unusual ability to combine academic rigor with practical application. He expects nothing less of historians. Dewey asks historians to consider applicability and method in their attempts to write responsible history. However, Dewey is not out to demonstrate that his version of pragmatism is the best version for history. In lieu of the relativism that he witnessed in Columbia's history department, and in his colleague Charles Beard, Dewey felt that he had a duty to bring scientific method back into history. Dewey's influence on American historiography deserves reconsideration because he was writing about history during its move towards relativism and eventually the postmodern era. A revival of pragmatism in the field of history in the 1980s makes his philosophy of history all the more worthy of study now.[13]

The goal of this research is to understand more fully how Dewey's instrumentalist version of pragmatism influenced historians during his lifetime and why it remains so significant now. It is necessary to place Dewey's pragmatism into the context of modern historiographical debates about whom "history" should include and the continuing debate about objectivity and the use of documents in research.[14] Indeed, Dewey was one of the first to question the Rankean

[12] James A. Good, "John Dewey's "Permanent Hegelian Deposit" and the Exigencies of War," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2006): 293-313.

[13] James T. Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History: From Turner and Du Bois to Today," *Metaphilosophy* 35 (2004): 202-225.

[14] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: the "objectivity question" and the American historical profession* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 150-154. Novick reduces pragmatism's role in

belief in the supremacy of official documents. Consequently, he recognized a need for rationale and logic in historical research.[15] Not only did he question the process of research but also the unscientific, and illogical, manner of fellow academic historians at work.[16] When Dewey discusses historiography, he is asking that historians perform as public intellectuals and as scientists in a laboratory when performing research.

historiography to four short pages. He posits that pragmatism was nothing more than, "everyman his own historian," as Carl Becker titled his 1931 Presidential address to the American Historical Association.

[15] John Dewey, John Dewey, "Historical Judgments," in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, ed. Hans Meyerhoff, *The Philosophy of History in our Time: An* Anthology (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), 163-173.

[16] Dewey spent the majority of his mature career at Columbia. While there he worked next to influential progressive historians Charles Beard and James Harvey Robinson. It is not an exaggeration to posit that Dewey's influence on academics in other fields, especially history, was real.

CHAPTER 2
DEWEY'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

John Dewey's instrumentalist version of pragmatism has had the most influence on American historians and their methodologies. Dewey's theory of inquiry emphasizes scientific thinking, a wide scope to borrow from the best points of view, as well as responsibility in research methods. Twentieth-century historians took notice of Dewey because he made historical inquiry clear and logical. One of the first historians to recognize the benefits of Dewey's pragmatism for historical method was James Harvey Robinson. Robinson published his groundbreaking *The New History* in 1912. In it, he seeks to make history scientific and usable. Robinson, a colleague of Dewey's at Columbia, first recognized Dewey's genius before the First World War.[17]

James Harvey Robinson was the first historian to attempt writing history with overt pragmatic undertones. Robinson had been a student of William James at Harvard, so he was familiar with the different strains of pragmatism. He, like Dewey, began to look at Hegelian/ structural history skeptically because it was rooted in mysticism of the absolute idea.[18] As a historian Robinson's intellectual growth reflected the same path of his Progressive philosopher colleagues. He was reared in a religious home, influenced by Hegelian philosophy in college, only to turn away soon after graduation and time spent with Harvard pragmatist William James.

Robinson was one of the most influential voices of the New History that emerged out of urban centers after 1910. The New History was invariably rooted in pragmatic philosophy. "Very

[17] Dewey published extensively in 1916 when both *Democracy and Education* and *Essays in Experimental Logic* appeared.

[18] Harvey Wish, introduction to Robinson *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook,* by James Harvey Robinson (New York: The Free Press, 1965), viii.

important for the New History was the idea that modern history, enriched by an all-inclusive subject matter, should be taught for the purpose of understanding the great problems of the present," wrote Harvey Wish in the 1940 introduction to Robinson's classic.[19] Ironically, Charles Beard was a student of Robinson's. Beard, of course, would become famous for his thesis that economics was the reason for the drafting of the United States Constitution. Progressive historians began to enter a crisis when deterministic answers to historical questions were not enough to account for factors such as human agency. It was hero laden and out-of-date with anti-historical tendencies of progressive America.[20]

In 1912, Robinson admitted that historians carried biases into their research and writing. It was a bold statement for an academic professional. As luck would have it, this occurred the same year that former president Theodore Roosevelt was elected president of the American Historical Association. In his speech to the annual meeting of the AHA, "History as Literature," Roosevelt lamented the overspecialization of science and literature. Roosevelt favored a synthesis between poetry and science. "Because history, science, and literature have all become specialized, the theory now is that science is definitely severed from literature and that history must follow suit," Roosevelt said. "Not only do I refuse to accept this as true for history but I do not even accept it as true for science."[21] Although a trust-busting liberal for all intents and purposes, Roosevelt gave a conservative speech on historical writing. In this atmosphere of 1912 Robinson, however, questioned the need for poetry in history because he did not feel that its benefits were necessary to write fair history.

[19] Harvey Wish, introduction to *The New History,* xi.

[20] It was not a coincidence that American historians of the progressive era were so political. Past American historians concentrated much time and effort on building great structures for diplomatic history and "great" political figures, i.e., the founding fathers.

[21] Theodore Roosevelt, "History as Literature," *American Historical Review* 18 (1913): 473-489.

Robinson's *New History* cited Dewey only three times. However, he clearly owed Dewey a great debt for his thoughts on history. Chapter five is titled "History for the Common Man," which is a recurring theme in Dewey's books and his own thought about history's debt to people. Near the conclusion of his essay on *The New History,* Robinson wrote, "It [history] will come in time conspicuously to meet our daily needs."[22] Robinson explicitly rebutted the historians who would synthesize myth with actual history. Robinson believed it was not fair or responsible. He wanted to win history to science and take it away from the Whig historians. Robinson's attitude towards history reflected that of his fellow progressive historians such as Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner, like Robinson, felt that Whig historians did not incorporate enough science into their methodology.

Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis became a hallmark for pragmatic history as well. Turner flipped history on its head when he said that geography determined important historical patterns more than ideas and politics. Turner sounded a lot like Charles Beard, who had written that economics was the main factor for the founding fathers when they drafted the U.S. Constitution. Beard and Turner, both progressive historians, knew Dewey, with Beard his colleague at Columbia. Both historians experimented with different types of historical inquiry as opposed to the more conservative notion of strict archival research. For this purpose I will not expound further on the experimental aspects of the research of Beard and Turner; it is sufficient to say that Dewey's inquiry uses experimentation in method similar to the Progressive historians. It might, at another time, give insight to the progressive's apparent iconoclastic notions in history.

[22] Robinson, *The New History*, 24.

Turner's 1910 speech to the American Historical Association echoed Dewey's call for stricter and new inquiry into an American that was rapidly changing:

> Those who insist that history is simply the effort to tell the thing exactly as it was, to state the facts, are confronted with the difficulty that the fact which they would represent is not planted on the solid ground of fixed conditions; it is in the midst and is itself a part of the changing currents, the interacting influences of the time, deriving its significance as a fact from its relations to the deeper-seated movements of the age, movements so gradual that often only the passing years can reveal the truth about the fact and its right to a place on the historian's page.[23]

This dissatisfaction with the fact-based Rankean method is evident as society changed and historians changed too. Beard, in the first chapter of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States,* writes, "The Third School of historical research is not to be characterized by any phrase. It is marked rather by an absence of hypotheses. It represents, seeing the many pitfalls which beset the way of earlier writers, have resolutely turned aside from 'interpretation' in the larger sense, and concerned themselves with critical editions of the documents and with the 'impartial' presentation of related facts."[24] The Progressive school of historians was more pragmatic and more likely to include people in research than past generations of historians. For Beard and Turner, serious scientific inquiry was absent from traditional explanations of structurally-minded historians. Human agency was more present in history than the traditional historians wanted to admit.

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[23] Novick, *That Noble Dream,* 103.

[24] Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1921), 3.

Several historians who adhered to Dewey's instrumentalism followed the Progressive historians and were more adamant about their need for human agency in history. Mary Beard, the wife of Charles Beard, was committed to pragmatic history principles of research. Her first two books, *Women in Municipalities* and *A Short History of the American Labor Movement*, illustrated her commitment to the instrumental, perspectival, and revisionist nature of history.[25] Another admirer and outspoken follower of Dewey's pragmatism was Merle Curti. He recounted his debt to Dewey's 1916 classic *Democracy and Education.* Curti said *Democracy and Education* showed him that historical study's purpose was to show the growth of human cooperation.[26] However, a gap existed between first-generation followers of Dewey and second-generation pragmatists such as Curti. According to James Kloppenberg, "Whereas the generation of Robinson, Becker, and the Beards, the generation of Curti's teachers, had introduced historians to perspectivalism, fallibilism, and instrumentalism, Curti and his generation used pragmatism not only as an important source of ideas but also as an important object of study."[27] Interestingly, Curti and Beard cooperated on a project, "Propositions in Historiography," that based its tenets on pragmatism, mostly Dewey's instrumentalism.[28] The report is important because it states pragmatism's relevance to modern historiography.

Dewey's influence did not end with Curti. Henry Steele Commager, Richard Hofstadter, David Hollinger, Joyce Appleby, and Morton White are some of the seminal historians who have either used Dewey's method or incorporated pragmatism into their research. The list of historians under the influence of Deweyan pragmatism could go on, but it is far too extensive for this thesis to encompass fully. Since the focus of this thesis is to show that Dewey influenced and continues

[25] Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History," 223.
[26] Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History," 223.
[27] Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History," 223.
[28] Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History," 208.

to influence several generations of historians, it is necessary to understand why Deweyan pragmatism is still valuable decades after Dewey's death.

Dewey's Philosophy of History

Dewey concentrated most of his academic career on the branch of philosophy known as epistemology.[29] He was also concerned with metaphysics and how it interacted with humans' epistemic functions. Dewey thought history needed an epistemological checkup. He did not want historians to concentrate on eternal unchanging beings but to look for answers in the present. His epistemology is probably most associated with *naturalistic* epistemology.[30] In order to understand Dewey's philosophy of history, we must define pragmatism for Dewey first and then continue to the intricacies of his historiography.

Dewey's definition of pragmatism is fundamental for a proper understanding of his view of history. For Dewey, history is both a way to understand humans and an act to present the problems of men in a logical fashion. In *The Growth of the American Mind*, Merle Curti explains that Dewey's theory of knowledge is a "public function…emphasizing the unfinished character of society."[31] Dewey's theory of history adheres to this naturalistic function, but it is still very human in its emphasis. However, pragmatism's definition was different for the three founders of pragmatic philosophy. Dewey's is more pluralistic; Jamesian pragmatism is monistic in nature and more foundationalist than Dewey; and Royce's more individualistic and metaphysical in nature than Dewey. Philip Jackson writes that the term pragmatism means "looking upon the

[29] Joseph L. Blau, "John Dewey's Theory of History," *The Journal of Philosophy* 57 (1960): 93. Blau quoted a line out of Wesley C. Clark's letters about Dewey that said that all of Dewey's class's deal with "how we think."

[30] Chase B. Wrenn, "Naturalistic Epistemology," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* http://www.iep.utm.edu/n/nat-epis.htm (accessed March 31, 2009).

[31] Merle Curti, *Growth of American thought,* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 548. The emphasis is on the organic nature of Dewey's system.

consequences of any proposition as a necessary test of its validity, provided, of course, that those consequences are not just imagined but are the results of actions taken in accordance with the proposition itself."[32] Jackson compares this sequence as making the proposition that the cat is on the mat and then finding the cat. Pragmatism is a philosophy of results. It does not abhor the contemplative act of philosophizing. Pragmatism does not dwell on abstractions; at least Deweyan pragmatism does not. More importantly, pragmatists do not seek to implement, abstract ideas into society or into history method.[33] Dewey wrote that "the term 'pragmatic' means only the rule of referring all thinking, all reflective considerations, to consequences for final meaning."[34] Jackson expounds upon Dewey's definition adding that pragmatism is a way of employing knowledge for the betterment of mankind. "Pragmatism is content to take its stand with science," Dewey wrote. "it also takes it stand with daily life."[35]

The first critique Dewey put forth about history was its irrational elevation of ideas he believed found its way into the interpretation of archival documents. "The witness of history is that to think in general and abstract terms is dangerous," Dewey writes. "It elevates ideas beyond the situations in which they were born and charges them with we know not what menace for the future."[36] Dewey in particular related this to German historians leading up to the First World War. He blamed Hegelian historiography for its abstract theorizing that lead to totalitarianism through nationalistic historians. Dewey's response was that history should rely on the scientific method.

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[32] Philip W. Jackson, "John Dewey," in *The Companion to Pragmatism,* ed. John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis (Malden, MA.: Blackwell), 59. Jackson's definition is Deweyan with its focus on consequences, validity, and results.

[33] This does not mean that pragmatism does not hearken back to idealistic assumptions. Dewey is not a relativist, but he disdained the romanticism of history and philosophy for philosophy's sake.

[34] Jackson, "John Dewey," in *The Companion to Pragmatism,* 60.

[35] Jackson, "John Dewey," in *The Companion to Pragmatism,* 60.

[36] John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (New York, H. Holt, 1915), 12.

According to Dewey, history had been unscientific because human agency was not taken seriously before the progressive historians.[37] In Dewey's famous work, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry,* he asks if it is possible for history to be more like science.[38] He means by "scientific" a way of understanding history through experimentalism and evolutionary naturalism. Before writing *Logic,* Dewey grounded his philosophy of history in democracy and education first in 1916.

Dewey gives us an important view into his philosophy of history in *Democracy and Education*. In this well-known 1916 book, Dewey shows where historical thinking fits into his philosophy. Consequently, the framework he lays out for history is similar to that in his *Logic* twenty-two years later. Dewey fits history into an overall framework that is democratic and educative; whereas in *Logic* he puts history into a logical framework. *Democracy and Education* is Dewey's introduction to his philosophy of education. In twenty-six chapters he puts forward a plan for education, that is, of course, democratic. The sixteenth chapter is titled "The Significance of Geography and History."[39] Here he sets the foundation of history on democracy and asks that education form the centrality of historical method.

Ironically, this Dewey sounds like the Dewey we meet in *Logic* two decades later. In *Democracy and Education* Dewey writes that history is important because it gives information and background on subject matter that is otherwise meaningless.[40] Unlike many philosophers of his day, Dewey believed history could shed light on the practicality of philosophy and not the

[37] Years later would write that history could be scientific in *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1938).

[38] Dewey, "Historical Judgments," in *The Philosophy of History in our Time: An* Anthology ed., Hans Meyerhoff (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), 163-173.

[39] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An introduction to the philosophy of education* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965), 207-218. It is significant that he groups together history and geography. There is little doubt that Dewey is familiar with Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis.

[40] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 208.

other way around. History is the starting point. It is the place where knowledge begins and where the democratic progress starts. Consequently, Dewey's words are far-reaching because he thinks like a philosopher but uses historical methods. He puts forth a radical claim in acknowledging a knowable past, one that provides a base for a democratic structure.

Connectivity and Illumination

Dewey writes that, '"to learn history"' is to gain knowledge and to recognize its human connections."[41] This connectedness Dewey so frequently refers to is a part of the illuminating factor of history. History illuminates "our own customs and institutions."[42] History is a function of the present; to be present-minded, to have historical knowledge, and is to shed light on human institutions. However, Dewey poses that there is a limit to illumination in history.

When history becomes a function of the literary imagination then illumination ceases.[43] Dewey says that literary history does not illuminate the present, because "in purely literary history the natural environment is but stage scenery."[44] Knowledge and democracy stop when abstraction is brought into history. The progress of history is natural and the expectation is that the research should match the progress of humans. Dewey elucidates further, "When this social aim is overlooked, however, the study of primitive life becomes simply a rehearsing of sensational and exciting features of savagery."[45]

The final part of history that Dewey explores in *Democracy and Education* is the role of morality in historical study. He concludes that history is not itself moral, but illumination of

[41] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 210.
[42] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 210.
[43] Much later Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra bring forth the proposition that history is a function of the literary imagination.
[44] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 211.
[45] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 215.

events in history is a moral act. The writing act of history is not necessarily moral, although the case can be made from Dewey's aforementioned statements that it can be seen as a moral act. According to Dewey, history reveals that people have made evolutionary progress; furthermore this is a moral fact of history. This is dependent upon "intellectual discoveries and inventions, and the extent to which the things which ordinarily figures most largely in historical writings have been side issues, or even obstructions for intelligence to overcome."[46] When progress and illumination are ignored, errors of interpretation happen, and Beard's "history as actuality" becomes fact then this is not moral history. Dewey summarizes his chapter on history stating that history enhances connectedness and experience and it enhances direct experience thus enhancing the present.

Dewey was concerned enough about history to step outside of his primary field to critique it. It was unusual for a philosopher to do so then and it is now. Ultimately, Dewey questioned the traditional foundations of historical methodology. Whereas historians of the Rankean era and the first generation of professional American historians posited that their research was done in the only manner they were familiar with, in archives, Dewey believed this was not scientific enough. Dewey knew there were other elements that determine how people act, such as is in evidenced in Turner's frontier thesis. Dewey felt that traditional historians with their nationalistic tendencies and reliance on official documents misunderstood the notion of human progress and connectivity. Dewey's problem with documents is that this kind of evidence does not necessarily shed light on the present, and its presentation can fall into the category of literary history because historians interpret the document for the reader.

[46] Dewey, *Democracy and Education,* 217.

Initially, Dewey challenges the validity of historical documentation by asking who was translating the documents. Of course, documentary research is necessary, and it is a necessary part of the function of historians. Coincidently, while Dewey is exploring the limits and scope of documentary research, two of the field's most widely read historians were near simultaneously penning their most important works on world history.[47] Dewey allows for the validity of oral history, traditions, legends, and so on, but he asks how the historian chooses which evidence to use and if it is valid. [48] Yet again, he says the use of oral history and traditions falls into the genre of literary imagination. Whereas scientists use the same methods of research, he openly reveals concern that historians do not have the same safeguards. He supposes that modern historiography is somewhat scientific but doubts that each historian abides by the same standards of research, instead looking more like novelists.

"The formation of historical judgments lags behind that of physical judgments not only because of greater complexity and scantiness of the data, but also because to a large extent historians have not developed the habit of stating to themselves and to the public the systematic conceptual structures which they employ in organizing their data to anything like the extent in which the physical inquirers expose their conceptual framework," Dewey writes in *Logic.*[49] Once more, connectivity and relation to the public are stated as goals for historians. In a somewhat famous argument with Reinhold Niebuhr about a philosophy of history, Dewey gives us a definition of what a philosophy of history is. "He (Niebuhr) engages in long range views and

[47] Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler both penned their voluminous works during the first half of the century. Spengler's *The Decline of the West* appeared over a period of a decade from 1918 to 1928. Toynbee's twelve volume series *Study of History* was published from 1934 to 1961. Dewey reviewed some of Spengler's work negatively. I am not sure if he reviewed any of Toynbee's work, although Dewey was surely familiar with him as well. Both historians used determinism to make facts work for them. This is the kind of history that Dewey questioned.

[48] Dewey, "Historical Judgments," 163.

[49] Dewey, "Historical Judgments,"165.

predictions," Dewey writes. "He seems to me to predicate political policies for the present upon a conception of what the future is practically sure to be."[50] What he is seeking to show is that the field of history must come to a conclusion regarding methodology. Accordingly, he defines a philosophy of history as a negative function among historians. He finalizes his essay *Unity and Progress* calling for unity in the profession for the benefit of the present. Lastly, he criticizes Niebuhr for placing a structural/deterministic view of history on historiography.

Dewey Tackles Human Agency

The act of historical research in Dewey's mind is a collective process that begins with criticism and finalizes with knowing. He is not so naïve as he realizes all historians differ in research, but not so much that, consensus and unity are not impossible. "We must doubtless, in any case, find our way experimentally," Dewey says.[51] Dewey is one of the forerunners to the movement that called for a climate of a synthesis between objectivity and subjectivity. He wants historians to use science and regard events as the principle methods in the retelling of history.[52] In *What I Believe*, he writes of his belief in the ability of science and the scientific method to save people from abstractions.[53] Abstraction does not unify or illuminate institutions and therefore does not serve the human good.

[50] John Dewey, "Unity and Progress," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), and published in three series as The Early Works (EW), The Middle Works (MW) and The Later Works (LW). These designations are followed by volume and page number. "LW 1.14," for example, refers to The Later Works, volume 1, page 14. LW 9.72.

[51] Dewey, "Unity and Progress," in *The Collected Works of John* Dewey, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, LW 9.74.

[52] Discussion over opposing viewpoints and revisions of Dewey will be discussed later.

[53] John Dewey, "What I Believe," in *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy,* ed. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 23.

The problems of people were central to Dewey and his followers. Dewey is not concerned as much with historical accuracy as he is finding a way to work in the confines to reach for accuracy in the field of history. The process of research is a part of a democratic way of thinking about history and research. Consequently, it is a moral play between historian, student, and reader. Dewey says that pragmatism is mostly moral and this is part of its long-lasting appeal. He adds that pragmatism is more humane than its European predecessors because of its apparent respect for humanity.[54]

It seems obvious the teleology is not a major topic of discussion for Dewey for several reasons. Dewey echoed contemporary and historian Eric Voegelin in that teleology and eschatology in historical thinking actually drive people to rationalize totalitarian ways of thinking about history.[55] Antithetically, instrumentalism is a method that makes judgment clearer without going into the deeper prospects of teleology and eschatology. Dewey explains that the philosophy in history is like using a crystal ball and predicting political fixes.[56] His concern is not people's destiny but how they live in the present day. He leaves destiny in history to moral philosophers and theologians. He will not place this burden on historians because their data are not abstract or apt to philosophic contemplation.

George Santayana agrees with Dewey about the method of pragmatism and its conviction that the philosophy of history is acting as if it owns the crystal ball with all the answers to the future. Santayana relates this to German historical methods, which Dewey did in *German Philosophy and Politics.* In *The German Mind*, Santayana writes that European thought,

[54] John Dewey, "The Development of Pragmatism," in The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy, ed. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 4.
[55] Michael P. Federici, *Eric Voegelin: The Restoration of Order* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2002),
[56] Dewey, "Unity and Progress," in *The Collected Works of John* Dewey, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, LW 9.72.

especially the German mind, is infected with a belief in cultural superiority because historians justify it in the writing of history.[57] Both Dewey and Santayana think that historians are irresponsible with philosophy in cooperation with history. They, being from the First World War-generation, naturally associate problems in historical method as a cause for German totalitarianism, although, both men owe a great debt to European Continental philosophy because of its impact on their philosophical thinking. Dewey addresses this apparent contradiction. In *Absolutism and Experientialism*, he writes that he prefers the linear aspects of German history but that the metaphysics is flawed.[58] Dewey prefers a naturalistic metaphysics where history moves towards human progress, connectivity, and interaction.

Historical Naturalism and Pragmatic Progressivism

In *The Growth of the American Mind*, Merle Curti writes that Dewey's brand of pragmatism has its roots in Darwinian naturalism. Dewey thinks Darwin's evolutionary progress is a friend to pragmatism and historical consciousness.[59] According to Curti, Dewey's main contribution to the American mind is his conception of a pragmatic theory of knowledge based on naturalism.[60] Dewey believes that people are always in a state of evolutionary progress and this belief is prevalent in his philosophy of history. Of course, this brand of naturalism has its roots in the Social Gospel which was so popular among Progressives of the early twentieth century. However, Dewey did not support Social Darwinism. Dewey's naturalism is moral and caring. His history is not nasty and brutish but is a picture of cooperation and movement towards

[57] George Santayana, *The German Mind; a philosophical diagnosis* (New York: Crowell, 1968), passim.

[58] John Dewey, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy, ed. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 17.

[59] In this instance historical consciousness is a way of understanding history as a part of everyday life. Darwin is integral to understanding Dewey's philosophy of history.

[60] Curti, *Growth of American Thought,* 545.

truth, a sort of Socratic Method in history.[61] The historian's responsibility is to facilitate this atmosphere of cooperation, accuracy, and unity. Throughout the field of history in the 1930s there was a movement to address the social role of the historian.

In his 1933 letter to the annual meeting of the *American Historical Association*, Benedetto Croce wrote, "Good history writing…does not need to be invented, because it has always existed in the world and has a long history of its own." He goes on to echo Dewey in writing, "But it is necessary constantly to redirect it and to breathe into it that energy which may be equal to new demands."[62] Croce was attempting to restore history in Hegelian terms. In that sense he reflected the pragmatism of William James because of its monistic tendencies. However, Croce realized, as did Dewey, that historical relativism could become prevalent in an age where knowledge is growing and society rapidly changing. Dewey's answer is that historians must educate and realize that the goal is still progress and unity. In Dewey's later period the message began to change from unity to responsibility. The older John Dewey believes that the historian/educator is the guide for all of the students' social interaction.[63] The question then arises about how much responsibility the historian has to the public.

[61] Dewey was a support of a "Back to Plato" movement in philosophy. According to Dewey the Socratic Method was needed for progress to take shape.

[62] Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," 230.

[63] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Kappa Delta Pi, 1998), 32.

CHAPTER 3

DEWEY'S NEED FOR UNITY AND HIS HEGELIAN PERIOD

It is easy to misunderstand a great figure's coming-of-age. How did the scholar become scholarly? Does Karl Marx's history tell us something different, even contradictory, about Marxism? John Dewey is one such figure whose history is often misunderstood. Dewey did not wake up one morning and develop the philosophy of pragmatism. He did not have a *cogito* experience like Rene Descartes. Dewey's past proves that pragmatism was a process of maturation for the native Vermonter. His genius developed over his 68-year academic career. The best place to start researching the beginning of Dewey's career is his undergraduate days at the University of Vermont. From there Dewey eventually earned a place for himself as a budding intellectual in Baltimore under the influence of neo-Hegelian philosopher George Sylvester Morris.[64] This forgotten part of his intellectual development warrants further discussion to better understand Dewey as a philosopher of history.

American higher education was undergoing change wrought by the nineteenth century advances in science during Dewey's collegiate career. The separation between philosophy and theology became more pronounced even if it showed commonly in books and not yet in classrooms. Rapidly, the bedrocks of American Protestant education were eroded. Consequently, this is the academic environment in which Dewey learned.

Already the analytic turn in the field of philosophy was evident in late nineteenth century America. Furthermore, the analytic turn would lead to academic fragmentation and prove to be a

[64] Neil Coughlan, *Young John Dewey: an essay in American intellectual history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 18.

death knell to systematic philosophy.[65] Among American philosophical circles of the Gilded Age several schools vied for supremacy. Scottish Realism and German Idealism were popular intellectual movements after Reconstruction.[66] Many American philosophers blended Christianity with scientific philosophy in hope of a synthesis. They did this with some success until the scientific method became mainstreamed during the Progressive era. Merle Curti writes, "The most striking event in the intellectual history of the last third of the nineteenth century was the blow dealt the historic doctrine of supernaturalism--the doctrine that a divine Creator stands about the laws of nature and intervenes directly in natural events and the affairs of men through miracles and the granting of grace-by new developments in the biological and physical sciences."[67] The conflict of the late nineteenth century philosophy between science and Christianity left a mark on Dewey's development. Dewey came to view evangelical forms of Christianity as unscientific and challenged their methods of inquiry. Personally, Dewey's mother was an evangelical Christian with progressive views.[68] Although he abandoned Christianity, he later saw its value as a foundation.

Dewey liked philosophy as an undergraduate and when he graduated from Vermont, he continued to read philosophy in his spare time.[69] He served as an assistant principal in Pennsylvania before he decided to enroll in Johns Hopkins in 1882 as one of its first graduate students. His professors were all scientific men who preferred to leave Christianity back in the Middle Ages.[70] George Sylvester Morris researched the philosophy of Hegel and Kant and

[65] Pitrim Sorokin, *The crisis of our age: the social and cultural outlook,* (New York: Dutton, 1941), passim. The analytic turn in academia is considered, for this purpose, as a product of late modernity. In theological circles systematic philosophy is also known as worldview philosophy.

[66] Coughlan, *Young John Dewey*, 10-17.

[67] Curti, *The Growth of American* Thought, 517.

[68] Coughlan, *Young John Dewey*, 4-5.

[69] Coughlan, *Young John Dewey*, 18-53.

[70] Coughlan, *Young John Dewey*, 26.

influenced Dewey the most.[71] He also studied with Charles Sanders Peirce, who is the founder of pragmatism, and G. Stanley Hall who founded organized psychology in America. The ascendency of science and psychology was thought to benefit theology because it revealed new ways of knowing God. Instead, the new fields did the opposite and dethroned theology. It became obvious that Darwin's science and story of origin was soon to overtake religious explanations for the origin of the world and the life in it. This was an intellectual environment that both challenged and shaped Dewey's mind.

Dewey began his career as a neo-Hegelian philosopher at Johns Hopkins before finally discarding that mantra and developing the instrumentalist version of pragmatism at the University of Chicago years later.[72] While at Chicago, he began to shed his need for a systematic philosophy, his Hegelianism; there he saw the value of practicality in the form of pragmatism. When he discarded the intricacies of Hegelianism, he dismissed orthodox religion as well.[73] In 1903 Morton White posited the original thesis that Dewey put Hegelianism behind him in *Studies in Logical Theory.*[74] James Good writes that this is not true: "Regardless of why the traditional view was initially articulated, the issue of Dewey's debt to Hegel continues to beleaguer Dewey scholars partly because, in 1930, he acknowledged 'Hegel ha[d] left a permanent deposit in [his] thinking.'"

[71] Pam Ecker, "John Dewey" (Spring 1997), http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/dewey/dewey.html (accessed 6 Dec 2008).

[72] Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 256.

[73] Morton White, *The Origins of John Dewey's Instrumentalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 3-11.

[74] Dewey's *Studies in Logical Theory* is seminal to White's argument that Dewey put Hegelianism behind him in New York.

The Hegelian period and permanent Hegelian deposit cannot be dismissed in Dewey's career; this is because history is of the utmost importance to Hegelian philosophy.[75] Since history is key to Hegelianism, that meant Dewey had to consider history in correlation to his dedication to Hegelian idealism. As a young philosopher in graduate school, Dewey found Hegel to be useful. Hegel represented the best trends in German philosophy nearing the twentieth century; he was not overly orthodox or absolutely scientific. Put succinctly, "The contents of philosophical knowledge, we might suspect, will come from the historically changing contents of contemporary culture," as Paul Redding writes of Hegelianism.[76] In nineteenth-century thought there was not a yet a confirmed logical contradiction in the need for the progress of science and the unity that metaphysics provided. Dewey would later find problems not necessarily with Hegel's systematized philosophy, but with his loose use of Christianity that appeared to be old fashioned and illiberal after the First World War. Hegel, whose philosophy was all but docile in Germany until later in the twentieth century, proved to be excessively dictatorial and metaphysical for someone who was a progressive and believed in democracy.[77]

Hegel's influence over Dewey is immense and several authors assert that Dewey never escaped the influence of Hegel's systemization and unity of knowledge.[78] Hegel's philosophy provided Americans a way to embrace religion, a sense of citizenship, science, and a sense that all of those were cooperative in essence. Ironically, Hegel's system was so broad and encompassing that both traditionalists and liberals found commonalities in Hegel.[79] As a result,

[75] Peter Singer, *Hegel: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13-31.

[76] Paul Redding "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel," in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/ (accessed 14 July 2008).

[77] Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), passim.

[78] Good, "Dewey's "Permanent Hegelian Deposit," 293-313.

[79] There are Right Hegelians and Left Hegelians among other sects. Hegel can and is interpreted to mean many different things. Part of the problem is that Hegelian philosophy is so vague.

to be a Hegelian was not unusual entering the twentieth century.[80] Many progressives decided that Hegelianism was a sufficient foundation to build on for reasons mentioned previously.

Hegel seems outdated in today's postmodern environment. He believed in Church, God, the State, and metaphysics. Furthermore, before the First World War and primarily before the start of the twentieth century, American scholars studied in Germany and earned PhDs from Germany institutions.[81] Ironically, Dewey enrolled in the first PhD program offered in the United States. He mirrored other young philosophers in the late nineteenth-century United States. He grew up in a religious environment and it proved to be a foundation and structure for Dewey's philosophy.[82] Neil Coughlan writes that Dewey early in his career was caught up between a desire for religiosity and the yearnings for a new form of scientific understanding.[83] Hegel provided a way to be both religious and seek a greater understanding through reason. Of course, the absolute idea was interpreted by various sects of Hegelians to mean different things. For Dewey, Hegelianism equaled a balance between reason, science, and religiosity.[84]

A reason that history is so important to Dewey is because it was a seminal part of Hegel's philosophy. Yet, during the First World War, Dewey began to question the idea of historical thinking in Hegel's philosophy. By the time the First World War began Dewey was no longer a new academic. He was an established, published, and honored professor, and in 1916 he published *Democracy and Education* which is considered his most seminal statement on his

[80] William H. Goetzmann ed., *The American Hegelians: an intellectual episode in the history of Western America,* (New York, Knopf; [distributed by Random House] 1973), passim.

[81] Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* 256.

[82] Coughlan, *Young John Dewey,* 3-68. Coughlan not only traces Dewey's development as a philosopher, but writes about most academics of his generation breaking with religious dogma. Coughlan is not the only author to touch on this issue. Indeed, several authors write about this subject with clarity too.

[83] Coughlan, *Young John Dewey,* 52.

[84] John Dewey. "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," in *The Essential Dewey,* ed. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1998), 17.

philosophy until that point. No one is sure how he felt about Hegel at this juncture, but according to his book *Germany Philosophy and Politics,* he used the First World War to question what he saw as a relationship between German arrogance and Hegelian philosophy. Dewey supported America's entrance into the First World War. He held that Germany overstepped its boundaries. As a philosopher he took Germany's aggression on a personal level and likewise derided it from a philosophical and political stance.

Challenging the European Model of History

There is evidence that Dewey began to question the European model of history as early as the 1890s. This is not unique of Dewey; critic and counterpart George Santayana also felt the Germans and Continental philosophy in general had an ego problem.[85] In *German Philosophy and Politics,* Dewey writes that he does not believe that ideas are behind man's every action.[86] He is reacting to what he saw as the German will to power that was fueled, in his opinion, by the attachment to ideas instead of practicality. He concluded *German Philosophy and Politics* when he wrote that America needed an experimental method in history. "An American philosophy of history must perforce be a philosophy for its future, future in which freedom and fullness of human companionship is the aim, and intelligent cooperative experimentation the method," Dewey writes.[87] In this definitive statement Dewey has made a distinction between European/Continental history and American history. The lack of practicality in history, Dewey

[85] Santayana, *The German Mind,* passim. The thesis of Santayana's work is that an inherent strand of egotism existed among German philosophers of the nineteenth century. The original title of Santayana's monograph was *Egotism in German Philosophy.*

[86] Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, 7.

[87] Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics*, 132.

believed, can lead to arrogance and, as a result, to war. Santayana agrees with Dewey when he accuses Hegel, Kant, and Schiller as driving Germany to commit itself to will of global power both militarily and intellectually.[88] During the First World War American intellectuals began to question the legacy of German/Continental philosophy in America. Dewey led the chorus when he wrote, "I do not believe, then, that *pure* ideas, or pure thought, ever exercised any influence upon human action."[89] His condemnation of Europe and philosophers of history set him up to develop a pragmatic philosophy of history.

Although the term "pragmatism" was in use long before the First World War, it did not catch on in mainstream academic circles until the conclusion of the First World War.[90] Pragmatism, while it grew in popularity, was not without its ardent critics. Joseph L. Blau contended that pragmatism evolved into a purely American philosophy but found its roots in British Empiricism.[91] Blau insisted, similar to Arthur Lovejoy, that pragmatism is a patchwork of different philosophies. He thought that John Stuart Mill set forth the same king of arguments found in pragmatism such as the limits of morality and the need for rational inquiry.[92] Nevertheless, Lovejoy sought to show before Blau in *The Thirteen Pragmatisms* that pragmatism lacks a serious foundation.[93] These critics struggled with the idea that philosophy could be practical and offer itself to answer so many problems.

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[88] Santayana, *The German Mind,* 7.

[89] Dewey, *German philosophy,* 7.

[90] Menand, *Metaphysical Club*, 337-338.

[91] Joseph L. Blau, *Men and movements in American Philosophy,* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1952), 228-273. Blau writes that Americans first borrowed from British Empiricism to create pragmatism.

[92] Colin Heydt, "John Stuart Mill: Overview," *in The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* http://www.iep.utm.edu/m/milljs.htm (accessed 9 October 2008).

[93] Arthur Lovejoy, *The great chain of being: a study of the history of an idea: the William James lectures delivered at Harvard University, 1933,* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1964), passim. Lovejoy posits that all ideas follow a great chain from ancient history to the present.

For many critics of the progressive era this was enough to write pragmatism off as another intellectual episode with its roots in late nineteenth-century America. The Americanization of British Empiricism was a stalwart effort from pragmatists such as John Dewey to separate the United States from European Continental philosophy, so the critic's story goes. Truly, Dewey and the pragmatists were not bound to Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries like their predecessors. The Vermonter recognized that America at the end of the nineteenth century was on the brink of not only military greatness, separateness, but a new way of understanding the world and indeed breaking the traditional bounds of European philosophy that often to led to militarism. Europe, in Santayana and Dewey's eyes, still reeked of aristocracy and Whig notions about traditionalism and those things that no longer belonged in the twentieth century Dewey thought. In Dewey's eyes, Germany's rigid attachment to abstract philosophy allowed the state to force people to choose between absolutes.

Dewey had a keen sense of understanding about the United States in the progressive era. He witnessed American success on a large scale during his lifetime and especially in his mature career. In 1898 the U.S. succeeded in subduing Spain in Cuba, a decade later the U.S. controlled the Panama Canal and was dealing with domestic problems rapidly beginning with anti-trust laws, unions, poverty, prohibition, and women's rights; the U.S. was unequaled in its path towards democracy during Dewey's lifetime. Dewey and the pragmatists realized that there was not a European tradition to turn to anymore that addressed these issues. On the other side of the Atlantic the Europeans were still warring over heritage and aristocracy. The whole plethora of domestic political and social events, combined with America's ever-growing role internationally, greatly affected how Dewey thought about philosophy. These changes revealed to Dewey that America should strive to be self sufficient.

Despite shedding his Hegelian roots, history plays a very active role within Dewey's pragmatic method. Dewey did not hate Europe, but he thought it impractical and outdated in the new environment of the twentieth century.[94] Europe was bloated with aristocracies that warred over land and other issues. A divide was apparent to him after the First World War. As far as John Dewey could see, industrialism, military might, and geography had separated the U.S. from Europe.[95] The industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, and Andrew Carnegie were boosting the Americans far ahead of European production at the beginning of the twentieth century. Differing from Morgan, both Carnegie and Rockefeller rose through the business world from the lower classes. Tradition's role in history was changing as wealth, invention, and education changed the ranks of the middle class. The idea of an established aristocratic method (Rankean historiography) was abhorrent to Dewey and the pragmatists. The tide of historiography changed as Dewey took history out of the realm of professional historians into the realm of the educator and the working man.

Dewey's Dilemma with Rankean History

Dewey was troubled about Rankean history for three main reasons. The first is its methods of document choice, the second is that it is overtly nationalistic, and finally because it is only concerned with the large characters of history. Dewey is concerned about the "working man" in history. This does not mean that he was denigrating history or lowering the expectations. He was concerned about human agency and the ability of historians to write about culture in their research.

[94] The term new world and old Europe does not a have political meaning in this instance. The term old Europe is in use to signify an aristocratic set of ideas thought to be set in motion in society.

[95] Dewey somewhat echoes Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. The idea of the rugged individualist in a world formerly dominated by aristocrats is key here. Dewey sees Americans in the new frontier as Europe is stuck in the old world where new ideas cannot flourish.

Dewey believed that history was of value because it could help us better understand institutions. If used correctly, history would show that progress is inevitable. "It is justifiable to say without dogmatism that both anthropology and history give support to those who wish to change these institutions," he wrote in his essay "Human Nature." [96] He understood the path could prove to be like a ladder for proper institutional reforms. Dewey had convincing to do with his fellow academics.[97] Historians were not ready to concede that Rankean historiography was invalid and that the common man played an important role in history, and that historians needed to be responsible in dealing with human agency. Dewey thought that academics were only nominally successful in emanating ideas to the general public of America. The other part of America, the largest part, America's workers took their ideas not from academic professionals but mostly from popular periodicals, local educators, teachers, and similar sources. Ironically, Dewey understood this and wrote a great deal about education and history. The educative aspect of history served as a humanistic element in democracy Dewey thought.

John Dewey's role in historical thinking in America takes place in the negotiation between the professional philosopher, the historian, and the worker. Dewey agreed that the traditionalist model for history needed to be balanced with an understanding of Darwinian evolution.[98] Growth and evolution take place in institutions and history needs to provide the material to use for reform. Dewey saw America as place where Darwinian evolution could take hold in the sciences and the arts in order to explain gradual changes[99] and historical changes, too. The maelstrom in Europe did not require more idealists and historians of high tragedy but

[96] Dewey, "Human Nature," in *The Collected Works of John* Dewey, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, LW 6.38

[97] As we shall see later Dewey was, as is, not without his critics.

[98] John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy, and other essays in contemporary thought,* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910), 1-19, 77-111.

[99] Dewey, "Self-Saver or Frankenstein," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, LW 6.280-285.

thinkers who are willing to get "dirty" and discover and how the point of war was reached. Dewey began to question how modernity fueled the loss of personhood despite the many political and technical advances.[100] The great problem in modernity and history was how to process the effects of science and the loss of self. Dewey posited that practicality was the answer; do not professionalize but personalize. Make history less rigid and temper the tendency against historicism at the same time.

Literature on Dewey's Theory of History

Literature on Dewey is abundant, with the exception being his philosophy of history. He is written about in parts of many books on historiography. The existing literature is predominately about Dewey's Hegelian period, or it explores his influence on the Progressive historians. During anniversaries of Dewey's birth or death more appears about his philosophy of history in spurts. More often than not, the subject of his historical methodology is dormant. This section will focus on what is written about his philosophy of history and summarize each article and book available.

Burleigh Taylor Wilkins and Joseph L. Blau were the two most important thinkers who first studied Dewey's historiography. Wilkins focuses on Dewey's lifelong relationship with Hegelianism.[101] He highlights Dewey's continuous flirtation with Hegelianism writing that, "Dewey, while sharing James's high esteem for thinking beings, conspicuously did not share James's love of Pluralism and the Incomplete" about Dewey's persistent need for unity.[102] Wilkins maintains that Dewey never left behind his love for monism in the form of Hegelianism.

[100] Throughout Dewey works we sense that part of maelstrom of modernity is the loss of selfhood which translates into a disappearance of common sense, practicality, and applicability.

[101] Wilkins, "James, Dewey, and Hegelian Idealism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17 (1956): 332-346.

[102] Wilkins, "James, Dewey, and Hegelian Idealism," 332.

Wilkins' points out that since most of the pragmatists were born in the middle 1800s, those thinkers could not have grown into their intellectual selves as pragmatists. The author of this article holds that these thinkers, especially Dewey, grew up under the influence of more traditional ideas, i.e., they were grounded in metaphysics.[103] Wilkins thesis is to show that the center of pragmatic thought is brought together by two different strands in Western thinking. The first is Jamesian, which is pluralist, and the second is Dewey's, which he says in monistic and complete. Wilkins ultimate goal is to tie Dewey to Hegel and prove the Dewey's version of pragmatism is not really that novel.

Wilkins quotes Dewey as late as 1930 claiming that Hegel left a "permanent deposit" in his philosophy.[104] Wilkins uses this to claim that British Empiricism, evolutionary experimental science, and Hegelian idealism are the roots of pragmatism. Throughout Dewey's career he used Hegel as a way to hang onto liberal Christianity and stress the importance of mind and matter together. Wilkins is attempting to show that Dewey wanted completeness in his thinking system, separating him somewhat from the later modernists. Dewey later outwardly rejected Hegel's idealism on the basis of its roots in German militarism as he saw during the First World War.

Wilkins followed his initial article up with another focusing on the historical inquiry of pragmatism.[105] Wilkins thesis is that history was a large part of pragmatism and that Dewey used it frequently in philosophizing. He aims to prove that Dewey's history is a logic of science. According to Wilkins, Dewey's history is logic and unity of science instead of tracing past events. "The question," he (Dewey) believed, "is not so much whether or not history in the large

[103] Wilkins, "James, Dewey, and Hegelian Idealism," 333-336.
[104] Wilkins, "James, Dewey, and Hegelian Idealism," 334.
[105] Burleigh Taylor Wilkins, "Pragmatism as a Theory of Historical Knowledge: John Dewey on the Nature of Historical Inquiry," *The American Historical Review* 64 (1959): 878-890.

is a science, or even whether or not it is capable of becoming a science. It is whether the procedures employed by historians are precluded from having scientific quality," Wilkins quotes Dewey writing in his logic.[106] Dewey is concerned more with the logic in which history is written and how the present affects the writing of the past according to Wilkins. Wilkins correctly critiques Dewey's historical methodology suggesting that Dewey believes that all historical inquiry is not about the past but the present.[107] Wilkins continues writing that the permanent Hegelian deposit in Dewey's thought blinds him to the accuracy history gained in the twentieth century. Wilkins does not successfully fend off Dewey's criticism by saying that if historical inquiry cannot be done that we leave history to mythmakers. Dewey did not devalue history, but rather he asked that history be more logical.

Joseph L. Blau in his article, "John Dewey's Theory of History," maintains that Williams James showed Dewey "how to use the new evolutionary currents of thought as a way of reinstating man's mental activities in nature."[108] Blau shows that Dewey thinks ideas served a utilitarian purpose in society. Dewey's founding of the "Chicago School" of pragmatism was intent on reformulating the method of the history of ideas.[109] Blau suggested that there are two strains in Dewey's thinking about history. He says that Dewey's thought is founded upon an organic evolutionary process (historical) of how things change, the second affected by his study of James is concerned with how change can be directed.[110] The most important statement Blau makes about Dewey, and one that this thesis holds, is that Dewey is not *primarily* concerned with the transcendental, but with the temporal order of human things. According to the author this is

[106] Wilkins, "Pragmatism as a Theory of Historical Knowledge," 880.
[107] Wilkins, "Pragmatism as a Theory of Historical Knowledge," 882.
[108] Joseph L. Blau, "John Dewey's Theory of History," *The Journal of Philosophy* 57 (1960): 91.
[109] Blau, "John Dewey's Theory of History," 92.
[110] Blau, "John Dewey's Theory of History," 94.

not contradictory with historical knowledge in that "experimentalism" allows for cooperation with the past. The historian in Dewey's eyes is a scientist. A scientist gathering information is just the first part of the work, the next is experimentation.[111] This definitely runs contrary with the idea of Rankean and traditional nineteenth-century historiography which is non-experimental. Blau asserts that history plays the role of facilitator in the process of naturalism. Dewey reiterates that the scientific nature of Dewey's historical inquiry cannot be removed from the process. "Historical inquiry is to be distinguished from scientific inquiry by its subject matter, not its methods," Blau claims.[112] Blau's is the seminal piece on Dewey's philosophy of history; sadly little has been done to equal it.[113]

Eugene Provenzo attempts to extrapolate a theory of history from Dewey's time at the University of Chicago's laboratory school. Provenzo researches Dewey's history in action, writing that for Dewey events and chronicle are separated from history as eventual.[114] Provenzo writes that Dewey uses history as scientific inquiry. Through this Dewey aimed to recreate a society on experimentalism. Provenzo sums up his article writing, "Dewey was not interested in making history a story of battles and dynasties. Instead, he stressed its usefulness as an analytic tool, a means through which children could, by tracing its historical origins and development, gain insight into the principles and complexities of their own society."[115] To bolster his thesis he shows that Dewey believed students were not interested in old history, but in how history showed scientific change in society. Provenzo, who is not a historian, helps us to see how Dewey's historical methodology is also central to his pragmatism in general.

[111] Blau, "John Dewey's Theory of History," 95.
[112] Blau, "John Dewey's Theory of History," 98.
[113] There are more articles about Pragmatism and History than about Dewey's philosophy of history in particular.
[114] Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., "History as Experiment: The Role of the Laboratory School in the Development of John Dewey's Philosophy of History," *The History Teacher* 12 (1979): 374.
[115] Provenzo, "History as Experiment," 376.

R. Jack Wilson writes that Dewey's Hegelianism is not a major influence on the philosopher's thoughts. In a review of William Goetzmann's *The American Hegelians*, Wilson writes that Hegelianism was a short-lived phenomenon in not only Dewey's intellectual life but among the American intelligentsia in general.[116] In a scathing review of Goetzmann's monograph, Wilson ignores Wilkins thesis that Hegelians were dominant before the First World War. He says that Hegel's influence in the States was, "odd, obscure, and doubtful."[117] In more than one instance the reviewer chides Goetzmann, the editor of *American Hegelians*, for puffing up the Hegelians influence. As for Hegel, Wilson notes that Dewey had a brief brush with the great Prussian but leaves out Dewey's comment in 1930 about Hegel's lasting impact upon him.[118] Wilson's caveat is that Dewey did not seem to have the fervor of a young intellectual in any published letters of his early career. "Dewey's Hegelian period ought to be seen not as a period at all but as a point," writes Wilson to summarize his review.[119]

David A. Hollinger addresses the problem of pragmatism and history on a larger scale. Hollinger wants to find out whether there is such a thing as an "American mind" and whether Dewey and the pragmatists created a dominant philosophy that became a way of life. He breaks down two strains of pragmatism, partially addressed already, labeling one vein out of Harvard (James) and the other at Columbia (Dewey). Unlike Wilkins he does not go into the monist-pluralist division among pragmatists. Hollinger ranks Dewey with the strain of pragmatists in line with relativism, moralism, and voluntarism. The author shows that relativism and voluntarism are both responses in trying to live consistently in a world governed by new

[116] R. Jack Wilson, "Dewey's Hegelianism," review of The American Hegelians; An Intellectual Episode in the History of Western America, by William Goetzmann, History of Education Quarterly, Spring 1975, 87-92.
[117] Wilson, "Dewey's Hegelianism,"88.
[118] Wilson, "Dewey's Hegelianism,"90.
[119] Wilson, "Dewey's Hegelianism," 92.

scientific laws. Hollinger says that inquiry was important for them because of the uncertainty of the world.[120] "This projection is easiest to illustrate in the case of Dewey, who was forever insisting that if only people could become scientific in the way they went about things, the potential for human fulfillment would be liberated from the bondage of a sterile, repressive, outrageously long-lived antiquity…Dewey's devotion was to the process of investigation itself," writes Hollinger.[121] Dewey, as stated previously, was devoted to the method of inquiry even in his idea of historiography. Fellow pragmatic-traveler Josiah Royce urged the church in *The Problem of Christianity* to become more scientific also.[122] In the latter stages of Hollinger's piece he leads the reader to see pragmatism as a way of making life simpler and submitting other philosophical system to scientism.

James T. Kloppenberg offers the best article on pragmatism's role in history among American historians. Kloppenberg's 2006 article, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History: From Turner and Du Bois to Today," argues that pragmatism is the unofficial philosophy for most historians. He traces those historians that have been and are currently influenced by John Dewey and William James. According to Kloppenberg, since the beginning of the twentieth century, there have been only three periods that overtly ignored the pragmatists. The first is America during the Second World War, the second during the height of the Cold-War era, and the third being the postmodern seventies.

Kloppenberg traces the pragmatists' influence on historians, mostly from Dewey, beginning with James Harvey Robinson to modern historians Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt,

[120] David A. Hollinger, "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," *The Journal of American History* 67 (1980): 93.
[121] Hollinger, "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," 94.
[122] Hollinger, "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," 95.

Margaret Jacob, David Hollinger, and Thomas Haskell among others. In Deweyean fashion, he concludes his article stating that inquiry and experimentation like Dewey's is needed again. Emphatically, Kloppenberg writes in concluding his article, "it seems fair to conclude that pragmatism remains, as it was for the new historians and as it has been for more than a century, among the most important sources of ideas, methods, and inspiration for American historians."[123]

[123] Kloppenberg, "Pragmatism and the Practice of History: From Turner and Du Bois to Today," 223.

CHAPTER 4

THREE REPLIES TO DEWEY'S PRAGMATIC THEORY OF HISTORY

If we believe Dewey's philosophy that history serves a functional purpose for society, it raises the question of how historians are to develop content. Are historian's to be the conscience of society? And if so, how does this burden affect research methods? Dewey did not go unanswered after he wrote on the subject of history. Dewey, always the straightforward philosopher, tells us in the title of *Logic, that* history for him is mostly a theory of inquiry. Arthur Lovejoy was the first to reply to Dewey's theory of history directly.

Lovejoy's Critique of Dewey

Arthur Lovejoy looks at Dewey's critique of historians' selection of material. He says that historiography is necessarily interpretative and explanatory.[124] Selection is seminal for Dewey to unlocking the Pandora's Box for historians. Dewey believes if he can show that selection is done unscientifically, historical research obviously contains serious flaws in the direction of interpretation. Furthermore, the practice of structural histories, with its causality and connections, call into question how responsibly this kind of history functions in society. When traditionalist historian Henry Adams wrote about a dynamic history, in what respect is that history responsible enough to answer the pressing questions of democracy, Dewey asked? The scientific claims of nineteenth-century historians were still wrapped up in the Victorian ideal of moral history, Dewey thought. Lovejoy counters Dewey, asking how historical research is possible without making judgments and interpretations. When it comes to subject matter, Lovejoy replies that historians, likewise, are the arbiters in what appears in books.

[124] Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History," *The Journal of Philosophy* 18 *(*1939):477.

Lovejoy rebuts Dewey, writing that historians pick subject-matter because it is interesting. "Now the only factual generalization which it is safe to make about the selection of subject-matter by historians is that it is always determined by the interestingness, for the historian or for somebody, of some question, to which data consisting of texts or other supposedly evidential material might conceivably yield a more or less probable answer," writes Lovejoy.[125] He admits that this is not a perfect case against Dewey's most damning argument about the historical selection process. Both thinkers are trying to rescue history from the malaise of scientific absolutism, dynamism, relativism, and positivism. The answer to historical objectivity is not available for either one of these philosophers to answer without somehow reverting to some form of logical positivism. The burgeoning quality that Dewey seeks is the ability of the historian to rely on a scientifically-based method instead of a sort of transitory method based only on the historian's reasoning alone.

The tone Lovejoy sets in his reply to Dewey is one of teacher to a mislead student. Lovejoy then replies to Dewey on the question of the kind of methods used in the field of history. He asks whether the philosopher or the historian is more capable to answer the questions of the present. In Lovejoy's famous monograph *The Great Chain of Being*, he writes that a discernible conversation from Plato on is obvious among the great thinkers.[126] In that great conversation philosophers argue about problems of the present. Plato sought to find the perfect society, so did Aristotle and that conversation continues in some fashion in the modern era. Lovejoy wants to prove that neither is more capable of answering that question than the other. According to Lovejoy, the historians are better suited to trace the philosophic conversation. His

[125] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History," 479.

[126] Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea: the William James lectures delivered at Harvard* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), passim.

reason is that philosophers confuse subject matter because they try to add to the conversation as opposed to understanding it like historians should do.

Another place where Lovejoy breaks with Dewey is on the issue of presentism. Lovejoy writes that Dewey is really asking historians to be more like philosophers.[127] Lovejoy says that historians should study men of the past and the interests of men in the past for the past not the present.[128] Conclusively, he is arguing that if historians operate under the assumption of taking care of present problems that they cease to be historians but become philosophers instead. Lovejoy agrees with Dewey that the historian writes in the present for the people of today but not as a way of answering public problems. Ultimately, Dewey and Lovejoy at this point are debating about detachment. Dewey shows that if historians are detached from their research then, for historians especially, what good is the research if it does not benefit people now!

In the end, Lovejoy has to concede to Dewey that history does suffer from a lack of concern for human agency; however, he stops short of endorsing Dewey's belief that history should reflect reality. According to Lovejoy, "the historian's procedure obviously always is, de facto, determined by a present interest in some historical question; but I am unable to see that either his proximate or ultimate 'focus' need be determined by the pertinence of the events which he seeks to investigate to our present philosophical or social problems."[129] He concedes to Dewey that the present does play a role in selection of documentary evidence and the interestingness of research. Lovejoy does not go further and he suggests that historians are

[127] The case can be made that Dewey operated more like a historian than a philosopher and vice versa. One of the appeals of Dewey is the cross-disciplinary nature of his philosophy.

[128] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History," 482.

[129] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History," 484.

allowed to construct the ideals based on history. Invariably he thinks Dewey is asking too much of historians, especially to be able to provide a "useful" element to history writing.

Dewey and Lovejoy both question historians' ability to live up to the modernist objective of detachment. Dewey does this more so than Lovejoy. They are asking historians to conform to the scientific model of research. The scientific model enables historians to remove themselves from circumstances to do their research. However, the caveat is that this kind of history is not any better for human agency but comes close to Rankean history, which Dewey disliked. Of course, we already know that Dewey does not agree that facts and evidence do all of the thinking for the historian. The detached modern historian is supposed to remove himself or herself from feelings of ideology and politics, basically a self autonomous from all external influences.[130]

As a consequence of this debate, the role of human agency takes a prominent role in the argument. Lovejoy does not aim to alienate people from history like the traditionalist and conservative schools of history. Lovejoy shares a pragmatic view of history with Dewey. He believes that it is necessary to have history because it is the foundation for all thinking. "For all knowledge, except in the spurious sense mentioned-all science and all practical intelligence-rest upon history," he writes.[131] The historical serves us in a collective fashion to stabilize common knowledge and provide a foundation for thinking. When leaning upon something it is the method that will provide the way out of dilemma and not the content or tradition to fall back upon. Lovejoy decides to take a different route from Dewey again, insisting that method is more spurious.

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[130] Paul C. Vitz and Susan M. Felch ed., *The Self: Beyond the Postmodern Crisis* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006), passim. Vitz says the overarching theme in *The Self* is the crisis of Descartes' version of modernity and its present effects on academics in all fields. *The Self* is a series of essays all dealing with the Cartesian notion of self and personhood.

[131] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History,"487. This is a common theme in Deweyan circles. In classical pragmatism history is a foundation upon which to begin knowledge.

Lovejoy believes that historians cannot rely upon method only. In providing an example of astronomy, Lovejoy writes that contemporary astronomers get little help from Aristotle's research on the same subject.[132] He says that method changes and continues to change. Dewey agrees with Lovejoy on this important fact about the traditional as a fallback point. Because if the astronomers are interested in how astronomy is done now, technically they should study the way it was done when Aristotle started doing astronomy. Lovejoy moves forward again stating that the historian is in a "presenticentric predicament."[133] On the one hand, if history does not show a problem in methodology, Lovejoy says, and then it is not history; it is propaganda. In the conclusion of his argument, Lovejoy writes the history must fall back on canon.[134] He does not successfully refute Dewey but instead reinforces his argument that historians suffer from a bifurcated consciousness that seeks a democratic method in a traditional manner.

White Chides Dewey and the Progressives

Historian Morton White follows a holistic approach to pragmatism. He takes issue with Dewey's theory of history because it is not a holistic approach and impractical. White believes that Dewey's desire for democracy blinds him to the reality of historical writing.[135] The main element behind White's critique of Dewey is to distinguish between the logic and psychology of historical research.[136] In a two-fold argument, White takes on Dewey's challenge of selection in historiography and Beard's search for detached objectivity. Of the three critiques of Dewey we will see, White is the closest to succeeding in bringing Dewey to an impasse.

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[132] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History,"482.

[133] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History,"486.

[134] Lovejoy, "Present Standpoints and Past History,"486.

[135] Morton White, "Can History be Objective?" in *Social Thought in America*, ed., Hans Meyerhoff, *The Philosophy of History in our Time: An* Anthology (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959). White differs from other critics of Dewey and history, lumping Dewey in with the Progressive historians especially Charles Beard.

[136] White, "Can History Be Objective?" 188-189.

White chooses to attack Beard first to try to link his early determinism and his later relativism to pragmatism's wavering foundation for methodology. First, White writes that Beard is trying to restore metaphysics to history after 1913; this is also an indictment of Dewey. The First World War in Europe sent shockwaves in America, especially American intellectuals. Historicism and metaphysical philosophies were common among American academicians until the First World War caused them to question their sensibilities. Historians did not want to fall back on relativism and abandon their professions to faith as Beard did in 1933. Instead, they tinkered with methods they thought made history more responsible. White questions the Progressives and Dewey's attack on Rankean history. Dewey found that in order to restore a foundation into research he must accept broad interpretations through inference.[137] Where he struggles with this concept is the ability to find a way around the relativism that broad interpretation seems to bring along with it. Dewey rejects Rankean history outright; Beard tries to restore history with a tripartite function.

The first is "history as actuality," which Beard addressed at the American Historical Association in 1933.[138] Beard's famous speech contains a large amount of Dewey's pragmatism despite his embrace of relativism. History as actuality states that history is a process of knowledge and understands history in its day-to-day process. Secondly, he divides history into history as knowledge and history as thought. This part history is collection of facts and data. The final part is historical thought that involves selection, arrangement, interpretation of facts, and record-based information.[139] The first generation of modern American historians, like Beard, while under the influence of pragmatism, did not understand how to incorporate it as a historical

[137] White, "Can History Be Objective?" 191.
[138] Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," 219-231.
[139] White, "Can History Be Objective?" 191.

method. White says that history is a mental exercise ultimately and it is obviously from a biased point-of-view.

According to White, Dewey's criticism of the selection of documents is a pedagogical or invalid point. White starts by showing us those historians cannot attempt a whole truth. For White, world history is not an option, and neither is it a purely scientific explanation. White's answer to this is similar to Deweyan pragmatism. The selection process is not part of the scientific process, White writes.[140] The process of selection is necessarily biased, according to White, and is nothing to worry about. He shirks off the problem of selection by categorizing it into psychological and logical categories. The logical side shows that selection can be done objectively and some underlying notion is being overplayed on Dewey's end to explain a hyper-selective process that is more imbued with psychological than logic. White relegates selection to nothing more than a drive to start the research process. Dewey disagrees with him on this point. The psychology and logic are both a part of the process Dewey believes. But Dewey says that the two cannot be separated in the real world of research. Historical research is psychological and logical. Dewey's common-sense pragmatism is not attempting to obscure historical research. He is finding the problems of historical knowledge and in a sense, leaving it to historians to address the problem.

However, White continues to argue that a synthesis between scientific method and pluralism suits historical research better than relativism. He quotes Beard responding that the scientific method cannot produce a full history.[141] Beard furthers this into troublesome territory positing that moral history is preferable before writing. White believes he can bring Beard and

[140] White, "Can History Be Objective?" 196.

[141] Ernst Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," in *Philosophy of History in our Time: An* Anthology, ed. Hans Meyerhoff (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959). 197

Dewey together, at least on paper, positing that there is a difference between logic and psychology of historical interpretation. White's approach is much closer to Dewey's than it is Beard's position. White is saying that classical pragmatism overplays the role of the scientific method and that Dewey needs to give room to historians on grounds of psychological interpretation. White says the bottom line is that the individual is not objective, but that she or he is still capable of being responsible in research White says.

Nagel on Dewey and Objectivity in Historiography

Interestingly, Ernst Nagel was a professor at Columbia at the same time that Dewey and Beard were there. Nagel, a philosopher, decided to weigh in to say that there can be objectivity in historiography.[142] He states that there are three general problems discussed about objectivity in historiography. The first is that historians attempt to make particular statements about history and not laws; second, historians selection of material introduces subjectivity into historiography; and, finally, value-charged history introduces personal bias among historians.[143]

Nagel writes that historians must use universals in history. He says that there is not a way around generalization. He calls history "idiographic" which is counter to Dewey's proposition that history must be thought about more in terms of people and not generalizations.[144] According to Nagel historians must rely on a foundation of non-repeatable experiences. He goes on to say that all social sciences rely on non-repeatable research to build upon, a position antithetical to Dewey's proposition. Nagel shows that philosophers who attack history should also attack their own research methods. He understands that all research relies on foundations that cannot be

[142] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 202.
[143] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 203.
[144] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 205.

empirically proven in scientific terms. He finds a further way to explain this by differentiating between "general" versus "individual" conceptual knowledge.[145]

His answer to Dewey, in a sense, is much the same as Morton White's. White differentiated between logical and psychological differences in research. Here Nagel wants to show that there are definite boundaries between research that is accepted versus research that is out of the bounds of academic research. For example, a Holocaust denier can be easily refuted empirically. This is Nagel's example of individual bias. The general or accepted view on research shows that there is such a thing as the Holocaust and it is irrefutable and, therefore, accepted. Dewey believed that logical research would weed out bad history. Nagel points out that Dewey does not address extreme cases of bad history as in the case of a Holocaust denier. Dewey is only trying to explain the possibilities that remain if historical research is illogical.

Nagel attempts to show us that history is in a constant state of flux. He writes that historians are in a continual conversation about research method and content. "Indeed, the relevance of such singular statements to the specific problems under investigation, as well as their truth, is questions upon which historians are often undecided or unable to achieve unanimity," he writes.[146] The idea that historians come to universal understanding on every detail is impossible. Nagel notes that too often philosophers attempting to do the same thing are in a pattern of self defeat. The circular nature of conversation in each field is one of change, regression, and acceptance of certain universals, Nagel writes. He shows that is takes years to come to acceptable answers on current research questions. It seems that Dewey agrees and again this ultimately proves his point that history is in flux for modern humans.

[145] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 205.
[146] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 207.

Whereas Nagel says that history and people are always in flux, Dewey takes this point as a way to construct a logical framework for history. Dewey believes the conversation of philosophy proves problematic for modern humans because they are automatically drawn to transcendentalism or relativism. The flux leads us to believe in transcendental ways to the truth. Flux gives a feeling of instability in the day-to-day life. Another problem is that this flux keeps us from providing our essential use in society. If we cannot be sure about the foundations, then we have to rely on tradition, faith, and actuality. Dewey says modernism is a sense providing foundations for people in the day-to-day world without making flux seem too predominant. For Dewey, religion and faith are reasons for division and unacceptable knowledge; this leads to an undemocratic, medieval idea of knowledge. Although, Dewey is not unreligious, he asks the people to try a pragmatic faith first. Dewey thinks history's role for people is a map with knowledge as a guide through life.

Nagel concedes Dewey's point, asserting that research is never exhaustive. If we try to add "wholesale knowledge" to history, according to Nagel, then it leads to all-around skepticism. He says that we cannot claim wholesale knowledge, first. It is impossible because of selectivity and since the historical events cannot be replicated. As for justification in the selection process, Nagel says that there is no answer to why one historian chooses something over another historian.[147] This subjective analysis does not deserve any more discussion.

Nagel writes that value judgments are taken on in two primary views. He says that selection is a part of the historian's value system.[148] The historian does pick out that which is most important to him or her. Nagel calls this value impregnation because it supposes that the

[147] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 207.
[148] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"208.

historian's motives are caused by natural law or internal motivations. On the other hand, he quotes another historian in positing that writing without value is naïve.[149] The basic idea is that historians are expected to know everything in their field and in the field of the past. This is where philosophers and logicians such as Dewey see a connection to the idea of improbable bias. It is a bias based on value judgment. The value judgment cannot be separated from the historian and the historian from the research.

Nagel says this kind of critique falls victim to "internality."[150] He says if we place this kind of rigor on history, we have to place it on all analytic philosophy. Nagel says history is the unmovable foundation for all the arts and sciences. He tells us if we move logical necessity to the study of history, it will change the complete foundation from which philosophy is done. History is essential to the logic necessity of philosophy. Nagel knows that Beard relied on determinism, and later faith, when methodology seemed incomplete. He is asking for philosophers, Dewey mainly, to concede the basis of history as a working foundation.

Dewey is trying to make historical method workable. Nagel retorts that history cannot provide full reality.[151] According to Nagel that logical connection in past events cannot be fully explained in a history textbook. He says that it is an impossibility. This leads Nagel to the next point about connexion in historiography. He claims that sociology is destroying history because it says that history is written by survivors.[152]

Nagel raises a host of issues over the belief that if winners write history, history is not objective. First, he says that culture decides the outcome of the study, but it does not necessarily

[149] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"209.
[150] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"209.
[151] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"209.
[152] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"211.

harm research. For example, whereas the culture of the Cold War in America produced pro-American historiography, now there are historians who are correcting the bias in these older histories. His second point is that no inquiry takes place in an intellectual vacuum.[153] Nagel says that all research is necessarily historicized. Leo Strauss agrees with Nagel on this point. Strauss posits that philosophers, in his case, have to write esoterically in order to have their research accepted by their modern peers.[154] Strauss differs from Nagel when he writes that ideas must not be determined through culture. Nagel agrees with Dewey and the pragmatists that information is filtered through culture and cannot be separated from the modern.

In Nagel's final two points, he dances dangerously close to relativism and historicism. Nagel's third point is that standards of validity are causal and always related to culture.[155] He writes that biased thinking is a part of the research and that it is possible to correct bias in research.[156] The last point is a somewhat obscure as Nagel attempts argues that historical research is warranted on its own terms. He finalizes with a quote from Karl Mannheim when he writes that historical research is affected by external forces (subjectivity).[157] Nagel's response is to correct the perspective, correct the subjective forces, and hope for thorough research despite. Unlike Dewey who places all the responsibility on the historian, Nagel says that the reader is as responsible as the author.[158] In this two-fold process he believes it is possible to train the perspective of both author and reader thus acting cooperatively in the historical process. Nagel's conclusion helps us to understand further where Dewey is attempting to take history. From this perspective it does not appear that Dewey is attempting a relativistic view of history.

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[153] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," 212.
[154] Richard Sherlock, "The Secret of Straussianism," *Modern Age* 48 (2006): 208-216.
[155] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"212.
[156] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"213.
[157] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"213. Dewey read Mannheim and was aware of his research.
[158] Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis,"213.

The phase that Dewey and so many American historiographers were dealing with in the twentieth century is how to write fair history while not alienating the person, which is supposed to be what history is really about. Beard's answer was history as actuality, and Dewey foresaw this happening as the twentieth century progressed. Mainly, the issue is how to include history and personhood while maintaining objectivity. Dewey's answer is practicality in place of the structuralism of the Rankean school. While Dewey is not a relativist, he is not certain how historiography in the twentieth century should proceed exactly. In place of structuralism and relativism, Dewey developed historical naturalism, something his student John Herman Randall expounded after Dewey's death.

CHAPTER 5

FINDING THE PERSON IN HISTORY

John Herman Randall, Jr. is perhaps Dewey's most articulate student of the pragmatic philosophy of history. Randall's exposition on history is the closest to what Dewey might have written. Randall connects Dewey's practicality and application into a complete philosophy of history.

Randall calls his historiography historical naturalism. This is not unexpected since Dewey classifies himself as a naturalistic empiricist. As a pragmatist, and more importantly a student of Dewey's, Randall puts several things into play that critics ignore when dealing with Dewey's theory of history. First, Randall shows that Dewey makes the present a slave to the past. Randall writes that Dewey appreciates the past and uses the past to construct solutions to problems, thus meeting the past with criticism and construction.

The Role of Tradition in Historical Method

John Dewey is not against history nor the traditional aspects of history.[159] History serves as an integral foundation for pragmatism. It is improbable that pragmatists are somehow nihilistic when dealing with the past.[160] Invariably seems to be how pragmatic historiography is thought about in collective memory. The cause of this is most likely because neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty tended towards relativism in the early part of his career. It is both a misunderstanding of pragmatism in general and lack of research on behalf of Dewey's primary material as well. Furthermore, Dewey tells the reader in *Unity and Progress* that the study of

[159] John Herman Randall, Jr., *Nature and historical experience; essays in naturalism and in the theory of history* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1958), 2.

[160] This belief is quite common in some conservative circles. Randall is correct in stating that Dewey needs the past for pragmatism.

history is in decline because history has not progressed passed the pre-Enlightenment phase.[161] He does not prefer grand narratives nor does he like focusing too closely on particulars.

Randall says that the day-to-day experiences bring history's traditional aspects into broader focus.[162] It is now clearer what Dewey is asking of historians. Dewey supports a blend of Thucydidean history with its heavy use of empiricism and progressive history's use of new methods blended with its recognition of people in history. History is to deal with facts, studies of cultures and peoples. What history does not focus on is the science of predicting outcomes. When examining Dewey's writings as a whole, he appears to be less radical and relativistic than supporters and critics believe. Randall says that function in the pragmatic philosophy of history is more than an epistemological function. Experience is the function for presenting history now.[163] It is not just an epistemological function. Pragmatists are not attempting to war with other philosophers' philosophies but out to change the methods instead. Pragmatism is a function of acting responsibly in the world.

There are two ways that Randall says that historians should act primarily to be responsible. First, a new philosophy of history that considers human experience's role in the scientific method is necessary. Randall says that Classical pragmatism did not provide all the answers about human agency's role in the scientific method. It served the function of "opening the can of worms" and leaving that answer to other generations of philosophers under Dewey's influence. Randall equates knowing and history as functions of human activity.[164] In a sense, this is an excellent summation of Dewey's philosophy of history. Dewey wanted to revamp the

[161] Dewey, "Unity and Progress," in *The Collected Works of John* Dewey, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, passim.
[162] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 11.
[163] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 12.
[164] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 15.

Thucydidean view of history into an approach/method. It is empirical historical research with people as the subject and persons as the writers, and yet there is a sense that Dewey expects a positive outcome from this kind of research as well. Dewey says that some parts of traditional history should be meshed into the progressive nature of history.[165] Tradition and morality, according to Dewey, have roles in history. This role recognizes that tradition backs up science and progressivism.

Science and tradition serve as verifying principles in the pragmatist's historical schemata.[166] The crystal ball effect that Dewey refers to is the unscientific method of eschatology. He mirrors this statement for the same reason he says he is not a communist. According to Dewey, the eschatological crisis in Soviet Communism is the reason for its moral breakdown. Another reason Dewey says that he is not a communist is because it ignores all of history to form its system; thus it does not understand how people progress.[167] Dewey, as a progressive, defended the United States on the ground that history in America is functional and more adapt to change and amenability than it was in Soviet Russia. When Dewey witnessed the show trials put on by Stalin in the Soviet Union, he equated this to an unwillingness of a society to adapt.[168] Dewey says this is the antithesis of history's function. This is not a patriotic point by Dewey but a way of showing that the pragmatic methodology of historiography works in the United States. Randall backs up Dewey, writing that all values are amenable, and later in the

[165] Dewey's conception of elementary education was classical with a heavy does of Platonism.
[166] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 16.
[167] Dewey, "Human Direction," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953,* Boydston ed., LW 9.91.
[168] John Dewey was a friend of Leon Trotsky and a supporter of Norman Thomas instead of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Jamesian fashion, tells the reader that historical knowledge is pluralistic and the source for unification of all knowledge.[169]

Dewey's history is pluralistic and geographic in nature. Europe is unprogressive and eschatological. This is no more obvious than it was during the First World War. The United States is not under the burden of eschatology. Pluralism serves as a necessary check to the structuralism of the traditionalists. When historians become rigid in predicting outcomes, progress stops, according to Dewey. People's progress ceases when war becomes the only apparent outcome. Progress is moral, and if history stops progress, history becomes immoral.

Randall expounds on how Dewey feels about immoral history. "The past leaves a deposit of materials and resources, which see limits, 'determine' what man can do in dealing with those imposed problems," Randall writes.[170] People should not be stopped by limits brought on to them by history. History should evolve and be adaptable to peoples' needs. When history is not used properly, for the benefit of people, propagandists have taken it over. A pragmatic understanding of history does not want to impose history (new problems) on people. Modernism, according to them, has already sent man searching for a foundation; history should provide light on the search. Rightly or not, Dewey thinks that burdening man with the issue of the past both creates war (WWI), decadence (Germany), and totalitarianism through eschatology (USSR). In order for the American worker to get to work or school their children, he or she must not be contemplating the problems of the forefathers but use science to create new methods to answer today's problems.

[169] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 17.
[170] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 95.

Randall writes all of this to show us that history is interdisciplinary in its effort to find more accurate knowledge. He says that historiography is "world historical" in nature.[171] All of this is a response to the challenge that history is not sufficient enough on its own terms to come to coherent truth. Instead of falling back on faith as historiography and Beard's history as actuality, Randall is attempting to show that history draws from a host of knowledge. "Knowledge of methods and techniques is the dynamic in all historical decision," he writes.[172] Dewey appreciates interdisciplinary knowledge but does not come outright and state it regarding history. It is not unlikely that he would not have supported this though. He wanted to have a workable historiography and the approach is open to discussion with variable techniques. Randall thinks that opening up history to other knowledge is a safer bet than faith-driven history. His prediction is prophetic as historiography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries continually moves towards an interdisciplinary approach.[173] Randall finally comes to posit that the value of history is that it leads to the origin of problems. This historical method is valuable on two levels. The first is interdisciplinary in nature and the second is that using history is like tracing the origin of some problem. The premise is shedding light on the origin of the problem and fixing it as a result.

The Individual's Role in the Study of History

One of the overarching questions of twentieth-century historiography is how to deal with the question of personhood and its place in history. How do we write fair history, include the excluded, and how can one methodology aim at this noble standard? Dewey's answer to that

[171] Randall, *Nature and Historical experience,* 96.
[172] Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience,* 99.
[173] Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press), passim.

question is that people become grist mill for history because education and unity are not themes in research. In the age of Enlightenment, knowledge was mastery of institutions and law. Since historians cannot reach the same conclusions, then agreeing upon unity is an integral part of understanding human progress. Currently, a new breed of thinkers is building upon the idea of people's role in history and how the role leads to a better understanding of personhood. To conclude this thesis we will explore how the self and its modern Cartesian model can help explain the problem of historical knowledge in twentieth-century historiography. Dewey answers the question of personhood in history and the role pragmatism plays together in order to further map out a pluralistic view of historiography.

John Dewey never wrote directly about the role of the person in history. He did not have to since his philosophy is concerned with human agency in the world. Dewey, as a classical pragmatist, says the person is the main building block in history. History is an extension of the social role of education while people are the building blocks for history. When Dewey looks for answers to society's greatest problems such as poverty, poor health, negligence, homelessness, and a lack of education, he says we must study people and construct a historical methodology that will shed light on the problems of people. "History is the passing of daily events," he writes. "This is the only history there is."[174] In Dewey's case the problems of man, *human direction*, culminate in history passing day-by-day. The ancient question of understanding events, wars, politics, and structural issues are a product of a bygone era. "Knowledge of history is necessary to know how things came to be," he writes. "The past does not have force."[175] When Dewey writes about history it is dispassionate with formulation for today's problems. On one level

[174] Dewey, "Human Direction," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882*-1953, ed. Boydston, LW 5.363.
[175] Dewey, "Human Direction," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882*-1953, ed. Boydston, LW 5.365.

Dewey is correct. History in America does not have the importance that it did in Greece or Rome during the height of its empires. He means if Americans are still trying to find where individuals belong, how can they develop a unified history with this crisis of conscious continually in the background? This can be summed up by simply knowing that technology took on a more predominant role in the twentieth century. The problem for Dewey to solve is educating the individual in conjunction with the movement of mass technology and science.

In *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, Dewey traces the methodology of history back to Darwin. The reason is possibly because the Cartesian model of self reliance and rational methodology cannot answer the problem of historical method, which might even cause more problems than it solves. Dewey tells us in *Influence* that Darwin's philosophy and methodology are not new but that his method works in history. Dewey explains that "old ways" are not resolved; rather we simply recognize them more as time passes.[176] He questions the ability of people to solve their own problems when he shows the people forget the problems they first try to solve. Problems and questions belong to an age, or generation. As the ages change, so do ideas and a way to get answers. The only way to slow this down would be to stop time. So, Dewey is attempting a reconstruction of the philosophy of history by making it practical. His philosophy appears nihilistic, but it is also a reaction against the Cartesian model of intrinsic personhood. The way that methodology and history are changed is by the rapidity of life. Reading Herodotus will not necessarily help the average person in everyday life. If the historian could apply the principles of Herodotus to life, then reading Herodotus would be extremely valuable.

Darwin was not sure how the person fits into history, but Dewey sees him as viewing history as happening naturally around the individual. History happens to individuals. According

[176] Dewey, *Influence of Darwin on Philosophy,* 19.

to Dewey people need historians for the purpose of knowing the past; however, when human agency is lost, history becomes a burden to people.

Today there is a sense that personhood has been lost since the onset of modernity and its twin, postmodernity. The study of the person is lost in part because Darwin did not categorically find the origin of the person but was more interested in tracing evolutionary progress of species. It is lost because the theological implications of origin are written out of history in large part and partially because what we call a person has a variable definition. Setting the definition is the next step to finding the person in historiography.

Charles Taylor, a philosopher who studies individualism in history, gives us a standing definition of the person. "Philosophers consider that to be a person in the full sense of yourself as an agent, a being which can thus make plans for your life, one who also holds values in virtue of which different such plans seem better or worse, and who is capable of choosing between them."[177] Taylor asserts that people are different from other beings because of their ability to self-interpret. The ability to self-interpret is along the same lines that pragmatist thought is about the person. Dewey wants the person to be able to interpret the age better through self knowledge and understanding. His philosophy of history says as much as he heeds us to be both practical and forgiving of the age.

For Dewey the past and the present coalesce into the person. "Whatever harm or loss a right act may bring to the self in some of its aspects---even extending to destruction of the bodily self, - the inmost moral self finds fulfillment and consequent happiness in the good," Dewey

[177] Charles Taylor, "The Person," in *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* ed. Michael Carrithers and others, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 257.

writes about personhood.[178] Dewey is saying that each person cannot find happiness in linking herself or himself to nothing. For example, where late modernity falls victim to detaching the self and losing the sense of personhood in history, Dewey's modernity finds both a coherent self and reliable narrative for that selfhood in practicality of methods. This is the underlying philosophy of Deweyan pragmatism and its benefit to history.

Looking back over Dewey's influence on historians there are two specifics that should come to mind. The first is that pragmatism helps bridge the gap between personhood and history. And, second, the person in Deweyan pragmatism is also of a communal nature and a connecting agent in history. Pragmatism and Dewey in particular are concerned about people and how they develop over time. Dewey wants people to understand themselves and their surroundings. In *How We Think* he writes that the best thinking is a synthesis between easy and difficult ways of knowing.[179] However, abstract and subject matter that is too difficult leads to alienation and burden. Thinking that is too easy is not good either because it causes people to become soft in the act of knowing. Both types of extremes cause alienation and loss of personhood. His answer is bringing the two together for hope of a better kind of inquiry and in a sense, a better personhood. Michael Lacey agrees, insisting that pragmatism, while leaving traditional roots of inquiry, did not actually leave the traditional philosophical foundations.

Lacey writes that classical pragmatists such as Dewey, James, and Pierce understood behavior and personalities to be normative.[180] Furthermore, Lacey writes is that the original American pragmatists ground their philosophy in communitarian public philosophy and modern

[178] Michael J. Lacey, "Losing and Finding the Modern Self: Neglected Resources from the Golden Age of American Pragmatism," in *Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 43.

[179] Dewey, "How We Think," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, ed. Boydston, MW 10.290.

[180] Lacey, "Losing and Finding the Modern Self," 37.

religious thought. Lacey's says that pragmatists did not throw out religion but used it to ground the person in history.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

That the self is central to Dewey's historiography is obvious by now. One of the main reasons that pragmatism is so relevant today is because people feel alienated from academic history.[181] Dewey rejected much of the Enlightenment for its contribution to people's alienated feeling in history. In attempting to rework philosophy and untie it from the restraints of the Continental school, Dewey sought freedom for people, even freedom from the bonds of history.

Both Dewey and James thought that people in history should be free from tradition, orthodoxy, secularism, religiosity, and other distracting concerns. Both philosophers realize that a part of personhood is lost in modernity. The person is rooted in a history of relationships. If the common man is included in history, it changes the way human agency is thought about in history.[182] Dewey's philosophy is open with potential for further elaboration. What is not lost is the application for the method of history and a recovery of the person.

There are three things on which classical pragmatists rested their foundation for the person according to Murray Murphy. The first is a real world where knowledge can be known. The second is that human agency can be explained in the past and present. The final point is that members of a community can be understood in history because of psychic unity.[183] Murphy writes that this psychic unity is a human want to study, be studied, know the past, and have an appropriate method of understanding the past. Dewey gives us further insight into what this

[181] Lacey, "Losing and Finding the Modern Self," 39.

[182] The influence of New Cultural historians has encouraged the production of new studies of history that focus largely on ignored aspects of human agency. Dewey's methodology is reflected in the studies put forth by many New Cultural historians.

[183] Murray Murphy, "Introduction," in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882*-1953, ed. Boydston, MW 14.IX-XXIII.

means for him. "The moral act is one which sustains a whole complex system of values," he contends; it is "one which keeps vital and progressive the industrial order, science, art, and the state."[184] For Dewey the person is grounded in a system that includes everything from art and government to the individuals understanding and participation in all of this. A better understanding of history is gained when individuals clearly understands their surroundings.

It is relevant to go back and see that Dewey considered written history only a "naïve" way to go about history.[185] Dewey understood that history is not only what is written but how the individual places himself or herself according to history. History from Dewey's point of view may come off as utilitarian, but in its essence Dewey gets to the heart of the matter. The person is the hub of historiography. Floating ideas around a framework of history will not work, as Dewey shows. His idea of historiography is that the person is the center of the universe and displacing the art of personhood, with relativism and ideology, creates displacement of people. Again, we must return to Dewey's writings on education. In *Experience and Education*, he calls the educator a Platonist.[186] What he means by this is that the educator is to facilitate learning. While demonstrating the role of the teacher as both philosopher and agitator, it is interesting to note that he chose the most traditional of all philosophers. As the modern individual is in constant flux, Dewey later writes that the past must not be forgotten and it must be remembered in order to understand the present. This is not cliché because anywhere experience is key; the knowledge of the past must be exerted.[187]

[184] John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1908), 393.
[185] Dewey, "Historical Judgments," in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 169.
[186] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Kappa Delta Pi, 1998), 77.
[187] This belief can be found among most pragmatists, especially in the classical tradition.

Dewey's historical method is not fail safe. It is open to scrutiny. The positive aspects far outweigh the negative. The requirement of putting the individual at the center of history is a major aspect of Dewey's historiography. But the individual cannot be complete without both an understanding of the present and the past as Dewey has shown us. There is a communal aspect to historiography too. When the foundation or tradition of history is removed from knowledge, as Beard and Croce demonstrated, then the individual becomes detached and uncertain. The common thread is that Dewey's version of historical naturalism keeps history in line by preserving the method and updating its character.

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