Pragmatism Today: Perspectives on Cognition, Education and Society

Papers and Research proposals

1. The Paradoxical Attributions of Democratic Will Formation

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Dewey's Democracy and Education represented a turning point in the educational discourse, initiating a radically new regime for educational theory which has deeply influenced the 20th century's educational discourse. But to what degree may a Deweyan outlook help to strengthen democratic will formation of today's youths?

In exploring this question, I take democracy an axiom, which means that the worth of democracy is here seen as self-evidently valuable and true. My assumption is that an idea of ethical-political education cannot be separated from the idea of a vigorous democracy. Moreover, that education within and towards the democratic is a vital pre-condition for building, maintaining and justifying a vigorous democracy. Consequently, the identities and loyalties of citizens are drawn to our attention: The health of a democracy does not only depend on the legitimacy of its political system. A healthy democracy also depends on the citizens' sense of belonging; "their sense of identity and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic and religious identities"; their "abilities to tolerate and work with others that are different from themselves"; their "desire to participate in the political processes in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable"; and "their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibilities in their economic demands and in personal choices which affect their health and the environment" (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 353). So, "instead of limiting the participatory activity of citizens to the function of periodically legitimating the state's exercise of power, their activity […] should be understood as the source of all political decision-making processes" (Honneth, 1998, p. 763). Thus, democratic will formation seems crucial. Such a democratic will formation is the focus of Dewey, when he in his Democracy and Education (1916) uses the term democracy synonymous with education .

Honneth (1998) points to the fact that Dewey's model of democracy is unique since it starts and ends in the social. Moreover, that Dewey's concept of democracy is "not just an alternative but is superior to the approaches predominating today" (Honneth, 1998, p. 765). To Dewey, democracy is reflexive cooperative and social processes played out in peoples' everyday life. This means that democracy exists only as lived experience. Next, that democracy needs to be created, recreated, upheld and justified through an open dialogue and confrontational forms of practices within and between groups.

The value of such confrontations, however, depends on to what degree the interest of the group is shared by all. And to what degree the social group participates in open and free dialogues with other social groups: “The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups” (Dewey, 1916, p. 105). Hence, the worth of democracy is based on and justified through the social:

From the standpoint of the individual, it consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups in which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common (Dewey, 1954, pp. 327-8).

In the same way as education, democracy is to be seen as a social process characterized by participation, communication, shared interests, freedom of speech and unlimited experimentation. The value of these confrontational interactions depend, however, on to what degree the communal interests are shared by all members of the group. And to what degree the social group is free to interact with other groups. Consequently, democracy is social processes of educational and reflexive cooperation in which the child has a vital contribution. Through active participation, the child will adopt community values, and next use these powers to social ends.

To Dewey, a democratic way of life is thus both the mean and the end to realizing the democratic. A prerequisite, however, is that the democratic already exists. At the same time, there should also be an expectation of democracy to come.

Consequently, a democratic way of life presupposes the support of the democratic as an ideal. The ideal concerns our community values, which serves as the normative basis for justifying education within and towards democracy. Next, the ideal concerns our shared images of the ideal society, which constitutes the aim of democracy and of education. Third, the ideal concerns the relationship between the two. However, contrary to what Dewey seems to believe, the concept of an ideal society is not given. Values and ideals earlier regarded as shared and justified by all are continuously being questioned, challenged and renegotiated in societies marked by transnational flows of people, ideas, knowledge and cultures (Beck, 2006; Fine, 2007; Strand, 2010). Chantal Mouffe (2000) thus speaks of a new symbolic order in which the communal values represent an empty space. Therefore, modern, pluralistic and complex societies seem to be characterized both by a radical indecision and ugly processes of marginalization (Benhabib, 2011; Mouffe, 2000).

The interconnection between democracy and education is therefore also about a perspective, a point of view, a normative and diagnostic outlook. It is a way of seeing the world that may justify our moral, political, and social commitments. When this normative and diagnostic outlook presupposes what it wants to create, the perspective makes us realize that which is absent. The formation of a democratic will thus seems to be based on the paradox that the absence of democracy is its very prerequisite.

So again, to what degree may educational policies and practices help to strengthen democratic will formation of the next generation? And what may be the current relevance of John Dewey’s political philosophy of education?

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2. The Hand-made Mind: Perception, Intelligence, and Symbolism from the Perspective of Haptic Philosophy

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Abstract: The main goal of the paper will be to present and critically examine the cognitive importance of the human hand in the process of perception as well as in the process of development of characteristically human forms of intelligence. This critical examination will be carried out mainly (but not exclusively) from the perspective of the philosophy of George H. Mead – a pragmatist thinker, whose importance for the so-called embodied cognitive science has been gaining a great momentum in the recent years (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia 2008; Franks 2010, Kilpinen 2013; Madzia 2013, 2015, etc.). Mead was the first pragmatist philosopher (perhaps with James, who, however, didn't go as deep as Mead in this respect) to have underlined the crucial importance of the physiological structure of the human hand for specifically human forms of i) perception of physical objects, ii) specifically human forms of intelligence, which in the end result enable iii) specifically human forms of reflective thinking which occurs by means of what Mead called 'significant symbols'.

In Mead's opinion, tactual or haptic perception is essential to our conception of physical objects. He presents a developmental argument, according to which the visual or distance experience, is evolutionarily derivative of the so-called contact experience. Visual experience, just like the haptic one, are two different modes of skillful, bodily exploration of the world. In the recent years, the philosopher of cognitive science Alva Noë came up with a similar argument stating that "vision is touch-like" (2004). Vision, just like touch, is an active, embodied, and environmentally situated action aimed at better adjustment of the organism to its environmental milieu. According to Mead, we experience the external world the way we do only because the external world resists our bodily efforts (as the paper will note, this argument originally comes from Wilhelm Dilthey with whom Mead collaborated during his studies in Germany). We experience the physical thing thanks to our own effort, which exists only over against the inertia or the force offered by the physical thing. The sense of touch gives us, therefore, at the same time a specific sense of the objective existence of the external reality (a point made recently by Matthew Ratcliffe [2013]).

From among the most basic cognitive categories, the form of our embodiment determines, for instance, also that of 'causality'. We understand the category of causality only because we understand the sequence of environmental changes brought about by imposing our physical strength on resisting worldly objects (see also Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Mead, therefore, refuses the intellectualist arguments of philosophers like Hume, according to whom causality is, in the end result, nothing but 'a sequence of images'. For Mead, on the contrary, the categories like 'causality' is implicitly understood, so to say, 'by our bodies.' According to him, the haptic categories like 'physical object', 'causality', etc. (which, interestingly, are also the fundamental categories of science) give origin to specifically human forms of intelligence the presentation of which the paper will systematically bind with Mead's anthropological theory of the origins of symbolic interaction. Ultimately, the paper will show how up-to-date and inspirational Mead's 'haptic philosophy' can be for contemporary research in 'embodied cognitive science'.

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3. Dewey on Race, Colonialism, and Education

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While John Dewey rarely discussed race in his professional publications, his version of pragmatism has been a significant resource for contemporary philosophers working critically on race and racial justice (see, e.g., Glaude 2007; Lawson and Koch 2004; MacMullan 2009; Pappas 2001; Sullivan 2006). His pragmatist philosophy also has been problematic for critical philosophy of race, however. Cornel West (1993) has charged that Dewey's pragmatism lacks an adequate sense of the tragic and thus is inadequate for grappling with racism and white supremacy. In addition, when Dewey explicitly discusses race, he tends to reductively collapse it into either class concerns or naively equate it with a form of xenophobia that increased familiarity between people will easily dispel (Sullivan 2004).
One of the most significant criticisms of Dewey with regard to race focuses on his pre-1916 work on education, including Dewey's famous laboratory schools for children. As Thomas Fallace (2010)

persuasively argues, Dewey's philosophy of education operates with a linear historicism and genetic psychology that privilege white people by explaining child development as the development from savagery to civilization. For Dewey, white children might be like so-called savages, but they are able to develop into civilized adults, unlike non-white people who are stuck in childlike savagery. Dewey's alignment of child development with the development of the (white) race resulted in both the treatment of African Americans and Native Americans as childlike races who were left behind in humanity's evolution toward Western civilization and the need to forcibly assimilate allegedly socially deficient immigrants, such as the Polish, who were seen as resistant to, but salvageable by America's educational system.

References to savages in Dewey's Democracy and Education (1916) are well known. Rather than focus on them in this paper, I will examine the next significant phase of Dewey's publications, in which Dewey became a truly public philosopher writing on World War I. My argument will be that the ethnocentrism and white privilege that characterizes Dewey's pre-1916 philosophy of education continues in his post-1916 work analyzing the war. As I will demonstrate, Dewey's assessment of WWI is saturated with white colonial privilege, but this privilege can be difficult to detect because it generally is hidden and unspoken in Dewey's WWI essays (and perhaps unrealized by Dewey himself). I will not make any claims about Dewey's conscious intentions when writing about the war. My interest instead lies in what we can learn about Dewey's philosophy just after the publication of Democracy and Education, a period which begins Dewey's gradual shift to the cultural pluralism that characterizes his later work. This shift had not yet taken place in 1918-1919, however. His approach to WWI is shaped by the same perspective of white superiority found in his educational work. This does not mean that Dewey's pragmatism cannot be a useful resource for contemporary philosophers and educators, but we must read it with an eye for Dewey's complicity with the white colonialist domination of his time so that we do not replicate it in our own.

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4. Education as Evolutionary Growth: Democracy, Pragmatism, and Autopoiesis

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"Since in reality there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education." –John Dewey (1916, p. 56.)
Perhaps because John Dewey wrote so much about democracy—indeed, one of his most influential books is entitled Democracy and Education—many people consider him to be "the philosopher of Democracy" (Popp 2007, 84). Jerome Popp argues, however, that this misses the Darwinian background to all of Dewey's thought. Indeed, for Dewey, the only non-relative value was growth, which he understood in the context of evolution. Moreover, though Dewey valued democracy, he valued it only instrumentally, relative to the value of growth. Since the discovery of the double helix in the middle of the last century, there has been a tendency among many to think about evolution primarily in terms of genes (Dawkins 1976). Dewey, it should be noted, was himself was skeptical of gene-centric biology (Dewey and Bentley, 1949, pp. 118-119).

Gene-centrism has helped to produce some radically anti-democratic approaches to education as we see, for example, in the writings of Peter Sloterdijk (1999). Moreover, this gene-centrism in evolutionary biology makes the interpretation of Dewey's thought in terms of biological evolution seem strange. It need not insofar as there is an alternative approach to evolution that can be found in the work of Humberto Maturana and Francesco Varela (1998) in biology and cognition. This approach is, I argue, very helpful in interpreting and relating Dewey's views on evolution to his approach to education. When individuals and communities are understood as autopoietic entities—that is, entities that create themselves out of materials that they produce and grow autonomously within active boundaries that they create between themselves and their environments—it becomes easier to see how growth can be a positive value for Dewey, one that is capable of grounding all other values.
Autopoietic theory, with its concepts of autopoiesis, operational closure, and systemic coupling provides concepts that are lacking in the organism-environment evolutionary paradigm that Dewey inherited

from Spencer (Pearce 2014). Specifically, for example, autopoietic theory provides an account in which an individual can be at the same time autonomous and in a relation of dependency with its environment. Moreover, thinking about evolution and education together by means of autopoietic theory importantly provides an alternative to models of schooling that amount to merely reproducing the community in the individual (Cunningham, 2014) and, in an extreme case of Sloterdijk, reduces the problem of social reproduction to one of "breeding". Such an approach becomes especially important in a globalized world where the fundamental task is to deal with complexity and in which responses to such complexity all too often fall back upon various anti-democratic approaches to politics and living.

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5. Recipes for Experience: Democracy, Education, Art and the Brain

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Recipes for Experience: Democracy, Education, Art, and the Brain

John Dewey's conception of experimental inquiry can be usefully described as a quantitative science for qualitative amelioration. The cash value of any science is the qualitative differences it makes in lived experience – qualitative changes achieved through material means, through means open to controlled and quantitative investigation. As Dewey noted, scientific theories and explanations are recipes. I elaborate on this view first by drawing on the organism-environment transactional view of experience developed in neuropragmatism, and, secondly, in order to orient research in the neuroscience and anthropology of consciousness toward education for democracy as a way of life. Such an orientation is needed given the growing understanding of the brain's plasticity, that it is, in a sense, a work of art with a history and always in the making.

My main goal is to initiate the conversation about developing the science and the art required for cultivating democratic life – for education for creativity. Central to this goal is a practical reimagining of the relationship between science and art in general, and especially between STEM fields and the humanities. This reimagining is a demand for creative reconstruction of contemporary brain science in light of recent studies showing the fruitfulness of artistic and humanistic study for scientific inquiry. Such reconstruction, however, falls short if its only warrant is its instrumental value for science. Rather, the greater value in artistic and humanistic study comes from the demand that science puts on our imaginations, most especially for how we imagine living better and more meaningful lives in light of what we have learned through experimental inquiry, scientific and artistic alike.

In recognizing the product of scientific inquiry to be a recipe for producing specific experiences, we not only evade old fashioned concerns about the relationship between facts and values but we also gain new possibilities for political culture. To reimagine our way of life in a critical light of the results of the neurosciences, to follow Catherine Malabou, is to engage in a form of neurophilosophy as cultural politics, to borrow from Richard Rorty.

New forms of freedom and of democratic life not only become imaginable in light of the new understanding of the brain as a plastic work of art ever in the making, never finished, always adapting; these forms of freedom and life also become achievable from the reconstruction of science and art as Dewey proposed. Such reconstruction, however, must reject the Cartesianism creeping into much neuroscience, especially the science of consciousness. We must develop new ways of speaking about ourselves that adamantly rejects the atomism and individualism at work in politics and neuroscience. Rather, we need to imagine speaking of consciousness and persons as achievements of biocultural relationships.

In proposing a recipe for conscious activity that is not strictly neural but emphatically cultural – for the brain is, if anything is, the cultural organ – a neuroscience and anthropology of consciousness becomes a means for generating the cultural politics necessary for creative democracy today.

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6. Dewey Meets Narrative Theory in a Literature and Medicine Class

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Treating literature as a means to an end is something that literary scholars tend to abhor. The idea of art for art's sake is assumed to safeguard literature against the crass utilitarian thinking characterizing

capitalism (Shusterman 1992). While John Dewey was sensitive to the ills of industrial capitalism, he accepted neither the idea of art for art's sake nor the rigid distinction between means and ends.

Aesthetic experiences can and should occur in everyday life as well as in the museum and theater, and the fact that an object has use value in no way prevents us from enjoying it as an end. Teaching literature to medical students involves adopting an instrumental attitude toward fictional texts. The point of narrative medicine, according to its foremost theorist and practitioner Rita Charon (2006), is to hone doctors' skills of listening, absorbing and responding to patients' stories, which should contribute to better care. One of the most oft-cited goals of literature classes is improving the students' capacity for empathy. While cognitive narratologists suggest that reading fiction in itself constitutes an exercise in empathy, they overlook the rich educational context in which our reading of literature takes place. To investigate the claims of literature's social goods along Dewey's lines, we need to attend to the practices in which fictional texts are embedded.

I have designed and taught an elective course for medical students in which they read classic short stories and analyze them with the help of narrative theory, including folk psychology (mind reading) and unreliable narration. By reading, analyzing, discussing and writing fiction, the students gain a rich and concrete understanding of point of view, or other minds; that is, cognitive empathy. In this paper, I use Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience presented in Art as Experience (1934) to explain and justify the pedagogical strategies adopted in the course. I will address the following issues:

1. The structure of a literary text reflects the emotionally tinged experience of the author. The reader's emotional reaction to it, which is often disregarded or disallowed in literature classes, is not in fact subjective and private, for it is bound to the objective material of the text. Emotions therefore contribute to better understanding of textual structures, and they are shared and communal.

2. Dewey's description of an aesthetic experience also describes a learning experience. The structure of literary narratives, especially short stories, is such that it leads to reflection and learning. We might therefore speak of narrative learning.

3. In Dewey's pragmatism, action rather than knowledge is primary. The idea is for the students to work with point of view hands-on in various contexts instead of just accruing information about it. In addition to legitimating a course that insists on the value of individual aesthetic experience and the instrumental value of literature to doctors, Dewey's thinking guides the execution.

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7. Advice in Validation of Prior Learning and Anticipation Of Experience

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This paper focuses on the empirical and conceptual results of a study on adult education relating to information and advisory practices in the context of validation of prior learning (VPL). The spread of VPL practices in Europe has engendered a number of consultation services, whereby VPL advisers offer information and advice sessions to those wishing to undergo a VPL procedure (e.g. Cedefop, 2009). But the VPL is therefore a blend of diverging, sometimes contradictory, and largely unknown concepts. For the candidates, this procedure is often associated with much confusion or uncertainty (e.g. Duvekot, Schuur & Paulusse, 2005). VPL advisers must provide up-to-date, clear information on the features of VPL. Above all, they act in an important interpreting and mediating capacity, helping candidates to better understand and use this information. This article focuses on this activity of interpretation and mediation, especially sets out to analyse the use of metaphors as a means of clarifying the experience to candidates, who perceive VPL as unpredictable.

The theoretical framework is the "course-of-action" approach with articulates Peirce's semiotics with Varela's theory of enaction, and the assumption of the prereflexive consciousness (Durand, 2011; Theureau, 2003). This approach considers activity as a fundamental expression of the existence and identity of every living organism, one specifies the notion of activity as representing a dynamic whole, simultaneously cognitive and semiotic, in which individuals and the environment are codetermined and coevolve while retaining their reciprocal autonomy (Maturana & Varela, 1987; Peirce, 1931-1958; Theureau, 2003). According to this perspective experience is characterised by a continuous interpretation of that which exists, including the whole dynamic of meaning stemming from the interaction between the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness described by Peirce (1931-1958), and, also, by a particular modality of consciousness: a "pre-reflexive consciousness" that corresponds to the familiarity of individuals with their own activities (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2010; Theureau, 2003).

The study was conducted within a Swiss validation service, taking into account 37 consulting sessions that were individually managed by four VPL advisers. The results revealed a prevalent use of metaphors by VPL advisers in their explanations to candidates. The efforts of VPL advisers to facilitate comprehension through metaphor are especially important as far as these issues are concerned. They represent spontaneous attempts to overcome the difficulties of meaning among candidates, and point to a specific relationship of signification between metaphors and anticipation of the unknown (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Peirce, 1877-1878, 1931-1958; Theureau, 2003).

The paper present: a) a brief description of the conceptual framework; b) a contextualisation of the research field; c) excerpts of the activity of four VPL advisers who used various metaphors to help VPL candidates to conceptualise this type of experience and its implications; d) a discussion of the implications of using metaphors in information and advisory practices, in the light of a conceptual exploration of the links between modes of meaning of the unknown.

Key words: Peirce semiotics, enaction, advising, validation of prior learning, metaphors.

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8. Beyond Getting It Right: Cognitive Diversity, Learning, and Creativity

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Many social and virtue epistemological treatments of education maintain a "vertistic" or truth-oriented approach to the aim of education. However, it has been argued that a thoroughgoing veritistic approach is undermined by experimental evidence from psychological studies particularly on the diversity adduced in human cognitive practice (Stich 1990/2009; Olin and Doris 2013). These empirical findings motivate moves towards a less veritistic and a more pragmatic account of cognitive evaluation.

Moreover, I claim that a veritistic approach invites an unwelcome transmission model of pedagogy by way of imparting knowledge through testimonial authority as sufficient for learning. While knowledge by testimony seems at face value the type of learning students undergo, it has been argued that learning deals less with imparting true beliefs via testimony and more with the acquisition of concepts and cognitive resources in a particular domain of inquiry (Bakhurst 2011/2013). Unlike imparting testimonial knowledge where mere telling (through propositions and inferential relations) is enough, the latter involves more of a showing by example and imparting of skills on how to proceed which offers a more natural account of learning. Together, I argue that these views on cognitive diversity and learning move us away from a veritistic view of pedagogy and towards what I call a pragmatic-constructivist view which aims to foster cognitive growth in student learners less in terms of allowing them to attain true beliefs (though of course this is still valued) but more in terms of being able to deploy and navigate concepts and cognitive resources well and thus become skilled inquirers. I further argue that this account benefits in its ability to mediate the pedagogical tensions between epistemic dependence and autonomy as well as its seamless integration and promotion of creativity in educational practice due to its focus on the more prospective character of inquiry countenanced in more pragmatic accounts of cognition.

9. Dewey on 21st Century Education

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Lagemann (1989) has famously said that we can only understand the history of education in the United States during the 20th century if we realize that Thorndike won and Dewey lost. In other words administrative progressivism won over pedagogical progressivism, and politicians and policy makers chose in favour of governance, accountability and standardized testing (Labaree, 2005). Critics such as Gibboney (2006) have even suggested that there is a direct line between Thorndike's view of education and the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act (U. S. Department of Education, 2001) in 2002. If this is true the victory of administrative progressivism extends not only into the 21st century, but also far beyond the borders of the United States since the No Child Left Behind Act has inspired school reforms in many other countries such as e.g. England and Denmark. There are indications, however, that the No Child Left Behind Act has not had the expected effect on neither school efficiency nor learning outcome (see e.g., Hursh, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). This, of course, raises the question of whether administrative progressivism is the right approach to the challenges that face education systems all around the world in the new global economy of the 21st century.

In this paper, I will try to answer this question by revisiting Dewey's Democracy and Education (Dewey, 1916) in order to investigate whether Dewey's classic work can provide us with a viable contemporary alternative to administrative progressivism. Obviously, such an alternative will have to meet the actual requirements of the 21st century, and the investigation, therefore, begins with a discussion of, among others, Dede (1992) and Kereluik et al. (2013) and their understanding of concepts such as 21st century knowledge, 21st century learning and teaching and 21st century education.

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10. Dewey's Democracy and Education: Merging Sciences, Arts and Greek Concepts of Experience

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In his 1916 Democracy and Education, Dewey observed that in its early stages, Modern era science "prophesied a restoration of the intimate connection of nature and humanity." However, this hope has not been fulfilled. A "dualism between man and nature is reflected in the division of studies between the naturalistic and the humanistic with a tendency to reduce the latter to the literary records of the past"—a dualism that Dewey interestingly claimed was not characteristic of Greek thought. In education this has translated into a tendency "to treat the sciences as a separate body of studies, consisting of technical information regarding the physical world, and to reserve the older literary studies as distinctively humanistic."

In this paper, I follow Dewey's efforts to dissolve this dualism, and I suggest that in the process he promoted an educational approach that would merge sciences, arts and Greek concepts of experience—incidentally also a root of his own cutting edge account of experience. I accordingly focus especially on Chapter 17 in which Dewey examined the history and importance of science; Chapter 18 in which he argued that "[l]iterature and the fine arts are of peculiar value" in education "because they represent appreciation at its best" and asserted that "every subject at some phase of its development should possess … an aesthetic quality"; and Chapter 19 in which he lamented the Modern identification of experience with "passive reception of isolated 'sensations'," and advocated an older Greek concept, also found in his philosophy, whereby experience is conceived as "what men do and suffer in particular and changing situations of life."

My general aim is to ponder Dewey's efforts, in Democracy and Education and other works, to understand science in terms of both the practical and fine arts; and how his writings on art and science suggest that Plato and Aristotle correctly identified conditions under which things become visible to cognition, even while not satisfactorily answering how these conditions can be met. Since Dewey understood aesthetic experience as a dramatic process, I also discuss how experience—understood in both the Greek and Dewey's sense of the term—is imbued with narrative and therefore temporal structure, and the importance of this to understanding and learning. Such structure helps bring about what Dewey called "an experience," which was his term for aesthetic experience.

Despite being emphatically temporal—traditionally an objection—this narrative form of experience also satisfies criteria for intelligible appearance or eidos, which in nonphilosophical ancient contexts suggestively meant the "visible form" or "look" of something, and in philosophical discourses, "truth" or "reality." Intelligibility is linked to learning, and following this admittedly abstract account, I will explore concrete examples to better grasp the role of what Dewey understood to be aesthetic experience in learning and education.

11. Doing the right thing

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In recent years the social sciences have taken a turn toward practice (Schatzki et al. 2001). Practice theoreticians like Andreas Reckwitz (2002) have argued that the paradigms of both Homo Economicus and Homo Sociologicus are inadequate for understanding human activity. Instead our accounts of human activity should be construed along the paradigm of Homo Practicus. Likewise, Joseph Rouse (2007) has argued that we need to re-thing the conception of normativity in human conduct: human conduct should neither be conceived as governed by (mental) rules, nor by (causal) regularities – such as habits, traditions or tacit knowledge. Instead, we should understand human activity in terms of normative practices that are constituted by the mutual accountability of the performances of actors. This line of argument has many parallels with ideas vested in pragmatism; e.g., Robert Brandom's (1994) central claim that language use should be understood as practices of 'deontic scorekeeping'.

But whereas pragmatism has a long tradition for reflecting on how the normativity inherent in human activity has implications for ethical theory, only few practice theoreticians have ventured into theorizing ethics. Prominent exception, though, are Alasdair MacIntyre's revitalization of Aristotelian virtue ethics (1981), Charles Taylor's ethics of authenticity (1991) and Annemarie Mol's praxeological 'logic of care' (2006). But all of these approaches, I will argue, construe their central ethical claims in unfavorable ways. MacIntyre's grounding of moral virtues in ideas about practice, the narrative order of people's lives, and moral tradition brings his position close to the the paradigm that construe human activity as Home Sociologicus – governed by the norms of the tradition. Taylor's attempt to re-concur the concept of authenticity from modernity leads him to construe authenticity in terms of inter-subjective articulacy of goods in communities of language users. This attempt, however, has the disadvantage of construing ethics as a discursive affair, and omits to pay tribute to agents' biological and material reality. Mol, on the other hand, acknowledges the role of materiality, but fails to advance ethics from a purely descriptive level to a normative level.

In this paper I will argue that in order to advance the turn to practice in the social sciences scholars might find inspiration from John Dewey's reflections on ethics (e.g. 2006). Dewey's pragmatic ethics succeeds in developing a normative ethics that is attentive to agents' practical construal of normative activity, yet does not (entirely) reduce the values that guides human normativity to a communal sphere. Dewey's refusal to accept a split between nature (materiality) and society (our ethical projects) makes his position attractive for practice theoreticians who aspire to theorize human activity as a fundamentally practical activity – both a normative and a material activity.

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12. Pragmatism as applied philosophy

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John Dewey's philosophy is radical on at least two levels: it is radical in its motivation to utilize philosophy for social and educational reform and it is radical in its transformation of basic concepts of philosophy. The latter transformation not only results in a different scope of topics that are taken up by philosophy, also the very nature of philosophy changes. Dewey has outlined the challenges and tasks of this different understanding of philosophy in several of his works, most prominently in "Reconstruction in philosophy". In the following paper the idea of Dewey that philosophy should make use of what he called the denotative method and thus turns into a real empirical philosophy shall be used in order to conceptualize an approach to applied philosophy that goes beyond the mainstream understanding of applied philosophy as a philosophical sub- discipline that investigates into so-called real life problems.

The transformation of philosophy Dewey recommends would not only include to develop knowledge in practical contexts, but would also insist upon to apply knowledge in practical contexts. The result of this operation is a learning process, a process that traditional philosophy, according to Dewey, has dismissed: "To 'learn from experience' is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction--discovery of the connection of things." (Dewey, Democracy and Education, ch. 11) For Dewey, learning is an open and experimental process that unfolds between the individual and the environment. The core principle of this process is experience, and experience is always situated within practices. Experience unfolds as an activity between an organism and the environment, it is not merely a form of perception or an epistemological stance towards the objective world. In this paper the focus lies on the second part of the process of learning and knowledge acquisition: how could philosophy apply knowledge in practical situations?

A look at the natural sciences could help to understand this point. From Dewey's point of view, the natural sciences are not successful because they achieve true representations of the natural world; as a matter of fact, Dewey was very critical about the positivist understanding of the natural sciences. The success of the natural sciences lies in their experimental use of experience in order "to have a new empirical situation in which objects are differently related to each other, and such that the consequences of directed operations have the property of being known" (Dewey, Quest for Certainty, p. 70). However, the blind application of the scientific method as such is not Dewey's goal. In this paper I shall argue that a reflected, direct and active integration of experimental philosophy into the practices of society, could be one of the results of Dewey's reconstruction in philosophy and path the way for a truly pragmatic applied philosophy.

Research proposals

1. "What is an organization that it may learn?" A pragmatist gaze upon organizational learning

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The above question was asked by two of the classical writers within the field of organizational learning, Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (1978: 8) as early as 1978 and connotes the need to answer the questions of how organizations may be understood as 'subjects of learning', and how we can understand organizations as 'something to be learned'. The field of organizational learning may briefly be described as a field of practice and research concerned with how organisations manage knowledge to allow them to adapt, innovate and survive in the market (see e.g. Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2011).

There is a long tradition of a pragmatist philosophical inspiration within the field of organizational learning (Brandi & Elkjaer, 2013; Elkjaer, 2003, 2004). This inspiration goes back to the work of Herbert Simon (1947) who in his critique of the use of rational choice models within theories on decision-making in enterprises was influenced by Dewey's contributions to psychology and human conduct and particular his notion of inquiry (see also Cohen, 2007a; Cohen, 2007b; Kerr, 2007; Langley, Mintzberg, Pitcher, Posada, & Saint-Macary, 1995). This primarily cognitive approach to inquiry is also a focal point in the works by Argyris and Schön although they base their work on action theory and action science, which might signal more closeness to Dewey's pragmatism than is the case (Argyris, 1983; Argyris & Schön, 1996).

Dewey's notion of inquiry cannot be limited to an issue of cognition dealing solely with knowledge because it rests upon an ontological notion of experience (living before knowing, and knowing as just one way of experiencing) (Dewey, 1916 [1980], 1938 [1986]; Dewey & Bentley, 1949 [1991]). Rather, Dewey's notion of inquiry rests upon interplay between habits, emotion, and intelligence (cognition), and action is based upon an equal relationship between the three. This relationship in Dewey's notion of inquiry is within organization studies captured in Farjoun et al' (2015) 'triadic model of human action', which is made up by relations between habits as learned behavior, emotions highlighting curiosity as well as doubt, and deliberation as an act of imagination. The model is used to argue in favor of transcending problems with agency and structure and to provide a model for social action within organization studies (see also Kelemen & Rumens, 2013 for a volume on pragmatism and organization studies).

This paper is situated in the current renewed interest in pragmatism within organization studies and organizational learning. To illustrate how pragmatist philosophy may help address a contemporary problem of organizational learning and knowing, universities as 'organizations for learning' and as 'something to be learned' will be illuminated in the paper. I particularly zoom in on an organizational practice, which both serves the marketization of the university and the well-being of university staff as a

whole, the HR department (van den Brink, Fruytier, & Thunnissen, 2013). In the paper, I re-visit the university inspired by pragmatist sociology as 'people doing things together' (Becker, 1986; Hughes, 2015), and how the same 'things' may be coined in different ways creating passions (Dey & Steyaert, 2007; Gherardi, Nicolini, & Strati, 2007) and tensions (Brandi & Elkjaer, 2013; Elkjaer, 2005; Elkjaer & Huysman, 2008) and as such matter for organizational learning.

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2. Three Modes of Inquiry in Design-Pedagogy

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Our aim was to investigate, through the concept of inquiry, how Deweyan pragmatism has influenced design-thinking, specifically in relation to design practice and design-pedagogy. We sought to demonstrate the value of the concept of inquiry when teaching design as well as when working with design practices. However, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of inquiry strategies. The point of departure is Dewey's concept of inquiry. For Dewey, the concept of inquiry is central as it exemplifies the epistemological and ontological understanding of pragmatism. Dewey maintains that 'Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole' (Dewey, 1938, p. 108). Dewey proposes that the doing as well as the directed transformation should be at the centre of attention in understanding how we think and learn through reflection on our practices.

Through this lens, we compared three design perspectives or approaches to the concept of inquiry, as applied by Schön (1983), DiSalvo (2009) and Dalsgaard (2014), and we discussed their implications for design practice. Furthermore, we operationalised the three perspectives through our own teaching for three consecutive years. This formed the basis of our analysis of their consequences for design practices among students. The empirical data consists of observations of students' design practices, photos of products and processes as well as supervision during a course worth ten ECTS points. The course: '[a design course]', is part of the bachelor of education in xxx at xxx. There are approximately 75 students per year group. We thus had approximately 225 students undertaking the course while its pragmatic approach was being refined.

Through the analysis, the paper presents our contribution to a strengthened pragmatism in the design-pedagogy of today by developing three modes of inquiry: 1) an inquiry directed towards the designer's own practice (inspired by Schön, 1983); 2) an inquiry directed towards the user's practices and

experiences (inspired by Dalsgaard, 2014) and 3) an inquiry directed towards an issue or phenomenon investigated through the design (inspired by DiSalvo, 2009). These three modes of inquiry have different purposes and criteria for success and suggest different practices for doing. Thus, their impact and consequences diverge.

These modes of inquiry have different implications for organising and performing design-pedagogy. Applying them affect planning in relation to which design cases to work with; how external partners (the owners of the design issues) can be involved and how the design solutions can be implemented. Furthermore, pedagogical awareness of the modes of inquiry affects how feedback is given to students on their work and processes and how their design decisions, reports and products are assessed. Our vision is to explore how doing and designing as a mode of learning and knowing can constructively inform the future of university pedagogic practices.

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3. The Epistemological Potential of the Pathological

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Abstract: Pragmatism entails the epistemological problem of thinking from the inside and out. Philosophical endeavours of making the conditions of knowledge explicit must therefore, according to Georges Canguilhem, 'know to recognize its limits and to incorporate the conditions of its practice'. This is the recurrent problem of pragmatism. Methodological strategies for countering this problem are historical analyses (focusing for example on the differences between previous and current institutional practices and styles of thought), or on conceptual differences between various contemporary forms of practice (various professions, organizational cultures etc.). Another approach is to take advantage of extreme or unusual cases, thereby utilizing their abnormality to highlight the features of culture that is normally taken for granted, seen but unnoticed. This will be done by examining two cases: The first case is an investigation of contemporary lifestyle norms through the study of health educational practices targeting patients with a lifestyle disease. The other concerns the study of the concept of attention by focussing on educational practices intended to rectify inattentional behaviours in pupils. The purpose of this paper is therefore to investigate the epistemological potential of the pathological.

4. Imitation, Education and Pragmatism – a contemporary view

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I his 2008 book Imitation and Education from 2008 Bryan Warnick argues that imitation and role modelling are crucial for establishing and structuring cooperative, educational communities. Imitation creates common structures of social meaning and provides an important means of both establishing and (re)interpreting communal membership and identity. This, Warnick explicitly claims, is directly relevant for Dewey's views on education and democracy as presented in Democracy and Education (Dewey 1916/2004). Here Dewey famously argues for an intimate, perhaps even necessary, relation between education and democracy. On Dewey's account education is a process of being initiated into a democratic way of life, while democracy can (and should) be viewed as an educational practice.

Education and democracy thus represent two interrelated and mutually dependent aspects of one and the same process: the progressive development of human communities and human capacities.

Warnick's suggestions concerning the educational and social importance of imitation are interesting, but they also raise a number of questions. Most importantly the idea that imitation and role modelling serve important educational and democratic ends seems to directly contradict Dewey's own explicit views. In both Democracy and Education and How We Think Dewey thus critically discusses and rejects this very idea (see e.g. Dewey 1916/2004, ch. 3; Dewey 1910, ch 12).

In my talk I present Warnick's account of imitation, explain how this account is based on a normative conception of exemplarity, and argue that imitation and exemplarity both can and should play an important role within a broadly Deweyan approach to education and democracy. More precisely I will argue Dewey's understanding of imitation is needlessly restrictive and should be replaced by a broader and more flexible account.

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5. Teachers' Reflections on Role Modelling and Pragmatism

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The ancient rhetorician and teacher Isocrates placed language and rhetorical education as central to civic life. His teaching highlights training the rhetor in spe to acknowledge particular circumstances and situations (kairos) and debating both sides (dissoi logoi) in order to foster political wisdom and address practical problems (Walzer). Isocrates' main pedagogical principle is imitation, that is the study of exemplary rhetorical texts, typically written by Isocrates himself, hereby stressing the teacher as a role model not only in relation to character formation but also in relation to shaping rhetorical craft (techne) (Against the Sophist and Antidosis).

In this presentation I build on recent years of scholarship investigating the relationship between the rhetorical tradition and the works of Dewey (Trained Capacities). Specifically, I will focus on the correlations and differences between Isocrates' and Dewey's notion of the particular and role modelling and see how experiences of mother-tongue teachers in Danish lower secondary school can inform our perspective and practice on this matter. Thus, I analyse written reflections of mother-tongue teachers on their individual experiences with acknowledging particular circumstances and debating both sides in relation to exemplary texts and role modelling. The analysis will reveal the teachers' experience with, for instance, accentuating importing features, paying attention to context, including similarities and differences (Warnick p. 38-43), and debating underlying values and possible actions.

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6. Social Engineering in Subject Matter Didactics

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Edward L. Thorndike once proposed an education science so powerful that it alone could determine the content, method and mode of evaluation in pedagogical practice (Thorndike 1906; Thorndike 1918).

Contemporary dictums such as "know thy impact" or "what works" has seemingly created a modern parallel to Thorndike's vison, with some researchers believing that there should be a direct link between scientific and intellectual progress and an increase in the quality of pedagogical practice (e.g. Gurung & Schwartz 2009; Hattie 2012). However, John Dewey points out that because science is derived from intellectual thinking and pedagogical practice is derived from pre-scientific habits, researchers cannot simply expect science to influence practice directly (Dewey 2009). Instead Dewey proposes an engineering science of education that combines both the epistemic methods of education science and the non-epistemic values of pedagogical practice in order to create a significant and progressive mode of inquiry (Dewey 1929; Dewey 2009).

The idea of a science that is closely intertwined with practice seems to correlate with the transdisciplinarity and ecology of many mode 2 research methods (e.g. Design-Based Research) that are becoming increasingly popular in Danish education research (DAMVAD 2014). However, some mode 2 research projects are primarily generating large-scale quantitative data (e.g. Berge & Skar 2015) that seems to support Thorndike's vision of a standardized and effective mass education. Consequently, Dewey's concept of social engineering seems to offer an alternative approach by primarily viewing scientific knowledge as a functional means for teachers to improve their own teaching. The question is what implications an engineering science will have on the role and status of the science of subject matter didactics.

This paper will examine the potential of social engineering as a metaphor for the science of subject matter didactics by analyzing the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of Dewey's concept of social engineering (Dewey 1929; Dewey 2009). The analysis also targets Design-Based Research (Barab & Squire 2004; The Design-Based Research Collective 2003; Bell 2004) for the purpose of discussing the methodological implications of an engineering science of subject matter didactics. Finally, the paper discusses whether the concept of social engineering and pragmatism in general narrows or widens the notion of subject matter didactics as a science.

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7. A practice based approach to learning environments in a digitally connected world

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New learning settings are emerging, old learning settings are being transformed and the connection between different learning settings are reshaped in new ways due to the increasing use of digital technology. These developments has triggered an interest in how people are learning in other settings than the ones usually in focus such as work places and educational institutions.

Especially the increasing use of online learning and blended learning has furthered this renewed interest in learning settings; learning at home (Furlong & Davies, 2012; Plowman, 2016); learning on the move

(Hwang & Shih, 2015; Seta, Kukulska-Hulme, & Arrigo, 2014); learning virtually (Ainley & Armatas, 2006; Barbour & Hill, 2011) and in more unusual settings such as hospitals (Hopkins, Wadley, Vetere, Fong, & Green, 2014).
Another important change triggered by these developments seems to be the increasing emphasis on the individualistic aspects of learning environments reflected in the focus on student centered learning environments (Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven, & Dochy, 2010) or personalized learning environment (Archee, 2012) which has prompted some educational researchers envisioning the complete elimination of formal educational institutions as we know them today.

The debate between different theoretical approaches on how to investigate or even use the term learning environments has a long history in educational research (Jonassen & Land, 2012). The use of digital technologies are rapidly reshaping learning environments in a number of ways stirring up the debate yet again (Engeström, 2009). The concept of learning is often associated with specific learning environments in particular educational environments learning theory however also tells us that learning is happening in all sorts of environments and across contexts. This however begs the question of how to conceptualize and theorize both learning as well environment. However, it also triggers questions such as how are learning activities connected across environments?, In what way does this connection change when digital technologies are introduced?

The study presents three different practice based approaches which are used to analyze changes in students learning environments triggered by the use of digital information technology for blended learning in a vocational school setting. The three approaches are Phenomenology of practice (Van Manen, 2007, 2014), Critical psychology (Schraube & Højholt, 2015) and Pragmatism (Dewey, 1929). There is a common normative thread running through the three approaches emphasizing that research on practice should be for practice (Baert, 2011; Suorsa, 2015; Van Manen, 2014).

Thus the aim of the paper is twofold; first to shed light on the relevance of the concept of “learning environments” for interpreting students practical experiences; secondly to investigate if practice based approaches provide/offer a better conceptual/theoretical option for interpreting the observed changes. Based on a qualitative case study of blended learning at a vocational education and training(VET) school in Denmark insight into the creation and development of new learning environments are being presented. Participant observation and student interviews forms the basis for the analysis of the different learning environments the students are experiencing as well as the connection between the different learning environments.

Researchers and teachers interested in the complex connection between the use of new digital technology and changes in learning environments will gain insight into practical experiences. Implications for didactical choices are being discussed. Practice based approached used to analyze the case has proven useful from a practice perspective to understand and develop the educational initiatives for VET students.

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