

JOHN DEWEY AND OUR EDUCATIONAL PROSPECT



A Critical
Engagement
with Dewey's
*Democracy and
Education*

DAVID T. HANSEN, EDITOR

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A Critical Engagement with Dewey's
Democracy and Education

Edited by
David T. Hansen

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Preface

This book features a set of critical responses to John Dewey's greatest educational work, *Democracy and Education*. The contributors address Dewey's claim that education is not a preparation for life, but constitutes a fundamental aspect of the very experience of living. Dewey criticizes the cultural bias of his time, still widespread today, that presumes that what takes place in schools, colleges, and universities is separate or removed from what unfolds elsewhere in life. For Dewey, places set aside for formal teaching do differ from the playground, the home, the workplace, and so forth, but only in the sense that they provide a more systematic, reflective opportunity to learn how to learn. One distinctive way in which they accomplish this purpose is by engaging students with humanity's achievements and shortcomings as embodied in a dynamic curriculum. Whether the subject is mathematics, poetry, science, dance, or woodworking, students can acquire more than information and skills, important as they are. They can also develop the disposition and the ability to think, to inquire, to judge, to question, and to communicate, human qualities that give rise in the first place to the things that people study and value.

Dewey argues in the pages of *Democracy and Education* that those who understand how to learn and who are by habit open to new learning are on the way to becoming democratic citizens. For Dewey, democracy constitutes something richer and more generative than its electoral process and system of political structures, as valuable as they are. Rather, "democratic life" constitutes another name for a life of inquiring, communicating, and learning. In Dewey's outlook, democracy necessitates learning about many things: other peoples' view and hopes, how to resolve problems as they surface, how to anticipate and plan for possibilities, how to remain modest in one's claims to truth, how to think about what is good for individuals, communities, and society itself, and more. In reciprocal fashion, democracy as a mode of associated living makes possible this very process of interactive learning and understanding.

Education is not a preparation for such a life; education constitutes such a life. According to Dewey, education, democratic life, and human flourishing are all one.

Published in 1916, *Democracy and Education* has gone through countless printings and continues to be widely cited in both research and many fields of educational practice. The book has been drawn upon so often over the years that it comes as a surprise to learn that no book-length study has been published that centers directly on the text. The present volume seeks to rectify that omission and to be of service to several audiences of readers. Students in colleges of education and elsewhere will find the chapters collected here to be useful and provocative company as they come to grips with Dewey's still timely educational vision. The same holds for educational researchers in diverse fields who have drawn upon Dewey in the past, but seek a richer horizon of understanding to help guide their scholarship. We also hope to serve scholars of Dewey interested in an intensive focus on particular themes in *Democracy and Education*. In a broad sense, this volume is for any person interested in the relation between education and democracy.

The book derives, in part, from presentations at the John Dewey Society Annual Symposium, which takes place at the yearly meetings of the American Educational Research Association. As president of the John Dewey Society from 2003 to 2005, I asked four of the book's eventual contributors to present their responses to *Democracy and Education* at the annual meeting held in San Diego in 2004. I asked a second group of contributors to do the same at the annual meeting held in Montreal in 2005. The society's annual lecturer for 2005, Herbert M. Kliebard, also agreed to contribute a chapter, and in addition to preparing an introduction to the book I have added a chapter of my own. I thank the contributors both for their presentations at the society meetings and for their chapters. Readers will note that several contributors take pains to emphasize that they are not Dewey scholars. However, I invited them to participate because they are scholars and teachers whose influence has been extensive in their respective fields, which include curriculum studies, philosophy of education, policy studies, and teacher education. They have drawn on Dewey's conception of education at important junctures of their careers. Their willingness to be part of this book attests not only to the continued power in Dewey's work, but to the diverse audience of educators to whom he sought to appeal in *Democracy and Education*.

All references to Dewey's work in the volume are from the critical (print) edition, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882–1953*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston and published by Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale (1969–1991). The works have appeared in three series, *The*

Early Works (hereafter EW), *The Middle Works* (MW), and *The Later Works* (LW). In the following chapters, a reference to LW.5.270, for example, will mean *The Later Works*, Volume 5, page 270. [The pagination of the print edition has been preserved in *The Collected Works of John Dewey 1882–1953: The Electronic Edition*, edited by Larry A. Hickman and published by InteLex Corporation, Charlottesville, Virginia (1996).]

I am grateful to Jeff Frank, doctoral student in the Program in Philosophy and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, for his editorial and scholarly assistance on this project.

All royalties earned by this volume will be contributed to the John Dewey Society.

DAVID T. HANSEN
New York City
March 2006

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I

Introduction

Reading *Democracy and Education*

DAVID T. HANSEN

What is John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*? In a literal sense, it is a study of education and its relation to the individual and society. Moreover, Dewey tells us, it is a philosophical rather than historical, sociological, or political inquiry. His original title for the work was *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. That was the heading he had in view when he signed a contract to undertake the project on July 21, 1911, with the Macmillan Company of New York (MW.9.377). However, his publishers convinced him to change the title in light of pressing political issues triggered by the cataclysm of World War I. Dewey completed the text in August 1915, and it came out the following year with his original title converted into a subtitle. The book constitutes Dewey's philosophical response to the rapid social, economic, political, cultural, and technological change he was witness to over the course of his long life. Born in 1859, when the United States was largely an agrarian society, by the time Dewey pens his educational treatise the country had become an industrial, urban world undergoing endless and often jarring transformations, a process that continues unabated through the present. Dewey sought to articulate and justify the education he believed people needed to comprehend and shape creatively and humanely these unstoppable changes.

At the same time, Dewey endeavored in the book to respond to what many critics regard as the two most influential educational works ever written prior to the twentieth century: Plato's *Republic* (fourth

century B.C.E.) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (published in 1762). Those two works are monumental, comprehensive treatments of the meaning and purposes of education. They are variously powerful, beautiful, edifying, controversial, off-putting, and unforgettable for anyone who comes to grips with their originality and sheer breadth of concern. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey makes plain his intellectual debt to Plato and Rousseau, even as he underscores his differences with them. The book becomes an occasion for him to enact Aristotle's dictum that, when it comes to inquiry, the scholar must love truth more than the ideas held by her or his teachers.

Still another response to the question What is *Democracy and Education*? is that it was Dewey's favorite among his many publications (Ryan, 1995, p. 181). In one of his rare autobiographical writings, Dewey remarked that an interest in education resided at the core of his intellectual development. "This interest fused with and brought together," he wrote, "what might otherwise have been separate interests—that in psychology and that in social institutions and social life" (LW.5.156). He juxtaposed that admission with his amazement at how little attention professional philosophers, as a rule, devoted to educational questions. As an intellectual tribe, they simply do not, according to Dewey, acknowledge "that philosophizing should focus about education as the supreme human interest in which, moreover, other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head" (LW.5.156). In general, Dewey's fellow philosophers ignored *Democracy and Education* (it bears emphasizing that when he published it he was Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University). "Although [this book] was for many years," Dewey opined, "that in which my philosophy, such as it is, was most fully expounded, I do not know that philosophic critics, as distinct from teachers, have ever had recourse to it" (LW.5.156). But if philosophers, with notable exceptions, have tended to ignore the book, the rest of the world has not. Its worldwide audience over the last ninety years has consisted of students in colleges of education, educational practitioners and researchers, humanities and social science faculty in many disciplines, public intellectuals, and readers of countless other stripes and persuasions. The book has been the most widely translated of all Dewey's works, appearing in a dozen languages (Ryan, 1995, p. 181). Whether the book will continue to be read in the decades ahead remains a separate question that I will address at the close of this introductory chapter.

My purposes here are to provide an overview of Dewey's project and to outline the substance and aims of the chapters that follow. However, neither here nor anywhere else is it possible to answer definitively the question, What is *Democracy and Education*? Dewey sets his tasks

and goes about them in his usual thorough, insightful, and determined (if not relentless) manner. But his thought, his writing style, his terms, his tone, his trajectory, outrun him, or outdo him, throughout the text. What Karl Jaspers said of Immanuel Kant can be said of Dewey's book, with some adjustment: "Kant is a nodal point in modern philosophy. His work contains as many possibilities as life itself. Consciously, Kant proceeded with rational precision, yet his work is shot through with thoughts that go beyond the 'system' and that Kant in turn strove to understand as part of his doctrine. It remains a source of boundless inspiration" (1962, p. 153). Dewey writes systematically, but he does not seek a critical system in the sense to which Kant aspired (cf. LW.5.155). Dewey strives for rational precision, but his irrepressible passion regarding the gifts of life constantly erupts through his language (this point could also be said for moments in Kant's writing). Jaspers's words are on the mark regarding how "shot through" *Democracy and Education* is with uncontainable insights and provocations. The latter are not always clear or comprehensible. For example, Dewey's statements about "mind" are often opaque and elliptical. This fact reveals Dewey's own struggle to understand the very ideas that emerged on the typewriter page before him. (Just as Orpheus's lyre grew into his shoulder, one could say Dewey's typewriter grew into his arms, given the man's phenomenal published output, which has been issued in thirty-seven volumes.) Dewey's words sometimes shimmer like reflections from a lake on the hanging leaves overhead. At times, he writes as if he's trying to capture a shimmer, yet finds it flashing out of his grasp.

Moreover, Dewey confessed, "probably there is in the consciously articulated ideas of every thinker an over-weighing of just those things that are contrary to his natural tendencies, an emphasis upon those things that are contrary to his intrinsic bent, and which, therefore, he has to struggle to bring to expression, while the native bent, on the other hand, can take care of itself" (LW.5.150). Throughout *Democracy and Education*, Dewey's "native bent" for formal and schematic philosophical writing jostles with his ethical and emotional awareness of the demands of actual human experience. Sometimes there are sparks when these elements meet, and sometimes a quiet fusion. At moments Dewey coolly works his way through an argument. At others he sounds like a poet or orator moved by a vision of what could be. He reveals his emotional, moral, and intellectual aversion to all forms of thinking that, in his view, console, isolate, or narrow the mind, rather than opening it up for a constructive response to human affairs. His impulses are so strong that he has difficulties, at times, in handling certain concepts and ideas, almost as if they felt uncomfortable to the touch.

Readers of American letters will recognize Dewey's joyful, inspired, and maddening challenge. There are recurrent and sometimes explicit echoes throughout the book of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Abraham Lincoln, Jane Addams, and many others driven to enthusiastic if also frustrated distraction by the promise of what the nation could become. Dewey seeks in his book to engage what Emerson (1983/1844) called "this new yet unapproachable America" (p. 485)—an America no longer moored politically and culturally to Europe, yet with its identity confused, uncertain, and undetermined, as remains the case today. Dewey aims to articulate the educational vision needed to help the nation achieve its highest ideals in practice, while keeping those very ideals under criticism so that they function as sources of hope and imagination rather than closed outlooks. However, just as Plato and Rousseau sought to write beyond their own societies, Dewey has in view not just his own country but any community that aspires to be democratic in conduct rather than merely in name. He writes in the spirit of a cosmopolitan, humane world he envisions coming into being. He does not proffer a crude American exceptionalism, so endlessly damaging near and far, any more than do the other figures previously mentioned, even if like them he cannot (and would not want to) leave behind his local horizons. Dewey's disarmingly titled "Introduction to the Philosophy of Education" is at once a sustained, disciplined philosophical inquiry into education, and an epic, poetic evocation of human possibility.

Dewey's Historical Moment: A Reading of the Book's Preface

Dewey published *Democracy and Education* in the midst of what would come to be called World War I. The United States was still a neutral state, although inching ever closer to joining the Allied side and, in retrospect, moving further down the road that would lead to its current superpower status. Meantime, the nation had been undergoing an astounding transformation since the bloody Civil War of 1861–1865 had nearly sundered it. Urban and industrial growth, waves of immigration and internal migration, the expansion of education, imperial actions overseas, international commerce, new modes of transportation and communication, scientific and artistic breakthroughs, and much more, generated a more or less permanent state of social possibility and experiment, as well as unsettlement and unpredictability. A keen observer and commentator on these rapid changes, Dewey intended his book to shed light on their fundamental educational and sociopolitical consequences. What do the changes exact of us, Dewey asked, with regards to the philosophy of life and education we articulate, criticize, and seek to realize?

Dewey signals his purposes in his brief preface to *Democracy and Education*. The preface consists of the following paragraph, and a subsequent one in which he acknowledges his debt to several generations of students as well as to several critics. “The following pages,” Dewey writes,

embody an endeavor to detect and state the ideas implied in a democratic society and to apply these ideas to the problems of the enterprise of education. The discussion includes an indication of the constructive aims and methods of public education as seen from this point of view, and a critical estimate of the theories of knowing and moral development which were formulated in earlier social conditions, but which still operate, in societies nominally democratic, to hamper the adequate realization of the democratic ideal. As will appear from the book itself, the philosophy stated in the book connects the growth of democracy with the development of the experimental method in the sciences, evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences, and the industrial reorganization, and is concerned to point out the changes in subject matter and method of education indicated by these developments. (MW.9.3; unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references are to this volume)

Written after the completion of the book itself, these prefatory words sound flat-footed and anticlimatic. The passive voice, the mechanical listing of topics, and the matter-of-fact, almost ho-hum tone, do not amount to much of an invitation to read on. Perhaps Dewey was weary after writing the book’s twenty-six chapters, which range over almost every conceivable aspect of educational thought and practice. Or perhaps he was bowing to his publishers, who had put forward the idea for *Democracy and Education* by urging Dewey to write a textbook for teachers. Dewey’s curt preface certainly sounds textbookish.

However, if we listen, his language expands, beginning in the first of the three sentences that comprise his remarks. The book will “embody an endeavor to detect and state.” It will be an inquiry, an endeavor, rather than a demonstration or proof. Dewey will try to “detect” ideas “implied in a democratic society,” suggesting the ever-present possibility of failure in that task. He will “endeavor” to state those ideas, to give them form, but once more the emphasis is on effort, on a trial, on an attempt, rather than on a presumption of accomplishment. Moreover, after undertaking this project, he will then “endeavor” to “apply” the ideas to problems in education, suggesting a final time the risk of being unsuccessful. What sounded mechanical at first glance has become, at second hearing, uncertain, unstable, and unsteady. Moreover, the book

will “embody” Dewey’s inquiry, meaning that from start to finish it *constitutes* an endeavor rather than a polished post-inquiry product. Dewey all but says the project will feature surprises, openings, unanticipated conclusions, and routes identified but not taken. What a strange text-book to offer readers: an ongoing journey rather than a packaged, contained, and prefigured artifact.

Dewey’s second sentence, longer than the first but not as long as the third and last, marks out his interest in public education, an institution that had been growing rapidly in its reach in the United States. Armed with “ideas implied in a democratic society,” Dewey plans in the book to highlight “constructive” educational aims and methods, those that both mirror and help bring into being a democratic society. Dewey’s qualifier anticipates one of the most familiar claims in the book, that education signifies the “reconstruction” of experience “which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (p. 82). Constructing, making, bringing into being that which was not there before, *poesis*, as the Ancient Greeks put it: these terms describe the view of education Dewey will try to “state” (i.e., create, make, build) in the pages to come. Dewey’s qualifier also provides a strong hint that he will be criticizing what he regards as *unconstructive* or positively destructive aims and methods. He further discloses that strategy in the latter portion of the second sentence, when he refers to theories of knowledge and of morality whose consequences, he tells us, are still at work in society to the detriment of its democratic emergence. I write emergence mindful of Dewey’s extraordinary claim that his own and other so-called democratic societies are that *in name only*—they are, he says, “nominally” democratic. To employ Emerson’s term, they may be “approaching” democracy, but they have not yet moved into that condition. Dewey conceives his book as an instrument to help further and support the approach. In this process, he will not willfully reject previous conceptions of knowledge and morality, any more than he will crudely toss aside previous views of teaching and learning. Instead, he will reconstruct them. He will draw from them what he sees as vital while excising what he believes “hamper[s]” the realization of democracy. We do not know, at this threshold juncture, why Dewey finds so telling a society’s moral and epistemological presuppositions. The entire book will generate his response, culminating in his concluding two chapters that explicitly take up the nature and impact of theories of knowledge and morality.

Dewey’s final, and cumbersome, sentence remains not only elliptical but enigmatic. Just as he wrote the preface after writing the book, so it seems that readers can only fathom the preface after reading (and

rereading) the text. However, Dewey does anticipate his path. He hopes to “state” how his philosophy of education “connects the growth of democracy” with contemporary forces and trends. Dewey will make plain time and again how crucial is the idea of “connection” in his educational and democratic outlook, along with its associated concepts of communication and continuity. The entire philosophy will pivot around the familiar, provocative, still controversial idea of “growth,” which Dewey describes not as *having* an end or outcome but as *itself* the finest end or outcome of education (p. 54). He argues that growth is “relative” to nothing save more growth, and concludes that education thus implies no greater end than the capacity for further education. Correspondingly, the “growth of democracy” to which he refers in the preface embodies its own end. That is, a democratic way of life is not a means to some larger end or outcome. It is itself the *realization* of political, social, and educational ends supportive of growth. As he summarizes: “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (p. 93).

Dewey will also argue in the book that this democratic “mode of associated living” emerges naturally and organically from forces such as those he names in the preface: the rise of the experimental method in science, the idea of evolution in biology, and what he calls “the industrial reorganization.” Any reader familiar with Dewey will recognize that by “experimental method,” he denotes nothing more, nor less, than the process he described through his verb choices in the first sentence of the preface: “endeavor,” “detect,” “state,” “apply,” and so forth. He will go on to show just how pregnant with meaning and action are these and related verbs associated with inquiry. Moreover, inquiry remains indispensable to democracy, since the latter obliges people to learn constantly from one another, which means learning to study others’ ideas, claims, hopes, and practices, as well as their own.

The idea of evolution remains decisive for democracy, according to Dewey, because it reveals that humanity has no preset or predetermined nature. It is true that humanity’s horizon of possibility and creativity remains bounded by physical forces, which may themselves be evolving, but its scope is indeterminate. That fact, for Dewey, leads to democracy precisely because it renders suspect any and all claims that it is natural for one group of people to dominate or control another in autocratic fashion. Posed differently, the idea undermines every dogmatic viewpoint, whether religious or secular, about the presumed meaning of being human. At the same time, the idea of evolution suggests humanity has no predetermined, fixed *telos* or end state. Once more, for Dewey, this idea gives rise to democracy because it dissolves claims to know the final

destiny of humanity as well as corresponding assertions about what humanity must do to reach that alleged terminus. The wheel turns, and we discern why Dewey suggests that the aim of democracy is democracy itself, just as the aim of growth is further growth.

These points also illuminate, from another angle, why Dewey esteems inquiry. If human beings are not predetermined entities with pre-set destinies, but rather are persons who can influence their very nature through education and social interaction, then it behooves them to learn to question, to criticize, to converse (whether through word or other media), and to be modest and fair-minded in their claims.

Finally, "the industrial reorganization" encompasses all the economic, social, and technological changes touched on previously. The term may also point to the antitrust legislation, the formation of labor unions, and the like that had been taking place in the years before his book appeared. According to Dewey, the conditions for democracy are a natural, organic outgrowth of this "reorganization." As he writes in chapter 7 of his book: "The widening of the area of shared concerns, and the liberation of a greater diversity of personal capacities which characterize a democracy [as a way of life], are not of course the product of deliberation and conscious effort. On the contrary, they were caused by the development of modes of manufacture and commerce, travel, migration, and intercommunication which flowed from the command of science over natural energy" (p. 93). However, Dewey argues that while these circumstances have created conditions for democracy, they cannot in themselves bring it into being. For that task, education is needed: "But after greater individualization on one hand, and a broader community of interest on the other have come into existence, it is a matter of deliberate effort to sustain and extend them" (p. 93). Dewey adds: "Travel, economic and commercial tendencies, have at present gone far to break down external barriers; to bring peoples and classes into closer and more perceptible connection with one another. It remains for the most part to secure the intellectual and emotional significance of this physical annihilation of space" (p. 92). According to Dewey, education constitutes the vehicle for this intellectual and emotional turn in human perception.

What may strike the reader, at first glance, as a rather wooden opening to *Democracy and Education*, becomes on second glance a striking preview of some key themes Dewey will take up in the text. Although highly compressed and elliptical, his preface remains conjoined with the work as a whole, perhaps especially through his emphasis on the existential need for inquiry. That need entails both openness to the world and critical reflection and response. In a democracy, or in what Dewey calls

an associated mode of communicative living, inquiry is not the provenance of a select few. It is the privilege and the obligation of everyone. On the one hand, as Dewey clarifies elsewhere, full-time scholars and researchers should make available to the public the results and findings of their work. On the other hand, the task of citizens is to influence policy by judging the outcomes of formal inquiry in light of shared public concerns (LW.2.365). In sum, Dewey does not contend that everyone must become a researcher in a formal sense, in part because there are countless other important social roles and activities in a complex society. He does suggest that a spirit of inquiry characterizes a genuine democracy.

Dewey may also highlight the fact that the book constitutes an inquiry because he is mindful of how challenging readers will find his claims. For example, some may be thrown from the very start by the notion that the United States is a democracy in name rather than in practice. Others readers, as they make their way through the early chapters, may find jarring Dewey's comparisons between so-called savage and civilized groups, until they discern that he is not making empirical claims but rather a theoretical distinction between groups that willingly adapt to change as contrasted with those that do not or will not. Posed differently, he distinguishes groups that seek or accept genuine contact with others from those that reject it out of hand. Given the inexorable changes he witnessed in his lifetime, which he believed would become even more accelerated in the future, Dewey did not believe it possible to achieve complete communal isolation.

However, in perceiving this outlook some readers may be unsettled by Dewey's further suggestion that the United States is not only still on the road to becoming a democracy, rather than having arrived, but is also not yet civilized. It does not yet feature an ethos, in his view, in which groups and communities—especially those with the greatest political and economic resources—deliberately seek out contact with others who differ in outlook and practice, in part so that society can transform itself peacefully rather than violently. Moreover, time and again in the early chapters Dewey emphasizes that technological, scientific, and economic prowess does not in itself constitute civilization. Rather, it is the uses to which this expertise is put that determine the question—in particular, whether these vaunted tools and powers are deployed to enhance and expand the experience of everyone rather than of only a few (see, e.g., pp. 42, 8, 9, 10). In his preface, Dewey implies that readers will need to take on the posture of inquirers themselves if they are to engage these and other arguments. He does not expect agreement as the outcome of the process, but he does hope for the engagement.

The Scope and Structure of *Democracy and Education*

Each of the twenty-six chapters in Dewey's book ends with what he calls a summary. That organizational feature reflects his intent, at his publishers' request, to write a textbook for educators. However, any reader of *Democracy and Education* swiftly discovers that Dewey's so-called summaries are more than that. They do take a look back at the themes and ideas he has put forward. But they also advance his arguments. Many of them contain expressions, formulations, conjectures, and hopes not found in the preceding sections of the respective chapter. If the twenty-six summaries were extracted from the book and bound into a text of their own, they would make for fascinating reading in their own right.

I offer here an interpretive synopsis, but not a summary, of the book so that readers can have it in hand as they work through the chapters that lie ahead. *Democracy and Education* features four primary sections, although they are not identified as such in the preface or table of contents. They form, Dewey says, a logical perspective toward the book's structure. Dewey himself offers a snapshot of the first three parts, in a set of pages that appears to embody the advice of one or more critics of a draft of the work (pp. 331–333). Someone may have said to him that, at this point in the text, readers could use a platform to gather themselves before climbing the final steps to the summit.

In chapters 1–5 of the book, Dewey examines why education is fundamental to the nature and perpetuation of any human community, however humble or vast it may be in size and scope of activity. According to Dewey, education is decisive for *renewal* of human culture and society. The idea of renewal constitutes the very first theme Dewey takes up in the book, as he compares differences between living and inanimate things. That beginning captures one of the primary passions informing the project. *Democracy and Education* constitutes a wake-up call, a sometimes harsh reminder that too much human existence remains, in metaphorical terms, inanimate as contrasted with truly alive. From the start, Dewey criticizes social customs, traditions, and ideals that he believes suppress the flowering of human thought, imagination, creativity, and individuality. In so doing, they suppress the emergence of democracy itself and its organic commitment to the growth of all persons. For Dewey, unexamined customs and traditions, however beloved, can render human life less *animate* than it might otherwise be: less artful, meaningful, joyful, hopeful, and sublime. Dewey never advocates the wholesale repudiation of convention. Far from it: inquiry and communication may affirm long-standing ideals and practices. However, for Dewey such a process implies that the conventional would no longer be merely conventional. It will have been