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***John Dewey’s Philosophy of Education and Its Effects on  
Contemporary Philosophies of Education***

**SUMMARY**

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### **Key concepts**

**Education, pragmatism, meliorism, instrumentalism, experience, growth, democracy, reconstruction, interaction, communication, network society.**

# **Dewey's philosophy of education and its effects on contemporary philosophies of education**

## **1. The aim, the methodology and the structure of the thesis**

The main objective of my research is to study the most important concepts of John Dewey's philosophy of education, to see how they operate in his vast system and to reconstruct the modalities in which these categories and principles have generated a major change in educational and philosophical thinking in the last hundred years. I would like to argue that interaction and communication are in the centre of his system; these ideas have a great impact on the contemporary educational thinking and have important effects on general - philosophical – fields as well. Dewey resolved in a very original manner the basic contradictions between life and education, school and curriculum, educator and educated, theory and practice - realising a synthesis which had a great influence on postmodern authors. Although the late 19th century's America, when Dewey started to create, was very different from contemporary societies, his ideas can represent important starting points in resolving actual problem situations. In order to analyze the complete context in which Dewey's philosophy appeared, in Chapter 2. I gave a brief description of the cultural, social and economic situation of the end of 19th century's United States, I also presented his most relevant philosophical predecessors (Emerson, Hegel, Darwin, James, Peirce), this way intending to reconstruct the genesis of his vast oeuvre.

For this research, I considered adequate the progressive plan as my major methodology. In Jaqueline Russ's approach it means that a concept is studied from different points of view, accomplishing a deeper and wider understanding of the key concepts. The progressive plan produces complex and rich definitions, so the essence of the notion studied becomes clearer and its connections with other categories become multi-faceted. In the case of my thesis, these are the basic concepts of Dewey's philosophy of education – I have presented them from varied perspectives, in an exhaustive manner. The structure of the dissertation follows the logic of this progressive plan: the first four chapters present the educational categories in their strict sense, in Chapter 5 I described those possibilities in which Dewey's notions are applicable in various fields of life and in Chapter 6 and 7 I studied the effects of his terminology on today's educational thinking.

I would like to believe that the relevance of this research lies in its interdisciplinary character, the fundamental categories being presented from philosophical and the pedagogical perspectives. I have afforded great attention to the historical, economic, political and cultural aspects in order to obtain a complex, multidimensional interpretation of the research issue. Similarly, I analyzed the connections between the American and European philosophy, a connection which in Dewey's case has many important aspects. This way the dissertation is also a kind of bridge-building between American pragmatism and European thinking, between philosophy and education.

## **2. Dewey's school**

Education is a process that begins at birth and it forms our ideas, habits and emotions all throughout our lives. The aim of education in Dewey's opinion is forming new attitudes rather than reproducing old customs. He emphasised the fact that the process of education is of greater importance than obtaining a final product. Good, authentic education stimulates the child's potential according to the needs of the society in which he lives. Through these stimuli, the child will act as an active member of the social environment, he will be able to enlarge his perspectives and he will work in favour of his group. Education, by definition, means preparing children for the future, but Dewey, already at the end of the 19th century, realized that the changes in the democratic system, the industrialization made the future in which children would live after some decades unpredictable. Accordingly, it is almost impossible to give children a set of precise knowledge, so preparation for future has to mean the development of useful skills which help them lead their lives. Dewey's thoughts on this matter are of great actuality for nowadays' educators as well.

In Dewey's view, society is the organic unity of individuals, and the educated individual is always social, which means that without the social component the person is merely an abstraction and without assertive individuals society is an inert mass. Therefore education has to be a correct introspection in the capacities, orientations and customs of the children, these inner tendencies should be transformed into their social equivalent, to evaluate the way they could serve social interests.

The social institutions that serve education are schools. Schools and scholar activities should be processes of life, not only an environment in which children are prepared for life.

Dewey emphasised several times that school itself should be a scene of life, presenting it in an embryonic form. Social life, for example, could be introduced in schools in the first place by presenting the life at home of families, these activities (cooking, sewing, gardening) should be the first to be learned by young children. References to the real life are also a psychological need, schools should deepen and extend the values of children, relying on their previous experiences.

Dewey assessed that traditional education has too many stimuli and control factors starting from teachers, they should not press their ideas and customs on children. The objective of educators in Dewey's view should be the selection of influences, the assistance of children in responding to these influences, to behave as a partner, as another member of society. Discipline in schools should not come from teachers but from the modes of organization of scholar activities. In this context teachers are facilitators of children's ideas, they should make the creation of new ideas happen. The educational contents assessed in curriculum should have strong, evident relations with social life, the centre of gravity should not be mathematics or history but teachers should historicize or mathematize children's life experience. Children would understand their social inheritance if teachers facilitated them to participate in activities that made our civilization as it is now. Dewey strongly believed that education is the reconstruction of reality and experience, so the processes and aims of education should be life itself. Educational methods follow Dewey's whole conception: active, participative, problem-centered methods are the most efficient solutions in his opinion. Teachers should choose methods which arouse children's interest and motivation, so learning could be more interesting if teachers used illustrations instead of verbal explanations.

Philosophies of education before Dewey were not able to manage the conflict between the need for freedom of children and the rigors of curriculum. The life of a child is fluid, it has a unique unity, while curriculum presents life in a selected, fragmented and abstract manner. Two solutions emerged from this opposition before Dewey: one centered on curriculum and one which believed that the child should be the universal starting point and the absolute criterion. Dewey as a veritable Hegelian proposed a synthesis between these two opposed perspectives: the curriculum should permit teachers to use children's environment and background, qualities and capacities to form them and teach them about what is good, true or beautiful. Teachers should let children's nature fulfill in their own way, they should help them actualize their potentialities. Progressive education is an education of experience through experience, as Dewey saw it. The experience of predecessors must be carried on by those who learn in schools, this way the continuity of experiences could be realized. The role of the

curriculum in this process is to select the relevant experiences; education has to follow radical social changes. Dewey considered that introducing manual activities should help schools become real life scenes. Workshops and projects are methods in whose case things are not done *to* children, forcing them to be inactive and tacit, but these are done *by* children, on their own. Dewey observed at the end of the 19th century that although education was more accessible for the masses, teaching methods still had not changed too much since the Middle Ages. It is inconvenient for teachers to have self-sufficient learners in their classes, so in most of the cases they reduce children to silence and passivity. Dewey pointed out several times that social progress should start in schools, he thought that only by changing old and useless habits in the classroom management would change society in a good direction. These appreciations are still of great importance and actuality for the education systems at the beginning of the 21th century.

### **3. Dewey's philosophical categories**

Dewey's oeuvre permits a great number of approaches, due to its various themes; in my dissertation I consider that the most relevant perspective is the anthropological one, because the analysis of human nature could represent the best way to get close to the problems of education and its implementations. In the third chapter three important aspects of human nature are to be emphasized: man as the product of the evolutionary process, man as a social being and man as a problem solving individual.

Inspired in a pronounced manner by Charles Darwin, Dewey believed that man is the result of an evolutionary process. In his opinion, this process has no definite end, we cannot search for absolute values, so man's task is to try to maximize truth and happiness.

Dewey was preoccupied with the results of psychological research of his times, so he analyzed the reflex arc and considered that this way he could explain the nature and mechanisms of human activities, without committing the errors of radical behaviorism. In his view, the reflex arc should be understood as an organic and comprehensive unity: stimuli, the central nervous system and its reactions of all kind represent a whole, they cannot be interpreted like separate entities. This way Dewey tried to eliminate the consequences of the traditional dualist thinking in order to integrate rationality and affections, organism and environment. Man is never separate from his world and he depends much on his human relationships: social environment is in fact an instrument of self-realization of the individual,

the use of language has a determinative role in the person's evolution. Existence attains sense through social interactions and through communicated meanings in Dewey's conception. Human beings auto-evaluate with the help of others' evaluation, individual behaviour mirrors other individuals' behaviour, character is always social. Even when we try to delimit ourselves from our social environment, we are reflecting on this environment and we are permanently under its influence whether good or bad.

Our social customs are expressed through habits, which make possible our reactions to similar impulses. Habits are the instruments of coordinating our relationship with the environment, they can be formed through educational processes. To achieve permanent growth, the individual should integrate new habits in order to simplify his reactions to different life situations. However, there is a great number of unpredictable situations for which we do not have already-formed habits, these are the problem situations we have to face. One of the most important dimensions of human life in Dewey's opinion is the problem-solving dimension. He elaborated a problem solving model in five steps as follows: observation of the problem, definition of the difficult situation, presentation of different solution hypotheses, choice of the solution and testing. Dewey proposed this problem solving model for both individuals and society's problems. He was well aware that the model is not perfect, but at that moment he considered it the most efficient *modus operandi*. The life of people concentrates on problems which need solutions because we all want to reach a state of equilibrium, so learning the problem solving algorithm is crucial in Dewey's view.

The interaction with the environment of human beings is expressed through experience, another central category of Dewey's philosophical system. An interaction becomes an experience when we learn something from it, when it has an impact on our lives, so it has to do something with our future, our projects. Dewey emphasized a number of times the fact that when an individual has an experience, a unity is set between the live organism and its environment, so the traditional metaphysical dualism between subject and object is eliminated. He spoke about two types of experiences: primary and reflective experiences. Primary experience is a kind of raw material, unprocessed by rationality whereas reflective experience is the result of the interpretation of the primary experience, it is more complex and adequate. Of course, Dewey appointed that the two cannot be delimited completely, the boundary between them is dynamic, they are interpreting each other reciprocally. Through experience, men are in permanent transaction with nature, there is a special continuity between men and environment, without which we would cease to exist.



After presenting the human nature and the nature of experience connected to it, in the third chapter I also considered important to present those experiences which are significant in Dewey's oeuvre.

Dewey was not a religious author but in some of his writings he discussed the *religious experience*, which is undeniably an important aspect of human lives. He remarked at the beginning of the 20th century that the religious institutions, the churches had lost their credibility and their integrating force in society. Dogmatism of the clergy, the fact that they reserved the right to say what is right or wrong, led to their intellectual bankruptcy in an era when sciences were developing fast, as Dewey pointed out. He believed that the role of the church should be assisting people to find their own values, to develop their human relationships and to make the acceptance of mortality easier. But for Dewey the most serious problem was that the church had also become morally bankrupt, because it patronized suspect political and economical interests. Instead of helping unity or solidarity, the clergy initiated major conflicts in history. Dewey believed that the religious experience should mean a yearning for an ideal, not necessarily supernatural, but something good, in which we could believe continuously. God could be interpreted as the union of all those energies and values which we consider worthwhile to aspire for.

According to Dewey, *scientific experience*, like religious experience has its roots in man's general insecurity, the difference between them lies in the fact that religion tries to eliminate this feeling, while science takes advantage of it, doubtfulness helped scientific research to be more productive. Science has the same problem solving model as common thinking, it merely differs in the degree of rigorosity: common thinking operates with stereotypes, science analyzes the details, the relations of the elements thoroughly. Dewey encouraged the promotion of the scientific results but he was not a victim of an exaggerated enthusiasm toward sciences. He considered that the task of science is not only finding new solutions but also reflecting on scientific aims and methods, discovering new ways of transforming doubt into a creative force. Pertinent scientific attitude is as much important as a new result, this attitude should refuse dogmatism, prejudices and individual interests, it should be a pure desire for research and for truth. Dewey criticized those animist opinions in which science was somehow held guilty for the cases when technology was wrongly applied. In these cases the moral values can be accused of the bad things committed, such as nationalism, violence.

For Dewey, art is another way of exploring the world, therefore *artistic experience* is not too different from common experience. Dewey was profoundly against the museum

conception of art when art is relegated to museums and galleries, set on a remote pedestal. In antiquity, art was organically connected to citizens' everyday life and it was a commemoration of their feelings. According to Dewey, this segregation should be eliminated in order to reinstall the unity between organism and environment. Artistic experience arouse from the lack of equilibrium between the two; searching for and finding a state of harmony give birth to object of art. At this point we can summarize the essential difference between art and science: while the main object of science is to dissolve the states of equilibrium and to profit from insecure situations, art celebrates harmony and stability.

One of Dewey's major concern was the problem of *moral experience*. He saw an intrinsic relation between the transformations of the natural and the moral life. He believed that we can decide the value of an activity depending on its effects on the natural environment. But, of course, morality has to do mainly with social life, the individual's decisions have serious repercussions on him. Dewey did not neglect the needs of the individual, but he considered a more important aim to achieve the social welfare, so his desire was to put individual diversity in society's interest. Reflective morality implies and permits openness to otherness, even to other people's mistakes. Traditional ethics required conformity, reflective moral experience means tolerance, acceptance and the research of differences. Moral habits are not independent from society: society is always responsible for the good and bad committed by the individuals. A wrong habit can be changed in time indirectly by changing the social environment, by selecting the impulses that have positive effects on the individual. The role of education is in fact the intelligent reconstruction of the environment of the child in order to form good habits. The major criteria for Dewey of these good habits is growth, the process of growth itself means the moral enrichment of the person. Interaction and cooperation are the guarantee for social welfare, isolation destroys the chance for freedom.

Democracy and political reconstruction were permanent subjects for Dewey, he formulated an original view in this matter. At the end of the 19th century he thought that a political reconstruction was of great importance when society faced contradictory times. Even if democracy was functional for the predecessors, under the new conditions of rapid urbanisation it was necessary to find new solutions. Dewey strongly believed that Americans were capable of learning from the mistakes of the past and in their capacity to think about the future. Reconstruction would be possible on the grounds of his problem solving model, by scientists and philosophers whose cooperation would lead to intellectual solutions. After the theoretic phase would follow the democratic testing of the results by the citizens. Dewey's

conclusion was that the essence of political ideals are not changing in time but they should be adapted to the historical context, only this way can they help us in resolving actual problems.

Democracy in Dewey's interpretation is a way of life in which individuals can fulfill themselves and have an authentic communicational experience. According to him, every man needs to consult with others, to convince their partners through dialog and to form common opinions, learning from own mistakes. The democratic method means tolerant attitude, accepting historical relativism. The democratic system has to aim at the happiness of the individual and for realising this we need permanent authentic communication. Education's role is to help forming creative imagination, presenting the multitude of possible perspectives without deciding who is right and understanding difference without prejudices.

#### **4. Adapting Dewey's notions of education philosophy**

In the first subchapter of Chapter 5, I undertook an important clarification: what philosophy means to the pragmatist philosopher, what kind of relationship exists between philosophy and education in his view and how philosophy becomes the general theory of education in his oeuvre. Similarly, I considered it meaningful to research the answers he formulates to the fundamental questions of philosophy (what is life and how it should be lived?), so we can affirm that he is not only the philosopher of education but also the philosopher of life. This way we can pass from a relatively narrow interpretation to a wider and more general understanding of his work.

According to Dewey, the task of philosophy is double: to interpret and to criticize the methods and results of science. At this point, philosophy and education are in tight relationship in order to form the critical attitude of the young. Dewey considered education a kind of laboratory where the principles of philosophy are becoming concrete, philosophy has a dynamic role finding out possibilities of evolution and growth.

The notion of life was a significant category for Dewey, as we pointed out, growth is the aim of every individual and permanent growth is life itself. We transmit elements from the past, we try to keep the ties between past, present and future in order to realize the continuity of life. Education is called to contribute to achieve this process of uninterrupted growth.

Live creatures interact with their environment and they have various experiences of equilibrium and loss of equilibrium. Every living being aspires to reach harmony, but for human beings this process is more complex due to their intellect. The task of intellect is mainly problem solving, research, so for Dewey education has to develop these qualities. The

truths discovered by scientists are not permanent, these are merely temporary solutions for the current problem situations. Research starts with doubt and it also ends with it. Dewey agreed with the failibilist idea of truth, he was aware that no principle, no idea lasts for ever. In his opinion, research is an esthetic process, a kind of poiesis, a moment of creation and education should set the creational forces free, accomplishing new rational contents. The universe is not a finite product, so it is necessary to generate the creative attitudes of the young. Dewey's meliorism means that, according to him, our uncontent thoughts and feelings which are expressed toward the world make us able to transform it into a better world. But this "better" is never the "best"; Dewey, as a veritable anti-metaphysician knew that there is no final point of evolution. There are no transcendental values, the growth of the individual depends on the transformations of society in which he lives, without a predetermined end.

Dewey's thoughts about *freedom* has consonance with the previous ideas, he considered that men do not possess freedom a priori, at their birth, in fact we acquire freedom throughout our lives by the activities that we perform. Freedom means our capacity of changing our plans, of taking decisions and choosing between possible solutions. Those activities have authenticity which we performed rationally and even if one of them has failed, we should prefer them instead of involuntary success. Dewey considered destructive for freedom the environments which are exceedingly permissive or restrictive, the individual in these contexts has no possibility of reflection or choice. The concept of freedom in Dewey's interpretation is based on becoming, we are free if we are able to become something else, to be different from what we were. Positive freedom is as much important as negative freedom, the constructive idea of freedom is as much important as the elimination of constraints. This kind of freedom is not easy to be practiced, it is necessary to have exceptional self-control and because it presents a challenge, education should be concerned with its improvement. Teachers should understand that freedom cannot be developed in a closed world, it is oriented toward an open future, school should be a place where young people learn the skills of being free.

Some of Dewey's analysts consider that the central category of his work is *communication*. Dewey renounced the traditional interpretation of the concept and emphasised the idea that communication is not only transportation and transmission of information but a more complex phenomenon; it means participation, cooperation and common interests. Communication in Dewey's view is an open space where participants can share their ideas, confront their perspectives, without having the pretension of finding out the only truth, the final perspective. The significance of the things are revealed in the process of communication, throughout this social exercise. Communication is not only the coordination

of social partners but it is also the source of reflective consciousness. Communication is possible because there is a social imagery through which we put ourselves in the place of our communicational partner, so it makes possible to get close to his perspective and to reconstruct his experiences. Education is closely related to problems of communication; according to Dewey, all types of communication have educational effects. Teaching is a construction of communicational situations, which should not be done *to* children, but *with* their contribution. In this part of my thesis I would like to conclude that Dewey's pedagogical and philosophical thinking are based on communication and interaction. In my opinion, his actuality is based on the way he outlines these categories and adapts them to real life situations.

## **5. The impact of Dewey's philosophical ideas on the contemporary educational philosophies**

In Chapter 6 and 7. I studied the most important receptions of Dewey's work, the way his ideas were represented in the significant philosophical systems at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, emphasising educational issues. I could not omit though to present the work of a contemporary author, a colleague and a friend of Dewey's, George Herbert Mead, with whom Dewey had a mutual influence. Mead's interest in education is partly due to his relationship with Dewey. Like Dewey, Mead considered the interactions of the individual with his environment as a starting point; these are not rigid structures, they are in a dynamic relation: consciousness is a part of the interactions. Mead also agreed with Dewey's evolutionary ideas, he believed that man should adapt himself permanently to his environment in order to survive. In Mead's opinion, this accommodation for human beings is symbolic and it makes rational behaviour and self-control possible. For Mead, language had a great importance, it makes possible for individuals to handle a problem situation without actually facing it. Culture is produced through language, emotions are expressed with the help of language and it also makes us capable of reflections. Conscience is structured in linguistic forms and we are conscious as much as we interact socially. The individual has a dynamic relationship with society, he is shaped by the expectations of society and also, society is transformed by the created identities.

Like Dewey, Mead believed that an ideal society permits and encourages dialog between cultures and languages, there are no "better" cultures, every cultural entity has its own values. Mead was aware that no existent society functions this way but he saw a positive

starting point in the formation of the global economy system, the universal religions or the United Nations. His symbolic interactionism was adapted by many authors in the 20th century, F.W.Kron was preoccupied with the educational aspects of Mead's work, he put in the centre of educational research the educational situation in which the learning participants of the process are not isolated, the separation of the subject from the object of learning should be transcended. In his view, the relationship between teacher and student is a complementary one, multidimensional intentionality helps to discover profound meanings. Freedom of experimenting is not merely theoretical, Kron thinks that it is possible to have concrete, diverse experiences.

One of the most relevant philosophical schools from the last decades which declaratively leaned on Dewey's work is interactive constructivism, namely the Cologne Program from the University of Cologne, USA. The founder of the group, Kersten Reich, resumed the most important elements of their relation to Dewey's thoughts. In the first place, constructivism, like Dewey, refused metaphysical thinking, the dualist interpretation of the world and they adopted their predecessors' opinion, that is, rationality, conscience and truth are not absolute, our thoughts are the consequences of the cultural context in which we live. The truth we formulate is a personal construction, made from our perspective, which can coincide with another person's perspective, but this intersubjectivity is not obligatory, the multitudinous visions about the world is natural. Constructivism also accepts Dewey's notion of democracy, which permits the plurality of constructions and is tolerant concerning diversity. A construction is true if it becomes efficient in the social practice, in current interactions or communication. Constructivist authors discuss three phases of the educational process: reconstruction, construction and deconstruction. Reconstruction assures the connection with the past, construction is the creative phase, deconstruction means criticism of the new constructions. If learners do pass through these three phases, learning is not only a simple imitation, but it becomes the guarantee of growth, as Dewey proposed.

Richard Rorty, the representative philosopher of neopragmatism was declaratively Dewey's disciple and follower, he also discussed the problems of education in some of his writings. Rorty, like constructivists, renounced metaphysical thinking. Irony was the key-concept of his anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism, which means a critical attitude toward everything. An ironist does not believe in final vocabularies, he permanently revises his opinions, his apparently sure knowledge. As for, Rorty spoke about two major phases: socialization and edification. Socialization is a reproduction of the actual consensus,

edification means the renewal of the individual, in this phase he questions the consensus, the existent vocabulary, and this constitutes the guarantee of growth.

In Rorty's view, Dewey was the Philosopher of Democracy, due to his profound belief in the desire of men to cooperate in order to achieve a free and open society. National narratives should be more interactive to give young people the possibility of rethinking conventional ideas. The role of teachers is to facilitate this fundamental process of communication.

Evidently, Dewey's impact is wider and more diversified than it could be resumed in a limited research, but I would like to emphasize the idea that in this phase of my study it is already clear: Dewey was a politemporal author, his work preoccupies the contemporary authors and it is furthermore an important task to continue rethinking his oeuvre.

In Chapter 7. I presented the network society in Manuel Castells's perception in order to analyze the way Dewey's ideas are adaptable in the context of the 21th century. Castells's idea is that the capitalist system has been transformed, technology gaining a major role in the last few decades. The new technologies are integrated in a global informational network, this way a multitude of virtual societies have been created. Castells emphasizes two major tendencies: the intensification of globalization and the search for identity, producing a significant tension between the Network and the Individual. The result of this tension values are in a process of reorganization and traditional structures are changing. The essence of the new paradigm in Castells's view is that the every mechanism of this new world is based on information, these are not used merely as means of production but it has become an aim to produce information. New technologies have a devastating effect in every field of life, the participation in the network is vital.

Dewey assisted the process of industrialization of America, he witnessed the forming of the world that ends in the network society. He was aware that technology is important in development and growth but it is an essential question if his ideas are applicable in the age of information. I think that the notions of experience, interaction, growth have to do a lot with the new situations of life. Dewey thought that growth generally has no final end, Castells agrees with it: network development has no limit, growth is an aim itself. Communication on the Internet could be interpreted as Dewey did it: an open space where multiculturalism has a real chance for materialization, different perspectives are tolerated. This diversity has its own traps, but the dangers can be avoided with selective and critical attitude toward the participant

and information presented on the Internet. School in the network society has the important role of teaching the adequate attitudes and the efficient ways of communication.

Democracy, in Castells's opinion, is in crisis; men lost their interest in politics, so solutions should be found which help to resolve these major problems. A starting point could be Dewey's idea of democracy: according to him, the reconstruction of confidence is possible if the aim is the solution to local problems, this way getting close to the citizen's real everyday problems. Education should teach the cooperative spirit in order to form a constructive attitude in future citizens.

## **6. Conclusions**

Dewey was the most prominent intellectual of the US for many decades, a major philosophical debate could not be ended without his expressed opinion. Studying his work, I think, we can understand why many authors speak about the revival of his thoughts.

In my research I analyzed the basic concepts of his philosophy, I described the modalities in which they functioned in his system and in contact with other philosophical schools. Dewey's novelty consists in the way he interpreted the role of philosophy and of education, as means of adaptation to the environment and means of resolving social problems. Philosophy is not searching final truth anymore, the veritable pragmatist thought that philosophy should find hypothesis, methods for actual problem situations. In the same manner evaluates the concept of democracy in Dewey's view: the American constitution pronounces formal principles, representing universal measures, adaptable to any society, in any era. Dewey appointed that every individual should approach creatively the sense of democracy and democratic institutions should express the needs and habits of the people. This personal democracy cannot be saved from outside, only the individuals' attitude can make it functional and the formation of the creative and critical attitude is the task of education. Dewey believed strongly in the capacity of men of applying critical rationality but himself was not able in many cases to adopt this critical rationality towards the discussed problems. His holistic thinking refused dualistic approach, which sometimes is indispensable for criticism. Dewey was too optimistic concerning democracy, he underestimated negative forces which lead to moral tragedies and also he overestimated the rational attitude's possibilities. Even so, Dewey's idea that authentic communication is a way of saving democracy is a thought which is worthy of reflection today.



My conclusion is that Dewey identified correctly the importance of interaction and communication. In the century of social interconnectivity and economic globalism the need of individuals of interacting and communicating is overwhelming but remains a problem in this context the quality, the authenticity of these associations. Dewey's school conception could have a major role in this direction, in forming critical attitude. The aim is avoiding the possibility of being swept by the technological system, reconciling the tensions between the network and the individual and help young people in the process of self-realisation. Dewey's cooperative methods (the project method, the work-shops) have a determinative role on forming young people's character. Learning based on problem solving is essential in a world which is characterized by ready-made solutions. Education in Dewey's view transcends the walls of schools, school and society are in continuous interaction and communication, so philosophy of education becomes philosophy of life.

Dewey have never acclaimed that he knew the universal solution for the next generations, his relevance lies in the fact that he was always aware of how difficult is to foresee the future in which the youngs we teach will live. The only viable solution is to teach them self control, to be able to employ their qualities and to determine the most efficient way of using their environment. There are no final answers, the merit of Dewey is that he putted those questions wich generates new starting points, his philosophy compells us for permanent rethinking.