



**UNMODERN  
PHILOSOPHY  
AND MODERN  
PHILOSOPHY**  

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**JOHN DEWEY**

Edited and with an Introduction by Phillip Deen  
Foreword by Larry A. Hickman

IN 1947 America's premier philosopher, educator, and public intellectual John Dewey purportedly lost his last manuscript on modern philosophy in the back of a taxicab. Now, sixty-five years later, Dewey's fresh and unpretentious take on the history and theory of knowledge is finally available. Editor Phillip Deen has taken on the task of editing Dewey's unfinished work, carefully compiling the fragments and multiple drafts of each chapter that he discovered in the folders of the Dewey Papers at the Special Collections Research Center at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He has used Dewey's last known outline for the manuscript, aiming to create a finished product that faithfully represents Dewey's original intent. An introduction and editor's notes by Deen and a foreword by Larry A. Hickman, director of the Center for Dewey Studies, frame this previously lost work.

In *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy*, Dewey argues that modern philosophy is anything but; instead, it retains the baggage of outdated and misguided philosophical traditions and dualisms carried forward from Greek and medieval traditions. Drawing on cultural anthropology, Dewey moves past the philosophical themes of the past, instead proposing a functional model of humanity as emotional, inquiring, purposive organisms embedded in a natural and cultural environment.

Dewey begins by tracing the problematic history of philosophy, demonstrating how, from the time of the Greeks to the Empiricists and Rationalists, the subject has been mired in the search for immutable absolutes outside human experience and has relied on dualisms between mind and body, theory and practice, and the material and the ideal, ultimately dividing humanity from nature. The result, he posits, is the epistemological problem of how it is possible to have knowledge at all.

In the second half of the volume, Dewey roots philosophy in the conflicting beliefs and cultural tensions of the human condition, maintaining that these issues are much more pertinent to philosophy and knowledge than the sharp dichotomies of the past and abstract questions of the body and mind. Ultimately, Dewey argues that the mind is not separate from the world, criticizes the denigration of practice in the name of theory, addresses the dualism between matter and ideals, and questions why the human and the natural were ever separated in philosophy. The result is a deeper understanding of the relationship among the scientific, the moral, and the aesthetic.

More than just historically significant in its rediscovery, *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy* provides an intriguing critique of the history of modern thought and a positive account of John Dewey's naturalized theory of knowing. This volume marks a significant contribution to the history of American thought and finally resolves one of the mysteries of pragmatic philosophy.

JOHN DEWEY (1859–1952) is widely regarded as the father of progressive education and one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century. The thirty-seven volumes of his *Collected Works* comprise books and essays on education, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, logic, religion, and much more. On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday the *New York Times* hailed him as "America's Philosopher."

PHILLIP DEEN is a visiting lecturer at Wellesley College and the author of essays published in *Contemporary Pragmatism* and *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*.

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Southern Illinois University Press  
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## Foreword

In editing and presenting this previously unpublished Dewey manuscript, which was thought to be lost, Phillip Deen has performed an admirable service to readers who are already well acquainted with Dewey's copious publications. His service is perhaps even greater, however, to readers who are not as familiar with Dewey's ideas but have hoped for more a more accessible entry point, available in his own words, into the complexities of the thirty-seven volumes of his *Collected Works*.

Readers of the first sort will be delighted to find in these pages a Dewey who is more supple than the one to whom they are accustomed—more candid, perhaps, but apparently less constrained by the blue pencils of his editors. They will find a Dewey who expands on numerous themes that he introduced and developed in earlier books and essays. In this work, he clarifies old ideas and draws new connections in ways that render them more perspicuous.

The tenth chapter, "Mind and Body," provides several excellent examples. Dewey rehearses and expands themes that he presented in chapter seven of his 1925 *Experience and Nature*, "Nature, Life and Body-Mind." He points out, for example, that ordinary parlance, which treats "mind" as a verb (as in "Mind what I am saying to you" or "I'm minding the children") reveals the poverty of premodern and modern theories that separate mind and matter. Once that separation becomes philosophical dogma, such theories are hard put to explain how the putatively disparate elements can be related. For Dewey, to mind is to care for—to behave in certain observable ways. He also expands his criticism of sense-data theories. He argues that the traditional identification of observation with one of its constituents, sense perception, is one of the great historical philosophical mistakes.

Further, in what Deen appropriately characterizes as a "striking section," Dewey provides an extended discussion of knowing as a form of technology. This section is unique in Dewey's work as I know it. Philosophers interested in technology have long lamented the fact that Dewey's treatment of technology is not presented in any one location but is instead dispersed here and

there throughout his writings. Now, in this chapter, we have Dewey's clearest and most succinct remarks about his view of technology and its relation to the role of philosophy in contemporary culture. It is worth noting in this connection that Dewey's view of Francis Bacon is here more nuanced than that of contemporary interpreters who understand him as treating nature as something to be conquered. Dewey reads Bacon as arguing for a kind of transaction with nonhuman nature: nature must first be obeyed if human beings are to achieve those ends that are desirable to common life.

For readers of the second type, those who have hoped for a more easily accessible Dewey, this volume has much to offer. Many of the main themes of Dewey's massive *corpus*, early to late, are presented in a manner that is both clear and well organized. Dewey's criticism of the "reflex arc" concept in psychology; his rejection of the "quest for certainty" that characterized the premodern and modern periods of philosophy; his criticism of premodern and modern treatments of the relations between theory and practice; his attack on scientism; his rejection of the traditional split between human beings and the rest of nature; and his rejection of traditional ethical theories as reductive: they are all here.

This list of criticisms, rejections, and attacks is, of course, negative in tone. In each case mentioned, however, Dewey's revolutionary philosophy takes care to present a constructive alternative. If classical S-R (stimulus-response) theory in psychology is limited or ineffective because based on narrowly selected data and reliance on antiquated mechanical models, then he will replace it with an organic model that emphasizes selective interest and adjustment to dynamic environing conditions. If the modern quest for certainty and the "epistemology industry" that it has spawned are still hung up in the net of the premodern synthesis, then he will supplant those views with a scientific approach that is experimentalist and fallibilist. If premodern and modern philosophies have constructed a metaphysics that projects a problematic relation between theory and practice, then he will reconstruct traditional epistemology as a theory of inquiry that ensures that theory and practice function as partners in the production of new tools and new habits. If positivists have gone too far in claiming that the methods and contents of the sciences are universally applicable, then he will praise the sciences for their many contributions to human life at the same time he emphasizes the importance of wider fields of experience. If traditional philosophy has tended to split human beings off from the rest of nature, then he will reconstruct that account with the help of anthropologists, and perhaps most importantly with the help of his beloved Darwin, in order to demonstrate continuities and evolutionary development. And if traditional ethical theories have tended to be reductive in terms of their exclusive attention to the

goods of the utilitarians, the rights and obligations of deontologists, or the virtues praised by Aristotle and others, then he will present an ethics that is experimental and developmental, that treats goods, rights, and virtues as among the many factors that may be called upon as humans take account of problematic situations, imaginatively weighing one claim against another in more comprehensive processes of moral deliberation than the tradition has imagined.

The late Richard Rorty famously remarked that Dewey would be waiting at the end of the road being traveled by Anglo-American analytic philosophy as well as by French philosophers such as Foucault and Deleuze. If Rorty's assessment were in need of additional support, it could surely be found in this volume. Dewey's report to Corinne Chisholm Frost concerning this project, which Deen quotes at length, sums up matters nicely. He will attempt to do something he has not done before, and he has no idea how it will turn out. He will attempt to demonstrate how modern attempts at reconstruction of the metaphysics of Aristotle and the philosophers of the medieval period fell sadly short because they left in place debilitating elements of the old "medieval synthesis." And he will show how that failure has prevented the new synthesis that he thinks necessary, a synthesis that is relevant to contemporary conditions.

This volume further solidifies Dewey's place as dialogue partner among philosophers living and working in our time. He anticipates, for example, by some fifty years Bruno Latour's well-known remark that "We have never been modern." What Latour meant was that modern philosophy split the human and social sciences off from the natural sciences in ways that maintained an old substance-ontology that seeks to know the essential nature of things. What our contemporary situation calls for instead, he suggested, is a functionalist approach that seeks to know what things do, that is, how things behave, and therefore how what is undesirable can be intelligently managed. Moreover, modern philosophy fostered discontinuities such as the split between a self-sufficient, culture-free nature, on one side, and a domain of culturally enmeshed human beings, on the other. What is needed now, in his view, is an account in which that split is healed—in which nature is treated as culture and human beings are understood as involved in the cutting edge of an evolving nature. In other words, we have never been modern because we, like the so-called "moderns," have never escaped the orbit of the "premoderns."

All of this, of course, is more or less what Dewey was saying some five decades earlier, and what he clearly articulates in the manuscript we now know as *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy*. In this volume Dewey shows the way to a new philosophy, a philosophy that is not only relevant

to but very much needed in our current situation. It is a philosophy that places ethics, social and political philosophy, and aesthetics at the center of philosophical discourse. It is an approach to philosophy that, were it to be embraced, would change forever the type of problems that are debated in professional journals and the ways that philosophy is taught in the classroom. It is presented here in this volume, and we are indebted to Phillip Deen for bringing it out of the archives into the light of day.

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## Acknowledgments

On a personal level, I would first like to thank John J. McDermott of Texas A&M University and Larry Hickman and Tom Alexander of Southern Illinois University Carbondale for spurring and sustaining my interest in Dewey's thought. In addition, I thank the staff of the Center for Dewey Studies both for their invaluable work in keeping Dewey's legacy alive and for their assistance with this project. The staff of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale's Special Collections Research Center were essential in providing the manuscripts and aiding me when I came to visit. John Shook and the Center for Inquiry allowed me to get this project off the ground by providing a residential research position in the summer of 2009. And my thanks to the editors and readers of SIU Press for guiding me through the overwhelming task of getting Dewey's book out to the world.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge some of the countless ways that Wellesley College has aided me in this project—from providing a research grant and an assistant (Kristina Costa) who engaged in the trying work of transcribing Dewey's pages to giving me a place to teach and to turn the fractured manuscript into the present book. The bulk of that work was done over the 2009–10 academic year, one hundred years after Dewey was himself a visiting lecturer in Wellesley's department of philosophy and psychology. And, as I write these words, it is seventy years to the day since Dewey came to campus to speak on "Man and the Sciences," arguing that science is an active, imaginative and social enterprise and one necessary to fight the threat of totalitarianism. Wellesley College, my colleagues in the department of philosophy and the impressive young women who come here all continue to honor Dewey's commitment to practical intelligence and intelligent practice.

Phillip Deen  
Wellesley, Massachusetts  
May 2010



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## Introduction

On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, John Dewey was interviewed by the *New York Times*. In that interview, he promised to write a book that was to be “the summation of his philosophical beliefs through the years.” It seemed that Dewey had completed such a book, but that the manuscript had been lost. Displaying the equanimity that he was known for, he was inconsolable for two days and then “simply started to write again.” Viewing it as an opportunity to write an even better book, he optimistically claimed, “You know, in a way this has given me new ideas, starting over fresh again. I think I have better ideas now” (Fine 1949). As Dewey scholars know, the book never appeared. They have been left to pine for it and speculate on its contents ever since Joseph Ratner wrote, in his editor’s introduction to Dewey’s reintroduction to *Experience and Nature*, “The unfinished introduction projected a grand design—a philosophical interpretation of the history of Western man. Dewey’s original intention was to write such a book after he finished the introduction” (LW 1:329). In 1959, many of Dewey’s friends gathered together to commemorate his 100th birthday, trade stories, and discuss his thought and character. In the course of their conversation, Corliss Lamont expressed his dismay that Dewey had never written one text encapsulating his philosophy. He continued, “I understand that toward the end of his life, he did start work on such a book and had finished about three-quarters of it.” Of the manuscript’s loss, Lamont could only say, “I think it was a tragedy” (Lamont 1959, 50–51). I am happy to write that the original manuscript has now been recovered. Though far from a perfect specimen and not precisely what Ratner and Lamont had thought, we have the opportunity to read the first “new” book by John Dewey in sixty years.

This introduction will do three things. The first is to recount the history of the manuscript and its recovery. The second is to summarize its contents, including Dewey’s history of modern philosophy, when philosophy failed by collapsing into epistemology, and what a truly modern theory of knowing would require. The second section also draws out the philosophical framework imbuing the book, which Dewey called “cultural naturalism,”

and argues that this work cashes out Dewey's provocative claim from the reintroduction to *Experience and Nature* that, rather than using the term *experience*, he should have used *culture* all along. The last task is to present what I take to be the underlying project—to come to terms with modernity and the related task to develop a critical theory of culture.

#### History of the Manuscript

In its eight-year life, Dewey's manuscript underwent radical change, but the changes were foreshadowed from the beginning. Its earliest mention is in 1939 in a letter to Joseph Ratner. Originally entitled *The Philosophic Science*—or, in one later outline, *A Science Became*—Dewey meant to write a popular text on the relation between philosophy, science, and common sense. However, it immediately got away from him: "It isn't taking the shape I anticipated and intended—but more that of a cultural interpretation in terms of modern philosophy[.] . . . I am not trying to do anything except to indicate how, given the state of culture, philosophy took the course it has taken—from that point of view it is a justification instead of an adverse criticism. The damn thing involves a sort of philosophy of modern history[.]" Including a rough outline, he marked out a tripartite structure: an introduction, a set of problems such as "Problem of Knowledge—Method" and "Nature and Man—Subject & Object, etc." and a third part on "Solutions." The letter concludes with a bit of dramatic irony with the words, "But I'm afraid I've laid out too big a job" (1939.02.13, 07028).

His frustration at "the damn thing" would continue throughout. Beginning work in the summer of 1939 at his Hubbards retreat and continuing in Key West, he would write a year later that both pieces were "neither any good and I doubt if this is going to be" (1940.01.22, 09497). By February of 1941, he was on his third attempt at the book, claiming to have "a better start, but only a start" (1941.02.20, 07067). This start included three chapters on "The Continuing Life of Philosophy," "Conflict within Philosophy" and "The Conflict becomes Confusion," none of which have survived.

But something seems to have changed soon after. The recovered manuscripts run from the summer of 1941 to late 1942 (with, in one case, a revision in 1943) and mark a time of concentrated thought and effort. At time of war, "philosophy didn't seem to have much place in this hell of a world, but I got started in May and have kept at it more or less ever since, something of an escape; the book—if it ever is one—is rather different from anything I have done before—general philosophic theory—more of the 'I'm telling you' type and less argument" (1941.07.29, 09748; see also 1941.12.10, 13300). He began working in earnest and with a clearer sense of the final product. To Corinne Chisholm Frost he wrote,



The leading idea is that the problems and the different philosophies (attempts at solution) of modern times have their source in the strains or tensions produced by the (relative) dissolution of the medieval synthesis. . . . I'm trying something different from what I've done before and I have no idea how it is going to come out. I want to show that the confusion and chaos of so much of modern life is due first to the emergence of the new forces, Protestantism, Nationalism, democracy, industrial revolution, new physics etc. from out the medieval synthesis and secondly to the fact that many of the fundamental ideas of the old synthesis were not discarded but were carried over into the systems that attempt a new philosophical formulations, and thereby has prevented the development of a synthesis which actually corresponds to the vital conditions and forces of the present (1941.06.28, 09404).

By January of 1942, he claimed to have “an idea which will work out, which none of the earlier ones did—there is no straight-out ‘modern’ philosophy, that is conceived in modern terms of what is modern but an inconsistent mixture of old and new” (1942.01.23, 13074). In large part, this is precisely what he would go on to write.

Alternation between optimism and pessimism would continue. At one time, he would tell Arthur Bentley that he has made significant progress on issues of epistemology, human nature and individualism, the roots of modern thought in the Greek-medieval, and the completion of chapters nine and ten of the recovered manuscript (1942.03.19, 15220). He would also come up with a new title: *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy* (1942.05.01, 13310). It is during this period of optimism running from mid-1941 through 1942 that Dewey wrote the manuscript that we have now. But, three years later, the book would reappear in his correspondence only for Dewey to tell Bentley, with whom he was writing *Knowing and the Known*, “I don’t know whether I ever told you that twice I have started to write a ‘social’ interpretation of the history of philosophers—if not of philosophy. I accumulated a lot of mss but it never would jell. When we get this job done maybe I’ll go back to it” (1945.02.14, 15410).

Of course, he did not get back to it and the manuscript went missing. Once the manuscript was gone, and with Joseph Ratner encouraging him to use the material from the reintroduction to *Experience and Nature* as the basis for going forward, Dewey hoped to begin his book on modern philosophy anew. Though he considered co-authoring with Ratner, and Ratner gladly accepted, it never came about (1949.07.11, 07254; 1949.07.16, 07256; 1949.07.18, 07258).

But let us turn to the part that is most intriguing—how did the text disappear, and how has it reappeared? In both cases, the answer is rather

mundane. While Dewey's life may have spanned the period from the Civil War to the detonation of the thermonuclear bomb, the great mystery of what happened to his manuscript on modern philosophy comes down to whether, on a fateful day in 1947, Dewey left it in a cab or, if not, whether he left it on the sidewalk for someone to take it.

There are various accounts of the loss, but they tell largely the same story. To Raymond Dixon, Dewey wrote, "I put all my correspondence with the Philosophical Library in a briefcase, together with some typewritten chapters of a book I was working on in, which I lost on our motor trip in return from Nova Scotia—my own carelessness of course" (1947.10.11, 14441). The *New York Times* interview mentioned above claims that it was "because of an error of a subordinate while traveling." Corliss Lamont and Roberta Dewey told the same story: the Deweys had returned from their Nova Scotia cabin one summer to their apartment in New York. Leaving their bags for the doorman and taking the elevator up, Dewey suddenly realized that he had left his briefcase in the cab. The briefcase, they learned, had been removed from the cab but disappeared soon after (Lamont 1959, 50). This story was repeated by Roberta Dewey seven years after John's death. Upon the Deweys' return to New York after closing their Nova Scotia cabin, the doormen who unloaded the car waited for them to go upstairs before transferring everything—only the briefcase did not make it. "As John Dewey believed only in facts and there [were] no facts in this disappearance, only assumptions, it cannot be definitely stated that this manuscript was stolen that night" (1959.09.14, 17930). Though Dewey would not speculate, Roberta was happy to, noting that some boys had recently been caught committing similar crimes in the neighborhood.

So how do we have the present manuscript? The short answer is that it was among the Dewey Papers in the Special Collections at Southern Illinois University, catalogued and waiting for decades to be rediscovered. Archivists at the Special Collections Research Center believe that the manuscript was included in the original collection. The more difficult question is how it made it into the Dewey Papers at all. Each document had been catalogued by Jo Ann Boydston, the esteemed editor-in-chief of the *Collected Works of John Dewey*. However, in personal correspondence with me, Dr. Boydston recalled some of the chapter titles but had no other recollection of the manuscripts.

As for where it was before it appeared in the Special Collections, there are at least four theories. The first is that Joseph Ratner had it. Dewey frequently gave early chapters to him for comment. Ratner, a noted packrat, may have contributed the chapters to the Dewey Papers. This is possible, since his contributions to the collection were extensive. However, it does not explain why, in 1949, Ratner commiserated with Dewey over the loss of the manuscript

and encouraged him to begin again (1949.07.06, 07255). Perhaps he simply forgot that he had them. Nor does it account for the fact that the manuscript was catalogued as part of the Dewey Papers, rather than Ratner's. The second theory is that Roberta Dewey had it. Shortly after Dewey's passing, George Dykhuizen asked her, "Have you investigated farther the manuscript which you uncovered in Nova Scotia and which you think may be the one believed to be lost?" (1952.10.01, 13674). In other words, the manuscript might not have been stolen, but left behind in Nova Scotia. We do not know if Roberta ever confirmed her suspicions. Her 1959 comments would indicate that she did not. Third, it is possible that the full manuscript was not lost, as Dewey indicated above that only a few chapters were in the briefcase. It may be that the legend of a missing manuscript, rather than missing chapters, was too tempting and spread falsely through the Dewey community. But why would Dewey speak so often as if the entire manuscript had been lost? Lastly, it is possible that Dewey lost the final draft, and what we have now is an assortment of earlier drafts. But, again, that does not explain why Dewey and Ratner spoke as if the entire thing had been lost and it was necessary to begin again. Dewey's correspondence also indicates that his work on the manuscript dried up after the burst of activity between 1941 and 1942—the period during which the extant manuscripts were written.

In short, it is presently a mystery how a manuscript thought to be lost by everyone, including the author, should reappear in the archives. Perhaps Dewey's "grand design—a philosophical interpretation of the history of Western man"—was never truly lost, only incomplete and forgotten somewhere among Dewey's papers. It would be ironic, after years of speculation on its content and the theft, if we were to discover that the manuscript had been waiting for us all along. Though we would be left to wonder, "What was *actually* in that briefcase . . . ?"

#### Dewey's Cultural History of Philosophy

In what was likely a journalistic flourish to make the story more tragic than it already was, the *New York Times* reporter claimed that the manuscript was complete as of 1945. Dewey's correspondence belies that claim. Dewey originally intended the text to have three parts—historical, theoretical, and practical. No such "practical" section seems to have been written. Furthermore, the latest and most complete outline we have shows the tripartite structure to have disappeared over time. Nevertheless, there still appear to be missing sections. For example, we have no manuscript numbered as chapter 5. And, despite the frequent appearance of social, political, and economic issues in the earlier chapters, they are typically intriguing promissory notes rather than sustained discussions. To recall one amusing example, Dewey

concludes some notes for chapter 11 with this one to himself: “Something about freedom—somewhere” (Folder 54/3). In short, Dewey never completed the book he had hoped to write.

Nor is the manuscript pristine. At one extreme, roughly half of the chapters were written in one session and have survived as continuous manuscripts, lacking only the occasional page. At the opposite extreme, “The Search for Salvation” and “The Present Problem of Knowledge” were broken into dozens of pieces, sometimes even into isolated pages. Between the two, “Wandering between Two Worlds” and “Experience as Life Function” were joined together from separate but substantial drafts. Given these facts, it is truly amazing that the extant text is so cohesive in style, content, and argument. (For a full discussion of the condition of the manuscript and the editorial principles and judgments underlying the final product, see the Editor’s Introduction.)

It has been remarked that there are no radical breaks in Dewey’s work like we might find in Heidegger’s or Wittgenstein’s. As such, *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy* discusses familiar Deweyan topics and themes. In this text, Dewey has rewritten and improved *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (with shades of *The Quest for Certainty*). It shares the semi-popular writing style, begins his account in premodern mythmaking and the way that modern philosophy unfortunately continues to carry on antiquated modes of thought, argues that conceptual dichotomies are outworn by the advent of science, and concludes with the social and moral upshot. That Dewey would argue that we have not fully understood and accepted the consequences of the scientific-technological revolution, particularly as it regards human values, is no surprise. This is arguably the central theme of Dewey’s body of work. And, of course, he offers historical accounts in other works.

As Dewey’s texts differ not in basic concepts but in detail and emphasis, we must then ask what subtle shades *Unmodern Philosophy* provides. But, in analyzing what does make it unique, we could take many routes. It is possible to evaluate Dewey’s historical account, to compare the book against contemporary works such as the reintroduction to *Experience and Nature* or *Knowing and the Known*, or to examine it as an ontology of events, a functionalized psychology, or a theory of technological inquiry. It is each of these things and more. In the following presentation of Dewey’s argument, I will approach it through the category of culture. In that vein, I will present both Dewey’s cultural history of philosophy and the philosophical framework embodied in it—cultural naturalism.

It is well known that Dewey came to question the use of the term *experience* and hoped to replace it with *culture*. This was striking, given that

it is hard to find a word closer to Dewey's heart than *experience*. It stands with *democracy*, *education*, and *inquiry* to form Dewey's final vocabulary. In the reintroduction to *Experience and Nature*, a book he came to believe should have been titled *Culture and Nature*, he presents this new term as an extension, not a rejection, of *experience*.

"Experience" is a word used to designate, in a summary fashion, the complex of all which is distinctly human. . . . "Culture" includes the material and the ideal in their reciprocal interrelationships and (in marked contrast with the prevailing use of "experience") "culture" designates, also in their reciprocal interconnections, that immense diversity of human affairs, interests, concerns, values which compartmentalists pigeonhole under "religion," "morals," "aesthetics," "politics," "economics," etc., etc. (LW 1: 331, 363; see also LW 1: 42).

Unfortunately, the reintroduction breaks off before Dewey gives a detailed discussion of what he meant by culture. But it is clear that it is a term inclusive of the whole range of human association. Revealing Hegel's "permanent deposit" in his thought, Dewey makes culture play the role of *Geist*, forming the most inclusive category within which various regions of human life interact. "We are given to thinking of society in large and vague ways. We should forget 'society' and think of law, industry, religion, medicine, politics, art, education, philosophy—and think of them in the plural." We may conceptually separate social phenomena into the economic, political, and moral, but they are all aspects of "one subject matter, highly complex and diversified" (LW 5: 120; Dewey 1927). By turning to "culture," Dewey once again hoped to escape the inherited dualisms and divisions that had brought down *experience*, *practice*, and a host of other terms.

Because it arises from a complex social world, philosophy must avoid any monistic approach to social phenomena. By *monistic* Dewey meant any theory that makes one phase of culture so central that the others are not necessary to explain social phenomena. He singled out Marxism and the British classical school for making economic theory the sole consideration, contemporary historians for doing the same with politics, social Darwinists for reducing everything to power, and clergymen and newspapers for proposing a simple moral reformation as the response to social problems. The relation between cultural spheres is dialectical in the sense that the groups are mutually dependent and no one of them is the ultimate foundation of the others. For example, Dewey's critique of ecclesiastical groups such as the medieval Church was not that they failed to address genuine human needs, but that a group that should serve spiritual needs also sought to control economic relations, the family, and the government. With Dewey's

central concept and broad approach in mind, let us turn to his cultural history of philosophy.

The final text is divided into two parts, corresponding to the two conjuncts in the title. The first part, comprising chapters 1 through 7, traces the rise of modern philosophy and the epistemological problem that forms its core. Ironically, the purpose of this genealogy is to show how deeply “unmodern” modern philosophy is. The second part is not historical but prospective. In chapters 8 through 14, Dewey begins an account of a truly modern philosophy, one that overcomes the epistemological problem of relating *subject* and *object* by functionalizing and naturalizing the process of knowing. Let us survey each chapter in turn.

In “Philosophy and the Conflict of Beliefs,” Dewey approaches philosophy as an anthropologist. He begins with prephilosophical cultures that nevertheless still told stories about their natural and cultural environment. They distinguished the ordinary from the extraordinary, lucky from unlucky, sacred from common. Desiring safety, they sought out means of control but, lacking developed science, they relied on animistic forces to protect and console themselves. Philosophy then began in myth and culture, but we should not think that it has escaped. Even today, philosophy arises in response to the clash of novel experience and inherited tradition. Unlike science, which, Dewey states, aspires to eliminate the social factor, philosophy delves into it. The cultural approach is therefore more inclusive than the merely scientific:

Philosophy has to take account of scientific conclusions. . . . Yet philosophy takes them not as isolated, complete and final in themselves, but in the context of other beliefs, moral, political, religious, economic and aesthetic. . . . To hold that the conflict must be resolved exclusively in terms of scientific beliefs is as one sided as it is to hold that it must be resolved in terms of traditional religious beliefs. For neither of these beliefs exhausts the field of experience. (ooo)

Philosophy sets scientific inquiry into a broader cultural context while simultaneously—one hopes—taking up its methods.

“The Story of Nature” presents the birth of two ideas concerning the nature of Nature. Dewey lauds the Greeks for an easy, native ability to balance the natural and the human. They saw before them an ordered, natural world but were not hidebound by the priestly class into abandoning artistry, imagination, and novelty. Repeating the assertion that philosophy must be understood in response to its social medium, Dewey asserts that two competing stories of Nature arose out of two crafts: the agricultural and the mechanical. The agrarian class saw nature as a process of immanent growth arising from a seed and eventuating in some fixed end or limit.

Individual things were defined by their inclusion under a fixed type. For the industrial class, purpose is imposed from without by the artisan. Elements do not grow of their own internal principles, but are manipulated according to the principles of mixture and separation.

In chapter 3, “The Discovery of Rational Discourse,” Dewey recounts the transition from narrative to philosophy that was achieved in ancient Greece. Stories of nature, presumed to give Adamic representation of the world, came into conflict externally as societies interacted or internally as they lost cohesion. The very capacity of language to represent came into question. The logic of inquiry was born when philosophers asked how rational discourse about nature was possible. Tracing the course running from the sophists through Socrates and Plato and ending in Aristotle, Dewey argues that the philosophical response to social disintegration was to assert that rational discourse requires an object of common understanding and intent—a world. For Plato, this shared object that would ground knowledge and thereby reintegrate society was the supernatural Idea, the basis of political craft. Aristotle, however, severed the internal connection between knowledge and social action since they unite only in contemplation. Aristotle subsumes worldly action to immanent ends working themselves out. According to Dewey, this conclusion was inevitable because the Greeks lacked a valid logic of inquiry. They were able to reconcile discourse with its object, the world, only because the forms of Greek discourse had been imposed on nature beforehand. Their logic of definition and classification lacked the methodological and physical tools needed to develop a true logic of discovery, experimentation, or inquiry.

Following this account of the ancient world, we have the fragmentary chapter on the medieval period, “The Search for Salvation.” The defining project of medieval thought was to fashion an escape from this world of political turmoil out of Aristotle’s theory of Being, the Hebraic godhead, and Roman natural law theory. These abstractions were synthesized and given emotional and institutional form in the Church. The Church achieved the seemingly impossible—a unity of theory and practice in a hierarchical society ordered according to the revealed will of God. Greek naturalism was supernaturalized. Dewey ends this part of his history by turning us toward the moderns, their debt to the idea of natural law, and the need to study modern science as part of a broader cultural movement.

“From Cosmic Nature to Human Nature” begins Dewey’s four-chapter discussion of modern philosophy. Rebellious against the stifling medieval synthesis embodied in the Church, modern thinkers made human nature take the place of the cosmic order but overcompensated with an intuitive, introspective method that replicated the supernatural separation of mind

from nature. For all its flaws, the ancient model was still a form of naturalism. The supernaturalism of the medieval period had split human nature from nature. The moderns rejected the dichotomy only to reverse it. Descartes and Locke, as the prototypically modern thinkers, did not overcome the split between the human and the natural but disagreed over whether to prioritize that which is internal to human nature or external to it. What began as the practical, human problem ossified into a metaphysical and epistemological one. Given a split between nature and human nature, the epistemological question was inevitable.

With modern philosophy, the question was not “*How* is rational discourse about nature possible?” but “*Is* knowledge possible?” It was no longer a matter of the logic of inquiry but of epistemology. In “Wandering between Two Worlds,” the blame for epistemology again falls on the antiquated inheritance bequeathed by the Greek-medieval period. Dewey shows that the interminable debate between empiricists and rationalists effaces what they share—faculty psychology, a split between the internal and external, and beliefs in certain knowledge resting on first principles, universal laws, substances, and “the given.” The result is fruitless arguments over “indubitable” truth not open to examination. Meanwhile, principles and data within scientific practice have their authority solely because of their function within inquiry, not because of temporal or ontological priority. Just as science was making rapid advances in the attainment of knowledge, philosophy was asking whether knowledge was possible at all.

“The Present Problem of Knowledge,” a critical chapter for Dewey’s cultural naturalism, consummates Dewey’s genealogy of modern philosophy. He highlights modern philosophy’s preoccupation with finding a method to secure certain knowledge and the resulting isolation of knowing from broader human concerns. The philosophical tradition has treated the problem of knowledge in the abstract when inquiry is actually a matter of concrete events. What constitutes a fact or a problem depends on the state of a culture and its tensions. To be a naturalist is to understand knowledge as an event, as a “knowing,” and method must begin from events-in-connection. “To say that man is in the natural world is then a way of saying that all events big or little that are or that can be characterized as human occur in connection with events investigated in other branches of inquiry, and are to be themselves investigated with any and all aids supplied by knowledge of these other events” (144). Inquiry is one cultural event pursued by particular groups, one event in relation to others.

As societies change over time, the problem of knowledge changes as well. Philosophy has historically distinguished between Truth revealed by Reason and belief attained by culturally embedded inquiry. The proper contrast is



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