

## DEWEY FROM STEM TO STEAM

David Granger

Welcome, one and all, to volume 32, issue 2 of *Education & Culture*. I originally began assembling this issue without a specific theme in mind. Nonetheless, as you can see from the title of my remarks, one soon began to emerge. More than a few scholars have commented on an apparent shift in Dewey's later writings that provided a counterbalance to his ardent attention to science in his early- and middle-period works—a so-called aesthetic turn. It seems to me that this move loosely parallels current initiatives in education calling for a broadening of popular curriculum focused on the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) to something like STEAM, which looks to add the arts, in various forms, to this modern-day quadrivium. Not surprisingly, proponents of STEAM now frequently enlist Dewey as a philosophical ally. It also seems to me that the authors in this issue, in their own unique ways, provide tacit support for this initiative in featuring often neglected dimensions of Dewey's work and underscoring their increasing relevance to education and a life well lived.

We begin the issue with Larry Hickman's 2015 John Dewey Lecture entitled "What We Can Teach When We Teach (About) Religion." In this timely piece, Hickman appeals to the Pragmatism of James and Dewey in an effort to address the educational and religious needs of three different types of students: (1) those of "an exclusivist persuasion"; (2) those "who [have] been persuaded by relativist claims of deferral and difference"; and (3) those who believe "that religious faith is no longer possible . . . because affiliation with institutional religion is no longer possible." When approached from a Jamesian/Deweyan perspective prioritizing religious experience, Hickman writes, a Pragmatist pedagogy of religion can serve the first type of student by "open[ing] the door to a genuine sense of alternatives in the way of religious belief" responsive to "the effects that advances within the technosciences have had on the objects of religious dogma." Alternatively, the second type of student might begin to acquire a heightened appreciation for "the processes by which effective evaluations of competing religious orientations are possible in the light of the ideals, norms, and goals" that might emerge through a genuine democratic pluralism. Finally, Hickman offers that the third type of student might have the door opened to "an understanding of the potential religious dimensions of all types of experiences, including those that are moral, political, and scientific."

Next up is Seth Vannatta's "What Use is Instrumentalism? Conservative Pragmatism in Liberal Learning." Vannatta begins by briefly sketching the main features of the current attack on the liberal arts as inadequate to the vocational needs of both

students and the imperatives of the post-industrial economy. At times, as he puts it, “the message seems to be that the liberal arts are under attack from STEM.” This vexing concern brings Vannatta inevitably to the critical question, “What utility is there in demonstrating the utility of the liberal arts?” After carefully exploring four popular responses to this question—the reactionary, the conservative, the pragmatist, and the presentist—Vannatta concludes that “fusing the conservative and pragmatist responses highlights the perennial and the evolutionary, the universal and the particular, the end in itself and the instrumental in liberal arts education.” Such a response to the question of utility, he argues, “resists the canonical rigidity of the reactionary; responds to the ever-evolving social demands and practices that help frame the perennial questions of liberal learning, but values the poetry of conversation and the disengagement demanded by such a conversation, even if social problems or student interests initiate the reflective inquiry.”

Jerry Williams then directly addresses the possibilities of a poiesis of the everyday in “The Poetry of John Dewey.” In his sensitive and probing analysis, Williams reminds us of the full scope of Dewey’s humanism and the necessity for “passionate expression” in education, an insight amply evidenced, he argues, in both Dewey’s (private) poems and (public) prose. In “Dewey and Sports: An Overview of Sport in His Work,” David Jaitner looks to break new ground in pulling together and organizing in a systematic way Dewey’s references to “sporting practices or movement cultures” across his broad oeuvre, references which commonly served only illustrative purposes. The result of this analysis is a compelling overview of the (mostly) positive possibilities for meaning-making and enhanced living in and through sport that might be drawn from Dewey, including matters social, pedagogical, and aesthetic. Jaishikha Nautiyal extends this analysis to include the contemporary quotidian world in “Aesthetic and Affective Experiences in Coffee Shops: A Deweyan Engagement with Ordinary Affects in Ordinary Spaces.” In a nutshell, Nautiyal uses coffee shops as exemplars of everyday “third spaces”—or spaces outside the home and work environment—capable of providing interactive and communicative experiences that are at once artful, affectively rich, and deeply embodied. In “Experience and Expression,” artist-educators Jay Michael Hanes and Eleanor Weisman employ Dewey’s theorizing about “the act of expression” to examine their own creative process in the context of a joint performance piece. Highlighting the Deweyan concepts of compression, impulsion, and expression, they explore the relationship between creative learning and knowledge construction. What is more, Hanes and Weisman close provocatively by suggesting that experience and expression in such a collaborative artistic process can potentially be a vehicle for social justice in a democracy. Our final article is Vasco d’Agnese’s “Art and Education in Dewey: Accomplishing Unity, Bringing Newness to the Fore.” After providing an overview of Dewey’s understanding of the relationship between art and experience, including the many estimable attributes of aesthetic

experience, d'Agnese makes a case for the ultimate centrality of art in Dewey's thinking. Indeed, he concludes by showing how art as experience realizes the primary task of education for Dewey: "bringing newness to the fore by emancipating and enlarging experience."

Appropriately enough, the issue closes with Jeremiah Dyehouse's review of George E. Hein's thoughtful and wide-ranging book *Progressive Museum Practice: John Dewey and Democracy*.

As always, enjoy.

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