Politics and Prose

The past year or so I have become more involved in politics as well as absorbed as much information as I could about candidates. The discussion among the presidential hopefuls occupied more than the usual amount of time in my day. When I get weary of what has seemed like an endless presidential campaign, I think of Dewey’s own commitment to the issues of his time, through his writing and his actions. When I watch Keith Olbermann or Rachel Maddow at night, doing email in between their features, I think of Dewey’s essays in the popular press, or the clip of him being interviewed in 1929 that starts Larry Hickman’s wonderful film on Dewey’s legacy that I use in my classes. Dewey was willing to reach out far beyond the walls of his institution in making his thought alive and present.

The title of Susan Mayer’s essay, “Dewey’s Dynamic Integration of Vygotsky and Piaget,” may cause some puzzlement among readers, as she asserts that Dewey never read Vygotsky. Mayer seeks to show how Dewey joins what might be broadly called the cultural emphasis of Vygotsky with Piaget’s own emphasis on rationality in showing that “Dewey’s broad theorizing of democracy’s implications for schooling can be seen to integrate the research emphases of the two psychologists.” Kurt Stemhagen and Jason Smith look at an area neglected by theorists of democracy, namely mathematics education. They use a little-known work of Dewey, The Psychology of Number and its Applications to Methods of Teaching Arithmetic, originally published by James A. McLellan and Dewey in 1895, as they make their argument for basing mathematics education on a more humanistic foundation. The final essay in this issue, by Kyle Greenwalt, is a rereading and repositioning of the Dewey given to us in Herbert Kliebard’s The Struggle for the American Curriculum. Greenwalt seeks an “earther” Dewey than the “hovering” figure he sees in Kliebard.

Three book reviews, by Craig Cunningham, Joseph Grange, and Barbara Thayer-Bacon fill out this issue. Both David Granger and Timothy Mahoney have done excellent jobs in locating and suggesting texts and reviewers for this feature. Finally, I am happy to welcome Jeff Milligan of Florida State University to the editorial board, starting in 2009.

—A. G. Rud
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