

Remarks on the Conceptualization
of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*^{*)}

It was a footnote in the edition of the *New Republic* of 17th July 1915 in which Walter Lippmann gave an appraisal of the philosophy of John Dewey. Lippmann commented on Dewey's break with idealism, which had become evident at last in his collection of essays on Darwin and the "experimental theory of knowledge" in 1910.¹

"When he (Dewey; J.O.) says that the true American philosophy must be one of radical experiment, Professor Dewey opens up a curious question. He is urging us to do something never done before by any other people. He is urging us consciously to manufacture our philosophy. There would be no more complete break with the tradition of thought" (Lippmann 2000, p. 307).

The idea that "in American" philosophy is only a continuous experiment should be understood as a break "with the whole tradition of philosophy" (ibid., p. 309). Whatever philosophy is made up of, it reveals nothing about "absolute principles", but merely the person of the philosopher. Each philosophy only allows one conclusion to be drawn, namely that of its creator, and he can be anybody. "The man's philosophy is his autobiography" (ibid., p. 308). Philosophy is an adaptation of desires to the limitations of life (ibid.), and not a revelation of absolute truths.

"What Professor Dewey urges us to do, ... is to recognize the real nature of philosophizing and to make the best of it. Instead of spinning our thoughts blindly and calling them absolute truth, let us spin them deliberately and be ready to change them. Let us continue to write autobiographies, but let us be sure we know they are autobiographies" (ibid., p. 309).

The true purpose of philosophy is to provide life counsel. It gives rise to learning and is an intelligent form of adaptation, no more and no less. Dewey, according to Lippmann, breaks with the "pretensions of philosophy", and his "experimental philosophy" is so radical "that it is ready to experiment with philosophy itself" (ibid.).

It is my intention to apply this assessment to the philosophy of education. The question of my lecture is therefore: Does Dewey also experiment with education? And if so, with which education? To answer this, I will first of all make some comments on the context of the adoption of pragmatism and thereby also take a look at the preconditions that Dewey found for his thesis in *Democracy and Education* (1). In the second part I will illustrate that Dewey

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¹ John Dewey: *Influence of Darwin of Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Holt 1910). The key essay "The Experimental Theory of Knowledge" had appeared in July 1906 in *Mind*.

had to study other theories of education in order to be able to formulate the core of his own theory, and will explain how he did this (2). Finally, I will describe the political concern that indeed presupposes a radical experiment or a break with theory. In order to be able to justify *Democracy and Education* in a conceptual and plausible manner, Dewey had to reject the eminent theories of education of his time (3).

1. Contexts of the theory

The assessment by the young Walter Lippmann was not shared by everyone. From the 1st to the 5th September 1908 the III International Congress for Philosophy took place at the University of Heidelberg. The man behind this congress was the French philosophy professor Emile Boutroux, who had organised the first congress on the occasion of the world exhibition in Paris in 1900.² The opening lecture in Heidelberg was held by Josiah Royce (1909). He defended the concept of absolute truth, which, with one exception, met with approval in the subsequent discussion (Elsenhans 1909, pp. 91sq.). The exception was F.C.S. Schiller, fellow at *Corpus Christi College* in Oxford.³ The following day, in the section “Logics and epistemology”, Schiller gave a lecture that caused such a stir that the planned discussion time was not sufficient.⁴ The congress organisers had to provide extra time, and the minutes record over 25 contributions to a heated debate that was to have consequences.

Schiller’s lecture on the theme of “*The rationalistic concept of truth*” (Schiller 1909) developed the counter-theory to Royce. In the discussion, the most diverse of opponents spoke up, who had nothing in common with one another other than that they were *against* pragmatism. The Vienna philosopher Wilhelm Jerusalem, who had translated William James, stated that Schiller’s “objections” made it clear that he did not understand German philosophy. According to Jerusalem, Schiller was making a problem of that which he and pragmatism presuppose without question, namely “theoretical recognition”. The German philosophers, he propounded, enquire as to the possibility of knowledge and therefore – literally – “dig deeper” than the Anglo-Saxons (Elsenhans 1909, p. 728). The Geneva lecturer Otto Karmin explained that the thesis of pragmatism is not a new one, because it was already developed by August Comte in the positivist epistemology and was even somewhat dubious then (ibid.). The Zurich psychologist and educationalist Gustav Störring acknowledged the importance of pragmatism at best “for the question of the psychogenesis of thought, but not in a logical-epistemological context” (ibid., p. 729), i.e. in the decisive philosophical regard.

And this wasn’t all: Rudolf Goldscheid from Vienna reminded the audience of a “*critical pragmatism*” in contrast to the current “relativistic” and “primitive” one. Ernst Mally from Graz called the “pragmatist definition of truth” circular (ibid., p. 732). Ernst Dürr from Bern spoke of arbitrariness, Oskar Ewald from Vienna referred pragmatism to the “eternal laws” of thought formulated by Kant (ibid., pp. 734/735), Leonhard Nelson from Göttingen saw a “fundamentally wrong presentation of the problem” (ibid., p. 737), and Paul Carus, editor of *The Monist* in Chicago⁵, defended American philosophy against pragmatism. Carus was the

² The second congress took place in Geneva in 1904.

³ The minutes of the discussion record the following entry: “He (Schiller) could not quite gather what Prof. R’s absolute truth really was. Sometimes it seemed to be a pure postulate, sometimes a pure form, sometimes a mere hypothesis. He himself was not greatly interested in such things” (Elsenhans 1909, p. 92).

⁴ The lecture by Armstrong (1909), which followed that of Schiller, was also discussed. However, it was Schiller’s lecture that provoked the most controversy. Both lectures took place on 2nd September 1908.

⁵ Paul Carus (1882-1919) was the first editor of the scientific journal *The Monist*. Of German descent, Carus studied philosophy and classical philology in Tübingen. He received his doctorate in 1876 and initially taught at the Saxonian Military Academy in Dresden. Following this, he went to the United States and became editor of

only person to have intimate knowledge of the American discussion. He was an influential publicist and early critic of pragmatism, who was in a position to personally appraise all of its authors. According to the minutes, he said the following in Heidelberg:

“Pragmatism may come from America, but, thank God, the movement has not yet taken possession of the whole country. Pragmatism is a disease that has emerged from the addiction to create something new and totally original. That which is true about it, however, is not new, and that which is new is wrong”.
(*ibid.*, p. 737).

The second American lecture was given by A. C. Armstrong from the *Wesleyan University* in Connecticut. He outlined the following justification: Pragmatism is not a philosophical system, but rather a *methodological* doctrine created by William James, John Dewey and F.C.S Schiller,

“a method inherent in all thinking, when this is rightly understood, one which has been victoriously followed by the natural sciences, and which is now introduced into philosophy for the latter’s regeneration and revival”
(Armstrong 1909, p. 720).

Philosophy should learn from the natural sciences – indeed nothing less than the method of thought. The method is not, as the criticism assumed, “subjectivist” or “relativist”, it permits different versions and can be applied to metaphysical problems. “Philosophy” would be the practical process of thought, as far as problems of all types are affected, without continuing to address essentialist or a priori questions that had occupied German philosophy for so long. There is no “per se”, rather only experience and its correction.

This radical claim must have met with huge resistance. In 1908, at the time of the Heidelberg Congress, “pragmatism” was a provocation that was rejected by European philosophy. The unanimity of the defence can be explained by the radical nature of the attack; there would be nothing left for philosophy if its methods of learning were no longer distinguishable from the social sciences. In the year of publication of the volume to accompany the congress, it was therefore claimed that pragmatism had been refuted and dismissed once and for all (Seliber 1909). Particularly in German philosophy, which had founded idealism, the American “instrumentalism” was the subject of strong criticism, the effects of which still linger in educational philosophy today (Oelkers 2005).

Dewey responded to the criticism in the Spring of 1909 with a Socratic dialogue, which was entitled *A Short Catechism Concerning Truth*.⁶ The dialogue was published in *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (Dewey 1910, pp. 154-168), i.e. the collection to which Walter Lippmann would refer a few years later. In the short “Catechism of truth”, a pupil and a teacher discuss nine objections to pragmatism, which portrayed the spectrum of the Heidelberg Congress.⁷ The form of the dialogue as a “catechism” is to be understood

The Open Court Magazine, a monthly journal for comparative religion. In 1888 *The Monist* was founded. In 1902 Carus had presented a first criticism of pragmatism here (*Theology as a Science*, *The Monist* 12, 4 (July 1902), pp. 544-657). The early criticism of pragmatism, often put forward by idealists and scholastics, is documented in Shook (2001).

⁶ Paper read in the Spring of 1909 before the Philosophical Club of Smith College.

⁷ “Truth” is subjective, without an independent criterion coming into play; Experience has no transcendence; Pragmatists constantly change the reason for their statements; “Truth” is the only the result of the application of ideas; The psychology of “finding out” is seen as the reality of that which has been found out; Pragmatism is nothing more than that which has been rejected, namely an intellectual mode of access to the truth; The

ironically; in contrast to Luther's catechism, dogmas are dissected and not confirmed. The pupil has changed teacher. His old teacher was called "Professor Purus Intellectus", and his new teacher is called John Dewey. In his previous idealistic studies, the pupil had experienced pragmatism as so nonsensical that he decided henceforth to consult the original.

Dewey (1985, p. 5) first of all defends the post-Darwinist concept of experience: "The pragmatist ... insisted that experience is a matter of functions and habits, of active adjustments and re-adjustments, of coordinations and activities, rather than of states of consciousness." Truths are not simply there and can be recognised, but rather have to be discovered, whereby a distinction is to be made between events and truths (ibid., p. 6). The technique of finding out is common in all "physical sciences", "forming hypotheses, experimenting, testing, corroborating, refuting, modifying ideas" (ibid., pp. 8/9). In this framework the "truth" of pragmatism must be seen; it is the truth that can be found out with the means of research, without ever being able to be absolute. Truths that cannot be put to the test are dogmas, not truths (ibid., p. 11).

"Naturally, the pragmatist claims his theory to be true in the pragmatist sense of truth. It works, it clears up difficulties, removes obscurities, puts individuals into more experimental, less dogmatic, and less arbitrarily sceptical relations to life; aligns philosophic with scientific method; does away with self-made problems of epistemology; clarifies and reorganizes logical theory, etc." (ibid., p. 9).

This "technique" (ibid.) is transferred to the theory of education. Education is – like any form of life – an uninterrupted experiment, which knows no epistemological special status. What Dewey (1910, p. 11) calls "the marvellous adaptations of organisms to their environment" in his essay on Darwin, also applies to education. Education too is not steered by a superior or "supreme" goal, because life cannot generally be understood as the ultimate fulfilment "of the goal of nature and of man" (ibid., p. 10). This, says Dewey at this point, is a break with the official and regnant philosophy of Europe that lasted for over two thousand years" (ibid., p. 11).

In another essay from 1909⁸ Dewey discusses the difficulties of teaching sciences in schools. Because the teaching material is "indefinite" and the sheer number of sciences far exceeds the possibilities of teaching, it is no wonder that teachers hark back to the narrow confines of their old subjects "English grammar", "text-book geography", "war campaigns and the list of rulers in history" and "memory games in literature", "since a single book will contain the 'Poems Every Child Should Know'" (Dewey 1985, pp. 71/72). But modern sciences challenge the school and education much more fundamentally, not through their content, but through their method. It would be wrong to adapt the new sciences to the old school subjects. The didactic cardinal error is to stereotype methodologically generated knowledge into "subjects", thus making it teachable for the old school.

judgements of the pragmatists cannot be differentiated from the judgements of other philosophers; Pragmatism too is only theory and not experience; and the criterion of the satisfying work of hypotheses reduces research to the "human factor" (Dewey 1985, pp. 3sq.)

⁸ *Science as Subject-Matter and as Method*. Address of the Vice-President and Chairman of Section L, Education, American Association for the Advancement of Science (Boston 1909) (Dewey 1985, pp. 69-79).

“Science teaching has suffered because science has been so frequently presented just as so much ready-made knowledge, so much subject-matter of fact and law, rather than as the effective method of inquiry into any subject-matter” (ibid., S. 74).

This thesis is levelled against Herbert Spencer’s (1861) theory of worth-while knowledge, which expected the greatest benefit for the development of society to come from the natural sciences, and attributed them for this reason also with the greatest didactic benefit. But that, according to Dewey (1985, p. 74), would only lead to an equating of school education with “the amassing of information”, while what matters are the ways of learning, of how knowledge is generated, and what constitutes its character.

“Surely if there is any knowledge which is of most worth it is the knowledge of the ways by which anything is entitled to be called knowledge instead of being mere opinion or guess-work or dogma” (ibid., pp. 74/75).

In this sense learning would be “participation in the making of knowledge”, i.e. a democratic participation, which does not assume a superiority of tradition or facts, but rather focuses on the process of generating knowledge and the building up of a “scientific habit of mind” (ibid., p. 77). Knowledge is not “didactified” and in this way adapted to the pupil, “ready-made”, as Dewey says; rather, the generation of knowledge should become transparent.

“Such knowledge never can be learned by itself, it is not information, but a mode of intelligent practice, an habitual disposition of mind. Only by taking a hand in the making of knowledge, by transferring guess and opinion into belief authorized by inquiry, does one ever get a knowledge of the method of knowledge” (ibid., p. 75).

Spencer’s natural sciences are authoritarian, because they confront the learner with ready-made results and do not demand any involvement or participation. Dewey’s “scientific method”, by contrast, is democratic, not only in the sense that it can be applied to any subject (ibid., p. 78), and also not just because anyone can learn it, but more fundamentally as a way of generating collective intelligence (ibid., p. 78/79).⁹ Almost emphatically, Dewey says: “Actively to participate in the making of knowledge is the highest prerogative of man and the only warrant of his freedom” (ibid., p. 79).

In 1911, for the second volume of Paul Monroe’s *Cyclopedia of Education*, Dewey defines the relationship between democracy and education. Monroe’s *Cyclopedia* was presumably the first pedagogical encyclopaedia to incorporate the key phrase of “Democracy and Education”. Under this heading, Dewey summarised the American discussion since the middle of the century. Thus democracy and education are linked to one another in two ways: first, in order to perpetuate itself, democracy needs educated citizens; and second, democratic ideas shape education itself, namely the constitution and process of the public school system (Dewey 1985, S. 417/418).

⁹ “If ever we are to be governed by intelligence, not by things and by words, science must have something to say about *what* we do, and not merely about *how* we may do it most easily and economically. And if this consummation is achieved, the transformation must occur through education, by bringing home to men’s habitual inclination and attitude the significance of genuine knowledge and the full import of the condition requisite for its attainment” (Dewey 1985, pp. 78/79).

The prerequisite for this is respect of individuality and thus the overcoming of feudal authority in the process of societal differentiation.

“Democracy inevitably carries with it increased respect for the individual as individual, greater opportunity for freedom, independence and initiative in conduct and thought, and correspondingly increased demand for fraternal regard and for self-imposed and voluntarily borne responsibilities” (ibid., p. 418).

Dewey wrote numerous contributions for Monroe’s *Cyclopedia*, in which he referred at several points to Charles Eliot, who had set central themes of the “new education”. These should determine the differences of the American education system with that of England or Continental Europe, for instance in relation to freedom in education, the stronger individualisation of the teaching and above all the function of education in a democratic society.¹⁰ Eliot is also one of the sources for Dewey’s famous formula according to which education is a “continuous reconstruction of experience” (ibid., p. 431).¹¹ In this way, education is neither limited nor can it be specified, it is simply the continual process of intelligent adaptation to each new situation in life.

This *shift* of theory has consequences: Individuality is no longer, as in the European tradition of cultivation, the “internal” alternative world to the “external” society. Indeed, the dualism of individual and society in general becomes questionable. Society is not a “thing” compared with the individual, but rather a complex interaction between individuals and groups. All social institutions or processes are *problem solutions*, which can be changed in the light of new problems and new solutions. This makes it impossible to relate education to an enduring internal cultivation. This forms a fundamental starting point for the pragmatist theory of education, it refers to social interaction, which cannot use any unquestioned authority in order to come into being.

Demands for a democratic educational reform have been a theme in American journalism since approximately the middle of the 19th century. In 1850, Edward Mansfield used the term *American Education*,¹² which with reference to the idea of the republic – and not of education – could be traced back to three principles, namely the American constitution, the natural sciences, and thus modern civilisation as well as the idea of Christendom as it is laid down in the bible (Mansfield 1850, p. 62).¹³ Similar reflections can be found in numerous treaties in the decade prior to the American Civil War. Reference is made to an education for the people and not just for the elite (*popular education*: Mayhew 1850),¹⁴ the overcoming of the current educational system and its undemocratic modus operandi (Andrews 1853) or the

¹⁰ *Liberty in Education* (Speech before the Nineteenth Century Club of New York 1886); *Undesirable and Desirable Uniformity in Schools* (Address given to the National Educational Association, Saratoga, July 12, 1892); *The Function of Education in Democratic Society* (An Address delivered before the Brooklyn Institute on October 2, 1897) (Eliot 1909a, pp. 123-148; 271-300; 399-418).

¹¹ Article “Education” in the first volume of Monroe’s *Cyclopedia* (Dewey 1985, pp. 425-434).

¹² The second edition was published in 1877. Edward Deering Mansfield (1801-1888) was, among other things, author of the *Political Grammar of the United States* (New York: Harper&Brothers 1834).

¹³ The *American Education* was reviewed in January 1851 in the *American Whig Review* as follows: “The subject and purpose of this book should comment it to a universal attention. A system of education truly adopted to this country, politically and morally, is *the* great desideration. All contributions to a thorough discussion of the subject should be eagerly welcomed and universally considered” (The American Whig Review 1851, p. 96).

¹⁴ Reprinted around 1867 under the title *The Means and Ends of Universal Education* (Mayhew 1867).

revival of education in view of the material and curricular state of schools (*revival of education*: May 1855).

A public education for all, which is adapted to the goals of a *civil society*, had been established in 1854 by the President of the Brown University, Francis Wayland.¹⁵ The huge progress of industry, according to Wayland, the growth and unequal distribution of societal wealth, the increase in mobility and the easing of social intercommunication, all suggest a public form of education, which every person must achieve, because everybody is directly or indirectly affected by all developments. This argument was therefore not first put forward by Dewey, but was a central theme of public discourse on the future of education more than sixty years before *Democracy and Education*. For Francis Wayland, it is not the state that is decisive in this process, but rather the spirit of the public, which cannot be managed and must instead take its own shape.

“Thus the public mind is ever wakeful. Every man is continually forming judgements, true or false, but yet judgements. Not only concerning the events of his own town or village, but events that are occurring throughout the Republic and the world” (Wayland 1855, p. 18).

The solution for the central problems of the rapidly developing industrial society is not rigid social inclusion or state distribution, but rather mobility and education. The civil society requires citizens who can participate in public affairs. After the civil war in 1869, Charles William Eliot coined the term “new education”.¹⁶ This was meant to describe a practical reform of higher education in the United States that was orientated towards the natural sciences, modern languages, and political economy.¹⁷

As a long-time president of Harvard University, Charles Eliot held a concept of education that should place a central focus on societal applicability and efficiency (Eliot 1909). Through this, also the state of pedagogy was criticised: “The history of education is full of still-born theories; the literature of the subject is largely made up of theorizing; whoever reads it much will turn with infinite relief to the lessons of experience” (Eliot 1869, p. 204). With such a speculative science, the problem of how a democratic education can be developed could not be tackled. This had already been stated by Mansfield (1850, p. 62); metaphysics does not fit in with modern education unless it becomes a science.

The progress of this development was precisely registered (White 1874). The *Government Printing Office* in Washington published a report in 1874 on the state of public education, which was directly related to the progress of prosperity and social culture (A Statement 1874, p. 11/12). The development of industry, the distribution of ownership and the productivity of societal work demanded the schooling of intelligence of the whole population and not only the elite. The report was drawn up for the education bureau of the interior ministry by Duane Doty and William Torrey Harris, Superintendents of State Schools of Detroit and St. Louis, respectively. Originally, the report was due to be compiled for the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, but appeared one year later with the intention of describing the special quality of the American education system and its specific developmental direction, also in order to depict the competitive situation.

¹⁵ Francis Wayland (1796-1865) was President of the Brown University from 1827 to 1850.

¹⁶ In: *Atlantic Monthly* (February, March 1869).

¹⁷ Described in detail in: What is a Liberal Education? (*The Century*, June 1884) (Eliot 1909a, pp. 87-122).

The key sentences of the influential report read as follows:

“The modern industrial community cannot exist without free popular education carried out in a system of schools ascending from the primary grade to the university. And without a free development of productive industry, enabling the individual to accumulate the wealth necessary for the supply of necessities of life faster than he consumes them, there is not left the leisure requisite to that cultivation of intelligence needed in the theoretical discussion and comprehension of public affairs; and without such occupation of the individual with public affairs, a democracy could exist only in name” (ibid., p. 12).

The accompanying curriculum had two central criteria, namely the material coping with life and integration into the community (ibid., pp. 14/15), not “education” in the sense of the European refinement. Both of these criteria should apply uniformly. To this aim, elementary education (common schools) is concentrated on a core curriculum and organised in an action-oriented manner.¹⁸ Higher education too (high schools, academies, seminaries)¹⁹ is strongly related to practical use aspects, which should have direct effects on the curriculum. *Classical studies* become marginal and only appear useful in a function-related manner.

The German grammar-school literature of the 19th century would have called this “materialistic” (GÜNTHER 1839 and numerous others). Both the criterion of societal usefulness and the link between democracy and education was alien to this literature, and a similar state of affairs applied for other Continental European educational systems. The assumption seems to hold, therefore, that the American theory of education was developed into the European “higher education”. Dewey followed this, and was therefore not the first to put forward a theory of the relationship between democracy and education. *Democracy and Education* of 1916 could therefore start out from a developed discourse, which Dewey gave a special flavour of his own. This special feature emerged from a theory problem. Dewey asks not only about the relationship between democracy and education, but also asks at the same time which theory of education is at all suitable for this relationship.

2. *The proof of superiority for a democratic theory*

What was established in the seventh chapter of *Democracy and Education* as “the democratic conception in education” presupposes that an accompanying theory of education is not simply available, but has to be first of all created. Dewey dissociates himself, and this in the passage through competing theories whose defects need to be proved before one’s own theory can be brought into play. The ambition lies in transferring this break with philosophical tradition of which Lippmann had spoken to the theory of education (Oelkers 2000). One’s own terms must be superior to those of other theories if one is really to find a new approach that is capable of reacting to the development of sciences according to Darwin and which at the same time places the relationship between democracy and education as the central focus.

¹⁸ “The common school aims to give the pupil the great arts of receiving and communicating intelligence. Drawing and vocal music are taught quite generally and the rudiments of natural science are taught in most city schools. Declamation of oratorical selections is a favourite exercise and is supposed to fit the youth for public and political life. Debating societies are formed for the same purpose” (A Statement 1874, p 16).

¹⁹ High schools are part of the public education system, while academies and seminars are private institutions. (A Statement 1874, p. 16).

The first and decisive term of Dewey's theory is one that has used heavily throughout history, namely "growth or development". The term plays a central role in the anthropology of the 18th century, and also in the romanticism and the subsequent pedagogy of the 19th century. Dewey retains the term "growth", but gives it a totally new meaning, which removes itself from the organic concept of growth on the one hand and from finalistic conceptions of development on the other. Fundamental is not the growth of a natural quality in time, but rather the process of adaptation in view of any new problems. This excludes any form of teleology, which, however, as a rule forms the core of educational theories. Educational theories are goal theories, which can ignore the process.

Dewey turns this relationship on its head. The use of the term "growth" or "development" is wrong in educational contexts if it implies teleology "that is a movement toward a fixed goal" (Dewey 1985a, p. 55). According to Darwin, a teleology of nature is out of the question, which however in the pedagogy of the 19th century is used as a matter of course. From Rousseau to Fröbel, in educational theories "nature" is always synonymous with "development", whereby it is implied that development is always moving towards a particular goal. This goal is reached with the process, it is therefore not part of the process and consequently cannot be corrected by the process.

Fundamental to this is the metaphor of the "path", which since Plato's *Politeia* has had a considerable influence on the imagination of education (Guski 2004). Education does not only lead from lower states to higher states; it only has one path and one goal at its disposal. Path and goal are linked, but the goal is fixed independently of the path. It is "given", a *telos* in the ancient sense, that things can be achieved or not achieved, but not changed. In this sense, Rousseau speaks of *perfectibilité*, Hegel refers to the *development of the spirit*, and Fröbel conceives of *The Education of Man*. In all of these theories, growth appears as the path towards the goal. "Growth is regarded as *having* an end, instead of *being* an end" (Dewey 1985a, p. 55). For Dewey, "growth" is an ever limited period, which finds its end in order to begin anew, while in the classical theory the development achieves or misses its predefined goal.

The teleological theory has to take on board three educational fallacies: The obstinate faculties of the child are faded out of educational theories, they would only disrupt expectations; the basic situation of education seems to remain fixed, so that nothing needs to be undertaken to adapt learning to new situations; and third, education favours means that ensure automation, as otherwise continuous growth towards the goal could hardly be achieved. "In all cases, the adult environment is accepted as a standard for the child. He is to be brought up *to* it" (ibid.). The goal is conformity with the goal, and then any other behaviour can be only one thing, "mischief or anarchy" (ibid.). This also explains the position of the teacher: "Since the end of growth is outside of and beyond the process of growing, external agents have to be resorted to induce movement towards it" (ibid., p. 56).

Roussau's *gouverneur* is conceived of in this way, as is Pestalozzi's *Mutter Gertrud* and not least Fröbel's *Kindergärtnerin* and thus the teachers of *progressive education*. In all of these models, the teacher should take for granted the nature of the child and support from the outside that which develops itself. However, this demands either the full knowledge of a process that is only just developing, or else an addition to nature, with which growth can be intruded upon. But, according to Dewey, "in reality there is nothing to which growth is relative save more growth" (ibid.), and following from this, there is nothing to which education is subordinate save more education" (ibid.). The child is therefore not "immature"

but rather self-acting. “Immaturity” emerges as an attribution, in comparison to adults children are lacking certain desired traits. Then a deficit has to be compensated for, and this presupposes that knowledge can be filled into a moral hole (ebd.).

The German baroque poet Georg Philipp Harsdörffer described this idea with the metaphor of a “funnel”²⁰ that has actually determined didactic expectations for centuries. But these expectations, according to Dewey, can only lead one astray:

“Since life means growth, a living creature lives as truly and positively at one stage as at another, with the same intrinsic fullness and the same absolute claims. Hence education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age” (ebd.).

The main authority for this change in theory is not coincidentally Emerson.²¹ The “immaturity” of the child does not have to be overcome as quickly as possible, but rather respected. A child’s size is deceptive; growth is not a state that leads from lower states to higher states thereby leaving behind the earlier states as the lesser ones. Life *is* growth, in the sense that change is constantly experienced and adaptations have to be made. There is no supreme goal that could steer development. Dewey, in other words, negates the theory of maturation and thus the finality of education. If education and experience are indistinguishable and life itself is like growth, then there can neither be an end to education nor a point of culmination. Earlier guiding metaphors of education such as “steps” of life or the “culmination” in the highest point of development would therefore be overridden.

In the fifth and sixth chapters of *Democracy and Education* Dewey discusses five concepts of education that are opposed to his own theory and which should be refuted in favour of his own theory. His theory, says Dewey himself, “contrasts sharply with other ideas which have influenced practice“ (ibid., p.59). What is meant here are theories that played a role in American education discourse at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century and which were seen as indispensable for the understanding of “education”. They are not always elaborated theories. The criterion is the influencing of practice, Dewey examines forms of reflection that are used in the understanding of education and with which one or another theory can be linked. The goal is to determine their suitability for the question of the relationship between *Democracy and Education*.

The first of these ideas sees education as an equipping or *preparation* for life. The concern here is with the presumably most effective metaphor in the history of pedagogical thought. The metaphor assumes the value of education for the future of the child or for

²⁰ Georg Philipp Harsdörffer (1607-1657): “The Poetic Funnel and the German Art of Rhyming Poetry; To Be Poured Within Six Hours” (1647). The metaphor of the “funnel of wisdom” is older. It is mentioned for instance in Michael Stifel’s *Deutscher Arithmetika* of 1545. The expression “Nuremberg funnel” was developed in the 18th century as a caricature of didactic expectations. Harsdörffer originated from Nuremberg.

²¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Education*. In: *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* (1863/1864). Dewey quotes the famous sentences “respect the child” in the middle of Emerson’s lecture on education (Dewey 1985a, p. 57). He does not quote the reasoning for the respect of the child, which goes as follows: „I believe that our own experience instructs us that the secret of Education lies in respecting the pupil. It is not for you to choose what he shall know, what he shall do. It is chosen and foreordained, and he only holds the key to his own secret. By your tampering and thwarting and too much governing he may be hindered from his end and kept out of his own. Respect the child. Wait and see the new product of Nature. Nature loves analogies, but not repetitions” (Emerson 1911, pp. 141/142).

society, which the present devalues. In accordance with this idea children are not yet full members of society, they are placed in a pedagogical reserve. “They are looked upon as candidates; they are placed on the waiting list” (ibid.). But children live in a near literal sense in the present, the future for which they are being prepared is “a long way off”, the “equipping” is in effect hardly conceivable and demands a high degree of artificial rewards and punishments, without really achieving a preparation for future life situations.

At its core, this is essentially an argument from Rousseau’s *Emile*. Any education is barbaric that sacrifices the present of the child to an uncertain future and prepares for something (*préparer*) that never happens as expected (O.C. IV/S. 301).²² The concern with education is not to gain time, but rather to lose time (ibid., p. S. 323). However, the argument is used less radically. Dewey does not claim that education cannot or should not have anything to do with the future, which Rousseau was able to do because he presupposed phases of natural development;²³ for Dewey, growth *is* the influencing of the future, the error does not lie here, but rather where education stakes *everything* for the preparation of the future. But one can always only influence the present that slips imperceptibly into the future (Dewey 1985a, p. 61).

Dewey calls the second false theory of education *Education as Unfolding*. This doctrine is associated with three authors, namely Fröbel, Hegel and Rousseau, who stand for three concepts that in spite of their differences share a common core. This core is described by Dewey as “development as unfolding“:

“Development is conceived not as continuous growing, but as the unfolding of latent powers toward a definite goal. The goal is conceived of as completion, perfection. Life at any stage short of attainment to this goal is merely an unfolding toward it” (ibid., p. 61).

“Goals” can also be ideals. They are absolute in this sense when the whole of development should steer towards them and only them. In Fröbel’s *Education of man* or Hegel’s *Philosophy of history*, they exist latently in development, as “potentials” or “undeveloped conceptions”, which are gradually led towards their completion. “What is termed development is the gradual making explicit and outward of what is thus wrapped up” (ibid., p. 62).

Fröbel calls this process the development of the nature of man and Hegel history to the absolute spirit. In both cases, the goal is definite, what development should be, according to Dewey, is nothing more than “the unfolding of a ready-made latent principle” (ibid., p. 63). Indeed, most educational theories of the 19th century are laid down in this way. The goals are end states, which can be achieved or missed, without being able to change them by development. The goals can be secured through metaphysical theories of “nature”, of “history”, of the “spirit” or of “society”. Empirical theories of education are hardly present in the Continental European pedagogy around 1900 or are attributed to psychology. But even psychological theories tend to understand “development” teleologically, which can be shown not least by Piaget and the Geneva *éducation nouvelle*.

²² This argument is already found verbatim in the manuscript Favre des *Emile* (O.C. IV/p. 81)

²³ 1. *L’age de nature* (up to twelve years). 2. *L’age de raison* (up to fifteen years). 3. *L’age de force* (up to twenty years) 4. *L’age de sagesse* (up to twenty-five years). *L’age de bonheur tout le reste de la vie* (O.C. IV/S. 60).

Dewey also consistently criticises Rousseau, whom Piaget always referred to. Rousseau, according to Dewey, conceives of the “natural development” of the child as an unfolding of potentials, into which no third party should encroach, because and insofar as society is unnatural (ibid., p. 65). But nature is not the “standard” of education, as many reformers at the end of the 19th century assumed. Arguably, that reference to the natural education can be used to criticise the educational practice, the nature does not simply do its work “in” the child. It is not an agent, while the Rousseauists understand “nature” as if it gives human development its law and its goal, which education then merely has to obey. “The constructive use of intelligence in foresight, and contriving, is then discounted; we are just to get out of the way and allow nature to do the work” (ibid., p. 119).

Third, Dewey brings into play *Education as Training of the Faculties*. The training of the faculties can be traced back to John Locke. In accordance with this, the human spirit possesses certain powers such as “attention, observation, retention, comparison, abstraction, compounding, etc”, which can be influenced such that a “trained habit” emerges. The means for this are practice and repetition, whereby the levels of difficulty graduate with success. This theory forms the background of the schooling process in the 19th century, but neither do the presupposed “internal” faculties exist, nor can they be trained like muscles. Only a marginal quality of education depends on training, he who has to learn by heart has no guarantee of having understood that which has been learned (ibid., pp. 69/70). The constant repetition does not make the quality any better.

According to Dewey, the central error in the theory lies in separating activities and capacities of learning from the subject matter. But: “There is no such thing as an ability to see or hear or remember in general; there is only the ability to see or hear or remember *something*” (ibid., p. 70). Sensualism implies isolated inner faculties that can be processed as such. But the sense organs are always related to learning environments and never solely accessible in themselves.

“Consequently, such powers as observation, recollection, judgment, aesthetic taste, represent *organized results* of the occupation of native active tendencies with certain subject matters” (ibid., p. 71).²⁴

Thus, according to Dewey, there is no direct influencing of psychological qualities of children and adults. The criterion for selection of learning subject matters is always “social” (ibid., p. 72) and not psychological. This is one of the reasons why also the fourth theory is rejected, that of *education as formation*. The best representative of this theory, says Dewey, is Herbart. Behind the theory of formation is Herbart’s psychology of presentation, which is supposed to represent a new approach to education. Herbart negates the theory of development as well as the theory of inner faculties. His psychology is neither organic nor sensualistic, but rather describes, with mathematical formulae, the movement of presentations. In this way, laws of the spirit can be understood, which are the basis for education. It is thus neither natural growth nor training.

“It is rather the formation of mind by setting up certain associations or connections of content by means of a subject matter presented from without. Education proceeds by instruction taken in a strictly literal sense, a building into the mind from without” (ibid., p. S. 75).

²⁴ “Observation is an outcome, a consequence, of the interaction of sense-organ and subject-matter. It will vary, accordingly, with the subject matter employed” (Dewey 1985a, p. 71).

The “educational teaching” of Herbart is based on the assumption that no presentation is lost and every new presentation has to be assimilated with the old ones. Old presentations can drop below the threshold of consciousness, but they remain present, an idea which Freud would use for his theory of the unconscious. The internal space is unlimited, education knows no limit and has a real threshold, that of the assimilation of the new. This too is a powerful idea that was picked up, for instance, by Piaget and used for his theory of development.

For Dewey, the defect of this theory lies above all in the isolation of the spirit. Herbart’s psychology completely ignores the interaction between organism and environment, or that which Dewey calls intelligent adaptation. In pedagogical terms, Herbart delivers a schoolmaster theory, which strengthens the environment and not the learning itself. “The philosophy is eloquent about the duty of the teacher in instructing pupils; it is almost silent regarding his privilege of learning” (ibid., p. 77). The theory contains everything about education apart from the main thing – “vital energy seeking opportunity for effective exercise” (ibid.). And the idea of formation of the spirit is to lead to a conclusive result, to a, as Dewey puts it, “furniture” of mind (ibid., p. 76), which totally ignores the fact that experience has to constantly rebuild itself. “The formation is not only a formation of native activities, but it takes place *through* them” (ibid., pp. 77/78).

The final theory that Dewey attacks is that of “parallelism”, which was represented by Herbart, but above all by the Herbartians. From this viewpoint, education is *recapitulation or retrospection*. The foundation for education here is again the idea of development, but now it is understood as repetition or recapitulation. “The individual develops, but his proper development consists in repeating in orderly stages the past evolution of animal life and human history” (ibid., p. 78). Herbart’s followers assumed stages of cultural development, and purported that the education of the child would ensue in parallel with these stages. It would thus be a repetition of the past, an idea that in a generalised form has determined higher education up to the argument between Dewey and Maynard Hutchins and which has still not completely disappeared today, as can be shown by discussions of the literature canon according to which the greatest books of the past should be given a central focus.

But the precedence of the cultural past is not the main point in Dewey’s criticism. Above all, Dewey rejects the idea of heredity, in the sense “that past life has somehow predetermined the main traits of an individual, and that they are so fixed that little serious change can be introduced into them” (ibid., p. 80). This criticism of the biological foundations is transferred to the cultural use of the theory. The present does not depend upon the past; perhaps the past can be researched and understood, but it does not determine the future. The cultural stage theory of the Herbartians or also the historical education of the German grammar school “tend to make the past a rival of the present and the present a more or less futile imitation of the past” (ibid., p. 81). This, however, contradicts above all the theory of time:

“The present is not just something which comes after the past; much less something produced by it. It is what life is in leaving the past behind” (ibid.).

This argument, which can be traced back to Henri Bergson, is also used indirectly against Ernst Haeckel’s “biogenetic law”. According to this law, which was definitively formulated in 1872, the ontogenesis “recapitulates” the phylogenesis,²⁵ an idea that was

²⁵ In an outline of the origin of the species in 1842, Darwin had speculated on a relationship between the development of individuals and species, without having any proof for this. Haeckel provided comparative studies on embryonic stages of different vertebrates and of man.

widespread among American and European intellectuals pre-1900.²⁶ Haeckel's morphological theory is unconvincing due to the very fact that time flows and cannot be "dammed up". The past cannot be stocked up in this way, but can only be a stimulation of the imagination, i.e. in an aesthetic sense. Dewey says to this:

"The past is a great resource for the imagination; it adds a new dimension to life, but on condition that it be seen as the past *of* the present, and not as another and disconnected world" (ibid., p. S. 82).

This assumption is fundamental for Dewey's criticism of pedagogy. The sphere of experience is always uniform, there is not *one* world of experience and parallel to this *another* one that determines experience or sets its goals. Bergson's criticism of Kantian dualism is behind Dewey's rejection of any two-world theory that supposes next to the empirical world an "ideal" or "transcendental" one, or else distinguishes the past world from the present one. But precisely this, a theory of two worlds, which was often understood antagonistically, has characterised the theory of education since Augustine. Ultimately, the two-world teaching has to be overcome if a democratic theory of education is to be founded. This has no authority from a "parallel" or "higher" world.

3. *Democracy and education*

The numerous theories of education since antiquity were able to differentiate between "this world" and "the next", between "nature" and "society", "God's state" and the "people's state", the "inner world" and the "outer world", "individual" and "community", "history" and "present" - all had a dualistic approach and used their dualism for purposes of moral judgement. The greatness of history serves the devaluation or the stimulus of the present, the "inner" world was the better world compared to the "outer" one, or "God's state" should humble man in his state - dualisms in this sense are fundamental for the construction of "education", at least in the ancient and Christian cultural spheres. With the goals, they presuppose unquestioned authorities, which cannot be negotiated because they represent the foundation of the theory.

This can also be demonstrated through the authors who Dewey criticises and whose teachings he rejects. Rousseau places "nature" *against* "society" and accepts at the end of *Emile* only one society, which corresponds to the pedagogical ideal of inner faculties (O.C. IV/pp. 858sq.), i.e. ultimately no society. Nature is more reliable than society, but it is only plausible if a strong dualism is presupposed. For Rousseau, the concern is with a post-Augustine pedagogy, which should overcome the demonic nature of original sin, but ultimately transfers it to the other side, that of society. From now on the child is innocent and society sinful, but the cleansing of society through natural education fails because one world cannot be related to the other. The theory is hindered by the structural dualism and is unable to lead to any result.

In Herbart's theory, it is the "individual" who is educated and not the "community", quite in contrast to the teachings of Herbart's own teacher Fichte, who propagated quite the opposite in his *Addresses to the German nation*. Here too there are only two possibilities, the shaping of the individual spirit or the formation of the people, whereby the theories presuppose that the two can be separated. This applies in general terms: Fröbel's Kindergarten forms the "inner" world of the child, not the "outer" one, from which it is distinguished.

²⁶ The translation of Ernst Haeckel's *The History of Creation* by E. Ray Lancaster was published in 1876 by Appleton in New York.

Fröbel's romantic references to the concept of the "people" are always pedagogically conceived. The unity of the people is the consequence of the education of man, not vice versa. "Inner" and "outer" are selective dimensions, because "spirit" is just as self-contained as "society".

This appears to be different for Dewey's early master Hegel, who refers firmly to the *development* of "spirit" and "history". But the principle of development contains an "inner determination", the spirit is realised *in* history and the world history is a "*Stufengang*" or series of stages (Hegel 1970, p. 75ff.). Education is a series of stages of higher education (ibid., p. 104), which has an ultimate result. The present form of the spirit grasps all earlier ones in itself (ibid., p. 105), history completes itself through the fact that the spirit ultimately seizes itself (ibid.). In the final stage, history overcomes the dialectics of opposing worlds. But according to Darwin, one will be hard pressed to place the protestant "spirit" in the centre of history and conceive as education as a "series of stages".

Dewey, in any case, used dialectics to annul the two-word theory and thus overcome his Hegelianism. If "life" is fundamental and not "spirit" or "history", then dialectics too is superfluous because life cannot exist twice and thus does not require a "dialectic imparting". In contrast to Hegel and Marx, development is not driven forward by contradictions, but rather by adaptation. Thought is intelligent problem-solving that does not presuppose any separate "spirit". Problems are not ultimately solved, but are always only temporary, and for this reason development does not reach any goal, but has to constantly correct itself. And it does not take place in different worlds that are closed off from one another.

This is conceivable, because Dewey does not distinguish between "experience" and "development". Development does not refer to "nature" and experience does not refer to a "society" distinguished from this. Thus nature can also not be played off against spirit as is the case with Hegel (ibid., pp. 75/76), or nature against society, as in the educational criticism at the beginning of the 20th century. The nature of the child, for instance, is only a rhetorical formula, which Rousseauists use for purposes of delimitation (Py 1997), without possessing a consistent concept. The theory of "nature" is not even conceivable outside of political rhetoric and this also applies if one changes contexts, i.e. like Fröbel communicating "nature" romantically and not – like Rousseau – at its heart medically.

What remains is Dewey's own theory, which sees education as *reconstruction*. It should overcome the distinction between the internal and the external and thus dissolve the two fundamental dogmas of pedagogy, which see education as an "unfolding" on the one hand and as "formation" on the other (Oelkers 1994, 2004).

"In its contrasts with the ideas both of unfolding of latent powers from within, and of formation from without, whether by physical nature or by the cultural products of the past, the ideal of growth results in the conception that education is a constant reorganizing or reconstruction of experience. It has all the time an immediate end, and so far as the activity is educative, it reaches that end - the direct transformation of the quality of experience" (Dewey 1985a, p. 82).

Only following this passage through the educational theories does Dewey establish the relationship between democracy and education. "Education" does not produce something artificial and does not complete anything, but rather adds something. It should be taken for granted that children always already possess social experience. There is no *tabula rasa* of experience, just as there is no zero point of development. Education can, however,

“reorganise” experience, i.e. add something to existing meaning or improve abilities to shape subsequent experiences. Only in this way can the fundamental error of the rival theories be avoided, namely not being able to link goal and process. Dewey’s theory identifies the end with the process, in the sense that periods of experience are distinguished that proceed in succession without being predetermined. The later period completes the earlier one (ibid., p. 84), without *one* telos being able to link up *all* periods.

Goals do not presuppose experience - that would require a two-world theory; rather, goals are functional in the process of education, without demanding a reevaluation of meaning, as Dewey points out with a famous comparison: “Aims mean acceptance of responsibility for the observations, anticipations, and arrangements required in carrying on a function - whether farming or educating” (ibid., p. 114). And only agents have goals and are able to pursue them, not “the” education. Education is only an abstraction, and if one is to attribute “goals” to the abstraction, then one is running the risk of confusing goals with desires or suggestions (ibid.), as is customary for instance in political rhetoric. In contrast, an educational goal has to be applicable and achievable (ibid., p. 115), and must come from within, out of the process, and must not be imposed from the outside (ibid., p. 117).

The linking of this theory with the ideal of democracy is then simple. It ensues in alignment with a social evolutionary theory. Modern societies, in contrast to ancient ones, are based on continuous reconciliation and thus on “readjustment” (ibid., p. 92). The modern forms of transport, business, industrial production of medial communication have overcome the closed societies of the past and levelled the gaps between the groups. Also and precisely the very solution of conflicts demands “intercourse” between parties that can no longer depend upon “external” authorities (ibid., p. 92/93). Democracy as a life form demands the expansion of the “area of shared concerns” and the release of a greater diversity of personal abilities, and this not as the result of negotiations but as the consequence of societal differentiation, as described for instance by Georg Simmel (1910).

Once, on the one hand, individualisation increased, and on the other hand a larger community of interests emerged, efforts to support both of these developments and broaden them in the direction of a democratisation of life were unavoidable. In this sense, it is not coincidental that since the middle of the 19th century, American journalism has placed democracy, education, and equal opportunities as the central focus. Dewey summarises this process as follows:

“Obviously a society to which stratification into separate classes would be fatal, must see to it that intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equable and easy terms. A society marked off into classes need be specially attentive only to the education of its ruling elements. A society which is mobile, which is full of channels for the distribution of change occurring everywhere must see to it that its members are educated to personal initiative and adaptability” (Dewey 1985a, pp. 93/94).²⁷

The point in Dewey’s criticism of pedagogy is that for democratic societies no democratic theories of education are in existence. The *pièce de résistance* thereby is the analysis of Plato. The beginning of the philosophy of education stands for his fundamental weakness, namely the construction of a hierarchy that appears necessary for education. It

²⁷ “Otherwise, they will be overwhelmed by the changes in which they are caught and whose significance or connection they do not perceive. The result will be a confusion in which a few will appropriate to themselves the results of the blind and externally directed activities of others” (Dewey 1985a, p. 94).

ensues in a top-down manner and presupposes ideas that are not alterable. In this sense the theory is feudal, it provides a closed model and demands agreement.

Furthermore, platonic pedagogy presupposes a society without any change, which is supposed to form the ideal place for education. Up to the socialist settlement experiments of the 19th century, behind the “new education” there was always an alternative society that was assumed to be so perfect that it need not and indeed ought not develop. “Correct education could not come into existence until an ideal state existed, and after that education would be devoted simply to its conservation” (ebd.). There is only *one* great change, after which both are completed, the theory of true education and its practice, whereby an advantage of Dewey’s hypothesis is that many pedagogical experiments did actually boil down to educational dictatorships.

There is, however, no second world in parallel to the first, and this applies as much to Robert Owen’s *New Harmony* as it does to Pestalozzi’s *living-room education*, i.e. the community of equals and the community of the house. Pestalozzi’s privatisation of social education is criticised by Dewey in that there are no alternatives to modern schooling, nor indeed can there be. “The movement for the democratic idea inevitably became a movement for publicly conducted and administered schools” (ebd., p. 99). Citizens should be formed, not people educated (ebd., p. 99/100). The one requires freedom and the other requires authority. Pestalozzi wanted an education of man in the tight confines of his position, thus advocating a theory that was not intended for democracy. It is not coincidental that Pestalozzi played no role in the construction of the democratic “Volksschule” in Switzerland, making his name instead in aristocratic Germany.

From a modern point of view, however, it is not only Plato’s theory that is “undemocratic” (ebd., p. 95). From Locke to Fröbel there is no relevant theory of education observed in the 19th century that placed a central focus on the life form of democracy. In this sense Dewey criticises his rival theories not only from a theoretical point of view, but also from a political one. He sees that Continental European theories of education are either related to a feudal and authoritarian society or to a Utopian place, and he also sees that there can be no pedagogical “autonomy” as this was and continues to be claimed in German pedagogy due to an idiosyncratic adoption of Rousseau. But education is not an individual world lying next to society, it is not a moratorium that could devote itself solely to pedagogical ideals. Ultimately Dewey also recognises the weaknesses of English liberalism, which has formed no concept for a free *and* equal education.

In this respect, there was nothing left for Dewey but to establish, in the first hundred pages of *Democracy and Education*, a clear break with that which had been claimed since the beginning of the 19th century in the historiography of education as “pedagogical tradition”. The selection of relevant theories originates from these sources. The theories were sorted into “histories of pedagogy” and placed on a scale of importance. Pestalozzi or Fröbel are eminent theorists due to this sorting, not because independent data were available for this purpose. A comparison with other authors mostly did not take place at all, with the consequence that only certain theories were even given any attention.

Dewey was not a historian, and he only knew a part of the history of education. There have been pragmatic theories since Aristotle, theories that relate to the *res publica* at least since Cicero, and the criticism of the pedagogical aspiration has accompanied the rise of educational theory since the 17th century. It is also fairly crude to differentiate only three phases or types of history, namely the Platonic phase at the beginning, the “individualistic”

one of the 18th century and the “national” one of the 19th century (ibid., pp. 94-105). One could ultimately say a great deal about the religious picture behind Dewey’s theory, which makes it understandable in the first place why education should have this extreme importance. It serves the *common faith* or the conciliation of society and cannot be reduced to Darwinism. Darwin’s theory is simply a way of resolving the old separation between philosophy and science (Dewey 1910, p. 19) and challenging an “epistemology” of philosophy.

Dewey’s concern was not to discuss all possible theories of education, but rather to capture fundamental possibilities of theory. They are philosophically analysed and assessed, and in the process of this it became clear that none of the available theories stood up to the demands. They were examined with regard to whether or not they were compatible with the consequences of the theory of life. In this process, Dewey uses, in addition to the theory of growth, above all two concepts, namely the intelligent adaptation or the psychology of problem-solving on the one hand, and the sociology of the group or of societal differentiation on the other. Compared with this, the five concepts of education that Dewey discusses are backward and useless for a theory that places a central focus on democracy and education.

What Dewey therefore expounded in 1916 was a modernisation of the theory of education by means of pragmatism. “Education” should be demystified, in other words related only to itself without any transcendental safeguards. Ultimately, the problem was how a theory of the relationship between democracy and education can itself be democratic. In this case, it must manage without the philosophy of the past, therefore without Plato’s “soul”, “Rousseau’s “nature” or Hegel’s “history”. Authorities of this type can only be adopted or dismissed. Darwinist about the concept is the idea of development through adaptation, whereby all previous concepts of “development” were subject to a clear criticism. They too fail to fit in with the two fundamental concepts of democracy, namely “participation” and “flexible readjustment” (ibid., p. 105). The theory of education must also simply follow these two criteria if it no longer wishes to be feudal.

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