



BOOK REVIEW

The Handbook of Dewey's Educational Theory and Practice

Charles L. Lowery and Patrick M. Jenlink, editors

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Editors Charles L. Lowery and Patrick M. Jenlink endeavor to provide a comprehensive resource about the thought, influence, and educational practice inspired by John Dewey. The book is divided in three parts with the first one aiming to provide the reader with an in-depth look behind Dewey's concept of democratic education in American society. Notable selections by Patrick Jenlink and Elizabeth Meadows outline Dewey's philosophy and extend them to contemporary education. Greenwalt and Nguyen's piece is the most religiously themed of the contributions, attempting to link Buddhist-inspired mindfulness and the practice of education as espoused by Dewey. The connection is tenuous at best, falling short of establishing a solid link through primary evidence. Maura Striano highlights critical thinking convincingly as she explores Dewey's thoughts related to inquiry and reflective thinking. The remaining selections provide strong critical theory analysis, with less discussion of Dewey's ideas.

Part two focuses on the theme of Dewey and educational practice. The Jenlink and Embry-Jenlink entry, along with Burdick-Shepherd's, are well written and provide an in-depth analysis of Deweyan thought on democracy and student teaching in practice. Taysum's work on moral democracy is limited in scope, attempting to create a social justice framework borrowing from Dewey's pragmatist philosophy. Like other entries, this article relegates Deweyan thought to the periphery in favor of a contemporary critical theory lens that unfortunately crowds out the focus of the book.

The final section focuses on Dewey's concept of the practitioner scholar and its implications for the present day. Problematic additions include Chenath Gautam's writing on organic pedagogy, which attempts to connect the perspectives of Dewey and Foucault. The post-secondary classroom inspiration for this article leads the topic onto a rocky path that only becomes disjointed in trying to connect the two philosophies. Lance Mason's chapter on digital media borrows too much from contemporary politics and relies disproportionately on a discussion of fake news that is biased and discounts entirely the opinions of those who distrust the media. This section does have some stellar writing however. Robert Karaba's piece, along with Charles Lowery and Conner J. Fewell's article regarding civic efficiency, are not to be missed. Both draw extensively on Dewey's writings and make a convincing case for their continued relevance. Monica Hatfield Price's discussion of the Dewey-Lippmann debate is rich in context and provides an illuminating analysis through which we may view the role of experts in the media, and in our democracy. As a body of work this book is a strong critical-theory-oriented addition that takes select Deweyian ideas and projects them forward. As a handbook of Deweyian ideas proper, it is limited in scope.