

Article

Learning by Undoing, *Democracy and Education*, and John Dewey, the Colonial Traveler

Marianna Papastephanou

Department of Education, University of Cyprus, P.O. Box 2 0537, Nicosia 1678, Cyprus; edmari@ucy.ac.cy

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Abstract: The centennial anniversary of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* has been celebrated this year in a reconstructive and utility-based spirit. The article considers this spirit and the need to complement it with a critical-deconstructive and 'use-less' prism that will reveal shortcomings in Dewey's and our own political pedagogies. Gleanings from Dewey's book allow us to begin with what most educational theorists today treat as strong points of Dewey's politics and then to explore how such points appear or disappear when Dewey's ideas travel and how they relate to colonial and developmentalist elements in Dewey's pragmatism. The article reveals how such elements operate in one of Dewey's educational policy writings and in his related travel narratives. The main aim of the article is to indicate that we often require a 'learning by undoing' to obtain a heightened view on the stakes and challenges of old and current progressive pedagogies.

Keywords: heterogeneity; homogeneity; nationalism; diversity; minority; Armenian genocide

1. Introduction

The present paper is a longer, article-length version of the presentation 'John Dewey, The Colonial Traveler' which I delivered at the Open research seminar '*Democracy and Education: Reversing the Democratic Recession?*' which took place at the University of Oslo, Department of Education, on the 26 October 2016. Various events celebrating the centennial anniversary of the publication of John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* [1] have invited us to ask: 'What categories and notions of Dewey's pedagogy seem timely and relevant for transnational educational policies and debates on "21st Century learning"? The Call for Papers of the seminar to which the shorter version of this paper responded further asserted that, 'taking the current cosmopolitan condition, democratic recession and a Europe in transition, it is pertinent to ask to what degree Dewey's political philosophy of education may help to promote global citizenship education and mutual understanding'.

Despite their significance and pertinence, the above questions reflect a rationale of utility and updating which focuses on extracting from a body of thought all that may be associated with what we now value and place our hopes on. Implicitly, this rationale privileges reconstructive readings of Dewey which seek in his thought what may pass as resilient, still useful, and valuable. Such readings bypass elements in Dewey's philosophy that invite critical interrogation. In a way, such approaches also end up being assertive of our current philosophical positions and affirmative of our outlooks. They do not challenge Dewey and our reliance on Dewey or the reasons for such reliance enough.

Hence, the questions I shall be raising go in the opposite direction and reflect a more deconstructive spirit: they complicate Dewey's position and expose as yet unquestioned, non-problematized aspects of his thought and actions. Are there any Deweyan political blind spots which may help us interrogate Dewey's and our own educational philosophies as well as his and our own political education?

In what follows I raise one such issue and, to broach it, I first glean from *Democracy and Education* [1] Deweyan political assertions, suggestions and exhortations of the kind that we would appreciate today and consider of lasting relevance. I also include my initial, critical reaction to some of these gleanings that should be kept in view throughout the paper, as it will strengthen some of my later points. Then, I explore how the dynamic process of migration of ideas to another context alters the picture of Dewey's thought that such gleanings construct. The rather static image of the Dewey of *Democracy and Education* as the local reformer and agent of American democratic reform changes when we take notice of how Dewey emerges from one of his travels and related writings as a global disseminator of educational ideas and developer of educational systems. Finally, I show that such transmutations of Dewey's traveling philosophy constitute a major philosophical and educational challenge.

2. Dewey's *Democracy and Education*

Dewey's *Democracy and Education* is commendably guided by the vision of a democratic society. He contrasts the democratic society to an undesirable society 'which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience' [1] (p. 104). Unlike it, a democratic society 'secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life' and 'makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms' [1]. Dewey selects two points by which 'to measure the worth of a form of social life': these 'are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups' [1] (p. 103).

Nowadays, most political philosophers and educators would agree with all the above. Some might only be a bit puzzled about Dewey's valorization of shared interests, since such commonality seems to favour the 'common' of community rather than diversity and to risk our precious, current emphases on heterogeneity, pluralist accounts of the good and the unassimilable alterity of the other. Shall we suspect a Deweyan preference for homogeneity and thereby part company with Dewey on this point?

Let us think this through by considering another relevant passage from *Democracy and Education*. The passage begins with heterogeneity and ends in praising homogeneity. Its beginning is politically interesting, as it focuses on the multi-ethnic/multi-cultural state. Dewey discusses the diversity of groups in his society and traces it back to four practices, which happen to be valued by many thinkers today. These are: commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and emigration. In Dewey's words, 'with the development of commerce, transportation, intercommunication, and emigration, countries like the United States are composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs' [1] (p. 26). Dewey's developmentalist historical account misses another major practice: that of emptying African lands from their people, of turning them into human cargo to enslave them for free labour—free here in the sense of got-for-nothing—and of 'emptying' those people from their languages, customs and cultures. In addition, the vague notion of emigration—which evokes ethically-neutral movement and is now emphasized and often utopianized in political philosophy and education—blocks view of another reality, that of expansion through movement. Dewey omits colonial expansion here as a practice that effected diversification. In addition, he certainly omits the political detail that expansion secures imperial space instead of serving nation-state construction on John Stuart Mill's well-known principle of one people/one land/one government. More, to Frank Margonis, imperial-colonial expansionism and the myth of exploration of new frontiers underpins passages in Dewey's work that refer to America's "'period of natural and unconscious expansion geographically, the taking up of land, the discovering of resources,'" where Europeans seized—not Mexican or Indian lands—but a "wealth of unused territory" [2] (p. 301).

I am mentioning such omissions only to indicate that Dewey's narrative of political diversity beautifies (and in so doing de-politicizes) a specific nation-building genealogy in much the same way in which we often glorify the global and mobile in our current realities while overlooking through what processes and due to what and whose liabilities the 'current cosmopolitan condition' of transportation,

emigration, and the like has been effected and whether it merits the adjective ‘cosmopolitan’. Consider here the quotation from the Call for Papers in the first paragraph of my introduction. It takes much utopianization of the current condition to call it ‘cosmopolitan’ rather than merely ‘global’; unless the term ‘cosmopolitan’ is divested of any ethico-political normativity merely to signify mobility, cross-cultural encounter and dispersal of ideas and practices. For my objections to all this, see [3].

At any rate, Dewey continues by connecting his narrative of progress and development with an education burdened with the responsibility to foster the required dose of homogeneity: ‘It is this situation [of heterogeneity—M.P.] which has, perhaps more than any other one cause, forced the demand for an educational institution which shall provide something like a homogeneous and balanced environment for the young’ [1] (p. 26). Dewey registers the heterogeneity that historical processes have effected as something to be regulated or mitigated and tasks the institution of education with providing the missing common ethos. Why? In his words, ‘only in this way can the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted’ [1] (p. 26). Within the common space of schooling: differences are contained; diversity is politically harnessed away from centrifugal risks; and commitment to one’s culture turns into harmless folklore. ‘The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated’ [1] (p. 26). Then there comes Dewey’s praise of the American educational contribution to accomplishing the patriotic bond: ‘The assimilative force of the American public school is eloquent testimony to the efficacy of the common and balanced appeal’ [1] (p. 26). Dewey values diversity so long as it is no renegade – just as many thinkers do today. We may notice two kinds of heterogeneity and homogeneity operating within this mindset: heterogeneity of cultures is valued so long as it is not accompanied with heterogeneity of political ends. Homogeneity is affirmed only when it frames larger political ends, and not when it comes close to homogeneity of monoculturalism—though no compelling argument is provided as to why a homogenous culture (if such a thing exists or has ever existed) is by logical necessity pernicious.

In “Nationalizing Education” [4], a 1916 essay whose centennial anniversary we could also celebrate, Dewey uses multicultural, heterogeneous nationalism, which he likens to an admirable internationalism, precisely to demarcate the political superiority of his country over European states on grounds of the former’s diversity against the latter’s supposed homogeneity. Contrasting US and European political space Dewey emphasizes that his nation is ‘itself complex and compound. Strictly speaking it is interracial and international in its make-up’. It contains ‘a multitude of peoples speaking different tongues, inheriting diverse traditions, cherishing varying ideals of life. This fact is basic to our nationalism as distinct from that of other peoples’ [4] (p. 204). He extrapolates that ‘our unity cannot be a homogeneous thing like that of the separate states of Europe’ [4]. Dewey’s generalization about states of Europe is, of course, false of the Europe of 1916, if we consider colonialism and the subaltern diversity that some supposed nation-states of Europe (in fact, empires) comprised. Certainly, as Armen Marsoobian remarks, Dewey’s generalization is also false of Europe today [5].

We may further complicate Dewey’s narrative, this time by reference to Alaska or to the 1898 Spanish-American War, to the colonies which that war added to American territory and to a different kind of diversity it involved, that of the colonized. Although Alaska had been populated for thousands of years by indigenous peoples, from the 18th century onward, European powers considered its territory ripe for exploitation. The Russian colonial era of Alaska ended when the United States purchased it (another sense of commerce, different from the commerce that Dewey mentioned in his narrative of American development) from Russia on 30 March 1867.

In the Spanish-American War of 1898 the U.S. defeated Spain and acquired its colonies in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Guam. This event was followed by the Philippine-American war (1899–1902). One of the major victories during the Spanish-American War was brought about by another Dewey, Admiral George Dewey. It is interesting that, as sources of the times show, the

imperial principles or 'values' behind the war were opposed by an Anti-Imperialist League in 1898 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Anti-Imperialist_League) which included an impressive list of politicians, academics, and authors. John Dewey was said to be among them already at the initial stages (but I have not found other sources or textual evidence in any of Dewey's works that might corroborate this; so, this point requires further research). Nevertheless, the following website includes important information on this war and reactions to it on the part of the League on anti-colonial grounds and in defense of the nation-state territoriality and of self-determination, freedom and independence: http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1592&Itemid=263.

As we proceed in this article, consider the contradictions that surface if Dewey's stance on this matter was anti-imperialist whilst his position in the Report and especially in other, related texts was fraught with colonial residues and imperial rationalizations of deportations and genocides. The claims to independence of some of the acquired US colonies, e.g., the claims of the people of Puerto Rico, a couple of decades later [3] come to remind us that 'varying ideals of life' also included political demands made by the colonized on which Dewey had not been adequately eloquent. By this I do not mean that Dewey should have directly written, say, about Puerto Rico, its independence struggle and US policy on it. However, as a philosopher-educator writing about his country developing into its then status through commerce, migration, etc., and into a democratic state through political education, Dewey should have not overlooked how examples such as Puerto Rico or issues of expansion and slavery complicated the smooth narrative of state-development which he was propounding. Like many theorists today, Dewey limits heterogeneity to cultural variation and fails to think it through to its political implications and stakes.

Dewey is particularly appreciative of individual diversity, and thus up to date concerning current philosophical-educational sensibilities. He gives diversity a central role in his vision of a democratic society and education so long as diversity contributes to growth: 'a progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth'. Therefore, 'a democratic society must, in consistency with its ideal, allow for intellectual freedom and the play of diverse gifts and interests in its educational measures' [1] (p. 314). However, how does Dewey speak about a collective otherness which he places at a lower developmental stage? Is that diversity also present in, even precious to, a democratic society? Collectivities of 'lower' progress and development come up as savage and barbaric groups in *Democracy and Education*. Below I provide some examples and unpack this point.

Dewey's distinction between schooling and informal kinds of education is framed by distinctions between civilization and barbarism as well as 'developed versus savage' social groups. 'In undeveloped social groups, we find very little formal teaching and training. Savage groups mainly rely for instilling needed dispositions into the young upon the same sort of association which keeps adults loyal to their group. They have no special devices, material, or institutions for teaching save in connection with initiation ceremonies by which the youth are inducted into full social membership. For the most part, they depend upon children learning the customs of the adults, acquiring their emotional set and stock of ideas, by sharing in what the elders are doing. In part, this sharing is direct, taking part in the occupations of adults and thus serving an apprenticeship; in part, it is indirect, through the dramatic plays in which children reproduce the actions of grown-ups and thus learn to know what they are like' [1] (p. 11).

My attention here is neither to the accuracy or inaccuracy of Dewey's socio-anthropological generalities nor to his dismissive attitude toward that particular, 'undeveloped' learning by doing. I am more interested in his investing diversity with a diversified value that qualifies which kind of alterity counts as acceptable or useful and disqualifies that which, to Dewey, represents a surpassed stage in educational and societal development. Dewey's narrative of development and progress unfolds with a reference to the evolution of civilization which evokes such qualifications: 'To savages it would seem preposterous to seek out a place where nothing but learning was going on in order that one might learn' [1] (p. 12). 'But as civilization advances, the gap between the capacities of the young

and the concerns of adults widens. Learning by direct sharing in the pursuits of grown-ups becomes increasingly difficult except in the case of the less advanced occupations. Much of what adults do is so remote in space and in meaning that playful imitation is less and less adequate to reproduce its spirit. Ability to share effectively in adult activities thus depends upon a prior training given with this end in view. Intentional agencies—schools—and explicit material—studies—are devised. The task of teaching certain things is delegated to a special group of persons' [1] (p. 12). Whether this narrative does full historical justice to how Scholai emerged in the ancient Greek world whose primary objective was not quite the transmission of useful knowledge and in which school meant pause for thought and free time is beyond the confines of this article. However, what is more important here is that education acquires a 'civilizing mission' role in Dewey's developmentalist genealogy.

Dewey began his *Democracy and Education* with the striking ontological aphorism that 'life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment' [1] (p. 5) and distinguished living and inanimate things in virtue of the former's preservation through their renewal of existence. He stated that 'the most notable distinction between living and inanimate things is that the former maintain themselves by renewal' [1] (p. 5) and emphasized that education had a crucial position in the process of social development. 'Even in a savage tribe, the achievements of adults are far beyond what the immature members would be capable of if left to themselves'. The gap between the original capacities of the immature human beings and the standards and customs of the elders increases 'with the growth of civilization' [1] (p. 7). The growth of civilization is natural, though not in the sense of linear or physically pre-programmed. 'Mere physical growing up, mere mastery of the bare necessities of subsistence will not suffice to reproduce the life of the group. Deliberate effort and the taking of thoughtful pains are required'. Human beings are born 'not only unaware of, but quite indifferent to, the aims and habits of the social group', and 'have to be rendered cognizant of them and actively interested. Education, and education alone, spans the gap' [1] (p. 7). Because the renewal through successive generations is not automatic, falling back to long surpassed developmental stages is the constant danger of a social system which would fail to develop an education as transmission of culture to the new generations. 'Unless pains are taken to see that genuine and thorough transmission takes place, the most civilized group will relapse into barbarism and then into savagery' [1] (p. 8). Thus, in this passage, education is strictly understood as a 'dam of civilization' since it guarantees a civilizing acculturation, blocks barbarism and savagery and demarcates the corresponding socio-political spaces. Whereas democratic education and society constitute Dewey's utopian vision, the barbaric and savage societies seem here to constitute his feared alternatives, the dystopianized spaces to be kept at bay. In *Democracy and Education*, the 'barbaric' and 'savage' occupy the political space of the dreaded 'otherness', beckoning from afar whenever meliorative societal and educational advancement toward a better future is at risk.

What about that which occupies the middle space and the intermediate time (neither surpassed dystopia nor accomplished utopia), that is, what about Dewey's own society? It was a society which had not yet implemented Dewey's educational recommendations and had not, therefore, reached the stage of the envisioned educational and societal utopia. Nor was it, however, as bad as the dystopian condition of barbarism let alone savagery. We may obtain insight into how Dewey places his own society in relation to utopia from his short essay 'Dewey Outlines Utopian Schools' [6]. There he offers a brief account of the main pedagogical principles of an imaginary, Utopian society onto which he has projected his educational recommendations and made them appear as accomplished reality. In that essay, the natural and the developmental are emphasized, the knowledge of useless facts is set against developing useful attitudes and a homology is drawn between the accumulative spirit of Dewey's acquisitive society and its privilege on knowledge acquisition and accumulation (which Dewey, of course, condemns). He contrasts his own society to the Utopian, depicting the former as a developmental stage surpassed by the latter through the natural development of the appropriate education (of problem-solving, learning-by-doing, etc.).

Education in Dewey's 'Utopia' is so natural that the first casualty is interrogation. The Utopians do not take Dewey's questions seriously: 'when I asked after the special objectives of the activity of these centers, my Utopian friends thought I was asking why children should live at all' [6] (p. 138). The reason for this was a faith in ontogenetic developmentalism (each person should grow and develop) that rendered meaningless any end other than securing natural growth:

After I made them understand what I meant, my question was dismissed with the remark that since children were alive and growing, "of course, we, as the Utopians, try to make their lives worthwhile to them; of course, we try to see that they really do grow, that they really develop." But as for having any objective beyond the process of a developing life, the idea still seemed to them quite silly. The notion that there was some special end which the young should try to attain was completely foreign to their thoughts [6] (p. 138).

Awareness of ontogenetic developmentalism and of its connection with growth and natural learning/selection/processes led to an educational developmentalism which evoked some of Dewey's ideas in *Democracy and Education*:

As their interest in the young develops, their own further education centres more and more about the study of processes of growth and development, and so there is a very similar process of natural selection by which parents are taken out of the narrower contact with their own children in the homes and are brought forward in the educational nurture of larger numbers of children [6] (p. 137).

Dewey's utopian text is also interesting for the conjugal dimension, the implicit heteronormativity and the affirmation of the family institution: 'The adults who are most actively concerned with the young have, of course, to meet a certain requirement, and the first thing that struck me as a visitor to Utopia was that they must all be married persons and, except in exceptional cases, must have had children of their own. Unmarried, younger persons occupy places of assistance and serve a kind of initiatory apprenticeship' [6] (p. 137). Amongst other things, these ideas break decisively with Plato's radical utopianist challenge of family in the Republic and with the absence of heteronormativity in Stoic utopias. Thus, they invite interesting comparisons. However, a discussion of this point goes beyond the confines of the present article.

But the advanced stage of utopia was not only ontogenetic and educational. It was also phylogenetic (society/the species should grow and develop), since the utopian space symbolized a higher level humanity that had overcome the past in which Dewey's own society lived. The Utopians 'asked whether it was true that in our day we had to have schools and teachers and examinations to make sure that babies learned to walk and to talk' [6] (p. 138). The timely curiosity of the Utopians about Dewey's world introduces a spatio-temporal incongruity that serves Dewey's rhetorical strategy of projecting his educational philosophy on the utopian, advanced society. As the Utopians exchange ideas with Dewey, they criticize the acquisitive society of Dewey's times and its prevalent 'measure and test of achievement and success' [6] (p. 139). The renewal of the existence of Dewey's society required an education which would assist it in overcoming its acquisitiveness and in approximating the vision of a democratic and naturally developed society such as the utopian icon of the relevant text. Thus, we may answer affirmatively to the question posed by the Call for Papers of the seminar at which the shorter version of this paper was presented: 'May Dewey's political philosophy offer tools for the criticism of those trends in European policies that seem more to be modeled according to the demands of the global marketization than from ideas on democratization and citizenship education?' Yet, question-raising rather than problem-solving should continue in the direction of the use-less rather than of the useful in Dewey's thought.

3. Dewey's Visit to Turkey

As the Call for Papers (of the seminar which hosted the initial airing of my ideas on the matter) specified, 'the ways in which *Democracy and Education* has been traveling over the last century may

help to situate and conceptualize educational policies, theories and experiences throughout the world'. More broadly, in relation to Dewey's educational philosophy, Thomas Popkewitz' [7] edited book on Dewey and the traveling of pragmatism in education has already initiated an exploration of Dewey as a 'traveling library' persona. Questions such as: 'What does it mean to translate a philosophical thinking into different contexts and language? How can we measure the success of translation?' [8] (p. 1) importantly retrieve translation as an aspect of travel. How do the principles of *democracy and education* become transformed when they form the ideological baggage of the traveling philosopher/educator, when they are part of his 'traveling library persona'? How do those Deweyan ideas that seem of lasting and current significance look like from the prism of how the traveling philosopher negotiated them within a different context? This prism, I hope, will have a deconstructive effect by revealing that, then as now, generalities about respecting diversity, promoting democracy, valuing minorities and so on remain an empty letter so long as they remain vague and de-politicized. Concrete political issues and their handling by public intellectuals constitute a touchstone where verbal commitments and political declarations are tested as to whether they, as such, draw us into something better or they could rightly stand accused of hollow rhetoric. To deploy my argument, I will now turn to one of Dewey's travels and to his educational recommendations to another country. I will ask: how does Dewey's journey to Turkey illustrate his own understanding and application of his ideas about democracy, diversity and minority?

Kemal Ataturk invited Dewey to Turkey in 1924 and requested from him the composition of a report and recommendations upon Turkish education. Dewey 'had long struggled in the educational reform movement in the United States' but, given the local nature of American schools, 'this was always a highly fragmented and piecemeal endeavor' [5] (p. 1). Hence, the invite to the journey and to writing recommendations for the construction of Turkish education practically from scratch 'must have been an attractive proposition for Dewey'. As Armen Marsoobian comments, now Dewey 'was given an opportunity to make proposals that could be implemented on a systematic nation-wide basis' [5] (p. 1).

Elsewhere [9] I discuss Dewey's 'Report and Recommendations' [10] (henceforth Report) in much more detail. Here I will sum up my points. The Report is very interesting not only for what it states but also, perhaps more, for what it fails to state.

Let us first see what it states: 'fortunately, *there is no difficulty in stating* the main end to be secured by the educational system of Turkey. It is the *development* of Turkey as a vital, free, independent, and lay republic *in full membership in the circle of civilized states*' [10] (p. 275, *emph mine*). By implication, in line with broader colonial idioms and attitudes, this developmentalist parlance couches the main educational end in a 'barbarism versus civilization' idiom and renders Dewey's recommendations part of a civilizing mission. Surprisingly, instead of directly aspiring to a utopian icon such as the one that had guided his own deployment of pedagogical idea(l)s in *Democracy and Education*, to Dewey, Turkey should strive to join the societies that Dewey considered acquisitive and in another text had characterized as 'villains' and 'meddlers' [11]. Further, and in contrast to Dewey's essay on Utopia where his own state should aspire to an as yet unaccomplished educational and societal vision, Turkey should model itself to Dewey's own society and its circle, which is now utopianized (set as an icon).

Now, let us focus more on what is not stated in the Report: the string of adjectives which pre-conditions the full membership in the circle of the civilized contains no relational, transitive terms that would have made nation-building an ethico-politically more demanding operation. For instance, adjectives such as 'non-predatory', 'non-imperialist', etc., are missing, probably because Dewey is well aware that he cannot use such words to describe the circle to which, in his view, the nascent state (Turkey) should aspire.

Then, Dewey specifies ways to achieve the end of joining the circle of civilized states: 'the schools must (1) form proper political habits and ideas'; [such as? we may ask] '(2) foster the various forms of economic and commercial skill and ability; and (3) develop the traits and dispositions of character, intellectual and moral, which fit men and women for self-government, economic self-support and

industrial progress'; notice here that, again, any relational rather than self-centered qualifier is missing. Dewey concretizes such traits and dispositions as follows: 'namely, initiative and inventiveness, independence of judgment, ability to think scientifically and to cooperate for common purposes socially' [10] (p. 275). Once again, no higher demands are made on the social self of the kind that would have direct relevance to how the other is treated within and outside the country.

Most political education and philosophy today celebrates generalities about respecting difference but offers no concrete and challenging examples to illustrate how such respect materializes in demanding and difficult political situations. Likewise, Dewey's Report says nothing about the education of minorities in Turkey. As Marsoobian notes, 'granted that as a result of the genocide, massacres and population exchanges, there were no Armenians (except "hidden Armenians") or Greeks left in Turkey aside from those in Constantinople, there were still significant numbers of other minorities, including Kurds, Alevis, Ezidis, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Laz, Caferis, Roma, Circassians and Jews' [5] (p. 7). We know from one of Dewey's related travel narratives [12] that Dewey was clearly informed about the existence of some of these minorities. Still, no recommendations or cautionary remarks about their treatment surface in his Report.

The Dewey of the Report only refers to a harmless and naturalized diversity. Anonymized or naturalized through references to a localism of diverse modes of working (e.g., agriculture, etc.), diversity does not become a vehicle of higher ethico-political demands on the state: 'the central ministry should [. . .] not merely permit diversification but promote it, and even insist upon it' [10] (p. 281). How and in relation to what? Here is Dewey's response: 'It would take the lead in studying the problems and needs of different portions of the country, and indicate the kind of topics, materials and methods adapted to maritime, pastoral, fruit-growing, grain-growing, cotton-raising, silk-worm districts, to urban industrial and commercial districts and the special industrial capacities of each region' [10] (p. 281).

While in Turkey, Dewey noticed 'a large amount of unused land and of publicly owned natural resources' [10] (p. 284). In addition, in his Report, he recommends that a 'certain amount of this land should be set aside in each province, all the future revenues of which are to be devoted to the schools of that province. Dewey sees this land as profitable but fails to ask how it became empty, why it looked like the colonial terra nullius free for the taking and cultivation. By overlooking such questions he further fails to notice the complications regarding generalities about democracy and diversity an answer to these questions would cause. Proving right Margonis' [2] comments on Dewey's failing to see that the 'wealth of unused territory' in the US was, in fact, land belonging to Indians and Mexicans and seized by Europeans, Dewey continues the argument in the Report about the utility of 'unused land' by reference to America. 'The states of the United States which in their early history adopted this method have profited enormously from it. It might be one of the duties of the financial commission just referred to, to prepare a definite scheme for setting aside and allotting unused lands to school purposes' [10] (p. 284).

Dewey's homology of Turkey and of one of the states in the circle of the civilized (which Turkey should join) concerning modernist opportunities for development and utilization of the other's land for school purposes reveals Dewey's feelings of affinity with Turkey's determination to preserve imperial land and secure the colonial gains of past conquests by modernizing the empire (in the gloss and façade of the nation-state). This frontier ethos with its expansionism over the lands of minorities provides a standpoint for deconstructing Dewey's developmentalist vision. The gap separating the utopianized space (Turkey) from the utopian destination (circle of the 'civilized') was not as huge as Dewey assumed when he inserted between them the distance of 'the civilized' and the developing. Though surely not assimilable, the spaces on which Dewey bestowed his utopianism shared at a very deep level much more than he seemed, or current progressive discourse seems, aware of. I will return to such affinities later on.

Now, how does all this relate with the gleanings from *Democracy and Education* in the first section and the generalities about democratic habits, heterogeneity, pluralism, etc. which still go down

well in our world today? To Marsoobian, ‘Dewey clearly laid out the goals for public education’ in his Report. ‘These goals were in harmony with his educational writings of the previous decade, especially *Democracy and Education*’ [5] (p. 5). To illustrate this harmony Marsoobian states that, in the Report, Dewey emphasizes ‘the need to develop methods of instruction and discipline so as to foster democratic habits: “Methods of dictation, arbitrary control and mechanical obedience do not fit pupils to be citizens in a democracy”’ [5] (p. 5).

Yet, in my view, this harmony is disrupted by very telling silences in the Report such as the above mentioned and many more. For instance, in *Democracy and Education*, Dewey states that ‘it is not enough to teach the horrors of war and to avoid everything which would stimulate international jealousy and animosity’ [1] (p. 102). In addition, he recommends that ‘the emphasis must be put upon whatever binds people together in cooperative human pursuits and results, apart from geographical limitations’ [1] (p. 103). Yet, nowhere in the Report does Dewey mention the teaching of the horrors of war, let alone contact and interaction with neighbours. He only mentions travels to ‘model countries’, members of the circle of the civilized. Finally, there is no mention of genocides such as those against the Armenians, the Greek Pontians and the Assyrians, no cautionary comment on the treatment of diverse populations and no valorization of heterogeneity as we encountered it in *Democracy and Education*.

The publication of the book whose centennial anniversary we are celebrating coincided with the Armenian and other genocides committed by the Turkish regime in 1915–1916—another centennial anniversary. Upon returning from his professional journey to Turkey in 1924, that is, some years after those events, Dewey wrote amongst other things a paragraph on the Armenian genocide, practically condoning it. Dewey’s ‘discussion of the events of 1915–1916’, which ‘occupies only one paragraph’ [13] (p. 375), has, since then, been globally disseminated and utilized by denialist propaganda. This paragraph constitutes ‘a terrible lapse in Dewey’s political judgment—a lapse in which he also failed to live up to the standards of inquiry set forth in his philosophical works’. As S. O’Dwyer explains, ‘through this lapse, Dewey became one of the first of a small band of Western intellectuals to relativize or even deny the Armenian Genocide’ [13] (p. 376).

Thus, when abroad and assigned with a task of educational policy which promoted his educational philosophy, Dewey remains silent about minorities and selects from his ideas the most de-politicized ones, mainly those which relate to development and modernization, as recommendations to the regime which invited him. Moreover, he sides with the renewal of imperial existence and the preservation of control over conquered lands and peoples, not with the claims to freedom of the subaltern. Though it may somewhat divert us from our focus, it is worth contrasting here how the 1898 Platform issued by the Anti-Imperialist League in the USA against the Spanish-American War defended subaltern peoples as follows: ‘we denounce the slaughter of the Filipinos as a needless horror’; ‘we maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed’; ‘we hold with Abraham Lincoln that “no man is good enough to govern another man without that other’s consent’’. (http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1592&Itemid=263). The contrast reveals a Deweyan contradiction, if it is true that Dewey supported the Anti-Imperialism League in 1898 (of which he became the vice president later, i.e., from 1910 to 1920). Then again, Dewey is not mentioned by William E. Leuchtenburg [14] among those who outspokenly opposed the Spanish-American War when it broke out. In addition, Dewey’s attack on imperialism, e.g. regarding Mexico in 1927 did not go deeper than some fashionable generalities, at least enough for us to draw some more conclusive evidence. Martin [15] (p. 294) summarizes the events of the Spanish-American war but is not clear at all about Dewey’s position. Dewey himself mentioned the ‘bad aftertaste of the Spanish-American war’ [4] (p. 260) and much later he praised W. James for his indignant protest at the American ‘seizure of the Philippines’ [16] (p. 22). However, this does not shed adequate light on his exact position when the events had started or when they were taking place. Leuchtenburg regards the fact that mainly conservatives criticized the Spanish-American war and its conquests and that too few progressives were outspoken against the war (and this only when the consequences of the war were realized [14] (p. 486) as a deep connection of progressivism with

imperialism. Leuchtenburg sees this connection in the progressivists' faith to America's democratic mission [14] (pp. 485 and 501); their racialized views (e.g., toward the black people of America that made them more receptive to imperialism [14] (p. 498); their middle-class excitement with America's rising as a world power; their tendency 'to judge any action not by the means employed but by the results achieved [14] (p. 500); their preference for outcomes rather than for '*fine distinctions and nice theories*' [14] (p. 500, *emph mine*); their unwillingness to 'remold the world anew', and their self-understanding as a movement 'providing remedies for certain specific political abuses and economic ills'. They 'were interested *not only in a more equitable division of the pie, but also in a larger pie to divide*' [14] (p. 503, *emph mine*).

Let us now return to the Armenian issue. What are we to make out of Dewey's position? And more, how come a figure such as Dewey, ends up controversializing the Armenian question? I designate as 'controversialization' the deliberate complication of a political issue which attention to evidence would prove a very clear-cut rather than controversial case. A typical case is the effort of some circles to controversialize the Holocaust, but, fortunately, current Western academia largely resists falling into such traps. Unfortunately, however, the Armenian issue has not met such felicitous Western resistances to controversialization. Related evidence concerning the 1915–1916 genocides and deportations was already available to Dewey [13]; had he studied it, he would not have controversialized the Armenian issue. However, he totally bypassed it in his fascination with the modernizing project of Turkey. Controversializing issues which are clear-cut is, in my view, a most violent form of depriving the other from voice and recognition. Controversialization of such issues is the 'invisible' tactic which perpetuates the invisibility of the 'other' (the no-count) in our current distribution of the real (to adapt Rancière's parlance), it remains unnoticed, or, when noticed, it is hastily bypassed as harmless or unworthy of educational attention.

Instead of thinking that Dewey's failures constitute a long surpassed stage in our thought whose acknowledgement allows us to focus exclusively on what in his thought is still useful today, I suggest that we see them as indicative of why it may not always be advisable to focus on the fruitful and why we should sometimes explore the unsettling. To give an example, the Call for Papers that I have already mentioned asks: 'May Dewey offer fruitful educational tools and perspectives in our efforts to integrate refugees?' I invite us to think this through by reference to the following point by Marsoobian on Dewey's sanitization of ethnic cleansing: Dewey 'remarks that the separating of these populations [Armenians and other ethnic groups from Turks] is "the only hope for the avoidance of future atrocities"' [5] (p. 15). 'Words such as these that indirectly justify ethnic cleansing still take my breath away twenty years later', says Marsoobian, referring to his initial reading of Dewey's texts back in the 90s [5] (p. 15). Due to deep affinities of his political and intellectual milieu with colonial mindsets (and other reasons which I have indicated in [9]), Dewey had so much given in to propaganda and had so unquestioningly accepted what he heard through his own experience of 'learning by doing' that he ended up condoning processes of turning peoples into refugees (in that specific case). Likewise, our question today should not only be how to integrate refugees but rather through what processes one becomes a refugee and whether she would rather prefer to have our help so as not to become a refugee in the first place instead of having no option but to be integrated [17].

'Expressed in terms of the attitude of the individual the traits of good method are straightforwardness, flexible intellectual interest or open-minded will to learn, integrity of purpose, and acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one's activity including thought' [1] (p. 187). To the Dewey of *Democracy and Education*, 'intellectual growth means constant expansion of horizons and consequent formation of new purposes and new responses. These are impossible without an active disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien' [1] (p. 182). The disposition to which Dewey was referring was open-mindedness. Yet, this did not help him to learn by undoing, that is, to alienate himself enough from the political tradition of his own country and of the broader Western culture of empires transmuted into nation-states (while preserving imperial attitudes and outlooks). Dewey adopted with too few questions the Turkish propaganda, precisely because it was not alien.

In contrast, the Turkish political framing of the issue of the Armenian genocide—a framing that he was so eager to merely listen to and be open-minded about—was close to his own and to his milieu's colonial and developmentalist spirit.

Is it really open-mindedness that is exercised when the context is wrong or unhelpful? Was it open-mindedness that led Dewey astray when he failed to see the Armenian massacre as it was, that is, as genocide [9]? In addition to his modernizing dreams, Dewey entertained some developmentalist and colonial views that mirror strong cultural affinities with the new Turkish state's determination to preserve imperial territoriality and control over subaltern populations at all costs. His receptivity of Turkish propaganda was precisely because it was not as alien to his own implicit developmentalist and colonial assumptions as one might think at first sight. O'Dwyer believes, and I agree, that 'at the heart of Dewey's gullibility', apart from a misguided open-mindedness and receptivity to the other, also 'lay his deep emotional identification with the modernizing goals of the Turkish Republic' [13] (p. 393). This once again proves that, sometimes, people are prepared to accept more easily that which chimes with what they already hold as appropriate or valid and fills their minds than to undo their intellectual dependence on the principal concerns of their own milieu. In such cases, the trials of open-mindedness are not due to gullibility and empty-mindedness but rather due to a kind of full-mindedness.

Perhaps, another possible description of open-mindedness might be quite the opposite of Dewey's account: instead of just welcoming the hitherto alien (real or imaginary), to take a distance from what is your own and from what appears as alien yet is, in fact, familiar enough to leave you unshaken.

To Dewey, Turkey's main end should be to join the circle of the civilized states. Therefore, by logical implication, as a nascent modern state and as yet not a member of the circle of the civilized, Turkey must have been regarded by Dewey as being in a non-civilized stage of development. Let us once again explore the dichotomy of the civilized and the savage in *Democracy and Education*. There Dewey takes for granted the proximity of the former to morality and of the latter to atrocity, and asks: 'Why does a savage group perpetuate savagery, and a civilized group civilization? Doubtless the first answer to occur to mind is because savages are savages; being of low-grade intelligence and perhaps defective moral sense' [1] (p. 41). However, Dewey's developmentalism is not of the essentializing type:

careful study has made it doubtful whether their native capacities are appreciably inferior to those of civilized man. It has made it certain that native differences are not sufficient to account for the difference in culture. In a sense the mind of savage peoples is an effect, rather than a cause, of their backward institutions. Their social activities are such as to restrict their objects of attention and interest, and hence to limit the stimuli to mental development. Even as regards the objects that come within the scope of attention, primitive social customs tend to arrest observation and imagination upon qualities which do not fructify in the mind [1].

Then, Dewey adopts a *terra nullius* modernist colonial rationale of savage inability or unwillingness to exploit nature: 'Lack of control of natural forces means that a scant number of natural objects enter into associated behavior. Only a small number of natural resources are utilized and they are not worked for what they are worth'. In contrast, 'the advance of civilization means that a larger number of natural forces and objects have been transformed into instrumentalities of action, into means for securing ends' [1] (p. 42). The 'we' which follows and its description as dealing with 'weighted'—I'd say 'cultivated'—stimuli is interesting: 'we start not so much with superior capacities as with superior stimuli for evocation and direction of our capacities. The savage deals largely with crude stimuli; we have weighted stimuli' [1] (p. 42, *emph mine*).

Did the 'we', the members of the civilized circle, those in the civilized group, perpetuate civilization and its moral high ground? 15 years after Dewey's visit, silence about and then mitigation of the Armenian genocide, Hitler encouraged his generals to exterminate the Poles for the sake of Lebensraum. He urged them not to have any qualms about the international impact this would have

by asking: ‘who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?’ [18]. Further, in a 1931 interview, Hitler ‘told a German newspaper editor that, in deciding the future of Germany, one should “[t]hink of the biblical deportations and the massacres of the Middle Ages [. . .] and remember the extermination of the Armenians”’ [18] (p. 32). In an interesting and ironic reversal, as I see it, the ‘civilized’ states had moments of modeling their ‘future’ after the ‘crude’ pattern set by their supposed ‘others’. The icon of one of the states in the circle of the civilized was Turkey rather than the other way round.

4. Conclusions

When political readings of Dewey go deconstructive or critical, they do so from a perspective of ‘familiarity’ that reflects current emphases and sensibilities within the Anglo-American milieu, that is, questions about Dewey being left-wing liberal or deep down conservative or about Dewey’s racialized attitudes. My issue here has not been Dewey’s degree of what passes as ‘progressivism’ or the presence or absence of race in Dewey’s work, not because I underestimate issues such as race (far from it), but because I consider them part of a broader question about Dewey’s persona as a colonial traveler and developer. To be posed this broader question does not presuppose that all of Dewey’s ideas lend full support to a developmentalist and colonial ideology. It is not a matter of Dewey’s oeuvre absolutely cohering, but rather of containing standpoints which undermine or complicate his political declarations. In so doing, such deconstructive elements enable a cautionary reading which aims to destabilize the celebratory spirit that ends up being self-congratulatory and beautifying of our political philosophical attainments. I have tried to show that the relevance of a specific, older political philosophy to the world and thought today is not just a matter of positive, still valid or applicable concepts directly conducive to promoting values and ideals. In this sense, I have attempted a reading oriented to the concept of the use-less (that which finds no use in current approaches to Dewey) rather than to that of the use-ful (e.g., the useful tools we may draw from his writings).

Useful-oriented readings inter alia focus on open-mindedness or leaning by doing, but, through my reading, I have asked: what did Dewey learn by doing the tasks he undertook and by having the experience which he had when he traveled to Turkey? Large populations (some of which were minorities compared to the whole country but majorities in some territories) were forced to depart and become refugees, following the opposite route that Dewey took, as late as months before the merry arrival of the travelling, global intellectual. The rooted who were turned into rootless did not cross paths with the footloose man of action, the reformer, developer and colonial traveler whose rootedness is evidenced through attention to the ‘internal borders’ that he was carrying along when crossing external borders with the best of intentions.

What kind of learning by un-doing might be relevant in such cases? As an attitude, open-mindedness sometimes depends on knowledge. Thought through, this means that the cultivation of attitudes, so cherished by Dewey’s pragmatism and often contrasted to knowledge acquisition (e.g., of remote or useless facts) [6] cannot succeed without a different and richer relation to obtaining knowledge. To be critical, the attitude of open-mindedness at times presupposes inextricable connections to uncomfortable knowledge acquisition, to concrete contents of learning beyond the ‘timely’, even up to learning significant though ‘use-less’ facts and to searching for appropriate factual evidence in ways that have a bearing on educational ethics and politics. Perhaps it also needs another ethos and another sense of politics.

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