

The Critical Philosophy and the Education for John Dewey

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Abstract The aim of this study is to investigate the conception of philosophy as a criticism and its relationship to education in the thought of John Dewey. The study of bibliographical order sought to analyze this issue in the major works of this author and his interpreters. The methodological structure of this paper explores the turn of the concept of philosophy elaborated by Dewey pointing to its social function of thinking about current conflicts, particularly in relation to the values and the science, the breakup with dualism, the critique of culture. Thus, philosophy as reflective, critical and creative thinking about the experience in a social shared activity is a condition for the continuous learning to act and to learn required in a complex and changing society and this process promotes and sustains human growth. From the philosophical perspective, critical and creative thinking is the principle of education and likewise democracy. Philosophy and democratic education are the bases of the ethics and politics life in a community.

Keywords: Dewey, philosophy, criticism, experience, thought, education

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the conception of philosophy as a criticism and its relationship to education in the thought of John Dewey. This objective gains power at this time when we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the book *Democracy and Education*, considered a classic treatise on philosophy of education. The international influence that this book has achieved greatly values the work of examining the relationship between philosophy and education for our time. The reflection we propose to develop is guided by the following questions: What is the philosophy for John Dewey? How he understands the critical and creative task of the philosophy? What is the relationship between philosophy and education? These questions about the meaning and the role of philosophy and its relation to education demand the reading of the major works of this thinker to understand the arguments that comprise his theoretical construct. For this work also we resort to reading some of his interpreters seeking to understand the concepts and arguments elaborated by Dewey and thus endeavor to develop hypotheses that may help to think of these concepts in the current context.

Initially we intend to present the methodological movement that we will adopt to develop the problem announced. In the first step, we aim to show that Dewey's understanding of the philosophical activity as thinking about the socio-cultural conflicts of a given time. For him the fundamental problem of our time is the mismatch between the development of science and the fixing of philosophy in beliefs that do not follow the scientific and

technological advancement or move away in a world apart from it. Based on this assumption, we intend to forward the argument showing that the philosophy should be a practice of criticism, especially to the dualism of its own historical productions permeated by prejudice that keeps the social division of classes. In this sense, it must be critical to the assumptions of culture in order to clarify and emancipate habits. Complementing this understanding, we will explore the creative aspect of philosophy as a philosophy of experience, a philosophy of nature in continuous change, experimentally working to find solutions to the moral and political problems of life. In this perspective, the philosophy is an act primarily investigative and communicative that works interrelated and interdependent way with each others workers and has the responsibility to enlarge the meanings and transform the experience. It has a logical task that is to think about thinking itself, checking, reconstructing and enlarging the experimental method itself or the method of intelligent experience called reflective thinking. Thus philosophy is inquiry of inquiry or the criticism of criticism. The author makes to derive from the theory of reflective thought a theory of the process of education, as being eminently philosophical. Philosophy and democratic education are the bases of the ethics and politics life in a community. In continuity, we show that for the author philosophy as love of wisdom is consistent with democracy as love to share communicatively reflective experience. The thesis aims to point that philosophy as a reflective, critical and creative thinking is an integral part of democratic life as it is indispensable for development of the capabilities that empower the person to participate freely and fully in social activities, especially to participate in a sympathetic solution of the conflicts common.

In broad terms, we could say that there is close harmony between the life and the philosophical thought of John Dewey. In the autobiographical text entitled *From absolutism to experimentalism* (1930), he declares that historical circumstances have exerted great influence on his life and forced him to think about the problems of life, thus avoiding that thought stay immune in relation to experience. He exposes the difficulty of the philosopher to define himself before life changing process, in an unstable experience, having to collect the various influences, some even incompatible, struggling to assimilate something of each in an effort to give consistent logical continuity to the new from than that has learned. We highlight this autobiographical aspect because it portrays the intimate connection between philosophy and education in the life and work of the author. The philosopher and educator John Dewey¹ lived in a period of great changes in America and worldwide that have impacted in the development of his philosophy² that is, in turn, a way to respond to the challenges of their time.

¹ John Dewey was Born in 1959 in Burlington, Vermont, United States of America and he died in 1952, in New York, New York. BUTTS and CREMIN (1959) and MILLS (1966) stress some information on the historical period in which the Dewey has borned and lived: after the American Civil War (1861-1865), the United States of America enters in a period of national consolidation in the economic, social, political and cultural levels, highlighting a strong movement of industrialization and development of trade. Thus, there is a new division of labor with the change of agrarian and rural social structure for industrial and urban commercial. Implementation of streamlined industrial production systems. Worsening social conditions of urban life caused by the lack of infrastructure of large cities, the heavy flow of migrants in urban centers and the precarious working conditions. The separation of the powers of Church and State. The rise of emerging nationalism guided by liberalism, that values education as a factor of economic, social, political and cultural. The public education has gone through a drastic change, intensifying the process of secularization and universalization, significantly increasing the number of students, demanding a review on studies and vocational guidance programs guided more by secular themes (scientific, technological and philosophical), requiring break with the authoritarian traditional teaching centered in the content memorization process. The institutionalization of the American University organized under the privately secular and religious private. The emergence of modern science as opposed to religious dogma, specially the Christian fundamentalism and th liberal theology and the philosophy of idealism and humanism dualistic. In this context, It's significant the publication of the Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species*, in the same year Dewey was born.

² Dewey, along with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and William James (1842-1910), are considered the founders of the North American philosophical movement called Pragmatism. The American Pragmatism was constituted as a philosophy of the experience based on the practical consequences in the conception of a concept or an Idea and definition of truth or knowledge. In this way it differs from idealism, rationalism and empiricism. Dewey is regarded a leading exponent of the Pragmatism, but he has preferred to call his philosophy experimentalism or instrumentalism. Dewey developed a distinct philosophy of experience based on the continuity, interaction and problematicity principle. His philosophy of experience, the faith in the human intelligence and democracy constitute the basis for the reconstruction of philosophy in various fields such as metaphysics, epistemology, logic, psychology, aesthetics, religion, ethics, politics and education. Schneider, in *A History of American* emphasizes that "Dewey social philosophy, [...] is the belief that collective action and public experience are necessary to give to any individual an "effective freedom" and a practical understanding of the implications of his particular interests and needs. He has become the chief American exponent and patron saint of democratic socialism" ([23], p. 566). Russell ([22], p. 137) resalta que Dewey "is the foremost representative of a philosophy which, whether one accepts or rejects it, must undoubtedly be judged to have a great importance as a social phenomenon. Russel continues his reflection making a critique of Dewey's philosophy: "Dr. Dewey has na outlook which, where it is distinctive, is in harmony with the age of industrialism and collective enterprise." Although Russel has divergence on other

2. The Philosophy as a Criticism of the Culture

Dewey formulated his understanding of the activity of philosophy closely linked to the historic and cultural problems of man. For him, fundamentally, vital cultural problems decide philosophical problems. His words are clear on this point: "I regard the philosophy of any period as a reflex of larger and far-reaching cultural achievements, needs, conflicts and problems" ([11], p. 522).

As the activity of philosophy cannot be exercised in a vacuum, it must deal with the conflicts of each time. The central problem from which derive others is the conflictive relationship between science and values: "Its central problem is the relation that exists between the beliefs about the nature of things *due to natural science* to beliefs about values" ([11], p. 256).

This problem has vital significance because it requires setting the beliefs developed by the science and technology that clash with the beliefs in the field of values and goals of conduct. In this sense, the problems have an ethical background. Another central conflict of Western philosophy is the gap that exists in the struggle between the active forces of scientific knowledge and the power of the technique, and the dispersion generated by the delay and inertia of habits and beliefs. It follows the need of philosophy to reconstruct the institutions, customs and beliefs of all sorts to harmonize with or adjust to the potentialities of science and technology. The author poses the problem of philosophy in these terms: "[...] the problem of the relation of physical science to the things of ordinary experience" ([11], p. 255).

Hickman identifies the problem of science and technology as central to Dewey's philosophy. The Deweyan contributions to the critique of the technological culture appears in all aspects of his theory such as education, aesthetics, ethics, social and political philosophy, logic, etc. Hickman also called Dewey as "the philosopher of technology" interpreting his theory of

aspects of Dewey's philosophy, especially the notion of truth, he recognizes the importance of the Dewey's book *Logic: the Theory of Inquiry*: "This book is very rich and varied in its contents; it contains highly interesting criticism of past philosophers, very able analyses of the prejudice inspiring traditional forma logic, and na intimate awareness of the realities of scientific investigation. ([22], p. 137). He also expresses his admiration for the Dewey's philosophy of education. In order to understand Dewey as a social philosopher in sync with problems of society of his time, Whitehead ([24], p. 477) says: "Dewey is to be classed among thos men who have made philosophic thought relevant to the needs of their own days. [...] He has disclosed great ideas relevant to the functioning of the social system." Whitehead points out that the importance of Dewey's thought to the American civilization can be compared analogously to the importance of the thought of Aquino to the Middle Ages or Bacon, Descartes, Locke and Comte to modern life. Richard Rorty put Dewey in the group of three most important philosophers of the twentieth century: "It is against this background that we should see the work of the three most important philosophers of our century – Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Dewey" ([21], p. 5). Rorty states that these three philosophers were responsible for a turn in the history of the philosophy because they "broke free of the Kantian conception of philosophy as foundational" ([21], p. 5) We closed these considerations with the appreciation of the French philosopher called Parodi about this great philosophical movement in the history of philosophy: "pragmatism, which constitutes one of America's most original contributions to universal philosophy." ([19], p. 229).

inquiry as technology, featuring the principle of the instrumentalism of the author:

The key to understand Dewey's work as a contribution to the philosophy of technology is, I suggest, an appreciation of his contention that all inquiry or deliberation that involves tools and artifacts, whether the tools or artifacts abstract or concrete, tangible or intangible, should be viewed as instrumental: in other words, as form of technology. ([18], p. 26)

In this case, technology is identified with all the intelligent techniques that are developed for satisfaction of the human needs and not only mechanical forms. Thus the technology is found in both primary experience and the reflective experience. According to this interpretation, Dewey analyses the development of this intelligence along the history in order to extract his understanding of the philosophy or of the technology of the philosophy.

The common presupposition of the problems mentioned by Dewey and that was subject of his continuous criticism is the dualism generated in the field of philosophical tradition between what was established, for a particular class, as true knowledge and therefore privileged over the ordinary experience. In Dewey's criticism, the traditional philosophies: "[...] have gone astray through failure to connect their reflective results with the affairs of everyday experience" ([10], p. 32).

Dewey developed a critical philosophy in relation to dualistic philosophies because these presuppose the existence of a "reality" that is superior to the precariousness and contingency of life. Entrenched in conceptions considered as absolute values, they accuse science as the guilty of the ills of humanity and the crisis of values. He showed the unsustainability of philosophies dealing with the "quest for certainty" and proposes experimental philosophy that is guided from the continuing inquiry from the existential experience. He sought the references to develop his philosophy of experience or philosophy of nature in "[...] by acknowledgement of the standpoint and conclusions of scientific biology and cultural anthropology and of the import of the experimental method in knowing" ([11], p. 524). The philosophy of experience has, for the author, its origin in the field of philosophy itself: "[...] my technique has grown directly out of the problems of historic philosophies ([11], p. 523).

Dewey took as assumption of naturalism the continuously change of the world. With this starting point, his philosophy sought to operate the synthesis of the dualisms: self and world, soul and body, nature and God, intelligence and emotion, theory and practice, objective and subjective, real and apparent, mental and physical, to know and to do, mind and body, work and leisure. For him, the dualisms have social basis, that is, they were originated in a society divided into classes, scholarly and working classes, rich and poor, those who command and those who are ruled. The dualisms represent the social disruption of continuity and legitimize the continuation of this division classes through the perpetuation of authoritarian practices in all spheres of life. In this sense, Dewey ([13], p. 118) criticizes the authority that tutelages thought: "Wherever external authority reigns, thinking is suspected and obnoxious". In this sense, the criticism to dualism is the critique of dualist culture that permeates all

areas of life, or more specifically, a form of social and political criticism.

We can deduce from this linking of traditional philosophy with authoritarian social structures the need for a review of own philosophical practice: to do the criticism about herself, by consequence, the criticism about culture. The philosophizing about philosophy becomes the reflection on the own production conditions of philosophy: "Philosophy forswears inquiry after absolute origins and absolute finalities in order to explore specific values and the specific conditions that generate them" ([14], p. 13). In this sense, Dewey sought to rescue the function of philosophy as experimental reflection on the problems arising from the conflict generated by dualisms in many areas of life such as logical or epistemological, social, ethical, political, aesthetic, educational, etc. The primary purpose of philosophy is to think creatively the moral and politics life's problems: "[...] philosophy must in time become a method of locating and interpreting the more serious of the conflicts that occur in life, and a method of projecting ways for dealing with them: a method of moral and political diagnosis and prognosis" ([14], p. 18). Being a philosophy of experience, its hypothetical speculation must transform the experience itself: "[...] a philosophy that humbles its pretensions to the work of projecting hypotheses for the education and conduct of mind, individual and social, is thereby subjected to test by the way in which the ideas it propounds work out in the practice. In having modesty forced upon it, philosophy also acquires responsibility" ([14], p. 18). This method did not mean the surrender of the philosophy to the operating and experimental character of scientific knowledge. It meant that philosophy could be allied with science, but would have to reconstruct its own conception. On the one hand, its responsibility lies in the critique of all conception of knowledge anchored on the premise of knowledge as inherently and exclusively contemplative. On the other hand, the responsibility to reconstruct his own conception of knowledge including operative and experimental character of the knowing as an integral part of the theory of knowledge. So philosophy could cooperate to clarify, create, guide and control the human action. Dewey ([10], p. 53) emphasizes that "[...] the future role of philosophy is to clarify the ideas of men about the social and moral conflicts of their days".

Dewey attributes to philosophy the effort to discover a new order of relationships not evident and provide new meanings, affording clarity to the very experience. In this perspective, the first task of philosophy is well placed by the author: "Its primary concern is to clarify, liberate and extend the goods which is inherent the naturally generated functions of experience" ([10], p. 407). Therefore, it has a wide human value and a libertarian character, in that it suggests intelligent direction to action, emotion and social relationships.

On the other hand, experience is saturated with classifications and interpretations produced by the reflections of past generations and seem fresh material and naively empirical, but are conventionalisms. They are appeals to prejudice and fanaticism (cf. [10], p. 33). Even if we know the sources and authority of those who produced them, they are considered prejudices, whether true or false, philosophy criticizes prejudices. Thus, another task of philosophy in continuity with the previous

is to detect and reflect on the results of past reflections that are welded to the materials of first-hand experience, or have become habits or habitual. Philosophy intellectually bare habits, which were acquired in the assimilation of culture, without being inspected critically to see what they are made of and what they serve us in adopting them. Otherwise, they preclude the intelligent advancement of culture, often obscuring and distorting:

An empirical philosophy is in any case a kind of intellectual disrobing. We cannot permanently divest ourselves of the intellectual habits we take on and wear when we assimilate the culture of our own time and place. But intelligent furthering of culture demands that we take some of them off, that we inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us. We cannot achieve recovery of primitive naivete. But there is attainable a cultivated naivete of eye, ear and thought, one that can be acquired only through the discipline of severe thought. (Dewey, 1958, p. 37).

The "discipline of a rigorous thinking" denotes the critical task of philosophy in relation to the knowledge of its time and space: "And this purpose is criticism of beliefs, institutions, customs, policies with respect to their bearing upon good." ([10], p. 408). Thus, the criticism of prejudices means for Dewey: "Clarification and emancipation follow when they are detected and cast out." ([10], p. 37). We can conclude the author's reasoning in defense of philosophy as a critical activity able to develop critical methods: "[...] philosophy as a critical method of developing methods of criticism" ([10], p. 408). In this sense, philosophy as critique of the beliefs and habits rooted in the culture prevents passive adaptation and makes possible the emancipation as a creative process of reconstruction of the experimence.

Dewey conceives philosophy as inherently critical, considering that it has a distinct position among the various modes of criticism in general: it is the criticism of criticism. The critical requirement stems from the tendency of objects becoming hard compartments not communicative and thus not interactive. Dewey mentions the variety of specializations such as science, industry, politics, religion, art, education, morals, and others, that when institutionalized or professionalized they become isolated and petrified. Hence the need for the critical task of philosophy in communicative practice:

Over-specialization and division of interests, occupations and goods create the need for a generalized medium of intercommunication, of mutual criticism through all-around translation from one separated region of experience into another. Thus philosophy as a critical organ becomes in effect a messenger, a liaison officer, making reciprocally intelligible voices speaking provincial tongues, and thereby enlarging as well as rectifying the meanings with which they are charged. ([10], p. 410).

The critique of philosophy implies a dialogical reflective work between the different specialized fields of research avoiding isolation and providing mutual reconstruction of meanings interconnecting different perspectives. The role of philosophical criticism prevents fragmentation of life in fields of specialized and disconnected knowledge of a totality of vision. The key position of philosophy in the development of socio-

cultural experience as a medium of intercommunications enlarging and rectifying meanings, in the sense of criticism of criticism, is due to the terms of generality, totality, and ultimateness, assumptions of its way of thinking. It means that philosophy is not limited to specific answers to specific problems (ethics, politics, logic, etc.) that it proposes to think. It is not reducible to a definite knowledge as occurs in the sciences. It is the disposition to continue to think about the knowledge, the world, the life.

In this line of reasoning, Campbell ([2], p. 93) affirms: "[...] philosophical criticism is a persistent attempt to uncover and evaluate, and replace if necessary, the basic assumptions of culture." Examining the assumptions of the culture we can clarify and guide the ongoing experience thus expanding the range and accuracy of the capability to philosophize and live democratically.

3. Philosophy and the experimental Method of Inquiry: The Reflective Thinking

Dewey questioned the dualistic assumption of rationalism and empiricism as a way to attain knowledge. He found in the experimental method the alternative to investigate the different philosophical aspects of experience: logical (treated as epistemological), ethical, political, aesthetic, anthropological, educational and religious. On the experimental method adopted by Dewey, Ratner explained:

[...] this cumulative process and corrective is the natural matrix by which are developing the new varieties of experimental method. Therefore, the experimental method consists not of a single linear rule. It is multidimensional and multi-potential, acquiring different specific ways by using into different specific situations and revealing new powers in each new pathway that is used ([20], p. 56)

For Ratner, the experimental method broke with the linear logic of thinking and created a matrix of inquiry as a process of inquiry of problematic situations as a process that feeds itself with the accumulation of meanings generated in each experience, and at the same time, is guided by the principle of fallibilism that considers the meanings accumulated as provisional and hypothetical and not absolute certainties, subject to a continued reconstruction reflective process of solving new situations. The fallibility principle is grounded on critics as auto correct condition by fostering the growth and expansion of the investigative process. The accumulation of knowledge without criticism leads to inert routine or fundamentalism. Criticism without the accumulation of knowledge leads to immobility or relativism. By embracing the experimental method, Dewey opened a wide field of inquiry for philosophy, once meant to leave the safe realm of the metaphysical truths and walk in the uncertain terrain of experience in a context of constant change. The experimental attitude meant a shift to the philosopher for the common field of research problems arising from life itself. Thus, the philosopher identifies himself as a human being among others, a worker from other workers, and their field is constituted as a field among others, all

functioning of interrelated and interdependent way with each other. It is here that the philosophical work acquires its value to the extent that his investigation turns to enlarge and transform the human experience.

Dewey criticized radically the epistemology characteristic of modern philosophy because it takes for granted the dualisms mentioned. In this case, knowledge is treated as possession of a representation of the world owned by an individual mind thinking independent of the external world. Dewey called this philosophy as spectator theory of knowledge that takes the mind as a mirror of reality, translating this into a mental image. These are philosophies of acceptance and they engage in discovering an antecedent reality that provides truth as logically demonstrated certainty. So these philosophies transform what is found in natural existence in “[...] a refuge, an asylum for contemplation, or a theme for dialectical elaboration” ([10], p. 51). For Dewey, philosophy has a role to offer intelligent control, intentional in guiding experience.

One of the problems implicit in dualistic philosophies is the isolation of the individual from the world and the others, facilitating the development of an external authority control. Thus, there remains a break of continuity in relations between individual and society. Opposed to this view, Dewey believes that human action is always done in a common and public world. So, he put as a basis of all knowledge the social constitution of the self:

As matter of fact every individual has grown up, and always must grow up, in a social medium. His responses grow intelligent, or gain meaning, simply because he lives and acts in a medium of accepted meanings and values. Through social intercourse, through sharing in the activities embodying beliefs, he gradually acquires a mind of his own. The conception of mind as a purely isolated possession of the self is at the very antipodes of the truth. The self achieves mind in the degree in which knowledge of things is incarnate in the life about him; the self is not a separate mind building up knowledge anew on its own account. (Dewey, 1979, p. 325).

For Dewey, the mind is active and not an organ of reception or mere accumulation of information or contemplation of the truth. In this sense the mind depends on the experience that knowledge is incarnate in life.

The experience is an organism-environment interaction in a context whose connections between thinking act and acting think results in a change in the individual and in the environment, causing accumulation of meanings in that one.

Dewey devoted part of his philosophical research in reconstructing the method to be employed in philosophy, that is, the reconstruction of the experimental method in which he examines the role of reflective thinking. He defined the character of this philosophical inquiry as the logic of thinking, anchoring his analysis in the social and historical development of *how we think of, in and to the experience*. Reflective thinking is defined as an intelligent activity that requires conscious and voluntary effort to rebuild experience in a vital problematic situation through the inquiry: “*Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends. [...] it is a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of reasons.*” ([7], p. 6, author’s italics).

Dewey identifies the activity of reflective thinking as the inquiry activity itself, as we can see in its definition of inquiry: “*Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified ‘whole’.*” ([12], p. 104/5, author’s italics and quotes).

It should be noted that, according to the author, the logic of thought is not a logical external to experience; an *a priori* extracted by the mind or by the thought, but it is built in the very process of investigation of problematic experience. Following the author’s argument in the excerpt:

[...] thinking does not mean any transcendental states or acts suddenly introduced into a previously natural scene, but that the operations of knowing are (or are artfully derived from) natural responses of the organism, which constitute knowing in virtue of the situation of doubt in which they arise and in virtue of the use of inquiry, reconstruction, and control to which they are put. ([9], p. 332).

Thus, for him, the primary object of philosophical inquiry, your genuine habitation, is the continuous, interconnected and conflicted field of individual and social experience. In this sense, philosophy is concerned with the logic of thinking and investigates the nuances of this logic that results from reflection on the experience. It investigates the logic of inquiry. It is the inquiry of the inquiry whose logic is not restricted only to an intrinsic analysis of thought, but as their political and social implications.

Dewey’s attempt was to rebuild philosophy doing, on the one hand, the criticism of philosophical reflection which remained distant from the experience and, on the other hand, proposing philosophical inquiry in the form of reflective thought engaged to think the ethical, political, logical and educational experience at present. The experimental method of thinking reflectively the problems of the experience is an antidote to the dualistic thinking that separates theory and practice. In Dewey’s perspective, action oriented and controlled by reflection imply verification as a part of the experimental process and knowledge results effectively through the transformation of the problematic situation. The reflective process ends with the warranted assertion, which is a means to coping new problematic situations.

Philosophy conceived as method of criticism, creative the investigation of experience seeks to express the deep conflicts and endless uncertainties of civilization. From this perspective Dewey understands that philosophy has a socio-cultural function.

Briefly, we can resume the conception of philosophy as criticism, as an experimental method in the form of reflective thought about the experience and problems still characterized in terms of generality, totality, and ultimateness. It means the socio-cultural function of philosophy as a condition of possibility for a democratic society.

4. Philosophy, Democracy and Education.

In this perspective, Dewey’s conception of philosophy corresponds to a social method or a method of democracy. In this direction the first task is to understand the

conception of democracy. Dewey establishes a criterion for democracy with two elements: “[...] 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.” ([8], p. 99). This is the base to define democracy as follows: “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” ([8], p. 87). This “mode of associated living” implies the activity of philosophy since it requires the ability and disposition to think in terms of generality, totality, and ultimateness about the common problems, exchange experiences, reconstruct beliefs.

The author puts democracy as a condition for achieving the education goals of cultural and social efficiency, in the sense of continuity of the life of society. The separation of these two goals is proper for aristocratic societies that offer distinct education for the upper members, the elites, and the other to the lower members, the masses. Culture should not be mistaken as something purely interior, but with the full development of personality, and of the human incommensurability, allowing everybody to participate freely and fully in the common activities in a valuable experience in extent, depth and continuous growth and expansion. In this sense, the author shows the relationship of the concepts of education and democracy:

But if democracy has a moral and ideal meaning, it is that a social return be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive capacities be afforded all. The separation of the two aims in education is fatal to democracy; the adoption of the narrower meaning of efficiency deprives it of its essential justification. ([8], p. 122).

It follows from this the value of education because it the social mean to give everyone the chance to assess social benefits and develop their individual capacities, and also demand all the respective social retribution. For Dewey, education should provide an enabling environment so that each individual has the opportunity to develop his/her potentially social nature. Likewise, the reflection of the philosophy of human need in the struggle for survival should be governed by the democratic values and purposes for their own guarantee. The philosophy should be the base of democracy and of education. In this sense, philosophy can be understood as a way of life, especially because, as the author himself acknowledges, philosophy as love of wisdom indicates a moral practice. Wisdom is a moral term, because refers to a choice, a preference for a way of life rather than another, in this case, democratic life. Without falling into redundancy, the “better life” is one that results in reflective thinking, critical and creative, exercised in an inquiry community.

Therefore, we cannot disassociate education, democracy and philosophy. And the defense of the author is to democratize philosophy and to philosophize the democracy. Philosophy as a reflective, critical and creator thinking is an integral part of democratic life as it is indispensable for the formation of the person able to participate in a sympathetic solution of the conflicts common. Democracy implies the sympathy as a moral sense: “For sympathy as a desirable quality is something more than mere feeling; it is a cultivated imagination for what men have in common and a rebellion at whatever unnecessarily divides them”. ([8], p. 121).

A democratic education – in and for democracy – presupposes a shared experience where a person is capable of free and full communication. It is opposed to the education as of development of capabilities to provide service or to be useful to others (market, industry, etc.) or as formation of culture, thought or spiritual life as something purely internal opposed to socialized dispositions. An excellence democratic education consists in the formation of the person in the following sense: “What one is as a person is what one is as associated with others, in a free give and take of intercourse” ([8], p. 122). This democratic educational process implies necessarily the transformation of the culture:

This is impossible without culture, while it brings a reward in culture, because one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning—without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding the range and accuracy of one’s perception of meanings. ([8], p. 123).

Our reflection notes that the thick cloud of scientificity obnubilated Dewey’s conception of philosophy. Our interpretation of Dewey’s thought captures the meaning of philosophy as this reflexive attitude characterized by criticality, completeness, generality, radicality and creativity before the happenings that weave the experience.

Our argument is that reflection, the core concept in the reconstruction of the concept of philosophy made by Dewey, has its origin in the philosophy and not science and is a condition of possibility of this. The difference is just in the act of reflecting or critical thinking characteristic of philosophy, and rationally grounded knowledge, characteristic of science. Therefore, philosophy is a reflective attitude on this knowledge to think how to respond to their demands. The text below is very illuminating on this issue:

It is of assistance to connect philosophy with thinking in its distinction from knowledge. Knowledge, grounded knowledge, is science; it represents objects which have been settled, ordered, disposed of rationally. Thinking, on the other hand, is prospective in reference. It is occasioned by an unsettlement and it aims at overcoming a disturbance. Philosophy is thinking what the known demands of us — what responsive attitude it exacts. It is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact. Hence it is hypothetical, like all thinking. It presents an assignment of something to be done — something to be tried. Its value lies not in furnishing solutions (which can be achieved only in action) but in defining difficulties and suggesting methods for dealing with them. Philosophy might almost be described as thinking which has become conscious of itself —which has generalized its place, function, and value in experience. ([8], p. 326)

To the science it is important to explain the facts of this world; to the philosophy it is important to think the permanent and active attitude front of the discoveries of science to maintain the continuity of life. To mark this difference, we gave voice to the author: “This direct and intimate connection of philosophy with na outlook upon life obviously differentiates philosophy from science” ([8], p. 324). For him, philosophy is an attitude that embodies the vision of the totality of experience crossed by conflicts,

as he says “[...] because there is the need of integration in action of the conflicting various interests in life” ([8], p. 326). Consequently philosophical attitude toward experience is “[...] the endeavor to attain as unified, consistent, and complete an outlook upon experience as possible” ([8], p. 324).

When the interests emerge in the experience in a manner much superficial melting easily into rough accommodations or are inadequately organized in individuality in order to not conflict with each other, philosophy is not needed or becomes a "homely philosophy." The oppositions or conflicts of interests that influence life or as we referred to the dualisms - science and religion, economics and science / aesthetics; conservatism and freedom; institution and individual - are cause for reflection and discovery of more comprehensive alternative to harmonize conflicts and restore the continuity of experience lived in society as a whole. When the ideals of conduct that affect the whole society are very different and discrepant among themselves arises the necessity of reflection that results in the philosophical systems. As Dewey said: "If there are genuine uncertainties in life, philosophies must reflect that uncertainty" ([8], p. 327). According to the Ratner's interpretation: "[...] philosophy is not outside of and above all other human pursuits, cultivating in secrecy and silence a remote, stacked-off preserve of its own; philosophy is and work within the open and public domain of all human activities, one among others, differentiated by its scope and function, but in no way set apart." ([20], p. 72)

The understanding of philosophy as activity and thinking operating the reflection within the experience, germinating it with signification in a continuous and interactive process, allowed Dewey to conceive the intimate relationship between philosophy and education. In opposition to the practice of applying philosophies, that is, "preconceived ideas" to education, philosophy begins to exercise its role as thinking educational problems as problems of life. Therefore, for the author, philosophy is

[...] it is only an explicit formulation of the problems of the formation of right mental and moral habitudes in respect to the difficulties of contemporary social life. The most penetrating definition of philosophy which can be given is, then, that it is the theory of education in its most general phases. ([8], p. 331).

We believe that the formation of this "straight mentality and good moral habits", translated as ethical thinking, takes place in the reflective and dialogical process, what means, in a community of democratic life. This means the ability to conduct the social life on an ethical basis. This leads us to understand Dewey's theory of reflective thought, which is a theory of the process of education, as being eminently philosophical.

Cochran considers Dewey as an international thinker because of the problems he approached and the solutions projected in politics, morals, education and others aspects. He believed that the next scientific revolution would happen when human beings applied their knowledge to think about social problems. In this sense, the Dewey's concept of democracy is a vision of the public in which the democratic communities are epistemic communities, the *locus* of production of knowledge necessary for individuals to build a more meaningful world for themselves from the shared needs in ordinary

circumstances. Another relevant aspect of the democratic community as an inquiry and ethical community is that this environment of shared and common experience promotes the freedom and growth of the person. Cochran emphasizes the virtues that stand the link between science, research and democracy: "[...] science and inquiry into the democratic control of social organization share these virtues: an experimental attitude; creativity; cooperative consultation with others; openness to difference; and a willingness to revise one's view" ([4], p. 326).

In the understanding of Bernstein, Dewey thought democracy radically, beyond communitarianism and liberalism. For him, the Dewey's conception of democracy presupposes a democratic culture: "Democracy requires a robust democratic culture in which the attitudes, emotions, and habits that constitutes a democratic *ethos* are embodied" ([1], p. 303). This *ethos* presupposes the development of a "social intelligence", considering that intelligence is distinct from reason as the supreme faculty of judgment. For him the sense of Dewey's intelligence differs of reason:

Intelligence is not a faculty; it is a set of dispositions that involves imagination, sensitivity to complexities of concrete situations, the capacities to listen to others opinions, and a fallibilistic experimental attitude to solving problems. Intelligence involves a passionate commitments to ends-in-view that seeks to achieve, and a willingness to learn from one's mistake. ([1], p 303-304).

Dewey bequeathed a theory that profoundly articulates the dimensions of philosophy, democracy and education as a way to deal with conflicts that pervade life in a reflective, critical e creative form. Philosophy and democratic education are the bases of the ethics and politics life in a community. When operating together they generate growth and expansion of the experience and culture. When these three elements come into disagreement there is growth arrest and retraction of the experience, opening room for degenerative forms of social life as routine, discrimination, violence and oppression. Social injustices denote the disruption of these dimensions and only can be overcome throughout ways of rearticulating them.

In a similar perception, Garrison, Neubert and Reich ([17], p. 104) emphasize that "Dewey's understanding of democracy is a deeply pluralistic and participatory concept that requires constant deliberation in a way of construction and criticism. (...) It is a transformative practice constituting democracy as an open-ended and revisable project of learning from experience." The consideration of these author brings into focus the challenge for democracy to think diversity in a world where conflicts intensify: "This involves issues posed by legal and illegal immigration, ethnic conflict involving violence an even genocide, radical en fundamentalist religious movements, extreme and exclusive forms of community like nationalism or restrictive identity politics, etc." ([17], p. 105) These struggles are a test for the survival of democracy.

Dewey had clarity about the fragility of democracy and became involved in advocacy organizations and causes towards the defense of freedom and civil rights. For him, it is necessary the involvement in the ongoing work of incorporating the democratic *ethos* in daily life, or democracy can sink or become a hollow speech.

The effort requires joint in everyday life the ability to philosophize to act democratically allowing a growing education. Learning to thinking philosophical and democratically is not a habit that only are acquires with school education. The formal education should refine this habit to improve life social life. This is the great value of public education. It is appropriate the identification made by Childs ([3], p. 441-442: “Adherence to this democratic ideal has made Dr. Dewey a vigorous champion of public education.”

This work of analysis of Dewey's ideas on philosophy and education raised hypotheses relevant to continue thinking the current problems. On the one hand, Dewey developed the philosophical criticism in several areas that deserve further investigation as: culture, communication, technology, politics, ethics, the dimension of habits and impulses, and many aspects of education. On the other hand, Dewey is an important reference for the development of conceptions of popular education like Paulo Freire in Brazil and the theory of communicative action of Habermas. Other dialogues can yield highly illuminating studies as the possibility of relationship with the philosophy of difference, multiculturalism and others expressions of the current philosophical thought like Rorty, Foucault, Delleuze, Bauman.

The task of translating to the current times the Greek ideal of love wisdom is equivalent to understand the loving relationship between philosophy, education and democracy at the work of thinking deep current conflicts such as violence, poverty, environmental destruction, etc. that corrode the social life. This is a possibility to build a world inhabited by an ethical and political that prime for human growth.

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