Chapter Title: Dewey, Ebbinghaus, and the Frankfurt School: A Controversy over Kant

Neither Fought Out nor Exhausted.

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For a contemporary reader, the topic and claims of Dewey's *German Philosophy and Politics*

(*GPP* henceforth)[1] may seem weird and far away – perhaps not least because the issues

accompanying this text were only seldomly addressed in the last decades. Many authors,

sympathetic or disinclined to Dewey, regard *GPP* as a slip-up. Others regard the Hegelian

Emptiness Charge (EC henceforth), the well-known argument against Kant to which Dewey

refers in *GPP*, as "demonstrably false" (Schnädelbach, 2013, p. 135; Geismann, 2001, p.

631)[2]. Moreover, it can seem as if *GPP* does not offer a lot of material for the contemporary

reader interested in pragmatist theory building.

However, in this chapter I will show that the controversial reactions to the text indicate that

GPP is, on the contrary, a highly stimulating philosophical source and that the reception of it,

centering around Kantian philosophy and Dewey's Hegelian-pragmatist critique, is evidence

for its still unexhausted potential for further developing an experimentalist philosophy that

centers on the notion of growth. More precisely, I will take the controversy surrounding the

role of Kant in *GPP* as an opportunity to clarify Dewey's overall line of argument in this text.

Furthermore, the controversial reactions that *GPP* elicited shed light on the relation between

pragmatism and contemporary critical theory (Honneth, Jaeggi).

I will begin by introducing Ebbinghaus's defense of Kant's Categorical Imperative against

Dewey's critique. Julius Ebbinghaus (1885–1981) was a renowned German Kant scholar. His

polemic reaction on *GPP* (Ebbinghaus, 1954; originally in German 1948) initiated a

controversy that has never been fought out but was recently reiterated through Axel Honneth

(in favor of Dewey) and former Ebbinghaus student Georg Geismann (in favor of

Ebbinghaus). Against this background, I offer a critical discussion of Dewey's most important claim, namely that Kantian dualism, the doctrine of the two realms (or worlds), significantly contributed to the German militaristic mindset. Moreover, I will show how this claim is linked with the EC and which particular form the EC takes in Dewey's text. Despite Honneth's (2001) acknowledgment of Dewey's innovative World War genealogy and important clarifications and supplements by contemporary commentators on *GPP* (Campbell, 2004; Good, 2006; Midtgarden, 2011), especially the significance of the EC in Dewey's argumentation as well as the contribution of *GPP* to Dewey's theory of growth haven't received sufficient clarification and discussion yet.

In the subsequent sections I will then argue that *GPP* contains important hints regarding the way Dewey conceives of the relationship between critical analysis of collective habits, which in *GPP* takes the form of genealogical inquiry, and his account of growth (which can be understood roughly as an experimental form of ethical amelioration based on the use of situated intelligence by social selves) while falling short in providing a systematic account of the link between them.

1. The Challenge of Ebbinghaus

The Dewey-Ebbinghaus controversy starts with a reaction on *GPP* by the German Kantian Julius Ebbinghaus who was offended by Dewey's attack on Kantian philosophy. In this section I will first introduce Ebbinghaus's (1954) critique of *GPP*. Helpfully, Ebbinghaus parallels Dewey's argumentation with the EC. While I agree with this comparison, I will show that the controversy was to a large extent an instance of talking at cross-purposes. Ebbinghaus points out several problems in Dewey's depiction of Kantian moral philosophy. I will focus on one of them which I take to be the most significant. Ebbinghaus (1954) links the argumentation in *GPP* directly to the EC but sees the EC not only as a Hegelian argument which Dewey uses but rather as a whole tradition of critique of Kantian moral philosophy. He

mentions John Stuart Mill and less known philosophers such as Eduard Becher as proponents of this tradition (p. 101). A major issue is that, according to Ebbinghaus, Dewey's view of Kant is deeply biased because Dewey apparently overlooks the primary function of the Categorical Imperative (CI), namely that it is *the* moral principle in the sense of a test procedure by which maxims can be tested regarding their moral value. The following clarification by Ebbinghaus (1954) is pertinent here:

> The law formulated by Kant in his categorial imperative is not one by which any principle whatever to which a man may find himself drawn under conditions of experience – such as obedience to potentates or abstention from the pleasures of life – can be imposed on him categorically. Kant's law is rather a way of expressing the conditions under which alone a principle can have the character of a categorial demand. […] We can sum all this up in the proposition that the categorical imperative determines the concept of duty *solely as regards its form.* It states only what duty as such is and consequently what all duties have in common. (pp. 98–99)

This passage is important because it clarifies in which sense the CI is a moral principle, namely by "expressing the conditions under which alone a principle can have the character of a categorical demand" – consider also the term '*a* principle' (as one of many) in the quote as opposed to '*the* moral principle' in the sense of the CI or Utilitarianism's Greatest Happiness Principle. 'Moral principle' is an ambiguous notion. Dewey seems to use the notion rather consistently as referring to *specific* or *substantive* rules, maxims, or even as commands (nevertheless capable of being more or less abstract regarding their content) which can potentially guide action (*GPP*, p. 149; p. 164); and not in the sense of a principle by which alone actions and their underlying maxims can be understood as instances of duty (or as morally good or bad) in the first place. For Kant, a maxim or rule is a duty only if it has the form of a universal law and given that this form is recognized. In *GPP* Dewey does not consider the CI as *the* moral principle, i.e. as the described test procedure; and I think that it is

quite legitimate to criticize Dewey for this. If the meaning of the CI as a test procedure is acknowledged, it even seems that the claim that the CI recommends complying with duty *in general* can be identified as self-refuting. For example, it could be argued that, if your maxim is to comply with 'your duty', no matter what its content is, it follows from the CI a contradiction because, due to the abstract formulation, the term 'your duty' would represent the class of all possible maxims, thus including the ones which would turn out *not* to be duties in the technical sense attributed to it by Kant, i.e. the maxims which do not pass the test with the CI. Ebbinghaus remarks in a closely related fashion that this arbitrariness would contradict the idea of a *categorical*, i.e. unconditioned, imperative:

> But if, in the opinion of the pseudo-Kantian who fills up the moral law with national prescriptions, the national order has to be sovereign in arbitrary ordinances, how can this rank as a categorical imperative (a law of duty)? […] [T]his moral law itself would have to be able to agree with subjection to an arbitrary will that in and for itself was lawless. Yet this is precisely what Dewey in fact thinks. (p. 102)

These sentences also reveal that Dewey and Ebbinghaus are talking past each other. Dewey could grant that this kind of argumentation would be at best "pseudo-Kantian". But at the same time, he would disagree that this is what he "in fact thinks" or, at least, that this is not the gist of his argument. Dewey is quite clear about this:

> I do not mean that conscious adherence to the philosophy of Kant has been the cause of the marvelous advances made in Germany in the natural sciences and in the systematic application of the fruits of intelligence to industry, trade, commerce, military affair, education […]. Such a claim would be absurd. (*GPP*, pp. 151–152)

While Ebbinghaus is concerned primarily with defending Kantian moral philosophy, Dewey is concerned not with the moral demands, the ought, which follows from the moral law but rather with the cultural consequences of Kantian philosophy with its aprioristic structure. These consequences are not due to the CI itself but rather emerge from telling men "that to do

their duty is their supreme law of action, but [being] silent as to what men's duties specifically are" (*GPP*, p. 163).

Thus, it is likely that Hegel (2008) was mistaken regarding this *strong* accusation of the arbitrariness of the CI, i.e. the claim that "any wrong or immoral mode of conduct may be justified" with the CI (§135). There are also passages in which Dewey seems to share this view (e.g., *GPP*, p. 149). Ebbinghaus's challenge, faced in the following sections, is to demonstrate that there are other aspects of Dewey's use of the EC which should be preserved, and which might be useful for the pragmatist theory of today. The 'strong accusation' is not the only possible way of reading Hegel and Dewey.[3] A different and more promising version of the EC will be presented in the reconstruction of Dewey's main argument below.

2. Reconstructing the Main Argument of *GPP*

Let me proceed by offering an account of the argument in *GPP* which differs from the literature (especially Campbell, 2004; Good, 2006; Honneth, 2001) but which I regard as complementary to it.

It is important to note that Dewey's use of the EC is not limited to *GPP*. This is worth mentioning because of the (maybe justified) reservations against *GPP* as a piece of 'World War literature', i.e. literature that is extraordinarily biased through feelings of national pride or political partisanship. The same reservations are not legitimate regarding some other writings by Dewey which, however, reiterate the argument, although more parenthetically. His critique of deontological ethics in the later ethical writings includes the critique of the kind of moral theory which neglects empirical circumstances and consequences as determining factors of moral goodness (Dewey, 1988, pp. 154–155; with reference to WW I, p. 198) and which allegedly demands to follow the command of "duty *in general*" (1985b, p. 268; my emphasis).

Moreover, I think that Dewey transformed the EC into his own method of philosophical critique: an important variant of the so-called "philosophical fallacy" (Dewey, 1981, p. 51; Pappas, 2008, pp. 26–30). This fallacy, when it takes the form of criticizing theories for neglecting the contextual circumstances under which they originated (Dewey, 1985a, p. 5) – and maybe were more or less functional then but not anymore after being reapplied under different circumstances –, can be regarded as a version of the EC. The philosophical fallacy appears in *GPP* although Dewey does not call it by its name. Dewey writes, "The witness of history is that to think in general and abstract terms is dangerous; it elevates ideas beyond the situations in which they were born and charges them with we know not what menace for the future" (p. 143). A comparison with the later essay "Context and Thought" (1985a) is worthwhile here: "the analytic fallacy […] is found whenever the distinctions or elements that are discriminated are treated as if they were final and self-sufficient" (p. 7). Already in *GPP* Dewey calls the work of ideas "severed from the circumstances of their origin […] an intellectual catastrophe" and "a systematic intellectual error" (*GPP*, p. 143). Against this background, the critique of Kant in *GPP* should be read as an exemplification of the philosophical fallacy. It is exactly this fallacy which accounts for the parallel with the EC. Moreover, this for Dewey rather typical use of the philosophical fallacy reveals how much of his own experimental philosophy is tacitly presupposed in *GPP*. To give at least one example: the reader who has in mind Dewey's view of intelligence – which is neither an isolated capacity nor given but rather cultivated in the interplay with other habits through frequent application in concrete situations – will find it much less surprising that Dewey regards Kant's a priori conception of reason as a systematic blockade for (moral) inquiry which, according to Dewey, must be based on experience (*GPP*, pp. 149–150; Honneth, 2001, p. 330). For Dewey intelligence is not isolated from orienting concrete action, whereas for Kant reason is isolated from it. And, it seems legitimate to say that it is not easy to understand how the Kantian spontaneous beginning of new causal chains works.

In the first part of *GPP* Dewey outlines his major concern. He shows that the general idea that theories, ideas, concepts have overt consequences is quite plausible. He also clarifies, how he conceives of this impact:

> Every living thought represents a gesture made toward the world, an attitude taken to some practical situation in which we are implicated. […] But at some times they are congenial to a situation in which men in masses are acting and suffering. They supply a model for the attitudes of others; they condense into a dramatic type of action. They then form what we call the 'great' systems of thought. Not all ideas perish with the momentary response. They are voiced and others hear; they are written down and others read. Education, formal and informal, embodies them not so much in other men's minds as in their permanent dispositions of action (*GPP*, p. 141).

Although these notes are written in the first part of *GPP* – before Dewey begins with his explicit critique of Kantian philosophy – they are highly important regarding Dewey's argumentative aim. I believe that it is already clear from this passage that Dewey's critique of Kant in *GPP* is not about the best possible way of understanding or applying the CI or the concepts of ought, inclination, and duty in Kant. What matters is to what kind of effects the ideas and theories contribute when they are transmitted over time through communication and education; and here Dewey indeed argues that Kantian ideas "intensified and deepened" (*GPP*, p. 152) the developments in Germany. When we connect this with the further statements in the first part of *GPP*, for example, with Dewey's harsh criticism of aprioristic philosophy (*GPP*, p. 142) and his remarks on choosing Kant "somewhat arbitrarily" as the focus of his study (*GPP*, p. 144), we might be led to a reevaluation of both, the starting point and the aim of Dewey's main argument. Kant and the other German idealists are chosen *as examples of a wider trend* of the philosophical tradition which Dewey classifies as intellectualistic. The first part of *GPP* can be read as an early version of later critiques of traditional philosophy referring not only to German idealism but rather to every

intellectualistic, i.e., for Dewey, basically any pre-experimentalist philosophy. When he writes, "[t]he traits which give thinking effectiveness for the good give it also potency for harm" (p. 143), this is not, at least not only, a statement about German idealism but rather a general philosophical consideration about the applicability of fixed or abstract principles and about the philosophical fallacy which I have described above. Here it is worthwhile to keep in mind that, in his own ethical theorizing, Dewey highlights constantly that there must always be some feedback from the concrete which reacts on reasoning. In turn, reasoning must always remain open to include this feedback. Dewey considered this openness of reasoning, plans, 'ends-in-view', etc. to revision in response to concrete experience as his formal solution to the problem of the applicability of principles. Kantian moral philosophy, at least in Dewey's maybe all too narrow depiction of it, is one theory which fails to establish this crucial feedback mechanism.

I will now sketch what I take to be the main steps of Dewey's line of argumentation in *GPP*:

(1) As stated above: general ideas and principles contain, by virtue of being general, also the potential of turning into evil practices (*GPP*, p. 143; already Hegel, 2008, §139).

(2) Philosophical theories which do not adequately account for the connection between ideas and practice tend to create an inner tension in the subjects confronted with them. This inner tension expresses a gap between intelligence and impulse.

(3) Kantian moral philosophy exemplifies both previous points. It strongly emphasizes reason and this emphasis results in an abstract moral principle as well as in a view of particular duties which are abstract and substantive at the same time.[4] Connected with this emphasis, it fails to bridge the gap between the transcendental and the empirical subject (doctrine of the two realms or worlds), between duty and inclination.

(4) Ideas are always "gesture[s] made towards the world" (*GPP*, p. 141) and unfold their impact when they become embodied. Their impact increases or decreases depending on their transmission through informal and formal education.

(5) In the German state before and during World War I there was the special situation that the education system drilled the young from an early age on to fulfill their duty "no matter what actually is" (*GPP*, p. 149; p. 145).

(6) The special situation pointed to in (5) even led to the emergence of people who had a feeling of duty just for the sake of duty itself without any further specification of the content of these duties. In order that Dewey's argument is without gap we must assume that Kantian philosophy in some way causally effected this emergence and was necessary for the emergence of this "gospel of a Duty devoid of content" (*GPP*, p. 164). In much later writings Dewey still believed that persons can be motivated by "duty in general" (1985b, p. 268).

(7) A special kind of cognitive dissonance emerges from the interplay of the following factors: the prevailing strong feeling of duty of the Germans, i.e. the social pressure to realize one's duty and the will to realize it (due to the peculiar socialization in the German Reich), on the one hand, collides with the impotence to act intelligently due to a structurally hindered imagination of (potentially good) alternative possibilities to act (cf. step 2), i.e. with doing the right thing in the sense of reflective morality, on the other hand.[5] The factors are a combination of heteronomous and autonomous (or reflective) factors. Combined with the missing action orienting function of the CI they produce a cognitive dissonance. Evidence for this argumentative step can be found in this quote from Dewey's (1980b) review of Santayana's 1915 book *Egotism in German Philosophy*,

> the German genius […] is responsible for turning a sincere and wholesome interest in what is primitive, naïve, vital and unforced in experience into an unhappy egotism[.] Its very lack of the external conditions which alone would secure its expression in the arts of life has thrown it back upon itself for compensation in an undisciplined riot of theoretical and emotional self-assertion – which has in turn lent added practical power to the things against which that genius is in essential rebellion. (p. 308)

This passage can be read as an affirmation of Hegel's critique of the standpoint of morality (2008, second part), which is closely linked with the EC, and the consequent necessity (for the sake of realizing freedom) to proceed to a further 'level' in which morality is not only something subjectively determined (even though by the non-empirical transcendental subject) but in which the conditions under which people live and act are themselves intelligently formed so that dissonances such as the one just described do not arise anymore. Dewey argues that the German morality in WW I and the time before was shaped subjectively, merely by "*Innerlichkeit*" (*GPP*, p. 160). Moreover, the quote leads us to the final step of the argument. (8) The final step is that the elements of authority and command which are contained in the Kantian idea of duty (*GPP*, p. 162) had taken an objectified form in Germany back then. Although Kant was *misused* when the German potentates and the administration took control over the content of duty, he also contributed, unintentionally, to the situation by proclaiming that there is no need to consider and reshape the context of the habits and social institutions. By being ignorant and uncritical in this latter respect, Kant paved the way for such a misuse.[6] As a result of this ignorance regarding the preconditions of action, the CI (correctly understood in its reflective sense) had to be applied to maxims which, let us assume for the sake of the argument, in most cases didn't have the form of a universal law because they either reflected natural inclinations or the 'customary morality' shaped and instrumentalized by the potentates for their nationalistic purposes. The corresponding lack of positive orientation leads to falling back "for compensation in an undisciplined riot of theoretical and emotional self-assertion" (Dewey, 1980b, p. 308). In conclusion, Kantian moral philosophy contributed to shaping the militarism which prevailed in the German Reich before and in WW I.

If this is an adequate depiction of Dewey's argument, or at least of an argument in the spirit of Dewey, then Ebbinghaus misconceived Dewey's (and likely at the same time Hegel's) primary argumentative objective. Nevertheless, we can grant Ebbinghaus to have exhibited

significant omissions and maybe also errors in *GPP* regarding Dewey's treatment of the CI, e.g., Dewey's ignoring of the CI as a procedure to test maxims and its corresponding function to identify the morally legitimate and illegitimate ones.

3. Honneth and Geismann

Not less offended than Ebbinghaus was his student Georg Geismann when Honneth's reissue of the German version of *GPP* appeared in 2000. This reiteration of the controversy offers at least three new insights: the controversy is not settled yet but rather still smoldering in the background of at least some parts of contemporary philosophy; it seems interesting to include the perspective of the Frankfurt School into the debate; it is confirmed again that the EC is a core issue in *GPP* – which is acknowledged by Honneth (2001) as well as Geismann (2001) who both, in contrast, e.g., to Campbell (2004), explicitly connect Dewey and Hegel regarding the EC. However, it is not entirely clear whether in this controversy *GPP* serves only as another occasion to discuss the EC itself, and thus to take sides with either Hegel or Kant. Let me consider these issues one after another.

Geismann comments *GPP* as follows,

> It brims over with wrong claims. It is neither in a philosophical-systematical nor in a historical-analytical respect nor in a political regard that is critical of ideology of any interest. Almost constantly the reading of it provokes a stunning 'si tacuisses'. (2001, p. 632)

Geismann regrets the German reissue of *GPP* provided by Honneth. Although his review is polemical, Geismann attempts rather carefully to summarize Dewey's argument and substantiates his depiction with references. Moreover, he criticizes convincingly the quality of the translation (Geismann, 2001, pp. 633–634) and the edition which, e.g., has no critical apparatus (p. 638). Nevertheless, his reading of *GPP* remains superficial insofar as Geismann reduces Dewey's argumentation to the 'strong version' of the EC which I have outlined

above. Geismann describes the argument as follows: "Hence, Dewey's 'argumentation' amounts to the possibility that, thanks to Kant's all-dominant doctrine, 'the Germans' will always find in the one [noumenal] world – quasi the heaven of ideas – a legitimization of their doings in the other [phenomenal] subordinate world" (p. 633; my translation). Because of this equation I suspect that Geismann remains very close to Ebbinghaus in his overall treatment of *GPP*, i.e. he also misconceives Dewey's argumentative intent. Yet, unlike Ebbinghaus, Geismann (2001) appreciates the passages of *GPP*, which are unfortunately rather few, in which Dewey writes about his own pragmatist position (p. 632). In conclusion, Geismann's review indicates first, that there was no discussion in the meantime of about 50 years since the first German edition of *GPP* appeared, second, that there is still a tense situation between Kantians and Hegelians regarding the EC, third, that the reception by Ebbinghaus and Geismann cannot be regarded as a serious attempt to understand *GPP*.

Honneth (2001) holds that *GPP* can be read in two separable ways "because it is not yet entirely certain whether it is supposed to emphasize the continuity in the history of ideas or a kind of perverted effective history" (p. 326). I agree that there is much unclarity in *GPP* and that the distinction is useful. Ebbinghaus and Geismann, e.g., are proponents of the first way of interpreting *GPP*, i.e. the belief that Dewey argued that the CI could be misused by the potentates who would determine the content of duties. Campbell (2004) favors the second option.

Honneth (2001) seems to argue that the militaristic mindset is not only due to an intentional misuse of Kantian philosophy. He states: "A direct line leads, *albeit unintentionally*, from Kant over to the statist concept of obligation at the time of the First World War, during which the readiness of the Germans to submit to state command exceeded that of all other nationalities" (p. 326; my emphasis). By emphasizing the 'indirect' effect of Kantian philosophy through the formation of the German culture, Honneth seems to agree with my objection against Ebbinghaus and Geismann. Yet, the passage raises questions how the causal

chain would be structured when elaborated more concretely. Here Campbell's (2004) historically substantiated approach is most valuable. His account focusses on providing further historical evidence, e.g., by reference to Hugo Münsterberg, for the prevalence of distorted versions of Kantian philosophy in some regions of Germany and the US which supplement Dewey's narrative in *GPP* (p. 12). In Honneth's depiction it remains unclear through which concrete channels Kantian philosophy had its impact on social life in Germany. How did the "ethic of duty" (Honneth, 2001, p. 326) emerge and spread? Without addressing this in a more historical fashion, it must remain obscure how it can be decided what is perverted history of ideas and what is not.

Honneth's (2001) essay is also valuable because of its comparative work with important German contributions to the intellectual genealogy of the World Wars. He argues that Dewey's genealogy is peculiar insofar as it diverges from the, at least in German literature more common, anti-intellectual (or counter-enlightenment) genealogy referring back to Nietzsche which also prevailed in the Frankfurt School (see, e.g., Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002, pp. 90–93), in the works of G. Lukács, H. Plessner, and presumably others. Especially he testifies deep parallels between Dewey and Adorno & Horkheimer (2002) concerning the treatment of Kant: "despite the great cultural distance, his text [*GPP*] touches upon the same concerns expressed in the famous passage on Kantian moral theory found in the chapter on Sade in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [Excursus II]" (Honneth, 2001, p. 321). Seen in this light, it seems that Honneth generally agrees with Dewey and believes that *GPP* should be studied by upcoming generations of philosophers, political theorists etc. Moreover, he seems to indicate that a comparison of Dewey's works on the World Wars with the works by German exiles is worthwhile. The main reason is that Dewey's "outsider's viewpoint" (p. 335) might still add something which cannot be found in the literature on German mentality at the time of the World Wars. At the same time, Honneth holds that Dewey's argument is "to a large extent unclear" (p. 326) and less elaborate compared with the accounts of German exiles

(p. 334). These latter statements and the deep parallels to Adorno & Horkheimer (2002) that Honneth recognizes somewhat contradict the fruitful perspective he also attributes to *GPP*. Beyond the reissue of *GPP*, Honneth and his students are the most important contemporary figures in Frankfurt School who work on a fruitful dialogue between Dewey's naturalistic humanism (for which especially Adorno showed enthusiasm) and a critical theory of immanent critique (see ch. 9). As noted frequently in the literature, the relation between Frankfurt School theorists and Dewey's pragmatism was blocked by prejudices on both sides (e.g., through a superficial misreading of Dewey's instrumentalism by proponents of the early Frankfurt School, Dewey's disregard and ignorance concerning Nietzsche and Marx and the only very marginal reception of Freud etc.). Yet, to date the relationship has become much closer (Frega, 2017), although there are still reservations and tensions left which are due to "serious philosophical problems" (see ch. 9).

4. The Practical Meaning of Genealogy: Inquiring Some Features of Deweyan Growth

In this section I will consider the value of Dewey's argument for his experimentalist theory of growth. Because I cannot and do not intend to provide a comprehensive account of Deweyan growth or genealogy in this chapter, my focus will be on figuring out important aspects of the relation between genealogies regarding collective habits and imagining ethical-political experiments.

To begin with, I want to discern two alternative ways of interpreting *GPP* as an exposition of an experiment concerning the relation between Kantian philosophy and WW I in *GPP*.

First, as Honneth (2001) depicts the relation, Dewey's critique of Kant before WW I can be seen already as attempts to refute Kant's dualists doctrines of the two realms and the dichotomy of inclinations and duty by means of his experimental moral philosophy (p. 323). Honneth holds that Dewey could not come up with a constructed experiment to refute Kantianism and was then released from searching because WW I appeared as a historical

refutation of Kantian philosophy. I think this interpretation is interesting but also raises several questions: can a historical event – in Dewey's philosophical framework – be regarded as a 'falsification' of a philosophical theory? Even if this were the case, how would this kind of historical 'falsification' relate to situated experimentation? And what would 'falsification' mean given that Dewey's pragmatism does not focus on the truth of theories but rather on their consequences for moral life? A further problem is that this reading of *GPP* renders unclear the connection between Dewey's concept of learning[7] and experimenting. Usually, regarding Dewey, learning *is* an experiment, an adventure etc. Thus, learning presupposes to know at least tacitly what one is about to do which is not the case in the 'historical refutation' of Kantian ideas long after Kant's death.

Second, an alternative interpretation is that Dewey's focus is primarily on the possible lessons to be gained from WW I. Both perspectives do not necessarily exclude each other. Possibly, Dewey had both in mind. Yet, it is important to distinguish them due to their different presuppositions and implications. In this second interpretation WW I is an occasion for inquiry, and the complexity of this problematic event requires philosophical inquiry into the possible causes of the problem. The effect of German philosophy on the German's habits is definitely one of the more remote and hard to grasp causes but it is not implausible that it had an impact on history and is thus worthy to be inquired systematically. Of course, there can be, and there was, dissent about the selection of ideas and theories and what their effects were. C.I. Lewis (1918), for example, agrees with Dewey that ideas had significant impact on the emergence of WW I but he doubts that selecting Kant as the most influential thinker was the right choice (pp. 4–6). Anyhow, genealogical inquiry aims towards acting better in the future or, in other words, towards learning from such a historical crisis. The insights provided from such an inquiry, in turn, serve as tools for further experimentation, i.e. the insight into mistakes that could be identified can *inform* action by imagining possibilities of action which do not replicate these mistakes.

This second view, of course, raises questions as well. What exactly would be the implications? Who is addressed by such insights provided by philosophers (as social critics)? The public? Other philosophers and maybe some social and political scientists? How do the insights into 'bad collective habits', with intellectualistic philosophy as one of its causes, translate into situated action? Which are the intermediary steps and mechanisms regarding this translation?

I will now elaborate on the second way of reading *GPP* as a Deweyan experiment in order to shed light on the link between intellectual genealogy and Dewey's theory of growth. Because I cannot outline or defend the Deweyan theory of growth here I will confine myself to a short description of its origin in Dewey's works and a brief outline of how genealogical inquiry as depicted in *GPP* fits in this project.

Growth – the formally determined ideal of amelioration of human living and its preconditions – is the very core of Dewey's philosophy (e.g., 1980a, pp. 46–58; 1982, p. 181; 1988, p. 194; 1985b, p. 306). The main questions of philosophy in Deweyan fashion are: how is qualitative transformation of habits and practices by means of experience, i.e. through intelligent reconstruction of individualized and collective habits, possible? What are the factors influencing this transformation-process, positively and negatively, and how can philosophy provide intelligent guiding assistance so that action turns into growth, i.e. how can philosophy become practically efficient in the light of 'the good'? That these questions express Dewey's (1981) view of the primary function of philosophy is not only clear from the "Preface" to *Experience and Nature* where he states:

> An empirical method which remains true to nature does not "save"; it is not an insurance device nor a mechanical antiseptic. But inspires the mind with courage and vitality to create new ideals and values in the face of the perplexities of a new world. (p. 4)

It is also clear from the distinction between primary and secondary experience (pp. 15–41) which plays a crucial role concerning his philosophy as a whole. Dewey's reflection about the relation between primary (pre-reflective and qualitative) experience and secondary (reflective and generalizing) experience is an attempt to grasp the modes of stagnation, decay, and growth of experience. Secondary experience, i.e. theory and reflection, can have harmful and beneficial consequences. When it takes the form of theories which commit the philosophical fallacy (introduced above), secondary experience becomes harmful in hindering agents in their inquiry of the particular situational circumstances with which they must cope. The negative effect of secondary experience and Dewey's attempt of turning it into the better are reflected in Dewey's numerous critiques of different kinds of dualisms. For Dewey, the Kantian doctrine of the two realms is a dualism which – as every dualism for him – is not only a matter of pure theory but one which is also reflected in the environmental circumstances we live in.

This view is very complex not least because the area of application is not only individual conduct but also interactions between groups and within groups and their shared or collective habits, values, customs etc. (Dewey, 1988, p. 54). Furthermore, it is important to note that in Dewey's view habits are a kind of experience, namely experience that is shaped by previous activity (p. 31), and that experience and activity denote one and the same active-passive process of doing and undergoing. Therefore, the talk of reconstruction of habits is just a different but complementary way of presentation of the experiential theory of growth he offers in *Experience and Nature* that was described above.

That Dewey didn't confine the notion of habits to individual character traits, and neither to mere routine (see ch. 6), is often overlooked even by rather sympathetic critics. For example, Rahel Jaeggi (2018) shields her concept of forms of life from the notion of habits without considering the specific Deweyan use of the concept habit. Hence, her depiction of "habits of life" (p. 38) does not cover the meaning of Dewey's notion of habits and therefore she does

not offer an explicit demarcation to her own notion of forms of life (which I believe comes closer to Deweyan habits than Jaeggi admits)[8]. Jaeggi neglects the collective dimension of Deweyan habits and therefore is led to misdirected criticism of Dewey in this respect later in her book, e.g., her claim that Dewey does not provide the conceptual means to account for collective learning processes (pp. 238–240). Thereby, Jaeggi also neglects the political and socio-critical dimension of Dewey's educational writings.[9] In defense of Dewey, one could argue that within Dewey's philosophical framework there is no need for an extra theory of collective or social learning processes because there is no need for distinguishing between individual and collective learning. Learning is social. It is a matter of communication and interaction between individuals or individuals and groups of individuals or between group-members and other group members. What would a collective learning process be? For Dewey, this means only that individuals come to share something new, and the process of sharing, in turn, is a matter of interactions between persons. Moreover, we are all social qua being human and in the course of our lives we might individualize ourselves gradually.

Yet, 'critique of forms of life' is a fitting description of the argument in *GPP*. A discussion of Dewey's social philosophy would exceed the limits of this chapter. But I want to indicate in the remainder of this section how *GPP* can be used in this field. Since we have seen that, for Dewey, ethical theory cannot work well in isolation from social criticism, these remarks can be seen as aspects of Dewey's theory of growth.

Colin Koopman (2011; 2013) discusses neither *GPP* nor the philosophical fallacy in his works on genealogical pragmatism, even though both seem to be nice pieces to be inquired from the perspective of his approach. Koopman (2011) holds that Foucauldian genealogy and Deweyan reconstruction are complementary projects, whereas the former's strength is the problematizing inquiring of the present in the light of history, the latter's lies in imagining how situations that are already problematic or indeterminate can be positively transformed (p. 536). The use of the EC and the philosophical fallacy in *GPP* add a further dimension to the

project of a "fluid practice of an immanent culture critique" (p. 560). On a more abstract level of Dewey's experimental philosophy we can say that the philosophical fallacy can serve as a negative orientational framework insofar as it is something to be avoided in forward-looking inquiry. The argument in *GPP* as depicted above is an attempt to recognize this fallacy in a concrete historical context, thereby showing how dichotomies which are transmitted over time through language can do harm. To recognize such dichotomies and to trace them through history might offer the concrete tools – which are but fallible hypotheses – to inform our reflections about how to act well. I have suggested to read *GPP* in this light.

Dewey might indeed have believed that WW I, as Honneth (2001) argues he did, refuted Kantian philosophy. But the more important thing is what can be learned from this catastrophe. Dewey's argument is that his experimentalist philosophy could do (and could have done) better. Although it evolved on the grounds of his life-experiences in the US, we should not conclude from this (at least not from this alone) that *GPP* is merely an instance of overly patriotic World War literature. The point is that, first, *GPP* is also an expression of Dewey's experimentalist philosophy which, according to its own claim, is nothing but the product of social or cultural critique (in a wide sense including even the critique of philosophical theories and of prevailing practices of critique) and in constant flux; and second, that the argument in *GPP* is not as extraordinary compared to other works by Dewey as one might think at first. Campbell (2004) has pointed out that even if Dewey was biased in his view of Germany this is not an argument against his experimentalist philosophy (p. 15) and neither, I believe, against the main argument of *GPP* as I have depicted it here.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I tried to make sense of Dewey's argument in *GPP*. I used the occasion of the reiterated but not fought out controversy between Ebbinghaus and Dewey through Honneth and Geismann to sharpen the Deweyan argument and to consider it also in the light of critical

theory. The topic of Dewey's use of the EC and the interpretation of *GPP* are real mammoth

tasks which could not be treated comprehensively here. My chief objective was to restate

Dewey's argument in a fresh way which at bests contributes to reopen the discussion about all

the unclarified difficulties which surround the topic. I hope I added more clarity to the

contested view regarding the argumentative aim of *GPP* which underlies the debate with

Ebbinghaus but also varies among sympathetic commentators. Because *GPP* was and is often

regarded as a slip-up, I have tried to show that Dewey's argument in *GPP* is not so

exceptional in some significant respects as is often assumed. Reference to the philosophical

fallacy supplements my view. For further research I see at least three promising fields of

inquiry in order to improve and refresh pragmatist ameliorative theory: (1) comparative work

with Jaeggi's critique of forms of life, of course including the works critical of Jaeggi, (2) the

use of the EC in critical theory, (3) the potentials of an implementation of the philosophical

fallacy as a tool and *GPP* in general as a source for genealogical pragmatism (after John J.

Stuhr and Colin Koopman) and Deweyan growth.

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[1] *GPP* is printed in Dewey, 1979, pp. 135–204.

[2] Schnädelbach and Geismann both draw on the German original of Ebbinghaus (1954) as the source which allegedly provides this demonstration. Sidney Hook was rather embarrassed about Dewey's interpretation of Kant in *GPP* (Dewey, 1979, pp. xxvii–xxviii). His embarrassment was reinforced by Dewey's (1979) reiteration of the same line of argument in the new introduction for the 1942 edition (pp. 421–446; Good, 2006, p. 239).

[3] Regarding Hegel, see Wood (1990, pp. 167–173).

[4] As I have discussed above, Dewey seems to believe that 'to exercise one's duty' is itself a 'substantive but abstract' duty. See also steps five and six.

[5] Possibilities to act are here understood as imaginations of concrete actions (Deweyan 'ends-in-view'), i.e. they are more 'substantial' than maxims. Maxims are principles or rules underlying actions and therefore something more abstract.

[6] I think that to depict matters this way fits very well in Dewey's thinking. The structural hindrance of imagination mentioned in step 7 is understood here as the real-world effect of Kant's committing of the philosophical fallacy described above in this subsection.

[7] In *Democracy and Education*, for example, learning is making connections between our intended doings and the experienced consequences of overt action (e.g., Dewey, 1980a, p. 147) assessed in terms of efficiency of the transaction with the environment. This efficiency is, due to Dewey's belief in the means-ends-continuum, not only one of means but also includes essentially reconsidering one's aims (or intentions). Therefore, learning entails "open-mindedness" towards the (social) environment (pp. 182–183) as a precondition.

[8] Consider how close Honneth's fitting description of Dewey's notion of 'national culture' is to Jaeggi's (2018, pp. 35–54) use of 'forms of life' as ensembles of social practices. According to Dewey, Honneth writes, "a national culture should be understood as an ensemble of habitualized patterns of reaction, the analysis of which attempts to show the mutual interaction between social problems and theoretically generalized ideas over a long period of time" (Honneth, 2001, p. 321).

[9] Regarding her conception of immanent social transformation as collective learning processes, Jaeggi dismisses Dewey's philosophy as a fruitful source also by claiming that Dewey does not provide the conceptual means to

address "systematic learning blockages" (see ch. 9; Jaeggi, 2018, p. 298). I believe that Dewey's concept of the philosophical fallacy is a counterexample to Jaeggi's objection.

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