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The Wise Designer

Review: Brian S. Dixon,
Dewey and Design: A Pragmatist Perspective for Design Research
(Cham: Springer, 2020), 200 pages.

Brian S. Dixon's book *Dewey and Design* provides, as the book's subtitle declaims, a pragmatist perspective for design research. Design research is an academic field that specifically deals with the design process. Its domain-specific knowledge led to the establishment of design as an independent discipline of study in the second half of the last century. According to Dixon's description, design research consists of three major areas of investigation: the design process, the artifacts that result from this process, and the relation of these artifacts with the end-user. Dixon exposes the fruitlessness of drawing a clear dividing line, and argues that design research would be better off as a continuous, not necessarily linear, process involving "practically" all three. Concurrently, the author emphasizes the practical aspect of this continuity; on the one hand as a stark contrast to the idea of purely theoretical research, on the other, from a pragmatist viewpoint, intending the knowledge of the world as full of the practical consequences of acting within it. Specifically, the pragmatist slant of Dixon's proposal is that of John Dewey, centered on the ideas of "an experience," "inquiry," and "imagination"; notions aiming at providing "a robust epistemological narrative" (DD, 86) for design research. The choice of this perspective necessarily leads Dixon to deal with problems such as the ontology of the specifically creative act of designers, distinct from the artistic one, the communicative potential of industrial artifacts, and their ethical import.

The central theses of the book are the following: first, how the theoretical methodologies of design research can benefit from the insight of design practice, what the author calls "design research involving practice," or

more specifically, “forms of design research which involve design practice within the method” (DD, 177). Secondly, understood in this way, how design research can generate new knowledge for the entire field and not just for project-specific purposes; finally, how John Dewey’s philosophy may be the best keystone to ground and achieve this new design research methodology.

The author thus begins to outline Dewey’s traits as the “intellectual underwriter” (DD, 177) for the discipline. In this endeavor, Dixon follows Ralph Sleeper’s critique¹ of Richard Rorty’s reading of Dewey. Sleeper finds Rorty’s equating of Dewey’s system with that of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger, which Rorty defines as a “deconstruction” of foundational metaphysics, incorrect. Throughout the book, Dixon takes the opportunity to address the same criticisms to design research scholars who have deployed Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s thoughts.

The first chapter of the book provides the points of contact between design as a whole theory and practice of pragmatism, and above all justifies the choice of Dewey’s processual philosophy as the most suitable to clarify these links.

To the layman, but even to scholars unrelated to design, the term “design” solicits images of well-finished products or other appliances that furnish and embellish our daily life. This is especially true for non-English speaking readers.² Dixon is keen to specify and show how the contemporary academic approach to design is a much more complex and multi-directional endeavor than simply dealing with the appearance of objects. After a brief but intense *excursus* on the directions that the academic investigation of design taken in the recent past, Dixon delimits the field of investigation to what he defines as “design research involving practice” and narrows it further to its application to collaborative design processes and participatory design projects.

Further, Dixon exposes how design theory drew predominantly from Heideggerian phenomenology or Wittgenstein’s late philosophy. With this analysis in the background, he presents the three Deweyan views that best define his own perspective: inquiry, meliorism, and anti-foundationalism. While on the one hand, Dewey’s theory of inquiry proposes a concrete guideline for “the processes that underpin [a designer’s] approach to *transforming* the world” (DD, 23); on the other hand, the idea of “meliorism,” or “the belief that the world can be made better by human action” (DD, 23), genuinely represents the motivational attitude of designers. Finally, Dewey’s “bio-socio-cultural anti-foundationalism” (DD, 23) has a greater breadth than the predominantly anthropocentric vision of Heidegger and Wittgenstein.

The second chapter outlines Dewey’s naturalistic metaphysics showing how designing with this account in mind allows one to “bypass individualistic questions of use” (DD, 59). This need derives from the impossibility of generalizing the results of traditional design research, which considers each design case as a single and independent one. This is especially the case with user experience, experience-centered, and human-computer interaction design approaches that put to the fore the design of experience. Although these approaches have already incorporated Dewey’s theory of experience, according to the author they have not fully exploited the potential of this theory by failing to investigate “the line of continuity that Dewey draws between experience and nature” (DD, 46). For example, the idea of “co-experience” presented by Katja Battarbee³ falls short precisely on this aspect. On the one hand, it requires the necessary basis to justify the understanding of the user as an active agent, rather than passive, in creating their own experience; on the other, it lacks the social aspect of experience which is fundamental for collaborative design processes and participatory design projects. Dixon,

1) See Ralph W. Sleeper, *The Necessity of Pragmatism: John Dewey’s Conception of Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

2) For more, in the specific case of Poland, see: Paulina Rojek-Adamek, “Projektant czy designer?,” *Designery: rola zawodowa projektanta w oglądzie socjologicznym* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2019), 192–94.

3) See Katja Battarbee and Ilpo Koskinen, “Co-experience: User Experience as Interaction,” *CoDesign* 1, no. 1 (2005): 5–18.

instead, appropriates Dewey's "experience of nature" as *an* experience "uniting of organism and environment" (DD, 39). The central insight Dixon draws is that "the individual recedes in a rebalancing towards the group, the things come forward and the moments of interaction become part of a web of moving trajectories whether social, cultural, historical, or future-focused" (DD, 59). Therefore, by presenting Dewey's cosmology for which "we – as creative humans – are in nature and an inseparable, integrated part of its complexity" (DD, 51), Dixon shows that the notion of "*an* experience" is much more complex when placed on its original naturalist metaphysical background.

What Dixon hopes for is that, if designers and researchers internalize Dewey's metaphysics, a broader understanding of the experiential field opens up – "an emergent horizon, a 'moving forward line'" (DD, 55) – to entertain against the approaches that deploy "the person-situation perspective" (DD, 55). In other words, Dixon proposes "to design with experience in mind" (DD, 45) as a complex timeline that spans from past experiences to future imaginative realms and that involves communal action, rather than focusing only on narrowly and episodically understood situations.

Returning to the problem of knowledge production mentioned in the introduction, the third chapter begins by analyzing the debate that initially framed design research within three methodological strategies: dialectic, design science, and design inquiry. Dixon focuses on the third one as it "considers design directly; that is, as an activity involving human actors and human situations" (DD, 66), in line with Dewey's attention on contextuality, but more importantly, as an *inquiry* arising and aiming toward contextual solutions.

Nevertheless, the importance of contextual solutions for design research often becomes the obstacle for transferring obtained results to other contexts. The author declares that design inquiry "would be reinforced through the development of a supporting argument for how knowledge or knowing functions" (DD, 76); in other words, it is crucial to probe which epistemological justification underlies this methodology. To do this, the author proposes to examine Dewey's theory of inquiry, rather than drawing from the epistemological tradition of natural sciences, the social sciences, and art (DD, 76 n.24), as suggested by other scholars. Dixon finds these epistemological justifications in the mechanism to evaluate knowledge, that is, "warranted assertability." This term describes the status a solution acquires when it is justified through ongoing research processes, meaning that such solutions may become, in new situations, as Dewey himself asserts, "*means* of attaining knowledge of something else."⁴ Seeing design solutions in these terms also implies design research as a *continuum* of inquiry constituted of cyclical experimentation and evaluation, an open process involving practice.

Up to this point in the book Dixon has dealt with design research and in its aspect that involves practice preserving a distance from any material products that result from the process. Since these products are the point of arrival, and therefore the closure of a specific research project, they seem to have no relevance for an open conception of design research as a continuum of inquiry. Dixon's outlook in the fourth chapter instead shows how design practice and design research are related, not only because the research supports the practice, but above all because research involving practice can produce a specific designerly knowledge in the form of artifacts.

By referring to the Deweyan concept of "work of art," Dixon highlights the communicative value of artifacts in academic research on design. Dewey does not use the notion of "work of art" to refer to an art product, but adopts it to indicate what the latter creates in the experience; in other words "what an art product does 'with and in experience'"⁵ (DD, 103). Although controversial, Dixon has no problem transferring this idea of

4) John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey: 1925–1953: 1938, Logic; The Theory of Inquiry*, Collected Works of John Dewey, vol. 12, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 122.

5) *Ibid.*, 9.

art to the design field by intending design objects as objects of “the industrial arts” (DD, 105) “in light of how much design practice has changed since the time of Dewey’s writing” (DD, 105). The case Dixon offers is the “critical design” work of Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby,⁶ who use design products as a means to raise awareness on the *status quo* of design itself in everyday life. However, it must be said that critical design objects are exceptional cases that, for now, are “wrapped” in exhibition spaces or museums, and therefore, do not reflect the intuitive relationship we have in everyday life with design objects; think of toothbrushes or coffee machines in familiar and quotidian settings which we use uncritically with still, sleepy gestures. However, this criticism does not touch Dixon’s proposal at its heart⁷ as his interest lies more in the part of the creative design process that leads to the creation of a design product, that is “the felt reality of the artist and the designer” (DD, 107), rather than on the actual everyday experience of a user. In this sense, museums and exhibitions become repositories of design research methodologies for professionals.

Assigning a quasi-art status to design objects produced within research, Dixon analyzes the generation of meaning, and how much such physical objects can be the vehicle of meaning-formation. The theoretical articulation of how design research can be made communicable and meaningful is supported by Dewey’s theory of communication since it clarifies how “language allows us to recognize designed things and, at the same time, understand their possible uses” (DD, 100), in addition to the supporting of imaginative thought, since “as we communicate, we are, often unconsciously, testing the boundaries of meaning” (DD, 100). Hence, another crucial insight from Dewey is provided by the notion of “imagination” not intended as the power of a “genius” or a fanciful mode of thinking, but rather as the connector between the material reality and creativity. Moreover, by bridging the similarities between the late Wittgenstein’s theory of language⁸ and Dewey’s theory of communication, Dixon surveys three major meaning/communication-based perspectives in design research to frame the methods for validating design practice and design products. Dixon adds Dewey’s “voice to the mix” (DD, 98) that already includes: design-as-communication,⁹ design discourse,¹⁰ and design as a process of sense-making.¹¹

Consequently, Dixon’s remarks bring about the critical aspect of *an* experience, again underscoring “that the background we bring to the situation” (DD, 104) is crucial for the generation of meaning. In this sense, the spectator of a “work of art” cannot be considered passive.¹² However, Dixon comes to the conclusion that objects alone cannot communicate research findings, but that they must be accompanied by a linguistic description.

Unfortunately, albeit incredibly inspiring, Dixon’s account omits an essential factor: the contribution the use of a design object makes to our understanding of it. The use-oriented specialized knowledge designers possess on functionality – not only that generated by an object’s name, modes of use, and interaction with functional objects – is a crucial element that distinguishes designers’ know-how from that of other creative practices.

6) See Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

7) Mads Nygaard Folkmann presented a very similar argument, appealing to Dewey’s aesthetic theory in his book, *The Aesthetics of Imagination in Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), but Dixon does not mention this text.

8) Furthermore, the author points out that “the similarities between these two philosophers are often overlooked. It was Dewey who first wrote about meaning emerging in use while Wittgenstein still held his ‘picture theory of language’” (DD, 99 n.8).

9) Nathan Crilly, David Good, Derek Matravers, and P. John Clarkson, “Design as Communication: Exploring the Validity and Utility of Relating Intention to Interpretation,” *Design Studies* 29, no. 5 (2008), 425–57.

10) See Roberto Verganti, *Design Driven Innovation: Changing the Rules of Competition by Radically Innovating What Things Mean* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

11) See Kalus Krippendorff, *The Semantic Turn: A New foundation for Design* (Boca Raton, FL: Taylor and Francis CRC Press, 2006).

12) Jacques Rancière proposes a more recent philosophical account of this view in his essay “The Emancipated Spectator” in his homonymous book. See: Jacques Rancière, and Gregory Elliott, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso, 2009), 1–23.

Ignoring a functionality-based know-how, Dixon risks undermining the arguments to justify design research involving *specifically designerly* practice. Perhaps Jane Forsey's proposal¹³ can help this deficiency, since she manages to show the peculiarity of the aesthetic experience of design; its diachronic aspect argues, in line with Dewey, for the continuous aspect of the experience in the interaction with the designed environment. Forsey presents this argument against the background of Kant's aesthetic theory, which is predominantly evaluated but also criticized for its synchronic aspect: disinterestedness and momentary pleasure. Forsey highlights that the Kantian experience of beauty, in its dependent form (*pulchritudo adherens*), allows a diachronic aspect to emerge, which is proper to the experience of design since it presupposes a concept of practical purpose. In these terms, the aesthetic experience of design objects depends on the accumulated experience of use of each individual that can discern products and their alternative ways of performing a function. This proposal accepts both criteria sought by Dixon; on the one hand, the active "emancipation" of the user, but also the possibility of verbally (or textually) justifying the reasons why we consider some products better than others, maintaining a distinctive designerly way of knowledge.

In the fifth chapter, Dixon grounds the contemporary turn in design toward the social and the political, exemplified by participatory design, by proposing theoretical bases drawn from the Deweyan political, pedagogic, and ethical *corpus*. Participatory design's concern lies in making possible a democratic design process, warranting the involvement of the final user in the development of a design. As the author himself states, paraphrasing Elio Manzini,¹⁴ "we are presently witnessing an historically important moment of transition where social innovation is coming to replace technological-industrial innovation as the key driver of human change" (DD, 124), where every citizen has power for this change and "design professionals have a special role to play in helping guide and shape what is said" (DD, 125).

The fundamental concepts of this chapter are "publics," "creative democracy," "reflective morality," and "meliorism," which are all connected to Dewey's proposal of an education system interlinked to his understanding of the political and the ethical. Dixon unravels himself in a complex panegyric to provide ethical and motivational orientations for research involving practice that provides only generic support for improving the awareness of designers' responsibility.

Having guaranteed the methodology of design research as a high creative potential connected to the imagination, we could reach the same conclusions through Jacques Rancière's proposal. While the French philosopher has the same "democratic" attitude as Dewey, he offers more straightforward arguments on the political role of creative practices. Also devoting a reflection on design,¹⁵ Rancière shows how the aesthetic, whether formulated through judgment or more generally in experience, has a political and critical character. In other words, the political can be understood mainly in aesthetic terms, as the space and time that establish the negotiation coordinates of a community. Rancière reaches for this insight by reversing the Kantian aesthetic intuitions from transcendental to conditions of perception of the common world. Since it is based on fewer assumptions, this proposal has the advantage of being tested more efficiently and applied to interpret an ample range of cases of socio-politically motivated design practice.

However, Dixon's project has broader ambitions which cannot be reduced to socio-political issues in which design research is involved, but intends to provide philosophical foundations to other pressing concerns

13) See Jane Forsey, *The Aesthetics of Design* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

14) Ezio Manzini, *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 26 and later, 63.

15) See Jacques Rancière, "The Surface of Design," in *The Future of the Image* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 91–107.

in design discourse: sustainability and ecology. In this sense, it is true that Dewey, with his “ecological”¹⁶ conception of experience, provides a more well-stocked philosophical apparatus.

After touching on Dewey’s metaphysics, logic, aesthetics, and epistemology, the sixth chapter presents, in its entirety, the complex but interconnected philosophical system of Dewey to justify knowledge production in design research involving practice.

In this chapter, we find for the first time an elaborate definition of design based on the idea of designerly knowledge, intending to introduce in the concluding section the responsibilities related to design research and practice. Design is “the art of seeking to strike appropriate balances between varied states through intelligent practice” (DD, 163).

Despite its generality, with this definition Dixon wants to reiterate the importance of the negotiation process that the designer undergoes during an inquiry. Consequently, the author analyzes Dewey’s theory of value, but above all, the process of valuation that takes place in inquiry. First, this allows us to see design as a value-oriented process, where values are “existentially real and situationally-bound” (DD, 185). Secondly, being quintessential for designers to deliberate through trial and error, experiments, observations, and make decisions about what is good or not, Dixon suggests a parallel between design research and philosophy.¹⁷ This parallel, which can make many philosophers suspicious, serves more as an incentive for designers and design scholars to become aware of the epistemological responsibilities that lie behind their projects.

However, before he could make such a statement, Dixon had to show the relation between the theory of inquiry and metaphysics. Again, referring to Sleeper’s interpretation, which contextualizes Dewey’s thought against the background of Wittgenstein’s and Austin’s idea of performative utterances, the link between inquiry and the world develops within the theory of communication. Since Dewey presents “an understanding of communication as *existential*” (DD, 152), that is to say communication has the potential to change things in the world, then we can also understand inquiry in its relation to communication as having this transfigurative power.

Having made clear the fundamental role of inquiry for design, Dixon can justify how “design research involving practice can be understood as a transformational act; a (generally) melioristic process, with the capacity to shift our shared reality, re-orientate our values and enable individual and collective growth” (DD, 169). In such circumstances, the artifacts resulting from design practice applied to research also become contributions for knowledge production since they are “things-which-change-reality by virtue of their meaningful reconstruction of the relations between *other* things” (DD, 160). The author stresses that from this perspective, an artifact should not be considered the end of the design process, but as it changes reality with respect to its temporal and spatial context this artifact is also “a means to future ends as well as a test of valuations previously made.”¹⁸

Dixon concludes, paraphrasing the well-known design theorist Richard Buchanan, that it is possible to conceive of design research involving practice as “new ways of bringing ‘knowledge’ together” (DD, 169).

The seventh chapter begins with an overarching summary of the previous arguments in order to introduce the methodological implications for adopting Dewey’s philosophy for design research involving practice. This part of the book does not add anything new about Dewey. However, it neatly lists everything we encountered in the previous chapters, perhaps with greater attention to formulating these ideas into a methodological protocol for effectively putting into practice “designerly knowledge production”.

16) As David Hildebrand defines it in: David Hildebrand, *Dewey: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).

17) “Philosophy” is Dewey’s pragmatism as a philosophy based on action, which can produce social change employing inquiry and criticism.

18) Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 229.

According to Dixon, the system proposed by Dewey redefines the concepts that already circulate in design theory but are outdated for contemporary research and practice. In short, Dixon proposes the internalization of Dewey's system as the general mindset of design research involving practice. One of the advantages of this approach is that it provides sufficient justification for denying that designers are driven only by personal motives. Dixon shows that by "framing a legitimate context *for inquiry*" (DD, 185), the motivations of designers can be considered as real, as original in relationship to the world, and not personal. This is because, following Dewey, we can affirm that values are existentially real and as such, the value of problematization is inherent in the situation that design research investigates and tries to solve. Here we can no longer talk about personal motivations, but a motivational context linked to a current and real situation.

From this, it follows that design research involving practice has an intrinsically interdisciplinary and methodologically pluralist tone since it recognizes the values of *that* situation, often pertaining to a different knowledge domain with distinctive methodological frameworks.¹⁹ This also requires a specific type of creativity, namely the ability to recognize potentialities emerging from the context of inquiry and experimenting with these potentialities and meanings.

Therefore, Dixon considers it mandatory to give a more academically rigorous slant to the research, which should develop around "a sound evidence base" (DD, 189) "as a guard against any naively positive accounts" (DD, 190). He suggests keeping meticulous track of the whole process through "systematic recording," including the "imaginative trajectory" that emerges from "the exchanges between the designers themselves or the exchanges between designers and potential users" (DD, 187) and "material outputs," be they prototypes, notebooks, or something else. This, even if it does not result in a defined project, can always be valuable as knowledge for the community of inquiry. To be considered knowledge, such research must also trace failures and errors, as it would be unethical "to *promise* that a proposed course of action will *definitely* resolve an otherwise insurmountable challenge" (DD, 190).

In conclusion, Dixon returns to the most critical and controversial notion of the Deweyan system: *an experience*. Repeating that design research needs to understand the concept of "experience" in broader terms and not as a subjective event, Dixon proposes the existing visual mapping approach as a valuable tool to understand the relationship between users and products or services. In the act of involving users in research, as happens for co-design or participatory design projects, a *Deweyan* visual mapping (which represents the experience of use of a product or service), should be read in light of the complexity of the context and with particular attention to the temporal dimension of the experience. Dixon does not expand on this, but presents practical cases that might reveal the potentialities of this practice despite not being Deweyan in nature.

In my opinion, further research in this direction might be applied to the development of a meta-design protocol, not to structure the design phases, but to design a user-friendly space "which enables the user to become a co-designer."²⁰ Dixon himself suggests that by providing a list of questions designers should be confronted with before starting their research, the inquiry involving end users should take place in a designed environment that facilitates the inquiry itself. For example, the question: "are participants being supported to understand and come to a view on the value of things" (DD, 189), implies that to involve the user as a co-designer,

19) Dixon mentions "biology, sociology, psychology or some other area" (DD, 186) and that "it is quite common that [design researchers] might choose to apply psychological concepts in their analysis of users' interactions with products or evaluate newly designed prototypes in formal, experimental lab-based settings" (DD, 186).

20) The quote is taken from Jos De Mul, but his idea develops on design for rapid prototyping technologies, where the philosopher envisions a new role for product designers, where users will be producing through these machines objects for themselves. See Jos De Mul, "Possible Printings: On 3D Printing, Database Ontology, and Open (Meta)Design," in *3D Printing: Legal, Philosophical and Economic Dimensions* (The Hague, The Netherlands and Berlin, Germany: Springer, 2016), 96.

the design researcher has to provide him/her the tools to design/inquiry on his own. In other words, the design researcher must be able to transfer to co-designers a sensitivity towards the “lived experience that gives form to the situational perspective” (DD, 195), that is, the aesthetic experience. In this direction, several scholars²¹ have suggested the importance of an aesthetic education in the design field. Such aesthetic education is “not the training of artistic judgment or taste but the training of a sensibility towards the surroundings in general,”²² that is the training of a designer’s competences around a sensibility for the context.

Framed within the dense network of definitions gathered from Dewey, this monograph proposes a methodological vector for design research involving practice. According to Brian Dixon, Dewey’s philosophy provides novel “epistemological direction and ethical guidance” (DD, 45) for this field, since it “reflects and gives form to what already is articulated (and unarticulated) in design research involving practice” (DD, 197).

If we consider Bruno Latour, whose gaze rests faithfully on Heidegger, the chief figure in contemporary design research, and that the other predominant philosophical source is the late Wittgenstein, Dixon introduces a “new” sage figure within the field. Therefore, the book should be of interest to design scholars and designers, but also junior philosophers who want to approach pragmatism and, above all, John Dewey’s thought. The author clearly explains Dewey’s complex terminology, which is not an easy task to accomplish as the American philosopher employs common words with far more complex implications than these terms ordinarily evoke. This is the case of the well-known “*an* experience.” Moreover, for a reader feasting on philosophy, and above all on pragmatism, the author clarifies the development of pragmatism through the salient exposition of its key figures.

The book consists of a preface and 7 chapters and is organized in the following manner: the preface presents a brief introduction, the central six chapters treat significant notions of Dewey’s theory applied to design research, and the last serves as a helpful summary and provides insights for further developments of the discipline. Moreover, appended to each chapter is at least one “In box Focus” to explain existing cases of design research involving practice or a “Practical Case” on how concrete projects applied the theoretical elements treated in the chapter. From a strictly philosophical point of view, since it is destined for the academic design community, the book does not present any novel reading of Dewey’s philosophy. Nevertheless, it gives much first-hand insight into the advancement of design research for philosophers interested in expanding the subjects of inquiry to design.

The book also provides a good example of philosophy applied to design, even if the philosophical analysis does not go very deep, especially in the last chapters. This book intends to provide the traits of “a philosophy for design research involving practice” (DD, vi) pervaded by Dewey’s philosophy, as mainly interpreted through *The Necessity of Pragmatism* by the life-long Dewey scholar Ralph Sleeper. For these reasons, as the author himself admits, the book should be read as proposing a philosophy *for* design rather than a philosophy *of* design.²³ Accordingly, this review does not offer strictly philosophical critical comments on Dixon’s book but made evident the development of its key arguments in conjunction with Dewey’s philosophy, and highlighted points of agreement with other proposals both in the field of design and philosophy.

Dixon’s constructive model of design research, which considers practice as an integral part of the process, is highly commonsensical and sound; it is counterintuitive that this research methodology was not broadly adopted earlier, since it reflects a prominent model of contemporary academic research where sharing of knowl-

21) See, for example Mads N. Folkmann, “Evaluating Aesthetics in Design: A Phenomenological Approach,” *Design Issues* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2010): 40–53.

22) See Carsten Friberg, “Design and the Question of Aesthetics,” *Artifact* 3, no. 2 (2013), 1–8.

23) There are several attempts to frame a philosophy of design in the literature. See among others: Per Galle, “Philosophy of Design: An Editorial Introduction,” *Design Studies* (2002); Glenn Parsons, *The Philosophy of Design* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016); and, Pieter E. Vermaas, and Stéphane Vial, *Advancements in the Philosophy of Design* (Cham: Springer, 2018).

edge is at its core. However, perhaps, given that design originates from a strong bond with the market in its commercial guise, this knowledge in the form of projects and operational activity, is traditionally considered highly competitive and therefore to be kept confidential. Dixon's efforts are focused on changing this image of design by showing the philosophical guidelines for an ontological shift of the discipline and a call to designers to be more responsible and critical, in the Deweyan sense.

As evidenced by other recent texts admonishing the robust anthropocentric perspective of design, Dixon's book also reflects a need in design studies to ground the methodology on a new holistic basis. Among other texts on design that explicitly refer to philosophical systems for this reason, I can mention: *Designing in Dark Times*,²⁴ which deploys an Arendtian lexicon to support design political *praxis*; *Deleuze and Design*,²⁵ which draws a parallel between the two conjoined terms as both concerned with expressing the creation of the possible; and *Designing with the Body*,²⁶ which derives from Richard Shusterman's "somaesthetics" reasons for practically involving the body in the design process rather than only reason.

As a final note, it is perhaps worth mentioning that Dixon justifies the choice of Dewey by pointing out that his philosophy is not what we "commonly" think philosophy is, that is, "disinterested abstraction" and "philosophy for philosophy's sake" (DD, 177). This comment reflects how other academic disciplines might perceive philosophy, which perhaps, gives the impression of being alien to specific problems of contemporary areas of investigation. On a positive note, it also shows that philosophers have much more to explore outside the usual fields (for example, fine arts).

24) Virginia Tassinari and Eduardo Staszowski, *Designing in Dark Times: An Arendtian Lexicon* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).

25) See Betti Marenko and Jamie Brassett, *Deleuze and Design* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

26) See Kristina Höök, *Designing with the Body: Somaesthetic Interaction Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018).



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