

**Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, eds.**  
*Democracy as Culture:  
Deweyan Pragmatism in a Globalizing World.*  
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US\$24.95 (paper ISBN-13: 978-0-7914-7588-1).

This collection stands out from what has come to resemble a cottage industry of volumes on global democracy and cosmopolitanism. Tan and Whalen-Bridge's collection has the distinction of exploring whether Deweyan democracy, or the account of democracy inspired by Dewey's writings and embraced by contemporary Deweyans, can be disseminated globally and across diverse cultures. According to the collection's editors, the eleven essays share a single approach: 'By examining the implications for conceiving of democracy as culture, rather than as something that precedes or follows from cultural formations, the essays in this volume consider Dewey's adumbrations of democracy as one face of globalization' (1). Since the volume is dedicated to the late Richard Rorty, it is unsurprising that the relevance of Rorty's neopragmatism to Dewey's pragmatism also emerges in several of the essays.

In the first section of the volume, titled 'Universalizing Democracy Pragmatically', two pieces lay out the groundwork for how Deweyan pragmatists might evaluate the claim that Western democracy offers a set of universal moral norms and is therefore incompatible with culturalism, or the position that all cultures contain unique and incompatible moral norms. Larry Hickman's essay provides a multi-pronged explanation of the 'genesis of norms' from a pragmatist perspective: (i) through conventions, (ii) through testing, (iii) through agreement or consent, and (iv) through 'research into better ways to delegate certain tasks of [norm] enforcement' (26). In the process, Hickman draws a sharp contrast between Dewey's experimentalist approach to democratic norm proliferation and Chantal Mouffe's more agonistic alternative, based on mediated conflict rather than collaborative inquiry. Tan's piece, 'Reconstructing Culture: A Deweyan Response to Antidemocratic Culturalism', directly addresses the tension between democratic universalism and antidemocratic culturalism. By appealing to Dewey's distinction between a generic and a universal ideal, Tan navigates a way out of the conundrum. '[A] general ideal, in the sense of "generic", does not carry the same weight as a universal ideal when it comes to making a moral claim. . . . Every culture realizes the moral ideal of democracy in its own way, with its own characteristic institutions, practices, and theories, but the moral ideal is universal in being a humanistic ideal that is valid for all human beings if it is valid for any' (46-7). Rather than slipping into the quagmire of moral relativism or the myopia of moral absolutism, the Deweyan 'moral ideal' shows that any democratic norms ought to be tentative, experimental, generic and culturally sensitive.

Section 2, 'Imposing Democracy', brings Dewey's ideas about democracy into conversation with contemporary and historical ideas, including George W. Bush's National Security Strategy, adaptations of Dewey's educational philosophy abroad, Jane Addams' democratic ethic, and Randolph Bourne's pacifist pragmatism. Sun Youzhong's essay, appropriately subtitled 'A Deweyan Critique of Bush's Second-Term *National Security Strategy*', critically engages George W. Bush's unpopular approach to international relations through the prism of Dewey's philosophy. I believe that such Deweyan criticisms of the Bush administration's foreign policy can be fruitful, if only because they illuminate these far-reaching matters in ways that policy wonks are frequently unable to do. In 'Can Democratic Inquiry Be Exported?' James Scott Johnston argues that '[f]or a genuine democracy to occur, it must be home-grown' (64). Johnston's own inquiry touches on Dewey's trips to Japan and China, acknowledging that his political and educational 'theories had little immediate impact beyond a select group of reformers and educators' (69), but over time had an immense influence on the broader Japanese and Chinese societies. The final two essays in this section address, respectively, the friendly relationship between Jane Addams and Dewey's visions of democracy (Judy Whipps) and the debate between Randolph Bourne and Dewey on the matter of whether America should fight the First World War (Bruce Robbins). Both essays are impressive in their scholarly depth, revealing the historical record of Dewey's involvements as well as the cross-pollination of ideas between him and his contemporaries.

In the third and final section, 'De-Centering Dewey', the volume steers widely into a variety of subjects, some directly related to Deweyan democracy and its adoption across different cultures and others indirectly, or only tangentially, related to the collection's overall theme. John Holbo gives a dizzying account of Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam's attempts to overcome the analytic tradition in his essay 'Dewey's Difficult Recovery: Analytic Philosophy's Attempted Turn'. By the end of the essay, it is unclear exactly what Rorty and Putnam's connection to Dewey is, except that whatever it is it demonstrates that, in Holbo's words, 'you can only get to be like Dewey by trying to be like Plato and failing' (121). In 'Descartes, Dewey, and Democracy', Cecilia Wee deploys the most ambitious argument of the collection, viz., that Descartes and Dewey shared similar assumptions about the social preconditions for democracy. Although Dewey often criticized Descartes for embarking on a 'quest for certainty', the doomed attempt to discern the foundations of all knowledge and reality, Wee thinks that when Descartes was not engaging in metaphysics, he and Dewey had much more in common than most Dewey scholars realize. She writes: 'For both Descartes and Dewey, the individual in a right relation to her community will have a consciousness of the whole that invests actions with dignity and meaning' (134). The final three essays in this section, by Whalen-Bridge, Jessica Ching-Sze Wang and Roger T. Ames, compare Dewey's ideas about democracy, culture and aesthetics, with the similar ideas of important figures in Eastern philosophy (especially Lin-chi, Liang Shuming and Tang Junyi).

The volume offers such varied perspectives that it will likely entice readers from many backgrounds and with diverse interests. In my judgment, the lead essay by Hickman, the fourth essay by Johnston and the sixth by Whipps would be of greatest interest to the orthodox Dewey scholar. They represent a significant contribution to existing Dewey scholarship. Scholars concerned with how Dewey's ideas about democracy cash out in contemporary debates on global democracy and cosmopolitanism should devote their attention to the essays by Tan and Youzhong. For those scholars interested in comparative philosophy, especially Confucianism and Dewey's pragmatism, the final two essays by Whalen-Bridge, Wang and Ames will be of interest. If there is one problem with this volume (although admittedly a small one), it is the emphasis on East-West comparisons and the neglect of perspectives from other parts of the globe. Relief could have come in the form of an essay on Deweyan democracy, Gandhi, and Indian culture. Although I was left unconvinced by Wee's ambitious argument and uncertain of the point of Holbo's essay, these and Robbins' essay round out the volume with the kind of diversity suitable for a collection titled *Democracy as Culture*.

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