



## The educational value of the history of Philosophy in John Dewey's discourse<sup>1</sup>

O valor educativo da história da filosofia no discurso de John Dewey

El valor educativo de la historia de la filosofía en el discurso de John Dewey

Marcus Vinicius da Cunha

Universidade de São Paulo (Brasil)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8414-7306>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5679422102387763>

[mvcunha2@hotmail.com](mailto:mvcunha2@hotmail.com)

Sarah Passos Vieira da Costa

Escola Maple Bear Ribeirão Preto (Brasil)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6669-9585>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/2742116571533489>

[sarahpassos.br@gmail.com](mailto:sarahpassos.br@gmail.com)

Horacio Héctor Mercau

Universidade de São Paulo (Brasil)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8854-2204>

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/5696091525782249>

[horacio.mercau@gmail.com](mailto:horacio.mercau@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This paper aims to broaden the understanding and scope of John Dewey's philosophical and educational theses, placing them within the rhetorical discursive tradition derived from Sophistry. To do this, firstly a quantitative examination of the occurrences of the expression "history of philosophy" is made, followed by a qualitative analysis of the theme "history of Philosophy" in the works published in *The collected works of John Dewey: 1882-1953* (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA). This examination reveals two features that allow Dewey to be associated with the rhetorical tradition: the educational value attributed to the study of history and a way of arguing based on the genealogy of facts and concepts. Based on Dewey's theses on aesthetics and his conceptualization of experience, the paper concludes with the proposal of a creative history of philosophy and education.

**Keywords:** John Dewey. History of Philosophy. Sophistry.

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## Resumo

Este trabalho tem por objetivo ampliar o entendimento e o alcance das teses filosóficas e educacionais de John Dewey, as situando no interior da tradição discursiva retórica derivada da Sofística. Para isso, faz-se primeiramente o exame quantitativo das ocorrências da expressão “history of philosophy”, passando em seguida à análise qualitativa do tema “história da filosofia” nas obras publicadas em *The collected works of John Dewey: 1882-1953* (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, EUA). Esse exame revela duas características que permitem associar Dewey à tradição retórica: o valor educativo atribuído ao estudo da história e uma forma de argumentar baseada na genealogia de fatos e conceitos. Tendo por base as teses de Dewey sobre estética e sua conceituação de experiência, o artigo é finalizado com a proposta de uma história criativa da filosofia e da educação.

**Palavras-chave:** John Dewey. História da Filosofia. Sofística.

## Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo ampliar la comprensión y el alcance de las tesis filosóficas y educativas de John Dewey, colocándolas dentro de la tradición retórica discursiva derivada del sofisterio. Con este fin, primero se realiza un examen cuantitativo de las ocurrencias de la expresión “history of philosophy”, seguido de un análisis cualitativo del tema “historia de la filosofía” en las obras publicadas en *The Collected Works of John Dewey: 1882-1953* (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA). Este examen revela dos características que permiten asociar a Dewey con la tradición retórica: el valor educativo atribuido al estudio de la historia y una forma de argumentar basada en la genealogía de hechos y conceptos. Basado en las tesis de Dewey sobre estética y su conceptualización de la experiencia, el artículo concluye con la propuesta de una historia creativa de la filosofía y de la educación.

**Palabras clave:** John Dewey. Historia de la Filosofía. Sofistería

## Introduction

Anyone dedicated to the study of John Dewey's ideas (1859-1952) will certainly notice his vast knowledge of the history of Philosophy. Little is discussed, however, about the meaning of the history of Philosophy in the constitution of the Deweyan philosophical and educational theses, a subject which once clarified may contribute to positioning them within a discursive tradition that goes beyond the well-defined limits of Pragmatism and favors the extending of its reach today. This is the objective of this work, which has, as a starting point, a survey of the references to the history of Philosophy in Dewey's work.

This survey used as source the collection of texts entitled *The collected works of John Dewey: 1882-1953*, published by Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA, available in electronic version on the online platform Intalex Past Masters. Its first edition was organized between 1967 and 1990 by the Center for Dewey Studies, under Jo-Ann Boydston's coordination. The second was edited by Southern Illinois University Press, containing all the works of the first one and following the same chronological order. The third is the one present on the platform; it reproduces the first edition and is responsible for Larry Hickman, director of The Center for Dewey Studies, an organ linked to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Containing texts of varied matter, such as books, articles and programs of disciplines, since the first edition the Deweyan work has been organized in three chronological sequences: The Early Works (1882-1888, with 5 volumes), The Middle Works (1889-1924, with 15 volumes) and The Later Works (1925-1953, with 17 volumes), in addition to a supplementary volume with scattered writings between 1884 and 1951. The analysis developed in this study considers all the texts in which the expression "history of Philosophy" appears, both in singular and plural, and the identification of which was made possible by the search tool available on the platform.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident that this method contains gaps, since, through it, only the passages in which Dewey literally uses the target expression are examined, being possible - or practically certain - that there will be discussions about the history of Philosophy at other moments of the work, without explicit reference to the expression. As we hope to show later, the method used, although presenting partial results, allows to identify very relevant discursive themes and contexts. In the practical aspect, it must be admitted that, without using this procedure, it would be necessary to know all the author's texts in detail, which, due to the length of the material, is not within the reach of the vast majority of researchers.

Following this method, we will initially make a quantitative examination of the occurrences of the expression "history of philosophy", then moving on to the qualitative analysis of the theme "history of philosophy" in Dewey's work, in order to highlight the educational value attributed by the author to the study of history, and also point out a peculiar characteristic of his speech, the argument supported by the genealogy of facts and concepts. We will then try to show that this way of arguing, in which history assumes an outstanding formative power, allows Dewey to be placed in the discursive tradition originated from the first generation of sophists. We will end the article using the books *Art as experience* (1934/2003) and *Logic: the theory of inquiry* (1938/2003) with the purpose of exposing Dewey's thesis on aesthetics and discussing his theory of experience as an investigation. We hope to show that such theoretical developments are useful to give due amplitude to the author's positions on the theme examined here.

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<sup>2</sup> For the elaboration of this work, the version of *The collected works of John Dewey* published in 2003 was consulted.

## The expression and the theme “history of philosophy”

The expression “history of philosophy” appears in 12 texts distributed in 3 volumes of The Early Works (EW) chronology; it also appears in 17 works reproduced in 10 volumes of The Middle Works (MW); in The Later Works (LW), there are 15 texts in 9 volumes. In the first chronology, in which 111 works were published, the 12 found correspond to 10.8%; in the second, with a total number of publications of 359, the 17 located represent 4.7%; in the latter, which contains 619 texts, the expression is present in 2.2% of them.

From a quantitative point of view, the frequency of the target expression is insignificant, as it appears in only 44 texts, that is, in 9% of the total of 1089 published. For a qualitative assessment, it is important to observe the following parameters: although it is not present in all volumes of the collection, “history of philosophy” appears in all chronologies, except in the supplementary volume, showing that the history of philosophy is a recurring theme in Dewey’s intellectual production; of the 44 texts in which the target expression is present, 45% are cataloged as journal articles, vehicles of great repercussion in the academic community already at that time; among the remaining 55%, in the midst of less valuable materials, there are works with equivalent or superior penetration in relation to articles, such as the books *Democracy and education* (DEWEY, 1916a/2003), *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (DEWEY, 1920/2003) and *Logic* (DEWEY, 1938/2003).

The most relevant qualitative indicator is the content of the subjects covered in the texts that contain the target expression, with an analysis that allows us to primarily apprehend the sensitive inflection suffered by Deweyan thinking in the transition from EW to MW. Early in his academic career, Dewey was a follower of Hegelianism, following the trend of most intellectuals in his country, in particular George S. Morris, responsible for his admission to the University of Michigan in 1884 (CUNHA, 2018a). Certain texts cataloged in EW, produced between 1882 and 1888, register this influence, differently from the others, classified in MW and LW, which show clear consonance with Pragmatism.

Of the group of works registered in EW, “The late professor Morris” (DEWEY, 1889/2003) stands out, originally published in the *Palladium* yearbook. In a tone of praise for the honoree, who died that year, Dewey explains that Morris defended “the unity of man’s spirit with the divine”, having found in Hegel the support for his own ideas (DEWEY, 1889/2003, p. 10). To Professor Morris, the study of the history of Philosophy was essential for promoting “the fountains of intelligence”, establishing “the organic bond of all special sciences” and enabling free thinking, ethics and truth (DEWEY, 1889/2003, p. 13-14).

In MW, the history of Philosophy is no longer represented as a path to the truth, in the sense suggested by Hegelianism. The text that best expresses this transformation is *German philosophy and politics* (DEWEY, 1915/2003), dedicated to German idealism, especially Kant and Hegel. Dewey (1915/2003, p. 199) analyzes that, since the hegemony of Hegelian thought, the “histories of philosophy, or religion, or institutions have all been treated as developments through necessary stages of an inner implicit idea or purpose according to an indwelling law”. The writing clearly reflects his break with Hegel, as he attributes another value to history, in line with the new trend in force in the United States, Pragmatism: “An American philosophy of history must perforce be a philosophy for its future, a future in which freedom and fullness of human companionship is the aim, and intelligent cooperative experimentation the method” (DEWEY, 1915/2003, p. 205).

Also in MW, in the article “The pragmatism of Peirce”, published in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Dewey (1916b/2003, p. 72-79) examines the conceptions of Charles S. Peirce and William James to explain that, according to Pragmatism, beliefs are established and altered through the use of scientific methods, which emphasizes the transience in the scope of the history of Philosophy. The postulation of the history of Philosophy

as a result of the contexts in which philosophical knowledge is developed is the object of Dewey's contribution (1902/2003, p. 191-203) to the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*: in the entry "philosophy", we read that the meanings of Philosophy come from history, which gives a dynamic and variable character to philosophical reflection.

This is also the subject of *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, a book in which Dewey (1920/2003, p. 81-95) examines the changes that have occurred in Philosophy over time to show that its contents are part of human history, a chapter of the culture of civilization, which ensures the creation of new concepts in the future, always in response to the characteristics of life in society.

In the same chronology, the book *Democracy and education: an introduction to the Philosophy of education* (DEWEY, 1916b/2003) brings the nucleus of the Deweyan conception about the history of Philosophy, precisely the transience: the philosophical systems caused by the impasses experienced in certain societies aim to understand social dynamics and present new ways of living through unprecedented conclusions; it is an incessant search that involves constant exchange with the sciences that deal with the facts of the world, and it is up to Philosophy to discuss the dispositions of men before the real. The totality sought by Philosophy does not come from history, but from this continuous movement which starting point has always been experience (DEWEY, 1916b/2003, p. 334-335).

Dewey, therefore, does not accept the idea of a universal Philosophy that definitively solves the problems arising from the contingencies of collective life. *Democracy and education* transports this conception to the educational field by arguing that a full understanding of the reflections on education that arose in the course of historical time can only be obtained through an accurate examination of the needs and contingencies of social life. When discussing this topic in a specific society, the democratic society, Dewey affirms that it is essential to understand the phenomena that historically have affected - and currently affect - this way of life.

Even before the publication of this book that expresses the most relevant Dewey's educational formulations, the subject is discussed in a contribution by Dewey (1912-1913/2003, p. 306-308) to *A cyclopedia of education*, in which he argues that the close link between Philosophy and education comes from the performance of the sophists in Classical Greece, a time when philosophical reflection becomes the foundation for pedagogical practice.

In LW, references to the history of philosophy follow this same line of argument, always participating in discursive contexts that emphasize the insertion of philosophical thinking in certain social contexts. This is what is read, for example, in "Philosophy and civilization" (DEWEY, 1927/2003), an article published in *Philosophic Review*, which brings a reflection on the cultural scenario of the period preceding the world crisis installed at the end of the 1920s, when the United States' relations with Europe were going through a critical moment (SIDORSKY, 2003). Dewey (1927/2003, p. 4) positions Philosophy as part of the history of culture and the history of philosophy as a branch of general history, making it impossible to understand any philosophical current as a system of timeless truths; there is a direct relationship between philosophical systems and the concerns of specific people in a given historical period, in all sectors of culture.

Dewey (1927/2003) states that the isolated analysis of a philosophy prevents the correct apprehension of its true character, making it impossible to identify similarities between systems that vary in time and space. Whatever the system under examination, philosophizing means expressing the present and the future through conflict, deliberation and reorganization undertaken by the community, which highlights the marks of the culture produced by humanity: be it "Indian, Chinese, Athenian, the Europe of the twelfth or the twentieth century", the history of Philosophy invariably carries a "load of traditions proceeding from an immemorial past" (DEWEY, 1927/2003, p. 7).

In “From absolutism to experimentalism”, published in *Contemporary American Philosophy*, Dewey (1930/2003, p. 148-161) recalls his own trajectory of studies at the University of Vermont, where, living in an environment permeated by discussions between teachers and students, discovered the value of the history of Philosophy as a resource for obtaining the perspective and proportion of current problems. The theme of the formation of a philosophical intelligence is taken up in “Philosophy”, a lecture that has as objective to show that the study of the history of philosophy has value because it broadens the student’s intellectual and moral view (1929a/2003).

This form of intelligence can only be developed, through Philosophy, when it is admitted that the contemporary scenario is marked by conflict and uncertainty, as Dewey (1949a/2003) characterizes it in “Has philosophy a future?”. The “disturbances in family life, in the relation of the sexes, in industry and commerce, in politics, domestic and international” reveal the risk of disintegrating the established order, but also the existence of ties of intellectual loyalty, and this ambiguity is what provides raw material for the necessary reconstruction in Philosophy (DEWEY, 1949a/2003, p. 361).

The philosophy conceived by Dewey (1949a/2003, p. 360) belongs to the field of investigation of what is inherently human, in contrast to the thought that sees it with the empty intention of scholarship, shaped by abstract and comprehensive forms disconnected from social needs. Philosophy and human history are in continuity: “The very features that once rendered past philosophies humanely useful are the very ones that unfit them for service in a radically changed human situation”. The moments of crisis offer an opportunity for the development of new philosophies, more consistent with the current situation. Dewey refutes the possibility of a final and comprehensive Philosophy, preferring to position philosophical thought in a specific time and place, as science operates.

The perception of the continuity between Philosophy and history allows Dewey to propose the revision of certain philosophical concepts that have been changing over the ages. This is the case of *experience and nature*, in “An empirical survey of empiricisms” (DEWEY, 1935/2003) and “Nature in experience” (DEWEY, 1940/2003); and *knowledge and instrumentalism*, in *Knowing and the known* (DEWEY, 1949b / 2003b). Dewey’s purpose in carrying out this task is to show that philosophy does not present a unitary opinion about man and the world, but a set of explanations that vary according to the historical moment in which they are elaborated, which values the initiative to reconstruct the philosophical reflection in line with the needs of present social life.

### **Genealogical method and rhetorical tradition**

In practically all the texts that mention the history of Philosophy, Dewey uses the argumentative strategy that Cunha and Sacramento (2007) call *resource to origin*, which translates into the imperative that, to understand a certain problem or philosophical concept, it is necessary to examine its original formulation and monitor its development throughout history, up to the present. Whether to discuss about the components of practical life, or investigate the relationship between philosophical thinking and science, or elucidate technical terms of Philosophy, the research method suggested by Dewey is always the genealogical one, that is, the resumption of the origin of the phenomenon on the agenda and the monitoring of its transformations over the course of historical time.

This method seems to be usual in Dewey’s work, as Cunha and Sacramento (2007) identify it on the basis of one of their most important texts, the book *Democracy and education* (DEWEY, 1916a/2003), in which the relationships between political life and ways of educating are discussed. Cruz and Cunha (2016) observe the use of this same type of argumentation in “Intelligence and morals”, an essay in which Dewey (1908/2003) discusses the transformation

of the theories of morality. The survey data reported here show that the study of history serves the investigation of important themes, both for education and for Philosophy, also operating as a component of intellectual training, because it is through it that the student institutes his/her philosophical intelligence that enables him/her to face today's challenges.

These data allow us to conclude that the value attributed by Dewey to the history of Philosophy lies in the educational potential of historiographic narratives. Dewey proposes to resort to history because the genealogical study of any problem - whether of a strictly philosophical nature or of social relevance - prepares the student to face challenging situations. This characteristic makes it possible to insert Dewey into the discursive tradition originating from the first generation of sophists, whose performance in Classical Greece aimed at educating citizens to deal with complex situations, called *rhetorical situations*, moments of conflict, urgency and uncertainty that demand the reestablishment of a "state of balance" (CRICK, 2010, p. 53).

In the conception derived from Sophistics, the education that enables the individual to overcome the immediate reality through a persuasive discourse is not dissociated from the analysis of the contingencies of life in society. Facing these contingencies, in turn, requires a critical stance that involves a certain intellectual and moral disposition. Crick (2010, p. 41) analyzes that a speech only becomes effective when the speaker establishes the "total relationship" of his own organism with the environment that surrounds him; rhetorical situations demand permanent openness to overcome current dogmatisms and achieve a new balance (CRICK, 2010, p. 53). On these occasions, the "tools of instrumental rationality" are insufficient because the proposed actions must go beyond the existing one, requiring new emotional and moral dispositions (CRICK, 2010, p. 42). Rhetoric is the means for "active engagement" in these moments of crisis, constituting the only instrument capable of inventing alternatives aimed at transforming the world (CRICK, 2010, p. 68).

Crick (2010, p. 17) explains that Dewey adopts the thesis derived from Protagoras, according to which man is the measure of all things, which justifies the need for the discourse to go beyond fixed limits, becoming situational and flexible. Both in Sophists and in Deweyan formulations, rhetoric is part of the proposal for a democratic society that projects the imaginative realization of an "ontology of becoming". The rhetoric "emerges from the past, speaks to the present, and alters the future", drawing a continuous movement in search of discursive interventions that contribute to the intellectual and moral growth of individuals and the community (CRICK, 2010, p. 21).

This approach, which Crick (2010, p. 38) qualifies as a "latent Sophistical attitude", can be seen in *Democracy and education*, a book in which Dewey (1916a/2003) relates the philosophical concepts in force in a given society with the search for resolution of the problems that arise within that same society, which enables the emergence of new forms of social experience; experience is the material of social change, it is the means by which Philosophy is made and remade, describing a continuous movement that discredits the affirmation of a universal and final thought.

A similar thesis is found in *Reconstruction in philosophy*, a text in which Dewey (1920/2003) considers that future philosophies will result from the demands arising from social life. In "Philosophy and civilization" (DEWEY, 1927/2003), the analysis of the crisis faced by the United States in the 1920s suggests the possibility of philosophy discussing similar situations faced by previous philosophical systems. In "Has philosophy a future?", the crisis of values generated by the postwar period leads Dewey (1949a/2003) to affirm that the concerns of the moment bring ambiguities conducive to philosophical reconstruction.

The proposition of a democratic society gives rise to Dewey's sophist attitude, because, in this social order, the debate between competing theses, the deliberation on what seems more appropriate and the periodic reevaluation of the established positions are essential. In short, it is a way of life in which citizens often face rhetorical situations; whenever old customs prove

unsatisfactory, new forms of conduct need to be invented. For this reason, in democracy it is essential to master the discursive resources of rhetoric, the art that enables the individual to dialogue and deliberate, both in the sphere of private life and in the sphere of collective life, for the benefit of the common good.

Rhetorical pedagogy is the educational approach that aims to develop in the student the personal dispositions necessary to argue in critical situations. The teaching of this art consists of developing the ability to articulate the discourse in line with *kairós* and *decorum*, concepts that, together, reveal a unique conception of historical time. Crick (2010, p. 20) defines *kairós* as the impulse that provokes us to respond creatively “to the lack of order in human life”. It is a “radical principle of occasionality” that expresses a perception of the temporality of the speech that contains the perception of the right moment to break conventions and intervene in the pace of events.

Whoever argues in line with *decorum* takes on another temporality, valuing the “sense of stability and continuity across time, as if the place in which one stands will always exist, even if just in memory”. The *decorous* argument “honors history and posterity by creating an object whose particular beauty endures”; time is perceived as a constant, immutable dimension, which deserves respect for keeping the current situation stable (CRICK, 2010, p. 183).

In Greek mythological iconography, the god *Kairós* is represented by the figure of a young winged man with hair that adorns only the anterior portion of the head and is shown balancing a scale on the edge of a razor. This representation reveals the need to take advantage of the single instant liable to intervention and, also, the precarious balance obtained in rhetorical situations. If we let the young god fly past us, it will be too late to interfere. *Decorum*, in turn, is represented by *Chronos*, the god who expresses the perception of a time that goes by without alteration and does not require intervention, like the waters of a river driven by the limit of the river bank.

The combination of *kairós* and *decorum* in the same speech translates the encounter of a stable time with a time to be broken, which reveals the “aesthetic unity” of rhetoric (CRICK, 2010, p. 184). *Decorum* reasoning operates with universal forms, whereas *kairotic* argument involves what is particular, unique, which is conceived only through imaginative daring. Rhetorical art moves from one pole to another, seeking to build meanings capable of mobilizing all audiences. When it comes to discussing historical events, the speaker must proceed *decoratively*, respecting the natural and traditional ordering of phenomena, but always attentive to intervene *kairotically* with the purpose of breaking that same order and introducing the intended innovations, aiming to mobilize the audience to act in an unprecedented way.

In the texts in which Dewey qualifies the history of Philosophy as part of the history of humanity, this combination is observed. Deweyan discourse does not neglect the traditional record of facts and concepts, but, at the same time, it seeks to lead the reader to a new understanding of this same record, showing that the history of philosophy, like history itself, is dependent on human experience, which it is variable, subject to the contingencies of a changing world. For this reason, Dewey (1920/2003) highlights the need to review the parameters of philosophical reflection; emphasizes the impossibility of compartmentalizing the study of the history of philosophy (DEWEY, 1929a/2003); suggests that social criticism is a primary function of philosophy (DEWEY, 1927/2003); and defends that the material of philosophy is the crisis, being essential to review the current values (DEWEY, 1949a/2003).

Dewey (1915/2003, p. 140) criticizes those who consider intelligence to be a “deposit from history”, not a force that operates in the creation of history. Dewey breaks, therefore, with Kant, to whom the idea of “a priori guiding thread capable of guiding the obscure and contradictory course of historical facts” is attributed, as if nature had a plan that was realized regardless of whether men were conscious of it and to act to accomplish it, as if the human species were “the instrument through which nature accomplishes its purpose, its end” (PECORARO, 2009, p. 27-28). Dewey also breaks with Hegel, for whom there is no progress



in nature, because the “peculiar form [of nature] is space, and its temporal rhythm is nothing more than repetition, eternal return of the equal. History and historicity are privileges of the spirit”, not of the “subjective spirit”, which represents man as an individual, but of the “objective spirit”, expression of man in the most general sphere of social relations (PECORARO, 2009, p. 37).

The core of the Deweyan thesis on the history of Philosophy consists in affirming that the plot of the historiographical narrative can only be understood when it is assumed that there is no time relative to the development of ideas and a time concerning social transformations. Dewey’s annoyance is directed at the attempt to elaborate a philosophy of history based on the desire to give past events the character of inevitability, excluding the action of the singular components; or when the historian takes the risk of foreseeing the future based on the past, as if historical time describes a linear trajectory towards a predictable end; or even when a particular institution or dominant political form is elected as the organizer of time.

Dewey’s criticisms can be compared with the positions taken by the scholars who dedicate themselves to the philosophy of history, which can be grouped in two extreme poles: on the one hand, there are those who conceive of historical time as having a meaning, which it allows to project with certainty the destiny of humanity; on the other, there are those who reject this idea, or, at least, strongly suspect it (BODEI, 2001; PECORARO, 2009). Dewey can be asked about this topic: do human achievements constitute a consistent and well-articulated scenario of situations or a disorganized grouping of isolated and directionless facts? In other words: in the Deweyan view, does the development of past events allow or prevent the construction of any image of our future?

Adept of the rhetorical tradition, the Deweyan discourse, as we have already seen, is consistent with the ideas of Protagoras, a sophist who considers that, for each thing that is examined, there are at least two reasonable arguments, the reason why one cannot conceive of the existence of absolute truths (SILVA, 2018). Understanding that the polarization of opinions enables the establishment of dogmatic propositions, Dewey manifests himself contrary to all types of dualism, and this position extends, according to Cunha (2018b, p. 29), to the dualisms that have been established throughout history of philosophy and introduced in the history of education the pendulum movement that sometimes values the internal factors of the student, and sometimes emphasizes exclusively its external conditions.

In line with Protagorean circumstantialism, Dewey adopts the discursive resource called *antilogic - dissoi logoi*, opposing speeches -, an argumentative form that is considered the most representative of Sophistics (KERFERD, 1981, p. 147; POULAKOS, 1995, p. 57-58). Poulakos (1995, p. 53-73) explains that whoever uses this way of arguing operates with two antagonistic pairs: the first is formed by *prepon*, the aforementioned *decorum*, and *aprepes*, which is considered inappropriate in a given situation; and *hetton*, the speech with a strength that lies in the audience’s adherence, and *kreitton*, the discredited argument at a certain point. The sophist knows how to make the proper inversion of these pairs, so that what is now *prepon* may cease to be so in the next instant; what is *hetton* in one circumstance can become *kreitton* in another. In this incessant dynamic of discourse, there is no absolute and eternal victory; in rhetoric, “competition between arguments never ceases” (POULAKOS, 1995, p. 65).

If in the language game there are no winners, only players, and if an appropriate and strong argument can be made inappropriate and weak when operated by a skilled speaker, we can ask both Sophistic and Dewey: why offer historical elements as support for a speech? If events, characters, concepts and social forms established over time are part of a scenario that the speaker builds for the sole purpose of arguing in favor of a thesis; if history does not express a set of indisputable truths positioned in a straight line; if the ordering of the facts does not indicate to walkers an inexorable path to follow, we can ask: what are

historiographical narratives for? Wouldn't the antilogic be permeated by a relativistic conception of history that induces disbelief in the future?

These questions can be answered by observing that, according to Poulakos (1995, p. 67-71), antilogical discourse employs another antagonistic pair, in addition to those already indicated: *actuality*, which expresses respect for the present moment, the circumstances of reality; and *ideality*, which refers to a utopia, something which should be, but will never be. Sophistic relativism does not lead to disbelief in the future because the antagonism between the present and the ideal is overcome by the term *possibility*, the function of which is to dissolve the antinomy between what is, what the historiographical narrative has established for certain, and what should be, but it will not be because that same narrative is not capable of building. When the *possibility* manifests itself, we are challenged to imagine what it is not yet, but it can be, if we mobilize for its realization.

Thus, the Deweyan approach to historical time runs away from traditional linearity, relativizes the strength and adequacy of the arguments, but does not imply disbelief in the future for assuming these characteristics of antilogic. The notion of *possibility* accurately describes Dewey's position, for whom the study of history does not aim to lead the student to a considerable amount of ready-made academic responses, but to a powerful source of reflection. In the Deweyan discourse, *decorum* and *kairós* coexist harmoniously: the historiographical narrative is not eliminated, but its value is associated with the contingencies of the moment, which is why the flow of events is likely to be broken, revealing that the power of history lies in its educational potential, in its capacity to form the philosophical intelligence necessary to think about the future, to imaginatively project possible paths.

Poulakos (1995, p. 71) characterizes the sophist rhetoric as a search for "third alternatives", a rhetoric of opportunities, always in search of solving paradoxes. This is the attitude adopted by Dewey, as it is read in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (DEWEY, 1920/2003), in which, even under the rubble left by the First World War, he claims to believe that philosophical reflection can be reconstructed through cooperation and, thus, contribute to the creation of positive visions for humanity through new concepts.

*Antilogic* is not identified with empty relativism, but with the purpose of keeping the man's disposition alive for dialogue, for investigation in search of reasonable consensus. Both sophists and Dewey base their speeches on the need to find *homonoia*, a community of thought that enables us to "the continuous creation of the city by logos" amid divergences (SILVA, 2018, p. 118). To question the meaning of history, to Dewey, is to dispel the belief in absolute truths, dogmas that have crystallized in the various conceptions of history theorized throughout the ages. As Crick (2010, p. 78) says, rhetoric seeks to understand "discontinuities within a continuous history, to show how even in the particular moment are recurrences that resonate with the past and will carry forward into the future".

### **For a creative history of Philosophy and education**

We saw above that the core of Dewey's criticism of historians lies in the intention of predicting the future based on the past, as if historical time describes a linear trajectory towards a predictable end. We have also seen that the Deweyan argument uses typical Sophistic strategies, which suggests its insertion into the rhetorical discursive tradition. The understanding of Dewey's positions on history, as well as his proximity to Sophistics, can be expanded by examining the reflections contained in *Art as experience* (DEWEY, 1934/2003), a book that, although it does not contain the expression "history of Philosophy", reveals that the Deweyan Philosophy of experience is strongly associated with the notions of temporality and historicity discussed here.

The purpose of this book is to show that aesthetic appreciation implies much more than a mere passive disposition before works of art. Experimenting with art requires an active perceptive attitude to discover specific composition techniques and to understand how the artist uses them to evoke a judgment and a feeling for his/her work. Dewey says that conscious experience is a perceived relationship between doing and suffering - meaning that the object directly affects us -, which allows us to understand that art as production and perception and enjoyment as appreciation are mutually supportive. Dewey (1934/2003, p. 61) establishes a rigorous standard for aesthetic appreciation, demanding that the viewer undertake the recreation of the perceptual techniques and processes involved in the elaboration of the artistic work: “For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent”.

Although the human sensory apparatus is conditioned by a unique neuronal anatomy and by the physiological characteristics of bipedal beings with stereoscopic vision, Dewey believes that our way of seeing is not invariable and can therefore be altered by individual experience. Art reflects the perceptual freedom of man’s experience as a physical creature capable of selecting what he sees and relating what he sees to what he feels, rejecting what is irrelevant and compressing and intensifying what seems significant to him. Our actions and reactions can be described scientifically because science, interested in what is “remote and identical or repeated things that are conditions of actual experience and not with experience in its own right”, reduces them to “to relations that differ only mathematically”. In experience, however, our actions and reactions are “infinitely diversified and cannot be described”, just as it happens when we are facing a work of art (DEWEY, 1934/2003, p. 212).

Dewey (1934/2003, p. 166) states that a theory of art must be based on “the central role of energy”, in which “opposition in company with accumulation, conservation, suspense and interval, and cooperative movement toward fulfillment in an ordered, or rhythmical experience” is observed. An aesthetic experience triggers an “interaction of energies” that allows the potential accumulated in the creative process to be conserved in the form of a new unified perception. The purpose of conceptualizing aesthetic perception in terms of reciprocity and exchange of energetic rhythms reflects Dewey’s interest in placing the mind in nature and situating the experience in the temporal course of history.

The recurrent debate of physicists during the last two decades of the 19th century, which aimed at discovering whether force and energy are universally convertible and whether physical processes are reversible, had an important impact on Dewey. James Clerk Maxwell showed that a change in the configuration or relative position of molecules or particles in a system results in an increase in the potential energy of the system as a whole, without changing the total kinetic energy available. His calculations showed that the order persists, even as chaotic as a collection of molecules may seem. This was a remarkable achievement that affirmed the variable configuration and the speed of matter and energy, discoveries that paved the way for the theory of relativity and the *quantum* mechanics. Maxwell’s model enabled significant advances to explain how it is possible for a system to be transformed as a whole through the interaction of its parts, without violating the laws of entropy and irreversibility.<sup>3</sup>

Although Dewey did not actively participate in this debate, it is evident that he started to examine natural phenomena through Maxwell’s theses, concluding that the same principles that govern matter in motion can be applied to human perception. Such perception implies a dynamic and continuous reconfiguration of how our bodies are located in space and time, in such a way that the energy is constantly redistributed to support new perspectives, while maintaining the sensation of what was experienced. This conception leads us to understand

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<sup>3</sup> In *The quest for certainty*, Dewey (1929b/2003) relates Philosophy to advances in science, especially Physics (COSTA-LOPES; CUNHA, 2011).

temporality as a non-linear, but continuous, dynamic phenomenon, subject to elaborations that depend on complex and mutually related mnemonic processes.

Dewey (1934/2003, p. 159-160) takes into account the principle of “ordered variation” proposed by Maxwell, to support his conception of rhythm as “ordered variation of changes”: “There is no rhythm of any kind, no matter how delicate and no matter how extensive, where variation of pulse and rest do not occur”, and such variations – “in number, in extent, in velocity, and in intrinsic qualitative differences, as of hue, tone etc.” - relate to what is experienced directly. “Each beat, in differentiating a part within the whole, adds to the force of what went before while creating a suspense that is a demand for something to come”. It is not about “a variation in a single feature but a modulation of the entire pervasive and unifying qualitative substratum”.

To Dewey (1934/2003, p. 214), the process of aesthetic perception embodies the contradiction present in the stages in which the opposing energies are balanced and ordered - resistance, accumulation, compression, conservation, expansion, liberation and transformation. The energies accumulate and compress until released, occupying a new space with a volume and contour that evoke a totally different sense of time of and the previous movement. This dialectical process is fundamental in Dewey’s theorizing about art: “Works of art express space as opportunity for movement and action. It is a matter of proportions qualitatively felt. A lyric ode may have it when a would-be epic misses it”.

The energy is conserved and transformed, composing a whole in continuous movement: “at the moment of reversal, an interval, a pause, a rest, by which the interaction of opposed energies is defined and rendered perceptible. The pause is a balance or symmetry of antagonistic forces”, and so on. During the inhibition phase, judgment is retained, the mind collects resources from memory and selects the images, observations and experiences that best capture the emotional tone caused by perception. Through this recursive process of emotional clarification, a previously accumulated energy is released and takes us forward, towards consummation, preserving the potential energy of the experience to respond to possible future contingencies (DEWEY, 1934/2003, p. 160).

The perceptual processes that operate in the appreciation of an artistic work, as conceptualized by Dewey in his aesthetic theory, are the same that participate in the elaboration of the narratives that make up the history of philosophy and, more broadly, the history of any event or concept - the history of education, for example. Such narratives are human constructions subject to the perspective of the observer, who, in turn, is subject to the mechanisms that govern the energetic movement put into action in the face of any natural phenomenon. This energetic movement results in the formation of a judgment that is in no way determined by the object itself, but by those who appreciate it.

To Dewey, therefore, historical time is a construct that, depending on who elaborates it, can be represented as simple and linear, devoid of contradictions, or represented as complex and full of nuances. The scientific effort to describe historical time does not differ essentially from the effort of those who are willing to appreciate a work of art, because in both cases the observer is conditioned by factors that Dewey (1934/2003, p. 175) considers vital, physiological, functional: “A well-conducted scientific inquiry discovers as it tests, and proves as it explores; it does so in virtue of a method which combines both functions”.

The appreciation and judgment that is formed in the consummation phase of that same appreciation comprise a qualitative process, an energetic whole that is qualitatively felt, involving the memory and affective value that we attribute to our present and past experiences, which is why some prefer a lyrical ode, while others choose an epic. The genealogical method proposed by Dewey to approach past events and compose the history of philosophy - which serves to compose any history - aims to free the student from the limitations imposed by a certain appreciation of historical time, the one in which the history is narrated like ode, a genre that respects the symmetry of stanzas and exalts heroic deeds.

Perhaps Dewey preferred the epic, which, while also exalting heroes, describes the action of a collective and serves to inspire moral behavior. Perhaps history as an epic, conceived in this specific sense, is the most appropriate genre for the goal that Dewey has in mind when considering the educational character of the history of Philosophy: it is a matter of favoring the construction of a creative history of Philosophy, giving the student an active role before the world, in line with what was intended by the pedagogy practiced by the sophists.

Dewey (1938/2003, p. 236-237) discusses these notions in *Logic*, stating that “history is that which happened in the past”, but it is also “the intellectual reconstruction of these happenings at a subsequent time”. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the mere chronology or cataloging of events and history as an interpretative narrative of past events. “Annals are material for history but hardly history itself”, as “*All historical construction is necessarily selective*” (DEWEY, 1938/2003, p. 235, emphasis added). The historical narrative is “an instance of judgment as a resolution through inquiry of a problematic situation”, and judgments that are recognized as historical must comply with the procedure of any investigation, the first step of which is to make “controlled observations” in order to resolve a given problem (DEWEY, 1938/2003, p. 232).

Such controlled observations provide data for inferential constructions that will be converted into what we call *history*, but these data are “selected and weighed with reference to their capacity to fulfill the demands that are imposed by the evidential function” (DEWEY, 1938/2003, p. 233). They, therefore, represent the connection with some problem; they are like materials - tiles, stones and wood - that a man gathers to build a house, before, however, having a plan for that. Following the Deweyan metaphor, the good historian is not the one who has the drawing of the house before gathering the materials, but the one who elaborates the drawing as he obtains, classifies and analyzes the materials. The design will depend on the skills and attitudes of the builder, just as the story depends on the dispositions of the historian. Considering that “selection is acknowledged to be primary and basic”, Dewey (1938/2003, p. 235) concludes that the whole story is “necessarily written from the standpoint of the present, and is, in an inescapable sense, the history not only of the present but of that which are contemporaneously judged to be important in the present”.

The process of data selection to build a historical narrative, as Dewey conceives it, allows to deepen the understanding of the Deweyan philosophy of experience, in the center of which lies the notion of investigation. Dewey (1938/2003, p. 236) states that “probably nowhere else is the work of judgment in discrimination and in creation of syntheses”; the construction of the story clearly exemplifies “the principle that new forms accrue to existential material when and because it is subjected to inquiry”.

For this reason, as we saw in the pages of this paper, Dewey defends the educational value of history, considering history not as a collection of facts and heroes, as established by the *decorous* narratives. Adopting a *kairotic* approach, to him, history is material that is put at the service of research, offering the student the experience of elaborating the image of what the past was and projecting what he/she wants for the future. In “History for the educator”, Dewey (1909/2003, p. 193) explains that:

If history be regarded as just the record of the past, it is hard to see any grounds for claiming that it should play any large role in the curriculum of elementary education. The past is the past, and the dead may be safely left to bury its dead. There are too many urgent demands in the present, too many calls over the threshold of the future, to permit the child to become deeply immersed in what is forever gone by. Not so when history is considered as an account of the forces and forms of social life.

Dewey's interest is directed to the past as a resource to guide the present and the future, and schools should not guide children's education in any other way. His theses on the educational relevance of history have in view the fragmentation of modern institutions, the undermining of the citizen's ability to perceive his/her relations with society; the individual does not realize how public events impact his/her life. To face this dramatic scenario, Dewey (1938/2003, p. 232) suggests that if the historian has a "dramatic imagination, the past seems to be directly present to the reader". And so the teaching of history must also allow children to have "a vivid picture" of how and why men have achieved successes and failures (DEWEY, 1909/2003, p. 194).

The dramatic imagination guiding the construction of a vivid image of the past facing the future - this is what is presented as indispensable in the Deweyan educational proposal. This is the component of any investigation, as well as any aesthetic appreciation, indicated by Dewey to guide the work of the historian and the educator for the benefit of the citizen in general, and the student in particular, living characters who can visit the dead in order to turn them into participants in the present social life.

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