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This is an **author produced version** of a paper published in:

Journal of Philosophy of Education 53.4 (2019): 759-772.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12401>

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This is an Accepted Manuscript version of the following article, a Dewey in Transition:
Towards a Pragmatist Ethics of Recognition in Schools. ccepted for publication in Journal of
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Dewey in Transition: Towards a Pragmatist Ethics of Recognition in Schools

BIANCA THOILLIEZ

This article aims to study one of the potential contemporary updates of pragmatist philosophy. Specifically, it explores pedagogic possibilities that open up by adding Axel Honneth's studies to the discussion on the ethics of recognition, with the community dimension of education found in John Dewey's philosophy of education. In the spirit of Richard S. Bernstein's understanding of Dewey's radical democracy and from a more clearly educational philosophical perspective, the article explores the pedagogical possibilities that arise from broadening the communitarian dimension of education found in Dewey's philosophy of education with the studies by Honneth on the ethics of recognition. In the line of Colin Koopman's definition of transitionalism as a 'philosophical temperament', Honneth's ethics of recognition 'transitions' the Deweyian tradition towards a more contemporary disposition to think through the ethical dimension of education. The article intends to make use of a fruitful dialogue between classic pragmatism and critical theory to address some challenges of contemporary school life.

INTRODUCTION

Within the renewed interest in pragmatism in general and the writings of John Dewey¹ in particular, there are two clearly differentiated lines of research in the fields of the philosophy and history of education. One line, which starts from the premise that the processes by which theories and discourse on education are internationalised always involve some type of re-interpretation, makes a detailed account of how John Dewey's ideas have been received around the world. The other line of research lies between contemporary re-conceptualising and revising of Dewey's philosophy, which has turned into a 'third-wave pragmatism' in itself aiming to respond to the concerns of our times, a 'philosophical practice' closer to the kind of cultural critique defended by Richard Rorty.² As stated by Colin Koopman (2009), both those traditionally seen as classic-pragmatists as much as the neo-pragmatists were all leading intellectuals of their time. In the particular case of Dewey, the public-minded orientation he gave to his work came about due to how he conceived the philosopher's job in pragmatic terms as an imminently reconstructive endeavour that should attempt to solve people's everyday problems of his time, i.e. a philosophy that can only be considered as such if it makes a difference to what is happening in the world while also keeping things happening. It places great emphasis on the present and on the active

nature of the philosopher's professional undertakings, which therefore breaks away from the tradition and changes its approach.³

Within the special context of Dewey's political philosophy and views on democratic education, supporting arguments to Koopman's enterprise can be found to frame pragmatism as a transition in the pedagogical context. Writing on the shape Western democracies are taking, Naoko Saito (2009) has pointed out that Dewey's philosophy is meant to be a critical voice inside his own culture, asking us to be involved in dialogue with and reconstruction of Dewey's pragmatism. Moreover, she adds that this commitment 'is also necessary for destabilizing the way in which we use the language of democracy in the discourse of a globalized economy, and for remembering a forgotten dimension of education—one that serves the task of creating democracy as a way of life' (Saito, 2009, p. 102). More recently, she has referred to Dewey's pragmatism as a 'criticism of criticisms' (Saito, 2018, p. 144), as 'a philosophy in service of practice and action and answering to the problems of common people' (p. 136), and as 'a philosophy of life' that can 'thoroughly and robustly resist the tide of the global economy' (*idem.*) and its impact on contemporary education policies. Another example of this kind of exercise of transitioning Dewey's ideas comes from Maura Striano (2009), who indicated the ways in which Dewey's philosophy may prove useful to analysing the nature of the pedagogic problems and challenges posed by school systems that are becoming more and more globalised. Several keys to interpreting Dewey's philosophy, and particularly his ideas on pedagogy, are indeed potentially *transitionable* to present-day problems. By the same token, Stefano Oliverio (2018) has addressed 'the topicality of a pragmatist attitude in contemporary educational scenarios' (p. 610), as a 'specific way of "inhabiting" the educational undertaking in all its dimensions (theoretical, methodological, and practical) and a method of sieving educational proposals in reference to their potential to live up to the needs of contemporary times' (p. 625). Saito (2009, 2018), Striano (2009), and Oliverio (2018) set about transitioning Dewey's ideas as a possible and necessary update that can only be carried out through revision and updating, or as Dewey's might have suggested, 'reconstruction'. Indeed, as Neubert (2009) mentioned as well, Dewey reconstructed himself several times throughout his life as a philosopher, and argued that the need to reconstruct ideas was a recurrent phenomenon due to how intimately they are tied to their context of origin and use. Furthermore, every so often they must be reinvented, transformed or even left at the wayside to keep up with changes in social and cultural life. Neubert identified three ways by which ideas could be reconstructed: '(1) making strong and productive use of the tradition, (2) establishing new links in order to adopt and develop new conceptual tools, and (3) reconsidering implications with a view toward new articulations of human life experience' (Neubert, 2009, p. 355)⁴.

In a similar line, Koopman's project (2009) aims to establish a third-wave pragmatism which would, firstly, *transition* the standard sundering of pragmatist traditions into two (classic- and neo-), and, secondly, help philosophy *transition* into the 21st century 'as a means of orienting and adjusting our practices of critique and inquiry' (p. 5). Therefore, below I present the possibilities of reconstruction through a transitioning move of

some of Dewey's pedagogic ideas so as to cultivate and spread democratic experiences in the context of urban schools in the 21st century. The aim is to make productive use of the Deweyan tradition to set new conceptual relations that can help us reconsider some aspects of the contemporary school experience. Of great relevance here are the works of Axel Honneth: with his perception of the political and sociological implications of human experience in social institutions (such as schools) and community living, the uniqueness of the possibilities offered by schools in democratic societies such as ours can then be reconsidered. Specifically, I will propose a reconstruction of the sense of democracy in schools. Thus, in line with Koopman's attempt to reconcile the split between classical and contemporary pragmatism (2009), the aim of this article is to explore a contemporary interpretation of Dewey's philosophy by re-examining it under the light of Axel Honneth's contributions. Following Bernstein's understanding of John Dewey's radical democracy (Bernstein, 2010) and from a more clearly educational philosophical perspective, I aim to explore the pedagogical possibilities that arise from broadening the communitarian dimension of education found in John Dewey's philosophy of education with the studies by Axel Honneth on the ethics of recognition.

COMING TO UNDERSTAND JOHN DEWEY'S RADICAL DEMOCRACY

The matter of democracy recurs throughout the different dimensions of Dewey's work as a continuing thread, as it does with many of our contemporary social and political concerns. The centrality democracy plays (as an idea, a social system, a communitarian *ethos*) in Dewey's thinking can be explained because it lies at the anthropological root he starts out from. There is no possible notion of the individual conceived in a pre-social state. Claims that democracy is a form of government that is simply better than others imply mistakenly thinking of a social contract underwritten by a set of people who until then had had no social relationship at all. Along with that descriptive value, in Dewey human society also fulfills a clearly normative function. Bernstein explains it as follows:

Dewey consistently argues that any theory of human beings that fails to acknowledge that human beings 'are not isolated non-social atoms' is defective, a misleading abstraction of philosophers. When the normative significance of the distinctive sociality of human beings is fully developed, it leads to the idea of democracy as an ethical form of life (Bernstein, 2010, p. 72).

Following Bernstein's interpretation, Dewey's view of democracy can be characterised by three fundamental ideas. First, democratic sovereignty is not a conglomerate of individuals; rather, each individual who inhabits the democracy is sovereign in his citizenship, and in and of himself embodies and performs the spirit and will of the whole group. Second, democracy is first and foremost a form of ethical living. Dewey spent his whole career demonstrating 'that without a vital democratic *ethos* or culture, political democracy becomes hollow and meaningless. Democracy as a form of government is an outgrowth of, and is dependent upon, this living *ethos*' (Bernstein, 2010, p. 74). Third and finally, regardless of the role intellectuals or experts may play in

democratic dynamics, the citizens are the ones who must judge and decide. Dewey's faith in the potential of human nature that acts as a guiding principle of democratic life is neither blind nor irrational: 'It is a reflective, intelligent faith that is based on his understanding of human beings and their potentialities (for good and evil)' (*ibid.*, p. 76).

Bernstein's study on the meaning of radical democracy in Dewey discusses three key questions: (i) what is the relationship between real democracy and ideal democracy; (ii) what role does conflict play in democracy; and (iii) what are the most suitable means for achieving ideal democracy. Because the question of education can be more clearly addressed in the third question, I will skip over the analysis of the first two here.

Accordingly, in his study on the most appropriate means for achieving ideal democracy, Bernstein highlights the matter of social cooperation and education in Dewey's legacy:

Democracy requires a robust democratic culture in which the attitudes, emotions, and habits that constitute a democratic *ethos* are embodied. From this perspective we can appreciate Dewey's lifelong interest in education, especially education of the young. The great hope for nurturing individuals who will be sensitive to social injustice and for developing the flexible habits of intelligence required for social reform is democratic public education (Bernstein, 2010, p. 86).

Dewey holds that problems with democracy and 'eclipsing of the public sphere' can be counteracted by proposing new forms of democratic action that are more active and committed to participation in local communities, capable of sustaining and revitalising the promise of democracy. This vision of democracy is particular to Dewey, and in Bernstein's opinion, goes above and beyond the liberal-communitarian dichotomy. This opinion is shared with Honneth's reading of Dewey's work, a coincidence acknowledged by Bernstein himself (2010, pp. 85–86).

When calibrating the contemporary relevance of Dewey's ideas on radical democracy, its sense, its limits and the means for its development, Bernstein (2010, p. 87) also proves to be somewhat critical. Despite the fact that the problems pointed out by Dewey still exist today, a few facts remain unclear. One, his analysis of the institutions (the existing ones as well as the new ones in the future) is insufficient and lacks specificity; second, even though his radical democracy involves fundamental changes in economic underpinnings, it does not provide the details on his proposed alternative inclusive plan; and third, he is wrong in his assessment of how resistant some forces can be to the attempts at political and education reforms such as the ones advocated by Dewey. Some of these 'resistances' are studied by Axel Honneth, and I believe his analysis may in part complete Dewey's vision of a radical democracy as a personal way of individual life in which we open ourselves to the fullness of communication. It is indeed, according to Koopman's analysis of Bernstein's reading of Dewey's political philosophy, by taking up 'Dewey's emphasis on communication practices amid conflicting

pluralities' (Koopman, 2014, p. 121) that I will attempt in what follows not only to find insight into Dewey but also through Dewey's work (via Honneth in this particular occasion⁵).

AXEL HONNETH: REIFICATION, DISRESPECT AND RECOGNITION

Honneth is considered to be the best representative of the 'third generation' of the Frankfurt School and the critical theory movement. His work is a good example of what Dewey would have considered to be a complete philosophical reconstruction project. Honneth's detailed study and analysis of the works of Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse and Habermas leads him to propose reactivating the legacy and scope of their ethical dimension for the 21st century. For that, he moves in a normative universe of the social pathologies of reason, giving special consideration to the processes of identity creation and subjectivisation involved in these pathologies (see Honneth, 2011, pp. 27–29). Without undervaluing the transcendence of the differences between these two traditions, I find that the meeting between pragmatism and critical theory (represented by Dewey and Honneth, respectively) has clear antecedents such as the clash between Rorty and Habermas,⁶ and can similarly offer insight into new ways of interpreting the pragmatist tradition, and Dewey's philosophy in particular. Indeed, Bernstein's criticism of what he called Habermas's 'Kantian pragmatism' matches up on several points with Honneth.⁷

At first, Honneth was interested in the concept of reification as a resource for determining just how far it is possible to describe how the subjects relate to the world, beyond its applicability to the strictly moral.⁸ 'I wanted to discover something about our society with his help. That is, whether there has been some time over the last few decades when the effect of the capitalist market has been particularly brutal' (Honneth, 2010, p. 63). According to his own intellectual account, the concept did not in the end have quite the explanatory power Honneth hoped it would have on this matter. But along the way, he discovered its applicability to the area of the 'relations of reification' between subjects and the area of 'trends in self-reification'. The ethical theory of recognition advocated by Axel Honneth is based on the assumption that recognition is one of the chief regulatory mechanisms of the social being of people. As he explains, recent years have seen a major change in our normative conceptualisation of political order, which has abandoned the categories of equality of material goods and evenly distributed wealth, to address instead issues of respect and dignity. This results from the notion that 'the normative purpose no longer seems aimed at eliminating inequality but at preventing humiliation or contempt' (Honneth, 1992, p. 79). In this context, on one hand, it is understood that the subjective perception of the achievements in a fulfilled life depends on recognition, and on the other, that an individual only perceives himself as a member of the community insofar as he feels recognised in a number of aspects of his personality: 'if a concept of human dignity, of its complete integrity, is attained only approximately on the way of determining the manners of personal offense and disrespect, then this means the opposite, that the integrity of the human person depends constitutively on the experience of intersubjective recognition' (Honneth, 1992, p. 79).

The need for recognition forms the foundation of social structures and individual subjectivities along three different lines of interaction: love (characteristic in family relationships), law (characteristic of the legal spheres) and social valuation (characteristic in relationships of solidarity set in the communitarian spheres). To understand the spheres of intersubjective recognition, Honneth explains the modalities of interaction where contempt or disrespect take part as an effect of the practices of reification (Honneth, 1997): *In first place there are the forms of contempt in which a person is violently stripped of all chance at freedom with his or her own body.* This type of situation represents the most fundamental form of personal humiliation. Any attempt at taking power over another person's physical body against that person's will causes a degree of humiliation that destroys the practical self-reference of a person deeper than any other form of contempt. This is because the specifics of such forms (injuries sustained in torture or violence) are not the bodily harm but its association with the feelings of helplessness before the will of another subject. The physical abuse of a subject represents this type of contempt that injures confidence, learned from love, from the capacity of autonomous coordination with one's own body. Therefore, the consequence, accompanied by a sense of social shame, is the loss of confidence in one's self and in the world that even extends to the bodily means in practical dealings with other subjects. *In second place, there are forms of personal contempt that are attributed to a subject to keep him excluded from certain rights within a society.* Such rights are understood as individual 'rights' that can be legitimately demanded from society by any fully valid member participating on equal footing in its institutional structures. However, if that subject is systematically stripped of certain rights, it is implicitly construed as a declaration that that person is not considered like every other member of society. Such forms of contempt, which are connected to social exclusion and the dispossession of rights, are characterized by not only the violent restriction of personal autonomy or the feeling of not having a particular status, but also by the fact of being hurt in the person's hopes of being recognised as a subject capable of forming moral judgments. Thus, the experience of being dispossessed of rights is bound up with a loss of self-respect, of the ability to refer to oneself as a legitimate and equal subject of interaction with the rest of society. The person loses the cognitive respect of a moral responsibility that can only be earned by effort in the process of civilising interaction. *Third and last there is a modality of humiliation that refers negatively to the social value of the subject or group.* These forms of contempt devalue lifestyles, whether individually or collectively. In everyday speech they are related to concepts of 'insult' and 'dishonour'. The social hierarchy of values separates different ways of life and certain convictions as being less valid or somehow wanting, and then strips their participants of any chance of attributing social value to their own abilities. The person who undergoes the evaluative degradation of his or her model of self-fulfillment suffers from the consequence of not being able to refer to their way of life as something positive within the social community. As a result, the subject loses personal self-esteem and the opportunity to judge oneself as an esteemed individual in terms of one's characteristic abilities and qualities. He is denied social

acquiescence to a form of self-fulfillment that he would usually find with the support of his group.

PEDAGOGICAL DISCUSSION

For Dewey, experience falls somewhere between the coordinates of continuity and interaction. Continuity describes the characteristics of experience in its relationship with the individual. A suitable experience changes and affects the person who has it, thereby also affecting the person's future experiences. Continuity is desirable when it adds to personal growth, peaking a person's curiosity and leading that person into scenarios that involve some kind of novelty. On the other hand, interaction describes the characteristics of experience in its relationship with the surroundings. Experience has an active component that is able to change the context in which it takes place: society and the physical world and its conditions. A suitable experience involves interaction between the objective and internal conditions in which it takes place. When the individual and environmental elements of an experience transpire simultaneously, they create a situation: a complete and global experience that changes both the subject and the context in which it is placed.

The pedagogical application of this conceptualisation of experience led Dewey⁹ to speak of 'meaningful experience' and the difference between the active and passive aspects involved in the very nature of the experience:

The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. On the active hand, experience is *trying*—a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term experiment. On the passive, it is *undergoing*. When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience. It is dispersive, centrifugal, dissipating. Experience as trying involves change, but change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it. When an activity is continued *into* the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something. It is not experience when a child merely sticks his finger into a flame; it is experience when the movement is connected with the pain which he undergoes in consequence. Henceforth the sticking of the finger into flame *means* a burn. Being burned is a mere physical change, like the burning of a stick of wood, if it is not perceived as a consequence of some other action (MW 9: 147).

This holistic form of experience also implies that all the data from a given situation are accessible in all their quality, starting from a perspective of

interested commitment or *involvement*. His concept of democracy, the role education plays in it, and the function philosophy may carry out in both contexts of action are elements that are radically connected to this Deweyan definition of experience. For Dewey, democracy is something that goes beyond a mere political system of governance, like a way of life, an educational principle, a moral that is taught. The idea of democracy¹⁰:

is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself (...) Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an eneric desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community. The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy (LW 2: 329).

Because of this conviction, Dewey presents the school as the institution best able to educate the new generations and make of them citizens who exercise a 'reflexive' participation (through conscious experience) in the democratic community. Democracy is not founded on a set of institutions or formal procedures like voting. Rather, it is the only way of life that, compared with other ways of life, believes wholeheartedly in the process of experience as the end and the means. Furthermore, our pedagogic practices must consist of creating more varied democratic experiences¹¹ which will foster continual changes in both the means and the ends of education.

The thrust of this idea is that education should not be associated with a closed set of ends, but with a kind of idea of growth or progress that leads itself toward creating a better world. Here, 'better' is understood as meaning that it contains more of what we consider good and less of what we find bad. Moreover, determining what is to be considered 'good' should be guided by a philosophy of education different from the traditional. Less time should be spent hunting for words that describe principles that detach us from the action, and more time involving ourselves in educational contexts and its problems. Doing so, will give us a better understanding of the situation that will help us to find more appropriate responses. Even though Dewey himself never used the term 'recognition' directly, Honneth found a powerful theoretical precedent for his own ideas, namely, in the holistic form of experience defended by Dewey as a way to understand reality rationally. As I have shown, that form implies having all the data from a given situation be accessible in all their complexity, which requires the subject to take a perspective of *involvement*. This helps Honneth in two ways: (i) to demonstrate the primacy of this particular cognitive stance to the world, and (ii) to refer to it as 'recognition'. This article has shown that for Dewey, all rational knowledge begins with the full experience of feelings from an environment that must be mastered practically. This leads Honneth to consider that according to Dewey 'as active beings, we relate with the world with a lack of distance and with practical involvement' (Honneth, 2007, p. 54). So, at its fundamental level, what the concept of recognition shares with the concept of involvement is 'the precedence of an existential

interest in the world, nourished by worthwhile experience of it', and that therefore, 'a stance of recognition is an expression of the valuation of the qualitative meaning that other people or things have in the execution of our existence' (Honneth, 2007, p. 56).

This link between Axel Honneth's works and the philosophy of education of John Dewey somehow continues the work undertaken by Koopman (2009). In the line of Koopman's definition of transitionalism as a 'philosophical temperament', Honneth's ethics of recognition 'transitions' the Deweyian tradition towards a more contemporary disposition to think through the ethical dimension of education. A possibility that in the past some failed to see (Stojanov, 2009), while more recently others are committed to explore (Hanhela, 2017; Schumann, 2012). This may contribute to make a better use of classic pragmatism and critical tradition within our contemporary comprehension of school life.

In order to be involved in community spaces wholeheartedly and aid others in doing so, it is essential for educators to give a thoughtful response to each pupil's need for recognition (in his various areas of interaction), and furthermore, the educator should be aware of the devastating consequences that may come about for not doing so¹². Accordingly, concrete ways must be found for education to address each sphere of recognition proposed by Honneth. Such ways should enhance self-esteem and emotional dedication in the family sphere; self-respect and cognitive attention in the legal relations sphere; and self-esteem and worth in the sphere of social and communitarian interactions. Because of their particular characteristics, schools are the prime place for immersion in democratic practices and experiences, something John Dewey was plainly aware of. Much of his work revolved around the relationships between education and democracy, with experience placed firmly at the centre. This helps to better understand the pedagogical possibilities that education opens for democracy, and vice versa. It also leads to difficulties. Honneth's analysis leads to think of the school as a prime place for experiences of the third kind of recognition, but also for contempt. Trying to foster experiences of social valuation, especially among pupils who take part in ways of life placed near the bottom of the social structure, is very difficult. Indeed, I find that the internal relationship of ends and means that was advocated by Dewey is also present in Honneth's description on the spheres of intersubjective recognition and their corresponding modalities of contempt. What I wish point out here is that, to foster experiences of social valuation that strengthen the democratic endeavours of Dewey, the educator must keep a stance of 'practical commitment' with reality. This may prove to be a highly effective means to capture all the complexity of the forms of reification and disrespect that may arise in the context of a concrete actuation. They must be identified and alternatives must then be found in response. Therefore, schools must face that fact and become involved in suitable educational practices, where questions (and answers) on the 'how' and 'what' of thought need to be carefully examined and re-imagined. As concerns methodology (i.e. the 'how'), Honneth somehow *transitions* and builds up from Dewey's proposal of seeing schools as a form of "community life" by stating that 'The less we treat students in class as isolated subjects who must spew a performance, and therefore, the more we treat them as members of a cooperative community of learners, the easier it will be for them to establish ways to communicate

among themselves in which cultural differences are not only accepted playfully, but can also be understood as opportunities for mutual self-enrichment' (2013, p. 393). However, Honneth cautions, 'there is still much to do in terms of the curriculum (the 'what'), where it is still necessary to spell out what outcomes should be drawn from the increasing multiculturalism of our societies for the curriculum itself' (*ibid.*). As I recently stated elsewhere (Thoilliez, 2019b), Rorty maintained that moral progress towards solidarity would transcend the limitations of one's own community, and guide us in the search for the largest intersubjective agreement possible and the maximum referential extension of 'us' (1984, p. 424). However, this great 'we' of a classroom and a school is woven from smaller communities, with their own traditions, customs and codes, which make the subjective experience of living in the world more pleasant and amicable. Moreover, failure to acknowledge in the public sphere the individual differences acquired from sharing the codes of one community or another, opens the door to experiences of humiliation and pain, despite what Rorty may have imagined. This is what schools, as extensions of the public sphere, must be sensitive to and suitably address. Mutual democratic recognition in the classroom is incompatible with stifling any discourse referring to projects of individual happiness.

As Bernstein put it, 'at the core of Dewey's vision was his moral ideal of a creative democracy—an ideal that becomes living reality only when it becomes a "personal way of individual life" in which we open ourselves to the "fullness of communication"' (Bernstein, 2006, p. 202). In complex democratic contexts such as ours, schools are not immune to difference and conflict. Schools in fact are scenarios where these differences and conflicts play out in the particularly cruel guise of contempt. They are also places where the effects of contempt may deeply undermine the self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem of the learners. Knowing how to promote 'community involvement' experiences in these school spaces is a fundamental contribution that education should make in that 'task before us': the building of democracy.¹³

NOTES

1. Citations of the works of Dewey are from the critical edition published by Southern Illinois University Press (Dewey, 1969–1991). Volume and page numbers follow the initials of the series. Abbreviations for the volumes used are: EW *The Early Works* (1882–1898); MW *The Middle Works* (1899–1924); and LW *The Later Works* (1925–1953).
2. An epistemic re-position where 'the true, and the good, and the beautiful drop out. The aim is to understand, not to judge. The hope is that if one understands enough poems, enough religions, enough societies, enough philosophies, one will have made oneself into something worth one's own understanding' (Rorty, 1982, p. 66).
3. In his piece 'The Need for a Recovery in Philosophy' (MW 10: 3–48), originally published in 1917 as part of the collective work *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, Dewey stated: 'Intellectual advance occurs in two ways. At times increase of knowledge is organized about old conceptions, while these are expanded, elaborated and refined, but not seriously revised, much less

abandoned. At other times, the increase of knowledge demands qualitative rather than quantitative change; alteration, not addition. Men's minds grow cold to their former intellectual concerns; ideas that were burning fade; interests that were urgent seem remote. Men face in another direction; their older perplexities are unreal; considerations passed over as negligible loom up. Former problems may not have been solved, but they no longer press for solution. Philosophy is no exception to the rule. But it is unusually conservative—not, necessarily, in proffering solutions, but in clinging to problems. (...) The association of philosophy with academic teaching has reinforced this intrinsic conservatism. (...) Philosophy when taught inevitably magnifies the history of past thought, and leads professional philosophers to approach their subject matter through its formulation in received systems. It tends, also, to emphasize points upon which men have divided into schools, for these lend themselves to retrospective definition and elaboration. (...) Direct preoccupation with contemporary difficulties is left to literature and politics. (...) [I] attempt to forward the emancipation of philosophy from too intimate and exclusive attachment to traditional problems. It is not in intent a criticism of various solutions that have been offered, but raises a question as to the genuineness, under the present conditions of science and social life, of the problems' (MW 10: 3–4).

4. Characterizing pragmatism as a “reconstructionist” endeavor, as a matter of creative renewal, that operates in different areas of human activity relates with a particular idea of hope. This has been recently being cooperatively explored (Thoilliez, 2019c; Wortmann, 2019; Oliverio, 2019; Schwimmer, 2019), in the context of the current discussion on post-critical pedagogy (Hodgson, Vlieghe, and Zamojski, 2017 and 2018). The potential of the pragmatist tradition to address current educational issues will be addressed in the forthcoming Educational Theory Summer Institute 2020 “The Art of the Possible. On Pragmatism’s Potential for Making Futures in Troubled Times.”, organized by Hans Schildermans and Nicholas Burbules at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
5. In a recent publication on school moral practices (Thoilliez, 2019a) I have expanded Honneth’s pedagogical potential by connecting his description of social valuation experiences with Richard Sennett’s articulation of forms of respect in contemporary Western societies.
6. In fact, Habermas was one of Honneth’s professors, and discussed Rorty’s positions with respect to the possibilities of a strong or weak criticism of culture. See Honneth, 2011, pp. 53–54.
7. So much so that Honneth seems to have carried out the duty from Bernstein himself: ‘Habermas speaks about moving from Kant to Hegel and back again to Kant. Many of my criticisms of Habermas’s Kantian dichotomies are in the spirit of Hegel. But the main point is not to move *back* again to Kant, to move forward to a more dynamic, flexible pragmatism in the spirit of Dewey and Mead. Dewey and Mead clearly discerned the crucial role in philosophy; we must understand their functional changing roles in human experience, inquiry and discourse. They—and I fully agree with them—affirm the continuity between theoretical and practical reason’ (Bernstein, 2010, p. 199). Honneth bases his conceptions of ‘disrespect’ and ‘recognition’ not only on Luckàcs and Heidegger, but also on those of George H. Mead and his psychosocial theories on the ‘generalised other’. This is yet another convergence between the works

of a major philosopher from the Frankfurt School and the achievements of American pragmatism. Although I will not go any further into this subject here and now, it would be well worth the effort on some other occasion. For now, I will only say that Honneth turns to Mead's pragmatism for a way to overcome some of the limitations of Hegel's philosophy. Regarding Honneth's writings Honneth says 'they contain the most suitable instrument so far for reconstructing young Hegel's theoretical-intersubjective intuitions in a post-metaphysical theoretical space' (Honneth, 1997, p. 90).

8. Although the overall purpose here leans more towards the pedagogical, the Dewey-Honneth connection taken up in this article starts off from an outstanding publications by Del Castillo (2011). He looked into how Dewey's political philosophy had occasionally been understood as being very similar to the models of deliberative democracy, and at other times, as being linked to communitarian perspectives. He firstly asserts that Dewey's proposals do not fully fit in either of the two models, and secondly, that contemporary philosophers such as Axel Honneth have gone to great (and fruitful) lengths to propose an alternative interpretation: 'I will argue that Honneth's reading is particularly useful for reconnecting Dewey to contemporary politics, in spite of the fact that Dewey never used 'recognition' as a key term. Among other advantages, for example, Honneth's reading invites one to see the old motto, according to which Dewey was the American representative of the Hegelian Left, in a new light' (Del Castillo, 2011, p. 121). Del Castillo's engagement with the exploration of the rich connections between critical and pragmatist traditions has continued through interesting conversations with Richard J. Bernstein (Bernstein, 2015; Bernstein and Del Castillo, 2015; Del Castillo, 2015).
9. From *Democracy and Education*, 1916 (MW 9: 4–371).
10. From *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927 (LW 2: 236–373).
11. Being the introduction into critical thinking practices among the most important ones (Standish and Thoilliez, 2018).
12. The fragile condition of the educational relationship is an ongoing conversation within our field (Standish, 2016; Biesta, 2017; Vila, 2019; Burbules, 2019).
13. I would like to thank the participants at the PESGB Seminar 'Towards a Transitionalist Critique of Education', held on 14–15 March 2016, at the University of Roehampton, London. Their comments on a first version of the present article have been of great help. I would like to thank too professors Paul Standish, Ramón del Castillo, and Stefano Oliverio, since this article is also a result of our ongoing conversations. My collaboration with them through these past years have represented a tremendous amount of inspiration and motivation to keep developing my own research.

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2911-5947>

Correspondence: Bianca Thoilliez, Autonomous University of Madrid, Facultad de Formación de Profesorado y Educación. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Campus de Cantoblanco. Calle Francisco Tomás y Valiente, 3, 28049, Madrid, Spain.

Email: bianca.thoilliez@uam.es

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