ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

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The Challenge of Pragmatism for Constructivism:
Some Perspectives in the Programme of Cologne Constructivism

STEFAN NEUBERT AND KERSTEN REICH
University of Cologne

In this paper[1] we wish to give a short introduction to the programme of interactive constructivism, an approach founded by Kersten Reich and under further development at the University of Cologne.[2] This introduction will be combined with a discussion about the importance of pragmatism as a source of a socially oriented constructivism. For the Cologne programme, especially the philosophy of John Dewey has been very helpful in this respect.[3] We will try to show this relation in two main steps. In the first part we will venture to reconsider Dewey's concept of experience from the standpoint of interactive constructivism. In the second part we will do the same with Dewey's concept of communication. Although we will not be able to explicate all the diverse and complex theoretical perspectives contained in both approaches, we will at least try to give you an impression of how pragmatism and constructivism might mutually enrich each other from our point of view.

Please allow us to use a somewhat unconventional form of talk for this purpose. We will introduce in both parts the role of a hypothetical Dewey who discusses and exchanges ideas with us. Contrary to the way that Richard Rorty sometimes resorts to a hypothetical Dewey in his writings, we will use this figure to give Dewey the chance to quote from his own works in order to pose questions to us and criticize our views. Nevertheless, we are aware of the potential traps that such a procedure implies, and it's up to the reader to criticize our ways of selection and omission.[4]

Part I: Dewey's Concept of "Experience" Reconsidered

Hypothetical Dewey: I find it very interesting to learn that the Cologne programme of interactive constructivism regards pragmatism—and especially my philoso-

phy—as a challenge for its own project. I'm eager to see how you try to reinvent or even appropriate my positions, and I ask the readers to watch carefully for how this accords with their understanding of pragmatism.

    Constructivists: So this might also be an exercise for them to look out for their own hypothetical Dewey.

    Hypothetical Dewey: Well, then let us begin. What connections do you see between both approaches? In what sense can constructivists today profit from my pragmatism in devising and further developing their theoretical approach? And do you think that pragmatism can—vice versa—also profit from your brand of constructivism?

    Constructivists: You pose a number of questions, and we will try to answer them step by step in the course of our discussion. Why do we think that Dewey's philosophy is a challenge for present-day constructivists? Since Dewey's philosophy is such a rich and multilayered approach with so many constructive insights and ideas, there could be many different answers to this question. Maybe the first thing that comes to mind is Dewey's philosophical core concept—"experience." From the perspective of interactive constructivism, Dewey's notion of experience is very instructive and bears a number of important implications for constructivism. One way of highlighting these implications is by contrasting Dewey's idea of experience with the more conventional understanding of the term established by the philosophical tradition of (British) empiricism.[5] The traditional concept of "experience" had been characterized by a notion of passive sense reception, the accumulation of isolated sense impressions from the past that were thought to "copy" information about the outside world. For Dewey, human experience is a lived presence that builds on the past and stretches into the future. It is a world of action, a continuum of doings and undergoings wherein meanings are socially co-constructed by those who participate in interactions with a natural and cultural environment. The constructivism that, to our mind, is implied in his philosophy of experience is grounded in culture[6] or "the Social" as "the Inclusive Philosophical Idea," as he himself once put it (LW3, 41–54). Interactive constructivism, likewise, puts strong emphasis on the dimension of social interactions in cultural contexts as the basis of our reality constructions. If constructivists in general claim that realities are constructed by observers, interactive constructivism adds the qualification that these observers are always at the same time agents and participants in cultural practices, routines, and institutions as well. Observing begins and ends in life-worldly contexts—i.e., what Dewey calls "life-experience" in all its ambiguities, uncertainties, contradictions, and fuzzy varieties. Here we are involved as agents that act in more or less consciously reflected ways on the basis of pre-established habits that largely grant the viability of our daily practices. And as agents we are always participants, too, since it is only by communication and shared activities that acting becomes meaningful and endowed with performative agency. The interconnection of our roles as observers, agents, and participants represents one primary circle in interactive constructivism's account of the cultural

construction of realities. Dewey's concept of experience as the starting point and *telos* of all philosophical reflection provides very productive grounds for seeing these three roles in their irreducible interdependency and complex combinations. The constructivist distinction of the three roles[7] resonates well with his overall philosophical approach, even if Dewey himself did not use these three terms as consistently as interactive constructivism does today.

Hypothetical Dewey: But from the impression that I got from radical constructivism, this approach falls back behind the cultural understanding of experience established in the pragmatic tradition and resorts to a mere subjectivism of knowledge with too little reference to action.

Constructivists: We share this critical view of one-sided and subjectivist forms of constructivism and we think that it is precisely this point at which pragmatism poses an important challenge.

Hypothetical Dewey: Please explain a little bit more in detail what you mean when you suggest an affinity between the distinction of the three roles you mentioned and my concept of experience. As you probably know, I distinguished (in "Experience and Nature") between "primary" and "secondary experience." I wrote, e.g.: "The consideration of method may suitably begin with the contrast between gross, macroscopic, crude subject-matters in primary experience and the refined, derived objects of reflection." I drew attention "to the relationship between the objects of primary and of secondary or reflective experience. That the subject-matter of primary experience sets the problems and furnishes the first data of the reflection which constructs the secondary objects is evident; it is also obvious that test and verification of the latter is secured only by return to things of crude or macroscopic experience." And as to the role that the objects of reflection play, I observed that they "*explain* the primary objects, they enable us to grasp them with *understanding*" by defining or laying out "a path by which return to experienced things is of such a sort that the meaning, the significant content, of what is experienced gains an enriched and expanded force because of the path or method by which it was reached." The experienced qualities thus "cease to be isolated details; they get the meaning contained in a whole system of related objects" (LW1, 15–16). Could you please specify how your distinction between the roles of observers, participants, and agents applies to these two levels or phases of experience?

Constructivists: Well, first of all, interactive constructivism claims that we are always already observers, participants, and agents even *before* we begin to reflect upon these roles—i.e., on the level of primary experience.[8] And *when* we begin to reflect—i.e., on the secondary level—it is most important for interactive constructivism not to forget that our observations are not something "pure" in the sense of an isolated or detached faculty of observation—i.e., the "spectator" position of many traditional copy theories of knowledge that Dewey already aptly criticized (see LW4, 19). Observations are always imbedded in the cultural contexts (see "Context and Thought," LW6, 3ff.) in which we act (observation

and knowing themselves being a form of action). And they depend on our participation in communities of interpretation. What Dewey in the above quote calls "explanation" or "understanding"—a constructed outcome of inquiry—always presupposes such participation. We think that pragmatists and constructivists agree on this point. If, for Dewey, the ultimate end of such reflection is an increment of meaning in experience for which observation (inquiry) constructs a "path," this pretty well points to what in interactive constructivism is called "cultural viability." Such viability is always a solution constructed by an interpretive community. It expresses a symbolic order—a "whole system of related objects" that coordinates a multitude of perspectives. For interactive constructivism, viability in this sense always implies cultural constructions that refer to action and experience. What seems interesting for us is the question of the relation of viability, construction, and experience. In this connection, the term "primary experience" that Dewey uses seems to suggest that beneath our constructions there is also something "given," something free from our own constructed viabilities, something immediately "there."

Hypothetical Dewey: I think what is "given" as a precondition of all our constructions is, for one thing, precisely that which has already been mentioned—namely, culture as already constructed by others. I observed that "life-experience . . . is already overlaid and saturated with the products of the reflection of past generations and by-gone ages. It is filled with interpretations, classifications, due to sophisticated thought, which have become incorporated into what seems to be fresh naive empirical material. It would take more wisdom than is possessed by the wisest historic scholar to track all of these absorbed borrowings to their original sources. . . . These incorporated results of past reflection, welded into the genuine materials of first-hand experience, may become organs of enrichment if they are detected and reflected upon. If they are not detected, they often obfuscate and distort" (LW1, 40).[9]

Constructivists: Obviously we do not construct all cultural meanings ourselves. Interactive constructivism also puts emphasis on the limits of our observations, actions, and participations. Culture has us before we have it. Inquiry into the potential meanings of our experiences is an endless task—too much for any single observer or community. This is why, in interactive constructivism, we further distinguish between the position of self- and distant-observers. As self-observers, we observe ourselves and others *from within* the practices and interpretive communities in which we directly participate. As distant-observers, we observe others in their practices and interpretive communities *from outside,* be it by temporal or spatial detachment or from the distance of reflection. However, this distinction should not be misunderstood as a separation. Transitions are fluid. As distant-observers we are always at the same time self-observers within our own context of observation, while as self-observers we may at any moment try to imaginatively project ourselves into the position of a distant-observer who looks and reflects from outside. For interactive constructivism, the diversity of cultural

contexts and the complexity of possible viable constructions characteristic of our (post)modern condition demand an ironical position of self-criticism that always reckons with the ambiguities, perplexities, and possible contradictions implied in this distinction.[10]

Hypothetical Dewey: I had much to say about philosophy as cultural criticism and self-criticism that comes close to the distinction you propose. For example, I argued: "An empirical philosophy is in any case a kind of intellectual disrobing. We cannot permanently divest ourselves of the intellectual habits we take on and wear when we assimilate the culture of our own time and place. But intelligent furthering of culture demands that we take some of them off, that we inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us" (LW1, 40). Does not your distinction between the positions we take as self- and distant-observers accord well with this quote? Whether or not you call this distinction "postmodern" seems to me a question of secondary import.

Constructivists: Well, what the qualifier "postmodern" indicates for us, among other things, is the recognition that the necessary distinction between self- and distant-observer positions applies to a specific cultural and historical situation. To many contemporary observers, this situation is characterized by a radical and irreducible diversity of discourses that allows for no ultimate or best observer position. Therefore, there is no level of ultimate reality that could be exempt from the application of the proposed distinction.

Hypothetical Dewey: But for me, there is yet another sense of something "given" in immediate or primary experience. I indicated this "given" when I used such terms as "existences" or "events." I would agree with you that this "given" is not and cannot be ultimately captured in a last or best observer's perspective. But it is there, independently of our constructions. We can only point to it, and in pointing to it we recognize that there is a world beyond our constructions. I maintained that "in every event there is something obdurate, self-sufficient, wholly immediate, neither a relation nor an element in a relational whole, but terminal and exclusive." I insisted on the "irreducible, infinitely plural, undefinable and indescribable qualities which a thing must *have* in order to be, and in order to be capable of becoming the subject of relations and a theme of discourse." But such "immediacy of existence is ineffable." This ineffability "expresses the fact that of direct existence it is futile to say anything to one's self and impossible to say anything to another. Discourse can but intimate connections which if followed out may lead one to *have* an existence. Things in their immediacy are unknown and unknowable, not because they are remote or behind some impenetrable veil of sensations or ideas, but because knowledge has no concern with them. For knowledge is a memorandum of conditions of their appearance, concerned, that is, with sequences, coexistences, relations. Immediate things may be *pointed to* by words, but not described or defined. Description when it occurs is but a part of a circuitous method of pointing or denoting; index to a starting point and road which if taken may lead to a direct and ineffable presence" (LW1, 74–75).

Constructivists: Interactive constructivism also recognizes that there is "a world beyond our constructions," as you call it. Indeed, not to do so would lead constructivism into a solipsist dead end. In this connection, we use the distinction between *reality* (as constructed) and *the real* (as an event).[11] Our constructions of reality can never be completely draughtproofed against experiences that interactive constructivism calls *the intrusions of the real.* In this view, "the real" represents a kind of border concept, the designation of a limit. Real events enter experience as a tear, a gap or discontinuity, a lack of sense and meaning. We use the term "real" to denote the contingency of the not yet symbolically registered or imaginatively expected that lurks behind any construction of reality. Taking us by surprise, real events do not "fit" into our so far constructed realities. They cannot be easily integrated and transformed into elements of a culturally viable understanding. They astonish us: there is something that could not be foreseen, something alien, strange, incomprehensible. To the degree to which we are open to expand our experiences and to learn from the real in our lives, such events may move us to change the horizons of our reality constructions. Therefore, it is important for us to respect the limits of the real.

Hypothetical Dewey: The way you describe the relation between reality and the real reminds me of my own account of the stable and the precarious phases of existence. For me, the world, or what I called "nature," is characterized "by a constant mixture of the precarious and the stable. This mixture gives poignancy to existence" (LW4, 194). If I may connect my terminology with the one you employ, I would think that "the stable" in my sense is what allows for and is in turn reinforced by what you call "our constructions of reality" (which always express some stability of order), while "the precarious" stands for the "sting of the real," the remaining uncertainty and indeterminateness that gives us a start and rouses us from complacency. Or in my words: "If existence were either completely necessary or completely contingent, there would be neither comedy nor tragedy in life, nor need of the will to live. . . . Any philosophy that in its quest for certainty ignores the reality of the uncertain in the ongoing processes of nature denies the conditions out of which it arises. The attempt to include all that is doubtful within the fixed grasp of that which is theoretically certain is committed to insincerity and evasion, and in consequence will have the stigmata of internal contradiction" (LW4, 194–95).[12] To "respect the limits of the real," as you call it, to acknowledge uncertainty, indeterminacy, precariousness, incompleteness, vagueness, or whatever term we may prefer for that which delimits our constructions, is after all one central message of my philosophical experimentalism.

Constructivists: Yes, and this is one more reason why this philosophy is so attractive for the Cologne programme of constructivism. But as we said before, we use the term "the real" strictly as a kind of "border concept." Interactive constructivists reject any attempt to devise an ontology or metaphysics of the real. We speak of the real in the sense of a void signifier that denotes a limit of our constructive capacities as observers. For interactive constructivism, there is

no overall perspective, no best or final observer as to the real. That is to say, we cannot know what the real *really is* without incorporating and assimilating it into our (symbolic and imaginative) constructions of reality. The intrusions of the real that we encounter in our lives expose the gaps, the inner fissures in the texture of our realities. Accordingly, they are as much expressions of our cultural resources as are our re/de/constructions of reality. What can (and cannot) enter our experience and observation as a real event may therefore differ quite considerably from culture to culture, from person to person, and even from situation to situation.

In other words, "the real" designates but a constructed perspective that we use to remind us that there is a world independent of our constructions. Our relative openness to the real is a question of our being sensitive and vulnerable to the world in which we live. The intrusions of the real are often described as events of confusing, dumbfounding, perplexing loss, lack, or failure—witnessing the unexpected death of someone we loved or feeling a sudden pain in our body without having any explanation. What these examples highlight is the dramatic extent to which real events may take us unawares and render us speechless. But the beauty of a landscape that seizes the spectator or the sublime feeling that captures one in the presence of a work of art are quite as much examples of our being open to the "limits of the real."

Hypothetical Dewey: "If existence in its immediacies could speak it would proclaim: 'I may *have* relatives but *I* am not related.' In aesthetic objects, that is in all immediately enjoyed and suffered things, in things directly possessed, they thus speak for themselves" (LW1, 75–76). What would *the real,* in your constructivist understanding of that term, proclaim if it could speak?

Constructivists: The hypothetical remark that Dewey resorts to indicates, indeed, the limits of constructions. But in saying so we have already left the real for the symbolic. The decisive point for interactive constructivism is that *the real* does not speak to us at all. *We* speak about the real and transform it into symbolic (and, as we will discuss later, imagined) reality. In this sense, Wittgenstein is more consequent than Dewey when he states that "whereof we cannot speak, thereof we should remain silent." Dewey, in his reflections on "nature" and "existence," seems to seek something more "positive" than a void signifier—an existential basis, even if it be ineffable and can only be pointed to. He seems to hold on to a residual imagination that the real *as such* has its own articulation, and that this articulation might be captured in the symbolic.[13] But his ideas about contingency, the "precarious" and "uncertain" dimensions of experience, his notion of "problematic situations" as indispensable starting points for new and constructive learning experiences, in many respects come very close to our constructivist concept of real events.[14] Therefore, maybe this difference should not be over-emphasized, because these are in part only two different ways of saying very much the same thing. For after all, both versions point to real events as "the other" of language, discourse, culture, and so forth. But there remains a difference that for us seems to concern the status of "realism" in both approaches. What do you think?

Hypothetical Dewey: To my mind, we need a pragmatic and constructive form of realism because it saves us from a constructivism build on quicksand. After all, our constructions must be anchored somehow in experience. "Without a basis in qualitative events, the characteristic subject-matter of knowledge would be algebraic ghosts, relations that do not relate. To dispose of things in which relations terminate by calling them elements, is to discourse within a relational and logical scheme. Only if elements are more than just elements in a whole, only if they have something qualitatively their own, can a relational system be prevented from complete collapse" (LW1, 75). I called this basis "existence" or "nature," and one may certainly dispute about the name it should be given. But does not your concept of "the real" throw the baby out with the bathwater and bereave us from the ground on which we may construct? I'm not quite sure whether I yet completely understand the way you use that concept.

Constructivists: Let us try to explain it the following way. With our senses we wander through realities, which are forever offering us the appearance of "real events." Most of the time we coordinate these offers with the symbolic and the imaginative, but often we also encounter gaps and contradictions, which suddenly stand up against the previous symbolic or imaginative. Then we are surprised at ourselves, baffled by the things we are doing, but perhaps also feeling desperate about our inability to comply with the expected symbolic rules or to fulfill the imagined wishes. We agree with Dewey that there is no real outside of experience. Therefore we always have to take into account the world of action as the context in which we observe and participate. But for us there is no way to an unrelated real except through a void signifier that only relates us with our symbolic or imaginative perspectives.

Hypothetical Dewey: But does not your version of constructivism ultimately end up with the displacement of "experience" by "language" that neopragmatists like Rorty and Fish propose?[15]

Constructivists: Well, the concept of the real seems to us to provide one important possibility to resolve the dispute within pragmatism for or against the use of the concept of experience in light of the pragmatic linguistic turn. Seen from a symbolic perspective alone, the philosophy after Wittgenstein as reconstructed by Rorty—drawing on the works of Putnam, Davidson, or Brandom, for example—has taken the unavoidable linguistic turn that has posted language into a predominant position.[16] From this point of view, experience is always already mediated through language. It has completely lost the existential grounding that Dewey tried to establish. But even this linguistic discourse finds its surprising supplement in Derrida's différance, which denotes the reappearance of displacement and omission even within the symbolic and points beyond. Language itself is important but limited.[17] If we call this limit the real, then what we get is a void signifier that, however, gives us the chance to relativize the new dominance of language. Although experience always presupposes language in our symbolic and discursive undertakings, this is not to say, on the other hand, that it is completely

exhausted or swallowed up in language. It appears in our imaginations as desire or wishes not yet refined through language or reflection. And it always implies the possibility that we encounter something real that we can linguistically recon-struct only after the event. If we concede this reconstructed sense of Deweyan experience—and we think this is not too far from his intentions—the dispute in pragmatism could be better understood and given a different turn even if it may not completely be resolved. This is a task of communication that pragmatists and constructivists alike should recognize.

Hypothetical Dewey: I insist: "the question at issue is what the real is. If natural existence is qualitatively individualized or genuinely plural, as well as repetitious, and if things have both temporal quality and recurrence or uniformity, then the more realistic knowledge is, the more fully it will reflect and exemplify these traits" (LW1, 127). Wouldn't you agree that your constructivist notion of the real, upon consequent reflection, commits you to a version of "pluralist realism" like the one envisioned by me to support your constructivist insights? How can you use the real as a primary category—a name for the inescapable limits of our "reality constructions," if I take you correctly—without being, in ultimate con-sequence, yourself some kind of realist? Shouldn't you better call your approach "constructivist realism," then, or maybe "interactive-constructivist realism," if you prefer that designation?

Constructivists: The real as a phenomenon is a very open-ended construct. Here, it is entirely up to the observer in his or her cultural contexts of participa-tion and acting, what is experienced as real. That can then be a symbolic effect, for example. After all, symbolic systems also exist materially. They return as reality in their use by humans. But also imagined, mental symbolic systems can appear as authoritative reality, and likewise imaginations that are taken for real. Symbolically, I may swear that my marriage will last, I can imaginatively trust that it will, but only future real events will show if it does. People who continually reject the real in order to put an emphasis on the symbolic may appear to others as rationalizing; people who reject it in order to primarily retain for themselves the imaginative may appear as daydreamers or deranged; but people who tend to excessively exhaust the real appear as fatalists. Here it is important for us to see through the tactics of changing observer perspectives between the symbolic, the imaginative, and real events. Therefore we think that it is decisive to establish a constructivist observer theory to avoid the traps of playing language off against experience. After all, only observers' perspectives can help us to situate ourselves as observers in our participations and actions in the world. The real warns us not to overestimate ourselves. In consequence we avoid speaking of realism in order to prevent misunderstandings. The term "realism" is connected either to the imagination of a form of copy theory of knowledge or to a view that is at some point in the hope of an approach to reality as it "is"—given—without sufficient regard to observer positions.

Part II: Dewey's Concept of "Communication" Reconsidered

Constructivists: Let's move on now to the theory of communication. We think that Dewey's concept of communication stands in intimate connection with his theory of culture. He regards the development of communication in the way of an increasing and enriched interaction and participation of humans as an important historical process that is necessary for democracy.[18]

Hypothetical Dewey: Yes, communication, for one thing, is an important instrument of development: "Modern methods of communication and transportation have made the market for goods as large as the civilized world. Education is constantly awakening new wants. The facilities for communication, for travel, and for education are constantly leading one part of the world to imitate the standards or fashions set by other parts. We have, therefore, a social standard for valuation which is constantly extending in area and in intensity" (MW5, 455). Furthermore, communication has established presuppositions for additional development and growth: "Gradually, however, free speech, freedom of communication and intercourse, of public assemblies, liberty of the press and circulation of ideas, freedom of religious and intellectual conviction (commonly called freedom of conscience), of worship, and to some extent the right to education, to spiritual nurture, have been achieved" (MW5, 399).[19]

Constructivists: The comprehensive understanding of communication as both means and presupposition of democratic development and growth also finds expression in the affinity of certain terms, all of which are related to the common.

Hypothetical Dewey: That's right. "Society not only continues to exist by transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common" (MW9, 7). And even more precisely: "Free communication on one side signifies power to receive and to participate in values on the other side. The great problem of society is to combine a maximum of different values, achieved by giving free play to individual taste and capacity, with a minimum of friction and conflict" (LW8, 102). The aim of communication is to enhance participation: "Interactions, transactions, occur de facto and the results of interdependence follow. But participation in activities and sharing in results are additive concerns. They demand communication as a prerequisite" (LW2, 330).

Constructivists: If we compare this understanding of communication with interactive constructivism, there are different issues that come to mind with regard to the challenges between pragmatism and constructivism. We wish to discuss four selected issues here. First, we will consider communication as part of lived experience. Second, we will take a closer look at communication as interaction. Third, we will examine some aspects of the relation of communication and de-

mocracy. And fourth, we will close with considering individual and social growth through communication.

(1) Communication as Part of Lived Experience

    Constructivists: For Dewey, communication is a necessary component of lived experience.[20] Communication and experience are closely tied together. Communication not only serves for the development of society, but also gives clues as to how this development can proceed in a most democratic way.[21] The question of how far democracy can be developed is a question of the actual, engaged, and practical realization of a generous communication between all members of a community and society.[22] Communication belongs to the basic values of a democracy, like friendship, love, pity, sympathy, cooperation, justice, rights, or duties (see MW5, 439). And communication is an essential value because only through it can the "participation in meanings and goods" necessary for democracy be achieved (see LW10, 249). The freedom of communication is as crucial for democracy as for science (see LW13, 135). This presupposes communicative relationships that are entertained voluntarily, but on the other hand also involve common values that can be legitimated and experienced.[23]

    Hypothetical Dewey: Therefore we need a joint interest, a common interest, "so that one is eager to give and the other to take" (MW9, 225–26).[24] Communication and experience cannot be separated: "Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of that interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication" (LW10, 28).

    Constructivists: From the perspective of interactive constructivism, we share Dewey's basic understanding of communication. Favoring personal freedom, which is expressed in individual achievements and growth, has become an opportunity for many people in the past as well as in the present to gain as far-reaching insights as possible. Their effort is rewarded particularly if there are projects, honored work and social acknowledgment for people interacting. This is the case if personal freedom can be reached through communication with others in view of mutual growth and social progress. But we also have to realize that in modern and postmodern societies increase in freedom often means decrease in solidarity, especially for the socially disadvantaged.[25] Dewey criticized this tendency already in his time, but nevertheless he was hoping for more change in the future than has actually been achieved. Here, pragmatism has a clear, optimistic, yet not unrealistic worldview, and it seems to us that this should also form a necessary basis for constructivism.[26] But we always have to inquire and assess anew whether the orientation toward resources and solutions combines optimistic visions with realistic and critical analyses of actual conditions of living together. This also implies taking structural problems into account that delimit or hamper our opportunities of acting and communicating.

(2) Communication as Interaction

Constructivists: Now let's take a closer look at what communication means in the concrete.

Hypothetical Dewey: "Discussion is communication, and it is by communication that ideas are shared and become a common possession" (LW14, 89).

Constructivists: But communication is also more than discussion, it always implies a context of interaction.

Hypothetical Dewey: Well, listen to my classical explanation: "A requests B to bring him something, to which A points, say a flower. There is an original mechanism by which B may react to A's movement in pointing. But natively such a reaction is to the movement, not to the pointing, not to the object pointed out. But B learns that the movement is a pointing; he responds to it not in itself, but as an index of something else. His response is transferred from A's direct movement to the object to which A points. Thus he does not merely execute the natural acts of looking or grasping which the movement might instigate on its own account. The motion of A attracts his gaze to the thing pointed to; then, instead of just transferring his response from A's movement to the native reaction he might make to the thing as stimulus, he responds in a way which is a function of A's relationship, actual and potential, to the thing. The characteristic thing about B's understanding of A's movement and sounds is that he responds to the thing from the standpoint of A. He perceives the thing as it may function in A's experience, instead of just ego-centrically. Similarly, A in making the request conceives the thing not only in its direct relationship to himself, but as a thing capable of being grasped and handled by B. He sees the thing as it may function in B's experience. Such is the essence and import of communication, signs and meaning. Something is literally made common in at least two different centres of behavior. To understand is to anticipate together, it is to make a cross-reference which, when acted upon, brings about a partaking in a common, inclusive, undertaking" (LW1, 140–41).

Constructivists: Dewey here draws on Mead (1934), especially the theory later called symbolic interaction. Mead's work has been very influential, among other things, for Jürgen Habermas' development of the theory of communicative action.[27] In a different way than Dewey, Habermas tries to consider the possibilities of delimiting relations of domination with regard to democratic communication. In this connection, interactive constructivism takes a position that partly picks up the threads of Mead and Habermas[28] and combines them with a critical reconsideration of Dewey's approach. In Mead, the dimension of interaction between self and others finds a path-breaking elaboration. Figure 1 summarizes the core points:
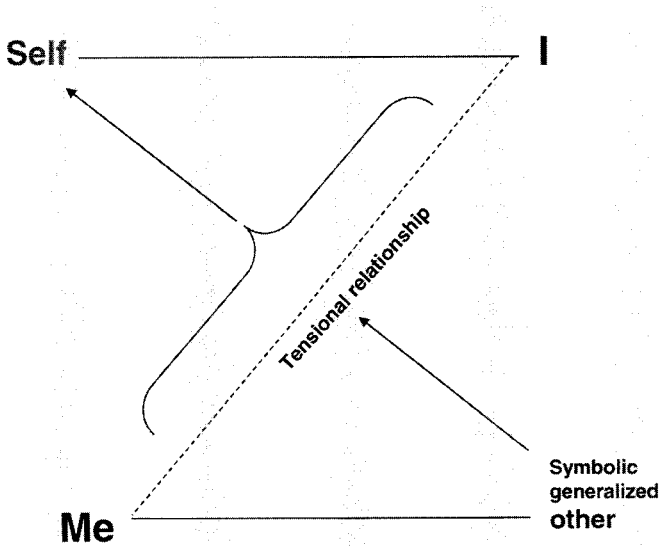
Figure 1. Interaction in Mead.

The position of the "I" refers to what we feel as subjects, what we perceive *for ourselves* from a position in which we can be spontaneous, creative, selfish, egoistic. But our culture does not allow us to remain this way. It brings us together *with others*. Through behavioral feedback—or what Mead calls "taking the role of the other"—we learn bit by bit what is proper in this culture and what is considered unacceptable. All these experiences produce within us the position of the "me." Thus, there is a tensional relationship between the poles of "I" and "me." A self, an identity is integrated, although we have to concede that over the years also this self undergoes changes. In what ways and how much it changes is entirely dependent on the balancing of the "I" and "me" parts in our life.[29]

Figure 1 expresses the fact that for Mead there can be no direct access from one self to another, albeit a certain pressure of the other upon the self, which is transmitted via the tensional relationship between "I" and "me." Communication as interaction between subjects only occurs via this inner tensional relationship. But Mead certainly places the emphasis on the other. The socialized pressure on the self occurs solely through the generalization of the behavior of others, and through the socialized pressure to conform—which appears to be crucial for finding one's role and shaping one's identity in a culture. As a pragmatist, Mead is aware of the fact that a person living in modern times has to undergo some extent of behavioral conformism if she or he is going to be socialized. In this way, the multitude of possibilities and ideas of the "I" are curbed and disciplined via the internalized looks of third persons in the "me." When we come into this world as children we must make claims on all the possibilities from the position of our

"I," but all educators in the world will predominantly rely on the development of a "me" in us in order to sneak into this important part of the self with their norms, values and meanings. Thereby they take part in shaping the self. This procedure is commonly called *socialization* and stands for the entrance of the subject into the symbolic systems of culture.[30]

We need symbolic systems because they give us the necessary orientation and control in our culture and make communication possible. However, the cultural history of the symbolic shows that the possession of sufficient symbolic certainties or an ultimately stable foundation for all observers, participants and agents is impossible. Symbolic systems themselves are contingent and undergo changes. Seen in a larger perspective, they only achieve particular views. They emerge in the process of civilization because they help us as observers in marking the opportunities and boundaries of our intentional standpoints. Symbolic communication is essential for every culture, but it is not the only dimension or access to communicating with others.

Hypothetical Dewey: You think of imagination?

Constructivists: Yes, the imaginative is another way of access. Here interactive constructivism has developed a comprehensive theory of mirror-experiences (*Spiegelungen*) in interaction with others. It is the imaginative desire of the other in mutual mirrorings that allows for a wealth of lively and multifaceted relationships. This opens new perspectives on intersubjectivity. Let's look at Figure 2:
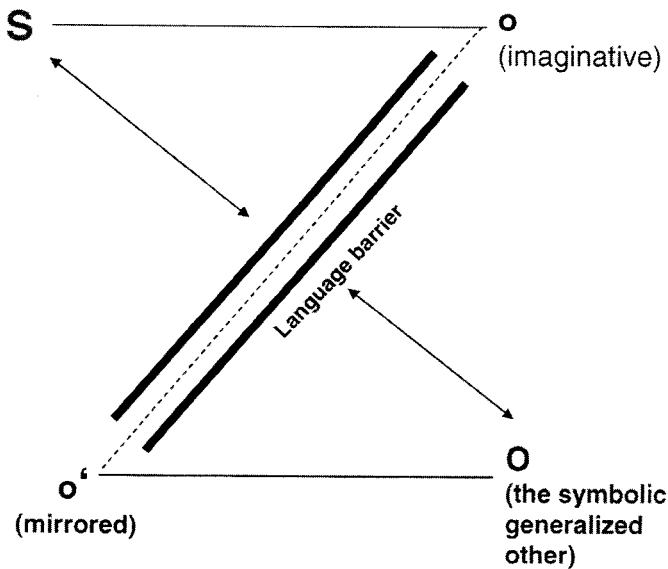

Figure 2. Imaginative Interaction in Interactive Constructivism.

We will briefly give an example for this concept of interaction: A couple in love thinks that the other can understand everything, that they know how to interpret every gesture and read every wish from one another's lips. The imaginative seems like a mutual river that is rejoiced together. But is there not always also some doubt as to how long such joy may last? The lovers may indulge in navigating the mutual river. But ultimately they will have to learn that they cannot take the other prisoner in their own imaginative wishes and mirror cabinets. The pleasure will last only temporarily. If the lover counts on what love is or could be, then she or he soon begins to cry out for symbolic clarities: faithfulness, marriage, renouncement of further possibilities, work on everyday realities, the first annoyances. In brief: symbolic demands, expectations and constraints move in to embed the imaginative river according to cultural contexts, social conventions, and individual expectations. Or, to say it quoting from Rilke: "Look at these lovers, tormented by love, when first they begin confessing, how soon they lie!"

The "imaginative" stands for those impulses and images that we initially only experience and feel, but whose tracks are still so open that we end up being closer to the emotions than to the intellect, closer to intuition than to rationality, and closer to experience than to a symbolic account of experiences. In imaginative mirror-experiences, there are wishes and desires not yet refined or transformed by symbolic work.

Hypothetical Dewey: I very well understand what you mean. Primary experience is never exhausted or swallowed up in reflective experience. This is why I thought that every genuine communication is like art (see MW9, 9).[31] If I take you correctly, you wish to suggest that this imaginative dimension of communication is characteristic not only of such romantic situations like the one you described so nicely, but is a potential (though sometimes hidden) trait of each and every communication between human beings.[32] What do you think, for example, of the following situation that I once described in my book "Art as Experience": "Two men meet; one is the applicant for a position, while the other has the disposition of the matter in his hands. The interview may be mechanical, consisting of set questions, the replies to which perfunctorily settle the matter. There is no experience in which the two men meet, nothing that is not a repetition, by way of acceptance or dismissal, of something which has happened a score of times. The situation is disposed of as if it were an exercise in bookkeeping. But an interplay may take place in which a new experience develops. Where should we look for an account of such an experience? Not to ledger-entries nor yet to a treatise on economics or sociology or personnel-psychology, but to drama or fiction. Its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience. The experience is of material fraught with suspense and moving toward its own consummation through a connected series of varied incidents. The primary emotions on the part of the applicant may be at the beginning hope or despair, and elation or disappointment at the close. These emotions qualify the experience as a unity. But as the interview proceeds,

secondary emotions are evolved as variations of the primary underlying one. It is even possible for each attitude and gesture, each sentence, almost every word, to produce more than a fluctuation in the intensity of the basic emotion; to produce, that is, a change of shade and tint in its quality. The employer sees by means of his own emotional reactions the character of the one applying. He projects him imaginatively into the work to be done and judges his fitness by the way in which the elements of the scene assemble and either clash or fit together. The presence and behavior of the applicant either harmonize with his own attitudes and desires or they conflict and jar. Such factors as these, inherently esthetic in quality, are the forces that carry the varied elements of the interview to a decisive issue. They enter into the settlement of every situation, whatever its dominant nature, in which there are uncertainty and suspense" (LW10, 49–50).

Constructivists: This is a very good example of how the symbolic and the imaginative are related in communication. What happens when we take a closer look at this relation? You can feel a difference between the gestures, sentences and symbolic statements, the multitude of words and linguistic utterances on the one hand and internal moods, impulses, wishes, and desires on the other. Sometimes it's difficult for us to tell whether what affects us comes from inside or outside. Then we maybe ask ourselves: "Why do I feel this or that way in this moment?" But already thinking about it changes the emotion, which subsequently becomes refined and rationalized. If we try to symbolically express our imaginations, we may associate words like the following: visionary freedom, imaginative power, fantasy, emotions, intuition, qualitative experience, magic, mood, atmosphere, images.

In interactive constructivism, the imaginative and the symbolic are two observer perspectives on communication that we may take. While we can distinguish between these two perspectives it's important not to divide them too far. For example, as learners, we cannot entirely learn on the symbolic level and leave our imaginations completely aside. Neither can we remain entirely on the imaginative level, since we need the symbolic to curb and discipline our dreams and impulses. The symbolic always introduces a reality principle on which we must rely in our culture.

Hypothetical Dewey: My example illustrates, I think, that experience always implies a kind of "reality principle," as you call it, because otherwise the two participants of the situation could not interact rationally at all. But I also insist that this level of rationality has its emotional or imaginative counterpart.

Constructivists: As constructivists, we pay particular attention to this imaginative dimension of all communication. In addition to pragmatist communication theories like the ones developed by Mead and Dewey, we here also draw on other approaches within the linguistic turn. Especially Jacques Lacan has launched a tradition of thinking about communication that opens a different focus on the symbolic and imaginative. For him, there is a language barrier between the subject and the other.[33] In symbolic interaction between self and other, we

cannot directly capture the imaginative. There remains something unspoken in every linguistic exchange, because in the imaginative we are speechless. Let us take a further look at figure 2.

One subject stands in a communicative relationship to another. Yet—and this is the crucial difference from previous models—this subject has no direct access to the other via symbols or language. This passage is barred by a language barrier. Even that partner in communication who is closest to me in my life remains in this sense a stranger: she has her own imaginative, and we can only discuss our imaginations in the symbolic. We cannot develop a direct linguistic access to the imagined other, which we here call small o. We have intuitions, sympathies or antipathies, moods and feelings that point to this observer dimension. However, if we try to communicate about these intuitions and such with each other, we must unavoidably change our perspective. The imaginative in all its particularity first needs to be symbolically articulated and refined in order that we may achieve understanding.

The language barrier can be described from two perspectives. On the inner side of this barrier, the imaginative is individual, singular, unknown to one another, and even largely unconscious to ourselves. On the outer side of the language barrier, the imaginative is expressed in a process of symbolic articulation and thereby transformed. The context of this transformation is experience in culture where we construct symbolic commonalities, driven by imaginations, that then circulate among and within us and further on develop or delimit our imaginative horizons. This is how the imaginative merges with the symbolic.

Instead of a direct symbolic access to the other (the symbolic generalized other), figure 2 suggests that communication occurs via an imaginative axis (o to o'). The subject (S) needs her or his imagination of the other in the encounter as it is subjectively experienced and intuitively constructed. This involves a process of mediating one's own desire (o) through the mirrored effects of imagination with the other (o'). The positions o and o' are partly comparable to those of "I" and "me." What has been laid out for symbolic interaction above, reappears here for the imaginative, too. Let us remember once again the image of the lovers. From the perspective of the imaginative, they develop an idealized image of their own desires (o) as well as of the felt expectations towards the other (o'), but only in their actions will the lovers experience real effects in the symbolic encounter with the other. These effects may either confirm or disappoint their imaginations. Here we need to think of the symbolic and the imaginative as being part of an ongoing tensional relationship. This tension may be illustrated in a recourse to Mead. Without ever wanting to exclude emotions and sensations, Mead already saw the "I" as that part which situates the self in the world as relatively spontaneous and open, as creative and event-oriented. Our theory of imaginative mirror-experiences gives an extended background to this position. It links the "I" to an imaginative desire (o). But this "I" in the position of o would remain in hallucinations and unrealistic dreams if it could not build on the tensional relationship through which

it is mirrored by others. From childhood on we learn through the look of the other, e.g., as represented by mother and father, to delimit our own imaginative desires through these related mirror-experiences. The process of identity involves the presence of a self, which depends on the imaginative process of being mirrored by others.

Hypothetical Dewey: I agree with the importance that you attach to imagination. But does not your emphasis on the inner side of "mirror-experiences" resound with a Freudian concept of the unconscious that involves us in speculations and prevents us from taking sufficiently into account the real world of action?

Constructivists: The world of action has many perspectives. For us it is important here to distinguish between different observer positions. From an inner perspective on communication, the self-observer may construct a highly subjective world. But in communicating through mirrored experiences with others she or he will not be able to realize her or his merely subjective intentions but has to rely on a reality principle that includes the world of interaction and thus delimits her or his privacy. Delimitations through mirrorings are necessary for living together and communicating with each other. And culture takes pains to secure such delimitations through symbolic systems. Whenever the imaginative is articulated in the varied forms of language, the symbolic appears. Then a generalized other steps onto the scene. This is where we have Mead's position of the "me," which already implies generalizations in the discourse of others. And for all of us these symbolic generalizations in culture are very powerful contexts. As children we have almost no chance of defending ourselves against the symbolic expectations of others. Thus we tend to overestimate the symbolic and to neglect the importance of imaginative interaction. For us it seems clear that this touches on the borders of the unconscious. We think that we should always take these borders into account without necessarily being proponents of Freudian psychoanalysis. And we would suggest that pragmatists today become friends with such a reconstruction of the imaginative horizons in communication.

Hypothetical Dewey: For me, imagination is (as Shelley taught us) "the chief instrument of the good" (LW10, 350), because only "imaginative vision elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual" (LW10, 348).

Constructivists: Indeed, we think that it is a strength of Dewey's philosophy of communication that he so much appreciates the role of imagination in culture. His instrumentalism and theory of inquiry help us to find symbolic solutions and delimit unrealistic speculations, but he was never blind to the fact that imagination stretches beyond our symbolic realities. And recognizing the importance of education, he would even today emphasize the indispensability of the imaginative in all dimensions of communicating and learning, especially with regard to emotional learning.[34]

In addition to what has been said in Part I about the dispute between experience and language with regard to the symbolic and the real, the relation

between the symbolic and the imaginative can now help us again to reconsider this dispute in pragmatism. Doubting that experience should still be a core concept for pragmatism today, Rorty suggests a conceptual shift from experience to language in order to prevent foundationalism and naturalistic essentialism through the linguistic turn.[35] We partly agree with Rorty in this attempt; partly, insofar as his intention is to avoid foundationalism and naturalistic essentialism. This seems to be a crucial task for the development of pragmatism and constructivism. But this strategy must itself be seen as an observer perspective that we construct as a viable interpretation of the development and application of language games in the symbolic dimension. If we give the symbolic perspective a home in language alone and make this perspective predominant, then we get on the one side a necessary linguistic approach that on the other side cannot fully come up to the multitude of phenomena in observation, participation, and action. The imaginative, as we see it, provides a good example here. Although it can only be articulated and discussed in language, it shows at the same time also the limits of language and the language barrier. Here it is not sufficient to look on poetic vocabularies or sensitive narrations that long for the imaginative. It makes more sense, to our minds, to see the imaginative in its tensional relationships with the symbolic and the real as discussed above.

Thus we can share the objections against Rorty raised, e.g., by Shusterman (1999), who tries to remind us of the dimension of a non-discursive experience that for him resides especially in the human body. He takes this non-discursive experience from Dewey, even if he critically observes against Dewey: "He was wrong to think that an unconscious, non-discursive immediate quality was the necessary grounding guide or regulatory criterion of all our thinking, though he was right to insist that non-discursive background experience influences our conscious thought" (Shusterman 1999, 207). But the main target of Shusterman's criticism is Rorty, against whom he insists on the somatic dimension of experience. "Before burying the body, we need to assess more critically philosophy's resistance to non-discursive experience. Such resistance is based not only on arguments but on deeply entrenched biases and agendas which work, most effectively, beneath the level of conscious thought" (208). In this turn to the somatic dimension we see another observer perspective, but one must be careful not to fall back behind the linguistic turn. And this is only possible if we recognize that reflection on the limits of discursive realities is bound to the symbolic dimension. For interactive constructivism, this is itself always a symbolically constructed observer position. And we think it's wiser not to delimit our perspectives about the non-discursive to the somatical. In principle, both discursive and non-discursive experiences can only be articulated and discussed in the symbolic. This is a dimension where the linguistic turn cannot be denied. But in the symbolic we also have to be aware of the limits of symbolization. Interactive constructivism, to conclude, claims two main perspectives for reflecting on the limits of the symbolic and in this sense reaching beyond it. One perspective is the imaginative, the other is the real. Both

can only be understood as observer perspectives that we construct to overcome a narrow linguistic understanding. But we need language to discuss them. So it is possible to have non-linguistic experiences in the imaginative and the real, but to recognize them we have to change into the symbolic, and to communicate them in a full sense we have to change into language games.

(3) The Relation of Communication and Democracy

Constructivists: The discussion about the importance of the imaginative dimensions of experience and communication is closely connected to the theme of the relation between communication and democracy.[36] We agree with Dewey that democracy is not only an institutional scheme, but a quality of life in common that depends on the powers of imagination on the part of those who participate in it. It must be experienced immediately in communication as an increment of meanings, possibilities, and visions. To fully recognize the meaning of democracy presupposes, therefore, that we appreciate the values of communication.

Hypothetical Dewey: Yes, I think this point cannot be emphasized enough. "Of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful. That things should be able to pass from the plane of external pushing and pulling to that of revealing themselves to man, and thereby to themselves; and that the fruit of communication should be participation, sharing, is a wonder by the side of which transubstantiation pales. When communication occurs, all natural events are subject to reconsideration and revision; they are re-adapted to meet the requirements of conversation, whether it be public discourse or that preliminary discourse termed thinking" (LW1, 132).

Constructivists: Communication makes participation possible, but participation is also a precondition for democratic communication. Democratic participation in Dewey's sense is bound to plurality and diversity. Insofar as we find a common vision and understanding[37] of our democratic living together, we are able to realize this plurality and diversity without fighting against each other in ways that prevent social growth. Therefore, in a social sense there has to be communication in a free way that not only allows all participants to share in the possibilities of plurality and diversity, but also provides sufficient participation of all in producing the common grounds of democracy.[38]

Hypothetical Dewey: "Language is the device for communication; it is the tool through which one individual comes to share the ideas and feelings of others" (EW5, 90). But this language needs a principle of equality of partaking in intercourse: "It is no accident that the terms communication and community lie so near together; or that intercourse means equally speech and any intimate mode of associated life" (MW6, 16).[39] More concretely, this is to say that free "communication is a means of developing free mind as well as being the manifestation of such a mind, and it occurs only when there exists sharing, partaking, in common activities and enjoying their results" (LW15, 182). Or, with regard

to the relation between the instrumental and the final aspects of communication, I argued that "Communication is uniquely instrumental and uniquely final. It is instrumental as liberating us from the otherwise overwhelming pressure of events and enabling us to live in a world of things that have meaning. It is final as a sharing in the objects and arts precious to a community, a sharing whereby meanings are enhanced, deepened and solidified in the sense of communion" (LW1, 159). Or in short form: "Thus communication is not only a means to common ends but is the sense of community, communion actualized" (LW1, 160).[40] And communication "is not announcing things, even if they are said with the emphasis of great sonority. Communication is the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular; and part of the miracle it achieves is that, in being communicated, the conveyance of meaning gives body and definiteness to the experience of the one who utters as well as to that of those who listen" (LW10, 248–49).

Constructivists: Plurality and diversity are marked, for Dewey, by appreciation of differences within groups as well as between groups.[41] He saw both as crucial preconditions for the development of democracy and communication. They provide opportunities for actively engaging with conflicts and contradictions in society. This allows for experiencing other people's opinions or beliefs in wide and varied ways and replying to them with one's own arguments. Democracy is not only based on establishing consensus, but also on the perception of dissent.

Hypothetical Dewey: "To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life" (LW14, 228).

Constructivists: But Dewey also saw the dangers of making communication a tool for mere interests of commercial profits in a capitalist society.[42] Against this antidemocratic tendency he maintained the hope that democratic developments of societies would be possible in the future. His vision of democracy includes seeing difference as an enrichment and cultural resource. Difference then becomes a chance to overcome the tendency to focus on the weaknesses of individuals. It represents a challenge to see every individual with his or her resources and strengths and to develop these as extensively as possible. All differences bear further differences, which in turn again create diversity, tension, joy of life, and so forth. This stands against boredom, indifference, simple-mindedness, and so on. In this way, democratic social development may produce a wealth of new opportunities for action in accordance with the social changes at hand. Seen from a perspective of today, these democratic hopes have not been realized yet. Plurality and diversity are even increasingly turned into contradictions between, for instance, poor and rich, uneducated and educated, without and with opportunities. Without sufficient perspectives of a common social growth, social differences largely appear as separations in society and between societies. In many respects, individual, social, and global inequality is still increasing. Interactive

constructivism shares Dewey's democratic view, which stands for an increase in opportunities for as many as possible.

(4) Individual and Social Growth through Communication

   Hypothetical Dewey: To understand the democratic ideal of social growth, one has to specify what communication means in respect to social life. "Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger. Without this communication of ideals, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions, from those members of society who are passing out of the group life to those who are coming into it, social life could not survive" (MW9, 6). Here, communication and education and learning are closely related to each other: "Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience" (MW9, 8).
   Constructivists: Such communication can be successful only if we have a lived culture of participative relationships.[43] This especially applies to the young, who need participative relationships to develop individual growth by partaking in democratic processes of problem solving. Dewey's constructive theory of learning and teaching stands against a traditional model of instruction that poses pupils in a position of obedience and subordination.[44] But to what extent can we hope for a sufficient realization of these chances in the present development of societies? In the ambivalent transition from modernity to postmodernity as shown by Zygmunt Bauman (1997, 2000), there seems to be an increasing conflict between the ideal of individual and social growth on the one hand and the dangers of arbitrariness on the other. In particular, these dangers appear whenever the variety of life-forms leads to indifference toward the common interests of all in a democracy. Dewey made strong efforts to fight against this menace although he did not underestimate the difficulties. The relation between the precarious and the stable aspects of our existence that we discussed in Part I also applies to his understanding of democratic societies in which there can never be a final and stable solution for all problems of development.
   Hypothetical Dewey: Yes, as I showed in "Experience and Nature," there is no clear decision for either side in the tension between the "precarious" and the "stable." We have to always pluck up the courage to see the "precarious" as a risk, but also as an opportunity to develop new solutions in the face of changing contexts.
   Constructivists: The "precarious" has greatly increased since Dewey's times. This is one main observation in Bauman's (1997) theory of postmodernism and its discontents. In this theory of ambivalence, a precarious mix of driving forces in globalization work together in producing a social reality that is often

ruthlessly opposed to the relatively slow possibilities of many people: in learning, in mobility and flexibility with regard to requirements of work, in idealization of youthfulness, in emphasizing consumerism, feasibility, and superficiality, and so forth. In the end, the struggle between the "precarious" and the "stable" even seems to have intensified. As constructivists, we share the pragmatist insight that we cannot actually escape the tension between the two poles. Instead, we need to concentrate all our symbolic and imaginative cultural resources on increasing the democratic qualities of our communications in order to further the growth of individual and social partaking in the interplay between differences and commonalities. Only then does the constructivist claim of recognizing the varieties of versions of world-making make sense and avoid the traps of arbitrariness and isolation of interests that hamper the improvement of democratic opportunities in life.

Notes

1. A shortened version of this paper has been presented at the 2006 meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy (SAAP) in San Antonio, Texas. We thank the SAAP and especially its president John J. Stuhr for the kind invitation.

2. See Reich (1998a, 1998b, 2005, 2006a, and 2006b), and Neubert and Reich (2001). For papers in English, see <http://www.uni-koeln.de/ew-fak/konstrukt/english/index.htm>. Accessed 13 May 2006.

3. See Neubert (1998). See also the homepage of the Dewey-Center in Cologne, <http://dewey.uni-koeln.de>. Accessed 13 March 2006.

4. The first part of this paper has been written by Stefan Neubert, the second part by Kersten Reich.

5. For an introduction in these aspects see, e.g., Shook (2000).

6. See Neubert (2006).

7. For a short explanation of the distinction of the three roles, see also footnote 29.

8. This is very important to avoid naturalistic claims. As an observer in a culture one is not only bound to physical environments, as Reed emphasizes (1996, 98), but also to cultural perspectives that should not be overlooked.

9. "For in any object of primary experience there are always potentialities which are not explicit; any object that is overt is charged with possible consequences that are hidden; the most overt act has factors which are not explicit. Strain thought as far as we may and not all consequences can be foreseen or made an express or known part of reflection and decision" (LW1, 28).

10. Lyotard gives the following short explanation about the difference between modernity and postmodernity: "I will use the term modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth. Simplifying to the extreme I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences; but that progress in turn presupposes it. . . . The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great voyages, its great goal" (1984, xxiii ff.). For a critical view on this, see Bernstein (1992, 200ff.). For a broader view on the debate about postmoderity, see, e.g., Bauman (1993, 1997, 2000). In the context of pragmatism, see, e.g., Good and Velody (1998) or Goodman (1995).

11. In interactive constructivism we have a complex and elaborated theory of the real that reflects different modern and postmodern theories, e.g., poststructuralist approaches to the limits of discourse or theories given by Foucault, Derrida, Levinas, Deleuze, Lacan, and others. See Reich (1998a, 1998b).

12. "As against this common identification of reality with what is sure, regular and finished, experience in unsophisticated forms gives evidence of a different world and points to a different metaphysics. We live in a world which is an impressive and irresistible mixture of sufficiencies, tight completenesses, order, recurrences which make possible prediction and control, and singularities, ambiguities, uncertain possibilities, processes going on to consequences as yet indeterminate. They are mixed not mechanically but vitally like the wheat and tares of the parable. We may recognize them separately but we cannot divide them, for unlike wheat and tares they grow from the same root" (LW1, 47).

13. We are not able here to discuss all necessary important aspects in the debate about naturalism, realism, and constructivism. For a good, newer introduction to naturalism and realism in pragmatism, see Shook (2003). But if an author like Rescher (2000) thinks that a "Pragmatism of the Right" can say: "The truth is in substantial measure determined by the thought-independent nature of things" (quoted in Shook 2003, 246), then this falls very much behind Dewey's complex theory of inquiry. It is as oversimplifying as saying about a so called "Pragmatism of the Left": "What we call 'truth' is entirely a human construct" (246). We, in interactive constructivism, try to overcome such simplifications because we think that it is not very useful to put things in black and white terms as Rescher suggests (246ff.).

14. "The visible is set in the invisible; and in the end what is unseen decides what happens in the seen; the tangible rests precariously upon the untouched and ungrasped. The contrast and the potential maladjustment of the immediate, the conspicuous and focal phase of things, with those indirect and hidden factors which determine the origin and career of what is present, are indestructible features of any and every experience. We may term the way in which our ancestors dealt with the contrast superstitious, but the contrast is no superstition. It is a primary datum in any experience" (LW1, 44–45).

15. See, e.g., Rorty (1979, 1989, 2000), and Fish (1998).

16. See especially Rorty (1998).

17. Derrida is influenced by Lacan, who, to our minds, has originally given start to this discussion of language. A constructivist observer theory can learn from these definitions without having to subscribe to all of Lacan's postulates, who often sets up a one-sided psychoanalytic focus (see Reich 1998a).

18. For further introductions to these complex themes, see, e.g., Campbell (1992), Dickstein (1998), Hickman (1998), Langsdorf and Smith (1995), Stuhr (1997), Eldridge (1998), and Caspary (2000).

19. "All modern life, however, is completely bound up with and dependent upon facilities of communication, intercourse, and distribution" (MW5, 427).

20. "Communication is a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession" (MW9, 12).

21. "I conclude, then, with expression of the belief that it is this method, the method of achieving community by processes of free and open communication, which is the heart and the strength of the American democratic way of living and that the weaknesses of our democracy all represent expressions of failure to live up to the demands imposed by this method" (MW8, 443).

22. "In short, a primary, perhaps the primary, loyalty of democracy at the present time is to communication. It cannot be denied that our American democracy has often made more in words of the liberties of free speech, free publication and free assembly than in action. But that the spirit of democracy is, nevertheless, alive and active is proved by the fact that publicity is a well established habit" (LW14, 275–76). For the question of how deeply democracy can be established in this sense in our days see, e.g., Green (1999).

23. "Democracy also means voluntary choice, based on an intelligence that is the outcome of free association and communication with others. It means a way of living together in which mutual and free consultation rule instead of force, and in which cooperation instead of brutal competition is the law of life; a social order in which all the forces that make for friendship, beauty, and knowledge are cherished in order that each individual may become what he, and he alone, is capable of becoming" (LW11, 417).

24. "Communication, sharing, joint participation are the only actual ways of universalizing the moral law and end" (MW12, 197).

25. See, e.g., Bauman (2004).

26. Some consequences for a participatory democracy are discussed by Hollinger (1996, 69ff.).

27. See Habermas (1984, 1987a). Habermas shares many opinions with pragmatism in his interpretation of the philosophic discourse of modernity (1987b), but pragmatists rightly criticize the unresolved dualism in his approach (see Hickman 2000). For a discussion of the transformation of critical theories in a pragmatic turn, see, e.g., Rehg and Bohman (2001).

28. However, interactive constructivism does not adopt Habermas' counterfactual ideal of a domination-free discourse. With regard to power, we put more emphasis, for instance, on Foucault's theories.

29. In interactive constructivism we differentiate this self into the three perspectives of an observer, participant, and agent (in more detail in Reich 2006): As observers we experience and regard the tensional relationship of "I" and "me" from two positions: self- and distant-observers. Therefore we need to be continually balancing out our observing and observed self anew. As participants we are already fixed in terms of particular participations (Mead speaks of roles). The norms, values, and conceptions in place emotionally and cognitively direct us toward particular views. As agents we need to realize and actualize in our actions as well as in our observations and participations that which closes the circle and which places us in a continual interactional relationship with others. These three perspectives are constructs that may help us to realize our inner balance between "I" and "me" as well as to experience richly the exterior balance between ourselves and others. From childhood on the relational tension of "I" and "me" develops via the interrelations with others a variable but ever more integrated image of one's own self that is reliable enough for communication. This reliability is marked by Mead in his use of the term "role": in Dewey we find the term "habits."

30. If we look at the interactions between people under these preconditions, it becomes clear that no information can be exchanged in direct correlation between humans as senders and receivers. In this connection, the pragmatic insights of Mead have long been more advanced than later developments in communication theories, e.g., by Gregory Bateson or Paul Watzlawick.

31. "Except in dealing with commonplaces and catch phrases one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience. All communication is like art" (MW9, 9).

32. Garrison (1997) has further developed this side of Dewey's theory.

33. For Lacan, there is a *méconnaissance* which describes this problem in psychoanalytic terms. For an introduction to Lacan, see, e.g., <http://www.lacan.com/covers2.htm> (accessed 13 May 2006). Interactive constructivism uses the term without all psychoanalytical implications (see Reich 1998a).

34. See Garrison (1997, 1998).

35. Rorty (1984). See Shusterman (1999, 193–219).

36. For an introduction, see, e.g., Campbell (1992), and Caspary (2000).

37. "We hear speech, but it is almost as if we were listening to a babel of tongues. Meaning and value do not come home to us. There is in such cases no communication and none of the result of community of experience that issues only when language in its full import breaks down physical isolation and external contact" (LW10, 338).

38. "In an intellectual sense, there are many languages, though in a social sense there is but one. This multiplicity of language-meaning constellations is also a mark of our existing culture. A word means one thing in relation to a religious institution, still another thing in business, a third thing in law, and so on. This fact is the real Babel of communication" (LW12, 56).

39. "It should make us aware that free thought itself, free inquiry, is crippled and finally paralyzed by suppression of free communication. Such communication includes the right and responsibility of submitting every idea and every belief to severest criticism. It is less important that we all believe alike than that we all alike inquire freely and put at the disposal of one another such glimpses as we may obtain of the truth for which we are in search" (LW14, 89–90).

40. "To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community; one who understands and appreciates its beliefs, desires and methods, and who contributes to a further conversion of organic powers into human resources and values. But this translation is never finished" (LW2, 332).

41. See MW9 (chapter 7).

42. "Deterioration of the means of communication, carried sometimes to the point of complete corruption, is a striking feature of our day. It applies externally to systematic use of the radio, press and other mechanical agencies of communication; it applies even more seriously to words, the specific ways of human communication" (LW15, 248). See also LW2, 325–50.

43. "Communication is an exchange which procures something wanted; it involves a claim, appeal, order, direction or request, which realizes want at less cost than personal labor exacts, since it procures the cooperative assistance of others. Communication is also an immediate enhancement of life, enjoyed for its own sake" (LW1, 144).

44. "Instruction always runs the risk of swamping the pupil's own vital, though narrow, experience under masses of communicated material" (LW8, 352).

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Latin American Philosophy: Some Vices

CARLOS PEREDA
Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

"We are invisible": this melancholic assertion alludes to the "non-place" that we occupy as Latin American philosophers or, in general, as philosophers in the Spanish or Portuguese languages. We tend to survive as mere ghosts teaching courses and writing texts, perhaps some memorable ones, which, however, seldom spark anybody's interest, among other reasons, because almost no one takes the time to read them. In saying this, I do not mean to call upon a useless pathos, nor do I mean to complain, or thrust forth a challenge. I am simply confirming a fact, and a widely acknowledged one at that.

  I wish to inquire a little into this invisibility. Later I will look into how the experience of our much acclaimed essay may help in fighting it.

I

The invisibility of philosophers whose means of expression is Spanish or Portuguese is twofold. In the first place, there is an immediate invisibility: we are invisible before our colleagues[1] and even before our very students. In the most influential traditions of philosophy, those expressed in the French and German languages, and in recent years, above all and overwhelmingly, in English, a philosophical book has the group of scholars in that discipline as its main audience, who oftentimes await that particular publication. In Latin America and, more generally, among speakers of Spanish and Portuguese, we care very little about what is believed, wished, and argued by those who also speak our tongues. Rarely is a book published in our languages discussed seriously. It is even rarer to consider it necessary to make it known, involve students in its exploration, and least of all—what a commotion this would cause!—to consider organizing a seminar around what those nearest to us think. We rarely cite—though we may be their friends—those authors whom we have read and admire. Agreed, sometimes a colorful compliment is paid, out of pure obligation, but we generally refuse to