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Abstract: Philosophy has become largely irrelevant to most undergraduates. Philosophical problems seem disconnected from life, “as something said by philosophers concerning them alone,” to quote John Dewey. Avoiding this requires that philosophers match course aims and methods with the abilities and circumstances of those being educated. To this end, this paper describes a pedagogical method incorporating John Dewey’s “pattern of inquiry.” An application of the method to an introductory text is given. The long range goals of teaching philosophy are discussed.

PHILOSOPHY’S RELEVANCE AND THE PATTERN OF INQUIRY

In the midst of an age of “work,” that is to say, of hurry, of indecent and perspiring haste, which wants to “get everything done” at once, including every old or new book:—this art [philosophy] does not so easily get anything done, it teaches to read well, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers. —Nietzsche, *Dawn*, Preface

An educational aim must be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs (including original instincts and acquired habits) of the given individual to be educated.

—Dewey, *Democracy and Education* ¹

Introduction

Here is a problem to which I would like to contribute one piece of a solution: Philosophy’s relevance is disappearing. This claim, though still a topic of fierce debate among professional philosophers, is at least true regarding philosophy’s *apparent* relevance in the eyes of undergraduates. In our age of “indecent and perspiring haste,” students have been increasingly reluctant to pursue philosophy as a major.² Though it is tempting to blame our media-saturated culture, inadequate secondary school funding, or the near-total preoccupation with securing employment that many students have, it is nevertheless our duty as teachers to reappraise and improve the manner in which philosophy is taught. Attending to the problematic aspects of present methods will enable us to more effectively convey our enthusiasm for philosophy to our students. We will not only teach them how to read well, but also, as Nietzsche puts it, “with doors left open.”

¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, in volume 9 of *John Dewey: The Middle Works* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 114. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Dewey’s works will be based on the critical edition by Southern Illinois University Press and will use the abbreviations EW, MW, or LW:

EW *John Dewey: The Early Works*, 5 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-72).

MW *John Dewey: The Middle Works*, 14 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976-88).

LW *John Dewey: The Later Works*, 17 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981-91).

² Over the past several decades, the percentage of undergraduates choosing philosophy as their major has declined by more than fifty percent. In 1964-65, nearly one percent of all Bachelor’s degrees were in philosophy; by 1993-94, philosophy majors accounted for only four-tenths of one percent, up slightly from the nadir in 1985-86 (.32%). See the American Council on Education’s *Fact Book on Higher Education: 1997 Edition* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1997), 181, 227.

Achieving this will require, as Dewey points out, a full appreciation of the circumstances and needs of today's students. Philosophy's task is to educate for activity. It must not only help students analyze what philosophers have said, but should inculcate habits of intelligence and imagination. In the short run more students need to see philosophy's relevance to their own lives and be encouraged to pursue it further. In the long run, our attempt to make philosophy more relevant to students will force a reappraisal of the connections that tie our professional philosophical interests to our roles as citizens. Hopefully, new critical insights on the "ground level" of our classrooms will urge progress on philosophy's more abstract but no less pressing problem, namely, the disconnection between academic philosophy and society-at-large.³

This paper identifies several problematic aspects of typical philosophical pedagogy,⁴ and then suggests an alternative pedagogy, modeled after John Dewey's pattern of inquiry. Along the way it offers examples as to how a basic introductory text might be approached using this method. The paper concludes with some remarks regarding the long range goals of teaching philosophy.

I. The Problem

In many introductory classes, the primary emphasis is upon knowledge and truth. Philosophy is presented as a series of attempts to determine the truth or falsity of propositions about a varied range of topics, often so that a definition, which is frequently presupposed as the uncontested paradigm for knowledge, may be achieved. This emphasis identifies philosophy's aims with those of modern epistemology, and results in the sacrifice of philosophy's apparent relevance to many students. Beginning from a starting point that is by and large spectatorial, the practical and concrete features of students' daily lives are set aside, seemingly without justification or warning, and the philosophical issues being considered take on a disconnected character. The danger here, Dewey notes, is that the student will see philosophy "as so much nimble or severe intellectual exercise—as something said by philosophers concerning them alone."⁵ For the teacher, avoiding this approach to philosophy may be difficult, requiring careful self-reflection about ingrained pedagogical habits. Dewey cautions that

In general, there is [in educators] a disposition to take considerations which are dear to the hearts of adults and set them up as ends irrespective of the capacities of those educated. There is also an inclination to propound aims which are so uniform as to

³ In America today, most philosophers are not—*qua* philosophers—actively engaged as citizens. Philosophy has almost no public voice. On this issue, see John J. Stuhr's essay "Re-visioning Philosophy and the Organization of Knowledges" in *Genealogical Pragmatism: Philosophy, Experience, and Community* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). "Humanities, Inc.," in the same volume, is another insightful examination of similar relevance-problems for the liberal arts.

⁴ My conclusions are drawn from my own observations during years spent as a student in undergraduate and graduate school, a teaching assistant, a professor, and as a visitor to the classrooms of other teachers.

⁵ *Democracy and Education*, 338.

neglect the specific powers and requirements of an individual, forgetting that all learning is something which happens to an individual at a given time and place.⁶

Compiling an inventory of those dispositions and aims dear only to philosophers would be a first step toward recognizing the ways in which philosophy has become disconnected from undergraduates. Such a list might include the fixation upon certain and systematic answers to moral quandaries, the overestimation of symbolization's instrumentality for clarifying issues, and the faith that traditional philosophical issues may be adequately communicated by reducing them to problems in the philosophy of language. Beyond making such lists, however, an alternative method is needed. Assuming that most philosophers will continue to teach—even stress—epistemological issues, and assuming also that philosophy would be healthier if more undergraduates pursued it, I would like to consider an alternative that avoids these pitfalls.

II. Partiality or Impartiality? Neither.

Before I outline my approach, I would like to establish some context by discussing a recent pedagogical debate concerning which of two opposed teaching styles is best able to encourage student participation and independent, critical thinking. (This debate is interesting not because of one side's superiority, but rather because *neither* side adequately addresses what I believe is a more significant and underlying source of the problem, namely, the way truth is modeled as the overarching goal of class inquiry.)

In an unpublished paper entitled “Teaching In the First Person,” John Corvino dubs these two styles the “Impartialist” and “First Person” approaches. The Impartialist teacher takes a neutral stance toward the philosophers under consideration by arguing for both sides, or perhaps by simply reflecting questions back to the students. The pedagogy informing this stance is that it more effectively communicates that philosophy is about learning *how* to think and not *what* to think. By abstaining from debates under consideration, the teacher de-emphasizes the importance of authority (*who* believes what) and focuses the students' attention upon justification (*why* something is believed).

In the First Person approach, the teacher does not shy away from criticizing the views presented. By publicly and personally taking a position, she provides a role model which students can emulate, eventually making clear, in a forthright way, their own views. This approach, it is maintained, circumvents student guessing games as to what their professor *really* believes about an issue, and that energy may be directed instead to the development of students' own views.

While the contrast between these two approaches is interesting, both fail to address a more consequential factor in whether and how students participate. That factor is the professor's general

⁶ *Democracy and Education*, 114-15.

attitude toward truth and the stake that she feels philosophy has in discovering truth. In my experience, when a professor strongly promotes the idea that philosophy's *raison d'être* is finding the right answer or the best argument, student impulses toward individual inquiry are stifled, and it can no longer make much difference whether an Impartialist or a First Person approach is being used. In the Impartialist case, students seek merely to know what the Impartialist professor is concealing, since they correctly assume that the professor *must* have some personal view and, when they find it, they will have uncovered the "right" answer. In the First Person case, students make strenuous efforts to parrot the view advocated. If based upon this absolute conception of truth, both teaching strategies fail because the notion that there may be a plurality of "right" answers is quashed, and several obstacles to students' desire to pursue philosophy are allowed to take root. Rightly or wrongly, students come to believe:

(1) that philosophy's underlying assumption is that inquiry and dialogue are merely instrumental means to achieving knowledge or truth, where all value is implied to lay. (Only philosophical answers, not processes, have value.)

(2) that student participation is only really valuable when it contributes true propositions, all hand-waving about "dialogue" and "the activity of philosophy" notwithstanding. (Dialogue has only instrumental worth.)

(3) that philosophical insight proceeds only "vertically", that is, by logical inference and argumentation, rather than "laterally," that is, by creative association, metaphor, and the imaginative application of theory to practice. (Meaning extends no further than its co-extension with truth.)⁷

(4) the damaging assumption that philosophy is a game to which only the brightest (i.e., the most verbal) should contribute. (Philosophy is undemocratic.)

None of these damaging beliefs can be avoided simply by choosing either the First Person or the Impartialist approach. I believe that either method of presentation can succeed in encouraging introductory students, but only if they present philosophical problems with what could be called an "inquirential" attitude. Such an attitude emphasizes that knowledge is both social and open to criticism, and promotes the idea that success in philosophy lies less in the issues that have been settled, resolved, in effect closed, than in the questions philosophy continues to keep alive and insistent. Its aim is, as Dewey put it, to "enable one to envisage the philosophic problems where they arise and thrive, where

⁷ An assumption which is gravely mistaken. Here, I follow Dewey, who wrote,

As to truth...philosophy has no pre-eminent status; it is a recipient not a donor. But the realm of meanings is wider than that of true-and-false meanings; it is more urgent and more fertile. When the claim of meanings to truth enters in, then truth is indeed preeminent. But this fact is often confused with the idea that truth has a claim to enter everywhere...; a large part of our life is carried on in a realm of meanings to which truth and falsity as such are irrelevant. And the claim of philosophy to rival or displace science as a purveyor of truth seems to be mostly a compensatory gesture for failure to perform its proper task of liberating and clarifying meanings. (*Experience and Nature*, LW 1: 307.)

they are at home, and where acceptance or rejection makes a difference in practice.”⁸ It is worth noting that this attitude concerns only pedagogical method and does not mean to preclude any philosophical text whatsoever. I will now sketch this attitude.

III. Developing Habits of Intelligence Using Dewey’s Five Phases of Inquiry

First, let me lay a few more cards out on the table. Beyond acquainting students with philosophical texts and “isms”, I take the aim of philosophical education to be the exploration of meanings and the creation of habits of intelligence; for the introductory class especially, this means fostering the dispositions needed for inquiry. Roughly these include: sensitivity to the particular features and demands of experienced situations, an appreciation for the full range of values which may be at stake, and the consideration of specific complex social and historical factors which play into the context of every situation. Of course philosophy should train students to clarify issues and analyze their logic carefully, but it must also cultivate their capacity to imagine new possibilities and teach them how to evaluate and test hypotheses. Most important, it must inspire them to have the courage to put their beliefs into practice and, if further experience demands, revise or scrap those beliefs which prove erroneous.

In 1910 Dewey wrote *How We Think* especially for educators and teachers. In it he described the structure of what he called, alternatively, “reflective experience,” “reflection,” and “knowing.” (Eventually, to avoid confusion with these terms, he adopted “inquiry” in their place.) Though it is a simplified version of his view, the following skeletal statement provides an adequate basis for my pedagogical proposal. Within each reflective experience, Dewey said, there are five phases:

- (i) a felt difficulty
- (ii) its location and definition;
- (iii) suggestion of a possible solution;
- (iv) development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestions;
- (v) further observation and experiment leading to a its acceptance or rejection; that is, the conclusion of belief or disbelief.⁹

⁸ *Democracy and Education*, 338. Such a view informed Dewey’s own early pedagogical practices. In an early article written for teachers of ethics in American high schools, Dewey propose that

Ethics, rightly conceived, is the statement of human relationships in action. In any right study of ethics, then, the pupil is not studying hard and fixed rules for conduct; he is studying ways in which men are bound together in the complex relations of their interactions. ...Let the teacher, at the outset, ask the pupils how they would decide, if a case of seeming misery were presented to them, *whether* to relieve it and, if so *how* to relieve. This should be done without any preliminary dwelling upon the question as a "moral" one; rather, it should be pointed out that the question is simply a practical one, and that ready-made considerations are to be put to one side. Above all, however, it should be made clear that the question is not what to do, but *how* to decide what to do. (“Teaching Ethics to High School Students,” EW 4: 56.)

⁹ John Dewey, *How We Think*, MW 6: 236-37.

Philosophical pedagogy modeled after this pattern of inquiry may prove more successful at avoiding the shortcomings listed above than more traditional approaches. Below, I discuss each of these five phases in turn, highlighting its relevance to pedagogy of philosophy, and offering a brief example of how it could be applied to a common introductory text, Plato's *Crito*.

(i) *A felt difficulty.* In any situation where there is a problem, something is felt as well as known to be wrong. (Philosophers often neglect or dismiss this fact; because they have a special interest in knowing, they tend to equate all of experience with a form of knowing. Feelings are irrelevant or, at least, to be set aside.) Usually, feeling that something is wrong is experienced as distinctly prior to knowing something is wrong; in other words, reflective inquiry begins from a situation that is *had* non-cognitively.¹⁰ This felt difficulty is important because it is a uniquely qualitative part of the situation in which we find ourselves, and exercises a regulative function as well.¹¹ The feeling is regulative in the sense that it “enables us to keep thinking about one problem without having to constantly stop and ask ourselves what it is after all that we are thinking about.”¹² It initiates reflection, yet the feeling doesn't disappear; by persisting it controls and, to a degree, guides the reflective progress right up until the end. And it is also of no small consequence that feeling also helps us judge how much is at stake. (Consider, for example, difficult cases of euthanasia where the only way to adjudicate between equally rational decisions is by checking with family members to see what “feels right.”)

This phase is relevant to pedagogy because students need help empathizing with what is distinctively *felt* to be problematic in a philosophical issue. Some topics are easier to teach in this way than others: Sartre's young Pierre, who must decide whether to join the French resistance or care for his ailing mother, or the difficulty of maintaining faith in God's existence in the face of persistent, often monstrous, evil, are two examples. Other topics, such as the incoherence of “matter” for Berkeley, or the problem of skepticism for Descartes, present greater challenges. But as teachers we must find ways to help students imagine for themselves the situations in which these problems could be genuinely felt. This may mean getting students to sympathize with the philosopher's predicament (e.g., Berkeley the bishop struggles against atheist materialism), or it may mean getting them to recognize that what seems to be *only* a philosophical problem is also a problem that they might face. Since the genuineness of the

¹⁰ For Dewey, our inquiries start from lived “situations.” Situations are not meant as yet another esoteric metaphysical concept. Rather, they are the Dewey's best description of the complex contexts out of which actual inquiry grows. Those interested in further detail can consult Dewey's “The Pattern of Inquiry” and “Context and Thought” in LW 4 and 6 respectively. “The Pattern of Inquiry,” a chapter from the Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, also appears in the excellent compendium, *The Essential Dewey, Volume Two: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*, edited by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 169-179.

¹¹ In “Qualitative Thought” Dewey writes, “the immediate existence of quality, and of dominant and pervasive quality, is the background, the point of departure, and the regulative principle of all thinking.” See LW 5: 262 or *The Essential Dewey, Volume One: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*, edited by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 205.

¹² “Qualitative Thought,” in Hickman, 198.

problem must be made evident to today's students, it is likely that there will be any number of ways that these problems may be presented. In this regard, we can expect that each group of students will be different, and that as the world changes, our tactics will have to change as well.

*Example: In the Crito, the felt difficulty guiding the inquiry is the fear and anxiety which is experienced by Socrates' friends and family at his impending execution, and Socrates' long range concern to help his fellow Athenians by exemplifying how one's duty to obey the laws is not necessarily opposed to an ongoing and conscientious assessment of those laws.*¹³

(ii) *Its location and definition.* Once a problem has been felt, it is necessary that we attempt to state or characterize the problem precisely. Often this is undertaken almost immediately. As most philosophers will attest, characterizing and defining the parameters of a problem, especially a philosophical one, requires a great deal of experimentation and ingenuity. Often, inquiry will proceed past this characterization stage, only to return to this phase again later. What is at first determined to be *the* problem changes, and it is necessary to reformulate the nature of the problem. In fact, it is only when a solution looms into view that the character of the problem becomes precise.

It is pedagogically useful to note that definition is a phase of inquiry that is both distinct and relatively early; this fact reminds the teacher to assure students that their first attempts at describing a philosophical problem may be made provisionally, not only because they are novices, but because this is *how problem-solving generally works*. Such an assurance licenses more catholic horizons for their speculations while still cautioning that even their most confident definitions may require revision as more is understood about the problem.

Example: Crito's successive arguments (the question of public opinion, duties of fatherhood, etc.) aim, of course, to persuade Socrates to escape, yet they can also be portrayed as ingenious attempts to fix the boundaries of the problem using characterization. We can hardly blame Crito for wanting to delimit the problem immediately, given its magnitude. Socrates was so important to so many people, that Crito's job—clarifying what his death might mean—was a gargantuan undertaking. As Socrates shows, Crito's characterizations of the problem are inadequate and must be revised.

(iii) *Suggestion of a possible solution.* Using the provisional characterization in phase (ii), inquiry now proceeds by suggestion, conjecture, or hypothesis beyond what is immediately present in the situation to something absent. This is a risky process, without fixed rules, and requires courage and imagination. Like any creative skill, however, it can be cultivated to some degree, and given the enduring need for solutions, it must be. As was the case with characterization, an adequate hypothesis often

¹³ With this theme in mind, a fellow teacher uses the *Crito* as preparatory to extended discussions about the ways civil disobedience and conscientious objection have been justified during the last several decades in the United States.

requires revisiting an earlier phase, either to make new observations or to reconsider the contours of the problem itself. Generally, this is a very important suggestion to make for the novice reader of philosophy who can never read too slowly or too carefully.¹⁴

Example: Obviously the Crito contains several possible solutions offered by both interlocutors, including both escape and acceptance of punishment. Crito's proposed solution of escape is justified by a hodgepodge of benefits to a variety of beneficiaries. Socrates' superiority to Crito is demonstrated by his willingness and ability to rigorously test those hypotheses (in what is called below "phase iv") and show them to be incongruent with a more coherent set of cherished values.

(iv) *Development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion.* Here, "reasoning" is meant in a restricted sense; i.e., the ability to recognize valid and invalid forms of inference, the examination of a hypothesis for its logical consequences, or perhaps the relation of a hypothesis to other factors which might determine whether and how it could be tested. In this phase, the ability to abstract and formalize are of paramount importance.¹⁵

While these formalizations are crucial, it should be noted that they comprise an *intermediate* phase of inquiry—not its culmination. The justification for any abstraction produced by this phase depends not upon other abstractions, but in whether or not it successfully contributes to the inquiry's aim: to resolve a lived problem. Philosophy students are often unmoved by philosophical problems (such as the nature of the soul or the question of free will) because they are usually introduced to them at the high level of abstraction particular to this phase.¹⁶ Though there is a real need for inquiry to utilize abstraction, when it is taken as the *summum bonum* it makes a mockery of the belief that, as Dewey said, "a large part of our life is carried on in a realm of meanings to which truth and falsity as such are irrelevant."¹⁷ I find that this is something that students deeply believe, and the lesson we may learn from Dewey is that philosophy—the discipline reputed to be *wise* about life—must not bracket out as "irrelevant" students' personal and particular entry points to the discipline.

¹⁴ As Thomas Kuhn suggested, "When reading the works of an important thinker, look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, ...when these passages make sense, then you may find that more central passages, ones you previously thought you understood, have changed their meaning. (*The Essential Tension* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], xii.)

¹⁵ Dewey's emphasis on practicality is often misconstrued as a sign of a bias *against* theory. Nothing could be further from the truth. As Dewey noted, "Looked at functionally, not structurally and statically, abstraction means that something has been released from one experience for transfer to another. Abstraction is liberation. The more theoretical, the more abstract, an abstraction, or the farther away it is from anything experienced in its concreteness, the better fitted it is to deal with any one of the indefinite variety of things that may later present themselves." See *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, LW 12: 166.

¹⁶ In my experience, students who are unable to begin participating at this level of abstraction wind up not just bored or cynical, but angry as well. Their anger stems from the fact that philosophy purports to be about life, but seems instead to be only about logic.

¹⁷ *Experience and Nature*, LW 1: 307.

Example: In the Crito we see how Crito's various arguments are quickly defeated by Socrates' logical analyses. He shows Crito's argument regarding public opinion to be unsound, and in the speech of the Laws, he ingeniously shows how the consequences (for his soul and for Athens) of Crito's hypothesis would be far more damaging than accepting punishment.

(v) *Further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection.* This final phase of inquiry, whose importance Dewey went to great lengths to emphasize, is concerned with actual testing and confirmation of those hypotheses not eliminated at an earlier phase. Depending on the nature of the problem, simple observation may be enough to confirm a hypothesis; often, more complicated experimentation is needed. When a hypothesis is rejected, one often finds that a feeling attends that rejection, and soon earlier phases of inquiry are recurring, newly-colored by the fact that the best hypothesis failed to work.

Since many philosophical problems are concerned with general issues which may range over long periods of time, most of the testing/confirmation phase may have to be left up to the student. This doesn't mean that the unfinished conclusions of classroom inquiries must just be dropped in the students' laps—classroom discussion, small group work, and papers can help students begin to work out a variety of ways in which a hypothesis might be tested beyond the semester.¹⁸ If the teacher is successful, most of the fruits of the method of inquiry developed during the semester will be borne later on in the student's life as she, a changed person, faces novel situations.

Example: Though some of the implications of Socrates' hypotheses cannot be tested empirically (e.g., the nature of the soul), others readily lend themselves to evaluation. Did Socrates' death in fact have some of the ill effects Crito warned about? What happened to Socrates children, for example? More relevant to students' concerns, I think, are discussions about whether or not they would escape, and the implications of that hypothetical situation on their conceptions of citizenship, parenthood, friendship, legal authority, and so on.

These, then, are Dewey's five phases of "inquiry" as they might relate to the pedagogy of philosophy. Let me conclude this account with three caveats about this notion. First, inquiry need not start from an actual problem encountered by chance; indeed, knowledge often advances when we seek out possible problems in order to prepare responses.¹⁹ Second, the analysis of inquiry into five phases does not mean that in a given situation the phases are necessarily discrete nor must they occur in a fixed

¹⁸ For example, when difficult issues are raised in class about the justice of the death penalty, the unit's conclusion can involve discussions about how citizens (i.e., students) might take the debate beyond the classroom.

¹⁹ "Problems," for pragmatists, denote not only the mundane and physical, but intellectual problems as well. Much misinterpretation of Dewey's pragmatism may be avoided by consulting his article, "What Pragmatism Means by Practical," MW 4: 98-115.

order. Various phases may interact even to the point where they seem part of a single phase. (Witness the give-and-take between observation and hypothesis-formation.) Finally, Dewey did not believe that these phases described the way people *always* thought; rather this was how inquiry worked in the *best* cases of critical intelligence and experimental science. Dewey hoped that by explicating the patterns of thought which have proved most effective in gaining reliable knowledge, he could derive and teach general methods based upon those patterns to educators.

IV. Conclusion: Philosophy as Equipment for Living

If philosophy is going to become part of public life, it must be made relevant to the average first-year student. This means that as philosophers we need to rethink our methods by better appreciating the present in which students are living.²⁰ Philosophy's emphases "must vary with the stress and special impact of the troubles which perplex men. Each age knows its own ills, and seeks its own remedies."²¹ We must try to face the fact that the pursuit of truth, where truth is taken to consist of static propositions and definitions which lay bare the essence of being, is a difficult pursuit for students to accept, at their time in life especially. Their lives are still becoming, they are still forming as individuals; the project of definition, of naming the essences of a perfect and stable realm, has an allure for many who are older—parents and teachers, for example—but not nearly as much for students. Their world is of anxious and often radical change, of tentative actions and provisional stands on many issues. They balk at principles and absolute definitions not because they are all die-hard relativists, but because they are rightly cautious of philosophies which would pigeonhole experience and delimit growth.²²

I have suggested that when philosophical inquiry is too closely identified with the methods and goals of epistemology, the special relevance of philosophy eludes students. When the route from practice to theory (and back) is nowhere evident, they see, with Dewey that "theory separated from concrete doing and making is empty and futile," and this conclusion poses a major obstacle to the

²⁰ We have to avoid detaching ourselves not only from our students but from the future-in-the-making. Of course we will continue to study the past, but we should study it, Dewey argued, in a way that recognizes that we study to serve *our* future. In "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" Dewey writes,

Imaginative recovery of the bygone is indispensable to successful invasion of the future, but its status is that of an instrument. To ignore its import is the sign of an undisciplined agent; but to isolate the past, dwelling upon it for its own sake and giving it the eulogistic name of knowledge, is to substitute the reminiscence of old-age for effective intelligence. [MW 10: 10.]

²¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²² The suspicion that students are rabid with relativism is a hypothesis which I have never found to be true, and one which deserves far less attention than it is presently given. I haven't the space here to argue it, but for now let me suggest that relativism is one of those considerations about which Dewey cautioned us, dear only to educators yet presented as urgent problems for students, irrespective of their particular aims and capacities.

interest of new students.²³ Indeed, this obstacle eclipses the debate over whether the teacher should choose the “Impartialist” or “First Person” style of presentation. I have proposed that using a pedagogic approach influenced by Dewey’s five phases of inquiry can help avoid this without requiring radical changes in which texts that are taught.²⁴ Undoubtedly, there will be works which will resist this approach; those difficulties, it seems to me, will prove valuable by forcing the teacher to think about the text—and its relevance to her students—in new ways. If some texts are moved to the back burner, or eliminated from an introductory course, so be it. That’s progress. The measure of success for this pedagogical method would be that students learn to think and read more patiently and sympathetically, suspend judgment about a position until they have a decent grasp of it, and come to see inquiry as a valuable and widely applicable skill worth developing beyond the semester.

Making philosophy relevant to introductory students requires that we entertain, with Dewey, the idea that “If we see that knowing is not the act of an outside spectator but of a participator inside the natural and social scene, then the true object of knowledge resides in the consequences of directed action.”²⁵ The better students can see the consequences of philosophy, the more it will interest them. As an experiment in pedagogy, we might try taking this notion to heart. We can always go back.

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²³ *The Quest for Certainty : A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*, MW 4: 224.

²⁴ The main objective here is simply to interest students in philosophy, whether it is analytic or continental, feminist or Marxist, ancient or modern.

²⁵ *The Quest for Certainty*, 157.