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The 'New' Logic in Dewey's Pragmatism and its Echo in Contemporary Logic*

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The logical theory of John Dewey, a representative of classical pragmatism, is an important part of his philosophy but has not been paid full attention by scholars. The paper explores three major aspects of Dewey's logical thought with the attempts to present the theoretical claims of his doctrine of logic. On this basis, the paper analyses the internal connection between Dewey's logical theory and his philosophical thought, as well as some notional resonances and echoes the former has caused in the context of contemporary logic. The investigation not only enriches our understanding of the connotations of Dewey's philosophy and even the pragmatic philosophy, but also helps us to further deepen the understanding of the research of contemporary logic.

Keywords: Dewey's logical theory, inquiry, fallibilism, situation, contemporary logic

INTRODUCTION

John Dewey is a representative of classical pragmatism and shares its long-cherished concerns with logic. As a philosopher rather than a logician, Dewey emphasises that logic is a holistic inquiry into the cognitive activities of human beings, and is a methodology that guides the correct conduct of inquiry. Dewey's philosophy covers many domains in which logic is an important part and closely related to every aspect of his thought. On the other hand, Dewey's logical theory not only provides solid support for his own philosophical system but also resonates in contemporary logic.

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In this paper, we will first examine three representative aspects of Dewey's logical theory: the relationship between organic experience and the logic of inquiry, his discussion of the object of logical investigation, and the fallibilism of his logical theory. Based on the multilevelled exploration, we will investigate the influence of his logical theory on other aspects of his thought. Finally, we will retrospect Dewey's logical thought in the context and models of contemporary logic. Through the above argumentation, it is potentially valuable to explore the Dewey's logical theory to deepen our understanding of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, and of the development of contemporary logical theory more broadly.

DEWEY'S 'NEW' LOGIC

Logic was once viewed as being capable of describing the ultimate structure of the universe because the rule of thinking that it is intended to investigate is exactly that law in light of which reason has formed the world. It was also thought to be the study of correct reasoning rules, involving the investigation of the terms, concepts, propositions, and the validity of reasoning. This orientation determined that the subject of logic was isolated from facts.

Dewey proposed a 'new' kind of logic by adhering to pragmatic thought. This new kind of logic differs from both formal logic, which emphasises reasoning norms, and ontological logic, which equates logic with the operating rules of the world. It is a theory of inquiry used to investigate how human activities in specific situations are related to each other and how they enhance human welfare. R. Sleeper described Dewey's logic as 'a concept of intelligent behavior' (Sleeper 1986: 99), and J. Stuhr commented: 'Dewey's account of logic as the theory of inquiry and his account of the nature and pattern of inquiry signaled a far-reaching revolution in logic' (Stuhr 2002: 276).

Organic Experience and Inquiring Logic

The concept of experience weighs on Dewey's philosophy. Under the influence of Darwinian evolutionism, Dewey regarded experience as an organic kind of life activity. An organism acts on environments, and changes in said environments occur in response to the organism and its activities. Experience refers not only to what humans do and undergo, but also to how they act and how they are influenced by other activities; in a word, it is the processing of experiencing.

Meanwhile, experience always occurs in a series of phases, and always points to the future. Anticipation is therefore more rudimentary than recollection, and prospect is more radical than retrospect. When experience becomes something experimental, it is more than a certain habitual compliance formed by behaviors in the past, but rather an inspiration and guide for future goals, so as to produce new experience. Therefore, experience being 'constructively self-regulative' (Dewey 1982: 134).

Inquiry is the rhythm of the flux of experience, and the process in which experience is constantly reorganised and thus grows. Dewey substituted inquiry for cognition, which is based on the dichotomy of subject and object. In other words, cognition, which requires understanding from another perspective, is not a spectator separated from the world, but makes use of situational tools to re-arrange experience by means of experiments; it permeates the turbulent world of experience to bring the chaotic into order. Dewey regarded logic as the theory of inquiry, which indicates that logic is not only the inference of forms, but also the study of the cognition of human beings in general. It is the unity of epistemology and logic.

The Object of Logic

Dewey believed that the theses in traditional logic were universal, with their forms independent of their contents and unrelated to the intention of an operator. 'Therefore theoretical or formal conceptions of logic often fail to describe how we actually think' (Pappas 2016: 454). He emphasised that all logical forms should arise from inquiries, and be closely related to control over experiential activities.

Logic is thus meant to investigate inquiry taking place in a specific situation. From a biological-anthropological standpoint, Dewey regarded this situation as the interaction between an organism and its environment – a field wherein experience occurs and develops. The interference of inquiry clarifies and reorganises elements in a given situation, leaving it certain and consistent. That is to say, inquiry aims to re-integrate experience into an ongoing action, turning uncertain, unstable and disarranged situations into harmonious ones.

Russell argued that Dewey's view of situation and continuous inquiry might cause the infinite expansion of a situation so that in the end it might contain the whole universe (Russell 1939). Russell misunderstood the term 'situation' in Dewey because the former looked at the term epistemologically, necessitating a conceptual description and definition. This is not, however, how Dewey made use of the term 'situation', for he regarded cognition as a pattern of human activity or existence in the world. In Dewey's view, a situation has its boundary, and should be thought of as a specific field that produces uncertainty in the transactions between organisms and environments. In this sense, it is the situation that makes human cognition possible, not vice versa. Cognition is one kind of human experiential activity, and situations are not experienced as situations; on the contrary, experience must be situated, taking place within a situation. Therefore, looking at a situation after self-reflection in the subject–object, the knower-known way is like putting the cart before the horse.

In the end, Dewey held that logical forms are those tools that can be used in inquiry to successfully solve problems. Logical forms are not imposed on the subjects of inquiry, but arise from inquiry.

Fallibilism in Dewey's Logical Theory

Dewey's logical theory is concerned with not only forms, but also existential affairs. The critical point here is 'the importance of thinking in terms of processes rather than static time-slices' (Hickman 2022: 5). As a gradual matter, inquiry is the continuous process of each field in which it takes part. This process needs to be open to each step of inquiry, and able to serve as a foundation for further inquiry, but cannot itself be understood as yielding permanent truth. '*Preexisting and ongoing* serial relations, and not physical contiguities, provide the bases for thought in general, and thus for the doubt that initiates inquiry' (Cherlin 2020: 315).

Dewey embraced fallibilism with respect to knowledge. Knowledge should not be understood as nominalisation; rather, it should be interpreted as 'knowing'. Logical rules are generalised and universally induced in a long-term continuous inquiry and then effectively guide the subsequent inquiry, but the rules themselves are not fixed, and need to be constantly revised in accordance with the situation. Validity, instead of certainty, is therefore the very aim of Dewey's logical theory. The result of inquiry is 'neither certain nor permanent. The best it can offer is a measure of stability in an otherwise precarious world' (Hickman 1998: 167). The value of knowledge does not lie in its faithful reflection of 'reality', but rather in that in real practice it specifies questions in a situation.

Dewey believed that the solution of particular problems in a situation was achieved through judgment. Dewey distinguished judgment from proposition. In his view, a judgment is a settled outcome of inquiry and a final assertion, while a proposition is something that has been affirmed but yet definitively decided. In James' likening of the stream of consciousness to a bird's flight and perching, a judgment is something 'substantial' occurring at a critical point, comparable to the places at which one might stay or perch in the stream of consciousness, while a proposition is something instrumental and transitional, analogous to the stream's flight. In this sense, the formation of a judgment means a decision, the ending of a debate.

From the analysis above, we can see that the discovery of knowledge in the form of propositions is not the aim of inquiry. Dewey put forwards a more radical view, namely that judgments can be divided into the warranted and unwarranted, or reliable and unreliable. A judgment is unwarranted if it is arbitrarily made, but if it is the result of intelligent inquiry, it is warranted, or in traditional terms, 'true'.

Overall, Dewey presents a pragmatic and empirical logical theory, emphasising that logic should be an outcome of real life and social practice, and should provide a useful guide for the solution of problems in reality. Therefore, logic should be oriented towards facts and should inquire about facts.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEWEY'S LOGICAL THEORY TO HIS PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

Like many other philosophers throughout history, Dewey showed a preference for logical theories. However, his logical theory does not focus on logical investigation for the sake of logic itself, but rather tries hard to demonstrate a unique understanding of the mutual relationship among logical forms, logical relations, and pragmatic philosophy.

Firstly, some logicians divide 'logic' into three types (Bochenski 1965: 8–9):

1) Formal logic: The rules dealing with valid reasoning;

2) Methodology: The application of said rules;

3) Philosophy of logic: The raising of fundamental questions about the essence and laws of logic.

Dewey unambiguously opposed the separation of logical forms and cognitive activities. In his view, logical rules and themes are inseparable. Inquiry is simply the practical application of methodology, providing logical forms. Therefore, both the methodology of inquiry and the formal criteria guiding inquiry are indispensable. Dewey 'is concerned much more with methodology, with the process of inquiry, which is the source of logical forms, than with the formalism itself. This position is typical of Dewey's general emphasis on "context" and "tensional situations". Inquiry, as the activity which applies the proper methodology for resolving these situations, receives extensive treatment' (Boisvert 1988: 182).

Secondly, Dewey's logical theory is related to his anti-foundationalist stance in philosophy. His logic is not aimed at providing a neutral foundation for human cognitive activities, but at developing a conceptual tool and truly undergoing living experience to assist with the analysis and solution of specific problems. By doing so, it intends to expand the breadth and depth of experience, further strengthen humanity's control over nature, and guide its development. To achieve this objective, Dewey endeavoured to construct a completely new set of logical terms in his later work *Knowing and the Known*, which he co-authored with Arthur Bentley (Dewey 1989). Dewey believed that to take philosophy as a kind of inquiry is to emphasise the continuity between life and science, oppose 'armchair philosophy', advocate for the breaking-down

of the barriers between natural science, biology, social science, literature and even art, and actively absorb the discoveries of these disciplines. In Dewey's view, these integrations do not threaten philosophical research itself; on the contrary, they help enhance it.

In Dewey, therefore, logic is not a transcendental framework independent of experience, but rather stems from the process of human interaction with environments. What logic needs to consider is not how to discover fixed truths, but how to effectively guide inquiry through continuous trial, error and improvement so as to create more meanings. This provides a unique perspective on the acquisition and application of knowledge. Dewey was uninterested in analysing the correspondence between the structure of propositions and the world by means of the construction of a symbolic system. Instead, he employed a logical theory to clarify the instrumental significance of each link and step in the process of inquiry: on the one hand, verifiable empirical descriptions should be offered for each link in the inquiry process; on the other, some methods can be formulated by reflecting on the structure of inquiry, so that incorrect operations can be avoided thereafter.

Moreover, Dewey's perspective on logic also affected his interest in many academic fields. For instance, Dewey advocated studying the meaning and usage of language in the specific situation where it is used, holding that the meaning of language stems from people's life experience and practice. His logical theory provides a methodological framework for democratic societies, emphasising the resolution of social conflicts through open dialogue and experimentation (Veen 2011). Dewey's logical theory emphasises learning through practice and experience, which directly influenced his educational concept of 'learning by doing', which holds that the soul of education lies in the cultivation of students' capability for inquiry rather than the simple imparting of knowledge. And his ethics no longer rely on fixed moral principles, but emphasise the dynamics, contextualisation, and the practicality of moral judgments and reasoning.

THE ECHOES OF DEWEY'S LOGICAL THEORY IN CONTEMPORARY LOGIC

With the expansion of the scope of philosophical logic, logicians at the beginning of the 20th century were no longer satisfied with the study of a mathematical, axiomatic system and turned their eyes to the process of human experiential inquiry. Here, Dewey's theory is unavoidable: modern and contemporary logic's perspective possesses many resonances, echoes, and connections with Dewey's logical theory, and deserves serious attention.

The 'Situation' in Contemporary Logic

Human inquiry is a complex process involving the interaction of multiple factors. The form of reasoning can determine the direction and outcome of its development, as well as such comprehensive factors as the specific object of inquiry and the practical environment in which the inquiry occurs. For inquiry into this new object, traditional formal logic, which takes the validity of reasoning as its concern, is no longer the most suitable tool. Therefore, logicians have turned to more non-traditional reasoning models and the formalisation of certain concepts and activities which can affect human experiential inquiry. Contemporary logicians have not adhered to the subject–object dichotomisation of traditional epistemology, regarding objects in the acquisition of human experience as unchanging, and have instead given them the same status as the subject, believing that they together constitute the 'situation' that makes human cognition possible. We can describe this shift in light of

Dewey's theory: the form and content of logic are an organic whole, both belonging to a specific situation in an inquiry.

How to holistically represent and depict in a logical system these developing and interacting unified factors has become a focus and difficulty in contemporary philosophical logic. In virtue of such purposes, modal logic that cares about and discusses such concepts as necessity, possibility, time and causality has become increasingly important. In particular, 'Belief revision theory in AGM style and dynamic-epistemic logic of information change are two major manifestations of the "Dynamic Turn" in logic' (van Benthem 2007: 129). Although these two theories are not exactly the same, they share a common objective: to represent with precise logical language the status of information updates during the interaction between a subject and his external environment. This dynamic shift focuses on changes in human beliefs during a cognitive process, which is the same as the 'processing of experiencing' emphasised by Dewey.

The Attributes of 'Situation' in Logical Theories

Some specific properties of a 'situation' mentioned in Dewey's logical theory have analogues in the models of modern and contemporary philosophical logic. Since the mid-20th century, both the humanities and social sciences have actively expressed their desire to cooperate with logic. Some scholars, among them C. Rosental, have held that 'logic itself is also a proper object of sociological inquiry and ethnographic observation, and a privileged source of data for exploring the material and social forms of intellectual work, such as the building of credibility' (Rosental 2003: 624). In this new social cognitive logic, we can see the 'social and cultural attributes of situation' mentioned in Dewey's theory. In his view, humans are both biological and cultural beings; to a large extent, their responses to the environment and their behavioural patterns are influenced by their cultural situation. Social cognitive logic starts with another aspect of 'interaction' so as to depict the influence of social relations on people's reasoning and beliefs, displaying the interaction between individuals and communities and the dynamics thereof with respect to group structures, group relations, and how changes in collective beliefs influence individual ones. Such a line of inquiry can lead to the same conclusions as Dewey's evolutionary theory despite differing in specific methods. Dewey did not regard situation as 'something' in the epistemological sense. In his words, 'What stimulates inquiry is not just an environment as such but rather a field of organism-environment interaction, particularly an instance of breakdown or disturbance in organism-environment transactions' (Burke 2002: xv). Carlo Proietti and Antonio Yuste-Ginel also offered 'an evolutionary explanation' to interpret human communication at the social level when they studied abstract argumentation from the perspective of dynamic cognitive logic (Proietti, Yuste-Ginel 2021: 8647).

The idea of evolution in a situation is characterised by 'succession' as well as interaction. In Dewey's view, inquiry takes place within a situation, which is a developing whole. Different situations occur in succession, and some things can be passed from a given situation to later ones. The 'static model' in belief revision theory has the same property of situational succession as does Dewey's theory, although this model opts for the term 'static' instead. In *Dynamic Logic for Belief Revision,* the static model is described as such: 'the current static model already contains all information about what might happen when agents communicate what they know. … Phrased in a slogan: "The epistemic/doxastic present already contains the epistemic future"' (van Benthem 2007: 133).

Dewey's 'Warranted Assertion' and Belief Revision Theory

Besides a concern for situationality, another overlap between Dewey's logical theory and more recent approaches involves the former's fallibilism and the latter's belief revision theory. Dewey holds that a final judgment is an obstacle to continuous inquiry. Such a dynamic understanding of knowledge implies that knowledge cannot guarantee its validity in any given inquiry's situation and cannot be considered uncorrectable in further inquiry.

The belief revision theory proposed in the 1970s attempted to formally describe with logical methods the process of the subject's information-updating, including changes in a subject's knowledge occurring through such processes as cognition, declaration, interpretation, communication and reasoning. During the process of belief revision, knowledge is no longer a fixed axiom or premise, but an object and product of the logical inquiry process. Knowledge confirmed as 'invalid' in the situation of inquiry will be removed from the set of a subject's beliefs, and the knowledge considered valid will be added to the set of beliefs. When we carefully analyse those epistemological views behind the logical path which is adopted by the belief revision theory, we unexpectedly encounter the idea proposed by Dewey.

Belief revision theory clearly distinguishes between two concepts of belief and knowledge, holding that knowledge usually refers to the information known by a subject, and can be classified as true or false. A belief is the knowledge accepted by a subject. Whether the subject accepts it or not evinces a cognitive attitude, and has no necessary relation with the truth or falsehood of that knowledge. In comparison, Dewey's logic distinguishes between propositions and assertions. It is thus not difficult to see that the term 'assertions' in Dewey's logical theory corresponds to 'belief' in the theory of belief revision, and that propositions have properties similar to those of knowledge.

This correspondence between Dewey and more recent logicians extends to notions of truth and of the validation of belief. Dewey considered 'warranted assertions' rather than anything else the purpose of inquiry, and had them replace the 'truth' of traditional epistemology. Thus, reasons (evidences) are key for knowledge becoming assertions. Van Benthem mentions the importance of evidence for the establishment of beliefs: 'A rational belief must be grounded in the evidence available to an agent' (van Benthem, Pacuit 2011: 61); he adopts the neighbourhood models of modal logic to depict an evidence structure, and proposes modelling levels of reliability of evidence. This line of investigation coincides with the participatory rather than the bystander research perspective proposed by Dewey.

Dewey's 'Inquiry Mode' and Logical Operators

Dewey believed that inquiry as a behavioural pattern has a common structure that can be objectively researched. The logician Russell, a contemporary of Dewey, agreed with Dewey's theory that human cognitive activities are a process of inquiry. The disagreement between Dewey and Russell concerning the result of inquiry can be viewed as a disagreement between two worldviews or paradigms. Russell held that inquiry has to be determined by existing facts or 'truth'; in other words, inquiry is the process of discovering facts (Russell 1995: 318–326). The 'truth' for Dewey, in comparison, is determined by inquiry – that is, the nature of the operational procedures that derive from observing both propositions and their underlying reasoning and inference determines whether the final result of the inquiry is true or false, warranted or unwarranted.

Dewey's original intention of entrusting inquiry about the 'mode' of inquiry to logic has been realised in the practice of contemporary philosophical logic. As is shown by the development of philosophical logic since the 1970s, its research path does show an obvious pattern when formally describing the subject and factors that interact with it. Although concepts such as knowledge, belief and communication themselves are subjective and vary according to the subjects, the models used to depict them can be fairly objective.

Most branches of contemporary philosophical logic are based on modal logic. In order to depict cognitive behaviours, scholars first add cognitive operators such as 'know' and 'believe' to modal logic, then describe and study in an axiomatic way the commonalities of these cognitive behaviours, and finally apply their insights to reality so as to test and reflect on cognitive processes. This leads to cognitive logic. Then, in order to study the dynamic process of cognition, they add dynamic operators to cognitive logic. Within this system, the updating of cognition can be represented with the help of dynamic operators rather than static; this results in dynamic cognitive logic.

The study of social logic also adheres to the same pattern. In order to demonstrate the influence of social factors on a subject's cognition, social relations are introduced into cognitive logic as a new operator. A social model is thus established to formally describe the revision of community members' individual beliefs and the dynamic changes in collective beliefs. Similarly, scholars have added the evidence operator and trust operator into dynamic cognitive logic to describe the interaction between trust, belief and evidence. Discussion of the reasoning and debating process also shows that the above-mentioned pattern 'is a naturalized approach that sees reasoning as a specific cognitive module' (Proietti 2021: 8647). The factors affecting the interaction between man and environments, including cognition, preferences, trust, and even society, appear in the form of operators with common structures or patterns to be objectively studied. These common structures are applicable to both the natural and social sciences, albeit with different factors emphasised in different fields models of inquiry.

CONCLUSIONS

Dewey attached great importance to his logical theory, but compared with his theories in philosophy and education it has been somewhat neglected. This paper sorts out and analyses the core arguments of Dewey's logic theory so as to present its major claims. We are convinced that he did not construct his logical theory merely for the sake of logic, but rather and primarily to serve the philosophy of instrumentalism which is the internal basis of his theory of inquiry. Therefore, his logical theory is an indispensable part of his overall philosophy. Contemporary logic has undergone revolutionary formal, topical and methodological changes since the 20th century, and some topics in Dewey's logic such as situationality, understanding of knowledge, inquiry mode, etc. either coincide with its concerns or reach the same conclusion independently. The line of inquiry pursued in this paper can not only deepen the understanding of Dewey's logic itself, but also enrich our understanding of contemporary research on logic.

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„Naujoji" logika J. Dewey pragmatizme ir jos atgarsiai šiuolaikinėje logikoje

Santrauka

Klasikinio pragmatizmo atstovo Johno Dewey loginė teorija yra svarbi jo filosofijos dalis, tačiau mokslininkai jai neskyrė pakankamai dėmesio. Straipsnyje nagrinėjami trys pagrindiniai J. Dewey loginės minties aspektai: patirtis ir tyrimas, loginių objektų teorija ir falibilizmas, siekiant pateikti jo logikos doktrinos teorinius teiginius. Remiantis tuo, straipsnyje analizuojamas vidinis ryšys tarp J. Dewey loginės teorijos ir jo filosofinės minties, taip pat kai kurie teoriniai rezonansai ir atgarsiai, kuriuos ji sukėlė šiuolaikinėje logikoje. Šis tyrimas ne tik gilina mūsų supratimą apie J. Dewey filosofijos ir net pragmatinės filosofijos sąsajas, bet ir padeda geriau suprasti šiuolaikinės logikos tyrimus.

Raktažodžiai: Johno Dewey loginė teorija, pragmatizmas, tyrimas, falibilizmas, situacija, šiuolaikinė logika