
With this refreshing new book, Tom Burke single-handedly reopens a debate which has lain dormant--yet unresolved--for nearly fifty years. As this is no meager accomplishment, Dewey's New Logic is rich with insights and subtleties the likes of which cannot be properly addressed in a single review. Thus in what follows I shall offer only the most general comments regarding the overall content of this book, leaving the more detailed scrutiny which Burke's work deserves for colleagues and more appropriate fora.

In his introduction, Burke locates two ambitions which he hopes to satisfy:


As Burke here implies, Dewey's New Logic is written mainly for those more familiar with Russell's metalinguistics/mathematical approach to logic than with Dewey's naturalistic, inquiry-based theory (who else would need an "explanation" and "justification" of Dewey's views?). In this regard Burke's book is ground breaking--his study is the first I have seen which is not written for an exclusively pragmatist or Deweyan audience. Realizing that "The exchange between Dewey and Russell is really a debate about what logic is" (137) rather than a dispute about some fine points within a logical theory they held in common, Burke does more than simply explicate Dewey's text from a sympathetic perspective, he overtly pursues his latter, more inclusive aim of vindicating Dewey's general approach to logic against the more popular, but undoubtedly less fecund, Russellian/Fregean model.

To accomplish this, Burke adopts the jargon and methods of his projected audience (i.e., "analytic" philosophers who have been trained in the "linguistic" tradition) and devotes a large portion (almost half) of the book to an examination of Dewey's theories of propositions and judgments. Dewey himself dedicates more than two hundred pages of his 1938 Logic (see parts Two and Three of Logic) to the development of these points; nevertheless, his views concerning propositions and judgments are among the most difficult, hence most often ignored or misunderstood, aspects of his theory of inquiry. I know of no better treatment of
Dewey's thoughts about the function of linguistic symbols in inquiry than Burke's. With Dewey's theories of (and distinctions between) propositions and judgments in focus, the superficiality of Russell's criticisms, especially those regarding Dewey's notion of "warranted assertability" (as contained not only in his 1939 review of Dewey's Logic, but also in his 1940 An Inquiry Into Meaning and Truth), become embarrassingly obvious even to the most vehement "anti-pragmatist."

In fact, Burke has little trouble in furnishing a sophisticated and thorough reply to Russell's "critique." This is not particularly surprising, for as anyone who has studied this debate will agree, "Russell's criticisms were forcefully presented with characteristic wit, but he simply failed to comprehend Dewey's views." (7) Although Burke is to be commended for his successful "Reply to Russell," the most crucial aspect of his project is his attempt to "explain and justify" Dewey's logical theory. Granted, this is no minor task and Burke is generally pretty good, however, I detect two problems with his presentation worth mentioning here.

In the first place, Burke quite rightly devotes a sizable portion of his text to Dewey's notion of "The Situation" (22-53), but he fails to acknowledge Dewey's distinction between a "determinate" or "unified" situation and an "indeterminate" or "problematic" situation. Burke recognizes that "The notion of a [the?] situation . . . is a full-fledged technical notion in Deweyan logic" (22), but he nevertheless proceeds to use the term in a confining way. He defines 'situations' as "instances or episodes (or "fields") of disequilibrium, instability, imbalance, disintegration, disturbance, dysfunction, breakdown, etc." (22). "Such instances of disintegration constitute a situation, where it is the business of inquiry to dissolve situations." (142). On this point, Burke is simply mistaken. Dewey employs "The Situation" as a basic category of experience, not as a term descriptive of a certain state of affairs (e.g., "episodes" of "instability," etc.) Dewey defines "The Situation" in his Logic as "a contextual whole" (Dewey, LW12:72) which is what experience is not only of but into. An organism and the environment to which it belongs and within which it is functioning constitute the situation. A "situation" can generally be of two kinds—"determinate" or "indeterminate." A "determinate" situation is one in which factors are so settled as to not present a problem for the functioning organism. And "indeterminate" situation, on the other hand, is one in which factors are so confused as to present a "problem" for the functioning organism; and indeterminate situation produces in an organism Peircean "doubt," a hesitation in action, a state in which the organism does not know what to do. This is, of course, a familiar story. However, I should like to remind Mr. Burke that Dewey insists "It is the situation that has these traits" (Dewey, LW12: 109). Thus inquiry is not a process by which situations are, as Burke says, "dissolved" but rather it is the objective of inquiry to resolve indeterminate situations into determinate ones. This might seem a minor point. Indeed, Burke manages to quell Russell's infamous ad absurdum
regarding the size of a situation (see Shilpp, 139-140) easily enough in spite of this error; nonetheless, Burke's later discussions of, for example, habits and intelligence become confusing (and in some places misleading) because of the missing distinction.

A second, but related, shortcoming of Burke's presentation of Dewey's logic is his failure to include any mention of what Dewey called "The Cultural Matrix of Inquiry" (Chapter Three of *Logic*. According to Burke, inquiry is merely the process of stabilizing an "organism/environment system" (22). This characterization, along with many of the examples Burke employs throughout the book, promote a strictly biological/physiological view of inquiry, and hence tend to simplify Dewey's theory. The early Dewey had faced several difficulties because terms as "adjustment," "environment," and "reflex-circuit" bore connotations too narrow for Dewey's actual meaning; his later terminology—"situation," "inquiry," "transaction,"—is deliberately designed so as to be inclusive of cultural factors in inquiry such as language/communication, history, economics, education and all other forms of shared experience. Burke is right when he says that "In Dewey's view, logical theory should address not just a formal study of linguistic syntax but it should be grounded in a theory of experience" (136), but this just confirms that no treatment of Dewey's logical theory could be complete without some mention of culture.

Generally speaking, Tom Burke has written an exciting, provocative, and genuinely important new book which should be read by anyone interested in Dewey's theory of inquiry or even the history of American philosophy. With *Dewey's New Logic: A Reply to Russell*, Mr. Burke has made a major contribution to the advancement of American philosophy and has filled a void in the Dewey literature which had been for too long left open.

New York University

Robert B. Talisse

---


Ulrich Engler, in his, *Critique of Experience* strives to present to the German philosophical scene a "post-Rortyan" image of John Dewey the critical and constructive thinker whose theories are grounded in the concept of aesthetic experience, as opposed to that of Dewey the mere instrumentalist or educationalist. From my viewpoint, the three most significant theses of this well-researched book read as follows: first, in order to counterbalance our technologically determined life conditions, we need to look not at the currently fashionable aestheticization of all life expressions of a dwindling subjectivity, but at aesthet-