This political pedagogy of Dewey is an element that is unfortunately missing from most educational settings and institutions. With the pressures of budget cuts and accountability regimes, the experiences Dewey would think are central of an educational experience are pushed out for rote vocational training.

Another aspect of Dewey’s work that scholars still find important is his social and political criticism. His work that challenged the emerging structures that allowed elite interests to overwhelm the interests of the masses through media and “public opinion” are extremely relevant for today’s world. In Kersten Reich’s chapter, “Democracy and Education after Dewey,” she writes: “The fact that it is possible even today to describe and reflect problems and opportunities for development in education and democracy by using and extending Dewey’s criteria shows how current Dewey’s think continues to be” (p. 83).

The reviving of the Deweyan spirit and the attempts to return to his work has found homes in fields outside education and often include political science, the arts, and psychology. What is interesting is that, in many philosophy departments, his work is still seen as more of a curiosity than as an influence for future work.

The last section of particular note comes from Larry Hickman’s contribution, “Evolutionary Naturalism, Logic, and Lifelong Learning.” Hickman addresses the critique that is often made about Dewey having a relativist conception of ethics. This is of course far from accurate, but that has not stopped conservative writers from blaming Dewey for the ills of so-called “progressive” education. In point of fact, Dewey’s stance on ethics was much more sophisticated and historical in nature. Dewey contrasted the dominant moral perspective that relied upon a set of universal and unchanging human values with the notion of societies engaging in the practice of democracy to construct such social norms and political ideals. Hickman puts it this way:

Dewey’s philosophy of education was neither scientific nor nihilistic. He did not seek to destroy values, but he did think that it is the duty of every member of a democratic society to seek ways of refining and reconstructing values in response to changing circumstances. (p. 133).

Dewey’s acknowledgement of the ability and need for societies to evolve through democratic action is certainly one of his most enduring and important legacies.

Overall, this volume provides a substantial contribution to the literature that explores Dewey’s hallmark themes of education and democracy. It is worthy of attention and careful study from all scholars who seek to reconstruct our educational and political systems away from inequality and towards progress.

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Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., introduces this special issue of *Contemporary Pragmatism (CP)* on Cornel West with a call to reclaim West’s thought for American pragmatism. For Glaude one of the pragmatic reasons for resituating West’s thought within the American pragmatist tradition is that doing so enable us to view pragmatism as a live tradition whose tools can be used by African American thinkers to reflect upon their tragicomic and peculiar condition in the twilight of Western modernity (pp. 1-2). Given the six articles featured in this issue of *CP*, Glaude apparently thinks that studying West’s 2004 book, *Democracy Matters (DM)*, is a fruitful means of accomplishing this, all the while injecting some much-needed tragicomic, “blues-inflected,” Christian, and Chekovian sensibilities into the mainstream of American pragmatist thought. For the sake of brevity, let me just mention the central themes of these six articles.

Thomas McCarthy’s article, “The Natural Order of Things: Social Darwinism and White Supremacy,” is written to be an accompaniment to West’s own genealogical narrative in *DM* of how the United States, at its birth, was simultaneously (and paradoxically) anti-imperialist with respect to Britain and imperialistic in its yearning to expand westward and to perpetuate a social institution that enslaved millions of Africans (p. 7). McCarthy takes up West’s genealogical narrative at the dawn of the 20th century. This is when Euro-Americans and European thinkers gradually shifted their justifications of white supremacy from appealing to evolutionary biology to appealing to Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority. Justifying racism culturally led to an apparently kinder, gentler racism. It is in this socio-historical milieu wherein Social Darwinism waned while the paternalistic racism that still undergirds white supremacy today became the dominant model for justifying the racist status quo (p. 21).

Eduardo Mendieta’s article, “Translating Democracy or Democratic Acts of Translation: On Cornel West’s *Democracy Matters*,” examines how West performs three significant democratic acts of translation in *DM*. The first democratic act of translation involves West translating “African American memory of racist indignity and triumphant democratic citizenry into a forward-looking memory of U.S. democracy” (p. 29). This is West’s way of transforming a centuries-long struggle against white supremacy into the wellspring for a realistic yet hopeful “democratic logos” (p. 29). The second democratic act of translation involves him translating the African American history of ennobling struggle against racial oppression (p. 27) into a vibrant resource for *democratic paideia* (p. 31). The third democratic act of translation involves him translating the aesthetic creativity of African Americans, particularly African American youth culture, into a resource for renewing the promise of democracy, not only in the hearts of American citizens, but also of all those worldwide who yearn for genuine democracy (pp. 34-36).

Jeffrey Stout’s article, “A Prophetic Church in a Post-Constantinian Age: The Implicit Theology of Cornel West,” traces some of the implicit theological commitments motivating West’s prophetic social criticism. These theological commitments include (1) grounding politics in *charism*, in which both ecclesiastical churches and governmental institutions are seen as fallible, “earthen vessel[s] into which divine gifts are poured” (p. 42); (2) conceiving of the Christian Church as that institution charged by God to decry the sins of empire, racism, sexism, economic exploitation, and homophobia (p. 39); (3) subjecting the Church itself to prophetic criticism so that it can be held responsible for its prophetic mission; and (4) conceiving of the God worthy of worship as being a God-who-suffers-with-us and the One-who-lifts-us-up-in-love (pp. 41-42). While Stout questions the adequacy of West’s Christology, as articulated in
commitment (4), on theological grounds, he recognizes that West’s pneumatology, which is a central component of commitment (1), is more robust than the pneumatology of many practicing Christian theologians (p. 43).

Jason A. Springs’ article, “The Priority of Democracy to Social Theory,” cautions us to be wary of Sheldon Wolin’s influence on West’s approach to socio-theoretical critique. This is because using Wolin’s conception of “fugitive democracy” and its excesses “risk implicating West in a set of theoretical oppositions that may ultimately deplete the resources of democratic faith and social hope that he ultimately seeks to vitalize” (p. 49). Springs thinks that West can sidestep this problem by situating his socio-theoretical critique in the prophetic Black Church (pp. 64-67). Indeed, he thinks that West already has the resources to do that with his prophetic pragmatism (p. 67).

Marc Lombardo’s article, “On the Frank Speech of Cornel West’s Prophetic Witness,” explains how West’s prophetic witness updates the ancient Greek and Foucauldian notions of parrhesia and the parárrhésiastes for early 21st century democratic societies. However, as Lombardo explains the differences between parrhesia and prophetic speech, a question arises: If Lombardo, following Foucault, is correct that only a citizen can truly perform parrhesia (for only a citizen faces the very real risk of losing everything by speaking frankly to the sovereign) whereas the prophetic witness cannot engage in parrhesia, technically speaking (for he or she is able to speak truthfully precisely because he or she has “already lost anything and everything worth risking”), then why compare West’s prophetic witness with the Foucauldian parárrhésiastes in the first place (p. 82)? I would suggest that Lombardo would have done his readers a valuable service by simply removing his lengthy discussion of Foucauldian parárrhésiastes and by devoting more of his article to a more thorough analysis of West’s prophetic witness and the prophetic notion of truth presupposed in prophetic speech.

Paul C. Taylor’s article, “Making Niagara a Cataract: Cornel West, Greatness, and the Music of Ideas,” is such a masterful analysis of the polyphonic, blues-inflected, and jazz-inspired nature of West’s thought that it easily warrants a thousand-word review by itself. This is a must-read article for anyone interested in West’s philosophy, from advanced undergraduates to experts in Westian thought. This article should be of particular interest to the following groups of scholars: (1) Those who would like a lucid account of why West is fascinated with evaluative judgments of people’s greatness and why he thinks that only a relatively few artists and intellectuals are genuinely great; (2) those who might be interested in how West can advocate a form of moral perfectionism within a democratic society; and (3) those who, like Lewis R. Gordon, wonder how West can justify his claim that Toni Morrison is the only great, literary intellectual ever to emerge from the African American community.

On balance, this issue of CP is a valuable contribution to Westian scholarship that deserves to be studied alongside such important book-length studies of West’s thought such as George Yancy, ed., Cornel West: A Critical Reader (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), Clarence S. Johnson, Cornel West and Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 2002), and Rosemary Cowan, Cornel West: The Politics of Redemption (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2003).

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