EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us in the Twin Crisis

LEONARD J. WAKS

Temple University, Emeritus

Editor-in-chief

T he World Health Organization learned on December 31, 2019, that a cluster of cases of viral pneumonia had been reported in Wuhan, China. A month later, with confirmed cases in 19 countries, the WHO declared a Public Health Emergency. Nations around the world locked down non-essential economic activities. 30 Million U. S. workers filed claims for unemployment insurance. The UN's International Labour Organization forecasted "massive damage" to the livelihoods of 1.6 billion informal economy workers.[1] Globally, school and university closures had by April 2020 affected roughly 1.5 billion students.[2] By October 2020, 34 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported, with more than a million deaths.

On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) officers responded to a "forgery in progress," and ordered the suspect, George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American man, into their squad car. When he failed to comply, Officer Derek Chauvin placed his knee on Floyd's neck for nine minutes while Floyd pleaded "I can't breathe." In the last three minutes Floyd was non-responsive.[3]

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[1] Harry Kretchmer, 13 May 2020 How coronavirus has hit employment in G7 economies, *World Economic Forum*, accessed on October 3 2020 at
 https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/05/coronavirus-unemployment-jobs-work-impact-g7-pandemic/

[2] N/A, April 29, 2020. 1.3 billion learners are still affected by school or university closures, as educational institutions start reopening around the world, says UNESCO, UNESCO, accessed on October 3 2020 at
 https://en.unesco.org/news/13-billion-learners-are-still-affected-school-university-closures-educational-institutions

[3] Catherine Thorbecke, May 29, 2020. Derek Chauvin had his knee on George Floyd's neck for nearly 9 minutes, complaint says. ABC News. accessed on October 3 2020 at
https://abcnews.go.com/US/derek-chauvin-knee-george-floyds-neck-minutes-complaint/story?id=70961042

The COVID-19 pandemic and State Violence combined to form the Twin Crisis of 2020.

While people were dying in intensive care from COVID, Black Lives Matter protesters took to the streets, to be met with counter-protests by armed right-wing paramilitary groups.

Responding to the pandemic, President Donald Trump announced on January 22, 2020 that "We have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine." He repeated these re-assuring words on February 10: ""Looks like by April, you know, in theory, when it gets a little warmer, it miraculously goes away. …But we're doing great in our country." He repeated them again on February 24, ""When you have 15 people, and the 15 within a couple of days is going to be down to close to zero, that's a pretty good job we've done."[4] By late May, 100,000 U.S. residents were dead from COVID. On October 1, after mocking presidential candidate Joe Biden for wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, President Trump announced that both he and his wife had tested positive for COVID.

Responding to the protests and counter protests, Trump called the protesters thugs, demanded that toppled Confederate statues be restored, shared doctored images of black people attacking white people, and accused former President Barack Obama of "treason."[5] He refused repeatedly to condemn white supremacist groups, blamed

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[4] Tamara Keith, April 21, 2020. "Timeline: What Trump Has Said And Done About The Coronavirus". *NPR,* accessed on October 3 2020 at
https://www.npr.org/2020/04/21/837348551/timeline-what-trump-has-said-and-done-about-the-coronavirushttps://www.npr.org/2020/04/21/837348551/timeline-what-trump-has-said-and-done-about-the-coronavirus

[5] Christina Wilkie, June 25, 2020, "Trump cranks up attacks on the Black Lives Matter movement for racial justice." *CNBC*, accessed on October 3 2020 at
https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/25/trump-attacks-black-lives-matter-racial-justice-movement.html

violent outbursts on Black Lives Matter, and designated the anti-fascist movement Antifa a "terrorist organization," [6] cementing his role as Crisis Provocateur in Chief.

Pragmatism and Creative Democracy

Pragmatism, among prevailing philosophical persuasions, is uniquely equipped to respond to crisis. For John Dewey, the Twin Crisis is a paradigm *modern* philosophical problem. Writing on his 80th birthday, while the nation was still plunged in the great depression, he stated that the problems of the day are " found in the waste of grown men and women who are without the chance to work, and in the young men and young women who find doors closed." He said we would have to re-create democracy for our times "by deliberate and determined endeavor." [7] He added that the "powerful enemies of democracy can be successfully met only by the creation of personal attitudes in individual human beings," and that "the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute." Creative democracy is a distinct philosophical and educational problem: theorizing such attitudes and finding means to develop, sustain, and test them.

With that problem clearly in mind, *Dewey Studies* invited a group of distinguished philosophers and educators to reflect on the twin crisis. How are we to understand the crisis? What forces lie behind it? What attitudes sustain it and how can we work together to reconstruct them? How can we, as a democratic community, build a nation that works to protect and nourish us all?

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[6] N/A. May 31, 2020. "Antifa: Trump says group will be designated 'terrorist organisation" *BBC News,* accessed on October 3 2020 at
 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52868295
[7] LW14, 225.

Themes

The Two Crises are Connected

While the two crises may appear distinct, Marilyn Fischer argues persuasively that they cannot be disentangled. COVID-19 is a health challenge, but health is not merely a matter of doctors, nurses, and hospital beds, but all conditions underlying human flourishing:

> Racism is an indicator of how these conditions, the sunlight and soil of human lives, have been withheld from African Americans and other disadvantaged groups. When this withholding is defended in the name of freedom (such as freedom from "excessive" taxation, or outcomes of "voluntary," though asymmetric, labor contracts), then freedom for some functions as theft from others' required conditions for life. Racism today is indeed a public health crisis.

Fischer's statement indicates how both the pandemic and racism are seen through two competing ideological lenses. Most of our authors also refer to this ideological conflict as among the leading causes of our national stalemate in the wake of COVID. While progressives locate the pandemic in the context of climate change and plenary destruction, libertarians and cultural conservatives dismiss the virus as a hoax engineered to discredit them. While progressives see the need for ending state violence, and propose reconstructing police services, the conservatives call out for "Law and Order." There is no common ground for discussion. This problem is addressed by several contributors.

Democratic Culture and Discourse

Tom Alexander cites Dewey's words that democracy is controlled by a "working faith in the potentialities of human nature as …exhibited in every human being irrespective of race, color, sex, birth, and family, of material or cultural wealth" (LW 14: 226). In day to day life "we must be moved by a "generous belief" in their "possibilities as human beings." But clearly, once we wall ourselves off in warring camps, this generous belief rapidly erodes.

Dwayne Tunstall echoes this concern, noting that "people have become polarized over even minor issues related to COVID-19. The wearing of face coverings has become a political issue." He concludes that:

> We are not a part of a nationwide community, as we neither share a common past nor work together in pursuit of a shared future. This is evident in our failure to act together in ways that create and maintain conditions necessary for an equal opportunity to develop our talents to the greatest extent possible.

Both Alexander and Tunstall point to the need to rebuild a "democratic culture" and restore a "democratic discourse." But before we can even begin to figure out how to do that, we have to understand the conditions that have led us to this impasse.

The Media Landscape

Several of our contributors point to the media as the source of our deep divisions. Here we must distinguish between mass media, big polarizing media, and social media. The mass media have fallen under concentrated ownership, as Lance Mason describes, and are also

beholden to large advertising by commercial firms and political campaigns:

> Throughout the 20th century mass media has fostered an exodus away from the direct social life of local communities and toward ... distractions of consumer culture ... While media had previously presented structural problems for democracy, in the neoliberal era media has facilitated citizens' mistrust of government and institutions. Reputable media organizations cheered the passage of NAFTA and other trade deals, deregulation initiatives, and gutting of social welfare policies that had devastating consequences to working people in the form of lost jobs and a diminished social safety net. During this time, media companies consolidated into a handful of giant conglomerates ... treating news divisions as another profit-making enterprise resulting in today's hyper-partisanship media landscape.

Winston Thompson notes that the media reality now induces our responses to the world. He asks, "is it quite right to identify the *killing* as the cause of moral outrage and action? Perhaps, it is more accurate to identify the *video of* the killing as the source of mass moral motivation."

Steven Fesmire notes that these media images do not land on a t*abula rasa.* He says that when people impute meanings to events-- such as the 2020 killing of George Floyd, "they do so with ideas that already make sense to them ...And what makes most sense to people is typically due to others with whom they share identities and life experiences." They do not merely make sense, but are inspired to take action:

> We're driven to mobilize sustained action by convincing ourselves that our cause is morally or politically in the right, so they build on their stable-yet-evolving intellectual scaffolding and explanatory schemes to rationalize, justify, and sanctify their conduct.

In this way our sharp differences become self-augmenting. We become even more divided by becoming more and more divided.

Meanwhile, hyper-polarizing large media firms like FOX and MSNBC shaped news and opinion to appeal to the two divided political factions, which soon occupied two alternative realities, each accusing the other of 'fake news.' This has rendered 'democratic discussion' across difference impossible and shaken the 'generous belief' in the potentialities of those on the other side of the divide - dismissed as either deplorable bigots or libturds.

Moreover, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter are efficient vehicles for the spreading of every form of propaganda.

Nathan Crick notes that social media can become the instrument of new democratic forms of fascism:

> the networking power of internet and digital communication has made anyone with a smartphone a potential propagandist, and anyone with a social media account a potential propagand*ee*. With the benefit of instantaneous feedback tabulated through Big Data, these propagandists can easily gauge public opinion and adapt their messages to the latest trend. Fascism no longer requires a top-down approach to find recruits.

Nick Tampio then indicates both the allure and danger of such propagandizing:

The appeal of sharing propaganda is obvious. It taps into the viscera. It can make you laugh, but it almost always makes you angry. … The problem is that propaganda does not make you smarter or more thoughtful. It does not inculcate a habit of mind in which you hear multiple perspectives, and reflect a bit, before deciding on a course of action. People fall out of the habit of reading, writing, and thinking. Propaganda makes people feel like they are doing politics at the same time as they are losing the skills and disposition to be democratic citizens.

For Tampio, the first step toward recovery is simple: withdraw from social media - Just Stop Tweeting!

Resisting Inertia

The previous contributors then agree that the current media landscape is driving out conditions for democratic discussion and collective problem-solving. If creative democracy entails free communication among all on shared problems, corrupted information flows that promote antagonist identities are immense hurdles to it. We must find ways to overcome them.

Jessica Heybach calls on us to fight back against the media-induced fog. She describes our collective mindset as we are locked down and immersed within social media as a:

perpetual digital carousel: Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, Instagram, work email, personal email, CNN notifications, press briefings, text messages, Google, scrolling, scrolling, half reading, sharing, commenting, deleting, blocking, replying, alerts …   scattered-brained—utterly fragmented through dozens of technological algorithms all pulsating, all pushing, all demanding attention.

A natural temptation is to turn away, to return to our scholarship and teaching. But she warns that inattention is what has allowed problems from environmental disaster to systematic racism to fester. We have to navigate our way through the fog to find spaces to speak and act. Tom Burke agrees, noting while our situation is "really messed up," we must resist the temptation to take another "moral holiday,' and instead work to establish just laws based on scientific reason and evidence, and to spread methods of intelligence throughout society. The emphasis on legal reconstruction is echoed below in Todd Lekan's contribution.

Toward Democratic Renewal

Our contributors offer a number of ameliorative measures in our research and teaching practices and in our personal lives. Here are some of these.

Democratic Research and Philosophical Reconstruction

Sarah Stitzlein, John Lupinacci, Katie Terazakis and Scott Pratt all suggest shaping new democratic research programs. Stitzlein says "One way to revive democracy is to lead or participate in these inquiries and experiments." This will require "forming and growing small publics around areas of key concern, such as police brutality and racial inequities in the impact of COVID-19." Further:

> Within those publics, we must identify and define those problems—to name and frame them in ways that increase understandings, build movements, and shift perspectives of others.

Lupinacci sees diverse groups of scholars, educators, and community leaders working collaboratively to identify community needs. He then sees them working backwards from those needs to project better arrangements for education, including *"diverse students learning together to make decisions that support strong, local, living systems."* I am guessing that Luponacci would also welcome students on these research teams.

Terazakis, drawing on the work of philosopher John William Miller, also suggests a new philosophical project, the examination and recreation of tools. She says:

> Every system, he argued, however apparent or obvious, is made operative via functioning objects, whose symbolic, meaning-conditioning contributions tend to fade from notice in the using of them. As Martin Heidegger also said of tools, we notice them when in crisis; when the hammer breaks.

Arguing that the tools in our current toolbox, the assertion of liberal rights, and acts of protest, have been effectually nullified by the Trump-Barr regime, she calls upon us to fashion new ones, including the critique of capitalism and neoliberalism, and the promotion of a truth and reconciliation commission on the South African model.

Along somewhat similar lines, Scott Pratt also points to the philosophical task of forging new tools for re-invigorating democratic life. He states:

> Philosophers, educators, and policy makers who believe that reasserting the founding principles of the United States in this moment as a framework for change may be making a critical mistake. … Perhaps it is time to look elsewhere for more effective tools of resistance.

Pratt finds these new tools in the thought traditions and ways of life of our native peoples, recognizing that "the shared world of native and non-native peoples is a relational world where all its members—human and otherwise—are related and interdependent where the central relation is a matter of *place.*" This would entail acknowledging obligations to the land that supports us, the animals, plants, and lakes, as just like our obligations to other people.

Democratic Education

In one way or another, all of our contributors are concerned about democratic education in its broadest sense. I pick out three for special mention.

Paula McAvoy suggests the need for developing a "shared fate" philosophical conception of both democratic citizenship and citizenship education in our schools. She accepts that "living in the U.S. today feels like an ideological civil war awash in belligerency." In this situation, spreading the idea of 'shared fate' is appealing:

> The appeal of shared fate is that it attempts to shift how one identifies with politics. The psychology around partisanship shows that *identifying* with the party in a way that endorses us-vs-them thinking is at the root of belligerent attitudes …Applying the aim of shared-fate citizenship would mean that education invites students to put some critical distance between themselves and the major political parties. This would help students resist over identifying with a partisan team and instead promote allegiance to democratic values over party.

Corey McCall offers an intriguing account of public narratives and monuments as educators. Reflecting on Black Lives Matter

protests against statues of Confederate 'heroes,' McCall says "Heroes and monuments help constitute us and give us a story to tell about who we are. Monuments help make us "us," and this is why they matter. Monuments are our history teachers. They tell us "who we ought to be by determining how we ought to remember and understand our history. … how we ought to relate to the past."

But history is always contested, and narratives, in shaping an 'us,' always include some and exclude others. McCall uses James Baldwin's essay "The American Dream and the American Negro" to cement this point. Baldwin, considering the impact upon his youthful consciousness of the dominant white cultural narrative, is worth quoting at length:

> In the case of the American Negro, from the moment you are born every stick and stone, every face is white… It comes as a great shock … to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to see Gary Cooper killing off the Indians and, although you are rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians are you. It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and identity, has not … evolved any place for you.

McCall concludes that the critical reconsideration of our cultural narratives and monuments during our crisis period, can lead to new narratives, new ways of monumentalizing and remembering our past, and ultimately to a new, more inclusive democratic society. He would welcome ways of remembering our past that bring us together as possessing a "shared fate."

Myron Jackson also considers the way that narratives shape members of cultural groups, calling our attention to the Black freedom

struggle as exemplifying "a survivalist philosophy that finds stimulus to build alternative cultures in the disasters of panicked culture." A people living together through a history of disastrous events can develop an "alert intelligence, ready to recalculate theory and practices on the basis of cultural adaptation." Such a pragmatic alertness, he says, tying his exposition to Dewey's theory of experience, emphasizes "organic engagement with communities, through an openness flexible enough to meet the demands of uneasy times and unanticipated crises." Being Black in America means living in a state of stress, of remaining cool in the heat of the moment:

> To be Blacked means one does not have the luxury to ignore how to "read the room" or take a temperature of one's reception in the room. The stressful conditions of being a minority entail a heightened awareness for the sights and sounds by which one is being appropriated and objectified. More privileged groups can afford the luxury of ignoring or downplaying the need to exercise such intensity of personal and social awareness.

Jackson calls for adopting a "disaster didactics" that is "sensitive to the demands of adaptability and elasticity." Its aim is to work despair, alienation, and rage into constructive projects. Black Americans have a "head start" in projects of "disaster didactics." Living through continual and anticipated disaster has provided a burden, but also an opportunity for growth - not merely for personal growth but for "creating alternative cultures as a healthy, constructive response to panic." Pragmatist philosophy and democratic education, Jackson suggests, should thus take the cultural products and biographies of Black Americans to heart as they look to the future during this crisis era of suffering and reaction.

Personal Responsibility

Kyle Greenwald also finds a solution to our crisis right in our divided lives: getting to know those near at hand on the other side of the factional divide. Hewing close to Dewey, he says:

> The living creature interacting with the environment results in experience. Experience can and should be shared. The more widely and equitably it is shared, the more democratic the society, and the more richly textured are the individual existences therein. Societies and the individuals that comprise them become more responsive, more informed, and more committed to those around them. But we must *want* to know the other. We must *want* to overcome isolation, segregation, and ignorance. There are great forces, both internally and externally, that drive people apart.

Reading Marilyn Robinson's novel *Gideon*, and reflecting on the character Jack Boughton, the troubled black sheep of the community, Greenwald concludes:

> It is the Jack Boughtons of our lives who must be confronted. Those whom we can't understand. Those who we are convinced are persecuting us. Those who bring out our own most paranoid fears.

Todd Lekan brings the matter even closer to home. Drawing on Dewey's conception of habit as already shaping what we see, what we take it to mean, and how it inclines us to react, Lekan says that:

> Our habits are means for accomplishing purposes, but they also operate "behind our backs" serving ends that we might not

endorse or even consciously reject. Many habits that we believe we have shed actually live on as vestigial structures that continually shape how we think and act in our social environments.

Lekan argues that democracy requires all individuals and groups to face injustice squarely by an "honest reckoning of the pattern of habits that enable some social groups to enjoy power and privilege while others are exploited, marginalized, and oppressed."

But for Lekan this reckoning is no mere navel gazing: it requires acknowledgement of the dual personal-social nature of our habits. Echoing Tom Burke, he says: "Changing these habits in meaningful ways requires much more than personal efforts to raise consciousness. They involve changing policies, laws, and social practices." The new forms of public philosophy and action research suggested by Steizlein, Terazakis, and Pratt, and the educational projects developed by McAvoy and McCall, can all provide powerful tools for these efforts.

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I wish to thank all of the contributors for the essays prepared rapidly in our time of crisis. They were all invited personally by the editor of *Dewey Studies.* Anyone who has edited a book or journal issue under time pressure understands that the authors whose works appear do not precisely represent the population of authors invited to contribute. So, I also thank those who, due to time pressure or conflicting commitments, considered our invitation but graciously declined to contribute.

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This issue of *Dewey Studies* demonstrates the on-going diverse interest in, and influence of, John Dewey throughout the world. The editors ask readers to submit articles to Associate Editor Jared Kemling (jaredkemling@gmail.com), ideas for panels and special issues, interviews, research notes to Leonard Waks (ljwaks@yahoo.com), and book reviews and composite review articles to Reviews Editor Daniel Brunson (daniel.brunson@morgan.edu).