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CANONIZING DEWEY: NATURALISM, LOGICAL EMPIRICISM, AND THE IDEA OF AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY*

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Between World War I and World War II, the students of Columbia University's John Dewey and Frederick J. E. Woodbridge built up a school of philosophical naturalism sharply critical of claims to value-neutrality. In the 1930s and 1940s, the second-generation Columbia naturalists (John Herman Randall Jr, Herbert W. Schneider, Irwin Edman, Horace L. Friess, and James Gutmann) and their students who later joined the department (Charles Frankel, Joseph L. Blau, Albert Hofstadter, and Justus Buchler) reacted with dismay to the arrival on American shores of logical empiricism and other analytic modes of philosophy. These figures undermined their colleague Ernest Nagel's attempt to build an alliance with the logical empiricists, accusing them of ignoring the scholar's primary role as a public critic. After the war, the prestige of analytic approaches and a tendency to label philosophies either "analytic" or "Continental" eclipsed the Columbia philosophers' normatively inflected naturalism. Yet in their efforts to resist logical empiricism, the Columbia naturalists helped to construct a sturdy, canonical portrait of "American philosophy" that proponents still hold up as a third way between analytic and Continental approaches.

Writing after World War II, John Dewey's former student and colleague John Herman Randall Jr declared that logical empiricism and British analytic philosophy "can scarcely claim to be 'American thought,'" whereas Dewey exemplified the "original and characteristic American philosophy." Targeting in particular Rudolf Carnap, a leading logical empiricist, Randall described this "Prussian systematizer" as "relatively insulated from the main currents of American experience and thought." In fact, Randall identified Dewey's expansive,

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publicly engaged view of philosophy as a prerequisite for open, democratic discourse. Carnap, he wrote, exemplified the "paternalistic" approach of German philosophers, who "thought in terms of 'experts' telling people what to do, running things efficiently for them." By contrast, Dewey, a good democrat, "thought you might find out more about what people need by asking them . . . They know where the shoe pinches better than you do." In Randall's portrait, Deweyan pragmatism and Carnapian logical empiricism (frequently called "logical positivism") stood for more than competing assumptions about the scholar's public role: they symbolized distinct national cultures.[1]

Randall served as the informal leader of one of the most cohesive and influential American centers of intellectual resistance to value-neutral scholarship in the mid-twentieth century: a philosophical school called "Columbia naturalism," which retained its coherence from the 1920s into the 1960s. Historians of philosophy, like those tracing the development of the social sciences, have devoted sustained attention to claims of value-neutrality that enhanced scholars' professional authority.[2] As yet, however, we lack a systematic analysis of alternative epistemologies and their political functions in modern America. The Columbia naturalists would feature prominently in that broad story. To the chagrin of their younger colleague Ernest Nagel, a brilliant logician and philosopher of science who worked to reconcile logical empiricism with indigenous modes of philosophy, the second-generation Columbia figures—Randall, Herbert W. Schneider, Irwin Edman, Horace L. Friess, and James Gutmann, all of whom studied under Dewey and Frederick J. E. Woodbridge in the late 1910s and early 1920s before taking up posts in the department—joined Yale's idealists in finding analytic philosophy to be politically irresponsible as well as conceptually inadequate.[3] Indeed, even Nagel, whose cautious temperament

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1 John Herman Randall Jr, "The Spirit of American Philosophy," in F. Ernest Johnson, ed., *Wellsprings of the American Spirit* (New York, 1948), 120–21, 129; *idem*, review of Cohen, *American Thought*, *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (1955), 78; *idem*, "John Dewey, 1859–1952," *Journal of Philosophy* 50 (1953), 11.

2 Professionalization dynamics feature prominently in Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860–1930* (New Haven, 1977); Daniel J. Wilson, *Science, Community, and the Transformation of American Philosophy, 1860–1930* (Chicago, 1990); and John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* (Evanston, IL, 2001).

3 Kuklick covers the latter in "Philosophy at Yale in the Century after Darwin," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 21 (2004), 313–36; and sketches Columbia naturalism in *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720–2000* (New York, 2001), 190–96. Also see William M. Shea, *The Naturalists and the Supernatural* (Macon, GA, 1984); John Ryder, ed., *American Philosophic Naturalism in the Twentieth Century* (Amherst, NY, 1994); Victorino Tejera, *American Modern, the Path Not Taken: Aesthetics, Metaphysics, and Intellectual History in Classic*

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and fascination with technical problems largely aligned him with analytic philosophy, decried its proponents' apparent embrace of value-neutrality.

Dewey, Randall, Nagel, and the other Columbia naturalists used their histories of philosophy, their textbooks, their editorship of the *Journal of Philosophy*, and their numerous public writings, as well as their specialized work, to promote a vision of philosophy that they regarded as uniquely compatible with American democracy. After World War II, however, the discipline largely rejected their understanding of what philosophy could and should be. As a result, most of the Columbia naturalists adopted a faintly xenophobic tone in the Cold War years. Working to attach the descriptor "American" to their work and to wedge Dewey into the pantheon of national heroes, they attempted to conceptually deport other philosophical systems from the United States.

In their efforts to canonize Dewey as the patron saint of American democracy, these figures took aim at many domestic competitors, including Catholics, Protestant fundamentalists, and secular natural-law thinkers such as Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer Adler.[4] But the arrival of logical empiricism in the 1930s played a distinctive role in the Columbia naturalists' attempt to delineate a national philosophical tradition. When the Austrian logical empiricist Rudolf Carnap, his German counterpart Hans Reichenbach, and several other key figures emigrated to the United States, Columbia's philosophers faced a school of thought that was, like theirs, militantly scientific and politically left-wing.[5] Logical empiricism, birthed amid the ideological struggles of 1920s Central Europe and transplanted into the very different academic climate of the Depression-era United States, offered the Columbia naturalists both a potent challenge and a golden opportunity to promote their own brand of scientific philosophy.

The Columbia naturalists targeted the logical empiricists' inclination toward noncognitivism, a theory holding that ethical judgments contain no cognitive content and thus present a fundamentally different kind of claim than do scientific statements. Most of the Columbia naturalists, like the vast majority of other American philosophers, ignored the complexities of logical empiricism and barely engaged the work of its exponents. As a result, they saw at the heart of the movement a particularly uncompromising version of noncognitivism that treated

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American Philosophy (Lanham, MD, 1996); and John P. Anton, *American Naturalism and Greek Philosophy* (Amherst, NY, 2005). Gutmann taught part-time at Columbia until 1936, when he finally received his PhD: John Herman Randall Jr, "The Department of Philosophy," in Jacques Barzun, ed., *A History of the Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University* (New York, 1957), 136.

4 John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York, 2003), 175.

5 Another Austrian, Herbert Feigl, had already landed at the University of Iowa in 1930. Carnap arrived at the University of Chicago in 1936, while Reichenbach found a post at UCLA in 1938. Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 233.

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value judgments as little more than individual idiosyncrasies, bearing no relation to the scientist's empirical investigations and logical reasoning. This conception of ethics, the Columbia naturalists insisted, impoverished democracy by isolating philosophers from normative public discourse. In order for philosophers to fulfill their democratic responsibilities, the argument continued, they needed to recognize that value judgments were profoundly social and publicly observable entities with future referents—in short, that these judgments expressed changes sought, states of affairs desired. Even Nagel, who grasped the subtleties of logical empiricism, defined values as elements of a shared public world and charged that the logical empiricists wrongly isolated values from factual judgments about that world. Although he departed from his colleagues in believing that logical empiricism could be shorn rather easily of its noncognitivist tendencies, Nagel joined the other Columbia naturalists in identifying Dewey's normatively committed philosophy as an indigenous, democratic philosophy and logical empiricism as a dangerously disengaged European import.

Ultimately, Nagel's attempt to broker a merger between logical empiricism and Columbia naturalism fell short. But his colleagues faced even greater disappointment in the Cold War years, as W. V. O. Quine and other Harvard figures codified a new philosophical paradigm and relegated the synthetic, publicly oriented style of the Columbia naturalists, along with their specific understandings of nature, science, values, and human agency, to the margins of the field. Columbia's philosophers continued to portray their approach as the democratic alternative to an authoritarian, essentially European form of positivism. But the intellectual culture of the 1950s instituted a very different taxonomy of philosophers, pitting the non-normative "analytic tradition" of Britain and the United States against a "Continental tradition" populated by Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, and other European critics of politically neutral scholarship.[6] These categories left no room for the Columbia philosophers' normatively engaged naturalism.

THE COLUMBIA NATURALISTS ON SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND PHILOSOPHY

The rise of American naturalism vividly illustrates the intellectual convergence of liberal Protestants and the children of Jewish immigrants in the first half of the twentieth century.[7] At Columbia, heterodox thinkers of Protestant

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6 On the constructed nature of the analytic–Continental divide, see Simon Critchley's introduction to *A Companion to Continental Philosophy* (Malden, MA, 1998), 3–6.

7 David A. Hollinger describes this phenomenon in "Jewish Intellectuals and the De-Christianization of American Public Culture in the Twentieth Century," in *idem*, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture* (Princeton, 1996), 17–41.

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extraction set the tone. Randall, Schneider, Edman, Friess, and Gutmann sought to coax Americans toward an inclusive, predominantly ethical faith for a machine age. "Most of the members of the Department are either sons of ministers, son-in-laws [*sic*] of ministers, or ex-would-be ministers," complained Corliss Lamont, an outspoken atheist and socialist who took his PhD under these men and taught alongside them for a number of years.[8] The second-generation Columbia naturalists assigned to professional philosophers an essentially ministerial role: taking the nation as their pastorate, they would help citizens accommodate their spiritual and political beliefs to new scientific truths and new technological processes. "For men to retain the *ardor* of the historic religions and to direct this toward social welfare rather than toward the supernatural is the great desideratum," Randall and his student Justus Buchler wrote.[9] Even Edman, the son of Jewish immigrants, adopted this view of the philosopher's task. The students of Dewey and Woodbridge aimed to provide an alternative to the churches as a source of spiritual guidance for Americans.[10]

The Columbia naturalists' views on ethical matters aligned them at many points with other naturalistic philosophers and theologians. Although self-described naturalists such as Max C. Otto at Wisconsin and Roy Wood Sellars at Michigan were kindred spirits, the Columbia naturalists hewed more closely in both tone and substance to religious humanists such as E. A. Burtt at Cornell and A. Eustace Haydon, Edward Scribner Ames, and Henry Nelson Wieman at the University of Chicago.[11] The 1933 Humanist Manifesto, written in part by Sellars and signed by Burtt, Haydon, Dewey, and Randall, illustrates the close ties between Mid-western centers of theological heterodoxy and New York.[12] But the second-generation Columbia naturalists worked even more closely with New York's many Jewish naturalists, such as Sidney Hook, a student of Dewey's who taught at New York University, and the Jamesian pluralist Horace M. Kallen

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[8] Corliss Lamont to Randall, 10 April 1934, "Lamont, Corliss," Box 2, John Herman Randall Jr papers, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter "Randall papers").

[9] John Herman Randall and Justus Buchler, *Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York, 1942), 291, original emphasis.

[10] Randall, who hoped to direct what he saw as individuals' innate religious impulses toward human ideals, told Reinhold Niebuhr that he was an atheist but "no infidel." Randall to Niebuhr, 2 Dec. 1942, "Niebuhr, Reinhold," Box 2, Randall papers.

[11] Donald H. Meyer, "Secular Transcendence: The American Religious Humanists," *American Quarterly* 34 (1982), 524–42; Stephen P. Weldon, "The Humanist Enterprise from John Dewey to Carl Sagan: A Study of Science and Religion in American Culture," PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1997, 59–98.

[12] Edwin H. Wilson, *The Genesis of A Humanist Manifesto* (Amherst, NY, 1995).

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at the New School for Social Research.[13] Both of these figures blasted away at Catholic neo-Thomists, neo-orthodox Protestants, and other "authoritarian" thinkers during World War II. The institutions surrounding Columbia were not without their "soft," culturally Protestant, naturalists, including Harry A. Overstreet, who pursued a project of religious reconciliation at the City College of New York, just a short walk north of Morningside Heights.[14] Still, philosophical naturalism took on a distinctly militant cast in Depression-era New York, and the personnel were increasingly of Jewish descent. By the late 1930s, Dewey, who had been labeled an enemy of democracy by Catholics and other theistic critics, firmly aligned himself with Hook's double-barreled attack on Catholicism and Stalinism.[15]

Columbia's second-generation naturalists took as their starting point Dewey's "instrumentalist" version of pragmatism, which was predicated on a reading of Darwinian biology that made a prominent place in nature for minds, values, and other "immaterial" objects. Dewey's naturalism departed substantially from what Edman called the "billiard-ball physics" of the materialists of yore. Naturalism, Edman wrote, was "simply a faith in the unity of nature or substance, of which all life is a derivation, upon which all action is posited, and within which the structure of mechanism is seen to be simply a systematized technique of practice and of economical understanding."[16] Dewey had reasoned that, if minds affected the external world, and ideals shaped behavior, then these "immaterial" entities necessarily occupied the same realm as material objects. He had explained this conjunction of apparent opposites by arguing that minds were functions or phases of organisms, separable analytically, but not concretely, from bodies.[17] The naturalists viewed this approach, and not reductive materialism, as the truly empirical one. "If the subjective is a necessary element in the problem," wrote Friess in 1926, "then it ought to be recognized like any other necessity."[18]

The second-generation naturalists also adopted Dewey's political project. In the United States, unlike Central Europe, the political right had often mobilized

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[13] Christopher Phelps, *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (Ithaca, 1997); Matthew Cotter, ed., *Sidney Hook Reconsidered* (Amherst, NY, 2004); Milton R. Konvitz, ed., *The Legacy of Horace M. Kallen* (New York, 1987).

[14] George Cotkin, "Middle-Ground Pragmatists: The Popularization of Philosophy in American Culture," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55 (1994), 283–302.

[15] McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 175; Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, 1991), 464.

[16] Irwin Edman, "The Vision of Naturalism" (1937), in *The Uses of Philosophy: An Irwin Edman Reader*, ed. Charles Frankel (New York, 1955), 197–8.

[17] Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 182.

[18] Horace L. Friess, "The Sixth International Congress of Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1926), 636.

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the authority of science, in the form of classical political economy. Dewey, a key theorist of Progressivism, sought to prevent the social sciences from becoming an adjunct to capitalist power—as had the natural sciences, in his view. He attributed much of the sway of free-market ideology in the United States to the prevalence of two philosophical positions, Lockean empiricism and strict fact/value separation. In the case of empiricism, Dewey argued that its dualistic postulation of mind as a separate entity could not account for the social origins and consequences of thought. Indeed, he described empiricism as the philosophy of the commercial middle class: like its close relative, Adam Smith's political economy, empiricism had been developed to tear down oppressive regimes but now served the purely ideological function of sustaining economic individualism.[19] Meanwhile, in the realm of ethics, Dewey sought to undermine the postulate, advanced by Hume on one side and religious traditionalists on the other, that normative commitments were transcendent and absolute, and thus impervious to scientific advances, to social upheavals such as industrialization, and to empirically grounded criticism. Such a view, Dewey believed, obstructed the critical impact of scientific inquiry on prevailing moral commitments, especially the reputed primacy of individual liberty.[20]

Exploring the broad middle ground between liberalism and socialism, the second-generation naturalists offered much the same analysis of commercial power and its cultural sources.[21] More than any other group of American philosophers, then or since, the Columbia naturalists allied themselves with the social sciences. Whereas other American naturalists joined idealists and realists in seeking a world view consistent with Darwinian biology and the physics of Newton and Einstein, Columbia's thinkers identified the technological applications of physical science to economic production as the relevant context for modern philosophy.[22] Meanwhile, they viewed the extension and cultural legitimation of the social sciences as the key to properly addressing the

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19 Numerous commentators have noted Dewey's relentless campaign against empiricism, e.g. Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York, 1995), 126.

20 John Dewey, "William James as Empiricist" (1942), *Later Works*, 15: 14. All Dewey citations refer to *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882–1953: The Electronic Edition.*

21 See especially Randall's *The Making of the Modern Mind* (Boston, 1926) and *Our Changing Civilization: How Science and the Machine are Reconstructing Modern Life* (New York, 1929).

22 Examples of the former tendency include Max C. Otto, *Things and Ideals* (New York, 1924) and *Natural Laws and Human Hopes* (New York, 1926); Roy Wood Sellars, *Evolutionary Naturalism* (Chicago, 1922); Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York, 1926); E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (New York, 1925); and Durant Drake, *Mind and Its Place in Nature* (New York, 1925).

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dislocations of industrialization. The Columbia figures found particularly congenial the comparative, historicist approach of the Boasian anthropologists and the instrumental, activist orientation of institutional economics and much American sociology. Like Dewey, they viewed the social world as a scene of willful invention, wherein human beings made and remade their beliefs and values, as well as their social practices and institutions, in accordance with desired ends. "Today," Randall proclaimed, "we are at last in possession of a science that insists on the importance and reality of all man's experience and enterprises, and has developed concepts that promise to render them all intelligible." Modern science, he continued, addressed "symphonies as well as atoms, personality as well as reflex action, religious consecration as well as the laws of motion or the equations of the field theory."[23] The second-generation naturalists took for granted Dewey's epistemological and metaethical claims and his political-historical critiques of the competing theories of knowledge. They worked to flesh out his "anthropological philosophy" by expanding its reach into aesthetics, social and political ethics, metaphysics, and the history of ideas.[24]

In this project, it was not so much Dewey as the now-forgotten Frederick J. E. Woodbridge who served as the primary role model for the young guns.[25] Like Dewey and Harvard's George Santayana—another important, if less direct, influence on the second-generation thinkers—Woodbridge placed the human mind firmly in nature, finding its products as natural as the rocks, fishes, and stars.[26] He leaned heavily on Aristotle, understood as "a man close to nature" rather than "a syllogistic gentleman with a category for every emergency."[27] Spurred on by Woodbridge and other department elders, the precocious second-generation thinkers viewed their intellectual contributions in world-historical terms. Friess was only half-joking when, in his mid-twenties, he proposed that he

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23 Randall, "The Nature of Naturalism," in Yervant H. Krikorian, ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (New York, 1944), 369.

24 Randall to John J. Coss, 28 Feb. 1929, "Randall, John Herman, Jr.," Box 2, Randall papers.

25 Randall, "The Department of Philosophy," 116. Woodbridge also inspired Dewey to clarify and articulate his metaphysical views: Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 321. Another mentor to the second-generation naturalists was John J. Coss, the department's executive officer. Coss, who built up the famed Contemporary Civilization course and played a key role in hiring decisions, also negotiated with publishers on behalf of Columbia's young philosophers. W. E. Spaulding to Coss, 27 Oct. 1924, and Coss to Spaulding, 1 Dec. 1925, "Correspondence, 1920–1929," Box 4, Randall papers.

26 Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, *Nature and Mind* (New York, 1937); *idem*, *An Essay on Nature* (New York, 1940). A critical study is William Frank Jones, *Nature and Natural Science: The Philosophy of Frederick J. E. Woodbridge* (Buffalo, 1983). Cotkin emphasizes Santayana's influence on Edman in "Middle-Ground Pragmatists," 293–6.

27 Woodbridge to Randall, 22 April 1937, "Woodbridge, Frederick J.E.," Box 3, Randall papers.

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and Randall undertake "a joint editing of The History of Human Philosophies on the scale of the French Encyclopedia."[28] Randall, in turn, was deadly serious when he undertook the massive study *The Making of the Modern Mind* shortly thereafter.[29] Such ambitions stemmed as much from Woodbridge's influence as from Dewey's work.

In the field of religion, Ethical Culture Society founder Felix Adler profoundly shaped the young naturalists' views. Since breaking with Judaism in the 1870s, Adler had espoused a purely ethical religion that folded scientific knowledge into inspirational practices and ideals.[30] Randall and Friess drifted into Adler's orbit in the 1920s; the latter married Adler's daughter in 1923 and intermittently toiled at a biography of his father-in-law.[31] Gutmann, who for many years taught ethics in the Ethical Culture schools and had attended one of them himself, introduced his colleagues to the movement.[32] Adler's influence can be seen in the development of Columbia's program in the study of religion. Launched in the 1920s by the second-generation naturalists, in tandem with figures from other departments and the neighboring Union Theological Seminary, the program emphasized empirical analysis but frowned on the reduction of religious phenomena to reflexes of economic interests or biological urges.[33] Columbia's naturalists saw religions as emotionally necessary symbolic systems through which individuals and communities grasped their particular historical circumstances.[34] These

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28 Friess to Randall, 15 Nov. 1924, "Correspondence, 1920–1929," Box 4, Randall papers.

29 Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind.*

30 Howard Radest, *Felix Adler: An Ethical Culture* (New York, 1998).

31 Friess to Randall, 22 Feb. 1925 (1 March addition), "Correspondence, 1920–1929," Box 4, Randall papers. The final product of Friess's effort was the posthumous *Felix Adler and Ethical Culture: Memories and Studies* (New York, 1981), which includes some biographical information, as do Gutmann's foreword to the book and Friess's "The Affirmation of Man," in Salo W. Baron, Ernest Nagel, and Koppel S. Pinson, eds., *Freedom and Reason: Studies in Philosophy and Jewish Culture in Memory of Morris Raphael Cohen* (Glencoe, IL, 1951), 128–41.

32 See the series of 1982 letters in "Black, Algernon D.," Box 1, James Gutmann papers, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter "Gutmann papers"). Adler taught at Columbia but busied himself little with the department's affairs: Randall, "The Department of Philosophy," 120–22.

33 Schneider to Dwight C. Miner, 17 Sept. 1952, "Corres. from Schneider," Box 1, Herbert W. Schneider papers, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter "Schneider papers"); Horace L. Friess, "The Department of Religion," in Barzun, ed., *A History of the Faculty of Philosophy*, 146–67.

34 Examples include Randall and John Herman Randall Sr, *Religion and the Modern World* (New York, 1929); Horace L. Friess and Herbert W. Schneider, *Religion in Various Cultures* (New York, 1932); Irwin Edman, *The Mind of Paul* (New York, 1935); and Herbert Wallace Schneider, *Meditations in Season on the Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York, 1938).

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figures, under the influence of Dewey, Woodbridge (who held a degree from Union), and especially Adler, pursued a strategy that one interlocutor described as "carrying old values forward under usable symbols."[35]

A dense web of personal and professional connections tied the younger Columbia naturalists to one another and to the wider community of American philosophy. Bonding tightly in graduate school, they vacationed together in Vermont for decades thereafter.[36] At gatherings of the American Philosophical Division's Eastern Division and the New York Philosophical Club, which they gradually took over from Dewey, Woodbridge, and Wendell T. Bush, the second-generation figures shared their work with a largely Protestant group of various philosophical hues. The profession's old guard included self-styled idealists (Yale's Brand Blanshard and Wilbur M. Urban, Harvard's William Ernest Hocking), realists (Princeton's E. G. Spaulding, Johns Hopkins's Arthur O. Lovejoy, Barnard's William P. Montague), personalists (Princeton's Warner Fite), pragmatists (Pennsylvania's Edgar A. Singer Jr), and even behaviorists (Bush).[37] Paul Tillich and other Union faculty joined these men at Philosophy Club meetings.[38] Deeply invested in solving the puzzle of knowledge, and thereby harmonizing science with religion, these philosophers vigorously debated the relationship between science and human ideals.[39]

In the interwar tussles over the nature of cognition and related matters, the disputants shared a broad sphere of agreement. The schools of American philosophy that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—first, idealisms derived from Hegel, Kant, and their British and German interpreters; then versions of pragmatism, realism, and naturalism—attempted to place the scientific enterprise on more solid philosophical ground than that

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35 Lee H. Ball to Randall, 19 Nov. 1931, "Correspondence, 1930–1939," Box 4, Randall papers. Coss had studied at Union as well: Randall, "Towards a Functional Naturalism," in John E. Smith, ed., *Contemporary American Philosophy* (New York, 1970), 56.

36 E.g. Schneider to Randall, 30 July 1942, "Schneider, Herbert W.," Box 2, Randall papers; Sterling P. Lamprecht to Gutmann, 25 May 1943, "Lamprecht, Sterling P.," Box 1, Gutmann papers. Lamprecht was an exiled member of the second generation; he studied with the others at Columbia but taught at the University of Illinois and later Amherst. For his version of naturalism, see *Empiricism and Natural Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1940).

37 Schneider to Randall, 24 Feb. 1937, "Schneider, Herbert W.," Box 2, Randall papers; W. E. Hocking to Randall, 19 April 1944, "Hocking, William Ernest," ibid.

38 Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900–1950* (Louisville, KY, 2003), 494; Ernest Nagel, transcript of interview with Kenneth W. Duckett, 10 Oct. 1966, "Arranged Correspondence. Miscellaneous (2)," Box 2, Ernest Nagel papers, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter "Duckett transcript," "Nagel papers").

39 On the centrality of science to America's early professional philosophers see Wilson, *Science, Community, and the Transformation of American Philosophy*.

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provided by nineteenth-century empiricism. The empiricist claim that external objects presented themselves immediately to the mind as sensory impressions seemed, to its American critics, to render the mind purely passive in relation to the world. The theory struck them as denying the very real consequences of moral ideals, scientific concepts, and other mental products.[40]

While offering different answers to the question of how scientists produced reliable knowledge of the world, most leading philosophers shared two assumptions about the character of knowledge and the role of the scholar. First, they viewed human minds—and intellectuals—as active agents in the world, not as passive mirrors of reality. By the 1930s, this emphasis on the mind's shaping power led many American thinkers to stress the role of theories, symbols, frameworks, and other historically contingent conceptual structures in processes of cognition and even perception.[41] To some extent, this concern overlapped nicely with the logical empiricists' attention to questions of syntax and the role of symbols in the sciences. But Carnap and crew hardly shared the second assumption common among American philosophers: that normative public engagement represented the key component and the primary justification of philosophical scholarship. Dewey wrote in 1929, "The greatest need of our national culture is an awakening of courageous faith in the value of speculative imagination, provided it is supplied with an adequate body of experience."[42] Though the commitment was often honored in the breach, most American philosophers agreed that political responsibility required normative intervention in democratic discourse—or, at least, the adoption of a theory of values that rendered such intervention legitimate. Into the late 1940s, the discipline's leading figures viewed themselves as humanists, helping citizens clarify and implement their value commitments, and usually also as metaphysicians, constructing a

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[40] This and the following paragraph represent my reading of the material in Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 95–224. It is revealing that Harvard's W. V. O. Quine, who carried many features of logical empiricism into the postwar era, felt like a fish out of water at Harvard in the 1930s. His colleagues disdained his highly technical approach. Joel Isaac, "W. V. Quine and the Origins of Analytic Philosophy in the United States," *MIH* 2 (2005), 205–34.

[41] Brigitte Nerlich, "The 1930s—At the Birth of a Pragmatic Conception of Language," *Historiographica Linguistica* 22 (1995), 311–34. Randall described empiricism as an "identification of knowledge with vision." This "spectator theory" failed utterly to account for modern science, in Randall's view: "It is difficult to 'see' a scientific hypothesis or theory, or a framework of measurement," despite the indispensability of these conceptual objects. Randall found in empiricism no place for the "use of intellectual tools," the "getting from one place in experience to another," typical of scientific practice. Randall to Ewing P. Shahan, 17 April 1942, "Correspondence, 1940–1949," Box 4, Randall papers.

[42] Quoted in Friess, "The Sixth International Congress," 621.

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theory of reality that could account for both natural structures and value-driven behavior.

Ernest Nagel represented an exception to this rule. Taking up his professorial post in 1931, Nagel stood midway between the second generation of Columbia naturalists and the third: Charles Frankel, Joseph L. Blau, Albert Hofstadter, and Justus Buchler, all of whom ascended from graduate study at Columbia to faculty positions in the era of World War II. Like Frankel, Blau, and Hofstadter, Nagel was Jewish, an immigrant from Austria–Hungary in his youth. In an era of informal quotas at Columbia College, he pursued his undergraduate training under the Kantian Morris R. Cohen at City College before moving on to graduate work with Dewey.[43] This trajectory meant that Nagel missed the key socializing experiences shared by members of the second generation: introductory courses in history with Carlton J. H. Hayes and politics with Charles A. Beard, admission as an undergraduate to Woodbridge's first-year graduate seminar in the history of philosophy, and graduate teaching in the Contemporary Civilization core.[44] Nagel taught in the city's public schools throughout his undergraduate and graduate years and first made his name with an influential logic textbook, co-authored with Cohen. Yet he seems always to have viewed himself as a researcher rather than a teacher, even as he faithfully discharged what he saw as his obligation to educate the public regarding science and its relationship to social values.[45]

Until the late 1930s, Nagel was the only Columbia philosopher with any real competence, or even interest, in the fields developed by the logical empiricists: symbolic and mathematical logic, semantics, the foundations of mathematics, and philosophy of science. During the 1920s, the members of the second generation had fanned out into precisely the value-laden areas of inquiry that the logical empiricists eschewed. Possessing a strong sense of collective mission, they sought to cover the gamut of undergraduate teaching needs by carving

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43 Randall, "The Department of Philosophy," 134–7. The department employed an informal hiring policy, relying heavily on personal vouchsafes and often giving outside prospects trial runs, though it favored its own students. E.g. John J. Coss to Randall, 28 Feb. 1934, "Coss, John J.," Box 1, Randall papers. It is difficult to find details about Nagel's life. Characteristically, his *Festschrift* offers neither a biographical essay nor a bibliography: Sidney Morgenbesser, Patrick Suppes, and Morton White, eds., *Philosophy, Science, and Method* (New York, 1969).

44 Irwin Edman, "The College: A Memoir of Forty Years," in Dwight C. Miner, ed., *A History of Columbia College on Morningside* (New York, 1954), 5–7; Schneider to Dwight C. Miner, 17 Sept. 1952, "Corres. from Schneider," Box 1, Schneider papers.

45 Box 27 of the Nagel papers contains dozens of speeches on topics such as "Philosophy as a Social Science," "Logic and the Good Life," and "Science and Contemporary World Views." See also Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman, *Gödel's Proof* (New York, 1958). Nagel and Cohen's book is *An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method* (New York, 1934).

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out broad specialties in traditional domains of philosophy: Randall took on the history of ideas, Gutmann wrote on ethics, Edman covered aesthetics, and Friess and Schneider specialized in the philosophy of religion, with Schneider adding political theory and, later, the history of philosophy to his portfolio. The third-generation naturalists tilled the same fields.[46] Nagel, by contrast, emerged from a different professional context, wherein logical empiricism loomed increasingly large. Attracted to logical empiricism's rigor and critical potential in the wider culture, and viewing it as fundamentally compatible with Columbia naturalism, Nagel worked diligently to build bonds between the two movements.

This was a difficult balancing act, however. Nagel regarded logical empiricism as a special case or limited application of Deweyan naturalism, one that could be detached rather easily from noncognitivist ethics and rendered an ally of Columbia philosophy. By contrast, the other Columbia naturalists detected a radical separation of science from public values at the very heart of logical empiricism. They viewed logical empiricism and Deweyan naturalism as direct competitors for the mantle of scientific philosophy. Indeed, they identified logical empiricism as merely an updated version, in new terminological dress, of a Lockean and Humean outlook that, in their view, powerfully buttressed commercial capitalism. Nagel's reconciliation project made little headway within his own department; his colleagues at Columbia regarded logical empiricism as an apolitical, scholastic form of philosophy that would allow American public culture to go to seed.

LOGICAL EMPIRICISM AND THE QUESTION OF VALUES

The logical empiricists hewed to a very different form of progressive politics than that of their interlocutors at Columbia. Carnap, Otto Neurath, and Philipp Frank were committed socialists. Through their Unity of Science Movement, which sponsored a series of international congresses (including one at Harvard in 1939) and produced several installments of the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* after 1938, these figures advocated national planning and the redistribution of resources. The FBI kept a watchful eye on Carnap and Frank following their arrival in the United States.[47]

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[46] Randall, "The Department of Philosophy," 131–3, 136. On the centrality of the history of ideas to the department's self-conception, see Woodbridge to Randall, 5 April 1940, "Woodbridge, Frederick J.E.," Box 3, Randall papers; and Nagel to Frank D. Fackenthal, 22 April 1944, "Nagel, Ernest," Box 1, Nagel papers. Rebecca S. Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (Berkeley, 1997), esp. 155, notes the prevalence of the ideal of "balance" in interwar departments.

[47] George A. Reisch, *How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science: To the Icy Slopes of Logic* (New York, 2005), 27–56, 115. Other helpful sources include Malachi Hacohen, *Karl*

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Yet the movement did not *look* politically engaged to leading American thinkers, who possessed a different understanding of the political meaning of epistemological and ethical theories. Even Carnap's colleagues at the University of Chicago typically missed the political ambitions fueling his technical studies in logic and semantics.[48] After all, mainstream American philosophers sought to open up normative debate, bringing ethical judgments to bear on a culture that seemed mired in self-seeking materialism. "Anything that obscures the fundamentally moral nature of the social problem is harmful," Dewey wrote sharply in 1939.[49] The Progressive movement, to which American scholars had contributed extensively, had been framed in such terms: the task was to re-embed capitalism in a moral framework. By contrast, logical empiricism had emerged in a political context where normative claims appeared to be the problem, rather than the solution. The more radical logical empiricists viewed socialism as a scientific alternative to ideology and hoped to purge from public debate the unverifiable claims upon which Catholic traditionalists and blood-and-soil nationalists grounded their political programs. Whereas most American philosophers, no matter how friendly to science, saw their primary function as that of humanizing industrial society by infusing public culture with ethical precepts, the logical empiricists took on the opposite project of purifying politics by criticizing irrational claims.[50]

In point of fact, the logical empiricists stood closer to the Columbia naturalists in the realm of ethical theory than this political analysis would suggest. The two groups agreed that all value judgments were conditional, relative to the human contexts in which they emerged. Such judgments took the form, "If you want to achieve *X* normative end, then you should take *Y* action." Even supposedly transcendental values actually exhibited this form, according to the naturalists and logical empiricists. "It generally turns out upon examination," as Edman put it in 1937, that the "eternal values, or the highest good, are simply the current

Popper, The Formative Years, 1902–1945: Politics and Philosophy in Interwar Vienna (New York, 2000); Thomas Uebel, "Political Philosophy of Science in Logical Empiricism: The Left Vienna Circle," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 36 (2005), 754–73; Gary Hardcastle and Alan Richardson, eds., *Logical Empiricism in North America* (Minneapolis, 2003); Alan Richardson and Thomas Uebel, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Logical Empiricism* (New York, 2007); and the symposium on Reisch's book in *Science & Education* 18 (2009), 157–220.

48 A. W. Carus, *Carnap and Twentieth-Century Thought: Explication as Enlightenment* (New York, 2007), 36.

49 Indeed, he continued, such obscurantism "helps create the attitudes that welcome and support the totalitarian state." John Dewey, *Freedom and Culture* (1939), *Later Works*, 13: 172.

50 Peter Galison, "The Americanization of Unity," *Daedalus* 127 (1998), 65.

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social and economic prepossessions of an influential class, local clichés, written, as it were, across the sky."[51] Both groups also agreed that value judgments could be criticized from the standpoint of empirical investigations, making science directly relevant to the formation of plans for private and public action. They assigned empirical inquiry the potent social function of sorting out achievable collective goals and effective plans of action from utopian visions, pipe dreams, and partisan agendas.

Yet when they discussed conditional value judgments, the Columbia naturalists employed the term "normative" in a different fashion than did the logical empiricists. The latter group implicitly sorted and labeled value judgments on the basis of their empirical adequacy, describing as "normative" only those judgments they deemed "metaphysical"—i.e. unachievable or ideological, out of step with scientific truth. For their part, the Columbia naturalists labeled all conditional value judgments "normative," and only then distinguished between them on the grounds of empirical adequacy.[52] To put the point another way, the naturalists employed "normative" in pragmatic, behavioral terms, applying the label to any beliefs or ideals, no matter how misguided, that actually functioned as motives to action. They viewed their cultural task as that of replacing empirically unsustainable normative commitments with more reliable normative commitments. By contrast, the logical empiricists imported their own conceptions of truth into the term "normative," restricting it to those beliefs or ideals that *should not* compel behavior, given the extant empirical findings. They sought to replace normative judgments with thoroughly empirical ones. In short, the logical positivists understood "normative" and "empirical" as opposites, whereas the Columbia naturalists viewed empirical judgments as a subset of the category of normative judgments: some normative judgments were empirically sound, and others were not.

In part, this divergence reflected competing conceptions of philosophy's role in the university and in the wider polity. As Stanley Cavell and Alexander Sesonske pointed out in 1951, the characteristic questions asked by the logical empiricists ("What does this statement of science mean?") and the American inheritors of pragmatism ("What can science do to secure values?") led the latter to task philosophers and even scientists with analyzing conditional value judgments, whereas the former banished these from philosophy and the

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51 Edman, "The Vision of Naturalism," 204.

52 Dewey told Charles W. Morris in 1939, "Of course I agree that 'metaphysical' statements in the sense of non- or anti-empirical are unverifiable. But I think the attempt to dismiss them entirely at one swoop by calling them 'meaningless' is a serious tactical mistake." Quoted in Reisch, *How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science*, 95.

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sciences.[53] The Columbia naturalists, in accordance with what is now considered the "Continental" approach, believed that their discipline stood alongside anthropology, sociology, political science, and other fields in a transdisciplinary formation that Randall called "the cultural sciences."[54] All scholars, in this view, bore a responsibility to demonstrate the impact of scientific knowledge on the conditional value judgments offered by public speakers. The leading logical empiricists, by contrast, relegated the articulation of science with values to other groups of experts.

It seems plausible to suggest that these differences reflected the Columbia naturalists' relatively sanguine view of science's ability to resolve the normative conflicts racking modern societies, and of the openness of all parties to scientific resolutions of this sort. The logical empiricists expected to defeat their opponents on the field of intellectual battle, not to convert them via acts of empirical mediation.[55] This difference between the movements found clear expression in their distinct conceptions of science. Again, the starting point was a common one: Columbia's naturalists and the logical empiricists rejected a representational account of knowledge as a picture of the world "out there." Instead, they understood scientific claims in functional terms, as "instruments or regulative principles" connecting other statements.[56] Yet the naturalists argued that scientific theories served not just to harmonize empirical statements, as the logical empiricists thought, but also, and far more importantly, to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal, the present and the future. Dewey put it simply: "The relation between objects as known and objects with respect to value is that between the actual and the possible."[57] For the Columbia naturalists, science was not a means of isolating statements of public reason from a morass of private prejudices, but rather a way of determining which prejudices were the most public under current circumstances, by assessing the consequences that would flow from their implementation. The naturalists wanted philosophers to explore the sources and impact of value judgments, not banish them from the field of inquiry altogether. They did not share Carnap's dismay that the behavior of individuals was "dominated more by their passions than by their reason."

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[53] Stanley Cavell and Alexander Sesonske, "Logical Empiricism and Pragmatism in Ethics," *Journal of Philosophy* 48 (1951), 8–9.

[54] Randall to James Putnam, 25 May 1944, Randall papers, Box 4, folder "Correspondence, 1940–1949."

[55] To the logical empiricists, Peter Galison has written, metaphysics meant "not some limited concept, but the alive, well, and dangerous movements for Godliness, *Volk*, mysticism, and *Deutschtum*." Galison, "The Americanization of Unity," 65.

[56] Ernest Nagel, "Some Theses in the Philosophy of Logic," *Philosophy of Science* 5 (1938), 50.

[57] John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), *Later Works*, 4: 239.

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Columbia's philosophers viewed reason as disciplining, directing, and thereby socializing the passions, not eliminating or blocking them.[58]

Still, the two movements might have coexisted fairly comfortably, had Americans not closely identified epistemological and methodological commitments with political positions in the late 1930s. That era witnessed bitter debates concerning the intellectual foundations of democracy and the role of values in the disciplines. A growing number of progressive scholars joined the Columbia naturalists in rejecting a value-neutral conception of social science.[59] However, powerful critics of "scientism" lumped together all secular social scientists and philosophers, no matter where they stood on the value question. The charge hit close to home at Columbia, as a swelling chorus of critics portrayed Dewey as a symbol of the relativistic, deterministic, and hedonistic implications of modern science. By the late 1930s, the politicization of American epistemological discourse had proceeded to the point where each party to the argument routinely dubbed the others totalitarian.[60] A 1940 controversy wherein a coalition of religious and political leaders scotched Bertrand Russell's proposed appointment at City College, on the grounds that the freethinking Russell countenanced immorality, heightened tensions between New York's naturalists and their cultural critics.[61] Given the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that an intellectual movement appearing to wall off empirical claims from value judgments, in the name of science itself, would threaten Columbia's philosophers, as well as their realist and idealist counterparts.

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58 E.g. John Dewey, *The Theory of Valuation* (1939), *Later Works*, 13: 249.

59 Robert C. Bannister, *Sociology and Scientism: The American Quest for Objectivity, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987); Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994).

60 Secondary accounts include Edward A. Purcell Jr, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and The Problem of Value* (Lexington, KY, 1973); David A. Hollinger, "Science as a Weapon in *Kulturkämpfe* in the United States during and after World War II," in *idem*, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture*, 155–74; and James Gilbert, *Redeeming Culture: American Religion in an Age of Science* (Chicago, 1997), 63–94. Within philosophy, the Yale idealist Wilmon H. Sheldon took the offensive: "Critique of Naturalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 42 (1945), 253–70. Ernest Nagel, John Dewey, and Sidney Hook, "Are Naturalists Materialists?" *Journal of Philosophy* 42 (1945), 515–30, 530, retorted that the real threat to human values was Sheldon's mind–body dualism. Such a view, they wrote, "deprives human choice of effective status, opens the door wide to irresponsible intuitions, and dehumanizes the control of nature and society" by insulating values from scientific criticism. Cf. C. I. Lewis, "Logical Positivism and Pragmatism" (1941), in *Collected Papers of Clarence Irving Lewis*, ed. John D. Goheen and John L. Mothershead Jr (Stanford, 1970), 107–8.

61 Thom Weidlich, *Appointment Denied: The Inquisition of Bertrand Russell* (Amherst, NY, 2000).

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Several features of logical empiricism's importation reinforced its American reputation as apolitical and imperious. The most accessible accounts in English—Herbert Feigl and Albert E. Blumberg's 1931 article on the movement, Carnap's short book *The Unity of Science* (1934), and the British philosopher A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936)—forcefully insisted on the irrelevance of scientific inquiry to values, and vice versa. "[E]thics as 'normative' science is impossible," Feigl and Blumberg declared. "Experience reveals what is, never what ought to be."[62] The descriptions in these texts of almost all prior philosophy as the pointless rehashing of linguistic errors gave the logical empiricists a reputation for arrogance and led critics to convict them of "the unbelievable effrontery of labeling a large part of significant human discourse meaningless."[63]

The American response to logical empiricism focused on Carnap, who was extremely reticent about connecting technical analyses to ethical or political positions.[64] At a 1941 conference, Carnap responded to a call for an empirical approach to religion by agreeing on the importance of "a 'path of life,' and a certain type of person as goal." But he resisted the term "religion," and mused that his response reflected the influence of the Central European context, "where the antagonism between our efforts and the influence of the Catholic church was particularly strong."[65] On the few other occasions when Carnap identified a public role for philosophers, he sought to dispel hopes that they could determine normative goals. At Harvard's tercentenary celebration in 1936, Carnap told the audience that the logician would often need to promote the cause of "spiritual hygiene" by "cautioning men against the disease of intellectual confusion." However, he cautioned, other experts would "conduct the therapeutic treatment," because "the mere discovery and acknowledgement of errors have no significant influence upon the thought and action of men." It was the job of psychologists and social scientists to root out the "laws of human conduct in observing and

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62 Albert E. Blumberg and Herbert Feigl, "Logical Positivism," *Journal of Philosophy* 28 (1931), 293; Rudolf Carnap, *The Unity of Science* (London, 1934); A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (New York, 1936).

63 Wilbur M. Urban, "Value Propositions and Verifiability," *Journal of Philosophy* 34 (1937), 591.

64 Quine identified Carnap with the movement in his 1934 lecture series and at the Harvard Tercentenary: Isaac, "W. V. Quine," 229. Patterns of emigration further reinforced this focus on Carnap; the alternative versions of logical empiricism crafted by Otto Neurath and Moritz Schlick, who did not make it to the United States, barely registered among American philosophers. Reisch, *How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science*, 13, 15–16. Reisch addresses Carnap's "neutralist activism" at 47–53.

65 Carnap, comment on Charles W. Morris, "Empiricism, Religion, and Democracy," in Lyman Bryson and Louis Finkelstein, eds., *Science, Philosophy and Religion: Second Symposium* (New York, 1942), 238.

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violating the requirements of logical thinking," whereupon educators would "apply . . . prophylactic methods for eliminating the source of illogical types of thought."[66] Carnap's strictly delimited conception of philosophy overshadowed his indirectly formulated, and often entirely unstated, commitment to political change through the application of expertise.

Many of logical empiricism's American supporters, who had typically received their graduate training in the ideologically charged 1930s, likewise suspected that normative debate could divide but not unite. Figures such as Quine viewed the decades-old skirmishes between pragmatists, idealists, and realists as parochial and counterproductive. As Joel Isaac has shown, logical empiricism came to Quine as a breath of fresh air in what he viewed as the conceptually vague and hopelessly utopian universe of American philosophy. In the 1950s, Quine would become a central figure in the analytic tradition by jettisoning certain theoretical claims of the logical empiricists, along with their left-wing politics, while retaining their core questions and style of argumentation.[67]

Though swimming against the tide, Quine evinced no inner tension about the new analytic approach; he firmly rejected the prevailing forms of American philosophy.[68] By contrast, Nagel and the University of Chicago's Charles W. Morris, both slightly older than Quine, straddled the division between Deweyan naturalism and logical empiricism. Nagel and Morris found unsettling Carnap's refusal to sanction normative engagement. But they recognized the movement's political intent and believed that Carnap would eventually come around to Dewey's view of ethics. As Quine crafted his technical objections to core tenets of logical empiricism, Morris and Nagel sought to convince American naturalists

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66 Rudolf Carnap, "Logic," in *Factors Determining Human Behavior* (Cambridge, MA, 1937), 108, 117–18.

67 Isaac, "W. V. Quine," esp. 223. Less fortunate was Charles L. Stevenson, who classed ethical statements with oratory and declared that their analysis fell outside the realm of philosophy. His Yale colleagues disagreed. When Stevenson came up for tenure, they unanimously convicted him of a "lack of thorough grounding in philosophy" and "a grave deficiency of temper." The question of logical empiricism's validity remained open at Yale, but Stevenson himself was off to Michigan. "Summary of the Action Taken with Regard to the Status of Assistant Professor Charles L. Stevenson," 7 March 1945, "Hendel, Charles W., 1943–1945," Box 17, Series I, Brand Blanshard papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. A slightly different interpretation of these events appears in Kuklick, "Philosophy at Yale," 324–5.

68 Isaac, "W. V. Quine," 227. Early in his career, Quine may have felt the need to prove his commitment to social efficacy; see his popular articles "Relations and Reason," *Technology Review* 41 (1939), 299–301, 324–7; and "Russell's Paradox and Others," *Technology Review* 44 (1941), 16–17. Characteristically, however, he still confined himself to the technical needs of private citizens rather than wider aspects of public policy.

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and logical empiricists that the latter occupied one corner of a larger, normative field that Morris dubbed simply "scientific empiricism."[69]

Morris, a student of the pragmatist George Herbert Mead whose office wall was festooned with pictures of William James and Dewey, described any modern philosophy lacking "an adequate scientific theory of value" as "a torso without a head."[70] In a series of articles, he touted the uniquely democratic character of American pragmatism and identified logical empiricism as a mere variant or branch of it. *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), Morris's contribution to the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* and the work for which he is known today, stressed that a fully developed semiotics would attend to language's pragmatic uses along with its formal characteristics. It was thus no real departure—Neurath's shock notwithstanding—when Morris produced *Paths of Life: Preface to a World Religion* (1942). As Morris saw it, public engagement and its epistemological and ethical correlates were nonnegotiable elements of the philosopher's vocation. He tasked the philosopher with releasing the "creative cultural forces," namely "mind, value, art, and moral behavior," from "the subservience to science which a scientifically minded age has seemed, wrongly, to impose."[71]

Nagel likewise worked to convince American philosophers that Dewey and Carnap were natural allies rather than bitter enemies. In 1934, a year-long pilgrimage had taken Nagel to Austria, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Britain, as well as the area of his birth, near Prague, and brought him face to face with Carnap and other logical empiricists.[72] Upon returning to the United States in 1935, he joined Morris and Quine as a key American contact for the movement, whose conceptual tools he deemed without parallel as "a cathartic to men's beliefs

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[69] Charles W. Morris, "Some Aspects of Recent American Scientific Philosophy," *Erkenntnis* 5 (1935), 148.

[70] George A. Reisch, "Doomed in Advance to Defeat? John Dewey on Logical Empiricism, Reductionism, and Values," in Elisabeth Nemeth and Nicolas Roudet, eds., *Paris-Wien: Enzyklopädien im Vergleich* (New York, 2005), 244; Charles W. Morris, "The Unity of Science Movement and the United States," *Synthese* 3 (1938), 27–8.

[71] Morris, "The Unity of Science Movement," 28. Also see "Pragmatism and the Crisis of Democracy," Public Policy Pamphlet No. 12 (Chicago, 1934). Morris's books are *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (Chicago, 1938) and *Paths of Life: Preface to a World Religion* (New York, 1942). On Neurath's response see Reisch, *How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science*, 47. Despite his broad political ambitions, Neurath objected to philosophers' use of such terms as "good," "justice," and even "interests." George A. Reisch, "Economist, Epistemologist . . . and Censor? On Otto Neurath's *Index Verborum Prohibitorum*," *Perspectives on Science* 5 (1997), 474–6.

[72] I have reconstructed Nagel's itinerary from letters in Leonora Rosenfeld, *Portrait of a Philosopher: Morris R. Cohen in Life and Letters* (New York, 1948), 399–401.

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and ideas."[73] Still, Nagel's writings of the 1930s and early 1940s offer a consistent, if calmly and often obliquely stated, critique of the logical empiricists for failing to extend their powerful methods of intellectual clarification into the realm of ethics.

RESISTANCE AT COLUMBIA

Neither Nagel's efforts within the department, nor Morris's integrative project, swayed the second-generation naturalists at Columbia. Nagel viewed noncognitive ethics as a dead branch that could be pruned from an essentially Deweyan tree. But his colleagues took noncognitivism to be the very root of logical empiricism. Moreover, they believed that, despite the logical empiricists' admirable opposition to classical empiricism, the movement actually repeated many of empiricism's errors, if in new linguistic forms.[74] Randall and his contemporaries variously attacked logical empiricism, ignored it, or treated its practitioners as novices groping toward truths that the American pragmatists had long since illuminated. Despite vigorous efforts by Nagel to harmonize Carnap's technical innovations with Dewey's value-inflected naturalism, Columbia became the nerve center of a powerful current of American resistance to logical empiricism.

Although Dewey himself largely ignored logical empiricism in print, his few published comments were pejorative. His *The Theory of Valuation* (1939) appeared in the *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* but focused almost entirely on indigenous movements in value theory. There, Dewey dismissed noncognitivist approaches in a few short passages and a sharply worded footnote, asserting that they denied the real-world consequences of ethical judgments.[75] He fleshed out his political critique of logical empiricism and British analytic philosophy in a 1942 essay on William James. These movements, Dewey argued, relied on a "pre-Jamesian psychology"; they continued, at least implicitly, to view minds in isolation from bodies. Such a view underwrote a spurious neutrality that relegated ethical matters to "decision by superior force" and came close to endorsing the totalitarians' politicization of science.[76] These scattered invocations aside,

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[73] Ernest Nagel, "The Fight for Clarity: Logical Empiricism," *American Scholar* 8 (1939), 47.

[74] Joseph [Garvin?] to Randall, 18 June 1939, "Correspondence, 1930–1939," Box 4, Randall papers. Both Woodbridge and Dewey took this approach: Randall, "Towards a Functional Naturalism," 71; Duckett transcript.

[75] Dewey, *The Theory of Valuation*, 410; Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 402–12. Dewey added the footnote after Carnap and Neurath protested that they rejected Ayer's strict version of noncognitivism. Reisch, *How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science*, 91–3.

[76] John Dewey, "William James as Empiricist" (1942), *Later Works*, 15: 14.

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Dewey's letters and published texts contain few references to Carnap and his allies. Dewey found Marxist theories of science, Catholic invocations of authority, and the Aristotelian pretensions of Hutchins and Adler more worthy of his attention.

Friess and Gutmann ignored logical empiricism even more completely. Randall, on the other hand, took numerous potshots at "our latest fashion in scientific philosophizing" after 1939.[77] The most consistent practitioner of intellectual history in a group strongly inclined toward that approach, Randall also served as the informal leader of the decentralized Columbia department after Woodbridge's day. He portrayed the gap between logical empiricism and Columbia naturalism as the product of divergent starting points. Versions of naturalism that concerned themselves with mathematics and physics, Randall wrote in the 1940 revision of *The Making of the Modern Mind*, limited their purview to "the logical structure of scientific knowledge," whereas those "that start from biology, psychology, and the social sciences emphasize the further context of the process of inquiry within which that structure is discriminated." Randall observed that these approaches shared a view of science as institutional and functional, not representational. However, the question of values divided them. "[I]n industrial society," wrote Randall, "cultural change" provided "the ultimate context and subject-matter of all our thinking." The "philosophies of human experience" pointed toward "a science of values comparable to the science that was the glory of Greek thought." By contrast, Randall argued, the physics-worshipers avoided the subject altogether.[78]

Most of Randall's criticism appeared in the 1950s, when elements of logical empiricism had taken firm root in American soil; he declared Carnap and Reichenbach to be inward-looking and myopic, "disdainful of Dewey's contention that philosophers should concern themselves with the problems of men."[79] However, Randall worked in the early 1940s on a book manuscript that would have codified his critique of logical empiricism. A 1944 outline began with "The Promise of New Worlds, 1915–1928," featuring "The Morning of American Social Science," "The Humanizing of American Religion," and "The Emergence of an American Philosophy." Then came "The Failure of Nerve and the Quest for Certainty," including a "Retreat to Positivism" alongside such other errors as "The Flurry of Humanism," "Refuge in Thomism," "Protestant Neo-orthodoxy," and

[77] John Herman Randall Jr, "Dewey's Interpretation of the History of Philosophy," in Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of John Dewey* (La Salle, IL, 1939), 80.

[78] John Herman Randall Jr, *The Making of the Modern Mind, Revised Edition* (Boston, 1940), 612, 614–15.

[79] Randall, "John Dewey," 12.

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"The Gospel of St. Marx."[80] Randall's book, had it been written, would almost certainly have elaborated the Columbia naturalists' charge that noncognitivism, like moral absolutism, fueled political quiescence.

Edman challenged the ethical neutralism of the logical empiricists on a number of occasions. Author of the widely read *Arts and the Man* (1928) and a frequent contributor to literary magazines, he wrote dismissively in 1934 of the Wittgenstein-inspired "cult" that would "reduce philosophy to a series of definitions, postulates, [and] logical relations."[81] Later in the decade, Edman seems to have joined Dewey in perceiving a greater threat from reductive, deterministic approaches to knowledge than from Carnap's ivory-tower ethics.[82] But his understanding of philosophy as "a wide and disciplined poetry" on the theme of "nature and destiny" clearly ruled out logical empiricism.[83] Edman went on the attack in 1941, claiming that laboring in the realm of pure logic deprived philosophers of a feel for human and even nonhuman nature, and thus robbed them of the basis for "an effective scientific control of society." Edman emphasized the centrality of the social context for philosophical inquiry, and ridiculed noncognitivists for acknowledging "nothing between statements empirically verifiable in physical facts and the exclamations of Oh and Ah."[84] In 1946, he observed that even the most abstruse investigation "is made from a given perspective." The "counsel of intellectual detachment," Edman wrote, "is a way of life," with distinct moral consequences. Edman insisted that real scientific progress, by which he meant "mutually intelligible discussion of common standards and categories," could occur in the normative realms of ethics, aesthetics, and religion.[85]

Schneider, a frequent commentator on moral theory, criticized the logical empiricists' noncognitivism on several occasions. His dissertation had identified a "moral science" as the key philosophical need of the modern layman.[86] In 1939,

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[80] Outline of *The Impact of the War on the American Mind*, "Curti, Merle," Box 1, Randall papers.

[81] Irwin Edman, "The First Quarter of 1934 in the U.S.A.," *Aryan Path* 5 (1934), 477.

[82] Irwin Edman, "The Uses of Philosophy" (1937), in Frankel, ed., *The Uses of Philosophy*, 25.

[83] Irwin Edman, *Four Ways of Philosophy* (New York, 1937), 325.

[84] Irwin Edman, "Lyric and Analytic Elements in Naturalistic Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy* 38 (1941), 562, 564, 567.

[85] Irwin Edman, "The Private Thinker and the Public World," *Journal of Philosophy* 43 (1946), 617, 623, 627. On Edman, see his "The College"; Charles Frankel, "Edman, Irwin," *Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Five* (New York, 1977), 198–9; and Allan Shields, "The Aesthetics of Irwin Edman (1896–1954)," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 14 (1980), 23–42.

[86] Herbert W. Schneider, *Science and Social Progress: A Philosophical Introduction to Moral Science* (Lancaster, PA, 1920).

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Schneider argued that Vienna circle cofounder Moritz Schlick had reified "the idea of private ownership of motives" in a recent book on ethics, offering "nothing in his analysis of motives that might encourage collectivism."[87] Schneider renewed his criticism in the McCarthy era, reiterating that values were "objects which can be discovered and verified in a biological and temporal context, as a necessary consequence of the purposive nature of existence." However, he now felt that the entire philosophy discipline had succumbed to the siren of value-neutrality.[88] Seeking an antidote, Schneider translated a section from a recent critique by the German value theorist Fritz-Joachim von Rintelen. There, von Rintelen argued that positivist methods should be integrated with a deeper and more spiritual conception of "*Bildung*, 'paideia,' or human self-realization" than the humanitarian ideal they had shaken off. Schneider believed that a positivist account of knowledge could "serve the cause of humaneness, of the humanities, and of human dignity in general."[89]

Nagel responded to such challenges by emphasizing the critical potential and essential familiarity of logical empiricism. He sought to steer philosophers around red herrings and direct their criticism toward what he saw as the new movement's primary weaknesses. Reporting in 1934 from a philosophical congress in Prague, Nagel told American readers that the logical empiricists offered the proper diagnosis of society's ills, but the wrong cure; the "dissection of logical problems" would hardly suffice to dispel undisciplined thinking. To the work of Reichenbach, Carnap, Neurath, and Schlick, he applied the criticism of Vienna circle member Felix Kaufmann, who had warned against "using Occam's Razor so as to cut the jugular vein of philosophic inquiry." Nagel stressed that "the price of a precipitate dismissal of genuine difficulties as meaningless is only too often sterility." Meanwhile, he saw in Morris's contribution a "more inclusive form of pragmatism" promising "an adequate theory of meaning," by combining formal analysis of symbols with sustained attention to their "social and biological contexts."[90]

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87 Herbert W. Schneider, review of Schlick, *Problems of Ethics*, *Journal of Philosophy* 36 (1939), 633–4. See also Herbert W. Schneider, "Moral Obligation," *Ethics* 50 (1939), 45–56. For biographical information see Craig Walton and John P. Anton, "Herbert Wallace Schneider: A Biographical Sketch," in Walton and Anton, eds., *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts: Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider* (Athens, OH, 1974), xi–xxii.

88 Herbert W. Schneider, "Philosophic Thought in France and the United States," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 11 (1951), 382.

89 Fritz-Joachim von Rintelen, "Positivism, Humanitarianism, and Humanity," trans. Herbert W. Schneider, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 11 (1951), 413. Both quotes are from Schneider's introduction to the text.

90 Ernest Nagel, "The Eighth International Congress of Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy* 31 (1934), 591–2. Nagel also lauded Morris's approach in his review of the *International*

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Looking back on his Europe sojourn, Nagel noted, with a mixture of admiration and dismay, the neutrality of analytic thinkers in the face of the "moral and social chaos" threatening their "intellectual oases" since Hitler's rise. Despite his misgivings, he held out hope that analytic philosophy would prove "a keen, shining sword helping to dispel irrational beliefs and to make evident the structure of ideas." If "the way of intelligence becomes part of the habitual nature of men," Nagel reasoned, "no doctrines and no institutions are safe from critical reappraisals." Yet he worried that the new mode of philosophy would instead create "quiet green pastures" in which philosophers could "find refuge from a troubled world and cultivate their intellectual games with chess-like indifference." Nagel believed that analytic philosophy could avoid becoming yet another expression of academic neglect of the world only if its practitioners reconceived their work as the criticism of prevailing cultural formations.[91]

On the question of facts and values, Nagel followed Dewey closely, maintaining that the same forms of empirical analysis could be applied to ethical judgments as to all other statements about the world. He argued that the logical empiricists carried forward much of the nineteenth-century empiricism they claimed to have superseded, by treating value judgments as private mental possessions cut off from public discourse. Unlike most of Columbia's philosophers, Nagel recognized that Carnap, Neurath, and Frank had given up their early belief—the source of the comparison to Lockean empiricism—that scientific claims could be analyzed into discrete "atomic facts" subject to definitive confirmation or rejection through empirical testing. He reassured American readers that the logical empiricists no longer meant by "verification" simply "comparing statements with 'facts' lying outside of discourse."[92] Yet in Nagel's view, the movement's leaders had not fully considered the implications of this move. How could they locate scientific propositions in the world of shared, public, communicable experience without doing the same for value judgments? Either there was a separate realm of individual, subjective thought or there was not; the logical empiricists could not have it one way for facts and another way for values. To the Columbia naturalists,

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Encyclopedia of Unified Science, *Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1938), 691; and in a letter of 11 Nov. 1938 to Morris, "International Institute for the Unity of Science," Box 1, Nagel papers.

[91] Ernest Nagel, "Impressions and Appraisals of Analytic Philosophy in Europe. I," *Journal of Philosophy* 33 (1936), 6, 9.

[92] Nagel took Moritz Schlick to task for failing to make this move. Ernest Nagel, "Impressions and Appraisals of Analytic Philosophy in Europe. II," *Journal of Philosophy* 33 (1936), 32. See also *idem*, "Charles Peirce's Guesses at the Riddle," *Journal of Philosophy* 30 (1933), esp. 376. He argued several times that the logical empiricists had only just arrived at positions established by Peirce and taken for granted by American thinkers. In 1948, however, Nagel allowed that Carnap had finally come abreast of "some of the American realists in 1912." Review of Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*, *Journal of Philosophy* 45 (1948), 471.

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all meaningful experience was fundamentally social and communicable, and therefore subject to empirical criticism. Nagel denied that ethical judgments were either "assertions about some transcendental autonomous realm of values" or mere "records of the private feelings of those who make them." Rather, they were "hypotheses concerning ways of organizing or reorganizing the human scene in the interests of the well-being of its members."[93]

Nagel's writings of the late 1930s and the 1940s sounded the other keynotes of the Columbia naturalists' response to logical empiricism as well. He charged, for example, that the logical empiricists ignored the history of ideas to their own detriment: they often failed to recognize age-old dead ends when these reappeared in new linguistic guises. Nagel wrote pointedly that "the historical approach, when wisely cultivated, can frequently produce the same kind of intellectual catharsis and dissolution of pseudo-problems as does the analytic method."[94] He also accused the logical empiricists of dismissing metaphysics too stridently and indiscriminately. According to Nagel, many American metaphysicians would actually agree with the logical empiricists' "anti-metaphysical" position, if only the movement's "missionary zeal" and "shrill tones" were dampened.[95] Finally, a rare mention of aesthetics indicates that Nagel viewed artworks, like ethical judgments, as proposals for rearranging the world.[96] His writings illustrated each of the main tenets, if not the rhetorical style, of Columbia naturalism.

It is important to recognize that Nagel's version of what the logical empiricists called "physicalism" did not portray physics as the master language of human thought. Rather, it signified the existence of a shared world whose structures and processes all scientific thinkers (and everyone else) sought to capture in language. Nagel viewed science and philosophy as secondary to, and derivative of, this "work-a-day world" of everyday practice, wherein ordinary people and scholars alike carried out their pragmatic experiments.[97] Scholars served the inhabitants of the work-a-day world by criticizing the abstractions put forward by other would-be leaders—other philosophers and scientists, certainly, but also politicians, businessmen, and ordinary citizens, speaking on any and all subjects.[98] He thus portrayed naturalism as both more and less than a school of philosophy: it simply meant recognizing, and seeking to improve, that shared social world in which all theories emerged and functioned. As Nagel wrote, naturalism "merely

93 Nagel, "Impressions and Appraisals II," 49.

94 Nagel, "Impressions and Appraisals I," 6–7 (italics removed).

95 Nagel, "The Fight for Clarity," 58–9.

96 Nagel, "Impressions and Appraisals II," 49.

97 Ernest Nagel, "Charles S. Peirce, Pioneer of Modern Empiricism," *Philosophy of Science* 7 (1940), 77–8.

98 Ernest Nagel, "Recent Philosophies of Science," *Kenyon Review* 3 (1941), 315.

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formulates what centuries of human experience have repeatedly confirmed."[99] Nagel's perception of harmony between Columbia's philosophers and the logical empiricists rested in large part on his belief that the latter, too, adopted a "common-sense naturalism" and accepted the findings of "common experience and informed practice" as the ultimate philosophical authority.[100]

Nagel's project differed in another important respect from that of his colleagues, and from the harmonization effort pursued by Morris at Chicago: he seems to have been uncomfortable with the sweeping generalizations and grand pronouncements of his culturally Protestant peers. Nagel believed that Deweyan conceptions of epistemology and ethics fit neatly with democratic politics, but he could not himself muster the persona of public prophet, and he viewed the proclamations of those who could with a mixture of admiration and distrust.[101] "I am convinced as much as you are of the need for an adequate and well-rounded philosophy," Nagel told Randall in 1942. But, he observed, "I do not feel confident in the soundness of general principles until I can see them worked out in some detail in connection with fairly specific and concrete problems."[102] Although committed to the broad frame of Columbia naturalism, Nagel thought and wrote as a specialist exploring a few small corners of that collectively tilled field. His technical interests, rhetorical flatness, and conceptual rigor, rather than his substantive arguments, would characterize American philosophy by the end of the 1950s. Still, American critics could find in Nagel's own commentaries much to reinforce their belief that logical empiricism countenanced ethical and political irresponsibility.

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[99] Ernest Nagel, "Naturalism Reconsidered," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 28 (1954–5), 7, 12. Cf. Woodbridge, *Nature and Mind*, 258; Edman, *Four Ways of Philosophy*, 229; and Randall, "Dewey's Interpretation," 82. Justus Buchler, *Charles Peirce's Empiricism* (New York, 1936), 261, dubbed this view "public empiricism."

[100] Nagel, "Impressions and Appraisals I," 7. To broad audiences, in fact—in whose minds Nagel sought to establish the superiority of the "antimetaphysical empirical philosophies" ("Cambridge analytic philosophy, logical positivism, and pragmatism") over unscientific competitors such as Marxism, rather than touting the benefits of Columbia's particular version—he described logical empiricism as having already "fuse[d] the use of refined logical techniques successfully with a biological, social approach." Ernest Nagel, "On the Philosophical Battlefront," *Partisan Review* 15 (1948), 711; *idem*, "The Fight for Clarity," 50. See also *idem*, "Recent Philosophies of Science," 315–316. By contrast, Nagel rejected Wittgenstein's "self-denying" reduction of philosophy to "the reinstatement of the unsophistication of the 'plain man.'" *Idem*, "Impressions and Appraisals I," 22.

[101] Nagel directed much of this criticism toward Neurath, whose writings he found sloppy. Nagel to Charles W. Morris, 11 Nov. 1938, "International Institute for the Unity of Science," Box 1, Nagel papers; Nagel to Arthur Bentley, 2 Dec. 1944, "Bentley, Arthur," Box 1, Nagel papers.

[102] Nagel to Randall, 31 July 1942, "Correspondence, 1940–1949," Box 4, Randall papers.

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LEGACIES

In the end, Nagel never witnessed the convergence between logical empiricism and Columbia naturalism that he so diligently sought. Although logical empiricism, as a coherent movement, disintegrated in the 1950s, Quine's department at Harvard, with its technical orientation and close ties to the center of British analysis at Oxford, shone most brightly in the firmament of postwar American philosophy. The discipline shifted toward more specialized modes of analysis and found a new center of gravity in logic, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language. Along the way, the discrepant programs for political engagement favored by the Columbia naturalists and the logical empiricists ceded ground to a third conception of the philosopher's social role. Whereas Carnap and Nagel expected political change to flow from an array of technical researches, Quine truly *was* apolitical, for all intents and purposes.[103]

Nagel's mediation project thus remained unrealized: analytic thinkers did not adopt even the limited version of public engagement modeled by Nagel himself, in his many lectures and his popular *Gödel's Proof* (1958). Nagel's 1954 presidential address to the APA's Eastern Division featured the same reminders he had issued for two decades. After telling critics that analytic philosophy had achieved "substantial feats of clarification," he urged its proponents to look up from their technical studies and to articulate "their substantive views on things in general," especially their commitment to "a naturalistic moral theory."[104] Nagel remained optimistic about naturalism's long-term prospects, believing that a naturalistic perspective was native to both the working scientist and the common man, as well as to scientific philosophers. However, his Columbia colleagues were hardly so sanguine.

Yet while Quine's approach was in the ascendant after World War II, it hardly swept the field. As Hilary Putnam has observed, the prevailing image of 1950s American philosophy as a vast analytic wasteland stems from an overly narrow focus on "the *internal* development of analytic philosophy," which causes naturalists, realists, and idealists to vanish by definition.[105] At Columbia, as at Yale, a broad, pluralistic definition of philosophy still held sway, even as prestige and funding flowed disproportionately to Harvard and its satellites. The Columbia department did move slowly toward the growth fields, most notably by hiring

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[103] Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 243–58; Isaac, "W. V. Quine," 225–6.

[104] Ernest Nagel, "Naturalism Reconsidered," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 28 (1954–5), 7, 12.

[105] Hilary Putnam, "A Half Century of Philosophy, Viewed From Within," *Daedalus* 126 (1997), 176, original emphasis. The standard image has found its strongest formulation in McCumber's *Time in the Ditch.*

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another logician, John C. Cooley.[106] However, the second-generation naturalists joined other members of the old guard in voting with their feet, pushing ever further into value theory, social philosophy, aesthetics, metaphysics, and the history of ideas.[107] The third generation, too, carried on in this expansive vein.[108]

Of the Columbia naturalists, only Nagel and Buchler are remembered today, and then only by specialists. Yet the group's core commitments, and the fields they helped to build, became deeply entrenched in American intellectual culture. Many readers will have noted parallels with the "end-of-ideology" outlook and the anti-absolutist stance of postwar American liberalism, especially as put forward by the "New York intellectuals," who in many cases were the naturalists' undergraduate students, Columbia colleagues, or close friends.[109] Believing that the industrial West was moving toward a less capitalist, more egalitarian future, the Columbia naturalists portrayed themselves as articulating "the values immanent in our civilization" rather than erecting fixed blueprints for the future.[110] Back in the

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[106] Randall, "The Department of Philosophy," 137.

[107] John Herman Randall, *Nature and Historical Experience: Essays in Naturalism and in the Theory of History* (New York, 1958); Herbert W. Schneider, "Metaphysical Vision," *Philosophical Review* 58 (1949), 399–411; *idem*, *Three Dimensions of Public Morality* (Bloomington, IN, 1956); *idem*, *Morals for Mankind* (Columbia, MO, 1960); *idem*, *Ways of Being: Elements of Analytic Ontology* (New York, 1962). On these writings see Beth J. Singer, "Metaphysics without Mirrors," in Tom Rockmore and Beth J. Singer, eds., *Antifoundationalism Old and New* (Philadelphia, 1992), 189–208; Tejera, *American Modern*, 176–94; and Anton, *American Naturalism and Greek Philosophy*, 163–222. Harvard's C. I. Lewis illustrates the wider trend; his postwar books include *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle, IL, 1946), *The Ground and Nature of the Right* (New York, 1955), and *Our Social Inheritance* (Bloomington, IN, 1957).

[108] Buchler and Hofstadter, attracted to logical empiricism during their student days in the late 1930s, soon questioned its "dread of imprecision" and took up metaphysics and aesthetics respectively. Justus Buchler, review of Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, *Nation* 172 (1951), 620. Representative postwar writings include Justus Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment* (New York, 1951); and Albert Hofstadter, *Truth and Art* (New York, 1965). Frankel and Blau wrote on political and social ethics, stressing the inseparability of value judgments from their human contexts: e.g., Charles Frankel, "Empiricism and Moral Imperatives," *Journal of Philosophy* 50 (23 April 1953), 257–69; and Joseph L. Blau, ed., *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy* (Indianapolis, 1954).

[109] Lionel Trilling to Gutmann, 22 March 1956, "Trilling, Lionel," Box 1, Gutmann papers; Edman, "The College," 10; Richard Hofstadter to Randall, 16 Jan. 1954, "Hofstadter, Richard," Box 2, Randall papers; Reisch, *How the Cold War Transformed Philosophy of Science*, 66. Cotkin notes this parallel with postwar liberals in "Middle-Ground Pragmatists," 284.

[110] Randall, *Our Changing Civilization*, 354. On the "postcapitalist" sensibility of that era, see Howard Brick, *Transcending Capitalism: Visions of a New Society in Modern American Thought* (Ithaca, NY, 2006).

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disciplines, the naturalists helped to establish the relatively secular mode of analysis characteristic of religious studies, which flourished after World War II.[111] These figures also made their mark on the initially intertwined fields of intellectual history, history of science, and history of philosophy, along with the later-emerging discipline of American studies.[112] They played a part in defining "Western civilization" as well, arguing that "American philosophy and thought, like American culture in general, began in Palestine and Greece."[113]

However, the clearest legacy of these naturalists' work is a canon of American philosophy that still holds firm. In the 1930s, the acerbic Randall and the breezy Edman took the lead in aligning philosophies with national character. They ascribed to the United States a unique set of social, cultural, and political conditions that had been captured in philosophical terms by those whom

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[111] Friess, "The Department of Religion"; Charles Y. Glock, "Remembrances of Things Past: SSSR's Formative Years," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39 (2000), 425. Programmatic statements include Herbert W. Schneider, "Religion as a University Concern," *Columbia University Quarterly* 23 (1931), 93–102; and Horace L. Friess, "The Importance of Religion," *Kenyon Review* 8 (1946), 617–32. Columbia's naturalists also worked closely with the faculty at Union Theological Seminary. For example, Randall co-taught for years with Paul Tillich and also socialized and shared students with Reinhold Niebuhr. Randall, "The Department of Philosophy," 140; Niebuhr to Mercedes Randall, 5 Nov. 1965, "Niebuhr, Reinhold," Box 2, Randall papers.

[112] Key texts include Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind*; *idem*, *The School of Padua and the Emergence of Modern Science* (Padova, 1961); *idem*, *The Career of Philosophy*, 2 vols. (New York, 1962–5); Herbert W. Schneider, *The Puritan Mind* (New York, 1930); and Ernest Nagel, "'Impossible Numbers': A Chapter in the History of Logic," in *Studies in the History of Ideas*, vol. 3 (New York, 1935), 429–74. On Randall's role in the history of science, see Nathan Reingold, *Science, American Style* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1991), 369. Schneider helped launch the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*: Walton and Anton, "Herbert Wallace Schneider," xix. On American studies see Philip Gleason, "World War II and the Development of American Studies," *American Quarterly* 36 (1984), 343–58.

[113] Randall, "The Spirit of American Philosophy," 118. Randall also penned *Aristotle* (New York, 1960) and *Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason* (New York, 1970); translated Ernst Cassirer's *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe* (Princeton, 1945) with Gutmann and Paul Oskar Kristeller; and co-edited, with Cassirer and Kristeller, *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago, 1963). Other Columbia figures translated and anthologized additional Western writers: *Schleiermacher's Sololiquies*, trans. Horace L. Friess (Chicago, 1926); *The Works of Plato*, ed. Irwin Edman (New York, 1928); Friedrich Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries Into the Nature of Human Freedom*, trans. James Gutmann (La Salle, IL, 1936); *Rousseau: The Social Contract*, ed. Charles Frankel (New York, 1947); Herbert W. Schneider, ed., *Adam Smith's Moral and Political Philosophy* (New York, 1948); Dante Alighieri, *On World Government, or De Monarchia*, trans. Herbert W. Schneider (New York, 1949); Irwin Edman, ed., *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (New York, 1950); and Herbert W. Schneider, Ralph Ross, and Theodore Waldman, eds., *Thomas Hobbes in His Time* (Minneapolis, 1974).

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Schneider later called the "big four" of the "revolutionary generation": Charles S. Peirce, Josiah Royce, James, and Dewey.[114] Frankel dubbed this period the "golden age of American philosophy."[115] In the Columbia naturalists' accounting, all philosophy in the United States before the heyday of classical pragmatism, and most of it since, had failed to fit its time and place, because it reflected the class-bound social structures of the Old World rather than the fluid, pluralistic culture of a New World democracy.[116]

The naturalists' postwar texts traded heavily in images of immigration and assimilation. "American philosophy has continually been given new life and new directions by waves of immigration," Schneider wrote, making it "useless to seek a 'native' tradition." Though no longer "intellectually colonial," he continued, the nation remained "intellectually provincial," with "an unfavorable balance of foreign trade in ideas." Yet the "imported goods" from "Cambridge, Paris, and Vienna," Schneider noted, "are not being swallowed raw; they must be blended with those homegrown ideas, for which an established taste and preference exists."[117] Randall and the other naturalists likewise spoke glowingly of American diversity. "The essence of the American spirit," Randall wrote, "is to be cosmopolitan, to be free from the provincialism, the parochialism, and the prejudices of European lands, with their tight unified national traditions bred of a millennium of competition and warfare." Indeed, he declared that the United States "is not a 'nation'; it is not bound together by those ties which European nations cherish—a common origin, a common 'stock,' common traditions, a common religion . . . America faces forward to a shared task, not backward to shared memories." As a result of this fact, Randall concluded, genuine American philosophy possessed "a pluralistic temper," "an experimental attitude," and "an egalitarian spirit."[118]

From their student days, the second-generation naturalists had understood philosophical systems as the products of leading social groups. Friess argued in 1925 that philosophies were "idealizations" of their originating societies,[119] while Randall took every opportunity to emphasize the social contexts of philosophical

[114] Herbert W. Schneider, *Sources of Contemporary Philosophical Realism in America* (Indianapolis, 1964), ix.

[115] Charles Frankel, *The Golden Age of American Philosophy* (New York, 1960).

[116] In addition to the texts cited below, see Woodbridge to Randall, 31 Jan. 1932, "Woodbridge, Frederick J.E.," Box 3, Randall papers. The sociologist Neil Gross explores the identification of pragmatism with democracy in "Becoming a Pragmatist Philosopher: Status, Self-Concept, and Intellectual Choice," *American Sociological Review* 67 (2002), 52–76.

[117] Herbert W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy* (New York, 1946), vii–viii.

[118] Randall, "The Spirit of American Philosophy," 122, 124.

[119] Friess to Randall, 22 Feb. 1925, "Correspondence, 1920–1929," Box 4, Randall papers (underlining removed).

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clashes. All of them joined Dewey in viewing British empiricism as the ideology of a commercial elite.[120] Just as Kant's central concepts reflected "middle-class German Pietism," Edman added, "[a]uthoritarianism in morals and absolutism in metaphysics have, too, their social roots."[121] The onset of World War II brought a flood of texts identifying Dewey as the patron saint of American democracy, and the Dewey boom continued unabated into the 1950s, as New York's philosophers painted American landscapes in which logical empiricism was marginal, foreign, or simply absent.[122] Edman's *John Dewey* (1955), published alongside volumes on Andrew Jackson, Roger Williams, and Benjamin Franklin in Bobbs-Merrill's Makers of the American Tradition series, deemed Dewey as American as apple pie.[123]

An influential vector for this nationalist argument, albeit in a muted form, was Schneider's classic *A History of American Philosophy* (1946). Whereas most of the naturalists placed Dewey at the head of the canon, Schneider bracketed the dispute over values and ended his narrative with the emergence of "radical empiricism," a category uniting pragmatists, realists, and naturalists with behaviorists and operationalists in the social sciences.[124] However, logical empiricism did not appear under this heading, or anywhere else in the book. By 1963, when Schneider revised the volume, he could no longer ignore logical empiricism altogether. Still, he concluded the new edition with the rise of American realism in the early twentieth century, merely gesturing toward such recent developments such as the "importation of less radical empiricisms." Schneider's only substantive comment on logical empiricism in the 1963 edition explained that it had "given technical elaboration to some aspects of the pragmatic movement" but "corrupted others."[125] Only in the 1970s would Schneider openly lash out against new analytic modes.[126]

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120 E.g. Albert Hofstadter, *Locke and Scepticism* (New York, 1935), 133–4.

121 Edman, *Four Ways of Philosophy*, 318.

122 E.g., Sidney Ratner *et al.*, *The Philosopher of the Common Man: Essays in Honor of John Dewey to Celebrate His Eightieth Birthday* (New York, 1940), Irwin Edman, *Fountainheads of Freedom: The Growth of the Democratic Idea* (New York, 1941); Sidney Hook, ed., *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom* (New York, 1950).

123 Irwin Edman, *John Dewey: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (Indianapolis, 1955).

124 Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy*, 511–71.

125 Herbert W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy*, 2nd edn (New York, 1963), xiii, 477. By this time, Schneider had retired from Columbia and moved to California, where he helped to build up the Claremont Graduate Center. Walton and Anton, "Herbert Wallace Schneider," xix.

126 Herbert W. Schneider, "The American Establishment, the Civilizing Arts, and Philosophy," in Walton and Anton, eds., *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts*, 439.

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Other Columbia figures challenged analytical philosophy much earlier. During the immediate postwar years, as the philosophical tide turned against them, the Columbia naturalists discarded the argument that Americans *should be* naturalists and took up the more coercive claim that naturalism represented the *only* truly American philosophy. In 1948, Randall differentiated "American philosophy" from mere "philosophy in America." He insisted that democrats could abide neither logical empiricism, with its stress on expertise, nor the neo-orthodoxy and existentialism "born of the agonies of European culture." Before pragmatism, Randall wrote, American thinkers had simply "worked over European ideas ... without American experience contributing very much to their thought." Dewey and the other golden-age figures had ended this "colonial situation" by refitting European thought to American realities. Picturing Dewey as a homespun man of the people rather than an ivory-tower egghead or a manipulative technocrat, Randall denied the potent adjective "American" to much of the philosophical work under way in the United States.[127] A few years later, Blau reiterated Randall's historical narrative in an even more combative chapter on "Recent Philosophic Importations."[128]

Though hardly as bellicose as his colleagues, Nagel also contributed to the canonization of Dewey, in a 1947 essay for European readers on "Philosophy and the American Temper." Unlike Randall, Nagel used a sociological account of philosophies to emphasize the continuity of Western thought, noting that "contemporary America shares with western Europe a comparable literary and religious heritage, a similar social and economic structure, and above all an identical science." Yet Nagel acknowledged the uniqueness of Americans' "political and social experience," which led them to bring to Western philosophies "a certain habit of mind and a set of general convictions." He wrote that this "objective relativism" or "contextualistic naturalism" captured "the dominant temper of American life" far better than did Calvinism, absolute idealism, Thomism, phenomenology, existentialism, and other non-empirical modes of thought. Though "sane and reasonable at a time when the tides of irrationalism run high in the world," Nagel explained, contextualistic naturalism was "vigorously anti-reductionist" in its insistance that "the world contains at least as many qualitatively distinct features as are disclosed in human experience." Such a view, he contended, "expresses the aspirations of a people still young enough to believe that the good life can be achieved through

[127] Randall, "The Spirit of American Philosophy," 119–20, 128. Cf. "The Department of Philosophy," 103.

[128] Joseph L. Blau, "Recent Philosophic Importations," in Baron, Nagel, and Pinson, eds., *Freedom and Reason*, 87–96. See also *idem*, *Men and Movements in American Philosophy* (New York, 1952).

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an overt participation in worldly affairs, rather than through a melancholy resignation."[129]

The Columbia naturalists' writings on philosophy's past and present, coupled with parallel efforts by other critics of analytic methods, produced the now-familiar canon of "American philosophy."[130] In the decades since World War II, various naturalists, pragmatists, realists, idealists, process philosophers, and even neo-Thomists have faithfully retraced the canon's contours, with an eye toward recapturing the publicly engaged vision of Dewey and his interwar peers.[131] These figures oppose the canon to two other bodies of philosophical work, namely analytic philosophy and what we now call "Continental" thought. Canon advocates portray both of these conceptions of the philosophical enterprise as European in origin and character, and see in them the opposing errors of technique without vision and speculation untethered from reality. Although specific formulations of the canon vary—Santayana, Alfred North Whitehead, and George Herbert Mead often appear alongside Peirce, Royce, James, and Dewey as "golden-age" thinkers—the core of the argument holds steady: these towering figures gave philosophical voice to a native strain of thought that underpins the American experience, yet had been glimpsed only by the transcendentalists and perhaps the Puritans, and then only hazily.

As it emerged, then, the canon of American philosophy comprised a set of texts that cutting-edge practitioners in the field—those who took their cues from Quine and other analysts—neither read nor valued. After World War II, accounts of American philosophy floated ever higher above the research programs of most actual philosophers in the United States.[132] This growing disjuncture was hardly lost on the Columbia naturalists, as their influence waned. Even as they declared their approach to be quintessentially American, these figures also

[129] Nagel noted that the American temper also took such names as "functional realism" and "process philosophy." Ernest Nagel, "Philosophy and the American Temper" (1947), reprinted in *Sovereign Reason* (Glencoe, IL, 1954), 51–3, 55, 57. The clearest statement of Nagel's postwar political stance is his Dewey Lecture, *Liberalism and Intelligence* (Bennington, VT, 1957).

[130] A full account of the formation of the American philosophical canon would also include such landmark texts as Max H. Fisch, ed., *Classic American Philosophers* (New York, 1951) and John E. Smith, *The Spirit of American Philosophy* (New York, 1963).

[131] Of course, not all adherents of the philosophical schools mentioned have aligned them with American democracy. But the strategy has proved widely attractive.

[132] Defenders of the canon often join Randall in explicitly differentiating "American philosophy" from "philosophy in America." The first sentence of Armen Marsoobian and John Ryder's introduction to *The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy* (Malden, MA, 2004) draws this distinction. Cheryl Misak takes a more ecumenical approach in *The Oxford Guide to American Philosophy* (New York, 2008).

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described themselves as part of "the philosophical opposition," as Gutmann put it in planning for Dewey's centenary of October 1959.[133]

That centenary celebration symbolized Dewey's rapidly declining prestige. It was far more modest and scholarly than the effusive bash of 1949.[134] Even the keynote speech paled by comparison, as Dwight Eisenhower's triumphant claim that Dewey was "the philosopher of freedom" gave way to Grayson Kirk's awkward description of Dewey as "one of the main figures in what we hope is the Columbia tradition of intellectual inquiry."[135] Behind the scenes, the tone was equally guarded. In the months leading up to the centenary, Gutmann and the rest of the organizing committee compiled a wish list of speakers that was remarkably broad, in disciplinary terms, but clearly delimited by epistemological considerations. On the one hand, the committee's roster included not only pragmatists and naturalists, but also idealists, realists, and phenomenologists. Heterodox versions of logical empiricism and analytic philosophy found a spot as well, in the form of the ecumenical Philipp Frank and Morton White. Nor was the list limited to philosophers. Appearing alongside the Columbia naturalists and other philosophers (Brand Blanshard, Arthur E. Murphy, Stephen C. Pepper, Marvin Farber) were the psychologist Gordon Allport, the economist Paul Douglas, the anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, the historian Merle Curti, and the art historian Meyer Schapiro, among many others.[136] Yet the list had clear boundaries as well. Dewey acolytes Alvin Johnson and Joseph Ratner worked to strike a number of names from the roster, including those of the outspoken atheists Bertrand Russell and Corliss Lamont. The organizers' criterion for selection was friendliness to normative engagement, not a commitment to the specific tenets of Columbia naturalism. Indeed, their list of potential speakers represented a cross-section of the interwar "cultural sciences," led by the aging philosophical mainstream of the 1930s and 1940s, with its sharp critics of value-neutrality. Here, Dewey's defenders saw a genuinely democratic, if deeply embattled, alternative to the disengaged studies of the analysts. Here, they saw America.

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[133] Gutmann to the Provisional Committee for the Observation of John Dewey's Centenary, 10 July 1958, "Dewey Centenary Committee," Box 35, Randall papers.

[134] "John Dewey Fete Set," *New York Times*, 18 Oct. 1959, 134; "Dr. Dewey, 90 Oct. 20, To Be Widely Feted," *New York Times*, 7 Sept. 1949.

[135] Quoted in Jay Martin, *The Education of John Dewey* (New York, 2002), 477; "Columbia Hails John Dewey," *New York Times*, 21 Oct. 1959, 28.

[136] Gutmann to the Provisional Committee, 10 July 1958.

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