**Pragmatism, an ethic for democracy or an ethic for science (or are they the same)?**

**On John Dewey’s ethics of (self) transformation**

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**Abstract**

The present chapter addresses the relationship between ethics, knowledge, and democracy in Dewey’s work from a somewhat new point of view. As it will be developed, there are three main and intertwined elements underlying his philosophical work. First, a certain ethics of (self) transformation —through which Dewey relates the concepts of virtue, discipline, and knowledge by drawing upon some of the classic principles of the “care of the self” philosophy, according to which subjects are simultaneously the agents of the construction of knowledge and the objects constructed by knowledge itself. Second, an absolute correspondence between “means” and “ends”. And third, a conception of truth as something rational, practical, plural, and (self) transformative —which does not exclude its fallible and relative character.

The chapter is motivated by the inspiring reading of John Lachs’ *Stoic Pragmatism*. By bringing together the ancient philosophy of Stoicism and the modern philosophy of Pragmatism, *Stoic Pragmatism* makes a fabulous point, to viz., that Pragmatism is, beyond a method for clarifying ideas, an ethics of life that invites individuals to live rationally in order to make life better. The importance for Pragmatism of an ethics that set intelligence at the center of the question “how life should be conducted?”, both individually and socially, is one of the main arguments that I will try to lay out in the next pages by drawing on Dewey’s work, always understanding Pragmatism as a philosophy concerned with the leading role of human action in the construction of the world we live in; with the idea that there are some paths in life that are more worthwhile than others; and with the necessity of taking responsibility in the construction of those paths, hence avoiding to take moral holidays when it comes to decide what to do next and how to do it in the best —i.e., intelligent— possible way.