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Paul Cherlin, John Dewey, and the Love of Wisdom

Review: Paul Benjamin Cherlin,
John Dewey's Metaphysical Theory,
(New York, New York, Palgrave McMillian, 2023), 170 pages.

I.

Philosophy has traditionally been defined as the love of wisdom. Understanding the love of wisdom is crucial to Paul Cherlin's book *John Dewey's Metaphysical Theory.*[1] Cherlin's short but broad-ranging study offers a view of the nature and importance of philosophy, metaphysics, and of the difficult metaphysics of Dewey which Cherlin finds "deserves to be counted among the greatest metaphysical theories in the history of philosophy" (MT, vii).

In this review, I first discuss some striking literary allusions in Cherlin's book and their importance to his study of Dewey's metaphysics. In particular, I want to

1) Parenthetically cited as MT.

suggest at the outset the broad meaning of the vague terms "nature" and "naturalism" which play a central role in Dewey's metaphysics. The review then discusses Cherlin's view of Dewey's understanding of what metaphysics is. The next section of the review examines Cherlin's exposition of Dewey's own metaphysical views. The concluding section of the review discusses Cherlin's understanding of the nature of philosophy and love of wisdom in Dewey's thought.

To use an elusive term. Cherlin's study of Dewey is "naturalist" in orientation. Still, the book makes intriguing allusions throughout to spiritual themes, as do some other readings of this difficult philosopher. For example, Cherlin frames his study with the words attributed to Rabbi Tarphon in the Mishnaic text *Pirke Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*). "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it."

In his Preface, Cherlin states that Rabbi Tarphon's words capture the spirit of his book and of Dewey's thought. Rabbi Tarphon suggests that no individual will be able to finish the task of life; each person must make an effort to carry it forward. Cherlin writes that neither his thought nor Dewey's purport to be the last word on any matter but instead contribute to an ongoing search or conversation (MT,viii). Rabbi Tarphon literally has the last word in Cherlin's book. His famous teaching is the book's final sentence and works as a summary of its goals (MT, 144).

The often-quoted words of Rabbi Tarphon do not explain his understanding of the "task" in which this Mishnaic scholar is engaged. In the immediately following passage in *Pirke Avot*, Rabbi Tarphon continues, clarifying his meaning and giving his words a religious and a particular cast: "If you have learned much Torah, you will be greatly rewarded, and your employer is trustworthy to pay you the reward of your labors. And know, that the reward of the righteous is in the World to Come."[2]

Rabbi Tarphon's words are in tension with the underlying naturalism of Cherlin's book, but they are wonderfully evocative in capturing something of both Cherlin and of Dewey. Cherlin, Professor of Philosophy at Minneapolis College and the editor of the online journal *Dewey Studies* brings passion to his study. His book shows an inspiring concern with the importance of his subject and with bringing his enthusiasm to both students and readers. The primary strengths of this book are its sincerity and

2) *Ethics of the Fathers*, 2:16.

its personal character. His book involves his readers in the never-completed tasks of the search for and practice of wisdom.

Cherlin draws upon a range of literary sources in addition to *Pirke Avot*. These sources are brief, poetic, and metaphorical and yet they capture Cherlin's understanding of philosophy, and of Dewey, more clearly than Dewey's labored prose or Cherlin's more formal analysis and explanations. Some of these sources, including Emerson and Whitman, have a recognized importance to the study of Dewey, and both show an uneasy combination of idealism and naturalism that some readers find in Dewey. Cherlin quotes Emerson's journals to show the dialectical, changing character of his concept of nature: "Cannot I conceive the Universe without a contradiction?" "Undulation, Alteration, is the condition of progress, of life" (MT, 61).

Cherlin also quotes "our poet-prophet Emerson" at the conclusion of his opening chapter for his "vision of nature" and its "inexplicable continuity." Nature, for Emerson, is intertwined with spirituality and God as shown in the passage Cherlin quotes from *The American Scholar:* "What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of the web of God, but always circular power returning into itself" (MT, 26).

Cherlin writes insightfully about Whitman's poem *Dalliance of Eagles* which provides in its depiction of "the clinching, interlocking claws, a living fierce gyrating wheel, / Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling," a nature that is "full of dynamism and opposition." Cherlin finds that Whitman's poetry "captures something of Dewey's 'generic traits of existence' that Dewey himself could not quite put into prose" (MT, 62). Cherlin also quotes Whitman, and Emerson as well, in his discussion late in the book of metaphysics and democracy in Dewey. Here again, the discussion of Dewey's naturalism is infused with apparently broader considerations as Cherlin quotes Whitman's essay *Democratic Vistas:* "at the core of democracy is the religious element" (MT, 126).

Other literary sources Cherlin uses are less commonly associated with Dewey. They include Hillel, Wallace Stevens, *Gilgamesh,* Primo Levi, and Maurice Maeterlinck. Dewey in fact wrote an essay about Maeterlinck and Cherlin offers two extensive quotations of Dewey on Maeterlinck (MT, 126–27), which Cherlin than summarizes in his own words: "The goal of knowledge is not to negate the mystery and strangeness of the world. Rather, knowledge grants us a way of pursuing the mysteries that

necessarily surround us, embracing their character and import as *otherness* that is unknowable in its fullness. Our notions of divinity, and our drive to both embrace and pursue the unknown, become one" (MT, 127).

The final literary quotation I will mention from Cherlin occurs at the conclusion of Section 5.2 which consists of a dense philosophical treatment of Dewey's understanding of personal identity and of democracy. Cherlin concludes his discussion with the statement: "It is Dewey's theory of democracy, above anything else, that gives us an indication about what it means to be a certain kind of person – a *good* person" (MT,122). Cherlin then quotes from *Wozzeck* without translation or attribution: "*Wozzeck, du bist ein guter Mensch, ein guter Mensch. Aber du denkst zuviel, das zehrt; du ziest immer so verhertzt aus*." (Wozzeck, you are a good person, a good person. But you think too much, that consumes; you always look so rushed.) (MT, 122). [3] Cherlin's literary allusions add a great deal to the tone and substance of his book and remind the reader of the difficulty of the reduction of important components of Dewey's thought, particularly as they involve naturalism.

II.

Cherlin's task in his book is not entirely that of Rabbi Tarphon in studying Torah but is rather to study Dewey's metaphysics. His task is centered around Dewey's obscure and difficult book *Experience and Nature* (EN)[4] (1925) which soon will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Dewey's metaphysics has received less attention than his work in education, social theory, ethics, the logic of inquiry, and other areas. Many scholars, such as Richard Rorty, see Dewey's work as anti-metaphysical in character and view his attempt at metaphysics as an aberration.[5] Simply stated, Cherlin's goal is to explain Dewey's metaphysical theory and to offer a defense of metaphysics and its importance.

In the "Afterword," Cherlin states that his book has a three-fold goal (MT, 144). First, his book attempts an accurate reading of Dewey's metaphysics and an interpre-

3) Translation by my friend, Hugo Teufel.

4) To avoid repetition, it is hereafter referred to as EN.

5) Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*.

tation of the consequences of Dewey's metaphysical theory. Second, Cherlin endeavors to show the complexity and richness of Dewey's thought; in particular, he emphasizes that each concept in Dewey's work is an integral part of a comprehensive philosophical system. Dewey is a philosophical system-builder, albeit in a reconstructed way. Third, Cherlin endeavors to show throughout his study how Dewey viewed philosophy as both the love of wisdom and as cultural criticism; Cherlin wants to explain what this means. His final words to the reader are, as we have discussed, those of Rabbi Tarphon in *Pirke Avot*.

Throughout his study, Cherlin weaves together a discussion of Dewey's views of the nature of metaphysics with a discussion of Dewey's own metaphysical theory. I want to discuss the former question here. Cherlin begins with Aristotle's view that metaphysics investigates being as such, or the study of that which is common to all things that exist (MT, vii). He finds that Dewey followed Aristotle's formulation and developed a metaphysics which centered upon the generic traits of existence. As Dewey develops his thought, it becomes an exploration of the connection between nature and what nature is, and experience. Dewey's metaphysics and the title of his book of metaphysics consists of a study of the relationship of these vague terms: "experience" and "nature" (MT, vii).

Cherlin discusses Dewey's view of the nature of metaphysics throughout his study. He discusses it at greatest length at the beginning of chapter 3 which explores the genetic traits of existence. We will discuss this metaphysical theory briefly in part III and discuss Dewey's views of the nature of metaphysics here.

For Cherlin, Dewey came to see the nature and need for metaphysics when he realized his logical theory was insufficient to address the relationship of thought to experience and thought to reality. He believed that metaphysics was required to address these questions fully. This metaphysics, unlike historical metaphysics, was to be non-dualistic and empirically based. Thus, Dewey tried to develop a metaphysics of *being qua being* without the dualism or essentialism of earlier theories. Equally important, he tried to develop a theory of being where the most basic traits of being do not cause the existence of anything else. Causality is part of the relationship between particulars.

While metaphysics is traditionally viewed as consisting of cosmology, questions of the origins of being often centering on theism, and ontology, questions of what

there is; Dewey dispenses with cosmological questions, finding questions of origins and causes are questions for science. Dewey's metaphysics is limited to ontology, the description of the most fundamental traits of existence.

Dewey distinguished between scientific inquiry and metaphysical investigation, with science concerned with particulars and their causal connections. Cherlin argues that for Dewey, generic traits do not come to be or pass away and are not contingent, situated, or eternal (MT, 52). Dewey thus moved, in Cherlin's account, from questions of the nature of metaphysics to the question of whether metaphysics is possible. Metaphysics is possible, for Dewey, because its source is experience, along the lines of James's radical empiricism, in a state prior to knowledge of particulars which arise out of experience in an attempt to resolve a particular question or situation. Dewey's view of the nature and possibility of metaphysics melds at this point with his own metaphysics of the generic traits of being. Parts of Cherlin's discussion of Dewey are implicit at best in Dewey's own writing, and rely on what Cherlin terms interpretive "footwork" to state in a cogent manner. It is more experiential and imaginative than cognitive and lends itself to some of the literary metaphors suggested in part I of this review and more. We turn now to consider Cherlin's discussion of Dewey's specific metaphysical theory.

III.

Cherlin's book consists of a preface and afterword, and of five chapters, each of which has several subdivisions and concludes with a brief summation. In what follows, we will briefly discuss each chapter with reference to its place in the project of the book.

The first chapter, "Metaphysical Orientation," has two broad goals. First, Cherlin defends the importance of metaphysics against its many detractors. This defense of metaphysics is important because, Cherlin argues, Dewey reconstructed metaphysics by eliminating dualism and essentialism, but did not reject it. He relies on the scholar of medieval philosophy, Etienne Gilson, for the view that metaphysics must be studied to avoid relying uncritically on wrong metaphysical views that are the product of absence of study. As Gilson said: "*we must propose a metaphysics, lest we presuppose a metaphysics*" (MT, 2 original emphasis). Cherlin's discussion echoes that of other

contemporary thinkers, suggesting a revitalization of metaphysics in some contemporary thought.[6]

Cherlin also works to establish the relationship between two broad movements, pragmatism and naturalism, in Dewey's metaphysics. Cherlin argues that pragmatism, with all its variety, was primarily a method of inquiry, best illustrated in Dewey in his work on logic. But for Dewey, a method of inquiry was insufficient for the understanding of experience and required supplementation by an empirically based metaphysics which he found in the radical empiricism of William James. Dewey wanted to go further than James in finding the ontological requirements of radical empiricism. In James, radical empiricism sometimes seemed to lapse into subjectivism. In the company of other philosophers at Columbia University, Dewey proceeded to develop a broad naturalistic metaphysics, which became far more important to his thought than pragmatism. Other recent studies of Dewey's metaphysics agree with Cherlin on the naturalistic character of Dewey's metaphysics.[7] The difficulty is the breadth of the concept of naturalism both in Dewey and in Cherlin's discussion. Cherlin recognizes the difficulty. He states that a naturalistic metaphysics is opposed to a dualistic metaphysics as "nature is inclusive and pluralistic, not exclusive and dualistic" (MT, 20).

Cherlin also contrasts naturalism with supernaturalism in the sense of "something that stands independent or above the natural world" (MT, 21). Matters are not so simple. Cherlin recognizes that philosophers such as Emerson and Spinoza "naturalized divinity" (MT, 21). Throughout his study, Cherlin rightly insists on the importance of spiritual experience, stating that metaphysics and spiritual experience "both are broad forms of orientation that derive their import from the fact that there is a *beyond* that cannot be objectified through cognition but is, nevertheless, felt and affective in our broader experience" (MT, 21). The relationship between naturalism and this *beyond* creates a tension throughout Cherlin's study and probably also in Dewey. It is the basis for a critique of Dewey by religiously committed thinkers,[8] but the point is broader. We will see how Cherlin develops his naturalistic understanding of Dewey in the subsequent chapters of his book.

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6) Heil, *What is Metaphysics?*

7) Boisvert, *Dewey's Metaphysics*; and Bernstein, "Pragmatic Naturalism."

8) Oppenheim, *Re-Imagining Pragmatism*, 283–368.

Influential earlier naturalistic studies of Dewey's metaphysics have begun with Dewey's early writings under the idealistic influence of Kant and then Hegel.[9] Hegel remained highly important to Dewey, even while his thought was naturalized. Cherlin discusses the influence of Hegel on Dewey at length in his third chapter, but chapter 2, "Prefigurations of Dewey's Metaphysics: 1903–1916," begins with Dewey's 1896 article "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," and focuses on Dewey's work during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Dewey's writings on logic receive a great deal of attention. Dewey's logic was not akin to formal or symbolic logic but was more in the nature of psychology or a theory of inquiry. It was criticized by formal logicians as psychologistic. Cherlin develops themes from Dewey's early works that he calls "double movement," "tensional exchange," and "continuity." He argues that these themes are functionally identical and work against dualism and dichotomies in experience in psychology and logic. Cherlin's goal is two-fold. First, Cherlin wants to show how Dewey's metaphysics in EN emerged from topics Dewey had discussed earlier in a narrower context. Second, Cherlin argues that Dewey's metaphysics cannot be understood without consideration of these earlier works. He disagrees with critics who see EN and metaphysics as aberrations in Dewey's thinking.

Cherlin's discussion establishes, in my view, the continuity of Dewey's metaphysics with the larger body of his thought. The difficulty remains in the vagueness and character of these concepts, as witnessed by Cherlin's careful efforts at exposition. The concepts are more effective as metaphors, as suggested earlier in this review. Further, a degree of caution is appropriate in using concepts developed for particular purposes in a subject of inquiry and extrapolating these concepts broadly to other subjects, especially to the realms of nature and metaphysics. In criticizing earlier, unreconstructed metaphysical theories, Dewey often argued that the transfer of concepts useful in a particular matter to a theory of nature constituted what Dewey described as the "philosophic fallacy." If so, Dewey might also be guilty of this fallacy by expanding concepts he developed as useful for logical inquiry into a theory of nature. Richard Rorty, among others, makes this point in his criticism of Dewey's metaphysics. We proceed with Cherlin to an examination of Dewey's metaphysical theory as developed in EN.

9) Boisvert, *Dewey's Metaphysics*.

Chapters 3, "Generic Traits of Existence," and 4 "Experience and Emergence" are central to Cherlin's study and offer his interpretation of Dewey's metaphysical theory, primarily derived from EN. Cherlin comments insightfully on the book's title. The "and" in the title is not an "and" of conjunction, suggesting that two different matters are to be discussed and related to each other. Instead, the "and" indicates, in Cherlin's terms, a "double movement" suggesting that "experience" and "nature" are aspects of the same naturalistic whole.

Cherlin finds Dewey's metaphysics shows the great influence, in its terminology and emphasis on dialectic, of the thought of Hegel, as naturalized by Darwinism and psychology. Its focus is on dynamism, rhythm, and change and on the reconciliation of apparently contrary elements. Cherlin effectively uses the metaphors of rhythm and music to indicate that nature and reality consist of the interaction and interplay of multiple elements, writing that "we live in a rhythmic world, full of resistance and harmony, conflict and continuity, sameness and difference" (MT, 63).

Although Cherlin points out that the "generic traits of existence" are the "centerpiece of Dewey's metaphysical program" (MT, 76) these traits, for both Dewey and Cherlin are difficult to name and to explain (MT, 63–64, 77). The generic traits of existence are interconnected and to know one is to know them all. There is a certain ineffability about them and about their character. Cherlin also suggests that the generic traits of existence cannot be fixed because "metaphysics in general ought to be an ongoing conversation" (MT, 77), a Rortyan metaphor which emphasizes here the odd character of the generic traits. Cherlin still names and tries to explain four of these traits: the generic and stable, the qualitative, the continuous and the discrete, and the actual-and-possible.

Dewey's metaphysics is easier to approach through its literary and musical parallels than through the identification and discussion of generic traits of existence. The generic traits of existence and the study of metaphysics do not cause anything or study causal relationships. Causal relationships apply to particulars and are studied by science. Dewey's metaphysics thus folds into his views on the nature of metaphysics, as discussed in part II of this review. As Cherlin puts it: "Metaphysical inquiry, guided by a radically empirical methodology, looks to experience in all of its variations and complexities, in its many forms and functions, and determines what traits are common to every experience" (MT, 77).

Chapter 4 moves from the vague concept of nature to the at least equally vague concept of experience. The chapter attempts to "lend added shape and nuance to what

is often seen as an amorphous, vague, and hence impractical term" (MT, 102). Dewey describes experience metaphorically as the "foreground of nature" which for Cherlin means that experience is part of nature and not separate from it. He also argues contrary to some readings of Dewey that nature has a separate existence independent of human experience (MT, 84). Cherlin offers the following definition: "experience is a complex of seriously conjoined events with meaning that coincides with, and shapes, natural environments in coordination with some need or purpose that has arisen in the course of cultural life" (MT, 84).

Cherlin develops a theory of *emergence* to account for continuity, growth, and novelty in particular existences (MT, 103). The theory is designed to avoid dualistic problems including the relationship of mind and body in dualistic metaphysics and epistemologies. Still, Cherlin acknowledges that "our basic philosophical categories fail us when attempting to describe Deweyan experience" (MT, 104). He rejects substituting culture for experience as late in life Dewey suggested might be done. The result is that Cherlin is unable to give much content to this vague, ineffable term. It is difficult to see how the term "emergence" can help clarify the nature of either nature or experience or offer a convincing metaphysical alternative to dualism.

IV.

With Cherlin's book as a guide, we have discussed Dewey's conception of metaphysics in part II and his metaphysical naturalism in part III. We have seen that for Cherlin, Dewey's metaphysics is linked to the body of his thought, both before and after EN. We have explored how Dewey's naturalism has the goal of avoiding various metaphysical dualisms. We have also stressed the vagueness of Dewey's metaphysics in the character of its two key terms and suggested that they are better understood as musical or literary metaphors than in analysis.

The term "liberal naturalism" is often used for contemporary philosophical positions that reject supernatural references while working to honor the scope of human experience beyond the realm of science or "scientism."[10] Dewey's philosophy

10) Bernstein, "Pragmatic Naturalism"; Giladi, *Responses to Naturalism*; and Friedman, "Responses to Naturalism."

has been viewed as a form of liberal naturalism. The issue remains of the nature of this naturalism, whether it is broad enough to do the work it is intended to do on the one hand or, conversely, whether non-naturalistic concepts are smuggled in on the other hand. We suggested that both these issues remain troubling in Dewey and in Cherlin. Cherlin has a strong, broad understanding of the breadth of experience and it is frequently stretched to or beyond the breaking point in his study of nature and experience. Perhaps the solution is to drop the label of "naturalism" and to avoid any pigeon-holing of metaphysical nature and experience. Perhaps too, Dewey's metaphysics may be limited by its failure to consider questions of origins. Dewey's thought provides understanding in approaching the particulars of experience while a more mystical, non-conceptual understanding may be suggested for ultimates. In thinking about Dewey's naturalism, I was reminded of an observation by the scholar of Jewish mysticism Daniel Matt in a discussion of the varying possible interpretations of Scriptural texts. Matt said that "divine truth embraces multiple and conflicting possibilities of meaning."[11]

In chapter 5, "The Nature of Good and Evil," Cherlin turns from analysis of Dewey's metaphysics *per se* to considerations of the relationship between metaphysics, social ethics, and democracy, and the nature of wisdom and the nature of philosophy, themes not far from the surface throughout the book. I first comment on the relationship between metaphysics and democracy and then offer some concluding comments on Dewey, Cherlin, and the nature of wisdom.

According to Cherlin, readers who are primarily interested in Dewey's social-political theory often have no interest in or are hostile to his metaphysics. Cherlin disagrees and argues that "Dewey's theory of democracy can be seen as an outgrowth of his metaphysics" (MT, 122–23). He suggests a strong linkage and that, in the words of Robert Westbrook, Dewey establishes "metaphysical warrants" on behalf of democracy (MT, 122). Cherlin argues that Dewey bridges metaphysics and ethics with the terms "faith," "possibility," and "nature" (MT, 123). He discussed the latter two terms in earlier chapters and offers in chapter 5 a discussion of faith based in part of William James's essay "The Will to Believe" and on Dewey's own religious philosophy set forth in *A Common Faith* and elsewhere.

11) Matt, *Becoming Elijah*, 65.

Dewey, and James, propose "liberating faith from religion in its most narrow sense" (MT, 123). Cherlin writes eloquently: "Dewey proposes that we replace personal revelation, as well as any set of claimed truths whose origin and final determination are exclusive to some person or group of people, with those discoveries that belong to all, made through experimentation (in the broad sense of trying, testing, embracing error, adjusting, and then trying something else)" (MT, 123). This method of faith involves "the unification of the self through allegiance to inclusive ideal ends" (MT, 123). Faith in God, for Dewey, is faith in "the unity of all ideal ends arousing us to desire and actions" (MT, 123–24).

For Cherlin, Dewey's concepts of faith and nature help provide naturalistic metaphysical "sanctions" or "warrants" for democracy (MT, 125). In addition to his discussion of works from Dewey's middle and late periods, Cherlin turns to an early essay of 1892, "Christianity and Democracy," written when Dewey was still a Christian and an idealist, which sees democracy as a spiritual way of living. Dewey wrote: "The supposition that the ties which bind men together, that the forces which unify society, can be other than the very laws of God, can be other that the outworking of God in life, is part of that same practical unbelief in the presence of God in the world which I have already mentioned. Here thus we have democracy!" (MT, 125).

Thus, Cherlin argues, metaphysics is a vital enterprise. Dewey's metaphysics combats authoritarian tendencies in earlier dualistic metaphysics and provides a warrant for the democratic experiment and faith. My worry is that the link Cherlin finds between metaphysics and democracy is overly causal, given the non-causal nature of Dewey's genetic characters of existence. Further, as Cherlin shows, in his early work, Dewey linked democracy to a different, spiritually oriented metaphysics. Finally, there remains doubt about whether naturalism is able to do all the metaphysical work Dewey wants it to do, particularly in the emphasis it places on ideals and on the nature of ideals.[12]

We conclude this review with a discussion of philosophy as the love of wisdom, a theme which pervades Cherlin's book. Cherlin writes early in his study, "Dewey took seriously the idea that philosophy was a love of wisdom, of lived experience,

12) Hocking, *The Meaning of* Immortality, 119–22.

rather than a love of knowledge and the justification of beliefs" (MT, 16). His most sustained discussion of wisdom is in the opening section of chapter 5, "The Art of Wisdom," where Cherlin explores the connection between wisdom, morality, and metaphysics. He sees wisdom as "Dewey's chief ethical term" (MT, 106). For Dewey, philosophy is both the "love of wisdom" and "cultural criticism" which Cherlin sees as indistinguishable in terms of their practical value. Wisdom involves balance and proportion and provides in individual and communal life "a way of balancing and creating something new out of oppositional forces especially those that, in Dewey's words constitute 'the rhythmic alternation between slight agreeable acceptances, annoyed rejections, and passing questionings and estimates, which make up the entire course of our waking experience'" (MT, 135). Dewey refers approvingly to Plato for understanding that wisdom constitutes "the true measure of all relations of life" (MT, 113). In general, Dewey's understanding of the "love of wisdom" owes a great deal to Greek concepts of *sophia* and *phronesis*, even though Dewey rejects Greek metaphysical thought (MT, 113).

Cherlin's book is at its best in its insight into wisdom as a way of life. In Cherlin, the link between the love of wisdom on the one hand and Dewey's metaphysical theory on the other hand is too strong. Questions have been suggested in this review and by many students about Dewey's metaphysics. The same questions may be raised about linking the love of wisdom to Dewey's metaphysics as Dewey raised in linking the love of wisdom in Plato to Plato's metaphysics. Dewey's analysis of the value and limitations of earlier metaphysical systems apply as well to his own. He wrote: "The wise man reads historic philosophies to detect in them intellectual formulations of men's habitual purposes and cultivated wants, not to gain insight into the ultimate nature of things or information about the make-up of reality" (MT, 109).

Metaphysics is a Socratic search for wisdom more than a conclusion, Deweyan or any other. We have seen a good deal of poetry and of Walt Whitman in Cherlin, and I offer Whitman's short poem of 1871, "The Base of All Metaphysics" as an understanding of metaphysics with both similarities to and differences from Cherlin's account of Dewey.

> And now, Gentlemen.
> A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
> As base and finale too for all metaphysics.
>
> (So to the students the old professor,
> At the close of his crowded course.)
>
> Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and
> Germanic systems,
> Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
> Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
> And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine
> having studied long,
> I see reminiscent to-day these Greek and Germanic systems,
> See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
> Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ
> The divine I see,
> The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,
> Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,
> Of city for city and land for land.[13]

As does Cherlin's gem of a book, we begin and end this review with Rabbi Tarphon. Cherlin has done an admirable job of carrying forward the love of wisdom and the study of metaphysics. It is for others to carry the task forward.

13) Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 275.

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