



Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism (Vanderbilt Library of American Philosophy)

Michael Eldridge

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In *Transforming Experience*, Michael Eldridge defines what is central to Dewey's philosophy as "cultural instrumentalism," a version of pragmatism that understands thinking to be a tool for dealing with life's problems. For Dewey, philosophy's primary role is to develop this tool to better society and its members. In particular, Eldridge shows how this central aim of Dewey's philosophy applies specifically to the political and religious aspect of human experience. While acknowledging and building upon the work of previous Dewey scholars, Eldridge distinguishes his own contributions by systematically concentrating on Dewey's core purpose of promoting intelligent action. In so doing, he makes the case that some Dewey scholars have misunderstood the implications of Dewey's elevation of the "problems of men" above the "problems of philosophers." Eldridge's opening chapters provide an overview of Dewey's thinking and explain common misreadings of Dewey, particularly his instrumentalism. Later chapters relate this instrumentalism to his secular philosophy and confront his controversial use of a reconstructed religious language.

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