

The chapter follows Wittgenstein's example of music, through which he presents meaning as that which is unavailable to be transcribed into another form. The meaning of a musical theme belongs to itself and resists all discursive explanations. To grasp/understand this meaning is to recognise its "intransitive" nature (56). Once again, Wittgenstein's central theme of ineffability is evoked by the author.

Moreover, Appelqvist rightly recognises Wittgenstein's innovation in applying such a perspective to language as well. A sentence, though it lends itself to explicit explanation in terms of its extralinguistic content, can be intransitively understood as well in terms of its formal structure. Such an observation allows one to recognise an expressive function of language beyond its communicative purpose, an understanding that is crucial to theories of literary language such as formalism.

The final chapter of the book extends Wittgenstein's conception of aesthetics to his method of philosophy. The philosophical perspective, according to Wittgenstein, is not discursive in nature as it does not offer knowledge of the world. The philosophical encounter, similar to the aesthetic encounter, is an example of a nonconceptual relation with the world. It does not seek to explain the facts of the world; instead, it attempts to describe the conditions of the world. Through description, both aesthetics and philosophy offer different ways of "seeing" an object as a whole (59). Both aesthetic judgements and philosophical statements present what Wittgenstein calls a "surveyable representation" of connections that cohere the whole (59). The justification for both relies on "reasons" intuitively felt. The chapter thus succeeds in demonstrating Wittgenstein's inquiry into aesthetics as a philosophical investigation.

By the end of the book, Hanne Appelqvist is able to effectively conclude the argument that Wittgenstein's approach to aesthetics is replicated in his consideration of ethical, linguistic, and philosophical questions. Through its four chapters, the book traces the development and evolution of a comprehensive framework, and succeeds in positioning Wittgenstein in relation to traditional, contemporary, and consequent schools of thought. Though the parallels drawn in the book exclusively refer to Western philosophers and their schools of thought, the arguments made are relevant to readers engaged with the Indian tradition of poetics. Particularly, the formalist yet phenomenological conception of aesthetics and language presented in the book can effectively complement one's reading of Indian theories. The clarity with which the book delivers this framework of aesthetics allows the reader to take up the task of applying and testing it in contexts that lie beyond the scope envisioned by the author.

The structure of the book also deserves special mention. The questions asked in each chapter trickle through to the next, and answers are questioned afresh at each stage. The reader is thus able to experience the gradual evolution of ideas and is encouraged to form their own critical stance on each new development. Though the book assumes a certain level of familiarity with the philosopher and the domain, it is not a prerequisite, and the arguments presented are not inaccessible to beginners. In fact, the book is replete with references and citations that could direct the reader to insightful scholarly works that concentrate on the particular concepts of linguistics, aesthetics, and philosophy discussed by Wittgenstein. To conclude, Hanne Appelqvist in *Wittgenstein and Aesthetics* is able to recognise and effectively respond to the interdisciplinary curiosity that characterises the critical impulse of academia today.

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EVOLUTION OF PRAGMATISM IN INDIA: AMBEDKAR, DEWEY, AND THE RHETORIC OF RECONSTRUCTION. By Scott R. Stroud. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023. 302 pp.

“Democracy is not merely a form of government. . . It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.” This was one of the many references which Dr. B R Ambedkar made to the concept of political democracy in his seminal text *Annihilation of Caste*. Originally meant to be delivered in the form of a speech at a conference organized by caste Hindus, the speech that was written in 1936 not only drew anxiety and criticism from its organizers but also led to the revocation of Ambedkar’s participation at the event. This text, self published later, emerged to claim the popularity of an anti-caste manifesto and invited critical attention of academicians and activists alike. Of course, Ambedkar’s text was just one amongst, though the most commonly cited one, a slew of other critical writings that a researcher may cherish exploring within the rather prolific literary oeuvre of Dr. Ambedkar. However, the regularity of such critical appreciation which this text achieved (apart from a few other texts like *Riddles in Hinduism*, *Who were the Shudras?* and *The Buddha and his Dhamma*) firmly concentrated Ambedkar’s identity around the anti-caste politics in India and established him as a vocal proponent of Navayana Buddhism.

However, in India, while both caste and religion is associated with politics, there has been scarce attention bestowed upon the relations between academic learning, theoretical investment and political praxis. For the Ambedkarite discipline, the relations are not positively different. This text by Scott R. Stroud seeks to explore these relations with regards to Dr. Ambedkar’s initiation into what he calls the pragmatic school of thought. The text, *Evolution of Pragmatism in India: Ambedkar, Dewey and the Rhetoric of Reconstruction*, studies Ambedkar’s tryst with philosophical, political and critical ideas during his times as a student at Columbia University under the supervision of the social pragmatist and thinker, John Dewey.

While the text devotes attention to minor detailing appertaining a young Ambedkar’s navigation through Dewey’s lectures in his classroom and without, the author traces the possibilities of Ambedkar being equally receptive to contrapuntal, often contradicting methodologies and thoughts to understand concepts like justice, welfare and equality. Within this context, the author presents a vivid understanding of what may have sufficed/incited the mind of Ambedkar while being exposed to a whole range of ideas by scholars like Dewey, William Pepperell Montague, James H Tufts, Edwin Seligman, Vladimir Simkhovitch, Charles S Peirce and Bertrand Russell. In this discussion, the author carefully looks at Ambedkar’s sense of engagement with the perpetual tension between an individual’s identity which is understood in relation to his society, the dialectics of history and contemporaneity, of myth and activity and that logic which operates between rules and principles.

The book presents five chapters with a long introductory note that contextualizes the immediate motives of the author’s arguments. The first chapter attempts to present an extensive genealogy of Ambedkar’s sincerity which calls upon a more ‘rationalist’ framework in order to understand fluid social dynamics. In this context, his admiration for John Dewey at Colombia University (recorded through his annotated notes and scribbles in his own textbooks), the testimony of Dewey’s student and close associate Nina Alderblum (regarding the rigorousness of “an Indian student” regarding Dewey’s lectures), the similarity of responses shared by Ambedkar with other students (as commented upon by Ernest Nagel and Horace Kallen), Ambedkar’s letter to his second wife Savita on Dewey; all of which occur in relation to Dewey’s pedagogy lead on to argue for a strong case in favour of Dewey’s overweening influence on Ambedkar.

The author also details upon Dewey’s texts like *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), *Liberalism and Social Action* (1936), *Experience and Education* (1929), *Creative Democracy* (1939), *Ethics* (1908) to discuss the broader approaches and tenets of Dewey’s propositions regarding reflective thinking and social inquiry. This provides an essential backdrop to understand the pragmatic deviations in Ambedkar and the nodes where he aligns with his mentor. For instance, Stroud discusses Dewey’s discourses appertaining ‘habits’ and the criticality of thinking which classifies the problematic into “brute habits”, “intellectualized habits” and what could construct “critical inquiry”. Dewey’s discussion on the nuances of ‘means’ and ‘ends’ also establish a

premise which is further explored in the latter sections of Stroud's text. This is presented in relation to Ambedkar's own understanding of identity politics and the values which he himself enshrined in the Indian constitution. Similarly, other issues which Dewey focuses upon are that of impulse and action, meaning, intention, mediation and the modalities between the 'good', the 'virtuous' and the 'right'. All these epistemological issues have been presented at length. This aids the processes of constructive reading, through the text, especially as one proceeds onto the sections focussing on Ambedkar's 'reconstruction' of what Stroud calls the 'force' and the 'rhetoric'.

The second chapter studies Ambedkar's initiation into Indian politics during the second decade of the twentieth century when Indian anti-colonial politics was also witnessing the rise of the Gandhian whirlwind. In continuation with the previous chapter, this segment also presents a discursive discussion about the relationship between Dewey & Russell, their understanding of the 'self' as a social agent of change (as an individual & in a collective) which finally is mediated by the 'moral economy' of various socio-political institutions. The delineation of moral theories are almost cascading, something even digressive, which ranges across philosophers like Kant and Hegel along with philosophical contributions from the immediate post Kantian thinkers like Fichte and Schelling. While the expansive delineation of such theories results in the debates around the construction of the self and the state (the state as either an extension of the self or as an antithetical entity to it), it provides a significant foundation on which one may study Ambedkar and his thoughts on fundamental rights, duties and upon social mobility within his own endeavours at drafting the Indian constitution.

Stroud identifies the logical corollary to this copious talk to be built around the operation of forces; those which Dewey bifurcates into categories like 'force as energy' and 'force as violence', similarly Russell's distinction between "creative life" and "possessive life" are brought into the discussion to depict the processes through which Ambedkar went on to choose an eclectic view of even Dewey's ideological opponents. Ambedkar vacillates between these forces which may work tremendously in measures of both revolution and reformation but may also risk a 'circulation' of tyrannical structures at the longer end of historical time. This text succinctly presents the reasons behind and the effects after Ambedkar's adoption of 'rhetoric' as the ultimate force for 'reconstructing' social problems. Interestingly, M K Gandhi has also been engaged with in this discussion while referring to the passivity of forces espoused by both Russell and Tolstoy.

This theme persists through the third chapter where the author uses wide referencing to Ambedkar's speeches and writings in order to depict his creative genius given that Ambedkar, as an orator, selected, omitted and improvised his arguments according to each social occasion. This appropriation works in spite of relying heavily on Dewey and Russell's concerns. Thus, a few significant moments in Ambedkar's oratory experiences have been cited extensively followed by an analytical study on each of them. As Stroud points out, the task of "intelligent" appropriation is central to the "reconstruction" of discourse. Ambedkar's rhetorical force, as Stroud points out, is persuasive and antithetical to coercive threats. It is also in contradiction to the passivity of Gandhian (or Russell's) pacifism. The author also portrays how this "force of the mental" can be studied in line of the 'personality' factor which is central to Dewey's thought during the debate between the individual, the state and the values of liberty, fraternity and equality.

In the last two chapters, Stroud reads these issues after having grounded them on a firmer ideological ground. The pragmatic thought in India has to encounter real, lived experiences which would otherwise be enveloped under transcendentalist philosophy steeped in functionalism and idealism. This is presented through reflecting upon the Hindu religious system where caste has received legitimization on both ideational and ideological planes. Stroud brings forth one such experience of Ambedkar during his encounter with the 'Jat Pat Todak Mandal', an offshoot of the Arya Samaj committed to the "erasure of caste". The banality which repelled Ambedkar after observing the elusive positions taken by the association, the Indian National Congress' civic/electoral constitutionalism without any responsible urge towards social reform, the communists' preoccupation with

the economy before combating social stigmas present within the Indian sphere of life were instances which finally led Ambedkar in his enunciation to “annihilate” caste structures completely. From here, as the author points out, Ambedkar’s pragmatism leads to the realization of the dichotomy between a religion “of principles” as opposed to “rules” which, in turn, engages with the rhetorical possibilities of religious conversion.

The final chapter draws the conversation to a close after having weighed Ambedkar’s thrust behind individual dignity and freedom as a fundamental clause before any endeavour is made to materialize social progress or experience collective democracy. This includes the autonomy of the individual to hew out one’s own identity and language. Finally, Stroud sums up Ambedkar’s argument regarding the vitality of persuasion (through the rhetorical activity) and finally to the belief that human beings, through whom societies emerge, live through experiences which are contingent, act under morality which is changeable and thus, must engage with critical inquiry to resist the rigidity of the historical past and the perpetuation of its experiences.

While the text has been neatly presented following a couple of central hypotheses, Ambedkar’s intellectual inheritance has been delved into like seldom before. While risking an enthusiastic understanding of Ambedkar’s ‘rhetorical reconstruction’, it does lay out critical issues on both political philosophy and social identity that is supposed to concern Ambedkar as much as his readers or his scholarship. The text, in its own way, deconstructs the singular impression of Ambedkar as an anti-caste icon which, under the weight of his own praxis, has had relegated his intellectual depth and its variety to an eclipsed state which his pragmatic bent of mind had otherwise claim to. The significance of the text must be considerable within both Ambedkarite scholarship and in other disciplines which seek to look into the various issues of social conflict/ cohesion and understand them in terms of socio-political operations of force. The text succeeds to argue that the discourse on ‘reforming’ and ‘reconstructing’ any society must visit Ambedkar’s persuasive methods critically before rounding up all discussion which concerns the thematic even if it leaves enough room for readers to speculate on the failures of Ambedkar’s electoral politics in India at the juncture of its political independence.

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AESTHETIC LIFE AND WHY IT MATTERS. By Dominic Lopes, Bence Nanay, and Nick Riggle. UK: Oxford University Press, 2022. 128 pp.

The last two decades have seen an increased discussion about the role of aesthetics in our lives. The primary argument has been that aesthetics are not superfluous, something to be ashamed of and discussed in secret, nor are they only for members of the upper class. In many ways, Elaine Scarry’s *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999) marks the beginning of this renewed discourse, which has been added to more recently by texts like Byung-Chul Han’s *Saving Beauty* (2015) and Timothy Aubry’s *Guilty Aesthetic Pleasures* (2018). Whereas texts like these focus on reframing the concept of beauty and the validity of aesthetic pleasure more broadly, *Aesthetic Life and Why It Matters* by Dominic McIver Lopes, Bence Nanay, and Nick Riggle distinguishes itself from existing scholarship by choosing a more grounded approach.

From the onset, *Aesthetic Life and Why It Matters* is framed as a resource that can be used by students. This is evident from the authors’ inclusion of a “Note for Instructors” section right before the formal introduction, in which they propose that the book is a conversation starter, rather than a