

# KETTERING REVIEW

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A journal of ideas and activities dedicated to improving  
the quality of public life in the American democracy

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# Editor's Letter

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The subject of this *Review* is the practice of public politics in democratic communities. Each of our authors will be familiar to *Review* readers, we suspect, for all have honored our pages before; three of the essays are themselves drawn from long-published works; and the remaining three may well be in print, via other publishers, as the works from which we here present brief previews reach completion in coming months.

In his “. . . afterthoughts” to this issue of the *Review*, David Mathews bluntly explains our focus as being on “the roles of citizens in a democracy,” specifically on what they do with other citizens in a democracy—in *communities*—to solve their problems. “We draw,” he says, “upon ideas about what citizens need to do if democracy is to work as it should.” That concern with “what citizens need to do” is distinctively what drives each seasonal issue of the *Review*: our writers, over the decades, have all seasonably wrestled with it.

The great philosopher of our modern democracy, John Dewey, was of course consistently addressing this concern—and he helped to formulate our understanding of it in the first half of the 20th century, long before that challenge became the *Review*'s chosen territory. Thus it seemed appropriate to acknowledge, first, the steps Dewey himself explained that helped reshape the politics of what had been an aristocratic ruling class in ancient Greece to suit the multiethnic citizenry of a brave new USA, through our still relatively few modern decades. That given, it might become useful, we thought, perhaps to reexamine some familiar concerns of *Review* contributors from the past 30-some years as, decade-by-decade, they have slowly themselves come to affirm governing “of and for and by the people” as the work of citizens, themselves. With such a focus, then, we have selected a little library of colleagues and writers to contribute their insights—and some record of their practice—while addressing the difficulties of popular democracy, over the years.

Dewey, of course, had spelled out the challenge long before the *Review* was born. And Dan Yankelovich, the nation's most profound analyst of public opinion in our time, recognized that understanding the process of a nation coming to judgment was more challenging—and valuable—than measuring the outcomes of mere polls. Yankelovich has analyzed his decades of experience in polling and opinion research in several studies from which we have been privileged to draw over the years; and Harry Boyte, who began his practical work during the challenging years of the Civil Rights Movement, reports from an academic career bound with practical politics in both the United States and South Africa over the past half century. Hal Saunders, too, is one of the world's leading expositors of the practical democratic

process, having explored its import internationally, both as a representative of the US government and a private citizen. Ramón Daubón has similarly pursued the phenomena of deliberative democracy around the world, writing extensively wherever he works. And Noëlle McAfee (who has been associate editor of the *Kettering Review* for the past two decades.) manages consistently to keep a professorial schedule, insatiable scholarship, and common sense in ageless harmony, despite the proper self-concerns of scholars, students, and international editorial critics like the rest of us.

So there are the valued analysts whose insights we here sample.

Long before the first issue of this *Review*—or of the Kettering Foundation’s definition of its commitment to the concept of popular self-government—John Dewey had explained democracy as entailing “the participation of every mature human being in formation of the values that regulate the living of men together.” Dewey argued that citizenwide dialogue was necessary, both for the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals. Half a century later, as the nation’s leading public opinion analyst—founder of *Public Agenda* and himself a sometime board member of the Kettering Foundation—Dan Yankelovich cited former President Lyndon Johnson and the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas for sketching “what might be called a ‘dialogue of democracy’—the unique and difficult form of communication between public and leaders that genuine democracy requires.” The significance of this “daring dialogue’s” approach to popular democracy is thence quickly evidenced by another persuasion of writers. Harry Boyte was a young scholar when he began to travel from the challenges of the civil rights struggles in the United States to the divisive complexities of popular politics in South Africa and Latin America. Hal Saunders, who followed his many years of distinguished international service in the US government by developing a multinational vehicle for Kettering’s research, was impelled, as he writes, by concern that

a focus on the structures of power leaves out most of the world’s citizens.

Yet many of today’s conflicts and problems are beyond the reach of governments acting alone.

So Ramón Daubón’s special contribution to this issue of our magazine (in refreshing, “talk-to-me” English) underscores why the theme has seemed to us still worthy of attention in our 21st century democracy. And Noëlle McAfee’s still-in-process “concluding” essay may remind us that, while the volume of practitioners in the world’s deliberative democracies may have increased, the challenge to public understanding—and academic collaboration—remains.

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Or has aggrandized—as David Mathews’ “. . . afterthoughts” may suggest. The practice of public politics—that we have long called *democracy*—is a practice of people, facing their *concerns* as a people . . . *together!* Dewey would have understood!

**Robert J. Kingston**