

# DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPEAKER SERIES-2019

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## “On the Need to Recover Reconstruction in Philosophy”

Nearly a century ago, John Dewey published a short but radical book titled *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Central to his argument is the conception of philosophy as the navigation of the old and the new. That is, how can we best act, according to traditional ways and values, in light of new ideas coming out of the sciences? Reconstruction is the philosophical work of using the methods and data from the sciences to evaluate and pursue our cultural ideals. Twenty-five years later, Dewey wrote a new introduction for the book’s second edition, in which he argued that a more accurate title would replace the *in* with *of*, as the need for reconstruction was ever greater. Today, contemporary philosophers like Philip Kitcher have echoed Dewey’s call for a reconstruction of philosophy. I consider both Dewey’s call and Kitcher’s echo in light of contemporary debates regarding data, democracy, and digital technologies. I argue that the need remains great, but the cause is not yet hopeless.