Our globalized world faces a formidable and urgent problem. We increasingly value ethnic, cultural, and other kinds of diversity. Yet we are everywhere plagued by ethnic cleansing and other means of political and social exclusion. Moreover, political, social and economic policy responses to these problems are confounded by our difficulty in even imagining how we can have both unity and diversity in the same society. The philosophical replies to this difficulty have amounted to a conceptual dilemma, the dilemma of diversity: when we emphasize unity, we end up subordinating the heterogeneous voices of society to one or only a few of their number; on the other hand, when we stress diversity we reduce unity to a plurality of separate islands linked at most by expedient arrangements that can come undone with the slightest change in events. So long as we remain in this dilemma, so long as we are unable to formulate the sort of society we would like to see in an age of diversity, we will be hampered in achieving an enduring solution to the conflicts that continue unabated despite our increased proximity to one another in today’s world.

In The Multivoiced Body, Evans addresses this dilemma of diversity and provides an original answer to it with the idea of society as a “multi-voiced body” as well as new concepts of communication and justice. These ideas rely on the sense in which each of our voices is shot through with the others of society: on how we are both one and many at the same time. Evans argues that focusing on the traditionally overlooked or undervalued notion of voice allows us to valorize simultaneously the solidarity, heterogeneity, and fecundity of society. This answer to the dilemma of diversity will not by itself solve our social and political troubles; but it can help diminish them by contributing to a new way of thinking about ourselves and society, one that the times demand and for which they have prepared us.

In addressing the dilemma of diversity, Evans treats figures and themes central to continental and analytic philosophy, modernism and postmodernism, feminism, post-colonial thought, and other areas that concern identity and difference. He also draws upon material from many fields outside philosophy and specifies the concrete implications of his views for justice, citizenship, democracy in society and the work place, globalization, and collective as well as individual rights. In other words, The Multi-Voiced Body straddles philosophy and political practice. It is therefore relevant to professionals and lay people concerned with social and political policies as well as to scholars in philosophy, communication, cultural studies, and other fields in the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences.