The Implications of Deweyan Pragmatism for Liberal Democracies

Robert B. Fenneuff

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF DEWEYAN PRAGMATISM FOR
LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

by

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Robert B. Fenneuff
My research explores John Dewey’s political theory in order to determine what practical and theoretical significance it has for liberal democratic nation-states that face significant problems in a number of areas. The problems Dewey’s political theory is most concerned with stem from the impact of highly complex modern technology upon the ability of a democratic society to strive closer towards its ideals of freedom, equality, and community. My research shows that Dewey’s theory calls for an experimental re-creation of social and political institutions with the purpose of creating an effective means by which society can organize the complex technology at its disposal for the betterment of democracy and community.

I arrive at this conclusion by showing that Dewey’s epistemology, ethics, and his application of scientific method are fundamentally linked in a naturalistic philosophy. I then show that Dewey’s application of his philosophy to social and political problems requires an experimental revisioning of political institutions and processes in order to take advantage of the new methods of inquiry and control at our disposal, and to bring about a new sense of vitality in our democracy as a whole.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Dewey's pragmatism weds scientifically rigorous methods of inquiry with ethical deliberation, culminating in an experimental search procedure designed to make democratic institutions and practices vital. Vitality here means a constant revisioning process, whereby citizens and elected officials shape political institutions and practices according to the needs of each particular place and time. It also means developing a process whereby individual citizens can have the greatest amount of input, that is practically realizable in public policy decisions. Dewey believed that democratic institutions and practices had become outdated and ineffective in meeting the needs of a technologically advanced, highly complex society. It was his hope that we could breathe new life into our democracy by recreating political institutions with the aid of the advanced methods of inquiry at our disposal. This thesis will explore Dewey's understanding of the problems our democracy faces, and the methods he envisions as the most effective means of dealing with them.

Dewey's work is applicable to a broad range of subjects. For this reason, it is also appealing to a diverse group of scholarly perspectives. Rorty and other linguistic pragmatists take from Deweyan pragmatism its conception of use values. Individuals such as Mark Okrent find strong similarities between Dewey's work and continental philosophy. Others such as James Campbell have applied Deweyan pragmatism to
community-wide public discourse.\textsuperscript{2} Cornel West has quite accurately placed Dewey within a tradition of American intellectuals who have developed a uniquely American voice.\textsuperscript{3} Robert Westbrook’s commentary, Alan Ryan’s recent biography, and a host of other publications illustrate and contribute to the recent increased interest in Dewey’s work.\textsuperscript{4}

There are a number of other groups which may find Dewey’s work appealing. Recent anti-federalist, or state’s rights groups might find Dewey’s discussion of the benefits of localized forms of government very sympathetic to their cause. Multiculturalists might find their work closely allied to Dewey’s, because his programmatic method of deliberation lays foundations for public discourse that emphasizes inclusivity. Ryan points out that a concern with the benefits and dangers of multiculturalism, and the concern with community, are similarities between Dewey’s era and our own.\textsuperscript{5} Harbingers of a post-behavioral revolution in the study of politics and public policy, such as David Easton, have extolled the virtues of a synthesis of normative and quantitative analysis in political science, and public policy decision-making.\textsuperscript{6} Dewey’s work also touches upon issues in the philosophies of science and education that are still relevant today. This list is by no means exhaustive. I think I have only given a bare outline of the myriad of interests that Dewey’s work may appeal to today. Although my research is limited to the application of Deweyan pragmatism to socio-political matters, even this must necessarily cross over into other areas of discussion. One must take account of Dewey’s epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical positions in order to arrive at complete understanding of his political
theory. He did not think these positions were exclusive of one another. As seen in the second chapter, he saw these areas of discussion as fundamentally overlapping, and informing one another. Given this, he saw formal divisions between ethical, metaphysical, or epistemological matters as purely intellectual artifices.

I begin with a discussion of Dewey’s epistemology, in the context of my critical response to Max Horkheimer. Horkheimer’s *The Eclipse of Reason* focuses extensively on Dewey as an amoral instrumentalist, who Horkheimer argues is substantially responsible for the decline of morality in modern society. This discussion lays the foundation for a comparison of their respective positions on ethics, since both Horkheimer and Dewey blend the formal categories of epistemology and ethics. This discussion also serves to introduce Dewey’s understanding of scientific method and its role in his program of social regeneration. This introductory outline of scientific method in Dewey’s program is followed by a more elaborate treatment of the subject in subsequent chapters.

I chose to respond to Horkheimer’s criticism for a number of reasons. Horkheimer’s status as the founder of the Critical Theory school of philosophy, together with the recent resurgence of interest in his work, make him a relevant figure with which to contend. Dewey’s philosophy has a great deal in common with Horkheimer’s, including the above mentioned blending of ethics and epistemology. This makes it all the more interesting that Horkheimer was so vehemently opposed to Dewey. The discussion in Chapter II focuses on a comparison of Dewey’s and Horkheimer’s epistemology, how Horkheimer incorrectly concludes that his
epistemology is completely different from Dewey’s, and how Dewey’s philosophy is not void of a sense of ethics. The substantial nature of Dewey’s ethics is taken up in the fourth chapter.

The third chapter focuses on Dewey’s view of scientific method as a mode of inquiry into the possible public choices a community has before it. Dewey’s use of scientific method can be effectively illustrated through a critical response to Richard Rorty. Rorty has explicitly attempted to excise Dewey’s view of scientific method from what contemporary pragmatism retains of Dewey’s philosophy. If Rorty’s reading of Dewey becomes the authoritative one, we will neglect a very substantial component of Dewey’s work. This is especially so since few people actually read Dewey’s work today, despite recent interest in it. As one of the leading pragmatists today, Rorty has a rather substantial following. Due to this, it may be the case that readers would take Rorty’s perspective on Dewey’s work as authoritative. This possibility demands a critical response.

Chapter IV builds upon the discussions in the previous two chapters by showing how Dewey understands ethics and scientific method as one. His naturalistic ethics, as further elaborated in chapter four, easily lends itself to scientifically rigorous modes of inquiry. Since his ethics, and the standard conception of scientific method are both empirically grounded, appealing to nothing beyond the world of experience and observation, they are compatible and complimentary.

Dewey’s naturalistic ethics, and his understanding of scientific method, are thoroughly grounded in the constantly changing world around us. He insists that
deliberation concerning right action should take account of the knowledge available in a particular problematic situation. Deliberation and choice are informed by tradition, of course, but they also involve responding to the exigencies of a given situation in order to resolve ethical dilemmas. Likewise, with scientific method, it changes and evolves according to the advances in technology and methods of inquiry available at a given time. Advances in methods of inquiry bring about advances in ethical deliberation, if scientific methods are in fact applied to moral choice-making.

Dewey's exposition of these ideas is more schematic than it is material. In other words, his argument is not as highly detailed, or as formally rendered, as some would like. Dewey advocates a programmatic plan of action to make democratic institutions vital, but he doesn't provide a detailed outline of how to accomplish this goal. However, a critical response to his ideas, if limited to this assertion, would not do adequate justice to Dewey's intentions as I see them. Both Dewey and Horkheimer alike saw the potential menace to society created by technological advances that aren't held in check by ethical deliberation concerning the right applications of new methods of production, communication, inquiry, etc. Unlike Horkheimer, Dewey saw the possibility of ethical deliberation, particularly in an era of nihilism and moral relativism, based upon new methods of scientific inquiry. Horkheimer wished to resuscitate dying ethical, epistemological, and metaphysical doctrines based upon a (theological) tradition oriented towards extra-worldly origins.

Dewey views the process of scientific experimentation as the best model for ethical deliberation. The application of this model to social and political institutions is
the broadly sweeping outcome of Dewey's pragmatism. His philosophy is meant to have broad applications in educational, political, and other social institutions, as well as in the lives of individuals. Chapter V focuses on the application of Dewey's philosophy to political institutions with a tradition of liberal democracy, the key but not sole example of which is the United States.

Democracy in politics is enhanced by Dewey's methods. Since it is clear that the ideal vision of true democracy will never be realized in practice, communities must look to ways to bring about as much of the democratic element in their political institutions as possible, if they hold the democratic ideal to be one of the means to the highest fraternal and communal ends of associated living. Dewey thought this might be achieved by enhancing local political institutions, while allowing citizens greater participation in decision-making. This was coupled in his view with an intersubjective framework for deliberations that has inclusive or centripetal qualities.

As is shown in Chapter V, Dewey asserts that experimentation with political and social institutions is a necessary component of a vital democracy. Vital here means a living, changing, and adapting sort of democratic political process. Retaining the political institutions and principles of prior generations, without conforming them to the needs of the present generation, makes democracy unable to maintain vital connections with its citizenry. If this is the case, it follows that social and political institutions must evolve through experimental processes, according to Dewey, in order to achieve the closest approximation to the democratic ideal as possible.
This notion of experimentation with political institutions and practices is quite a scary prospect in itself. Failure is built into the experimental process, and this is quite unacceptable to many. However, the conscious acceptance of the possibility of failure, the acceptance of risk, obviates the further possibility to accept that some changes may be mistaken, and to accept that a return to a previous state of affairs is warranted. Such an admission does not ameliorate the potential consequences of failure, however, it does point out that experimental steps taken incrementally do not entail the impossibility of return.

All of this may sound overly optimistic. Yet, one can see Dewey’s philosophy as a reaction to his, as well as Horkheimer’s, perception that technological advance without an ongoing critique of its application can lead to disastrous consequences for society. Scientifically rigorous ethical deliberation is a way of having a method of control that is equal to the task of controlling the application of technological advances.

The motivations behind Dewey’s work are as varied as the subject-matter he discusses. However, I speculate that what motivated him to express his ideas in the form he did stems from his faith in the transformative power of ideas. Dewey’s emphasis on the role played by the early Enlightenment, the scholars of the *Encyclopedia*, illustrates several things. Firstly, it illustrates in his argument the changing view of human nature throughout history, and effect these changes had upon socio-political institutions. This discussion serves as the foundation for the assertion that cultural tendencies cause a shift in conceptions of human nature. These shifting
conceptions, in turn, have dramatic impacts upon social conditions and institutions. Secondly, his emphasis on the impact of the Enlightenment illustrates what he sees as his own role in social discourse. I think Dewey considered his own work as a continuation of the Enlightenment project. His synthesis of scientific method with community-wide ethical deliberation is quite similar to the Enlightenment’s wedding of reason with ideas about human freedom. As an intellectual contribution to liberal-democratic discourse, I think Dewey’s work is somewhat similar to the approach seen in the Enlightenment in form and substance. I speculate that the hope or optimism that motivates Dewey is that his presentation of the problems our democracy faces will motivate his readers to begin to inquire into the nature and efficacy of our social and political institutions. This is precisely what I describe as the transformative power of ideas. I think it is what Dewey saw in the Enlightenment, and what he saw as the potential of his own work.

Dewey’s work is meant to be applicable primarily within a liberal-democratic community. Due to this, there are implicit fundamental values in his arguments. The respect and dignity of all persons, free speech and press, and widely understood conceptions of humanist values are all taken as given bases of his arguments. The assertion that his program would have drastically different results in a community that has a tradition of slavery, segregation, or some other form of human rights violations liberal-democratic communities would find morally repugnant, would simply receive the response from Dewey that it has overlooked the particular nature of the community to which his program is directed. Dewey’s pragmatism was not conceived
as having relativistic values as its bases. It is firmly rooted in the western liberal-
democratic tradition.
CHAPTER II

HORKHEIMER, ETHICS, AND EPISTEMOLOGY

My initial discussion of Dewey’s epistemology and value theory is illustrated through a response to the criticism directed at him by Max Horkheimer. Horkheimer’s position, stated as succinctly as possible, is that Dewey’s pragmatism is an example of subjectivist, amoral instrumentalism, which is responsible to a great extent for the decadence of industrial society. Elaboration of this admittedly brief account of Horkheimer’s position will be followed by a discussion of why I think Horkheimer has mis-read Dewey’s work. I will show that since Horkheimer and Dewey share a common concern with social decay, it does not follow that Dewey misses the core of the problem. Furthermore, it is not the case that Dewey’s efforts at redressing the social ills of the industrial age only compound the problem of social decay, as Horkheimer suggests. Rather, Horkheimer’s perspective on Dewey’s work is due to the different angle from which Horkheimer approaches the problem of social decadence in the industrial age. The different approaches Horkheimer and Dewey take toward the problem of social decay are illustrated below.

This chapter also functions to introduce Dewey’s understanding of scientific method and its role in his program of social regeneration. The introduction of this aspect of Dewey’s program is followed by a more lengthy treatment of the role of
scientific method in developing innovative political institutions and practices in chapter five.

Horkheimer asserts that the subject/object dichotomy of modern epistemology, which forms “the present crisis in reason,” is manifest in what he describes as the polarization of objective and subjective reason. \(^1\) He describes the hegemony of “objective reason” in ancient and medieval thought as characterized by the “conviction that an all embracing or fundamental structure of being could be discovered and a conception of human destination derived from it.” \(^2\) This period, he argues, was not characterized by a polarized distinction between the objective order and man’s subjective faculties. “Subjective reason” was manifest as a “partial, limited expression of a universal rationality” which was used to “reconcile the objective order...with human existence” \(^3\)

According to Horkheimer, the decline of objective reason and the subsequent rise of subjective reason has taken place incrementally, through the collapse of the medieval worldview, and up through the critical stage reached in the industrial age. While some would see elements of modernity as efforts to compensate for the collapse of the ancient and medieval worldview, Horkheimer sees modernity as a prime contributor to cultural and spiritual decadence. He views modernity as marked by man’s incapacity to account for his activities beyond purely instrumental justifications. This is, for Horkheimer, the fundamental cause of the lack of meaning in life, and a lack of a sense of ethics in our communities. Subjective, or instrumental reason has emerged as the dominant intellectual force at the expense of an objective moral order.
The incremental rise in the power of subjective reason, as described below, is seen by
Horkheimer to be the cause of the loss of the objective moral order.

Horkheimer asserts that "subjective reason has come to be commonly regarded
as an intellectual faculty of coordination, the efficiency of which can be increased by
the removal of non-intellectual factors." The incremental increase in subjective
reason as the dominant intellectual force corresponded to the removal of non-
intellectual, or spiritual guides to man's conduct. Intellectual activity was seen as the
only phenomena that could be controlled, and given a sense of stability. The
precarious and ever-changing world of experience was seen as too unstable, as a world
of mere appearance. Accordingly, the coordinating activity of the mind became the
only thing that was considered real, or as the sole indubitable data. The objective
order continued to lose status due to the rise of the structuring of reality through
man's subjective faculties. This has led to the point where "if we say than an
institution or any other reality is reasonable, we usually mean that men have tried to
organize it reasonably."

The link between the reasonable and the known, and the unreasonable and the
unknown, forms the basis of the polarization seen in modern epistemological dualism.
Surprisingly, this polarization is seen as the basis of the crisis of morality in Dewey's
and Horkheimer's theories alike. Descartes' method of doubt, and the doctrine of the
categories in Kantian epistemology, are both revolutionary intellectual moments in the
historical process of the decline of an objective world order and the subsequent rise of
an instrumentalist, subjective world order in Horkheimer's view. The Cartesian
skeptical position asserted that what can be known for certain is that the res cogitans exists at the moment it is engaged in thought. Also, the res cogitans doubts that anything outside of itself exists. In Kantian epistemology, the world is constructed mentally according to the way that we categorize it. The fundamental Ding an sich, or sub-strata, is entirely outside of our grasp. Hence, in the Kantian framework, it is altogether unknowable whether an objective order exists. Horkheimer argues that these conclusions of modern philosophy have led to a point where “thinking either became incapable of conceiving objectivity at all or began to negate it as a delusion.”

This predicament has led to “epistemologically unsolvable problems... (where) each of the poles of reason has been torn away from the other by abstraction.” Horkheimer’s conclusion here is remarkably similar to Dewey’s characterization of the present crisis caused by these epistemological dead ends. What makes this conjunction so surprising is not simply the similarity of their conclusions; rather it is the fact that Horkheimer vehemently criticizes Dewey specifically for being a cause of the crisis of the industrial age due to Dewey’s purportedly amoral, instrumentalist view of science and its social functions. Dewey, as is shown below, rejects epistemological dualism for reasons that are similar to those asserted by Horkheimer. Dewey criticizes epistemological dualism as a dead end. Like Horkheimer, he criticizes it for producing an amoral subjectivism. Notice here the transition from an epistemological to an ethical problem. Dewey states that “the chief obstacle to a more effective criticism of current values lies in the traditional separation of nature and experience.” Horkheimer uses the terms nature and objective order interchangeably. The similarity of terminology is by no means the
strength of the argument here. The substantive content of Dewey’s and Horkheimer’s positions are what is so strikingly similar.

Westbrook points out Dewey’s criticism of epistemological dualism in his discussion of Dewey’s account of experience. Dewey’s “concept of experience is neither dualistic nor subjective,” which as I will show below, places Dewey’s theory outside the grasp of Horkheimer’s criticism. Dewey’s organic epistemology asserts that man’s experience is fundamentally linked to the natural world, therefore it is not dualistic. The interaction between man and nature gives rise to man’s understanding of the world, hence Dewey’s philosophy is not purely subjective. “A key mistake of the epistemological industry, Dewey argued, was its treatment of experience (where) knowing subjects were set apart from an objective world that they attempted to know.” Dewey viewed this “epistemological industry” as a flawed vocation leading to unsolvable puzzles much in the same way that Horkheimer saw it. Like Horkheimer, Dewey sought to reintegrate subjective reason, or man’s perception of experience, into nature in order to arrive at a systematic understanding of the world and the place of humanity in it. Dewey sought to reconcile experience and nature by showing how adaptation and reasoned inquiry integrate man into his environment. “Experience is of as well as in nature. It is not experience that is experienced, but nature.” Westbrook further clarifies this point, stating that:

Dewey believed that the persuasive evidence for his postulate of immediate empiricism was provided by evolutionary biology, which had established that experience was a process of interaction between a living being and its environment.
These assertions clearly show the basic thrust of Dewey’s organic philosophy.

According to this, man is a natural being whose ability to reason is an adaptive mechanism that developed in response to man’s struggle to perpetuate his species. Man’s intellectual activity could not evolve as it did if it had been set apart from the world of sensory experience. Given this, man’s intellectual activity is a biological phenomenon that exists as part of natural processes.

Dewey wished to prove the futility of the epistemological industry and its attempt to account for man’s intellectual activity. Further, he proposed to show how his empirical method would lead beyond the puzzles created by epistemological dualism. Thirdly and most importantly, Dewey asserted that his empirical method was, as Horkheimer plainly did not see, a method by which fundamental ethical deliberations could be made that would not end in the static conception of human agency found in traditional metaphysics, or in irreconcilable differences created by competing moral relativist positions. This third goal, that of overcoming irreconcilable differences in relativistic moral positions, is one shared by Horkheimer and Dewey. They both had a faith that the natural order is such that human reintegration into it would allow for the solution of humanity’s problems in the modern age. Relativism, and epistemological dualism, are seen by both Dewey and Horkheimer as the barriers to such reintegration.

Epistemological dualism “failed to recognize the mediating function of knowledge within a circuit of non-cognitive experience.”14 This circuit is accounted for in Dewey’s scientific method of inquiry. Dewey’s “denotative”, or empirical
method is one in which verification of experience is always “secured by a return to the things of crude or macroscopic experience.” Modern philosophical notions of the verification of things beyond doubt through intellectual processes was a method that ironically went against its own logic. Modern philosophy’s methods first isolate characteristics of things known, then proclaim that these isolated characteristics are the only real things, all the while basing the activity involved in isolating these characteristics upon disavowed reference to some real object in the world. The denial of this real object in the world, while reifying the characteristics that find their origin in this object, is an altogether dubious activity. Dewey asserts that “the subject matter of primary experience sets the problems and furnishes the first data of reflection which constructs the secondary (intellectual) objects.” His empirical method of verification requires the reality of the objects of primary experience. Greater understanding of the objects of experience results from the recurrence to the world at large. This is how the verification of the intellectual constructs of objects (those of secondary experience in Dewey’s vernacular), takes place. When this is done:

the (primary) qualities cease to be isolated details; they get the meaning contained in a whole system of related objects; they are rendered continuous with the rest of nature and take on the import of things they are now seen to be continuous with.

This is a summary of Dewey’s empirical or denotative method. The experience of primary objects, and the construction of secondary objects, are both reintegrated into the environment. Modern philosophy finds stumbling blocks, or epistemological dead-ends where a chair I experience is not at all the same as that of another’s
experience, although the reference point of experience is the same object. The dead-end is found in modern philosophy’s inability to transcend the supposed problem of “knowing” the chair. The move beyond this dead-end involves a re-orientation towards questioning what the chair is good for, or whether it is useful for purposes intended. Epistemological dualism does not allow for questions concerning what our understanding of the world does for us, or whether our understanding of the world and our place in it can help us solve problems attributable to our agency. The “epistemological industry” does not allow for questions concerning whether a particular activity was a good choice, rather it asks repeatedly and ad infinitum whether we can be sure that our activities effect an objective world. “The problems to which empirical method gives rise affords opportunities for more investigations yielding more fruit in new and enriched experiences.” It is the only method, so Dewey argues, for re-integrating human agency into the world. Empirical method gives greater understanding of objects experienced in the world than epistemological dualism. It also allows us to have a better understanding of our place in the world.

Dewey acknowledges that “appeal to experience by a philosopher is treated by many as necessarily committing one to subjectivism.” He further states that this assumption has become “so deeply engrained” as it has because of developments in epistemology stemming from the modern era. However, Dewey clearly shows how his theory is altogether different than the subjectivism that some, including Horkheimer, would proclaim it to be.
The psychology of personality, which is seen by Dewey as an outgrowth of subjectivism, has become quite malicious for philosophy. In a not so veiled criticism of the Cartesian res cogitans, Dewey asserts that "mental attitudes...were treated as self sufficient and complete in themselves...the sole original and therefore indubitable data." Correspondingly, those things experienced in the world were considered phenomenal, mere appearances. Dewey's theory runs completely counter to subjectivist philosophy. His process of verification of secondary experience, discussed above, through a recurrence to primary experience places a great emphasis upon the reality of objects sensually experienced. It is fundamental to his method that the world is as it is experienced. Our assurance of this assertion's validity is that the activities we undertake as a result of our perception of the world lead to consequences intended.

As stated above, there are great similarities between Horkheimer's and Dewey's theories concerning epistemology. Both very clearly assert that the subject/object distinction is a dangerous abstraction. Logic, according to Horkheimer, "is ...of the object as well as the subject, it is a comprehensive theory of the basic categories and relations of society, nature, and history." Dewey calls for us to "see that knowing is not the act of an outside spectator but of a participator inside the natural and social scene." Notice here again that there is a blending of the formal categories of epistemology and ethics in the theories of both authors. They both assert that subject and object are inseparable. Horkheimer states that "the two fundamental categories of spirit and nature are inextricably linked." Dewey's empirical method links the secondary objects of intellectual activity to the primary objects of
Dewey's organicism fuses human intellect and human agency with the world of ordinary sensory experience. As seen above, Dewey's method involves a circuit of experience. This circuit involves a recurrence to, and critique of, primary objects by secondary objects and vice versa. This mutual critique is very similar to what Horkheimer advocates between objective and subjective reason. Further, this mutual critique in both Dewey's and Horkheimer's theories forms a fundamental component of their theories of ethics.

One way of falsely linking objective and subjective reason was characterized by Horkheimer as a form of monism where spirit was still seen to be dominant. His view of this form of monism is that "it represents an attempt to consolidate the claim of spirit to total domination...for nothing is to remain outside the all embracing concept." If this is the argument against monism, it is clearly not relevant to Dewey's theory. Westbrook's assertion that Dewey's evidence for his "postulate of immediate empiricism" provided by evolutionary biology, runs counter to Horkheimer's charge against monism. Dewey's evidence showed that evolution is a "process of interaction between a living being and its environment." The organism must adapt to its environment or perish. Organisms make changes in their immediate environments, however, these changes are subtle in comparison to the adaptations the organism must make in response to environmental demands. While this example fails to account for the extreme changes to the environment created by the human race, it does express the point that adaptation is an interactive process where neither environmental conditions, nor the organism, is passive. If this example is persuasive, it lends strength to the
argument that Horkheimer’s criticism of monistic philosophies is not relevant to a
discussion of Dewey’s theory. “Spirit is the complement of nature” Horkheimer
argues, and we “must not pose one or the other as the ultimate.”30 Dewey’s
philosophy does not do so. He views human agency as wholly within and part of
nature. Further, Dewey argues against the “belief that nature is an indifferent, dead
mechanism.”31

Horkheimer does not see the link between Dewey’s epistemology and his
ethics. He clearly sees the link between Deweyan epistemology and human agency,
but he somehow fails to see how Dewey’s ethics are a product of his empirical
method. Horkheimer asserts that “the subjectivism of (pragmatism) lies in the role our
practices, actions, and interests play in its theory of knowledge, not in its acceptance
of a phenomenalistic doctrine.”32 Horkheimer does take note of the deliberative
function in Deweyan pragmatism, but since he sees no value theory in it, he cannot
account for the role deliberation as to right action plays in Dewey’s theory.

Horkheimer’s polemic against pragmatism reaches an apex in the following passage:

Pragmatism...is the counterpart of modern industrialism for which the factory
is the prototype of human existence, and which models all branches of culture
on the conveyor belt. In order to prove its right to be conceived, each thought
must have an alibi, must present a record of its expediency.33

Pragmatic deliberation, according to Horkheimer, is based purely on practical
considerations. There are no ethical considerations made, and if they are, they are
outweighed by practical needs. What is seen here is the altogether dubious assertion
that pragmatism does allow for deliberation as to right action, yet it stops short of
being a theory of ethics. Horkheimer colors the pragmatist as an individual who
makes decisions without regard to anything but practical needs. If the pragmatist,
Horkheimer continues, opposes "the practical consequences of scientific, artistic, or
religious undertakings...his philosophy destroys any other principle to which he could
appeal." What the pragmatist is left with, by this characterization, is more than an
unwillingness to make conscious ethical judgments, he is left with the complete
incapacity to render decisions based upon any sort of principles save for those of
practical necessity. The terrible sense of danger Horkheimer feels is that the
pragmatist thinks anything goes in the name of efficiency and practicality, so that
efficiency will come at the expense of a desensitization to man’s capacity to inflict
atrocities upon others on a massive scale. Horkheimer thinks truth as practical success
has superseded controls on human desires that objective reason has previously
afforded humanity. Truth as that which is satisfying, according to this argument,
leaves us with a faculty of judgment based upon emotivism. "In the face of the idea
that truth might afford the opposite of satisfaction and turn out to be shocking to
humanity...the fathers of pragmatism made the satisfaction of the subject the criterion
of truth."35

Is this in fact what Dewey wishes to accomplish? Does Dewey reduce the
desirable to the desires of the subject? Horkheimer thinks that Dewey "identifies the
fulfillment of the desires of people with the highest aspirations of mankind."36 Turning
now from a discussion of Dewey’s and Horkheimer’s epistemological theories, and
towards their theories of ethics, I will show that Horkheimer has a distorted perspective on Deweyan pragmatism.

One of the most common misunderstandings of Deweyan pragmatism is that it reduces the desirable to the desired. Ryan gives a laundry list recitation of many of the writers who have criticized Dewey for precisely this reason. Horkheimer quotes Dewey completely out of context in this fashion: "Faith in the power of intelligence to imagine a future which is the projection of the desirable in the present, and to invent the instrumentalities of its realization, is our salvation." Horkheimer takes this quote from Dewey as having two possible meanings. It could refer to "the desires of the people as they really are," although this is ruled out because people, according to Horkheimer, are so engulfed in subjectivism that they can't know what their desires really are. It could mean that "Dewey somehow agrees to accepting some kind of difference between subjective desire and objective desirability," but this is ruled out in the name of Horkheimer’s all embracing polemic. Horkheimer’s view of pragmatism as a purely instrumental subjectivism would not allow him to accept that Dewey’s theory does more than reduce values to spontaneous, emotive, or instrumental wants or aims.

Dewey explicitly makes the distinction between the desirability of activity based upon ethical considerations, and activity based upon simple human desires and passions. The elaboration of these distinctions, and the method Dewey constructs for making them, are fundamental components of his theory of ethics. Intelligent inquiry, as outlined in *The Quest for Certainty*, and elsewhere, is proposed by Dewey
for the sake of making clear, highly circumspect choices among actions and objects. Dewey’s method shows that science and morality, instrumentalism and ethical deliberation, are not at odds. Rather, scientific method can help articulate the reasons behind a particular choice of action, and lead to a more fruitful understanding of one’s community.

"Known objects exist as the consequences of directed operations," according to Dewey. What he considers intelligent action is a set of "operations actually performed in the modification of conditions." Intelligent method is the use of scientific method in inquiry concerning right action. Dewey believes that full circumspection of the reciprocal relationship between us and the environment, including the consequences of our input into the relationship, can only proceed successfully with the use of a rigorous methodology that employs scientific principles.

"Intelligence within nature," Dewey argues, "means liberation and expansion, as reason outside nature means fixation and restriction." The freedom found in what Dewey describes as intelligent action, versus perceiving fixed antecedent principles, places great emphasis on the ability of individuals to make a mark, or have an impact upon their existence. If man lived solely by fixed principles, there would be little room for creativity, or it would be a bounded creativity of such a limited type that our choices would be of little importance. These statements may be hyperbole, but they stress what is so important to Dewey in his advocacy of the use of intelligent action to solve problems. The problems I refer to are not simply instrumental, i.e., based on achieving greater efficiency. They are instead instrumental in its normative sense,
involving how we live together as a community, how we can make living in an
industrial society more satisfying, and how we can have a positive impact on our
environment. Man’s capacity to have a great impact upon his environment, natural
and social, places great responsibility on all of us to use whatever effective means
available to understand the consequences of our actions.

With these points in mind, it becomes altogether clear that Deweyan
pragmatism is not at all inconsistent with ethical deliberation. This can be seen in
Dewey’s discussion of the difference between the desired and the desirable. This
discussion also shows that Horkheimer’s out of context quotation of Dewey above is
an example of how completely Horkheimer misunderstands pragmatism. Dewey
argues that:

To call an object a value is to assert that it satisfies or fulfills certain conditions.
Function and status in meeting conditions is a different matter from bare
existence. The fact that something is desired only raises the question of its
desirability; it does not settle it.  

This quotation simply does not square with Horkheimer’s interpretation. Dewey
asserts that one must use intelligent method to determine desirability. One must place
the potential fulfillment of the desire within the context of all the implications said
fulfillment would have for the relationships one has to the environment and to the
community. This is the only way a simple desire can rise to the status of a value in
Deweyan ethics. “To say that something satisfies is to report something as an isolated
finality. To assert that it is satisfactory is to define it in its connections and
interactions.” This is clearly an example of the acceptance of the responsibility for
one's own actions, and the use of ethical judgments to guide these actions in the
direction that takes account of their consequences for ourselves and for others.

One might say in response to this that accounting for the effects that desires
have on our relationships amounts to having antecedent normative principles. Dewey
would certainly not deny this. He would never claim that there are no antecedent
normative principles, as his goal of developing more vital democratic processes in
political institutions indicates. The key is that conforming principles to the needs of
given situation is what Dewey emphasizes. Much like satisfactions that are not
reflected upon, claiming antecedent principles without conforming them to immediate
needs is liken to reporting them as an isolated finality. However, this does not mean
there are no antecedent principles.

The formation of a cultivated and effectively operative good judgment or taste
with respect to what is esthetically admirable, intellectually acceptable, and
morally approvable is the supreme task set to human beings by the incidents of
experience.47

One must necessarily overlook these passages in order to argue consistently that
Deweyan pragmatism is an amoral, purely instrumental philosophy. Given this, it is
reasonable to assert that Horkheimer is guilty of the fallacy of selective emphasis in
his criticism of Deweyan pragmatism.

Deweyan pragmatism has been criticized for having nothing to say about
ultimate goods. Faced with connecting Dewey's ethical theory to social democratic
institutions, Ryan explains that "other people had been thinking of the institutional
details, and (Dewey) had little to add... people would design and build social-democratic institutions as they went, and he could not pre-empt them.\textsuperscript{48}

What Dewey sought to provide, as his critics did not understand, is a way to articulate our choices of the things we place value in. His critics wanted a concrete, highly specific account of virtue. They believe Dewey's work came up empty in this regard. Dewey wished to show how art, science, and the religious sentiment can all be used as tools to inquire into our role in nature and our community. Artistic creation functions to express our natural and social bonds. It is a way in which we shape our world and our expression of ourselves.

Since art is the most universal form of language, since it is constituted, even apart from literature, by the common qualities of the public world, it is the most universal and freest form of communication. Every intense experience of friendship and affection communicates itself artistically...that art weds man and nature is a familiar fact. Art also renders men aware of their union with one another in origin and destiny.\textsuperscript{49}

We can formulate an understanding, through artistic expression, of those things we value in the world. Art is an activity through which the meaning of our existence is announced. Artistic creation is put to the same task as scientific inquiry. Ryan points out that Dewey's claims concerning art "are part of his insistence that pragmatism has its own account of the ultimate goods of human life - those experiences that we value for their own sake, as conferring meaning on the rest."\textsuperscript{50}

The creative method employed in art, science and the world of everyday experience, is analogous to the function of democratic procedures in social affairs. We use similar methods of inquiry in artistic expression, scientific inquiry, and in the
discourse on the nature of community. Ryan states that "Dewey thought of
democratic processes as a search procedure in which we look for policies, laws, and
administrative techniques that will allow us to continue a common life in a way that all
of us can find fruitful and fulfilling."

It is quite clear that from the above exposition of Deweyan pragmatism that it
is not at all inconsistent with moral deliberation. It is in fact an enunciation of a way in
which an understanding of our place in the world, our relationship with the natural and
social world, can be taken into account in deliberation as to right action. Its focus is
on the consequences of actions for ourselves and for others, rather than on antecedent
measures of value which Dewey finds to be backward looking and anachronistic.

Ryan’s poignant quote in this context is an adequate summation of Dewey’s
intentions:

To gain an integrated individuality, each of us needs to cultivate his own
garden. But there is no fence about this garden: it is no sharply marked off
enclosure. Our garden is the world, in the angle at which it touches our
own manner of being. By accepting the corporate and industrial world in
which we live, and by thus fulfilling the precondition of our interaction with it,
we, who are also parts of the moving present, create ourselves as we
create an unknown future.
CHAPTER III

RORTY, METHOD, AND METAPHOR

I turn my attention now to Richard Rorty’s work, with respect to his comments and criticisms concerning Dewey’s emphasis on scientific method and its potential impact upon social organization, social progress, and the alleviation of social ills through experimentation and innovation. What is of such great interest here is that Rorty not only speaks from the rhetorically powerful position of one who is sympathetic to Dewey’s work; he fully considers himself a Deweyan pragmatist engaged in the task of retaining what is important in Dewey’s work for contemporary culture. I am of a charitable mindset with respect to Rorty’s attempt to retain the spirit of Dewey while purging that spirit of the faults within the letter of Dewey’s work. I am also in complete agreement with Richard Bernstein that pragmatism is a rather diverse school of thought, and that there can be seen a sub-current of ideas that runs throughout the works of the major figures lumped together under the rubric “pragmatism”, including Rorty. However, there are grounds within the Deweyan canon from which one can mount a strong argument that Rorty has taken a very narrow aspect of Dewey’s work and held this to be indicative of its spirit. One can assert that Rorty has appropriated Dewey’s “spirit”, and reformed it to fit Rorty’s own project, which involves a re-orientation of philosophy away from metaphysics and
epistemology and towards linguistic theory and cultural criticism, manifest in his linguistic pragmatism.

Rorty sees linguistic pragmatism's task as "one of reconciliation of the old with the new, and (philosophy's) professional function as serving as honest brokers between generations, between areas of cultural activity, and between traditions."¹ Linguistic pragmatism, according to Rorty, works to "change familiar ways of speaking so as not to presuppose a metaphysics, or a metaphysical psychology."² The purpose in Rorty's project is to develop ways that "old beliefs and new beliefs...can cooperate rather than interfere with one another."³ This project serves to free language and culture from the dominance of the belief systems of the past, so that old metaphysical presuppositions do not have the capability of oppressing human creativity, which would "conflict with the needs of the future."⁴ By doing away with descriptions of things that do not adequately express the historical moment, freedom from the constraints of tradition is gained, and the moment of self-creation, self-identification, is achieved. Descriptions of things in language, dance, or other artistic media, express a culture's and an individual's sense of relevance. Linguistic pragmatism mediates between the new developments in one's culture, and what is deemed relevant in one's received tradition.

A defense of Dewey against Rorty's appropriation of some aspects of his work will serve a twofold purpose. Firstly, it is hoped that this will allow at least a broader perspective to be taken of Dewey's work, broader than that seen through the perspective of a linguistic pragmatist. Secondly, this exposition is meant to bring to
light the social and political implications of Deweyan pragmatism for contemporary liberal democracies by laying bare the foundations for a more elaborate treatment of this subject matter in subsequent chapters.

Dewey’s emphasis on scientific method is absolutely essential to his version of pragmatism. It must be made clear that Dewey’s understanding of scientific method is not as a process that discloses some essential universal Truths about the world. It is an approach which removes personal prejudice from inquiry, and allows for the intersubjective, repeatable, rigorous, and systematic use of inquiry to explore possibilities and their consequences. What Dewey appears to mean by scientific method, although Rorty does not suggest that he sees this, is the standard understanding of science as a method of generalization, classification, explanation, and hopefully prediction. This is why Dewey doesn’t provide, as Rorty wishes he did, a straightforward explanation of what he means by scientific method. Dewey does make clear that what he means by scientific method is essentially the standard version I have mentioned above. He states that:

in experiment everything takes place above board, in the open. Everything is overt and capable of being observed. There is a specified antecedent state of things, a specified operation using means, both physical and symbolic, which are externally exhibited and reported. The entire process by which the conclusion is reached...is overt. It can be repeated step by step by anyone. Thus everyone can judge for himself whether or not the conclusion reached...justifies assertion of knowledge.

This passage lends strong support to the argument that Dewey meant nothing particularly vague or exotic by “scientific method.” Furthermore, Dewey held that the idea of scientific method as a revealer of universal truths, and of science as truth itself,
is the “now discarded philosophy of science.” Illustrating this point more completely, Dewey states that it is a “misapprehension” of science as a concept to think of it as do “those who have professed adoration of science - writing it with a capital S--; those who have thought of it not as a method of approach but as ...a new theology of self-sufficient authoritatively revealed inherent and absolute Truth.”

Rorty vacillates between asserting that Dewey had no clear conception of what he meant by method, and asserting that Dewey meant by method that contains the old epistemological baggage Rorty, and Dewey alike were trying to do away with. One can see this quite clearly in Rorty’s response to an article by James Guinlock. At one point, Rorty exclaims that the notion of method is vacuous; at another, he states that “If we (get rid of the term method) we shall be saying what no non-Platonist disputes: that in a tragic world we muddle along as best we can.” Rorty’s preference is to “drop the term, and call (it) social practices (in the cultural realm) and technique (in the scientific realm).” His distinction between method and techniques or practices borders on pedantic quibbling, as he loses the spirit of Dewey and opts for an incorrect understanding of Dewey’s use of the term “method” in order to attack it as a straw man. The claim that use of the term “technique” is superior to the use of the term “method” amounts to the implication that there is a specific, epistemologically weighted meaning to the term “method,” whereas this isn’t the case for the term “technique.” Either Rorty is claiming that Dewey is using the term “method” with classic epistemological implications, or he is disclosing his (Rorty’s) epistemological commitments. This method of interpretation is evidence of how Rorty views other
writer's use of such terms in general. He loads them with epistemological baggage in order to construct a weaker, non-charitable version of the writer's position. Such rhetorical tactics are disingenuous to the task Rorty claims to have set for himself, that of the rescucitator of the spirit of Dewey. Furthermore, there seems to be a sense of urgency in Rorty's fixation on ridding language of words that imply an inherent grasp of "Truths" such those he infers in Dewey's use of "method." My point here is that if these terms do not have this effective power in the world of experience, disclosing truths of whatever sort, then there is no need to place the level of effort in countering them that Rorty expends. On the other hand, if terms such as "method" do exhibit some sort of effective force in the world, or hold some practical value for us, then they exhibit the sort of use value Rorty is looking for in language. If either is the case, Rorty might wish to approach Dewey's perspective on method from a new direction. It might be the case that Dewey's use of terms such as method creates problems for Rorty's linguistic theory, as these terms may inhabit some sort of gray area Rorty's theory doesn't cover quite properly. The urgency I mention above may stem from such being the case. However, this would only suggest the need to confront the position these gray area term should take up in one's theory, rather than doing away with them altogether. Such an imperative should be seen as categorical in one's treatment of another's theories.

Rorty challenges his readers to cite, "chapter and verse," those passages which clarify Dewey's position regarding scientific method. He points out that the chapter entitled "The Supremacy of Method" in The Quest for Certainty does not clarify what
"method" is. What Rorty finds there is "(Dewey's) endlessly repeated polemic against epistemological and metaphysical dualisms." However, this is not the place where one should look to find "chapter and verse" citations of Dewey's conception of scientific method. One can find the letter and spirit of Dewey's use of this terminology scattered throughout many of his works. Yet there are particular sections of his writings which express as clearly as one would expect what he meant by scientific method.

The section on Penology and Criminology in Individualism Old and New is a perfect example of Dewey's application of scientific method to the analysis of social problems. He briefly discusses the (then) current way of treating criminals as evil, and the progress inherent in dealing with criminal behavior and rehabilitation through the use of the tools of social science. This can allow penologists to understand criminal behavior better by seeing it as a "manifestation of interactions between an individual and the social environment." Dewey clearly opposes scientific methods of inquiry to pre-scientific methods of addressing social problems rooted in metaphysical superstitions. This can be seen in his reference to traditional understandings of the nature of criminality as that of a possessed, evil person. Dewey's methodical treatment of the problem of criminality consists of observation of the environment in which the criminal is reared in order to gain an account of the circumstances that give rise to such behavior. These observations, compounded through repeated, systematic inquiries of many different backgrounds of criminals over time will yield a body of empirical accounts of the development of criminal behavior from which generalizations
can be made. Such of method of inquiry will result in the capacity to make informed explanations of criminal behavior which can lead to ideas about how to address the problem.

Dewey’s praise of the practical effects of Jeremy Bentham’s theoretical works upon collectivist legislation in the late 1860’s is ample evidence of Dewey’s intentions concerning scientific method and its practical applications in liberal democracies. Dewey notes that "(Bentham) said of himself that his ambition was to extend the experimental method of reasoning from the physical branch to the moral."\(^{19}\) Another very Deweyan point of praise follows, where he states that "(Bentham’s) enduring idea is that customs, institutions, laws, and social arrangements are to be judged on the basis of their consequences as these come home to the individuals that compose society."\(^{20}\) Dewey points out that Bentham’s attack upon Lockean natural rights theory, following Hume, gave theoretical grounds for the support of positive state action on the above mentioned Benthamite grounds, whenever such action was seen to benefit society.\(^{21}\) This activity in turn led to social legislation in the fields of public health, education, and "reform bills that greatly broadened the basis of suffrage."\(^{22}\) What Dewey finds so praiseworthy here is Bentham’s extension of Enlightenment reason to practical application in human affairs. This further strengthens my assertion that Dewey is engaged in a continuation of the Enlightenment project himself, since those things he finds so praiseworthy in Bentham’s work are precisely those things he aspires towards in his own. The force of Dewey’s attitude toward scientific method is evident in his discussion of Bentham as well. The power of the advances made in
scientific inquiry can be shown to have a dramatic influence on our ability to discern the consequences of social policy in massive and cognitively challenging social organizations, such as those blossoming in the early industrial age, and those which have only grown more complex and less amenable to management.

Dewey’s emphasis on Bentham here illustrates that he (Dewey) did not conceive of scientific method as disclosing universal truths. Dewey asserts that:

The use of scientific method, even if sporadic and feeble, encouraged study of actual consequences and promoted the formation of legislative policies designed to improve the consequences brought about by existing institutions. At all events, in connection with Benthamite influence, it greatly weakened the notion that reason is a remote majestic power that discloses ultimate truths. It tended to render it an agency in investigation of concrete situations and in projection of measures for their betterment.23

This passage is evidence that Dewey did not think of science as yielding universal truths. Given this, it does not appear that there is any remarkable distinction between Dewey’s use of the term method and Rorty’s replacement of it with the terms “technique,” and “social practice.”24 It is unclear what the exchange of the term method for Rorty’s terminology will do for us.

Dewey speaks at length of scientific revolutions, of advances in world views brought about through scientific discoveries, or paradigm shifts in science. His discussion of Heisenberg’s principle of indeterminacy as a major transformation of the philosophy of science, and his discussion of Kant’s incorrect application of what Kant described as the “Copernican Revolution,” illustrates Dewey’s intimate knowledge of the history of science.25 Dewey’s understanding of scientific method is evident in his treatment of the Copernican system, which asserts that “an idea in experiment is
tentative, conditional, not fixed and rigorously determinative...the directive idea does not fix the nature of the object.”

This argument is given as opposed to the Ptolemaic system, which Dewey states is more similar to Kant’s interpretation of the “Copernican Revolution.” The Kantian/Ptolemaic system states that the directive idea, or rather, “the constitution of the human subject in knowing” controls antecedently the outcome of all inquiry. One can see here the opposition between Dewey’s understanding of scientific method, which is not a method of imposing fixed principles upon the world, and the Ptolemaic system which works from such fixed principles, and is the understanding of method Rorty has incorrectly attributed to Dewey. What is clear here is that Dewey’s view of science is consistent with that “cardinal principle” of empirical knowledge Richard Bernstein claims that all pragmatists would endorse.

This is seen, according to Bernstein, in Sellar’s famous claim that “Empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension science, is rational, not because it has a foundation, but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put any claim in jeopardy, though not all at once.” If Bernstein’s statement is an accurate representation of a principle that all pragmatists would endorse, it appears odd that Rorty would attempt to impose upon Dewey a view of science that places Dewey outside the pragmatist fold.

Rorty takes issue with Dewey’s attempt to develop a “radical empiricism” with good cause. Rorty rightly points out the flaws in Dewey’s argument concerning a “true” experience, and its inconsistency with the majority of Dewey’s arguments concerning what he considered the pragmatic sense of truth. However, Dewey’s
view of scientific method need not be conjoined to his inconsistent attempt to describe what a “true” experience consists of. If one sees rightly Dewey’s view of scientific method as one that is more consistently allied to Rorty’s agreeably preferred conception of experience that “goes back to ta phainomena rather than to empeiria,” the conception of this stronger interpretation concerning the consistency of Dewey’s scientific method with my arguments will appear more clear.\textsuperscript{32} Considering that Dewey thought his expressed view of experience was “still more or less inchoate,” it might be the case that one could charitably assume this was experimental discourse on his part, something he was considering but possibly not even convinced of himself.\textsuperscript{33} If one were to see Dewey’s version of scientific method as linked to a version of truth that does not claim to represent anything beyond the assertion that it, as a method of inquiry, has allowed us to find ways of coping with the world by making our activities more effective in achieving our aims, we can see that scientific inquiry can be a fruitful tool for engaging in an effective social policy discourse, without trying to work out a construction of reality that is an erection of the old idols.

Rorty’s linguistic turn is a move beyond epistemological concerns with the nature of reality. It is a move beyond “experience” and “representation” of the real toward an “appearance” and a “registering” of aspects of the world in language.\textsuperscript{34} This is meant to be a superior way of talking about the world, and of engaging in social practices. Now if we see Dewey’s scientific method in the manner I have been describing, it becomes clear that it can be a very beneficial component of engaging the world and our community, effectively contributing to the project of which Rorty’s
linguistic pragmatism is only a part. The questions then become: What is gained through maintaining Dewey’s view of methodical inquiry in what we retain of the Deweyan canon, and in our social practices and discourses? What is lost to us by removing method from what we retain of Dewey, and how will Rorty’s version of pragmatism and his reference to the Bloomian “strong poet” enable us to engage in social inquiry, or allow social and cultural development as a consciously directed process to continue?

The gain in retaining Dewey’s view of scientific method is found in his emphasis on “doing of a physical and overt sort.”35 This emphasis is manifest in wedding theory and practice, which is fundamental to Dewey’s work, and would be lost or distorted without retaining his understanding of the role of scientific inquiry in social discourse and ethical deliberations. “All experimentation involves overt doing” which is “not a random activity, but is directed by ideas which have to meet the conditions set by the need of a problem.”36 This emphasis on activity that is not random is distinctly different than the task set for pragmatism in Rorty’s view. Deweyan pragmatism is far from an ad hoc play of language games which sees some metaphors die off and some literalized, or put to use as part of the language. Dewey’s pragmatism is a process philosophy, although the underlying environment from which problems emerge is, admittedly, a combination of things that contingently exist, that happen to be due to the interplay of forces which are not part of a pre-conceived process, (a non-teleological environment). Further, retaining scientific method in the Deweyan canon restores “integration and cooperation between man’s beliefs about the
world in which he lives and his beliefs about the values and purposes that should direct his conduct.\textsuperscript{37} Dewey wishes to have scientific inquiry serve as a component for a social discourse on the nature of the normative commitments that a community shares. This is a bold directive that Dewey thinks is the obligation of any community. It is unclear to what extent this discourse should be oriented toward private commitments. It is quite clear that to the extent the community maintains active public commitments, as all shared living arrangements do to some extent, Dewey’s method of inquiry into social problems appears to be a fruitful component of the discourse directed towards public commitments. The central task Dewey envisions for his understanding of philosophy, which incorporates scientific inquiry, is to understand our beliefs about the world “due to natural science, and our beliefs about values - using that word to designate whatever is taken to have rightful authority in the direction of conduct.”\textsuperscript{38} What is clearly gained by retaining these aspects of Dewey’s work is the awareness of our capacity to maintain a systematic discourse within our community concerning the nature of the community’s public normative commitments. What is also gained is a similar awareness of the ability of our private, parochial sentiments to have a destabilizing, dis-integrating impact upon social discourse. Dewey’s method is meant to remove from public discourse those parochial sentiments that would prejudice an individual’s or group’s input. The result would be a form of discourse that at least manifests an overt awareness of the impact of parochial sentiments on a community’s ability to coalesce around a set of public commitments. Dewey’s theory of intelligent action, as seen explicitly in the lecture entitled “The Naturalization of Intelligence” in
The Quest for Certainty, is meant to determine the consequences of actions that are enjoyed to see if these enjoyments can rise to the status of a value.\textsuperscript{39} This would be a step removed from the belief structures present in society which consider values as such simply because they are enjoyed. Dewey argues on this point that the scientific revolution discredited "the notion of an act whether of sense or thought which supplied a valid measure of thought in immediate knowledge...consequences of operations became the important thing."\textsuperscript{40} As a result of the scientific revolution, a known object became that which is experienced after experimental "variation and redisposition" has altered it.\textsuperscript{41} What is clear here is that Dewey's expressed understanding of the role his pragmatism plays in helping to shape public normative discourse is altogether different than the role which critics, such as Horkheimer in the previous chapter, have understood Dewey to play in the shaping of mass material culture by scientism, or "subjective reason" seen as an outgrowth of Kantian epistemology. Dewey's view of the scientific revolution is altogether different than that of his critics. From his view of this revolution:

the suggestion almost imperatively follows that escape from the defects of transcendental absolutism is not to be had by setting up as values enjoyments that happen anyhow, but in defining value by enjoyments which are the consequences of intelligent action.\textsuperscript{42}

These admonitions are quite the opposite of what Dewey's critics take from his work, and I have here in mind Horkheimer and those of similar perspective. For Dewey, the issues "involve nothing less than the directed reconstruction of economic, political, and religious institutions."\textsuperscript{43}
How can Rorty's understanding of pragmatism as a linguistic practice retain Dewey's required (methodical) inquiry into the alleviation of social problems? If we remove methodical inquiry from Dewey's "spirit," aren't we losing the quintessential Dewey? How can the "strong poet," an idea which Rorty takes from the work of Harold Bloom, retain the ability to engage in the task that Dewey has set for the pragmatic philosopher? It seems clear from the perspective of this exposition that he cannot. However, Rorty does not think that such inquiry is the sole province of the philosopher. Rather, he feels that "this function is that of high culture in general rather than philosophy in particular." My criticism of Rorty with respect to his denial of the need for the socially active philosopher to engage the problems of the community is that the philosopher's replacement in the Rortian scheme by the strong poet presupposes the sort of liberal democratic society that Dewey envisioned as the product of his pragmatism. This presupposition on Rorty's part is revealed in his discussion of the nature of this strong poet.

This type of person is a "relatively leisured language user--all of us who have the equipment and the time for fantasy." Obviously such leisured language users require the luxuries prevalent in a technologically advanced liberal society. They require the backdrop of a community in which social organization is so advanced and specialized that this group of individuals, perhaps a class of individuals, has the luxury of free time and presumably an education which allows them to have a critical perspective on cultural history as well as contemporary society. Rorty clearly disagrees with my description of the requirements of his "strong poet." He believes
we can all lead a life of creative self-reinvention, or self-overcoming. He claims, following Philip Reiff, that Freudian psycho-analysis “democratized genius by giving everyone a creative unconscious.”

This perspective allows us to see that “the intellectual is just a special case... of what other people do... to dramatize and crystallize (their) sense of self-identity.” The problem for this writer is that it is altogether unclear how this absolutely democratized sense of creative intelligence has anything to do with Rorty’s assertions that the philosopher’s role today is as one more of many types of cultural critics. His examples of the myriad of types of lifestyles in which an individual can gain a sense of self-identity through re-description does not square with the particular intellectual requirements of the role of the “cultural critic.” It appears then that this focus on the creativity of individuals in Rortian pragmatism does not square with the role of creative intelligence in Deweyan pragmatism. It then follows that Rorty’s assertion that we should edit Deweyan pragmatism according to the requirements of Rorty’s linguistic pragmatism is in error because such editing will not in fact retain the “spirit” of Dewey as Rorty claims it would.

The metaphors which Rorty’s strong poet has the freedom and luxury to create allow him to:

make the past itself, including those very causal processes which blindly impress all (of his) behavings, bear (his individual) impress. Success in that enterprise - the enterprise of saying ‘Thus I willed it’ to the past is success in what Bloom calls giving birth to oneself.

What is so obviously lacking in these descriptions of this new type of individual is that there is no emphasis on what the strong poet contributes to the community. This is of
great importance because Dewey is concerned, as seen below, with the contributions of individuals such as philosophers and social scientists to the community seen as a project in common. It might arguably be the case that the existence of such “strong poets” in a community serves as a litmus test for whether or not a community is in fact a liberal democracy. However, what this description of the ideal sort of existence for Rorty reveals is the fundamental difference between his and Dewey’s view of what creative intelligence is, and the consequent role of creative intelligence in society.

Following Dewey, I see Rorty’s version of creative intelligence as an individualism inherited from a “pre-scientific, pre-technological age” in which Lockean concepts, such as the “idea that property and reward were intrinsically individual” flourished.” Rortian creative intelligence is an anachronistic analog of that older version of individualism which is the cause, Dewey argues, of that “profound split” between creative intelligence and the social benefit that can be brought about through its application to social projects. Dewey states that:

A stable recovery of individuality waits upon an elimination of the older economic and political individualism, an elimination which will liberate imagination and endeavor for the task of making corporate society contribute to the free culture of its members.

The emphasis on creative intelligence in Deweyan pragmatism is oriented towards its role in contributing to society. The emphasis on creative intelligence in Rortian pragmatism is oriented towards individual gain. Rorty’s creative individual looks inward, contributing to the separation of individual creative agency from the need to engage in the community as a project in common. The Rortian, who is oriented
toward seeking his own identity, is an example of that "lost individual" who, while being "caught up into a vast complex of associations" tries to break free of them into order to re-invent himself, all the while lacking a "harmonious and coherent reflection of the import of these connections (in his) imaginative and emotional outlook on life." If an individual was even capable of breaking free from these associations, he would, according to Dewey, be a "monstrosity," for it is "absurd to suppose that the ties which hold them together are merely external and do not react into mentality and character, producing the framework of personal disposition." It is clear from this that Dewey’s perspective on the role of individual creative agency is that it flourishes in and through those associations that make up a community. While the Rortian may co-exist with the Deweyan in such a community, each clearly plays an altogether different role in the function of that community. It follows from this that Rorty’s task is better served in avoiding appropriating those things he finds useful in Deweyan pragmatism and editing the rest. I think Rorty might more effectively show how his pragmatist, his strong poet, compliments the Deweyan pragmatist, rather than showing how the Rortian "overcomes" the Deweyan.

It is clear from this analysis that Rortian pragmatism and Deweyan pragmatism, as Bernstein suggests, both exhibit a common sub-current of ideas that may loosely fall under the rubric “pragmatic thought.” However, it is also clear that Rortian pragmatism is not a better, or more advanced form of pragmatism which holds greater pertinence for contemporary culture. It simply does not serve the purpose Dewey’s work was meant to serve. Rortian pragmatism does not address the need to remedy
social ills, rather it presupposes that these ills have already been remedied, or that they are not the concern of his strong poet. Rorty cannot appropriate aspects of Dewey’s work and edit the rest, particularly the features and functions of scientific method, without losing the spirit of Dewey which he professes to wish to save.

Deweyan scientific method in the service of social inquiry is meant to free social discourse from those parochial sentiments which divide communities, by providing an intersubjective forum where social policy can be created without the distortions inherent in political discourse that operate on the level of rhetorical gamesmanship for the benefit of the individual politician and his constituency. The function of scientific method is absolutely quintessential to Deweyan pragmatism, as it is part of Dewey’s program for the freeing of social discourse in this manner. Editing it from what we retain of Dewey is editing that which is truly Deweyan.
Dewey’s argument that ethics and scientific method are one is founded upon the naturalistic basis of his philosophy. Dewey grounds ethics thoroughly in the world of experience and observation, without reducing moral laws to natural laws. The scientific attitude in inquiry enhances any deliberative effort concerning the world of experience. If ethics are so concerned, then deliberations concerning right action are also enhanced by scientific methods of inquiry. I will show that if knowledge gained through scientifically rigorous inquiry requires experimentation, and ethical deliberation is made more effective by scientific methods, it follows from Dewey’s argument that experimentation with the possibilities of right action is likewise required. This leads to Dewey’s position on social and political matters, as seen in the next chapter. His position ultimately calls for experimentation with practices and institutions that we deem democratic on a scale not seen in our society. However, as described at the end of this chapter, Dewey’s experimental methods of inquiry into the best political institutions and practices are limited by what I describe as an organic order postulate which stipulates antecedent criteria of the good society.

Dewey grounds moral theory in reflection occurring when “men are confronted with situations in which different desires promise opposed goods.” Dewey opposes this “reflective morality” to “customary morality,” the latter of which “places standards
and rules of conduct in ancestral habit. The standards developed through reflective moral theorizing are contingent, changing according to the conditions of a given situation. Dewey states that "definitive injunctions...cannot proceed from (reflective morality). This sense of contingency, and the idea that moral standards should be set according to conditions, are both very important elements in Dewey's argument. The crises he sees in society are due to the application of unreflective, or customary morality to a state of affairs in which it is ineffective. He argues that "there are periods in history when a whole community or a group...finds itself in the presence of new issues which its old customs do not adequately meet." These are periods of change on a grand scale, as seen in "Greece following the time of Pericles..., that of the Jews after their captivity...(and) the present...with the vast social changes which have followed the industrious expansion of the machine age." Advances on the scale seen in our machine age must be met by advances in the value system through which we define our activities, and ultimately ourselves. There is a genuine danger in maintaining an ethics based upon the antecedent conditions in which customary morality originates. Dewey cryptically describes these dangers as "the force of new conditions (producing) disruption externally and mechanically." What this is meant to describe is a state of affairs in which technological advances have created the capacity for activities that have not been held in check by the types of deliberation and control Dewey advocates. These activities extend from new methods of economic, political and social oppression, to destruction of the environment, and mass genocide. Moral theory, based upon the programmatic principles Dewey advocates, is meant to be a
counter-measure to these activities, to whatever extent possible. Its goal is to
"generalize the types of moral conflicts which arise, state the leading ways in which
such problems have been intellectually dealt with, (and) render personal reflection
more systematic and enlightened." The values that emerge from such a program are
intended to be the products of sound judgment, in the sense that scientific inquiry is
the basis of sound deliberations as to empirical matters. Dewey points out that this
method of making judgments is "about the conditions and the results of experienced
objects, about that which should regulate the formation of our desires, affections, and
enjoyments."8

Dewey’s naturalistic philosophy is derived from the premise that an "organism
is part of the natural world; its interactions with it are genuine additive phenomena."9
This assertion refers to Dewey’s criticism of subjectivism, specifically the spectator
type of knowledge. It is important to point out Dewey’s view that experience is in
as well as of this world. The world and the individual constantly interact. The
products of this interaction are genuine knowledge. Applied to moral theory, Dewey’s
naturalism suggests that moral knowledge, for lack of a better description, is a product
of our interaction with the environment. The premises of moral principles are limited
to this world. “Problematic situations,” moments in which moral deliberation is
required, “when they are resolved then gain the meaning of all the relations which the
operations of thought have defined.”10 What follows from this argument is that moral
knowledge is the product of understanding the consequences of our activities for the
relations we have with other things and individuals. There are no extra-worldly
relations to which our activities must conform. However, the consequences of our activities are evaluated according to secular humanist principles as the antecedent criteria of the good. These principles are thoroughly grounded in this world, relying on the methods of science and reason, therefore they are secular, or naturalistic. These principles also take account of the freedom, welfare, and equality of other individuals as the chief operative principles guiding our interactions with them; therefore the principles are humanistic. These criteria of the good are the foundations of Dewey’s naturalism.

What convinces Dewey that the natural world is the effective limit of the relations of our activities is empirical observation. What I mean here by effective limits of our observations is two things. Firstly, right action and moral deliberation have no theological or extra-worldly reference point. Secondly, this naturalistic aspect of Dewey’s moral theory does not create a subject/object dichotomy, and its attendant skeptical dilemmas, the product of which are unresolvable moral puzzles. Since we see that our decision-making processes, when acted upon in the world, have effects that solve our dilemmas or problems, “the supposed grounds for opposing human experience to the reality of nature disappear.”

Dewey’s argument is not only meant to do away with subjectivist dilemmas of a philosophical as well as moral kind, it is also meant to counter the claim that his own position could be considered subjectivist. Dewey argues that the real is in the environment, and not merely within the mind. Experiences are within the world because “situations have problematic and resolved
characteristics in and through actual interactions of the organism and the environment."\textsuperscript{12}

Dewey sees "the real" as a process that is in a state of continuous flux. It is within this flux, this "union in Nature of the settled and the unsettled", that moral theory gains significance.\textsuperscript{13} This is particularly important to Dewey's theory, because this argument extends to the reduction of ideals and ends to real entities within the process of acting upon unsettled conditions in the environment. Ideals and ends are thoroughly grounded within this world, as part of our interaction with it. They gain significance only as part of this interaction, as means to further ends. This union of the ideal and the real in Dewey's naturalism is important because it emphasizes the ability of human activity to achieve goals, which means here the alleviation of problems arising in unsettled situations. This includes times when sweeping social changes require new methods of control. The emphasis on this ability illustrates Dewey's optimism concerning social progress, the origins of which are seen in his understanding of the transformative power of ideas, and the power of the Enlightenment in shaping the course of human events.

To summarize so far, knowing how to resolve a dilemma between competing and opposed goods is a problem for reflective moral theory, according to Dewey. This theory is based solely upon knowledge acquired through interactions between individuals, the environment, and their received tradition. Intelligent methods, which are those using scientific forms of inquiry, make efforts at knowing how to resolve problems in moral theory more effective.
Dewey’s discussion of “the nature and office of principles” further illustrates his moral theory. It shows the conjunction between an understanding of methods and ethics as contingent upon the needs of the times, but it also shows that “the intellectually cumulative effect” of experience and tradition serves as reference points in moral deliberations. Dewey’s discussion highlights a distinction between rules and principles, which builds upon his argument that social and political institutions must change according to the needs of a given time.

Dewey’s distinction between rules and principles further illustrates his view of reflective moral theory. “Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing things. But principles are intellectual, they are the final methods used in judging suggested courses of action.” The application of rules is effective in certain cases where habit provides the course of action required to complete a task. The nature of this method of accomplishing tasks makes it ineffective in responding to changing circumstances. By Dewey’s definition, rules are inapplicable in cases they haven’t been designed to deal with. He defines principles as standpoints from which to judge circumstances. Principles are malleable, whereas rules are hard and fast according to Dewey. Principles “provide a consistent point of view...but (they) do not pretend to determine in advance precisely what constitutes the general welfare or the common good.” This point extends not only to antecedent moral principles, it also extends to Dewey’s argument that political institutions and practices should not stand as static monoliths. The dynamic, always contingent nature of historical processes requires that society accepts that its institutions and practices will always be in the process of becoming
antiquated, and that amendment of institutions and practices is a necessary feature of historical change.

This need for "constant revision and expansion" concerns moral principles as well as political institutions and practices.\(^9\) Practices and measures manifest in political institutions are of a fundamentally moral nature. Society's values, those things it holds as good and proper, are to a great degree codified in the practices of its political institutions. It follows then that change in moral principles to suit the times requires a similar change in society's institutions.

Dewey asserts that moral knowledge must expand as man's activities expand.\(^20\) Technological advances "assume moral import whenever they are discovered to have a bearing on the common good."\(^21\) Any new application of technology has an impact upon the lives of people, in Dewey's estimation. Since the application of scientific knowledge, in the form of new technologies, to human affairs is a fundamentally moral one from Dewey's point of view:

the great need of the present time is that the traditional barriers between scientific and moral knowledge be broken down, so that there will be organized and consecutive endeavor to use all scientific knowledge for humane and social ends.\(^22\)

By applying Dewey's perspective on principle to social and political institutions more closely, one can see his understanding of justice. Dewey asks, "What does justice demand in the concrete?"\(^23\) Taken as a rule from Dewey's point of view, justice means following the strict letter of the law with a minimum of flexibility and interpretation (however dubious this method might sound in practice). However,
taken as a principle, "justice signifies the will to examine specific institutions and measures so as to find out how they operate with the view of introducing greater impartiality and equity into the consequences they produce." Justice here is defined as impartiality and equity in determining the outcome of legal matters. It is a standpoint from which to survey a particular matter. Institutions and their methods and procedures used for adjudicating legal matters are scrutinized for their ability to afford an outcome that corresponds with the principles of justice. If the institutions are ineffective in this regard, principles call for a revision of institutions and processes in order to allow for the realization of society's understanding of a just outcome. The way institutional effectiveness is determined is by using the best methods of inquiry at society's disposal for surveying the possible outcomes of the choices available, given a particular set of institutions and practices. If the choices available within a particular institutional framework do not allow for the closest approximation to a just outcome possible, they must be revised in a manner that will do so. This scenario illustrates precisely how Dewey sees moral principles developing. They are realized in practice through empirical testing and observation, and are not oriented toward anything beyond our interaction with nature and society.

One last point about Dewey's view of principles addresses issues taken up with Rorty in chapter two above. Dewey emphasizes that principles or standards, "as a standpoint for survey of situations allows free play to the imagination in reaching new insights." This is precisely what Rorty envisions the Bloomian "strong poet" doing. What Rorty fails to take notice of in his criticism of Dewey's emphasis on method, is
that Dewey's theory allows for the creative life of the individual, and the culture as a whole, to freely imagine and develop new possibilities of existence. This is Rorty's concern, but it is also Dewey's. Dewey's perspective on principles and methods "requires, rather than merely permits, continual advance in the conception of what constitutes happiness in the concrete." The fundamental difference lies in Rorty's emphasis on the individual's self-centered re-creation, or re-description, and Dewey's emphasis on the creative potential of individuals as members of an organic community that benefits from the growth of individuals as much as they do. Rorty is more concerned, as his emphasis on the anxiety of the "strong poet" indicates, with the ability of the individual to break free from the influences and impresses of his forbearers, so as to re-create himself in an image of his own design. This anxiety comes from the possibility of not being able to break free of one's culture and tradition, and form a one's own description of oneself. If Rorty could account for this similarity between his and Dewey's theory, concerning the play of creative and imaginative forces, he might possibly reassess Dewey's theory in a new light.

The following questions might arise concerning the relations between received tradition and intelligent methods: Don't we engage in moral deliberation all the time? Why do I, as an individual or as a member of a community, need to be taught how to engage in moral deliberation? A response to these questions from a Deweyan perspective would initially find it absurd to suppose that antecedently known goods, or received tradition, could serve without revision as an effective reference point for judging conditions that are in continuous flux. An individual who poses questions
such as these, Dewey might argue, is engaged in applying customary morality to problematic situations, and doing so rather poorly if one judges the effects on society of doing so by his standards. "Morals are ineradicably empirical," Dewey asserts.  

His conclusions call for a reorientation of moral deliberation away from attitudes such as those of the above questioner who suggests that customary moral deliberation fulfills the requirements of moral theory. "Since morals is concerned with conduct, it grows out of specific empirical facts." The specificity and immediacy of a scenario that requires moral deliberation does not lend itself solely to the application of antecedent principles. Every era that has experienced profound social and environmental changes has to come to grips with the crises caused by the ineffectiveness of antecedent principles in controlling new conditions. The perspective of the above questioner, Dewey might argue, stems from an ignorance of the forces at work in new conditions. It might also originate in the inability to detach oneself psychologically from the perceived security of a previous era, when one's set of values had an effective force in the world. Furthermore, such questions ignore the fact that we are taught "morals" as a matter of our upbringing and socialization, either directly or indirectly. The problem is that the customary morality we are taught is ineffective in meeting the needs of current conditions. Dewey points out that, "even the most comprehensive deliberation leading to the most momentous choice only fixes a disposition which has to be continuously applied in new and unforeseen conditions, re-adapted by future deliberations." This may lead to a feeling of insecurity, of having never gained a sense of certainty in moral principles. However, Dewey finds this
constant searching for right principles of action geared towards ever-changing circumstances to have a positive side. He asks, “Does this (constant moral deliberation) reduce moral life to the futile toil of a Sisyphus?” Part of his answer is that it is not a futile exercise, but one that “keeps activity alive, (and) growing.” I will show in the next chapter that this constant re-adaptation through an on-going process of deliberation is precisely how Dewey thinks democracy, and community, are to be kept alive.

Scientific modes of inquiry make public policy decision-making in a multi-faceted community more possible. They do so by providing intersubjectively transmissable criteria that form a basis for a common perspective from which to approach policy problems. Dewey points out the strength of scientific method in this regard:

the fundamental advantage of framing our account of the processes of knowing on the pattern of what occurs in experimental inquiry is that nothing is introduced save what is objective and is accessible to examination and import.

What Dewey means by “objective” is the principle of the intersubjectivity of criteria mentioned above. This is evident elsewhere, as when Dewey states that with the transfer “of experimental method from physics to man...all tenets and creeds about good and goods would be recognized to be hypotheses...to be tested and confirmed...they would lose all pretense of finality.” The application of this principle to community concerns, and hence to community itself, since the nature of a community is seen to be intimately related to its concerns, would provide a counter-
measure to the parochial interests brought to public dialogue. It is Dewey’s firm conviction that such “change would do away with the intolerance and fanaticism that attend the notion that beliefs and judgments are capable of inherent truth and authority.”

Some groups in society will not be open to having their values tested as mere hypotheses. There are a number of groups currently residing in our society that would fight to defend their principles as inherently true. However, I must reiterate that Dewey’s program is only applicable to liberal-democratic societies. Those that will not conform to liberal-democratic principles are not part of this program. Being open-minded is a necessary pre-condition for entering into such a dialogue. This is achieved through a fundamental change in how individuals are educated and socialized, which is a project that is inseparable from achieving the democratic society Dewey envisions. The educational component of Dewey’s vision is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it might suffice to say that its intentions are “to foster those impulses and habits which experience has shown to make us...impartial in perceiving the tendencies of our...activities.” Complete impartiality in perceiving the tendencies of our own activities is obviously unattainable. However, the extent to which it is attainable is the extent to which Dewey’s goals are approximated. Conversely, this extent is also a limiting factor in realizing those goals.

Experimental method “meets the conditions of the present situation” by serving as the basis for a re-definition of values with a view toward controlling future events. It does so through the analysis of the consequences of directed action. Through such
methods, the "conception of value" is defined causally and operationally. This is meant to move moral theory beyond the definition and classification of actions as good and bad, towards prediction of possible choices as better or worse. This is an important distinction between a forward looking, "reflective morality," and a backward looking, "customary morality." It is precisely how scientific methods are reflected in Deweyan ethics. Both have the ultimate goal of predicting events. Rigorously developed ethical deliberations would strive towards having the predictive capacity of science from this perspective. Dewey thought this method would provide for a very powerful form of community decision-making. It is a fundamental component of why he thought public dialogue has the capacity to deal with the issues a technologically complex society faces.

It was stated above that principles developed through reflective moral theorizing are contingent upon the particular conditions of a given situation. There is another important, fundamental element in Dewey's moral theory that clearly differentiates it from relativistic moral theories. Dewey's moral theory is founded implicitly on antecedent criteria of the good that I describe as an organic order postulate. I describe the foundations of Dewey's moral theory this way for several reasons. His moral theory cannot be described as resting upon a natural order postulate. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Dewey does not reduce moral laws to natural laws. Accordingly, Dewey does not think nature informs man's activities deterministically. Rather, Dewey sees man's activities reshaping nature according to man's needs to such an extant that the environment is conditioned by,
and in turn conditions, man’s existence. This organic, or even symbiotic interaction between man and nature in Dewey’s theory makes it impossible to describe the foundations of Dewey’s moral theory as a natural order postulate without introducing contradictions in one’s understanding of Dewey’s theory as a whole.

The particular cultural tradition which implicitly informs Dewey’s understanding of reflective moral theorizing by serving as the antecedent criteria of the good, as the organic order postulate itself, is secular humanism. Dewey’s reflective moral theory is flexible according to conditions. However, it is clear that Dewey’s moral theory is not relativistic. Secular humanism, as Dewey’s organic order postulate, provides antecedent criteria to which reflective moral theory must conform.

Critics such as Horkheimer have not taken notice of the organic order postulate that is fundamental to Dewey’s moral theory. If Dewey’s critics had done so, the charges of relativism and instrumentalism levelled at Dewey might have been dropped. If Dewey had been more explicit about his antecedent criteria of the good, his moral theory might have been assessed by his critics differently.
Dewey's political philosophy dissolves the formal boundaries of scientific method and ethics. His view is that scientific, rigorously methodical inquiries are the best ways for communities to determine what is right for them. This is coupled with the idea that individuals should have as much access to the political system as possible. These principles are meant to serve as the foundation of a discourse about public values. Such a discourse would allow for an ongoing inquiry into the nature of community, asking what community is, and what we want from it individually and collectively.

There are particular prerequisites for arriving at the position where these foundational principles can be put in practice. It is this writer's contention that these prerequisites form a substantial component of what holds enduring value in Dewey's work. These are that there must be a continual re-visioning, through the best means possible, of individuality and community in order to achieve the greatest approximation of the ideal of democracy as possible. Secondly, the vitality of the struggle to approximate the ideal of democracy in practice is perpetuated through maintaining a rigorously designed experimental procedure as part of the political process. Thirdly, since culturally produced perspectives on the nature of individuality
and community have profound effects on society, they can have massively degenerative effects on democracy if they are not in keeping with contemporary needs.

The most pressing issue this nation must concern itself with, Dewey argues, is "the creation of democracy...which is now as urgent as it was...when the most experienced and wisest men of the country gathered...to create the structure of a self-governing society."\(^1\) The conditions within which this creative enterprise must take place have changed drastically since the days of the founding fathers. The founding fathers and "new physical circumstances" had come together in a "marvelous conjunction" of good fortune which provided the means to "re-adapt the older institutions and ideas to meet (new) situations."\(^2\) Dewey thinks the drastically different circumstances this nation is confronted with have made the frontiers of human growth a moral problem, as opposed to problems created by the founding era’s physical frontier.

The earlier concern with shaping the physical frontier of this nation has been replaced with the need to expand the creative democratic enterprise into the moral frontier.\(^3\) It is a moral frontier, Dewey argues, because the waste of resources and energy in his day were those of individuals who were denied the possibility of making the contributions to their own lives and the vitality of the community they are capable of.\(^4\) Dewey thinks this problem exists because "for a long period we have acted as if our democracy were something that perpetuated itself automatically; as if our ancestors had succeeded in setting up a machine that solved the problem of perpetual motion in politics."\(^5\) I think Dewey's connection between stagnant political
institutions and the need to expand the creative democratic enterprise to moral frontiers is found in the need to open up avenues for personal and communal growth for all individuals in all spheres of social and political life. Dewey states that "everything which bars freedom and fullness of communication sets up barriers that divide human beings into sets and cliques, into antagonistic sects and factions, and thereby undermines the democratic way of life." Revision of political institutions, with the purpose of making them more inclusive, and making them a forum where differences can be communicated and varying perspectives heard, is fundamental to redressing the problem of wasting the nation's human resources.

This argument illustrates Dewey's thesis that "democracy is a moral ideal." It is not, as he declares, "something institutional and external" that will run as a machine unimpeded without a particular set of beliefs and way of life being carried on by the citizens who are actually the source of democracy. Democratic faith as a guide to life is presented by Dewey as the following "philosophical position." It is:

the belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness... the faith that the process of experience is more important than any result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process.

This process, alluded to here in the most general of terms, is the manifestation of the vitality of democracy in practice. It is a constantly growing, nurturing experience that is vital for the individual and the community. If the vitality of democracy is stifled, so is that of the community, and vice versa. This argument exhibits precisely why the waste of human resources through the effects of oppression, or exclusion from
political and social life by other means, is a moral problem. It also illustrates why the inquiry into developing vital democratic processes is a moral inquiry. Questions concerning the extent to which political institutions approximate democratic ideals are moral questions. Scientifically rigorous modes of inquiry into achieving as much of the democratic ideal in practice as possible are inquiries of a moral nature.

What does the alleviation of this fundamentally moral predicament require? It requires cooperation on the part of all citizens "by giving differences a chance to show themselves because...(this is) not only a right of other persons but (it) is a means of enriching one's own life experience," as well as the community's.11 Tolerance and acceptance of difference is a "release and enrichment" that provides for the ongoing growth of a vital democracy.12

Dewey is well aware that he may be charged with asserting "a set of moral commonplaces" but his "only reply is that (this) is just the point in saying them."13 He emphasizes these apparently commonplace moral assertions because they are essentially neglected through the complacency of individuals who perceive of democracy as a perfected set of institutional machinery when, he would argue, democracy is fundamentally grounded in maintaining the democratic beliefs described above in one's daily life. The re-invigoration of this belief system is a "task that has to be carried on day by day."14 Furthermore, Dewey adds that "Since it is one that can have no end till experience itself comes to an end, the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute."15
Those elements of Dewey's political theory that are important today center around dealing with issues faced by a complex, highly heterogeneous society. He proposed, in a very general form, a set of relatively flexible methods that may help to find resolutions to the crises facing modern liberal democratic communities. These methods are intended to be combined with public evaluation of social problems in order to gain a practically and normatively grounded understanding of community.

It is often stated that certain historical city-states such as ancient Athens had the capacity to sustain a 'democratic' form of government through high levels of participation combined with access limited to an elite. The scale of the myriad of demands placed upon a modern democratic society was not even closely approximated in ancient Athens for a number of reasons beyond the scope of this paper. One can see in Rousseau's social contract theory that the only way his version of government can be seen as democratic is if the society itself is absolutely homogeneous. Even then, as Rousseau had anticipated through his construction of the "general will," there are a number of problems with his model.

One of the many prescriptions for the ailments caused by the incapacity of large and complex nation-states to maintain democracy, described so in a very limited fashion, calls for limiting access to the political system. This would be expected to decrease the range of demands placed on the system, thereby making it more manageable. Another alarming phenomenon is a virulent form of nationalism that calls for a move towards the exclusive nation-state as the panacea that will bring about
solidarity and community. One of many conceivable consequences of these prescriptions is that societies will move towards totalitarian systems of government.

Dewey seeks increased participation through limiting the demands placed upon the political system by interests grounded in parochial beliefs. His prescription would ideally expect that all members of society would conform to a set of intersubjectively transmissible criteria by which a community decision-making and public values discourse can be created. As will be seen below, this is accomplished through a wedding of scientific procedures and a normative discourse, together with an information gathering and dissemination network that will allow (ideally) the greatest number of citizens to participate in the community as a project in common.

Dewey placed a great emphasis on the role played by a technocracy that possesses the proficiency required to disseminate information to society at large. The technocracy's role, in Dewey's view, is to help develop and inform the discourse on community by providing information concerning the negative consequences of social relations, meaning everything from criminal activity to those Kafkaesque processes of massive systems that cause individuals to be lost in the bureaucratic machine. This civil service would act to explain and predict the consequences of social interaction, so that those things individuals enjoy in these interactions can be tested systematically to determine if they can rise to the status of a public value. With all this said, Dewey's vision of how national bureaucracies of experts work together with citizen's local governments is unclear, and quite puzzling. How the raw material of politics, i.e. information, is handled by national bureaucracies, while still being the object of local
concerns is also puzzling. What is not puzzling is that scientific principles are meant to
guide the collection and dissemination of the raw material of politics. Therefore, it
appears that this part of politics, its raw material, is not to be part of the political
process at all. Instead, it is meant to be public, open to verification, and complete. All
of these points raise significant issues that Dewey did not explore.

It would be a mistake to attempt to put forth a definite summary of particulars
concerning the structure of political institutions, according to Dewey’s conception of a
liberal democratic community. It would amount to a logical inconsistency to assert
that Dewey had a highly specific conception of what a liberal democratic community
would look like. Since the political institutions in a community are shaped by an
interaction of socio-cultural and institutional traditions, and the limits and resources of
a particular situation, any dogmatic assertion of a universally correct structure of the
institutions a society must possess in order to achieve a balance of individual freedoms
and communal concerns would clearly be a contradiction in Dewey’s work. Dewey
thought that political institutions should change with circumstances in order to allow a
community to solve the problems that confront it. Dewey’s theory emphasizes certain
important elements of the process through which a highly heterogeneous,
technologically complex, liberal democratic society can successfully tackle the
problems of how to assure human freedom in the context of associated living.

There are definite formal limits to Dewey’s theory that must be differentiated
from the particular examples of institutions he chose to highlight, in order to see what
value Dewey’s insights have for democracies at the beginning of the twenty first
century. It is this writer’s contention that Dewey’s political theory is very much a foundational one, being strictly limited to a generalized outline of some of the methods or processes involved in attaining a balance between individual freedom and communally oriented society. As will be seen below, Dewey favors a New England town meeting style of government, combined with a federal government that oversees the operations of a technocracy, and a large public infrastructure. However, these institutions are not, as I contend, part of the formal limits of his political theory. Rather, they are examples of what he thought would be a set of effective political institutions for his time. I think that Dewey meant his political theory to be as flexible, and thereby as minimally historically situated, as possible. What I mean by this is related to my position that the formal limits of his theory are concerned with processes that require the addition of scientific, cultural, material, and like factors of a particular time and place in order for it to be elaborately applied in practice, as when a community asks: What does this mean for us? Those who contend that the examples Dewey uses to illustrate his position expose society to further dangers, and are idealistic, have missed his contributions to democratic theory.

It is important to emphasize this position for several reasons. The examples of political institutions Dewey uses to elaborate his argument, if taken as necessary components of his theory, might allow some serious, possibly insurmountable objections to be raised. Consequently, what may otherwise be considered an important legacy would be shelved as an historical curiosity. These objections center around Dewey’s emphasis on town meeting style government, and the role of a
centralized technocracy. As we will see later, these objections are based on a logically inconsistent rendering of Dewey’s theory.

Dewey’s emphasis on increasing the role of local government does not also entail a decrease in the role of the federal system. I do not think that Dewey sought a devolution of power in order to gain an increase in the role of local government in politics. A critical response to Dewey’s theory that suggests it calls for a devolution of power implies that shifts in political power and effectiveness in political institutions occur within a zero-sum game. Dewey would not suggest that politics in the United States operates under a taut system. In fact, following the jargon of Albert O. Hirschman, Dewey would suggest that there is a great deal of “slack” in our political system, meaning that the system is not operating as effectively as possible.  

If the political system is not operating under taut conditions, an increase in power and responsibility at the local level does not entail a decrease in power at the federal level. Since Dewey thinks our political system is not the closest approximation to the democratic ideal as possible, he would not suggest that it is a taut system. Therefore, the balance of political power and effectiveness does not resemble the conditions occurring in a zero-sum game.

Dewey’s political theory stems from a series of foundational arguments that serve the purpose of sweeping aside historical beliefs concerning the nature of individuality, community, and democracy. This is necessarily first on Dewey’s agenda, because he thinks that the cultural conception of the individual and his relationship to society at any given time has determined the nature of its socio-political
institutions. By re-visioning the nature of the individual and political institutions as the product of a given culture, Dewey hopes to lay the groundwork for a political process that will connect the individual to community in a way that will allow for the greatest human freedom. This is precisely why he advocates a reassessment of the conception of community.

The transformative power of ideas weighs heavily in Dewey's philosophy. His philosophy is that if fundamental attitudes can be changed through directed inquiry and discussion of the range of possibilities in a given society, progress towards a greater sense of community can be achieved.¹⁹

The commonly held view that the problem of communal living is one to be viewed in terms of an individual versus the collective dichotomy is the fundamental fallacy that Dewey wants society to move beyond. This is necessary in order to establish a practical, real world discourse on the nature of community. The overall conclusion of Dewey's argument in this regard is that "the problem of freedom is a problem to be viewed in the context of culture."²⁰ Dewey was concerned with framing the problem of freedom, and not prescribing particular solutions.²¹ "Solutions are idle until the problem has been placed in the context of the elements that constitute culture as they interact with elements of native human nature."²² Furthermore, implicit in Dewey's argument is the idea that the correct solutions to problems can only be arrived at through a correct framing of the questions concerning them. Dewey's criticism of what is regarded as human nature serves as one of the premises upon which he poses his view of the problem of freedom.
Dewey states that the prevailing psychological theories about human nature at any one time are only the expressions of the particular historical moment in which they were formed.

It is significant that human nature was taken to be strongly moved by an inherent love of freedom at the time when there was a struggle for representative government, that the motive of self-interest appeared when conditions in England enlarged the role of money, because of new methods of industrial production; that the growth of organized philanthropic activities brought sympathy into the psychological picture, and that events today are readily converted into the love of power as the mainspring of human action.23

This example of Dewey's train of thought illustrates two things. It supports his position that the culture of a particular period is what determines which of the purported elements of human nature will be emphasized and therefore nurtured in that culture. It further supports the conclusion that "the problem of freedom and of democratic institutions is tied up with the question of what kind of culture exists, with the necessity of free culture for free political institutions."24

The notion of an exclusively individualistic human nature was not conceived of as a basis for social action until the mid-eighteenth century. Dewey states that "in the earlier periods of human history (cultural conditions) acted almost like physiological conditions" as far as the perception of human nature was concerned.25 Once "cultural conditions were seen to be subject in some degree to deliberate formation," they led to the problematic situation still facing us today, where conditions were developed "which subordinated cooperativeness to liberty and equality, serving to explain the decline in the two latter."26 The individualism spawned by these ideas expressed the view that negative liberties will sustain democratic principles. This is part of the
fallacious individual versus the collective context in which society’s problems are presented. It is the view that less government is inherently better, and that greater individual freedom will bring society closer to the democratic ideal. Dewey thought that Lockean and economic laissez-faire liberalism both filled particular purposes in their time. However, the residual effects of Locke’s and Smith’s ideas in practice create problems for a society that has outgrown the utility of these theories. As will be seen below, Dewey’s response is that this situation calls for the growth of positive freedoms, taken to mean that among a government’s responsibilities is the duty to make society amenable to an individual’s ability to achieve his creative capacity.

Dewey makes the commonly known case that “Locke’s version of liberalism (was) that governments are instituted to protect the rights that belong to individuals prior to the political organization of social relations.”27 This version of liberalism had a purpose in serving the needs of a particular historical moment. It is a version of social contract theory that was put forth in response to feudal government. The problem is that it “bequeathed to later social thought a rigid doctrine of natural rights inherent in individuals independent of social organization.”28 In the modern era, where representative government has been achieved to some extent, democratic governments are theoretically founded upon the basis of the individual as a component of a collective. However, the legacy of Lockean principles causes society to see that “the great enemy of individual liberty (is) government because of its tendency to encroach upon the innate liberties of individuals.”29 This is the case, even though the foundation that government is built upon in our representative democracy is made up
of precisely those individuals whose liberties are encroached upon by government.

Furthermore, the natural rights basis of Lockean liberalism places the individual above the collective, as if the individual were prior to and morally above the collective. Lockean liberalism "defined the individual in terms of liberties of thought and action already possessed by him in some mysterious ready-made fashion." The theoretical foundations this and other democracies were built upon swept away the historical bond between the individual and the collective without replacing it with another temporally suited one. Lockean social contract theory, from a Deweyan perspective, was inherently problematic in this regard. In its orientation towards the accumulation and protection of private property, Lockean liberalism was a precursor to Adam Smith's economic version of liberalism, and its attendant problems. Notice here Dewey's connection of the theoretical and the practical. It is a further example of his view of the transformative power of ideas. Dewey argues, not altogether radically, that political institutions were built upon ideas such as Locke's. It follows then, according to this reasoning, that a revolution in ideas can have the profound positive effect on democracy Dewey hopes to achieve. Hence the focus on changing the conception of individuality and community becomes apparently necessary to him.

Dewey states that Smith's newer version of liberalism "was concerned with the release of productivity and exchange from a cumbrous complex of restrictions that had the force of law." Laissez-faire liberalism's "effect was to subordinate political to economic activity." However, the outcome of laissez-faire economics only managed to turn human productivity and creativity further away from the possibility of
producing any collective good, and more towards private gain at the expense of others. Smith’s hidden hand that benefits all who participate in the marketplace resulted in economic and political changes that replaced previous feudal interests with the new capitalistic interests, who “provided the intellectual justification of the status quo.” The result was that community became secondary to the marketplace.

Several problems emerged as a result of this version of liberalism. The perception held by laissez-faire economists was that the marketplace would provide for the needs of society. Dewey points out that “they overlooked the fact that in many cases personal profit can be better served by maintaining artificial scarcity and by what Veblen called systematic sabotage of production.” Furthermore, minimally regulated capitalistic forces managed to gain the above stated vested position in society previously held by the nobility in feudal society against whom liberalism was originally a reaction. Dewey states that laissez-faire economics “completely failed to anticipate the bearing of private control of the means of production and distribution upon the effective liberty of the masses in industry as well as in cultural goods.” When manufacturing and local small trades began to be replaced by the forces of the industrial revolution and mass production, laissez-faire liberalism became onerous in its capacity to thwart community. Dewey states that the problem of liberalism was, and still is, that it fails “to grasp the historic position of the interpretation of liberty (it puts) forth.” The result is that liberalism, as well as democracy, “was not conceived as a moving thing, something that is attained only by continuous growth.”
What these social conditions call for, in Dewey’s time as well as our own, is a new understanding of individualism that moves beyond the socially fabricated tension between the individual and the collective. A new individualism is called for that takes better account of the consequences of social relations, the destructive impact on community caused by free market forces, and economic laissez-faire liberalism. Dewey insists that this ideal position can be approximated to the extent that the public can be made aware of the capacity for individuals and their communities to have harmonious relationships. Dewey states that “a stable recovery of individuality waits upon an elimination of the older economic and political liberalism.” What this recovery of individuality seeks to develop is a citizenry that is consciously aware of itself as an integrated community. It is a recovery of those “lost individuals” who are overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of society, and hence unaware of how their membership in “a vast complex of associations” connects them to an integrated whole.

How does one develop the awareness Dewey claims is required in order to become part of an integrated community? Dewey thinks this was the major obstacle in arriving at a position where the “Great Society” can develop into the “Great Community.” Dewey is referring to a technologically advanced, liberal democracy without a conscious awareness of its own growth or its sense of community when referring to the “Great Society.” The motivation behind Dewey’s political theory is to arrive at such a conscious awareness, thereby achieving the “Great Community.”
It is commonplace to state that the sheer complexity and speed of technological change has outpaced our capacity to understand the impact it has on society. Dewey quotes a somewhat humorous passage from Clarence Ayres to drive this point home.

Our industrial revolution began, as some historians say, with half a dozen improvements in the textile industry, and it took us a century to realize that anything of moment had happened to us beyond the obvious improvement in spinning and weaving. It appears obvious to Dewey that the remedy for this situation involves society’s capacity to use science and technology, the development of which has led to the present predicament, to grapple with the forces that have eroded our connections as a community. One of the main points of Dewey’s *The Public and Its Problems* is concerned with harnessing scientific method for the sake of community. In this work, Dewey makes the case that it is the duty of experts in technical matters to keep pace with the impact of technological change, and to disseminate this information to the public in a way that allows it to make informed choices concerning those things the public values in the community.

In order to gain a better sense of what Dewey means by transforming the “Great Society” into the “Great Community,” we must first look more closely at his vision of community. Community is defined as existing:

Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community.
This quote requires a bit of unpacking. It contains a number of terms that are loaded with meanings highly specific to Dewey’s philosophy. The “good” and “goods shared by all” refer to the understanding of “the good” and “value” seen in *The Quest for Certainty*. Here, Dewey points out that the public goods he refers to are determined through the use of what he describes as intelligent behavior, which consists of using methods that aid in determining consequences of actions that are enjoyed to see if these enjoyments can rise to the status of a public value. When Dewey refers to consequences being appreciated, he means using the capacity gained through a scientific attitude to grasp the effect that our actions have upon society. The call to have a scientific attitude is not so much a demand that everyone don a labcoat, as it is a call for an actual discourse on community to take place at all. It is an admonition to put aside archaic metaphysical and epistemological baggage, as well as parochial beliefs that reduce the capacity to develop community. The scientific attitude is meant to brush aside these things, and replace them with a discourse based upon intersubjectively transmissible and empirically grounded methods of inquiry and communication in order to gain control of this “Great Society” and move us as close to an approximation of the “Great Community” as possible.

Positive aids, governmental programs that aid a person in achieving their highest capacity, are a necessity in helping achieve whatever level of this communal ideal that is possible. Dewey makes the case that what Walter Lippman described as the “omni-competent” individual is an illusion. Lippman’s construct described a person who can master everything necessary to overcome barriers to his accomplishing
what he wishes. Likewise, Aaron Wildavsky’s redundantly described notion of “intellectual cogitation,” a process where a single individual can make complete empirical inquiries and determine proper policy choices by them, is equally illusory.46 What is required, according to Dewey, is a set of institutions that will gather and disseminate information to the public so that it can make informed choices concerning public goods and right action.47 The first component of these requirements is scientifically based. The second component, how scientific method is used for practical, public purposes, is a normative one.

Dewey wants to make the case for positive freedoms which are enhanced through the application of the information provided by civil institutions. Dewey points out that:

no man and no mind was ever emancipated merely by being left alone. Removal of formal limitations is but a negative condition; positive freedom is not a state but an act which involves methods and instrumentalities for control of conditions.48

The practical implications of this position are that some sort of institutional structures are required in order to “control conditions.” After elaborating on some of the fundamental functions Dewey has in mind for such institutions, their scope and complexity will lead this discussion into some of the problems Dewey’s examples ironically create for the community he is trying to envision.

As stated above, the role these institutions play in Dewey’s theory is to provide what is now a relatively amorphous public with the information it needs to develop into a community that is consciously aware of, and engaged in controlling, the
consequences of their interactions. Dewey states that the things these institutions should be concerned with are:

- matters like sanitation, public health, healthful and adequate housing, transportation, planning of cities, regulation and distribution of immigrants, selection of management personnel, right methods of instruction and preparation of competent teachers, scientific adjustment of taxation, efficient management of funds, and so on.49

This is a lengthy list of duties, suggesting that this civil service will be quite large.

Corresponding to this rather questionable growth in the reliance on a civil service is an enhancement of the policy making responsibilities of localized political institutions.

Dewey thinks that a return to local forms of government, as illustrated by the New England town meeting, will resolve several problems. Firstly, he thinks it would contribute to a decrease in political apathy. Dewey states that "political apathy, which is a natural product of the discrepancies between actual practices and traditional machinery, ensues from inability to identify one’s self with definite issues."50 It follows from this, and other points in Dewey’s argument, that an individual is more likely to be politically engaged if he perceives political issues as coming home, in a sense. Secondly, the reduction of the prevalence of what Dewey describes as “extra-legal” agencies would result from an increase in the responsibilities of local government.51 In such a large society as ours, a “centralizing movement” has gained such momentum that “intermediary groups (have become) closest to the political conduct of affairs.”52 These same forces, so clearly seen by Dewey as a problem, continue to be so, as is evidenced by Dahl’s treatment of the polyarchic forces that have developed by the middle of this century, and the discussions of political apathy
that ensue following every federal election at the end of this century.\textsuperscript{53} Thirdly, Dewey asserts that the “lack of personal liability to the electorate” of elected officials is a problem associated with large central governments that would be counteracted by an increase in the responsibilities of local governments.\textsuperscript{54} Fourthly, Dewey thinks that a restructuring of political institutions to enhance local government will allow for the answers to several questions to develop. These are questions such as “What is the public? If there is a public, what are the obstacles in the way of its recognizing and articulating itself?”\textsuperscript{55} If, as Dewey states, it is the case that “the public is so bewildered that it cannot find itself,” and that the “American democratic polity was developed out of genuine community life,” it must be the case that an enhancement of community life will allow the public to “find itself.”\textsuperscript{56} The route to arriving at the position where the public is disclosed is made possible through a face to face discourse on what the public is, what its concerns are, and where it should direct its activities as a project in common. Through this process, the individual and the collective will appear less distant from one another. As the individual has a greater capacity to influence and direct the public policy choices that have an impact on his life, he or she will have the capacity to see individuality harmoniously aligned with collectivity. This is the implication of Dewey’s theory. The perceived distance of the individual from centralizing forces in government influences the degree to which the individual places himself in opposition to the collective. It stands to reason that if this is the case, this distance must be reduced.
Criticism of Dewey's advocacy of a large technically oriented civil service might conceivably focus around commonly held views about the nature of large scale bureaucracies. Large scale bureaucracies have inherent characteristics that would reduce the ability of government to respond to challenges brought about by changes in society. Bureaucracies have a natural inclination toward reinforcing the status quo, thereby counteracting the ability of political institutions to evolve in consonance with contemporary needs. This natural inclination of bureaucracies is one of the problems that Dewey wishes to address. A critic might hypothetically contend that if Dewey's theory were placed in practice, it would only reinforce this inclination. In answering this criticism, we must make clear an initial distinction between the roles played by the civil service and other more political institutions. Dewey asserts that "Inquiry, indeed, is a work which devolves upon experts. But their expertness is not shown in framing and executing policies, but in discovering and making known the facts upon which the former depend." What Dewey clearly points out here and elsewhere is that policy-making is the responsibility of citizens and elected officials. Dewey thinks the role of experts is not inextricably linked with politics or policy-making, as some critics might contend. The claim to such an inextricable link flies in the face of the fact that a great number of quantitative analysts employed in academic and government institutions have no interest in becoming, or having a connection with, the policy-makers who use the information these technical experts make available. Beyond that, technical experts who are trained in normative analysis, and those who have expertise in anything more than finite aspects of the complexity of social phenomena, are rarities. The point here
is that Dewey regards this division of responsibilities as necessary to overcoming the criticisms leveled at large bureaucracies. To the extent that this technical civil service can operate as experts in inquiry only, and leave the responsibility of making policy in the hands of the citizenry through elected officials, this bureaucracy will have its capacity to thwart political change by maintaining the status quo reduced. What Dewey failed to notice is that there are political processes manifest in the inner workings of large bureaucracies, that can distort the information a bureaucracy produces. This will have a substantial effect on the ability of a technical civil service to serve its intended function, and will consequently require a level of oversight commensurate with the problem.

These responses to some hypothetical criticisms of Dewey’s program lead to further questions, one of which focuses on the problem of delegated legislative authority. Politicians are typically generalists who rely on experts to make particular policy decisions all the time. This is a natural by-product of our massive representative system. Therefore, relieving the civil service that has grown up around our large federal government of its policy-making responsibilities is impossible. A Deweyan response to this position would suggest that the problem of delegated legislative authority is a symptom of the disease described above as the centralizing forces in our society. The federal government has taken on too many responsibilities. This has led to the need to delegate away some of these responsibilities. The devolution of some powers held by the federal government to other governmental institutions would allow for a commensurate decrease in the need for delegating away
responsibilities. Enumerating particular areas of devolution is beyond the scope of this present work. Furthermore, it is consistent with Dewey’s position that such devolution can only occur as a result of experimentation combined with scientific inquiry as to its effects on society as a whole.

Contrary to the point recently made by Alan Ryan, it is clear that Dewey was well aware of the problems that bureaucracies pose in maintaining a constant revision of political institutions. Dewey acknowledges that “changes are extrinsic to political forms which, once established, persist of their own momentum.” Furthermore, he was aware that bureaucracies are “elaborate and well institutionalized” and act to “obstruct the organization of the new public.” What this problem calls for is “the creation of adequately flexible and responsive political and legal machinery” in light of the fact that society is constantly changing. Dewey was well aware of the “denunciations of bureaucracy and the proclamations that individualism is the source of our national prosperity.” The way in which Dewey seeks to describe a balance between central and local government, combined with a civil service, is meant to counteract those forces Ryan claims Dewey does not address. The loss of responsiveness and the lack of connectedness between individual and community are problems Dewey associates with the present political system. These problems, as he says, are exacerbated by bureaucracies. Dewey’s call for a constant revisioning of political institutions includes bureaucratic institutions as well. Dewey may not have solved the problems bureaucracies pose for democracy, but he certainly was aware of
them. He thinks that addressing these problems through an experimental procedure is the way to disclosing how to ameliorate them.

The balance of political decision-making in the federal system Dewey outlines can be seen more clearly in his discussion of the role of the state. It must be first pointed out that the idea of "an a priori conception of the intrinsic nature of the individual on one side and the state on the other yield(ing) good results is absurd." Dewey insists with logical consistency that the role of the state is a matter to be determined through experimentation. Given these considerations, Dewey concludes that he can only define the state in its most fundamental form, as "the organization of the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by its members." Nothing enlightening there, one might say. However, the terms used express a good deal when placed in the context of Dewey’s position. The organization of the public referred to concerns bringing the work of the civil service to bear upon the needs of local government institutions. The officials referred to are those chosen by election, not the civil service, who act as "guardians of custom, as legislators, as executives, judges, etc." The interests shared refers to, among other things, making sure that the civil service does not become a menace to democracy. The state is responsible for infrastructure, as well as for regulating all forms of commercial transaction according to the principles of effective and equal bargaining. The regulatory component of the state’s responsibilities obviously calls for a large central government, certainly one that is large enough to reflect the size and complexity of society as a whole. Wherever there are "widely distributed consequences" of social
interaction, there is a “common interest and the need for special agencies to care for it.” This is problematic for the goal Dewey has in mind. However, I think a clear distinction between local and federal responsibilities that favors as much as possible having the guardianship of rights and resources at the federal level, and policy-making where appropriate at the local level, is the balance that Dewey had in mind. Dewey was aware of the problems associated with his attempt to balance policy-making responsibilities between local and central governmental institutions in a federal system. He states that “self-government of the town meeting type is adequate for the management of local affairs, such as school buildings, district revenues, local roads, and local taxation.” However, he knew that this form of government is inadequate for handling political affairs that have an effect on, and our affected by, global issues. He points out that “while participation in town meetings is good as far as it arouses public spirit, it cannot provide the information that enables a citizen to be an intelligent judge of national affairs - now also affected by world conditions.” The “void created” by the cognitive gap between local experience and the need to account for global issues is a limiting factor on what policy roles local government can take responsibility for. Dewey is well aware of this limiting factor. However, I don’t think his intentions were to figure out a way to overcome this void in theory. Rather, I think he meant such problems to be handled by those engaged in the political practices of a given community.

“The deepest problem of modern life,” Dewey claims, is “the problem of restoring integration and cooperation between one’s beliefs about the world” as
determined to a great extent by scientific inquiry, and "his beliefs about the values and purposes that should direct his conduct." This problem, according to Dewey, should be approached through the wedding of scientific procedure and normative discourse. It has been pointed out above that the technical civil service, as I describe it, engages in information gathering and dissemination according to the widely understood conception of scientific procedure. This does not mean a disclosure of universal truths, as argued in a previous chapter. It has also been pointed out above that the civil service's function should not extend to the sphere of policy-making. Their role in government is as an information resource for policy-makers. The policy-making process is where normative analysis takes place. This is where the community's values are "operationally defined" through the use of an "intelligent method" of decision-making to determine which social policies will be the outcome of a community discourse. The sort of intelligent method referred to is one concerned with decisions that "will determine the main course of our conduct, personal and social." Intelligent method, as an ideal type, is a process that resembles the intersubjectively transmissible requirements of scientific procedure. This scientific attitude in normative discourse ideally does away with "prejudice, the pressure of immediate circumstance, self-interest and class-interest, traditional customs, (and) institutions of accidental historical origin" in order to develop a common ground upon which policy decisions can be rendered. One may balk at the possibility of such a goal ever being realized. However, the important point here is that to the extent it is realized is the extent that the answer to the question "What is the public?" is realized. It appears to be the case
that the public is announced through this particular form of discourse. Further, the answers to the questions concerning what the individual is, and what his connection to the community is, can also be found through this discourse.

Another one of the problems referred to earlier can now be briefly addressed from a Deweyan perspective. This is the concern with the modern liberal democratic community’s ability to deal with the myriad of demands coming from its heterogeneous citizenry. One of the responses to this problem, mentioned above, supposes that the way to deal with it is to limit access to the political system. Another response is a search for community through the most heinous means by retreating into exclusive, nationalistic communities. Firstly, it is ridiculous to assume that even the most homogeneous, or least open, political system would have so few different demands that the admittance of personal or class interests into the political forum would be avoided. The reversion to exclusive, read here totalitarian, states is clearly not an acceptable resolution. Rather, the extent to which Dewey’s hopes for a public discourse that is unencumbered by prejudices and interests can be realized is the extent to which an inclusive nation-state can move forward harmoniously as a community. This is the more realistic goal that states must move themselves towards, although this is pessimistically not seen to be the case. The goal of a homogeneous and therefore harmonious nation-state, or one that can withstand the tensions caused by limited access to the system, is actually the more idealistic one. The world is growing ever so much closer due to technological advances.
The application of Dewey’s political theory to contemporary democratic practices faces significant problems. The role Dewey has designed for his technical civil service, as an information bureau isolated from policy-making, is the most glaring problem with his theory. This idea flies in the face of empirical evidence which shows a growing trend to greater reliance on the ability of civil service institutions to take on policy-making responsibilities. Those who are in control of information that is relevant in policy-making have discretionary powers that effect policy. Therefore, civil service institutions that control information have a role in policy-making by their nature. Dewey overlooks this aspect of the civil service’s role in information management.

Dewey’s advocacy of direct democracy at the local level faces problems associated with contemporary culture’s inability to develop an enlightened electorate that is equal to the task of developing public policy in an increasingly complex world. Dewey is not at all unaware of the problem, as his focus on culture as the source of innovation or lack thereof attests. This problem with Dewey’s theory highlights problems that contemporary society faces on a fundamental level. The issues of education and cultural sophistication must be addressed before one can realistically extol the benefits of direct democracy. As these fundamental problems go unresolved, so do problems associated with Dewey’s political theory.

Dewey insightfully points out some of the great problems facing liberal democracies. These insights are as important today as they were in his own time. Dewey’s recognition of the tendency of liberal democracies to lose their capacity for
innovation and experimentation is an issue that is even more important in our day than
his. Our political institutions do not evolve in consonance with the rapid changes
taking place in our society. Consequently, our political institutions do not respond
effectively to the demands our places upon them. The gap between social change and
between political change is a measure of the level of democracy in society. Jefferson
saw in his day a need for a revolution in political arrangements every twenty years.
Given the rapidity with which society changes today, both Dewey and Jefferson might
advocate innovation in political arrangements at far shorter intervals.

Unlike Jefferson and the Anti-federalists, Dewey retained respect for
government at both the federal and local levels. His theory is important in this regard
for its re-emphasis on finding a proper balance between federal and local government,
as opposed to the short-sighted approach taken by state’s rights advocates, and those
who think that ending “big government” programs is the panacea for our nation’s ills.

While many contemporary communitarians blame liberalism per se for
observed social decay, Dewey rather plausibly identifies the market system as the
primary cause of this problem. Like his balanced approach to a federal system of
government, Dewey’s focus on the problems of distribution of wealth and opportunity
in a market economy emphasizes the need to maintain a balance between an efficient
economy and a stable democratic polity.

Dewey’s work enjoys a resurgence of attention today by riding a wave of
enthusiasm for strong participatory democracy. The problems in his theory mirror the
problems our society faces in striving towards greater participation in the political
process. Inquiring into the problems with Dewey’s theory could serve heuristically towards finding solutions to our political problems. Such inquiries could serve us well as part of the program Dewey advocates, which is developing innovative social and political practices that bring about greater democracy and community.
NOTES

Chapter I: Introduction

8 This is evident in the quantity and type of publications concerning Rorty, a good example of which is *Rorty and Pragmatism: The Philosopher Responds to His Critics*, ed. Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995). In this text, Rorty responds to seven of his critics. This is indicative of the interest in his work.

Chapter II: Horkheimer, Ethics, and Epistemology

2 Ibid., p. 12.
Ibid., pp. 4-5.
4 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
5 Ibid., p. 5.
6 Ibid., p. 7.
7 Ibid., p. 173.
11 Ibid., p. 125.
14 Ibid., p. 128.
16 Ibid., p. 4.
17 Ibid., p. 6.
18 Ibid., p. 7.
19 Ibid., footnote 1, p. 16.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 16.
22 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 50.
34 Ibid., p. 51.
35 Ibid., p. 52.
36 Ibid., p. 53.
39 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
40 Ibid., p. 54.
Chapter III: Rorty, Method, and Metaphor

2 Ibid., p. 200.
3 Ibid., p. 199.
4 Ibid.
6 Richard Rorty, Rorty and Pragmatism, p. 94.
8 John Dewey, Freedom and Culture, p. 69.
9 John Dewey, Individualism, Old and New, p. 98.
10 Richard Rorty, Rorty and Pragmatism, pp. 91-99.
11 Ibid., p. 92.
12 Ibid., p. 95.
13 Ibid., p. 99.
14 Ibid., p. 94.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 164.
20 Ibid., p. 16.
21 Ibid., p. 19.
22 Ibid., p. 20.
23 Ibid.
Chapter IV: Ethics and Scientific Method

2 LW, vol. 7, p. 162.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
7 *LW*, vol. 7, p. 166.
8 *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 265.
9 Ibid. p. 234.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 244.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 280.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 281.
19 Ibid., p. 282.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 283.
23 Ibid., p. 279.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p. 281.
26 Ibid.
28 *MW*, vol. 14, p. 204.
29 Ibid.
30 *MW*, vol.14, p. 144.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 229.
34 Ibid., p. 277.
35 Ibid.
36 Certain fringe elements such as racist groups, religious fundamentalists, and others that are not democratically inclined to begin with are what I have in mind.
37 *MW*, vol.14, p. 144.
38 *The Quest for Certainty*, p. 258.
40 Ibid.
Chapter V: Political Institutions and Experimentalism

2 Ibid., pp. 224-225.
3 Ibid., p. 225.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., pp. 227-228.
7 Ibid., p. 228.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p. 229.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 228.
12 Ibid., p. 230.
13 Ibid., p. 228.
14 Ibid., p. 230.
15 Ibid.
17 I have in mind here racist and fundamentalist religious groups, but there are other equally valid examples.
20 Ibid., p. 25.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 21.
24 Ibid., p. 18.
26 Ibid.
28 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
29 Ibid., p. 5.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. 7.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 33.
34 Ibid., p. 35.
35 Ibid., p. 36.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 39.
39 Ibid., p. 82.
43 See here the Chapter entitled “The Construction of the Good”, as well as the elaboration of these ideas in Chapter 1 of *The Quest for Certainty*.
44 Dewey’s theory of intelligent behavior can be seen in the chapter entitled “The Naturalization of Intelligence”, in *The Quest for Certainty*.
48 Ibid., p. 168.
49 Ibid., p. 125.
50 Ibid., p. 135.
51 Ibid., p. 119.
52 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 123.
56 Ibid., pp. 123 and 111.
57 Ibid., p. 208.
60 Ibid., p. 31.
61 Ibid.
64 Ibid., p. 65.
65 Ibid., pp. 64-65.
66 Ibid., p. 33.
67 Ibid., p. 35.
68 Ibid., pp. 60, 62.
69 Ibid., p. 54.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p. 259.
75 Ibid., p. 265.
76 Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


