A Study of Instrumentalism: as a Philosophy For American Democracy

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A STUDY OF INSTRUMENTALISM

AS A

PHILOSOPHY FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

BY

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VITA AUCTORIS

George Arthur Curran Jr., son of George Arthur and Mabel Frances Curran, was born in Chicago, Illinois, October 27, 1918. He received his elementary education at St. Patrick's Academy, Chicago, Illinois, and his high school education at St. Ignatius High School of the same city, graduating in 1936. He then enrolled at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. and completed two years of study in the college of arts and sciences.

In September, 1938, he entered the Society of Jesus at Milford Novitiate, Milford, Ohio, and enrolled in Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In August, 1942, he began his course in philosophy at West Baden College, West Baden, Indiana, at which time he registered as a student of Loyola University. In the summer of 1943 he began his graduate studies in the Department of Philosophy of Loyola University, having received his A.B. degree in June of that year.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the philosophy of John Dewey as a philosophical basis and apologetic for political democracy, according to the traditional understanding of democracy in the United States. Since Mr. Dewey has evolved his own theory of democracy, it has been necessary to establish, first of all, the traditional concept before treating of Mr. Dewey's social theory and its relations with that concept.

In the historical treatment of the notion of constitutional democracy, I avoided the more controversial issues regarding the contract theory of government and the origin of authority, and restricted the description to those notions most commonly accepted.

With regard to the basic political philosophy of Instrumentalism, I have followed the theory which Mr. Dewey outlined in The Public and Its Problems. I endeavored to fill in, where necessary, with fuller explanations of intelligence, experience, human nature, and values from Mr. Dewey's other works.

Both in the explanation of the basic political philosophy
and in its application to democracy, it was necessary to distinguish between Mr. Dewey the social philosopher and Mr. Dewey the astute commentator on world history and current affairs, for in the latter role much that he writes is merely a forceful expression of common experience and common sense. But there are certain guiding principles, key ideas, and methods of approach that distinguish his treatment of social philosophy. Consequently by singling out these characteristic ideas and methods, I have not followed in exact detail the argument of any one book. Another reason for this selection is that Mr. Dewey devises his own terminology and sometimes refers to the same problem or line of thought under a different heading, so for the sake of consistency I have chosen to use the same terms throughout. For the most part, I have endeavored to use Mr. Dewey's terminology throughout this thesis.

Finally there is no effort here to make a moral evaluation of Instrumentalism as a political philosophy, but merely to analyze it in its relation to American constitutional democracy.
CHAPTER II
THE NAME AND CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a much abused term. For generations it has been a shibboleth of political campaigns and has become so hackneyed and vague in popular usage that it no longer suffices to distinguish Gileadite from Ephramite. It has been the rallying cry of two world wars and through the peculiar exigencies of the second has become acceptable even to the authoritarians of the Stalinist school of practical politics.

In America three divergent trends have recently been united under the common name of democracy: the systems of thought that have their root in some kind of progressive evolution, post-Kantian philosophical scepticism, and the cult of modern science. The new democracy that incorporates these three streams of thought has been briefly synthesized by Professor Boyd Bode:

The newer developments in both the natural sciences and the social order point to the conclusion that standards of value and conduct are flexible and changing products of everyday experience and are to be judged by no other test than the enrichment of human life here and now. This is the wider meaning of the term democracy, a meaning which transforms it from a political concept into a whole way of life. This conception of values and conduct has never prevailed in the past. It cannot prevail now except at
the price of extensive reconstruction in our beliefs and attitudes and institutions.¹

It would seem that the wider view of democracy which Professor Bode proposes was contained radically in the principles of the particular philosophy of political democracy from which it was transformed. And though it is not the purpose of this work to analyze this new cultural-social concept, however, by an analysis of the political philosophy which underlies it as tested by its effect when applied to the traditional institutions of American representative democracy, at least the basis of the liberty and freedom promised by this new order may be sounded.

But before passing on to a study of the fact of political democracy as it has existed and been understood in the past, the place of the political philosophy of Instrumentalism in relation to the broader cultural concept may be made clear from Professor Eduard Lindeman's description of the background and aims of the men promoting the new democracy, for he wrote thus of the contributors to the first publication of The Conference On The Scientific Spirit And The Democratic Faith:

They were, borrowing Emerson's famous phrase, "radical democrats" who believed in freedom.

¹ B.D. Bode, How We Learn, Heath, Boston, 1940, 296.
They believed that all genuine authority comes from within and is not external. Most of them, but by no means all, belonged to the American philosophic tradition of which William James and John Dewey may be said to have been the chief architects. With respect to science they could not be called positivists, certainly not in the Comtean sense, but they were persons believing in the dynamic power of science and truth. The majority of those who represented religious interests were of the humanist persuasion. The synthesis which they sought was one which combines science as a search for truth, democracy as the guarantee of liberty, humanism as the source of faith, and education as the instrument of progress. The truth they seek is neither apologetic nor externally authoritarian; the freedom which they affirm includes freedom to collaborate; and the education which they recommend considers learning to be an everlasting adjustment to changing circumstances.2

From an analysis of the philosophical basis of the political democracy the radical democrat professes and the type of liberty this democracy guarantees, it is to be hoped one may gain a more penetrating insight into the whole of the creed.

To try, then, to get at the meaning of the more limited topic of political democracy, at least as it is understood in America, John Dewey's procedure is a wise one,

To discuss democratic government at large apart from its historical background is

to miss its point and to throw away all means for an intelligent criticism of it... We limit the topic for discussion in such a way as to avoid the great bad, the mixing of things which need to be kept distinct.3

One of the earliest and most important treatises in the genesis of the modern democracy was Aristotle's *Politics*. In it he divided the constitutions or types of government that were known at that time into three divisions, all of them according to the number of those in control, whether one, a few, or the many. If the rule was for the common good, the government was good. The good governments were (again according to the number ruling) kingdom, aristocracy, and constitution; the bad governments, where an interest other than the common good prevailed, were tyranny, aristocracy, and democracy.4 Hence according to this division, democracy was of its nature bad--democracy was distinguished from the constitutional government by reason of the fact that in the former the poor ruled, in the latter a large military class. Aristotle's argument was that the majority would always be poor and the poor would always rule in their own interest as opposed to the interest of the community.5


The discussion as to the best kind of government, as treated by Aristotle and the Scholastics was chiefly a question of operational efficiency. The mixed regime, including monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements, advocated by St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Robert Bellarmine, were the conclusion not so much of philosophical principles as of the political experience of their day. But the political thinkers of the Middle Ages made a very definite and important contribution to a philosophy of democracy in their explanation of the juridical genesis of civil society and government, for the doctrine which placed the origin of government in the free consent of the governed, so fully developed and defended by Suarez and Bellarmine, was the common teaching of the late Middle Ages.

However, the greatest contribution of Christianity to the development of democracy was the new concept of the value and dignity of the human person. It was this doctrine of human dignity and natural rights that accounted for the steady progress toward a constitutional democracy through safeguards

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established for the prerogatives of the individual and special groups. St. Thomas had observed that custom has greater authority than the ruler since it represents the will of the whole people. With an increasing number of charters—freely granted or extorted from monarchs by force—securing the rights and privileges of lords, barons, religious communities and cities, custom assumed the force of law and an opening wedge was entered for the growth of the constitutional democracy; for gradually the bourgeoisie and the common man were able to claim as rightly theirs, what at first had been secured only to a few.

But there is an entirely new body of political theory that has had an important influence in the forming of contemporary notions of democracy and in many points it is at odds with the constitutional tradition of Western Europe. For Jean Jacques Rousseau proposed a philosophy of government which at once asserted freedom and was directly responsible for the growth of a revolutionary spirit and on the other hand provided theoretical basis for the complete disregard of the rights of minorities and individuals.

According to the Rousseauvian theory, the majority has absolute and complete power over the whole of the body politic:

As nature gives each man absolute power over all his members, the social compact gives the body politic absolute power over all its members also; and it is this power which, under the direction of the general will, bears, as I have said, the name of sovereignty.9

Each man alienates, I admit, by the social compact, only such part of his powers, goods and liberty as it is important for the community to control; but it must also be granted that the sovereign is sole judge of what is important.10

The effects of this doctrine in practice were manifested in Paris during the dictatorship of the Directoire. The tradition has been maintained in democratic France in anti-clerical legislation and a state monopoly of schools.

But in America, the constitutional tradition, with roots in Scholastic philosophy, was a more important factor in the drafting of the Constitution of the United States and in the campaign which eventually sold it to the colonists than was Jacobin spirit and theory. For the jealous defense of local autonomy and the demand for a Bill of Rights was based on something more than narrow provincial suspicions. After all, the basic grievances set forth in the polemics of the Revolution—however accurate their application to the specific incidents of the time—were that charter-rights or the

10 Ibid., II, 4, 27.
unwritten natural rights of man had been violated. In spite of the religious intolerance of the times, there was an universal theoretical recognition of the rights of the individual and the struggles of the dissident non-established sects tended to strengthen the legal position of the minority group.

In fact the emphasis of the Founding Fathers on a government of laws rather than of men was so pronounced that certain critics of democracy writing from entirely divergent viewpoints concur in declaring that democracy as a name was odious and as a system of government was feared throughout the first half century of American history. The avowed liberals, Charles and Mary Beard, describe the situation thus:

For at no time, at no place, in solemn convention assembled, through no chosen agents, had the American people officially proclaimed the United States to be a democracy. The Constitution did not contain the word or any word lending countenance to it, except possibly the mention of "we, the people," in the preamble. Nor, indeed, did the Constitution even proclaim a republic. It did guarantee a republican form of government in the states, but as John Adams wrote to Mercy Warren, during their heated controversy over political aims, nobody knew just what that meant. As a matter of fact, when the Constitution was framed no respectable person called himself or herself a democrat. The very word then had low connotations, though it was sometimes mentioned with
detachment; and the connotations became distinctly horrible to Respectability after the outbreak of the reign of terror in France.  

This suspicion of the name, democracy, continued, for as the historians Beard go on to relate, not until Jackson ran against John Quincy Adams was the term "Democrat" used to denominate a candidate for President or a political party and at that Jackson was known as a "Democratic-Republican" to distinguish him from the other Republican, Adams. It was not until 1852 with Pierce that the Party of Jefferson and Jackson became known as Democrats.

And the authoritarian, Francis Stuart Campbell, after quoting voluminously from prominent early Americans concludes:

There is something pathetic in seeing Americans almost daily besmirching unconsciously their ideals and their traditions—all thanks to a faulty education. The Founding Fathers would turn in their graves if they could hear themselves called "Democrats"; America indeed was never a democracy, and never will be...unless we make "democracy work" and replace within the framework of a "pure democracy", our legislation by the Gallup Poll. Those who have been taught the wrong interpretation may ask their money back from the schools where they have wasted their adolescence.

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And the textbooks which preach a spurious democracy may still provide us with fuel in cold days to come.12

Perhaps the main reason for the avoidance of the word, democracy, in colonial literature was a more technical interpretation of its meaning. The distinction is carefully drawn by Madison in the Federalist:

Under the confusion of names, it has been an easy task to transfer to a republic observations applicable to a democracy only; and among others, the observation that it can never be established but among a small number of people, living within a small compass of territory. Such a fallacy may have been the less perceived, as most of the popular governments of antiquity were of the democratic species; and even in modern Europe, to which we owe the great principle of representation, no example is seen of a government wholly popular, and founded at the same time wholly on that principle. If Europe has the merit of discovering this great mechanical power in government, by the simple agency of which the will of the largest political body may be concentrated, and its force directed to any object which the public good requires, America can claim the merit of making the discovery the basis of unlimited and extensive republics. It is only to be lamented that any of her citizens should wish to deprive her of the additional merit of displaying its full efficacy in the establishment of the comprehensive system now under consideration.13


Since the question debated by the colonists was the erection of a representative government, the use of the word democratic, would only have confused the issue as it was understood to mean government exercised directly by the citizens. When Madison uses the word, popular, he includes that basic concept of democracy today, the idea of control and direction by the bulk of the people. It would also be a mistake to think that the importance and the place of the people in the immediate decision of policy and direction of government was not carefully considered, even though the term, degree of democracy, was not used to describe the object of the deliberations.14

The use of the term, democracy, however, to signify merely control and general direction by the people was not entirely unheard of in colonial times; for Alexander Hamilton, the man generally considered to head the opposition to popular government and the Jacobin spirit, spoke of democracy in laudatory terms and clearly defined what he meant by the terms he used:

That instability is inherent in the nature of popular governments I think very disputable; unstable democracy is an epi-

14 For the important discussion on the role of a Representative and the discussion concerning instructed vs. uninstructed delegates, cf. Annals of Congress, First Congress, Gales and Seaton, Washington, D.C., 1834, 796.
that frequently in the mouths of politicians; but I believe that from a strict examination of the matter—from the records of history, it will be found that the fluctuations of governments in which the popular principle has borne a considerable sway, have proceeded from its being compounded with other principles;—and from its being made to operate in an improper channel. Compound governments though they may be harmonious in the beginning will introduce distinct interests, and these interests will clash, throw the State into convulsions, and produce a change or dissolution. When the deliberative or judicial powers are vested wholly or partly in the collective body of the people, you must expect error, confusion, and instability. But a representative democracy, (Italics not in original.) where the right of election is well secured and regulated, and the exercise of the legislative, executive, and judiciary authorities is vested in select persons, chosen really and not nominally by the people, will, in my opinion, be most likely to be happy, regular, and durable. 15

This channeling of the democratic principle which Hamilton describes through the separation of legislative, judicial and executive functions has, according to Fr. Wilfred Parsons, come to signify democracy for the contemporary American. 16


16 "The fact of the matter is that there is not a single government in Europe today that is democratic in the sense that we Americans use the word. Probably the single characteristic which to Americans, rightly or wrongly, specifies our concept of democracy is the separation of the executive, legislative and judicial functions." W. Parsons, Which Way Democracy, Macmillan, New York, 1939, 59.
From the tradition of Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln, government of the people, the common man, the man in the street, John Q. Public, and G.I. Joe have become part of the overtone of American democracy. Just as, for instance, state robes, complicated ceremonials and temporary titles are a part of the very real though diminutive democracy of San Marino, so a careful avoidance of titles and a tendency to limit ceremony to simple, bare essentials has been part of the American tradition. It is this glorification of the common man and political non-recognition of social classes that is emphasized in recent comparison of the Soviet and the American "democracies."

Before proceeding to devise a formula for the chief notes of American constitutional democracy, it might be well to recall by way of contrast certain other approaches and methods used in explaining democracy. There is, for instance, the point of view of Professor Bode and the members of the Conference on the Scientific Spirit and the Democratic Faith, an opinion previously cited, which holds that democracy is something new on the face of the earth, that it is a way of life wherein standards of value and conduct are considered as flexible changing products of everyday life to be judged by no other standard than the enrichment of human life here and now. But even the proponents of the new democracy admit it is new and concede that the moral concept of the natural
law was the historical basis of democracy. Whether or not the adherents of this new viewpoint have become numerous enough to challenge seriously the statement that American democracy is still popularly considered to be based on the natural law, is irrelevant to the present discussion. It is enough to note that the constitutional tradition has been the basis of the system of government which exists today in the United States of America.

By following an historical treatment, no mention has been made of various theories that emphasize some one particular element as chiefly responsible for the development of political democracy. It is, for instance, the custom of those who follow the Rousseauvian tradition as the chief contributing factor to democracy to analyze the threefold slogan: liberty, fraternity, equality. This approach usually leads to a cultural rather than a political discussion. Then there is the revival of the Augustinian concept of love as the motive force of all human association. M. Bergson made some rather startling assertions in this regard, which Jacques Maritain modifies and incorporates in his doctrine of the philosophy of person as the one true basis of democ-

Recently, too, Professor Perry has emphasized the role of Puritanism as an ideological root of American democracy.

As a conclusion to this treatment of the historical genesis of the name and concept of democracy in America, the following three notes may be said to be characteristic of that democracy today. First, there is that basic element of democracy referred to by Madison and Hamilton as the popular element. This chief note has been well summarized by Charles Merriam:

Democracy is a form of political association in which the general control and direction of the political policy of the commonwealth is habitually determined by the bulk of the community in accordance with appropriate understandings and procedures providing for popular participation and consent.

The second note has to do with what has been referred to as the Bill-of-Rights aspect of democracy. It concerns the recognition of the sanctity of the human person, the rights of the minority and the necessary dependence and harmony of

20 R.B. Perry, Puritanism and Democracy, New York, 1944
the contract of government with the natural law.

The third note, while not fundamental, is the idea usually contained in the adjective, democratic, that is a certain emphasis on the political and social equality of all citizens whether or not they happen to be holding public office.
CHAPTER III

THE BASIC POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF INSTRUMENTALISM

In studying any aspect of John Dewey's philosophy, it is well to bear in mind Dewey's own approach. His is not a philosophy of positive propositions, it is more a method of study and analysis of concrete situations and interactions. Hence one would not be justified in singling out a central thesis as the heart of Mr. Dewey's philosophy without having first proved that such is the case. It is Professor Dewey's continual theme that we cannot predict with certainty and it may be that experience will even dictate a change in the very method of study.

It is true, however, that there is an implicit metaphysics in Instrumentalism, wherein "experience" takes the place of being. This experience, as it is interpreted by John Dewey, is broader and more comprehensive than the ordinary definition attributed to the term by common usage. By experience, Dewey understands: "Certain modes of interaction, of correlation, of natural objects among which the organism happens, so to say, to be one."¹ But this over-all concept

of experience does not necessarily make Instrumentalism a monistic or holistic philosophy, for as William O'Meara points out:

Thus considered, Instrumentalism is a variety of pluralism...as such it has been called "concatenism" which term is intended to mean a pluralism of entities which do not exclude one another but are said to "overlap". Dewey approves the word "overlap" when taken to refer to the fact that for genuine continuity of experience, an experience however unique in its own quality must be seen as containing "something that points to other experiences."

Such a basic concept necessarily implies a non-essentialist approach to social or political problems; it necessarily rejects traditional concepts and demands a purely empirical analysis of individual concrete happenings as the basis of its tentative predictions. Thus to analyze a social concept or institution, Professor Dewey has recourse to an historical interpretation of the concrete instances which gave rise to the growth of that institution or idea.

In an effort to analyze the traditional concept of human nature, he has recourse to the method of Plato's

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I may seem to be going far afield if I refer to Plato's statement of the way by which to determine the constituents of human nature. The proper method he said was to look at the version of human nature written in large and legible letters in the organization of classes in society, before trying to make it out in the dim petty version found in individuals.\textsuperscript{3}

But he does not use the method as Plato did, that is as a purely analogical approach. For at best Plato hoped merely to find some similarity between the justice he found on a large scale in the state and the justice he found in a smaller version in the individual.\textsuperscript{4} Dewey, however, often bases his analysis of human beings and human nature directly on the study of society in the large, since there is only a gradual distinction between the components of experience of which the human organism is but one.

Before proceeding to the direct analysis of political society, for a better understanding of the notion of human nature, Dewey begins by prescinding from given sources of what is; there is to be no discussion of causes, merely of acts and consequences and he introduces the one positive and


determining factor in all of his social theories, intelligence.

We must in any case start from acts which are performed, not from hypothetical causes for those acts, and consider their consequences. We must also introduce intelligence, or the observation of consequences as consequences, that is in connection with the acts from which they proceed.5

In other words, the purpose of this preliminary caution is to warn the reader against the tendency to attribute any consistent pattern of acts which may be observed in the individual or the group to some component of all human beings as a source of these acts. The notion of intelligence is introduced to preclude any dialectic necessitarianism.

Professor Dewey points out that an awareness of human nature arose with efforts to control it, for "When we are attempting to control anything we are acutely aware of what resists us."6 He reasons that man became aware of some kind of force in human beings from the fact that they react differently from inanimate objects when an effort is made to control them and direct their actions. The argument continues that the distinction between good and bad in human nature corresponded to the pliability of that force. Insofar as the

5 The Public and Its Problems, 13.
child or the serf yielded to the direction of parent or master, society called the native force or nature of the one yielding good. This pseudo-historical analysis of the origin of the concept of human nature, while again following the method of The Republic, has definite Rousseauvian implications. The concoction of this theory was, of course, necessitated by Professor Dewey's denial of any definite end for man against which his nature and actions could be judged as means

We are forced therefore to consider the nature and origin of that control of human nature with which morals has been occupied. And the fact which is forced upon us when we raise this question is the existence of classes. Control has been vested in an oligarchy. Indifference to regulation has grown in the gap which separates the ruled from the rulers. Parents, priests, chiefs, social censors have supplied aims, aims which were foreign to those upon whom they were imposed, to the young, laymen, ordinary fold; a few have given and administered rule, and the mass have in a passable fashion and with reluctance obeyed. Everybody knows that good children are those who make as little trouble as possible for their elders, and since most of them cause a good deal of annoyance they must be naughty by nature. Generally speaking, good people have been those who did what they were told to do, and lack of eager compliance is a sign of something wrong in their nature.7

But as to the nature of that force which men first dis-

7 Ibid., 2.
covered in their efforts to control it, Professor Dewey must again take an unusual stand by reason of his theory of experience. He denies that impulse and instinct are innate and primary and his explanation follows from the overlapping of the components of experience. You cannot speak of the primary and innate urges of a person, since the person and his environment overlap in the chain of experience and it is difficult as yet to determine whether this force we call instinct belongs to both the person and the environment or to either the person or environment alone. For instance, speaking of the cries of a new-born infant:

It is an meaningless as a gust of wind on a mud puddle apart from a direction given it by the presence of other persons, apart from the responses they make to it. It is a physical spasm, a blind dispersive burst of wasteful energy.8

In answering the assertion that there are basic instincts common to all men, that are evident realities and the components of human nature, the Professor admits that sexual desire and hunger are realities, but he compares them to the realities of suction, rusting of metals, thunder and lightning and remarks that:

science and invention did not get on as long as men indulged in the notion of special forces to account

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8 Ibid., 90.
for such phenomena... Advance in insight and control came only when the mind turned squarely around. After it had dawned upon inquirers that their alleged causal forces were only names which condensed into a duplicate form a variety of complex occurrences, they set about breaking up phenomena into minute detail and searching for correlations... The psychology of behavior is only beginning to undergo similar treatment.9

In general, from arguments like these, Dewey denies any of the distinctive notes that have been said to be proper to human nature. He further refuses to consider any initial property of an object either as the cause of its actions or of its effect on others and in this regard seems to deny the possibility of essential knowledge from induction. But it would be inaccurate to say that Professor Dewey denies the possibility of human nature, however limited that concept may in reality be. Rather it would seem his attitude is to discredit what has been advanced as proper to human nature and to point to the social danger and intellectual inaccuracy in the traditional use of the term.

It may be asked, since optimistic or pessimistic notions of human nature are fundamental to any political philosophy, whether Instrumentalism is in the tradition of Rousseauvian optimism. It would not be correct to reply with an

9 Ibid., 149
unqualified affirmative. It is true that in his interpretation of history Dewey tends to lay much of the blame for the evils of the world to outmoded institutions and conventions of civilization, but only as unfavorable partial conditions. He would not condemn civilization or any single institution of civilization as being in itself at all times a corrupting influence, for what might be an advantageous condition in one set of circumstances becomes detrimental with a change in those circumstances.  

Nor does Professor Dewey subscribe entirely to the optimistic point of view that human nature if released from hampering bonds will of itself, by an automatic self assertion realize its own best interests.

Political and legal institutions may be altered even abolished; but the bulk of popular thought which has been shaped to their pattern persists. This is why glowing predictions of the immediate coming of a social millennium terminate so uniformly in disappointment, which gives point to the standing suspicion of the cynical conservative about radical changes...Where general and enduring moral changes do accompany an external revolution it is because appropriate habits of thought have previously been insensibly matured. 


Not only the Marxian concept of a single revolution that will bring about the millennium, but even the Nineteenth Century concept of the continual march of evolution is repugnant to Instrumentalism:

There is something pitifully juvenile in the idea that "evolution", progress, means a definite sum of accomplishment which will forever stay done and which by an exact amount lessens the amount still to be done, disposing once and for all of just so many perplexities and advancing us just so far on our road to a final stable and un perplexed goal. Yet the typical nineteenth century, mid-Victorian conception of evolution was precisely a formulation of such consummate juvenilism. 12

The optimism of John Dewey rather approaches Kant's notion of the struggle for holiness, a contest that goes on ad infinitum with new problems and obstacles continually presenting themselves, but the emphasis is on the present partial achievement that lends incentive and direction to future efforts.

Positive attainment, actual enrichment of meaning and powers opens new vistas and sets new tasks, creates new aims and stimulates new efforts. The facts are not such as to yield unthinking optimism and consolation, for they render it impossible to rest upon attained goods. 13

12 Ibid., 285.

13 Ibid., 288
The question of faith in the people as a political group will be treated at greater length further on.

Before passing to Dewey's analysis of society and the state, there is one further element in his positive doctrine on human nature that needs elucidation. That element is the place of "intelligence" in human nature. It seems that the primary function of intelligence is to forecast what will be, if certain steps are taken; and in what is, to discriminate between good and bad, that is between what will be advantageous in future actions and what will not. "And I repeat while we hear much about intelligence, the effect of any theory that identifies intelligence with the given, instead of with foresight of better and worse is a denial of the function of intelligence." 14

By a denial of a connection between intelligence and the given, Dewey means that thoughts and perceptions are not accidents of the knower:

Now dreams and hallucinations, errors pleasures, and pains, possible "secondary" qualities, do not occur save where there are organic centers of experience. They cluster about a subject. But to treat them as things which inhere exclusively in the subject; or as posing the problem of a distortion of the real object by a knower set over against the world, or as presenting facts to be explained primarily as cases of contemplative knowledge, is to testify that

14 Character and Events, II, 797.
one has still to learn the lesson of evolution in its application to the affairs in hand.\textsuperscript{15}

Perhaps the Instrumentalist notion of intelligence might be conceived as a power of certain "organic centers of experience"--up to the present it has been found only in human beings--to make use of the present reaction so to affect the environment as to direct its future effects and thus to a certain extent control future reactions. It is a kind of living transformer with the faculty of seeing what is good for itself and operating accordingly. The notion is extremely important in political theory, since it is the one factor that can change the course of events and upon which any concept of progress and retrogression must depend.

In a brief summary, Dewey's doctrine on human nature relies on a method which rejects all argument from a common effect to a common cause. In an historical analysis of the concept of human nature, he sees it as a vague unknown force which cannot be isolated in individual human beings or even in society as a whole, a force which man has become aware of through his efforts to control it. One sociological implication of his reasoning is that an oligarchy which sets the social aims and taboos has arisen through a concerted effort

\textsuperscript{15} Creative Intelligence, 36.
to control that force. The only positive element of that force, thus far partially isolated and analyzed is intelligence and intelligence merely directs reactions to singular concrete situations.

To proceed, then, to the study of political society as such, Dewey arrives at his conclusions from a study of acts and consequences:

consequences are of two kinds, those which affect the persons directly engaged in the transaction, and those which affect others beyond those immediately concerned. In this distinction, we find the germ of the distinction between public and private.16

It is from this distinction of private and public, that Dewey prefers to derive the notion of the state, rather than from the notion of society, for, as he points out, any act jointly performed by several may be termed social even though the direct consequences are limited to those participating in the act. And a private act may be socially valuable by indirect consequences. In carrying out this distinction, Dewey declares that the public is not to be identified with the socially useful, and he mentions as examples of public activities which were not socially useful, unnecessary wars and unfair tariffs.

16 The Public and Its Problems, 12.
As a result of these distinctions, certain definitions are arrived at:

*' Private' is defined in opposition to 'official', a private person being one deprived of public position. The public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for. Officials are those who look out for and take care of the interests thus affected.17

(Italics are not in original.)

From these definitions Dewey erects his notion of a state, illustrating its historical genesis with explanations of how a common interest bound all those who were adversely affected by the transactions of others, by feuds, robber bands, etc.

The state proper consists of the measures and rules thought to be required by the common interest for the suppression of evil consequences which extend beyond the original participants of the act and of certain persons appointed to be guardians, executors and interpreters of these rules and measures.18 Government is the over-all entity that includes both the public and the officials and is consequently a broader concept than that of the state. To translate Dewey's terminology, one might say that government merely signifies

17 Ibid., 15.
18 Ibid., 17.
all those who happen to be members of a particular state including the officials. The state is the organization of the people, its distinctive note is the existence of officials.

Now, "The state represents an important although distinctive and restricted social interest."\(^{19}\) This restriction of the state lies in the fact that it is concerned in general with those activities of individuals and "primary" social groups which affect the security and prosperity of the public. When the activities of these groups, however, are restricted to their own members, they are usually outside the jurisdiction of the state. The primary groups are defined as the participants in joint action which has grown up out of biological conditions or local contiguity: they are families, churches, schools, labor unions, business concerns, etc.

However, there is no hard and fast line of demarcation setting off the exact extent of state influence, as may be seen from the following important qualification:

Our hypothesis is neutral as to any general sweeping implications as to how far state activity may extend. At times the consequences of conjoint behavior of some persons may be such that a large public interest is generated which can be fulfilled only by laying down conditions which involve a large measure of reconstruction within that

\(^{19}\) Op. Cit. 28
group. There is no more inherent sanctity in a church, business corporation, or family institution than there is in the state. Their value is also to be measured by their consequences. 20

As to the infallibility of the state, Dewey holds no brief for the stand of Rousseau that the expression of the public's will is bound to be for the best interest of the public; moreover the public will is not the guiding factor of the Instrumentalist state. On the contrary, he points out: "This conception of statehood does not imply any belief as to the propriety or reasonableness of any particular act, measure, or system." 21 In accord, too, with the whole dynamic concept of Instrumentalism is the notion that a particular form of state or organization can cease to serve the common interests of the public. Or as Dewey puts it, a new public has come into existence, perhaps through some external agency like industrial change, and this new public must seek new means to protect itself by the regulation of the new forces which have been introduced into its environment. 22 Thus the central problem of politics is the search for the public, the effort to determine whose interests are being adversely affected.

20 Ibid. 73.
21 Ibid. 29
22 Ibid. 44, 45.
and how they are being so affected.

In commenting on the actual operation of states, Dewey remarks that power is poison. Oftentimes public officials are led to use their office to serve their own interests or through ignorance or overcaution use it in the interests of a particular class or group. As a corrective, "Only through constant watchfulness and criticism of public officials by citizens can a state be maintained in integrity and usefulness."23

The general reaction of the state on those concerned is summarized thus:

It is quite true that most states, after they have been brought into being, react upon the primary groupings. When a state is a good state, when the officers of the public genuinely serve the public interests, this reflex effect is of great importance. It renders the desirable associations solider and more coherent; indirectly it clarifies their aims and purges their activities. It places a discount upon injurious groupings and renders their tenure of life precarious. In performing these services, it gives the individual members of valued associations greater liberty and security; it relieves them of hampering conditions which if they had to cope with personally would absorb their energies in mere negative struggle against evils. It enables individual members to count

23 Ibid. 69.
with reasonable certainty upon what others will do, and thus facilitates mutually helpful cooperations. It creates respect for others and for one's self. A measure of the goodness of a state is the degree in which it relieves individuals from the waste of negative struggle and needless conflict and confers upon him positive assurance and reinforcement in what he undertakes.24

Any description of the Instrumentalist state which was restricted to a detailing of its positive features would be incomplete, for an insight of the theory demands consideration of some of the factors that were denied or rejected in its construction. Perhaps the most important of these is the question of the person or individual member of the state. What is his place, What protection can he expect from the Instrumentalist state?

Dewey clearly recognized the importance of the individual in non-Instrumentalist interpretations of the state:

To suppose that an a priori conception of the intrinsic nature and limits of the individual on one side and the state on the other will yield good results once for all is absurd. If however, the state has a definite nature, as it should have if it were formed by fixed causal agencies, or if individuals have a nature fixed once for all apart from conditions of association, a final and wholesale partitioning of the

24 Ibid. 71.
realms of personal and state activity is the logical conclusion.25

But since to an Instrumentalist the person is just another factor in "experience" continually changing from his reaction with the things about him, he cannot be set up as a criterion of value. One cannot speak of definite, immutable rights of the person since the subject of those rights is himself so mutable.

Something of the hypothetical nature of Dewey's notions of the person may be gathered from the following, taken from a recent book:

The idea that human nature is inherently and exclusively individual is itself a product of a cultural individualistic movement. The idea that mind and consciousness are intrinsically individual did not even occur to anyone for much the greater part of human history... All we can safely say is that human nature like other forms of life tends to differentiation and this moves in the direction of the distinctly individual, and that it also tends toward combination, association.26

At present, appeal to the individual is dulled by our inability to locate the individual with any assurance. While we are compelled to note that his freedom can be maintained only through the working together toward

25 Ibid. 65.
26 Freedom and Culture, 21.
a single end of a large number of different and complex factors, we do not know how to coordinate them on the basis of voluntary purpose.  

The very existence of the problem of the individual and the social is denied; and the problem which really gave rise to the use of the generalizations, "individual" and "social" is explained thus:

It indicates that ways of interaction between human nature and cultural conditions are the first and fundamental thing to be examined, and that the problem is to ascertain the effects of interactions between different components of different human beings and different customs, rules, traditions, institutions, the things called "social."  

Thus the object of investigation in this political problem is not the individual human being, but a component of that human being. The question of responsibility, rights and duties is consequently by-passed.

Since, then, the individual human person and his rights are omitted as a guide in outlining the activities of the state, and since society and social betterment have been rejected, the search for the "public" and the protection of

27 Ibid. 163.
28 Ibid. 33
29 Character and Events, 809.
its interests would seem to be the chief norm of Dewey's political philosophy. It must consequently be in the light of that norm that we analyze Instrumentalism as a philosophy of democracy.
CHAPTER IV

INSTRUMENTALISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF DEMOCRACY

Throughout this chapter, unless specifically qualified, democracy will be understood in the sense outlined in the first chapter, that is an habitual determination of the general control of the political policies of the commonwealth by the bulk of the community through appropriate procedures for participation and consent. The application of Instrumentalism to the particular constitutional structure and practice of democracy as it has been understood in this country will be taken up in the following chapter.

Thus, the concept of democracy against which Instrumentalism is to be analyzed as a possible philosophic basis and apologetic is not exactly the democracy of which Mr. Dewey writes, even in the restricted political sense. For even Dewey's notion of political democracy is based on his theory of the state: "But one of the meanings is distinctly political, for it denotes a mode of government, a specified practice in selecting officials and regulating their conduct as officials."¹ Though not entirely different from the common idea of demo-

¹ The Public and Its Problems, 82.
cracy, the reference to officials in the special sense in which he has previously defined official, makes the notion dependent upon his adverse-consequence explanation of the state.

It is only fair to mention that Dewey, in claiming that the acceptance of his philosophy is necessary for the defense and growth of democracy, is using democracy in the broad sense, in the sense of the Radical Democrats. However, Mr. Dewey does not deny that as a matter of fact there is a political form, where the people, for the protection of their natural rights, limit the functions of the various departments of government and control the policy of that government both directly and through the choice and approval of representatives. At most he would question the propriety of calling that form democracy. He would probably prefer to call it a "representative" government, in that it represents most closely the public interest.

To inquire, then, as to whether Mr. Dewey's concept of the state naturally requires for its perfection and fulfillment the democratic form of government, we must have recourse again to his definition: "The state is the organization of

2 Ibid. 86.
3 Ibid. 76
the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by its members." He goes on shortly to add:

our conception gives a criterion for determining how good a particular state is: namely the degree of organization of the public which is attained, and the degree in which its officers are so constituted as to perform their function of caring for public interests. But there is no a priori rule which can be laid down and which when it is followed a good state will be brought into existence.4

Consequently according to Instrumentalism there are two positive criteria for determining how good a state is: the degree of organization of the public and the efficiency of its officers. There is also the negative statement that no concrete form of government can, on philosophical grounds, be called a good state.

As to the first of the positive criteria, organization, the sense in which Dewey accepts this term would seem to be the common one of subordination for the achievement of an end. In one of his works he describes what organization in society is:

Conscious agreements among men must supplement and in some degree supplant freedom of action which is the gift of nature. In order to arrive at these agree-

4 Ibid. 33.
ments, individuals have to make concessions. They must consent to curtailment of some natural liberties in order that any of them may be rendered secure and enduring. They must, in short, enter into an organization (Italics not found in original) with other human beings so that the activities of others may be permanently counted upon to assure regularity of action and far-reaching scope of plans and courses of action. 5

In the same work he admits that organization tends to become rigid and to limit freedom. 6

This organization is perhaps the chief instrument of the "official" in the performance of his specific function, warding off harmful consequences of certain types of joint action. For it would seem to be according to the Instrumentalist interpretation, a function of intelligence in disposing environmental conditions in suchwise that the resulting activity will be guided in a definite direction. Since the notion of command and the moral force of authority are specifically rejected in Instrumentalism, this indirect process of channeling activity through organization is of paramount importance.

In treating the extent of the state's activities, we quoted Dewey as saying that at times the state might find it necessary to undertake within smaller social groups such as

5 Human Nature and Conduct, 307
6 Ibid. 308
the church and the family "a large measure of reconstruction." This large measure of reconstruction includes moral as well as purely physical means, for Dewey like Plato recognizes the importance of education and cultural climate in giving direction to the activities of a people. Hence there is no bound other than the supposed exigencies of a particular situation to limit the organizing activity of the state.

Considering organization as an integral part of the Instrumentalist theory of the state, it would seem at most to be indifferent to a democratic form of government. And since democratic governments have always been notorious for their cumbersome procedures by reason of overlapping agencies and checks and balances—from the days of the double consulship of Rome to the division of power in the American Constitution—one would be led to conclude that with organization as the criterion of a good state, democracy would not rate very high. On the other hand organization is the very keynote of the totalitarian regime.

The second criterion of a good state is the efficiency of its officers, "the degree in which its officers are so constituted as to perform their function of caring for public interests." This notion of efficiency is open to two interpretations. In the larger sense it may mean the offices of government are so constituted as to achieve a max-
imum of good for the people, including also in that maximum good the protection of the people against any abuse of official power. In this sense the criterion would be a truism. But since there is no specific reference in the explanation of these criteria to a protection of the public from the official, it may be presumed that the second and more common interpretation is intended, that is, that the officials have at their disposal sufficient power for the attainment of the ends in hand.

Nor from an historical point of view would it seem that the criterion of getting things done and the ability to get them done quickly is by any means a special property of the democracy. It is even a common saying that the democracy sacrifices efficiency for the sake of freedom. The necessity of recourse to the people, even granted well established procedures for the information of the electorate and the operation of elections or plebiscites, involves much more detail and loss of time than would a spot decision on the part of an official of some authoritarian regime.

The negative statement that Instrumentalism could give no real a priori rule for the formation of a good state is based on something fundamental in the Instrumentalist philosophy. The reason no definite rule can be given is that there is no definite end against which the various forms of
of government can be measured as means.

The state as an absolute end is out. Mr. Dewey is very definitely opposed to the Hegelian notion of setting up the state as a supreme goal or absolute entity. He sees it at most as a social agency with a special work to do. It must prevent the evil consequences of joint action. But what is the basis of determining the evil or good?

I do not admit anything but a strictly relative distinction between means and ends. Consequently when I have touched upon economic and political problems in writing upon social philosophy I have held that all such problems are problems of valuation in the moral sense. It is in this context that I have dwelt upon intelligent action as the sole and supreme method of dealing with economic and political issues.7

This intelligent action in social matters is a kind of internal automatic process of setting up a temporary end. A problem presents itself; the unity of the mind is disturbed; various solutions are tentatively considered on the basis of past experience; finally, with the consideration of one solution, the unity and peace are restored. This solution then manifests itself in overt physical action. The latest solution is merely the projection of a temporary end or aim.8

7 "Experience, Knowledge, and Value", The Philosophy of John Dewey, 591.

which will suffice until another problem arises.

In summary, then, Dewey's basic philosophy of the state fails to provide a convincing apologetic for political democracy. The criterion of organization tends rather to favor authoritarian forms where popular interference is reduced to a minimum, as does the second criterion of efficient officers. Moreover, the very basis of this philosophy of the state precludes the possibility of its being an apologetic for any definite political form.

In his analysis of the development of democracy, Mr. Dewey admits as much:

The forms to which we are accustomed in democratic governments represent the cumulative effect of a multitude of events, unpremeditated as far as political effects were concerned and having unpredictable consequences. There is no sanctity in universal suffrage, frequent elections, majority rule, congressional and cabinet government. These things are devices evolved in the direction in which the current was moving.  

However, in another phase of Dewey's social philosophy, in his analysis of the notion of progress, we find something of an apologetic for political democracy. First of all, he states that the problem of progress is a problem of discov-

9 The Public and Its Problems, 144.
ering the needs and capacities of collective human nature as at present aggregated in nations and races, and in inventing social machinery that will aid in the satisfaction of those needs and liberation of the powers. The two chief obstacles to progress, according to the theory, are the conservative and the evolutionist outlook. The former tends to look on conventions and institutions as permanent and necessary, thus checking salutary change, and the latter feels that the process of change is automatic and fails to take the necessary steps himself.

The aspect of this theory distinctly favorable to political democracy is the statement, "ease of social change is a condition of progress." Since the more democratic a government is, the more plastic is its social structure, democracy would seem to be the political form best satisfying this condition of progress. But the second condition, the intelligent direction of the social change would seem to be another neutral or at least disputed factor with regard to democracy.

The concept of progress was given a slightly different turn in Dewey's later works. The article referred to above appeared in the International Journal of Ethics of April,
1916. In the most complete expression of his political philosophy, *The Public and Its Problems*, 1927, the idea appeared under the heading of "The Search for the Great Community." The notion of the great community is the fulfillment of his idea of progress, a satisfaction of the needs of the public and a fulfillment of its capacities, but it is a dynamic equilibrium rather than a static situation and at that an equilibrium never to be attained.\(^1\) He described it thus:

Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all the 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.\(^2\)

In analyzing the historical events which have thus far brought men to a closer realization of this ideal, Dewey mentions that political democracy, in itself fostered by a chance convergence of economic and social forces, has been perhaps the chief determining factor; but it is to be noted, he insists it is the desires and aims consequent upon the practice of democracy rather than the form itself which are of importance:

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\(^1\) *The Public and its Problems*, 148.
\(^2\) Ibid. 149.
That government exists to serve its community, and that this purpose cannot be achieved unless the community shares in selecting its governors and determining their policies, are a deposit of fact left, as far as we can see, permanently in the wake of doctrines and forms, however transitory the latter.  

(Italics are not found in original.)

After showing how the fruition of this tendency on the part of the members of the community to look out for their interest as a community will lead to an exchange of ideas and enrichment of life as the circle of groups and individuals affected by this beneficent influence widens, he concludes that "the great community", never quite to be attained, constitutes a broad notion of democracy.

Certainly, here we find an instance of that central emphases in Instrumentalism, the enrichment of life from the realization of the present experience with more extensive realization resulting from wider and more diversified contacts with environment. In the spirit underlying this idea we have what would appear to be a very definite impetus toward democracy. But unless the life to be enriched is that of the individual human person and unless certain bounds are set to what adverse circumstances living individuals here and now are to be subjected in the name of attaining that greater enrichment either for contemporary humanity or some

13 Ibid. 146.
generations to come, that spirit might well find its realization in some totalitarian form which advocates rather repressive temporary methods for the eventual attainment of a free society.

It is interesting, too, to note that Mr. Dewey is not averse to the use of force in this respect. He refers to social and political as well as physical agencies when he states that power or energy is either a neutral or eulogistic term granted an end that is worth while. And in the use of power constraint may be necessary:

Constraint or coercion, in other words is an incident of a situation under certain conditions—namely, where the means for the realization are not naturally at hand, so that energy has to be spent in order to make some power into a means for the end in hand.14

Mr. Dewey, is careful to point out in his analysis that the trend to democratic method was not the result of political idealism and according to his own tenets, he can only surmise that it seems to have left certain "permanent" convictions amongst men as to general policy in government.

Another very important topic in Mr. Dewey's social writings is the question of science. He explains that his

14 Character and Events, 784.
very philosophy of Instrumentalism owes its origin to the advance of physical science. The chief contention of all Mr. Dewey's philosophical writings, logical, epistemological, psychological, and ethical, is that physical science by its new method has advanced far ahead of the institutions of society and men's ways of thinking. His role was to introduce the new philosophy of method.

One of the important notions derived from the notion of science is that invention is personal, it is the work of an individual intelligence rather than of the community. The innovation or discovery comes from the individual. Only after it has become habitual does the state or the organized group take it over. The democratic inference of this notion might be that unless there is freedom of movement on the part of the individual and the power to initiate changes and reforms, the organization of society would remain stagnant.

But apart from the actual invention or new power thus put at the disposal of society is the question of the direction in which that new power is to be used. Mr. Dewey points out that in contemporary society it would seem the group in control of industry determine the direction of the application of science. More than that, from the act-consequence theory,

they provide a stimulus and thus indirectly select the field in which future inventions will take place. A very forceful example in recent times of the control and impetus given to technological advance by the Nazi regime, bears out Mr. Dewey's statement that mere innovation or change, independent of the intelligence applying it, will not of itself mean advance toward the great community or the democratic ideal. A stimulus may be provided for individual initiative along certain channels considered desirable by even an authoritarian regime.

As to the parallel of method in the social and physical sciences, Mr. Dewey is willing to admit that on the basis of what has already been accomplished the outlook is not very bright. "What purports to be experiment in the social field is very different from experiment in natural science; it is rather a process of trial and error with some degree of hope and a great deal of talk." 16

But even granted a considerable advance in the science of human nature, Mr. Dewey still points to the ominous possibility that the advance in knowledge might merely be the means of putting more effective instruments into the hands of those who desire to manipulate other human beings for their

16 Freedom and Culture, 65.
for their own advantage. In this sense the newly acquired knowledge would merely be a neutral power of the environment available for whatever aim an intelligence here and now chooses to make of it.

But in spite of the rather insignificant advance thus far, and the neutral character of social knowledge in itself, Mr. Dewey sees important consequences for the future of democracy in a growth of popular faith with regard to the effectiveness of the scientific method in social affairs. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that rather than any cut and dried method, it is a scientific attitude, or as he calls it a "morale" that alone is capable of establishing and furthering democratic processes. Some of the distinctive notes of that attitude are:

- willingness to hold belief in suspense,
- ability to doubt until evidence is obtained, willingness to go where the evidence points instead of putting first a personally preferred conclusion; ability to hold ideas in solution to be tested instead of as dogmas to be asserted; and (possibly the most distinctive of all) enjoyment of new fields for inquiry and of new problems.

He also remarks that among scientists the number who have this correct attitude even toward their own work is probably very

17 Ibid. 171.
18 Ibid. 145.
Two of the important results in political affairs which he asserts follow from this scientific attitude are that it is the only guarantee against misleading propaganda and, secondly, it is the only assurance of a public opinion intelligent enough to meet present social problems. In the second of these effects, he is professedly offering the method of science as the only solution to the complex social problems which applied science have created or exaggerated.

Science through its physical technological consequences is now determining the relations which human beings severally and in groups, sustain to one another. If it is incapable of developing moral techniques which will also determine these relations, the split in modern culture goes so deep that not only democracy but all civilized values are doomed. Such at least is the problem, a culture which permits science to destroy traditional values but which distrusts its power to create new ones is a culture which is destroying itself. War is a symptom as well as a cause of the inner division.19

To sum up the effect of John Dewey's theories of science on a philosophy of political democracy: first of all, invention and discovery, the basis of change, proceed from the individual rather than the group, hence there must be leeway

19 Ibid. 154.
for initiative if any change is to take place. Secondly, the scientific attitude helps to counteract propaganda and helps toward solving the political problems of a complex civilization. However, scientific advance in either the physical or social field is of itself indifferent to democracy, the direction in which it is used depends upon the intelligence taking advantage of it.

Perhaps the most important indication of the relation of Instrumentalism to Political democracy is to be found in Mr. Dewey's analysis of the present crisis of democracy and especially in the solution he offers for that crisis. The first of the problems he sees confronting democracy today is brought about by the abundance of physical and moral forces that have recently been made available to man. The difficulty is how to use these forces so as to prevent the subjection resulting from war and economic strife. The second problem is perhaps another phase of the first, it is the basic political problem of individual freedom vs. organization. Security and protection demand organization, but the more efficient the organizations become, the greater are the sacrifices of freedom demanded by that efficiency. The third problem he poses is the prevailing dichotomy of attitude that chooses discussion and persuasion in politics but relies on dogma and authority in religious and social thinking and educa-
The one basic solution he offers to all these problems is a universal renewal of faith in human nature. He appeals to the American tradition of belief in the common man as an expression of belief in human nature. But in this same treatment, Mr. Dewey very clearly demonstrates that he is not speaking of any theories based on the nature and rights of individuals. He prefers to speak of human nature in the large and the interaction of components of human nature, since it is so difficult "to locate the individual."

This renewal of faith is an aim to be inculcated. It can only be accomplished in an environment where all the factors of culture foster the "humanistic" outlook, where faith in man's ability to solve all his problems by democratic processes prevails. Hence the first step is to establish the humanistic culture.

We have to see that democracy means the belief that humanistic culture should prevail; we should be frank and open in our recognition that the proposition is a moral one--like any idea that concerns what should be.

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20 Ibid. 165-168.
21 Ibid. 123-124
22 Ibid. 124.
This establishment of the humanistic culture is to begin in the schools and include church and family.  

In reviewing Instrumentalism as a basis for political democracy, its most significant contribution would seem to be in the theory of progress, especially in the idea that the enriching and fulfillment of all the capacities of human nature will be best achieved by an environment wherein all the divergent groups of the world's population freely interact. So, too, in promoting a scientific attitude, Instrumentalism would serve an important need in the maintenance of a healthy democracy; it would supplant the merely emotional standards of the typical voter with objective pragmatic criticism.

In fact, the whole dynamic concept of Instrumentalism with its accent on adaptability and willingness to advance touches something almost essential in the democratic spirit. It is perhaps a necessary counterpart to the attitude of Edmund Burke's ideal statesman with his disposition to preserve and ability to improve. This accent on advance, progress, and experiment is important to a contemporary democracy, where change of officers, continual review of policies, and a susceptibility to initiative from every segment of the public are supposed to prevail.

23 Ibid. 129.
In approving that aspect of Mr. Dewey's philosophy which advocates the widespread inculcation of a scientific attitude toward government, it is on the assumption that it be a true scientific attitude, that is one based on the natural law, recognizing the dignity of the human person and the necessary limits of the powers of the state. This, unfortunately, is not the way Mr. Dewey or his followers interpret the phrase, scientific attitude.

But the inadequacy of Instrumentalism as a philosophical apologetic of the political form of democracy becomes apparent when the best its author can offer in an earnest endeavor to defend democracy is a vague "belief" in its desirability, or in the Instrumentalist terminology, in proposing a temporary, ideal aim. In speaking of the specific forms which distinguish political democracy, the best Mr. Dewey, as a good Instrumentalist, can say of them is that up to the present they seem to have been discoveries of lasting value.

The philosophy of the state which Mr. Dewey erected on his adverse-consequence theory is completely indifferent to democracy or any other form of government so long as that form professes to act in the public interest. It offers no intrinsic principle that would lead to the adoption of either a government by the many or the few. All that is required is that a scientific attitude and pragmatic approach govern the
decisions of the officers. The crucial test of this indifference comes in the conflict between the individual and the group. According to the Instrumentalist philosophy of the state there is no indication as to the direction and no bounds set as to the extent of state action in such conflicts.

Fundamentally, the reason Mr. Dewey's effort to find a philosophy of democracy to supplant the doctrine of natural rights proved inadequate is that a process philosophy can justify nothing more than the process method and change. (Indeed by identifying democracy with pluralism and experimentalism he claims to have accomplished nothing more.) If all that was needed for an adequate defense of political democracy was a justification of a plastic society allowing for freedom of interaction and growth in the body at large, Instrumentalism would suffice. But Mr. Dewey himself has stressed the importance of direction, the second condition for progress; and without some definite knowledge of the nature of the components of a society, one cannot with consistency advocate the permanent vesting of direction in any definite proportion of that society. Unless there is something sacred and of permanent value in the individual human being, there can be nothing sacred or of permanent value in a system safeguarding the political prerogatives of individuals.
CHAPTER V
PRACTICAL POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF INSTRUMENTALISM

Perhaps the most succinct statement of Mr. Dewey’s disagreement with the traditional basis of America’s constitutional government is his commentary on the opening words of the Declaration of Independence:

We repeat the opening words of the Declaration of Independence but unless we translate them they are couched in a language that even when it comes readily to our tongue, does not penetrate today to the brain. These truths are self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Today we are wary of anything purporting to be self-evident truths; we are not given to associating politics with the plans of the Creator; the doctrine of natural rights which governed his style of expression has been weakened by historic and by philosophic criticism.1

But aside from the mere statement of disagreement, Mr. Dewey has a positive concept of law to supplant the old notion of the harmony of government with the natural law and its consequent derived authority. He has a theory of social

1 Freedom and Culture, 156.
interaction that precludes a doctrine of individual rights and throws a different light on the place of the small community in a democracy.

To take up first the Instrumentalist concept of law, it is apparent from the adverse-consequence theory of the state—apart from the statement just quoted—that Mr. Dewey prescinds from any consideration of the place of God in his political theory. Consequently, with the notion of the Eternal Law obsolete, there is no grounds for a discussion of the Natural Law. Mr. Dewey, accordingly, derives his notion of law from his theory of the state.

In context, however, Mr. Dewey says there are but three alternative explanations of law and authority. He concludes that any theory asserting that will has a causal force in the origin of the state must necessarily devolve into a doctrine of superior force when the justification of the will which issues commands is questioned. In like manner, Rousseau's doctrine of an overruling general will and either the absolute will or absolute reason of German metaphysics are merely other names for superior force. The only alternative, he concludes is a doctrine based on widely distributed consequences.

"Rules of law are in fact the institution of conditions
The whole purpose of the law is to forecast consequences more accurately. When there is a uniform way of doing things, one can count on the probable action of his neighbors. The one who violates a law is merely exposing himself to the possible adverse consequence of being caught and punished, consequently the moral force of the law is lost. Only the penal aspect remains. The law is based on long-run consequences and its purpose is to help men overcome their shortsightedness.

According to this interpretation, judges may make laws in their official capacity, if they are merely defining further conditions of action. There is here no question of retributive justice or right and wrong. The courts have the same function as the state in general, the preventing of adverse consequences.

In the field of criminal legislation, Dewey's theories would not necessarily lead to great divergence from present procedure. He does not hold with Lombroso that the criminal is entirely a victim of circumstances. Although he concedes a great deal to habit and environment, Mr. Dewey declares that the basic mistake is a failure to consider consequences,

2 The Public and Its Problems, 54.
3 Human Nature and Conduct, 55 footnote.
and public punishment is necessary to this end. Mr. Dewey does, however, stress the fact that the members of society share in the criminal's responsibility by not doing their part to eliminate the social environment that produces crime. In this regard he mentions that the concept of retributive justice serves as a means of dodging responsibility: "By killing an evil-doer or shutting him up behind stone walls, we are enabled to forget both him and our part in creating him." 4

But in the general interpretation of law and in judicial procedure, Dewey's theories might have profound effects. No longer would the purpose of the court be restricted to a determination of fact and the rendering of a decision in accordance with existing statutes. On the contrary, only the consequences of the present act would merit consideration. All law seems under this interpretation to be reduced to the status of penal laws and the notion of permanent constitutions or a corpus juris becomes outmoded with the idea of the growth and forecasting of consequences. 5

A very interesting phase of Mr. Dewey's democracy is the role of the functional group and the small community. Begin-

4 Ibid. 18.

5 The Public and Its Problems, 45.
ning on the assumption of the disintegration of the family, church, and neighborhood,\(^6\) he points to the void they have left in social life. In his theory, it is the intimate face-to-face association that stimulates the deepest reaction and ingrains the most lasting habits of action, thought and emotion. Unfortunately, the technological age has necessitated a wider field of organization with a consequent destruction of the small, local unit. But, with the general basis of material security the technological age is capable of establishing, a humane age can emerge.\(^7\) And the chief requisite for the establishment of this humane age is recourse to local communal life: "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself."\(^8\)

The principle, then, that would guide the growth of this new democracy would be that the reactions of groups bound together by a common interest and intimate association are of the greatest permanent value.

It is true that ties formed by sharing in common work whether in what is called industry or what are called professions

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\(^6\) Ibid. 215.
\(^7\) Ibid. 217.
\(^8\) Ibid. 216.
have now a force which formerly they did not possess. But these ties can be counted upon for an enduring and stable organization, which at the same time is flexible and moving, only as they grow out of immediate intercourse and attachment... There is no substitute for the vitality and depth of close and direct intercourse and attachment. 9

The political impact of this principle is evident when one considers that the "public" of Mr. Dewey's theory of the state comes into existence and is bound together solely by its common interest, a sharing in the consequences of particular acts. If the community is to find itself and protect itself, it must know what those interests are; hence a government organized on the basis of common interest would come closest to solving the problem of the public.

There is in this principle and its application to a political community a strange affinity with the papal ideal of an organic society. Both, working from a different point of view, recognize the importance of the personal and intimate association as opposed to the impersonal and artificial social patterns imposed by the large scale centralization of the new industrial age. Mr. Dewey closes *The Public and Its Problems* with these words: "We lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of an immense intelligence. But that intelligence is

9 Ibid. 212-213.
dormant and its communications are broken, inarticulate and faint until it possesses the local community as its medium.\textsuperscript{10}

Perhaps the best general summary of the social philosophy of John Dewey would be a record of the influence of the central thesis of Instrumentalism in his social writings. After studying his analysis of disparate political and cultural problems, after examining the new concepts and definitions he has attached to such well known words as state, the public, and even law, it is surprising to note the consistency and singleness of approach that mark his writings on all of these topics. All of them are seen as different manifestations of intelligence in action.

The occasional apparent discrepancy in the works of Mr. Dewey, who denies the existence of any absolutes, who refuses even to discuss the problem of causation, yet who refers to ends and means, better and worse, can be resolved in the realization that for him intelligence when confronted with a single concrete problem, immediately envisages various outcomes and intuitively perceives a hierarchy of desirability amongst these various outcomes; this operation of intelligence in facing a singular, concrete problem creates the temporary Dewey means and ends, better and worse.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. 219.
The whole question of method and emphasis on science are merely rules of thumb for the exercise of intelligence in concrete situations. Though as a matter of historical fact, the laboratory method of synthesis and experimentation provided the inspiration for Mr. Dewey's Instrumentalism, once that philosophy was formulated, the various sciences became merely different manifestations of intelligence in action.

The whole political philosophy outlined in *The Public and Its Problems* is merely one limited phase of intelligent action. The problems of the state are only those which imply a common interest on the part of the whole people, problems with adverse or beneficial results affecting them all. In fact, according to Mr. Dewey, a public or a state exists only as a result of these problems and continues in existence only so long as the problems remain. The official, or government, becomes the intelligence intrusted with the solution of these common problems.

With this notion of the state as its basis and judged by Mr. Dewey's own standards of the good state, organization and efficiency, the burden of this thesis is rather easily proved, Instrumentalism is a less than indifferent apologetic for Constitutional democracy.

Thus far we have summarized the positive impact of the Instrumentalist notion of intelligence on the political theory
of John Dewey. If all that he did was formulate a theory based on his concept of intelligent action, his work would be rather innocuous. It would mean simply that the purpose of the government is to prevent any evil consequences that might befall the community as a result of joint action. The means at hand to prevent these consequences being the proper disposition of the factors involved in the problem. A proper regard for the nature and dignity of the human person and the whole natural law might, under one interpretation be reckoned as factors worthy of consideration, but this is not Mr. Dewey's interpretation.

In the first place, as was noted before, according to the Dewey interpretation, intelligence is not to be confused with the perception of the given. Intelligence does not perceive essences; it is concerned merely with consequences. Our knowledge of the human person is so vague that we cannot isolate him from his environment, much less treat of his intrinsic rights. This prescinding from the individual human person is of the very greatest moment in the consideration of democracy, for as Mr. Dewey himself admits, democracy was built on the theory of natural rights. All that he can offer as

11 Character and Events, II, 797.
12 Freedom and Culture, 64.
a substitute is a hope that man's experience with democracy, his "faith in human nature" will lead him to preserve the democratic form of government.

As to the practical political implications of Mr. Dewey's philosophy, law is just another arbitrary expedient made use of by the government to prevent adverse consequences for the whole community; the traditional distinction between the functions of judge and legislator is dropped. As another rather vague political implication, Mr. Dewey explains the desirability of an increase in the power and vitality of the local communal group without, at the same time, mentioning how this is to be brought about on the present political scene.
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