

# Authority, Social Change, and Education: A Response to Dewey's Critics

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## Introduction

In this paper, I want to examine and challenge certain criticisms of Dewey's conception of authority. These criticisms are, broadly speaking, of two species. The first set of criticisms involves what critics have labeled Dewey's "strong" authority. These critics, the so-called "Illinois Revisionists," argue that embedded in Dewey's social and educational philosophy are assumptions about authority that lead the critics to speculate that the legitimation of authority is predicated upon an expert, professional class. This class maintains power and social control through the use of scientific, technical, and rational means. In terms of education, these critics conclude that schooling is a vehicle for the inculcation of positive values regarding science and technology and their importance in the modern world.

A second set of criticisms comes from the historian John Patrick Diggins, who argues Dewey as having a "weak" conception of authority. The argument here is that, as Dewey presupposes no metaphysical ends, and no fixed historical knowledge to draw upon, little is left over to hitch authority onto in terms of social control. What is left are individual experiences; clearly not enough to make value judgments regarding social issues. Furthermore and with respect to education, as teacher authority is said by Dewey to be minimal, and no fixed, philosophical educational "ends" are allowable, there is little to guide authority in determining future educational direction.

I intend to explore these arguments further, and then to challenge them. This will occur through a reconsideration of Dewey's position on authority—both social and educational. After completing this reconsideration, I will be in a position to bring the completed results to bear on the criticisms themselves. My thesis is that, while Dewey is clearly able to refute certain of these criticisms, others continue to hold. In particular, I concur with those arguments that read Dewey as having posited no metaphysical or educational "ends" and further positing that these ends are necessary ones if anything other than a contingent authority is to evolve. I maintain that Diggins and those who agree with him will not be satisfied by Dewey's response.

## Part 1: The Challenge to Authority

There have been several challenges to Dewey's estimation of the role and scope of authority. A number of these challenges developed out of an increasing discomfort with the socially and economically conservative American political scene of the 1950's. Pragmatism, viewed as a philosophical tool for increasingly authoritarian government, came into disrepute in the 1960's, as a more broadly leftist, revisionist assault on American politics and culture emerged. Works such as Christopher Lasch's *The New Radicalism in America*, critical as it was of the Liberal state and in particular, pragmatism and its later progressivist manifestation, led to a flurry of theses to the effect that "the manipulative note was rarely absent from their writings: the insistence that men could best be controlled and directed not by the old crude method of force but by 'education' in its broadest sense...[T]he progressives' faith in education...often served as a rationalization for a crude will to power on the part of the intellectuals themselves" (1965, p. 146).

Of course those fearful of the effects of the growing bureaucratic technocracy did not maintain a stranglehold on criticism of the progressivist movement. Inasmuch as progressivism was tied to the larger philosophical base that was pragmatism, social critics of the more traditionalist bent who insisted on a firm metaphysical foundation for social planning found Dewey and his followers short on provisions as well. A metaphysically bereft philosophy left nothing but an anemic conception of authority based not upon timeless principles, rather the vagaries of science and experimentation. Robert Hutchins provides a clear example of this line of thinking. "The difference between us and Mr. Dewey is that we can defend Mr. Dewey's [social] goals and Mr. Dewey cannot. All he can do is say he is for them. He cannot say why, because he can appeal only to science, and science cannot tell him why he should be for science or for democracy or for human ends" (1944, p. 1316).

More recent criticisms of Dewey's pragmatic conception of authority owe their allegiance to these earlier ones. Criticisms of Dewey's crypto-authoritarian model of progressive education, together with criticisms of Dewey as having

an inadequate conception of authority for lack of a foundationalist metaphysics, stand fast. I wish now to develop more closely some of the arguments on both sides of this debate regarding authority, and specifically to ask of each side two general questions. The first deals with the belief of what, for Dewey, authority amounts to, and the second deals with how and who legitimizes or authorizes the authority to be utilized. I begin with those critics who I argue posit a "strong" view of Deweyan authority and finish with one very recent critic who posits a weak view.

### *Strong Authority: The Case of the Illinois Revisionists*

The Illinois Revisionists, so named by Robert Westbrook (1991, p. 186),<sup>1</sup> are a group of historians and philosophers of education who criticize Dewey very broadly for offering "a philosophic justification for the dominant economic organization of the period...[and]... never seriously challeng[ing] the power sources within American society" (Karier et al, 1973, p. 85-86). For Clarence Karier, authority was never brute force; rather, it was the insidious social control of further and further "scientifically rationalized orderly change..." (Karier and Hogan, in Tiles, 1992, p.113), Dewey's pragmatism offered a justification for the crypto-authoritarianism of a professionally-managed society through his constant pronouncements on the importance of "the faith in progress, science and technology and the belief that science and technology might resolve virtually all social problems..." (Karier and Hogan, in Tiles, 1992, p.113). I turn now to examine more closely how this argument works.

Dewey supposedly advocated a public that was premised on the unhindered nature of inquiry. Inquiry was a method, chiefly a scientific one, for settling individual, social, political, and educational concerns. The factual data that was generated by inquiry in its most formalized state lay in the domain of academics, scientists, and others primarily belonging to centers of higher education (Karier and Hogan, in Tiles, 1992, p. 119). The knowledge generated in the universities conferred a degree of expertise on those who undertook it, and thereby was used to legitimize the newly minted class of professionals who went on to transform the social system based on their findings (Karier and Hogan, in Tiles, 1992, p. 113).

As professionalized, scientific rationality transformed the social system, so it was that increasingly, experts and expertise came to rule politics. The professionalized middle class, a class that Dewey himself belonged to (Karier and Hogan, in Tiles, p. 112), became the final arbiters of social change. Relying on university-based experts, this class utilized a rationalized and technological approach to solving social and educational concerns; an approach which, characteristically,

relied not on the public to settle disputes or provide for new possibilities, but rather experts of the professional middle class's own choosing. The knowledge and decisions of the experts would be internalized in the body public such that the public would come to see the technico-rational reasoning-out of social problems and the resultant social control as the norm. Ultimately, it was argued, Dewey advocated the "use of state power to control the future through shaping the thought, action, and character of its citizens" (Karier et al, 1973, p. 87).

Education was of course a major means for state power to undertake this process. To inculcate in young, fertile minds a sense of the grandeur and importance of science, technology, and its potential for solving social problems, together with the importance of having an "expert" class, was said to be a major concern for Dewey. As such, the teacher must be at least somewhat authoritarian in her dealings with the students. Participatory democracy, while necessary as an educational ideal for students and teachers alike, was not manifest in the classroom. Rather, teachers, by the very nature of the task of promoting and inculcating these new values, had to adopt an authoritarian posture in order to accomplish necessary instruction. As Mary Ann Raywid notes "Fundamentally incompatible demands push the teacher to function more as demagogue than as duly constituted democratic leader. To be successful educators, teachers must be engineers and manipulators of consent, highly accomplished at attaching learner purposes to the service of educational ends. For Dewey teachers clearly cannot function as teachers if classroom decisions actually are made on the basis of one vote per person-yet perhaps nothing is more fundamental to political democracy than this formal provision for equal power" (in Tiles, 1992, p. 257).<sup>2</sup>

If all this is true of Dewey's supposedly benign call for science and technology to be a central feature of the classroom, then certain conclusions follow. It is tantamount to saying that the need to foster certain intellectual habits in individual children licenses the teacher (and the educational "system" and the broader society the teacher represents) to manipulate her students in the name of a greater social good. One must consider the possibility that this is a variant of "pernicious manipulation" as Feinberg calls it (1975, p. 240).<sup>3</sup> That is, a peculiar self-interest is involved in the act of manipulation. While it may not seem so, *prima facie*, because the teacher apparently acts in the public's interest, nevertheless, it remains problematic because, even if it is not obviously pernicious, yet there may be a good argument for limiting the amount of manipulation that goes on in the classroom, as many educators believe the child's innate curiosity is what should be further developed, and coercive manipulation on the teacher's part may serve to stifle this. Further, the public interest, if we are to believe Karier, is actually the

interest of an entrenched expert middle class who represent primarily themselves. If the definition of pernicious manipulation is extended to a certain class self-interest, then the change may be apropos to Dewey's classroom, and render his overall argument problematic.

To summarize: what we have from the Illinois school and like-minded revisionists is a view of Dewey as having a strong authoritarian notion of social control. Authority is considered coeval with a cryptic, technico-rational social control. It is vested in a professional class of primarily university-based experts who thereby legitimize it. There is little opportunity for meaningful public discourse, as peoples are manipulated into believing in the possibilities of science and technology exclusively, as well as in the necessity of an expert "ruling" class. Further, the classroom operates in an equally authoritarian manner, as manipulation and control must occur if children are to benefit from habitualizing these novel social goods.

### *Weak Authority: The Case of John Patrick Diggins*

Diggins offers a radically different account of the shortcomings of Deweyan authority. For Diggins, the problem is not a cryptic, insidious authority premised on social control via a coterie of predominantly university-based, middle class professional scientists and researchers. Rather, it concerns the lack of a specific and necessary type of authority, one connected to agreed upon historical principles or timeless metaphysical values that can be hooked onto for stability (1994, p. 206).<sup>4</sup>

"Dewey had his work cut out for him. Where classical writers looked to transcendent ideas or the historical past for true knowledge, Dewey looked to probable hypotheses and present problems as the place where useful knowledge asserts itself. And where ancient philosophers looked to thought as the ordering agency that would give society ideas at which to aim, Dewey believed that practical activity itself could serve as an ideal by which men could order their lives. Dewey's pragmatic naturalism, locating the origins and validity of ideas in human experience, arrived at a conclusion that turned upside down the assumptions of classical thought: authority, like truth, is neither given by nor revealed to the theoretical intellect, but instead is produced by human activity" (1994, p. 221).

Although traditional means of legitimizing authority were said to be anathema for Dewey, yet Dewey did indeed have a conception of authority. Authority is said by Dewey to be found in the "reflective enterprise that enables man [sic] to take his bearings in a chaotic world" (1994, p. 226). Authority is vested in one's cognitive and decision-making capabilities, though to be sure, this is not thereby an individualis-

tic enterprise, as Dewey is clear that the formation of one's cognitive and decision-making abilities necessitates a shared activity. The transformation of authority was a transformation of authority from a set of political and religious ideals under the guise of "duty" and Christian "sacrifice" to what Diggins has termed "the reflective enterprise" (1994, p. 215). The previous conceptions of authority now serve as the enemy of modernity and the triumph of modernity is said to be one's own self-interested experience of the chaotic world (1994, p. 215).

Diggins has problems with Dewey's situation of authority in the reflective enterprise of one's own experience. "If authority derives from everyday experience, how can the contingencies of experience yield order and stability? If authority does not lie in a source external to and independent of man's actions, how can it govern his actions?" (1994, p. 222). Furthermore, Diggins argues that Dewey's insistence on placing authority in the sphere of reflective intelligence forces authority into the fold of experimentation. This forces authority to wait, to suspend judgment until the process of verification, of testing, takes place. Unfortunately, Diggins argues, a particular direction often needs to be taken before experience can render a judgment and authority can pronounce that decision as valuable. Thus it is that "if pragmatic knowledge must always be from hindsight, of what value is it in guiding our thoughts prior to activity?" (1994, p. 234).

Finally, Diggins turns to the classroom to examine the role and scope of authority in education. Again, Diggins is critical: in this instance with respect to Dewey's refusal to identify pre-determined ends for education. Diggins argues that by not allowing education to define certain pre-determined ends, and by allowing such nebulous ends as "growth" to reign in position of authority over the classroom, Dewey cannot say on what basis certain specific educational values are to be accepted or determined, whether of the student or the teacher, as no end that can serve as a beacon or a guide is allowed to exert itself beyond the vague "growth" and the too-local "ends-in-view." (1994, p. 314). Once again, Dewey's refusal to specify certain philosophic ends that can serve as guides forces him to abandon any meaningful authority in educational aims in exchange for individual self-interest and the contingencies of experience.

To summarize: Diggins does indeed find Dewey a philosopher of authority. But this authority is not one of predetermined ends or of certain values. Rather it is the authority of reflective experience and intelligent judgment; an authority that pronounces over past experience only, and cannot serve as a guide to future actions. It is legitimated not by any social body, political enterprise, or tradition; rather by experience itself, and the judgments therein. As such it is a very individual, self-interested authority that has no claims on the possibility of future social action.

## Part 2: Towards a Reconsideration of Dewey's Concept of Authority

I wish now to reconsider Dewey's take on authority through an examination of his social, political and educational works. I say reconsider because, although Dewey clearly has a conception of authority, it is often embedded, as his critics point out, in social practices, intelligent method, the development of habit, and other concrete activities that render difficult a precise characterization of just what authority is. Clearly though, one must attempt a working characterization of authority in order to further attempt its legitimation and operation. As Dewey does not provide but a very broad one, I choose another to help accomplish this task. Kenneth Benne argues that authority occurs when one "...grants obedience to another person, to a group, or to a method or rule, with a claim to be able to assist him in mediating this field of conduct or belief, as a condition of the grant of such assistance. Any operating social relationship of this sort is an authority relationship" (1938, p. 2).

Now this working characterization is still very broad, but also very much within the spirit of Dewey. It suggests that any characterization of authority must have about it qualities of guidance, direction, and relationship. As I will show, these qualities serve a very important role in the manner by which authority is legitimated. Both Dewey and Dewey's critics would agree, I think, with Benne's estimation that authority "is a necessity of all stable community life" (1938, p. 27). What they would dispute is rather the way in which it is manifested, as well as who or how it becomes legitimated. In Benne's estimation and in Dewey's estimation as well, authority is bound up with "the pervasive contribution of scientific findings and method to nearly all functions of modern life..." (1938, p. 26). This is just what the Illinois school and Diggins want to dispute, though obviously, for different reasons. But it will soon become clear that there is no extricating Dewey from an insistence that authority is bound up with method. Indeed, one might agree with Benne inasmuch as, if there were to be one characteristic of method that Dewey claims is certain, it is that authority *is* method: the method of organized intelligence (1938, p. 172).

I will come back to this point shortly. Right now however, I want to develop from Dewey the manner in which authority manifests itself in social relations. I want to construct a model of authority on two levels. The first level deals with authority in social and political spheres. The second deals with authority in education, and more narrowly, the classroom. Both levels of inquiry rest on two as yet untested assumptions. The first is that authority is coeval with organized intelligence, or method, as Benne insists. The second is that it is the public and not any exclusive individual or group interest that legitimizes authority. I will proceed first

to argue that authority for Dewey does equate with organized intelligence, and I will discuss what this means. Secondly, I will show that organized intelligence is coeval with public intelligence. This completed, I will argue that authority is the composite of organized public intelligence that all are able to participate in, and further, that education, as a broadly public venture, is the means by which organized intelligence is cultivated. Organized intelligence is the chief goal of education on a public level, and represents no one particular group or class interest. Once these points are adequately developed and addressed, I will be in a position to turn once again to Dewey's critics and test out their various estimations of authority as it is manifested in Dewey's writings.

It is in *Authority and Social Change* that Dewey's strongest statements regarding the nature of authority emerge. "We need an authority that, unlike the older forms in which it operated, is capable of directing and utilizing change and we need a kind of individual freedom unlike that which the unrestrained economic liberty of individual has produced and justified; we need, that is, a kind of individual freedom that is general and shared and that has the backing and guidance of socially organized intelligent control" (1990, p. 137). Now Dewey is referring to a phenomenon he sees as a holdover from a previous, laissez-faire style liberalism: one that placed individual rights and desires ahead of social ones (1990, p. 25). Although this liberalism at one time served well the democratic interests, yet it failed to provide an adequate answer to the pressing social problems which are encountered, in part, as a result of newer technological possibilities (1990, p. 25). Such technological changes bring with them consequences which, if democracy is going to survive and peoples prosper, require a fundamental shift from an individualist conception of authority as imposition and its opposite as being freedom.

Organized intelligence is the chosen response to laissez-faire style liberalism. Science is the most reliable evidence we have that organized intelligence can solve complex public problems (1991, p. 168-169). In the long run, what dictates for Dewey the necessity of placing authority in the method of organized intelligence is its track record with respect to scientific and technological innovations (1990, p. 141). By making organized intelligence, and in particular, its method, the locus of authority, Dewey is suggesting first of all, that anything which is to be given value over other determinations is subject to some kind of inquiry, hypothesis testing, or experimentation. Secondly, should method determine that a change in the initial determination is necessary owing to new consequences, or new factual data being presented, the value placed on that initial determination must also change (1991, p. 242-243). With method, the value of anything is contingent and cannot be relied upon as a fixed principle from which to operate. Although, as Dewey argues, one inherits one's morality to a large extent from one's social

group via the speech patterns (1988, p. 43), yet the authority of this morality, as with the morality itself, is always contingent on further inquiry. If inquiry determines that a particular value or moral worth is untenable, then that value or moral worth must be questioned.

Furthermore, organized intelligence *is* public intelligence. The great mass of peoples do not live in isolation from one another. They form groups and share interests. They belong to communities, societies, and cultures. One might be tempted to locate organized intelligence solely in the individual experiencer, as many if not all of the laissez-faire individualist models did. However, this, as Dewey argued, presented problems because the theory of epistemological "correspondence" that provided the foundation for much of the early liberalism was itself faulty. The Lockean/Humean view that intelligence arose from the reconstruction of atomistic or isolated events was predicated upon an individualist theory of cognition with little to say about how communities, groups, societies, and cultures could come to inquire into a particular problem (1990, p. 33). A conception of intelligence not fastened to an empirical, atomistic psychology was needed if a "transformed" liberalism was to emerge. This "transformed" intelligence, as with this "transformed" liberalism, was to take its bearings not from an individualistic spectator theory of the world, rather from a conception of intelligence and cognition that involved the organism fused into an organic whole with its environment. The focus was not exclusively on environment, nor on perceiver, but rather the transformation of the two through mutual interaction (1988, p. 172).

What this did for environment was to give it a larger stake in the overall process of cognition. Environment, once considered of little consequence with regards to the overall function of cognition beyond supplying material to be worked upon, could now be shown to have a demonstrative effect upon the interacting individual. Certain environments, for Dewey, were privileged above others. Important for Dewey was the environment of other peoples, broadly considered as the social or public realm. The manner in which this environment came to affect particular individuals was via the medium of communication. Through the give and take of communicative exchange, peoples could be transformed (1988, p. 132-134). Organized intelligence involved the selective habitualizing of one's responses to this transformation: it involved active reflection and inquiry in determining what the best response to a given social environment would be, and what response was to be valued. The procedure of organized intelligence, the method of inquiry adopted on a social scale, allowed diverse peoples to come together in what Dewey called "conjoint communication" around a particular social consequence of a private act, (1989, p. 73). These consequences could then be deliberated upon, with inquiry as the guide. It is in this way that intelligence is transformed into a public activity.

The public is to be the locus of inquiry. But this begs immediately the question of who, precisely, constitutes the public? Dewey felt the public at the time he wrote to be "lost ...bewildered..." (1989, p. 117), and "eclipsed" (1989, p. 110). This was due primarily to the overabundance of multiple publics, combined with the lack of an effective means of shared inquiry. What was necessary in Dewey's estimation was a reconstruction of the public via the instruments of inquiry (1989, p. 73). Problems that confronted particular publics, particular communities, could be treated in an experimental fashion. Solutions to problems of the public were to arise out of the examination, testing and predicting of potential solutions to these problems. Indeed, the formation of public interest was itself the communication of the results of this public inquiry (1989, p. 107). In Dewey's estimation, all those who have a stake in the consequences of the activity of the one or the many have license to participate in this shared inquiry, and thereby reap the results. This leaves open the possibility that potentially all, inasmuch as certain broad social policies affect the mass of peoples, could share in the process of deliberative inquiry and the consequences thereby.

The public, however, does not have all of the tools necessary to probe in experimental fashion the consequences of particular activities. Inasmuch as certain factual data demands precision in its compilation and evaluation, a certain expertise is demanded of key players. (Dewey 1976, p. 64).<sup>5</sup> Now not every individual who constitutes the body public is capable of performing these tasks. Thus it falls to experts to carry out these needed activities. Experts are for Dewey a necessary ingredient in inquiry of a public nature. Their role, however, is a rather limited one. Specifically, experts in a particular discipline or subject-matter do not prescribe, from the results of inquiry, what is to be done. Rather, the expert demonstrates to the inquiring public the factual data upon which further analysis and pronouncements depend. The concerned public, in evaluating the data supplied by these experts, must, according to Dewey, "...have the ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns" (1989, p. 209).

The locus for decision-making with respect to the factual data presented by experts clearly falls upon the concerned public. Inasmuch as the public must judge the implications of adopting a certain response to shared social problems, the public must as well be able to carry out the task of inquiry. The authority invested in inquiry and its results demands vigilance on the part of the concerned public with respect to the communication of findings and the judgement passed on various possible alternatives to problematic situations. This in turn demands that the public be properly educated with respect to the tools and capacities of inquiry. Education, that is, formal schooling, is the chief vehicle of supply for this demand.

Dewey's primary purpose of education is often said to be "growth" or "direction." While this is certainly true, what it implies is nevertheless the capacity and capability of the individual to inquire. Inquiry and intelligence are among (though by no means only) the chief attributes that education must develop (1990, p. 28). Inquiry is necessary because it functions as the chief instrument for the necessary communication and decision-making so important to conceiving and maintaining an efficient, democratic public. As such the teacher's job is to provide an environment conducive to the formation and development of inquiry. She is saddled with the responsibility of directing and re-directing the child such that the child's own intellectual curiosity can take root and blossom into a fully-fledged formalized and habituated inquiry (1984, p. 25-26).<sup>6</sup> Inasmuch as she helps nurture a developing inquiry, she is providing the child with the means to authority.

In this manner, social control in the classroom is tantamount to assisting the child, through direction and re-direction, to cultivate her own personal capacity for inquiry. "Control, in truth, means only an emphatic form of direction of powers, and covers the regulation gained by an individual through his [sic] own efforts quite as much as that brought about when others take the lead" (1990, p. 24). Social control is present in the educative process, but it is a means only. It serves to guide and direct the child's own process of inquiry such that she, once the inquiry is habituated and developed, will have the capacity to determine for herself whether or not to value or participate in certain social activities. It is a necessary means to what Dewey terms "freedom." And since freedom "resides in the operations of intelligent observation and judgement by which a purpose is developed, guidance given by the teacher... is an aide to freedom, not a restriction upon it" (1991, p. 46).

The child participates in the direction that the teacher sets. As Dewey argues, "nothing can be forced upon them or into them" (1984, p. 25). In point of fact, the habits of inquiry that the child develops are her own. The experiences that help to cultivate those habits are also her own. Dewey rejects the blank slate approach to learning, whereby the teacher imparts while the student absorbs. Rather, the child forms her habits of inquiry through the experiences she has. True enough, the teacher provides opportunities for inquiry to be used, and in this way prods the inquiry to higher and more formalized stages. Dewey certainly applauds some degree of social control. But any social control that is manifested by the teacher is to be merely one of direction and re-direction (1984, p. 26). As Dewey eschewed more direct means of authority in his insistence on the rejection of overt disciplinary maneuvers and fixed dogmas, it fell to the teacher to provide direction and re-direction in the name of the public interest. And again, the manner in which this was exerted

was via the assistance of the teacher in the development of the child's specific capacities of inquiry. The fundamental means of control ultimately becomes intellectual self-control through cultivation and application of inquiry (1984, p. 33).

Now I wish to summarize what I have said so far. For Dewey, authority is equated with organized intelligence. Organized intelligence is akin to inquiry. Inquiry, although certainly an individual capacity, is also a broadly social and public one. In this manner, organized intelligence exists as a public undertaking. Although the public is certainly charged with the responsibility of judging the various means for addressing social problems, yet it relies on experts for the gathering and distribution of factual data. The public, through deliberation and communication of the results of inquiry, attempts solutions to pressing concerns. The means for the development of inquiry is education. Children (and adults) are given direction and re-direction in the cultivation of their own innate intellectual curiosity. This is what is meant by social control. The result is a habituated, formal instrument of intelligence that is developed via certain experiences and opportunities that are consciously guided from without but nevertheless developed within. Although the experiences and opportunities are to a certain degree shaped and directed, yet the inquiry and habits developed are the child's own. Social control via the development and guidance of inquiry gradually shifts to self-control in the utilization of the newly developed instrument. The authority of inquiry is therefore self-legitimizing: it is legitimized through the activity of the inquiring broader public via the formal process of education. In this manner inquiry begets and authorizes inquiry.

### *Part 3: A Response to Dewey's Critics*

What I wish to attempt here is the bringing to bear of Dewey's more fully considered model of inquiry on certain arguments of Dewey's critics. I want to reiterate that it is inquiry itself that legitimizes its own authority, and not a particular class or group of people, as with Karier and the Illinois school. But I also want to challenge the reading of Diggins, who suggests that Dewey's conception of authority is anemic, and, as it lies neither in historical knowledge nor in transcendental principles, is of little use in operating as a viable mechanism for social situations.

Let me begin with the Illinois school. Recall that this school argued Dewey as having a strong authoritarian view of social control. Recall that this authority consisted in a certain technico-rational control exerted by a professional, middle class typically represented by the university professor but also by teachers, engineers, and other professionals as well. Recall also that this ruling class utilized science and technology exclusively to manipulate others into believing

in the possibility of such ends. With the Illinois school, education became a means to garner control of children and to inculcate in them the ideology of the expert, ruling class.

The Illinois school's argument hinges, I think, on two assumptions. The first is that Dewey believed that the middle class professionals, the "expert" class, as Karier has labeled them, both had and insisted on the means to control broadly public discourse on values to be determined, avenues to be pursued, and decisions to be made. The second is that Dewey believed education served as the locus and opportunity for the inculcation of certain values with respect to science and technology. To demonstrate that the Illinois school's arguments do not hold hinges on refuting these two claims.

The first claim is refuted by insisting, once again, that Dewey emphatically rejected the idea that an expert ruling class dictated social and public policy. Again, experts, as Dewey maintains in *The Public and its Problems*, are there to assemble and disseminate factual data. The broader public, using the means of organized intelligence, roughly translatable to intelligent inquiry, is to judge, based on the data, what the best course of action with respect to the consequences, might be. The experts function as an important means in this process. But they do not hold the lion's share of responsibility in making public decisions regarding the avenues to pursue. That they influence the end reached and that they do this from a position of non-neutrality is indisputable. It is in the realm of the broader public, though, that the claims of the experts must be weighed and judged and any decision based upon the factual data ultimately arrived at. The experts, as Dewey argues, do not reserve this function for themselves.

As to the second claim, the claim that education serves as a means for manipulation and social control, this as well is incorrect. Although education certainly does initially serve as a means for social control, it does not occur in the manner suggested by the Illinois school. Control comes ultimately from within the individual experiencing and developing inquiry, and not from without. The child "owns" her habits and experiences. They were always hers to develop or not. No specific inculcation of certain values is thereby suggested by Dewey. This includes values attached to science and technology. One is not expected to swallow the argument that science and technology are universally beneficial. Rather, one is expected to inquire about the possibilities of a particular science and a particular technology in and for a particular situation, a particular context, and then to form a reasoned opinion on these based upon available evidence and suggested consequences. There is a subtle but significant difference here. No particular ideology or argument is suggested by Dewey to be habitualized by the child without first passing the test of inquiry. If the child determines through inquiring that a particular use of technology or science is undesirable, then so be it. It is that child's reasoned opinion and that cannot be

taken away. In this manner, the child, as inquiry becomes more and more formalized, is able to determine what to value and appreciate based upon her own judgment. Guidance and direction, once necessary for this development, gradually become less and less a factor. What was once direction and re-direction on the part of the teacher passes to self-control as intelligence becomes more and more a dominant factor.

John Patrick Diggins' arguments are ultimately more penetrating than the Illinois school's. Recall that Diggins argued Dewey a weak philosopher of authority. That is, rather than hinging authority on predetermined ends or timeless metaphysical principles, authority is equated with experience and the judgments based upon experience. It is not legitimized by any particular social body, rather the individual experienter. As such, it becomes a very self-interested authority, with little to say over such issues that predominantly social problems generate. In terms of education, Diggins argues that, as there are no pre-determined educational ends that serve as authoritative markers for guidance and control, and, as the teacher is unable to exert any particular authority, there cannot be a strong enough conception of authority in the classroom to render any particular value trenchant.

Now Diggins is absolutely correct about Dewey rejecting any metaphysical principles as the authoritative basis for subsequent valuation. There is no extricating Dewey from this. As a consequence, anyone who posits that antecedent or transcendental rights or virtues are a necessary component to the social transmission of authority will be unsatisfied with Dewey's estimation. Again, there is, I think, no getting around this. However, Diggins is incorrect in assuming that because Dewey hangs much on individual experience, he thereby has little to say regarding authority of a social nature. Diggins seems to forget about Dewey's rather strong statements regarding authority in his social, political, and educational writings, preferring to focus on Dewey's more experiential works, such as *Experience and Nature*. As a consequence, he misses much that Dewey has to say about the locus and legitimation of authority. If Diggins were to concentrate more specifically on works such as *Human Nature and Conduct* and *The Public and its Problems*, he would find, I think, that Dewey has much to say about authority as the organized intelligence of a public or social group brought to bear on specific problems. True, Diggins is correct when he ascertains that the inquiry manifested by the individual inquirer in response to certain experiences is the locus of authority. But this applies only to the individual in the context of having certain individual experiences. Inasmuch as that individual shares and participates in social activities, and the consequences of social activities impact upon her, there is a need for that individual's inquiring capacities to be pressed into service for the good of the public. In this manner, individual

inquiry becomes social inquiry. The results of a group of people inquiring about a specific problem or set of anticipated consequences are communicated from the group to others, so that they may in turn benefit from the process. The results of inquiry are themselves deliberated upon.

Certain results from the inquiry of consequences become valued. These values hold until a further problem necessitates their reexamination. These values pass as customs via, as Dewey says, the speech patterns of a particular group, to that group's progeny. The values hold, in turn, until the process of inquiry is developed and formalized in that progeny such that they can make reasonable judgments regarding those customs and values. If certain values or customs or legislation becomes intolerable due to anticipated or unanticipated consequences, those individual inquirers who are saddled with the problem must have the opportunity to deliberate publicly the various avenues of change. Authority is vested in the decisions made by the inquiring public. But this authority is contingent upon the possible consequences arising from the decisions made. Again, if it is found that the consequences of a particular decision necessitate its withdrawal in favor of another, the authority to perform the activity of withdrawal is provided for and by, public inquiry. In this way, the authority of any particular decision only seems to reside in the valued decision; in reality, it resides in the inquiry itself. But again, this inquiry, while certainly of an individual nature, as Diggins correctly points out, is also of a public one. Inasmuch as certain values, decisions and legislations of the public serve to affect individuals, the need and possibility for a public inquiry manifests itself. This public inquiry is saturated with authority, inasmuch as it is the power and capacity for organized, intelligent deliberation and communication of actions towards anticipated and real consequences. As a result, Diggins is incorrect in saddling individual experience with being the final arbiter of authority.

As to Diggins' concerns regarding the lack of ends in education and the absence of teacher authority, he is, in the main, correct. Any ends in education must be determined through a procedure of inquiry. These ends are contingent ones only. That is, they cannot hold for all time, but must surrender themselves as necessary if certain consequences dictate. The broad aims of education under the banners of "growth" and "inquiry" are certainly no refutation of this. Teachers have little traditional authority. They do have the means and right to guide and direct children in pursuing their own experiences, and it is in this capacity that their authority resides, and so Diggins does overstate his argument when he posits that teachers lack any authority. Nevertheless, this, I do not think, would satisfy Diggins. Inasmuch as this authority is not exclusive but rather hinges on the developing experiences and inquiry of the children involved, it is of

itself transient. As children age and their capacity for inquiry broadens and formalizes, more and more self-direction seems to be involved, and less and less teacher direction is necessary. This is certainly not a strong enough conception of teacher authority to satisfy someone who craves "ends" as Diggins does. In this respect, Dewey would continue to leave Diggins unimpressed.

### *Conclusion*

Dewey certainly does have a response to the combined criticisms of the Illinois School and John Patrick Diggins. To the Illinois School, who complain that Dewey has a strong conception of authority bound up in the technico-rational enterprise of science and technology led by an elite professional, middle class, Dewey can retaliate by arguing that it is the public who formulate decisions based upon social consequences and not a group of experts. Experts, rather, provide factual data that the public then judges. The means for judging comes from inquiry, which all are to cultivate, primarily through the educational process, whose prime responsibility therefore, is assistance with the development of the child's own individual inquiring experiences.

To John Patrick Diggins, Dewey has only a partial response. Inasmuch as experience is the means and context within which an individual inquires, Diggins is quite correct that inquiry is an individual affair. But this individual affair becomes public when the activities of others form consequences for the one. The inquiry then shifts to the public domain. Through judgment of the consequences, communities and groups composed of individuals share and deliberate on better courses of actions. Policies are produced as a result of inquiry taking place within the context of conjoint, public communication. What was once an individual affair now becomes public as inquiry is charged with finding the best course of action for a community of peoples.

Nevertheless, Diggins is correct in his charge that Dewey has no metaphysical conception of authority. There are no "ends" that authority can hang onto. Authority, inasmuch as it depends on the results of settled inquiry, is contingent. Neither the public, the schools, the teachers or the experts own it. It comes rather, out of a process of inquiry into problematic situations that have a judgment rendered. It exists as long as further deliberation does not remove it. In the end, it is found among the inquiries themselves, as only inquiries have the capacity to authenticate a decision and stamp it as of certain value. This is cold comfort to those who wish for an authority based upon historical knowledge, metaphysical ends, religious dogma, or the power of a ruling class. However, it is all that Dewey is willing to provide.



## Notes

1. Westbrook invokes Clarence Karier, Walter Feinberg, David Hogan, and Paul Violas as those revisionist historians of the Illinois school. Needless to say, he has little liking for them. It should be noted that Feinberg has distanced himself from this "revisionist Illinois school," and therefore should probably not be included. For more on this distancing, C.F. Feinberg, W. (1993, Vol. 43, No. 2, Spring). "Dewey and Democracy at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century." *Educational Theory*. pp. 195-216. Also, personal communication, Jan, 2000. There is a history of this term. Diane Ravitch earlier called a number of these critics "the revisionists" in her defense of liberal education. C.F. Ravitch, D. (1978). *The Revisionists Revised*. New York: Basic Books.

2. Interestingly enough, while she suggests students can be manipulated, Raywid rejects this hypothesis in a further article. Here, she denies that Dewey believed in or held to the indoctrination of students. She argued that Dewey correctly held that one cannot "stamp in" a commitment to the exercise of intelligence. Rather, this must be developed by the individual. C.F. Raywid, M. A. (1992). "The Discovery and Rejection of Indoctrination." in *John Dewey: Critical Assessments Vol. 2*, edited by J.E. Tiles. London: Routledge p. 300. Whether this is tantamount to saying that intelligence cannot be habitualized is another matter, though, and depends upon what one means precisely by habituation. As I will argue later in this paper, Dewey's views on habituation have less to do with external imposition and more to do with organic and native responses to problems.

3. Feinberg, interestingly enough, argues that intellectual curiosity is itself a habit. He is here trying to dispute the contrast between socialization and education. The crux of the argument is that intellectual curiosity is not perhaps part of a formalized education, but rather itself socialization. This seems to render more problematic the possibility that a child could genuinely and of her own self-interest come to embrace a technological and scientific approach to problem-solving, as Raywid in "the discovery and rejection of indoctrination" wants to suggest. Dewey, I would argue, accepts neither of these two alternatives exclusively, but (as with Raywid) posits that intellectual curiosity, while able to be cultivated, yet rises naturally and spontaneously in every human organism, yet is also a habit (as with Feinberg), but not one that is externally imposed, rather a natural outgrowth of the organism. C.F. Dewey, J. (1991). "Logic: The Theory of Inquiry." In *The Later Works of John Dewey Vol 12*. 1938. Ed. JoAnn Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. Esp. pp. 37-38.

4. Interestingly enough, Diggins takes the arguments from the other side, those that posit a strong authoritarian social control predicated upon an expert, professional class, as "a

surprise." C.F. p. 313.

5. Dewey, addressing the importance of the professional class of academics, makes a slightly different argument as to why this class is important than perhaps Karier would. Dewey argues "If security and responsibility of intellectual organization are worth anything to the nation, then the professors' efforts to get a responsible share in college control form a public service." This does not imply that professors have a right to the lion's share of public decision-making, rather only a responsible one. What is responsible is of course, not discussed. But it does not imply, I think, that Dewey expected professors to be public leaders; rather only participants in a greater public discourse about what to value and what avenues to pursue. In Dewey, J. (1985). "The Case of the Professor and the Public Interest." In *The Middle Works of John Dewey Vol. 10. 1916-1917*, edited by JoAnn Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. pp. 164-167. esp p. 166.

6. It is perhaps concluded that Dewey advocated that teachers should have more authority to operate unhindered from administrative and political concerns. In the main this is true. But not because Dewey wanted to rest authority for its own sake in teachers, but rather because he felt that teachers were inadequately represented in the broader community, and therefore had little voice. For example, Dewey argued "...that is the great reason for forming organizations of this kind, and organizations which are affiliated with other working organizations that have power and that attempt to exercise the power...namely, the reflex effect upon the body of the teachers themselves in strengthening their courage, their faith in their calling, their faith in one another, and the recognition that they are servants of the community, and not people hired by a certain transitory set of people to do a certain job at their beck and call." In Dewey, J. (1985). "Professional Organization of Teachers." In *The Middle Works of John Dewey Vol. 10*, edited by JoAnn Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. pp. 168-172...p. 169. This is also his claim for the call to teachers to increase their as yet unheard contributions to the "science" of education that is set out in Dewey, J. (1990). "The Sources of a Science of Education." In *The Later Works of John Dewey, Vol. 5. 1929-1930*, edited by JoAnn Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. p. 23.

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