The Good, the Right & the Exigencies of Life: John Dewey & the Value of Moral Disagreement

Karen Bland

School of Humanities/Department of Philosophy

December 2018

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. The Classical American Pragmatists 14
2.1 Introduction 14
2.2 Charles Sanders Peirce 17
2.3 William James 25
2.4 Conclusion 31

3. Making Connections: David Hume & John Dewey 37
3.1 Introduction 37
3.2 Impressions & Ideas 38
3.3 The Passions & Reason 43
3.4 The Role of Utility in Moderating the Passions 46
3.5 Conclusion 49

4. Making Connections: Immanuel Kant & John Dewey 55
4.1 Introduction 55
4.2 The Theoretical Groundwork of Kant's Deontic Moral Theory 57
4.3 Respect & Moral Motivation 63
4.4 The Interdependence of Moral Motivation, Moral Goodness & the Kingdom of Ends 67
4.5 Kant in Response to Hume 76
4.6 Conclusion 79

5. Making Connections: John Stuart Mill & John Dewey 83
5.1 Introduction 83
5.2 Mill's Principle of Moral Happiness 85
5.3 The Sanction of the Principle of Happiness 91
5.4 'Experiments in Living' 94
5.5 Conclusion 97

6. John Dewey's Experience 103
6.1 Introduction 103
6.2 Experience 104
6.3 Habits & Perception 107
6.4 Communication: Language & Meaning 113
6.5 Experience & Experiencing 119
6.6 Conclusion 121

7. John Dewey's Enquiry 125
7.1 Introduction 125
7.2 Dewey's Process of Social Enquiry 126
7.3 Moral Judgments & Warranted Assertability 132
7.4 Conclusion: Hume, Kant, Mill & Dewey 137

8. Cognitivism & Non-Cognitivism 144
8.1 Introduction 144
8.2 Moral Disagreement: the Cognitivist vs. Non-Cognitivist 146
8.3 Pragmatism: Morality Without Metaphysics 153
8.4 Conclusion 157

9. Monism & Pluralism 160
9.1 Introduction 160
9.2 Foundational Pluralism and Monism 162
9.3 Pragmatic Pluralism & Monism 169
9.4 Conclusion 175

10. Pragmatic Proceduralism 178
10.1 Introduction 178
10.2 Proceduralism 180
10.3 Thin Proceduralism 185
10.4 Self and Societal Realisation 191
10.5 Conclusion 195

11. Three Case Studies 197

11.1 Introduction........197
11.2 Case 1: The Westboro Baptist Church........199
11.3 Case 2: Chris Lilley's *Jonah from Tonga*........205
11.4 Case 3: Murray Darling Basin........210
11.5 Conclusion........214

12. The Good, The Right & The Exigencies of Life........218

Bibliography........225

Abstract

The crucial demarcation of John Dewey's ethical theory was to advocate a shift from promoting particular moral views to emphasising a **process** of reflective moral enquiry that is equipped to incorporate plurality and difference. I have attempted to revisit Dewey's relevance to the present by setting his ideas within a broader historical context than he is normally located in Pragmatist literature. Hence, an important methodological aspect of the thesis is deriving the conceptual framework through a historical analysis of David Hume's particular brand of sentimentalism, Immanuel Kant's unification of sentimentalism and rationalism in the third Critique and John Stuart Mill's notion of community under the rubrics of two terms, namely Dewey's 'experience' and 'inquiry'. I demonstrate that understanding each philosopher as building on the ideas of the previous philosopher's ethical theory provides a background to Dewey's pragmatist ethics. This allows me to reconfigure the tendency of standard contemporary analyses of Dewey that continue to evaluate his work in terms of the very alternatives that Dewey sought to overcome, for example, objective and subjective, cognitive and non-cognitive, plural and monist. Finally, I show how Dewey's pragmatist ethics bear upon the value of disagreement as illustrated in three case studies from the present day. This reveals Dewey's theory in practice. Dewey's particular conceptions of experience and enquiry, rather than any particular set of norms or principles, are employed to define his conception of the ethical. Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism is neither normative nor meta-theoretical. Rather it describes the basis upon which one can demonstrate that one is a part of a community of ethical progress.

Thesis Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Acknowledgements

The completion of my Ph.D. dissertation has been a long journey. Life certainly never stood still or waited until I had finished my thesis. Fortunately these life interruptions often turned into segues that enhanced my thesis, helping me to consolidate my ideas and reflect on the meeting points of theoretical and practical philosophy – yes it is all a Deweyan process!

Many people have inspired and supported me along the way and I could not have got to this point without them. First and foremost I am deeply thankful for the patience, honesty, acumen, generosity and wisdom of my principle supervisor, Jennifer McMahon. Jenny restored my faith and confidence, when I had none. Motivated me when I thought all was lost. Gave me time and space when I needed to mop up my tears. Her support helped me sideline my doubts and her insight and direction got me over the line. For this I cannot thank her enough. I am forever grateful.

I am very grateful to my co-supervisors Denise Gamble and Greg O'Hair. Their academic support and feedback, knowledge and insights, was invaluable. Thank you.

The faculty members of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Adelaide have been very supportive and offered sage advice and feedback along the way. Thanks also to the department for the teaching opportunities that they provided. Beyond the financial reward, the joy and inspiration that I get from teaching has been motivationally invaluable.

Thanks to my colleagues at La Trobe University and my fellow postgraduate colleagues at the University of Adelaide and the University of New South Wales for your amity, coffee, drinks, help, support and advice. My heartfelt thanks go to Michaelis Michael, for his supervision, guitar playing, bike riding, laughter and unending support, even across states. Thanks to Philip Cam for his supervision, for introducing to me to Dewey and inspiring my interest in philosophy for children. Thank you to Karyn Lai for her supervision and for introducing me to Confucian and Taoist pragmatism. Thanks also to Stephen Cohen for my first teaching opportunities.

I am forever grateful to my dad, Ian Bland, for teaching me to think and ask questions. To my mum, Annette Kenda and her husband Ron for their love and support. To my brother Pete, sis-in-law Carm & my nieces G n Loz, best bubs ever. To the greatest guardianettes in the world, Morgs n Ash. To my sisbish Pony & her Sipsip & Foobs and in memory of Jasey, SLOW DOWN. To the Ryans' and Derwas's and in memory of Aileen Derwas for endless meals, laughter & board games. To my Melbourne crew, Muzz, Pink, Melissa & all who accompany them, for getting me through with love, tears, laughter, food & vodka. To my family O/S for your love and support across the miles. I could not have got through life, let alone cancer, without you all. Luv ya's to the moon and back.

Sources & Abbreviations

John Dewey

AE	*Art as Experience*.
D&E	*Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*.
E&E	*Experience and Education*.
EN	*Experience and Nature*.
HNC	*Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*.
Independent	"Three Independent Factors in Morals"
Logic	*Logic – The Theory of Inquiry*.
NE	"Nature in Experience".
RIP	*Reconstruction In Philosophy*.

Immanuel Kant

Anthropology	*Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View*.
CoJ	*Critique of the Power of Judgment*.
CoPR	*Critique of Pure Reason*.
Cosmopolitan	"Idea of A Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective".
Groundwork/GW	*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.
OCS	"On The Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory".
Orient	"What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?".
MOM	"The Metaphysics of Morals".

David Hume

Inquiries	*Inquiries Concerning Human Understanding*.
Inquiry Morals	*Concerning the Principles of Morals*
Treatise	*A Treatise of Human Nature*.

Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
CI	Categorical Imperative
MDB	Murray Darling Basin
WBC	Westboro Baptist Church

1. Introduction

Moral judgments involve identifying whether an act or a failure to act, a motive, character, reason or intention is good or bad, right or wrong. A moral judgment must demonstrate fairness and perspicacity, a weighing of what someone may or may not do, against what their intention was, along with what kind of a person they are. This description of moral judgments suggests not only that they are demanding in terms of the incorporation and weighing of relevant information, but that sound moral judgments are difficult to make when there is conflict and division, particularly in cases of deep persistent moral disagreement.

Consider an example of a moral issue with a long history, namely, the issue of slavery. Most of us think of slavery in terms of the Trans-Atlantic Slavery Trade that was abolished in the 19th century. However, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) there are 20.9 million men, women and children in slavery today.[1] Modern slavery takes many forms: bonded labour where people are tricked into taking a loan that they will never be able to pay off; child slavery such as child labour and trafficking; early and forced marriage; forced labour where threats of violence keep labourers in line; descent based slavery where people are born into a 'slave' class and even inherit their parents' debts; and trafficking for labour or sex. In the 21st century people are still sold like objects, forced to work for little or no pay and are at the complete mercy of their 'employers', even though it is illegal under international human rights conventions and declarations in all the countries where this slavery is practiced.[2]

Of course, the undeniable persistence of slavery in practice does not mean that slavery is a contentious moral issue about which there is disagreement. The fact that there are international laws against slavery demonstrates that humanity in general views the deprivation of basic rights such as freedom, equality and safety from harm as morally wrong and practitioners of such acts as culpable. The acknowledgment that slavery is wrong, and the instantiation of punishment as a fitting response to it, demonstrates that there is agreement

[1] http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/what_is_modern_slavery.aspx See also US Department of State website: http://www.state.gov/j/tip/what/. Accessed 23/05/2014.
[2] *Ibid.*

about the moral reprehensibility of slavery. Yet this agreement in principle does not necessarily motivate the kind of behaviour at a personal level, which would stamp slavery out.

While we can confidently assert that slavery is wrong, does this mean that buying the products of slavery is wrong? Various consumables such as clothing, shoes, coffee, chocolate, diamonds and many of the components of the technology that much of the world relies on are highly consumed products of the slave trade. It is at this level, the level of consumerism, that a difference between principle and motivation can be seen. Are we, as users of its products, morally accountable for the slave trade's continuance and flourishing? Should we boycott products? Attend rallies? Campaign against particular producers? Sign petitions? The persistence of slavery and modern society's dependence on its products highlights the general point that agreement on principle is not sufficient for motivating action, which would serve the relevant principle. It also demonstrates that agreement about objectives may not be sufficient to secure agreement on how to achieve those objectives.

My own experience of living in a community mourning an environmental tragedy sparked my interest in considering the complexity and seemingly intractable nature of disagreement on means when there is agreement on ends. There is also the added fact that in some cases, agreement on ends was not sufficient to motivate behaviour, which would secure those ends. The River Murray and its various tributaries that make up the Murray Darling Basin, is Australia's largest water resource. The combination of a prolonged drought (2002-2008) and overuse for irrigation, industrial and domestic supply, depleted the health of the Murray. In 2008, the Australian government responded to this environmental crisis with the establishment of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, a single body responsible for overseeing water resource planning through comprehensive scientific research and community consultation. The multiplicity of uses and interest groups compounded the complexity of the problem: how should the River Murray's reduction in water supply and water quality be addressed?

Through participation in consultations between various local, state and federal government bodies with local Lower Murray communities, I began to

recognise that the process of consultation was akin to what I have called John Dewey's proceduralist moral theory. I understood that if outlined in the relevant way, Dewey's theory shows that substantial progress of various kinds emerges when a community engages in the kind of debates that he would consider constitutes a 'community of inquiry'. I realised that taking this path marked Dewey's proceduralism as distinctively different to other ethical theories. As we will see, while other ethical theories show on what basis one can decide which ethical conclusion is right, Dewey shows instead the basis on which one can show that one is a part of a community of ethical progress.

Two lessons emerge. Firstly, one can only be a part of ethical progress if participating in community. Importantly, the way participation is construed by Dewey avoids the principle and motivation dichotomy, replacing them with his conception of experience and enquiry, which, while distinguishable in theory, cannot be separated in practice. Without first person involvement and subjective commitment, there is no participation in enquiry. Secondly, genuine scope for disagreement on all aspects of an issue is a necessary part of ethical progress. When these first person involvement and subjective commitment conditions are met, the very terms of the debate that one's enquiry involves, may evolve and change. The River Murray situation, while complex and stressful, nicely illustrates Dewey's proceduralism in practice.

Traditionally, Deweyan studies focus on the classical American Pragmatists, Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. However, an important methodological feature of this thesis is detecting a thread of understanding from those who arguably underpin contemporary analytic ethical theory, Hume, Kant and Mill. Given the magnitude of writing and thinking surrounding each of these canonical philosophers, this thesis has been an exercise in creative restraint with a precise outcome in focus – to extract and elucidate relevant key concepts through primary source analysis in order to reconstruct an arguably more robust and well-rounded Dewey. This enables the development of a proceduralist account of Dewey's ethical thought. Whilst Dewey's pragmatist heritage is clear, my alternative approach highlights aspects of his ethics, which draw attention to its relevance to contemporary philosophical debates in analytic philosophy, both theoretical and practical.

The thesis starts with an overview of Peirce and James in order to demonstrate the limits of the traditional historical approach. I argue that that Dewey inherits Peirce's instrumentalism, adapting it further to bring out its latent proceduralism and that James's radical empiricism provides the starting point for Dewey's notion of experience, which circumvents the empiricist/rationalist divide altogether. I then derive the conceptual framework through a historical analysis of pertinent key concepts in Hume, Kant and Mill under the rubrics of two terms, Dewey's 'experience' and 'inquiry'. I argue that this historical tracing of Dewey's conception of experience as a crucial aspect of enquiry can be understood as incorporating Hume's specific brand of sentimentalism, Kant's conception of aesthetic reflective judgment and aspects of Mill's notion of community. An approach indirectly supported by Dewey:

> In view of the part played by actual conflict of forces in moral situations and the genuine uncertainty which results as to what should be done, I am inclined to think that one cause for the inefficacy of moral philosophies has been that in their zeal for a unitary view they have oversimplified the moral life. The outcome is a gap between the tangled realities of practice and the abstract forms of theory. A moral philosophy which should frankly recognize that each human being has to make the best adjustment he can among forces which are genuinely disparate, would throw light upon actual predicaments of conduct and help individuals in making a juster estimate of the force of each competing factor. All that would be lost would be the idea that theoretically there is a correct solution for every difficulty with which each and every individual is confronted.[3]

I demonstrate that aspects of Hume, Kant & Mill can be seen in Dewey's account of experience and enquiry as the basis of moral judgment. Keeping this in mind, I am able to avoid the misunderstanding of Dewey that results from failing to fully appreciate his indebtedness to the history of analytic ethical theory. In effect this enables me to proffer a hermeneutics of the sentimentalism-rationalism structure grounded in pragmatist assumptions concerning the two-way exchange between conceptual development and perception.

The overall aim of this thesis is to highlight the ways that Dewey's ethics is significant and informative to contemporary ethical theory and practice. Placing Dewey in a lineage of analytic ethical theorists, Hume, Kant and Mill, reinforces and strengthens the significance of his extensive contribution to ethical theory. Through the very same historical figures other philosophers in

[3] John Dewey, 1966 (1930), "Three Independent Factors in Morals" in *Educational Theory* Jo Ann Boydston (Trans.), 16, pp. 198-209, p. 208-9. Hereafter *Independent*.

the analytic tradition have ended up in debates that dichotomise, for example, cognitivism and noncognitivism, monism and pluralism. This is not to deny that such debates are relevant and informative, it is rather to suggest that by placing him firmly within the analytic theoretical timeline in which such disputes were arguably cemented, we are able to fully realise Dewey's conception of experience and enquiry and so avoid losing sight of his significant contribution to ethics in practice. The essential benefit of Dewey's proceduralist account is that it transcends traditional metaphysical problems and suggests that we turn instead to how to cope with moral disagreement, with clashes of judgment and value. This leaves me in a position to demonstrate how Dewey's ethical practice has lessons for us in regards to contemporary debates.

I represent Kant in response to Hume then forge a path through Mill to Dewey. This allows me to contribute to existing work that, as Sandra Rosenthal describes it, assimilates various features of pragmatic philosophy into the framework of analytic philosophy.[4] Setting out this history of relevant ideas led me to the realisation that Dewey's contribution to this debate is to show that the state of uncertainty and tension between competing sides, while it may not be comfortable, is the very state required for progress and change.

> The more conscientious the agent is and the more care he expends on the moral quality of his acts, The more he is aware of the complexity of this problem of discovering what is good, he hesitates among ends, all of which are good in some measure, among duties which obligate him for some reason. Only after the event…does one of the alternatives seem simply good morally or bad morally.[5]

Dewey's implicit notion of communication implies in turn, a proceduralist ethics – a focus on process rather than conclusions – which is not inconsistent with the fact that our desired ends initially draw us to the table. I argue that a particular way of communicating, rather than any particular conclusions, defines the ethical. That is, unless the argumentation involves unwinding the terms of reference so that no view is privileged, there is no communication of the kind

---

[4] Sandra B. Rosenthal, 2002, "A Pragmatic Appropriation of Kant: Lewis and Peirce" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 38: 1/2, Essays in Honor of Richard S. Robin, Indiana University Press, pp.253-256, p. 253. See also John Kaag, 2005, "Continuity and Inheritance: Kant's "Critique of Judgment" and the Work of C. S. Peirce" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 3 pp. 515-540.

[5] Dewey, *Independent*, p. 198.

that defines a community. This is my contribution to the field of Deweyan Studies.

Chapter two focuses on the standard view of classical American Pragmatism, which places Dewey as a successor of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. I offer a brief exposition of Peirce's *The Fixation of Belief*[6] and *How to Make Our Ideas Clear*[7] with a particular focus on his system of enquiry based on the scientific method. I then turn my attention to James's *Pragmatism*[8] in order to clarify his empirically grounded conceptualisation of 'experience'. Dewey's inheritance is indisputable. Traditional American Pragmatism emboldens experience turning it into a dipping pool for thoughts and guidance under the strict rubrics of moral enquiry based on the scientific method. This pragmatist inheritance became the foundations for Dewey's account of the metaphysical reality of our experience of relations, where the relations are just as real as the properties that they relate: subject and object; individual and society; self and other; theory and practice. The chapter demonstrates that whilst Dewey certainly inherited much from his pragmatist forebears, limiting our analysis to these precursors alone, limits our account of Dewey.

In chapter three, an exegesis of David Hume's sentimentalism, focuses particularly on his empiricist explanation for moral motivation, that is, the natural human desire to feel positive, not negative, sensations evidenced by how humans act. For Hume, what counts as morally right or wrong depends on motivation (which engages feeling), as opposed to abiding by rules or the outcomes achieved. Humans are born with a moral sense, a fluttering in the breast of approbation or disapprobation, which is felt, not judged. Thus the motivation to act morally is embedded in the natural human desire to feel positive, not negative, sensations. Hume's defense of the role of feeling in moral judgment is informative in so far as it allocates morality a place in our experiential reality. This paves the way for Dewey's conception of experience,

---

[6] Charles Sanders Peirce, 1877, "The Fixation of Belief" in *Popular Science Monthly*, 12, pp. 1-15 http://www.peirce.org/writings/p107.html Accessed 24 Oct. 2017

[7] Charles Sanders Peirce, 1878, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" *Popular Science Monthly*, 12, pp. 286-302. http://www.peirce.org/writings/p107.html Accessed 24 Oct. 2017

[8] William James, 1975, (1907), "Pragmatism" in Burkhardt F. H. (Ed.) *The Works of William James: Pragmatism*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA and London.

which acknowledges the two-way transactional relation between human nature and the social life, self and society. Hume saw that our common nature plays a part in shaping our social life. Dewey saw that our social life plays an equally important role in shaping our plastic human nature.

In chapter four I represent Kant as responding to Hume's awarding 'feeling' primary place in terms of our motivation to act morally. I argue that Kant's analysis of a rational moral agent involves **both** identifying the basic principle of the moral system through the application of the categorical imperative (rationalism) and an account of how we are motivated to act in accord with it. The standard view of Kant sets out a metaphysically robust deontic theory that focuses on the role of reason in discovering the universal moral law. On this view, moral rightness lies in the willing, in acting from duty, that is, in accord with universal moral laws, not in what is willed. Kant thus shifts the idea of morality away from Humean reasons (and causes) for action (feeling), to obligation (duty). He concludes that this must be the only criterion for morality as any other proposed criteria are inappropriate or inadequate since they are volatile matters of fortuitousness or character. According to the interpretation offered here, which draws upon his third Critique, Kant's analysis of rationality extends to rationally grounded feeling and thus is an account of how we can be held responsible for acting as we do (principled motivation).

My analysis is tailored specifically to my endeavour. I am interpreting Kant within a specific historical timeline in a way that shows progression from Hume and highlights the shortcomings that Mill responds to. By acknowledging the third Critique as Kant's unification of theory and practice, I am able to highlight the pragmatist leanings in Kant that this implies. Following Paul Guyer[9] I argue that this pragmatist interpretation of Kant is evidenced in Dewey's acceptance of the interdependence between moral goodness (practice) and what constitutes the realm of ends (theory) in order for moral considerations to be morally motivating. This in turn is reflected in Dewey's non-dichotomous

---

[9] Paul Guyer, 2011, "Kantian Communities: The Realm of Ends, the Ethical Community and the Highest Good" in Charlton Payne & Lucas Thorpe (Ed.), *Kant and the Concept of Community*, Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, pp. 88-120.

treatment of feeling and reason (or sentimentalism and rationalism) as part of the self's expressive impulses and passions, which, when embedded in the good of humanity (Mill), offers a pluralistic informed process of enquiry into ethical problems.

Chapter five interprets John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*[10] in light of his political theory as outlined in *On Liberty*.[11] Reading these two influential works together enables the presentation of a more liberal and munificent reading of Mill's utilitarian theory. The Millsian utilitarian assesses the morality of an act by its propensity to produce happiness, specifically higher intellectual, as opposed to sensational, pleasures. *On Liberty* provides insight into what constitutes higher pleasure, particularly at the level of community. The combination of both theories embeds the rational decision maker in the social and political realm in which they participate. As an individual cannot be happy living in a dysfunctional community, utilitarian happiness must include this social feature. Interpreting *Utilitarianism* in light of *On Liberty* strengthens the cultivational aspect of the higher pleasures when developed within an individual's obligation to society. Mill's ideas on the 'higher pleasures' and 'experiments in living' are demonstrably reflected in Dewey's 'enquiry into experience' which facilitates or indirectly creates the conditions by which the private experience is converted into a form compatible with communication – the private impression evolves into the publicly communicable experience.

The historical analysis of ideas continues onto Dewey, who is presented as offering a radical departure from both the empiricism and rationalism of these analytic ethical theorists. Application of his pragmatist heritage to his conception of experience (chapter six) and enquiry (chapter seven) situates Dewey to transcend traditional dichotomies: feeling/reason, (Hume), sentimentalism/rationalism (Kant), and private/public (Mill). 'Experience' provides Dewey with the grounds from which to build a proceduralist method of reflection, or reflection on our experiences in a critical way. This process, as

---

[10] John Stuart Mill, 2001, (1861), *Utilitarianism*, 2nd Edition, Edited with an Introduction by George Sher, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Hereafter *Utilitarianism*.
[11] John Stuart Mill, 1991, (1859), "On Liberty" in John Gray & G. W. Smith (Eds.), *J. S. Mill On Liberty in Focus*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 21-130. Hereafter *On Liberty*.

opposed to object-centred ontological naturalism,[12] recognises that physical and social existence are best understood in terms of processes rather than things; change rather than stability; a quest for certainty rather than actual certainty. This is a view, which recognises that the perceiver is always a part of what is perceived, as the knower never stands outside of that which is known. Thus, when we talk about justification of moral beliefs, we must construe it as warrantability within the context of particular experience through 'communities of inquiry'.

Chapter seven outlines Dewey's process of social enquiry and its impact on moral judgments in terms of what we are warranted to assert. Proceduralism is represented as a method of adjudication for tackling disagreements between those holding opposing values. For example, the scientific problem-solution metaphor is guided by the idea of identifying one right answer. In contrast, Dewey's social enquiry qualifies or revises this problem-solution model with an adjudicatory model based on 'communities of inquiry'. This changes the emphasis from finding solutions – a solve-all correct answer – to finding common ground. Putnam discusses this idea at length: ethical problems are not like scientific problems they do not have 'solutions' in the same way that scientific problems do.[13] The general intention of 'inquiry' is to engage participants in communication that aims at identifying shared interests, or guiding goals. "Goods…have to do with deliberation upon desires and purposes; the right and obligatory with demands that are socially authorized and backed; virtues with widespread approbation."[14] While a broad aim of amelioration, or bettering the problem is of course instantiated, there is no expectation that the

---

[12] Talisse & Aikin offer a useful analysis of pragmatic naturalism in chapter four "Pragmatism and Metaphysics" of their Robert B. Talisse & Scott F. Aikin (2008) *Pragmatism: A Guide For The Perplexed*, Continuum International Publishing: London, pp. 85-90. According to them pragmatists take the methodological commitment as to how enquiry should proceed and the ontological view of naturalism and adding a third component, a form of "*Humanism*, one which requires that philosophical and scientific work be extensions of and relevant to the values and purposes of human lives." p. 85-86.

[13] A theme explored by Hilary Putnam, 1990, "How Not to Solve Ethical Problems" in *Realism With a Human Face*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. Discussed at length at 8.2.

[14] Dewey, *Independent*, p. 208.

problem will be solved or dissolved once and for all. Possibilities will be investigated, resolutions will be made, and actions will be taken.

I argue that Dewey's idea of moral (as opposed to political) democracy 'falls out of' inductive reasoning exercised within a 'community of inquiry' – that is, under the constraints of communicability – in the same way as Kant's idea of the moral law 'falls out of' reasoning. For Kant, the idea of a kingdom of ends is not always explicit in one's moral judgments, rather the way we judge what is right implies such an end implicitly.[15] So too for Dewey's notion of democracy: it is not an explicit end, rather it is the outcome of the process of 'communities of inquiry'. By the end of chapter seven we have established that Dewey's proceduralist method of reflective morality aims to replace the goal of identifying an ultimate end (telos - Mill) or supreme principle that serves as THE ethical criteria (categorical imperative - Kant) with a goal of identifying a method for improving social judgment making. His conception of experience as constituted by subjectivity (Hume) reveals a rejection of the reductionist tendencies of traditional moral theories according to which moral judgments are argued to be either rational or alternatively sentimental. In contrast, by equating ethical enquiry with empirical enquiry, Dewey's reflective intelligence is used to revise judgments in light of actions (means) and their consequences (ends) within 'communities of inquiry'. The focus moves away from finding solutions to problems and toward mediating disagreements.

Chapter eight moves the thesis into contemporary debates on the relevant features of moral judgments and the value of disagreement. Traditional responses argue on the one side that the relevant features of moral judgments must be objective, authoritative, universal and impartial, on the other that in the absence of moral facts, moral judgments are subjective, with only the possibility of well-informed feelings. Drawing on neo-pragmatist philosophy I argue that both views suffer from the mistaken reductionist tendency of dichotomising the rationalism-sentimentalism structure.[16] This conclusion is applied to the

---

[15] Guyer, 2011, p. 88. See also *fn.* 3 p. 119 of John Rawls, 2000, *Lectures on the History of Ethics*, Barbara Herman (Ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, pp. 313-317.
[16] Arguably due to a failure to read Kant in light of his third Critique and a dismissal of the pragmatist inheritance.

cognitivist vs. non-cognitivist (chapter eight) and the monist vs. pluralist (chapter nine) debates. Chapter ten situates Dewey in relation to Axel Honneth and Benjamin Gregg's contemporary proceduralist accounts of ethics. I argue that both capture essential aspects of Dewey's theory, but draw short in terms of the democratic moral life that Dewey had in mind.

In chapter eleven, I bring the thesis full circle and apply Dewey's proceduralism to contemporary case studies in order to demonstrate what constitutes a Deweyan 'community of inquiry' in action and establish the explanatory power of Dewey's proceduralist theory. The case studies are a demonstration of what does and does not constitute a Deweyan 'community of inquiry'. The first case study scrutinises the Westboro Baptist Church, a fundamentalist multigenerational church based in Topeka, Kansas. The discussion focuses on Megan and Grace Phelps-Roper, two prominent family members who left the church after years of frustrated attempts to have concerns heard about how the scriptures were being interpreted and acted upon. The dogmatism of the church is demonstrated by the refusal of church elders to engage with disagreement and their insistence that members toe the church's line, or leave. The case highlights the significance of engagement with disagreement in terms of airing concerns and instituting change. It represents a case where objectives are not deliberated on but instead are forced upon 'members'. Coercion, rather than rational deliberation, is the defining process. Principles stand isolated from experience and thus enquiry.

The second case study examines a public debate about racism that erupted over the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's television series *Jonah From Tonga*. The central character, Jonah Takulua, is an unmanageable and rebellious 14-year-old boy of Tongan descent played by comedian and series writer Chris Lilley, who is not of Tongan descent. On one side of the debate, Lilley's work is applauded for being cutting edge comedic genius that challenges racist stereotyping that exists in Australia. The other side dismisses Lilley's work for perpetuating racist agendas and reinforcing stereotypes. They accuse Lilley of 'brownfacing', of presenting a stereotyped caricature of persons of colour. This case demonstrates shared objectives but widely differing ideas on what exemplifies those objectives. Nonetheless, according to Dewey's ethics, it

represents a significant advance on the Westboro case. This is because individual subjective criteria jostle to find some equilibrium within a community through rational debate. Experience is given a chance to be informed through enquiry.

The third and final case study returns us to where we started by taking a closer look at the response of local communities of the Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth to widespread water supply problems of the Murray Darling Basin. The vastness of the area combined with its multiple and diverse value at both a local and national level means that the health of the Basin is one of Australia's biggest environmental, economic and social problems. While everyone agrees that current usage must change in order to make the waterway more environmentally sustainable and commercially viable, conflicts between individuals, communities, government bodies and commercial interests about how best to respond to the crisis, persist. The complexity of the problem makes reconciliation and consensus between conflicting interests difficult, however through a process of debate and negotiation between all stakeholders, much progress has been made over an eight-year period. This marks a vivid example of proceduralism. It is, in effect, Dewey's 'community of inquiry' in action.

While other ethical theories show on what basis one can decide which ethical conclusion is right; Dewey shows the basis on which one can show that one is a part of a community of ethical progress as marked by participating in a morally democratic life. Dewey's incorporation of the physical and social into his notion of experience enables him to transcend traditional dichotomies. We are left with a theoretically robust account of tackling moral disagreements that accommodates "all the whirl of an organism"[17] – the internal **and** external, subjective **and** objective, cognitive **and** non-cognitive, plural **and** monist, properties **and** qualities of experience. This aligning of the facts of being human with the facts of nature enables Dewey to align ethics with physics and biology, so that we are able "to state problems in such forms that action could be

[17] Stanley Cavell, 2002, (1976), *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays: Updated Edition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 52.

courageously and intelligently directed to their solution."[18] Given the contingent nature of inductive conclusions and in particular the nature of social problems, Dewey's emphasis is on adjudication, on the process of communication. My alternative historical approach enables this thesis to clearly articulate Dewey as a responder to what was found wanting in predecessors of analytic ethical theory. Doing so allows us to highlight the significance of Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism for contemporary ethical theory and practice.

[18] John Dewey, 1922, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, p. 12. Hereafter *HNC*. This does not contradict my claim that for Dewey, adjudication rather than problem solving is the more apt paradigm (p. vii) as it refers to the direction taken, rather than the end point per se.

2. The Classical American Pragmatists

This chapter focuses on the classical American Pragmatists that preceded John Dewey, namely, Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. I offer a brief exposition of Peirce's key essays *The Fixation of Belief*[1] & *How to Make Our Ideas Clear*[2], with a particular focus on his system of enquiry based on the scientific method. I then turn my attention to James's *Pragmatism*[3] in order to elucidate his empirically grounded conceptualisation of 'experience'. I conclude that treating Pierce and James alone as his precursors, does not do justice to Dewey's rich and vibrant reconstruction of philosophy. This positions me to then map previously unchartered tracings of ideas from Hume to Kant through Mill to Dewey and in doing so build upon the standard view of Dewey. Reconstructing Dewey in light of these precursors of contemporary analytic ethical thought, as opposed to classical American Pragmatism, allows me to revisit Dewey's relevance to the present by setting his ideas within a broader historical context than he is normally located in Pragmatist literature.

2.1 Introduction

The standard view in literature on pragmatism identifies Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey as the classical American Pragmatists. They represent a particular school of thought that sits somewhat uncomfortably on the edges of both Analytic and Continental philosophy. Where 'Analytic' philosophers rely on logical analysis to solve or perhaps dissolve metaphysical problems and 'Continental' philosophers turn to phenomenology, hermeneutics and existentialism, classical American Pragmatists posited that practical consequences are fundamental components of meaning and truth. This resulted in both a method and a maxim that arguably represent an alternative philosophical approach to both analytic and continental approaches. The following most famous iteration of Peirce's maxim, perhaps encapsulates the

---

[1] Peirce, 1877.
[2] Peirce, 1878.
[3] James, 1975.

classical pragmatist approach best: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."[4] This is a rule for clarifying the contents of hypotheses by tracing their practical consequences and as such a method for analysing experience.

The traditional view of the classical American Pragmatists treads a path from Peirce to James to Dewey, where Dewey is understood to unite, temper and reconstruct his forebears' work. In this chapter I demonstrate that the pragmatic approach identifies a process of enquiry based on the scientific method that actively tests and theorises experience. This pragmatist reconception of experience transforms it from passive to active – we have experiences and we analyse them, actively transforming them by testing out hypotheses, selecting elements and converting them into a meaningful configuration. To paraphrase John Smith, this is a broad conception of experience that is based not on what experience *must* be for us to have knowledge, but what actual experience shows its self to be.[5] Perhaps the most important theoretical ramification of the Pragmatist reconceptualisation of enquiry and experience is the undermining and sidestepping of many traditional epistemological and metaphysical problems of the analytic tradition.

It is generally accepted that whilst Peirce, James and Dewey differed in their individual views in some crucial respects, as will be explored shortly, they nonetheless agreed that traditional empiricism and rationalism, of those that came before them, fell short. In particular, they held that the empiricist and rationalist division between sense and reason resulted from a narrow conception of experience, according to which sense and reason operated within separate metaphysical domains and set reason in contrast to the understanding. For both the empiricist and rationalist, experience is limited to that which our sense organs have access to, where all we experience is our experience of

[4] Peirce, 1878, pp. 292.
[5] John E. Smith, 1985, "The Reconception of Experience in Peirce, James and Dewey" in *The Monist*, 68: 4, pp. 538-554, p. 538.

"experience". We are but spectators,[6] faced with unanswerable questions about our access to reality, concepts and, of course, what and how we know. The pragmatist response was to acknowledge that experience includes not just what we ostensibly perceive through our senses, but also the traceable aspects of our actions, the 'practical consequences'. The focus of pragmatic enquiry turns away from questions of how we can possess absolute certainty and turns instead to how we can use the method to make fallible progress. The pragmatist asked: 'what concrete practical difference would it make if my theory were true?' It is a method of identifying problems in terms of the difference they make: if there is no practical difference, there is no genuine problem.

One concern of both Peirce's instrumentalism and James's Radical Empiricism is to demonstrate that pure concepts emerge out of and are informed by empirical observations. I argue that neither completely renounces the empiricist/rationalist divide. There is a sense in which Dewey, on the other hand, transforms his pragmatist methodological inheritance and sets to reconstructing and reconfiguring reason in relation to the understanding. He thereby dissolves the distinctions between concepts such as appearance and reality, theory and practice, subject and object, knowledge and action, fact and value, self and other, individual and society[7] and redeploys them as useful concepts that will help to address "the problems of men."[8] This indicates a shift of focus from absolutes and universals to simply what works, in terms of different outcome oriented considerations, such as consequences, self and societal progress and ameliorating discordant situations, to name but a few.

The standard view of classical American Pragmatism is based on Peirce and James' work. Section 2.2 outlines Peirce's logical method of enquiry founded on the scientific method, as it is employed to settle epistemological disputes in

---

[6] Mentioned by Smith, 1985, p. 539, however the 'Spectator View' is arguably attributable to 18th Century Scottish Philosophers, in particular Adam Smith's influential 1759 work *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Adam Smith, 2002, (1759), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Knud Haakonssen (Ed.), Boston University: Cambridge University Press. http://assets.cambridge.org/97805215/91508/sample/9780521591508ws.pdf. Accessed 04/02/2018.

[7] This is by no means an exhaustive list; they are simply the distinctions most important to this thesis.

[8] John Dewey, 1946, *Problems of Men*, New York: Greenwood Press.

terms of fixing beliefs and clarifying ideas. The focus will be on Peirce's understanding of the role of consensus as a precursor to Dewey's conception of the "community of inquiry". In Section 2.3, I focus on James's notion of experience, where the meaning of a concept is contained in the conduct it produces. This is the forerunner to what I argue became the central concept in Dewey's ethics, namely his particular conception of "experience". The concluding section, 2.4, argues that whilst Dewey's connection to his pragmatist heritage is undeniable, isolating him in this tradition leaves his rich and productive ethical theory, particularly of the later Dewey, somewhat emaciated. I argue that locating Dewey in the very lineage from which these metaphysical disputes in analytic ethics emerged facilitates a robust reconstruction of his theory that can in turn be applied to contemporary problems, concerning the relations between sense and reason, in analytic philosophy.

2.2 Charles Sanders Peirce

The aim of this section is to offer a short overview of the aspect of Peirce's pragmatist theory most relevant to this thesis, namely, his instrumentalist conception of 'inquiry'. I focus on his works pertinent to this task: "The Fixation of Belief"[9] and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear".[10] It is in "The Fixation of Belief" that Peirce outlines his view of reasoning and its role in working out what we know and believe. Grounded firmly in formal logic, Peirce argues for the independence between the truth of a situation and our thoughts on it. "Reasoning is good if it be such as to give a true conclusion from true premises, and not otherwise. Thus, the question of its validity is purely one of fact and not of thinking."[11] Peirce is emphasising that while there is an objective reality, facts, our only access to it is through thinking. This is a form of induction under the constraints of enquiry that he associates with science. This is particularly important when the method is used to assess our beliefs (our thinking). Just as scientific facts remain fallible and contingent, so too, according to Peirce, do our

---

[9] Peirce, 1877, pp. 1-15.
[10] Peirce, 1878, pp. 286-302.
[11] Peirce, 1877, p. 2.

beliefs. The "true conclusion would remain true if we had no impulse to accept it; and the false one would remain false, though we could not resist the tendency to believe in it."[12] This forces us to acknowledge that beliefs may need to change in light of new information. With this realisation in mind, we see the need to visit and revisit our beliefs by testing them out and assessing them, reviewing them in line with new understandings. As Peirce recognises, this is important work, as our beliefs guide our desires and shape our actions[13] – they form the bedrock of our moral lives.

Peirce is drawing a methodological parallel between science and belief formation regarding both facts and moral norms. The process of revision of a belief is triggered by doubt, which Peirce describes as "…an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else."[14] The irritation of doubt puts beliefs into a state of jeopardy and forces us to review and revise them in light of new experiences and so restore calm and ease of mind. This is what Peirce identifies as the "struggle of inquiry"[15] – enquiry helps us to arrive at beliefs that settle opinions and in turn, our minds. Peirce's emphasis on the fallibility of the premises and on convergence among reasoners and their capacity to reason implicates induction as the model of enquiry.

According to Peirce, tenaciously holding onto poorly substantiated beliefs or arbitrarily and authoritatively demanding that others conform to your beliefs, indicates a dislike of doubt and the instability of not having fixed beliefs.[16] Both methods of fixing belief – tenacity or authority – have attractive features, particularly in terms of eliciting moral norms that act as social controls. The a priori character of tenacity promotes comfortable and comforting conclusions whilst the method of authority offers us a path of peace, as it will appear that

[12] Peirce, 1877, p. 3.
[13] Peirce, 1877, p. 4.
[14] Peirce, 1877, p. 4-5.
[15] Peirce, 1877, p. 5.
[16] Peirce, 1877, p. 6.

some things are permitted and some are forbidden.[17] However, these benefits do not outweigh the potential of each to lead to dogma and pernicious dictatorial moral values that reflect fear and an unwillingness to re-visit and re-vise moral life.[18] Therefore, Peirce insists, we must give these up and instead adopt a new method of belief formation and settling opinions. This new method, will not only produce an impulse to believe, but will "also decide what proposition it is which is to be believed…let men, conversing together and regarding matters in different lights, gradually develop beliefs in harmony with natural causes."[19] What method is able to harbour such enquiries? What method can fix beliefs that remain fallible, context sensitive and tolerant of different opinions? Answer: The method of science.

The Peircean project of moral enquiry is more unstable and uncertain than the tenacious and authoritative methods to which he is responding. Peirce takes the fundamental hypothesis of science and applies it to moral life enabling our moral beliefs to move away from both tenaciousness and authority.

> [The fundamental hypothesis of science is based upon the understanding that] there are real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those realities affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and reason enough about it, will be led to the one true conclusion.[20]

From this we can extrapolate a rough outline of Peirce's fundamental hypothesis of morality where social norms are akin to scientific facts in terms of being observable and evaluable aspects of experience that are accessible through perception. So, to re-configure his statement above:

> Morality consists of real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them. Our moral decisions, behaviour and their outcomes affect our senses according to regular laws and though our sensations (individual experiences) are as different as are our relations to the objects (individual perspectives), yet by taking advantage of the laws of perception we can ascertain by reasoning how things really are; and any person, if they have sufficient experience (such as a background in moral theory) and reason enough about it, will be led to the one true conclusion (social norm).

---

[17] Peirce, 1877, p. 11.
[18] An example of authoritative belief formation will be discussed at some length in reference to the Westboro Baptist Church (see 11.2).
[19] Peirce, 1877, p. 8.
[20] Peirce, 1877, p. 10.

The fallibility of our conclusions entails that social norms, like scientific facts, remain open to revision in light of new understandings.

The method of moral enquiry, according to Peirce, is based on a trigger and response pattern. Experience is interrupted by doubt, which in turn begins a process of enquiry informed by our own perceptions, sensations and thoughts in conjunction with those around us. This highlights the social aspect of enquiry, where the community, rather than an individual or authority, informs the meaning and significance ascribed to experience. As Peirce puts it, enquiry aims to be "agreed to by all those who investigate."[21] Moral enquiry based on the scientific method leads belief-fixation away from authority and tenacity toward community in this respect. Once a particular doubt is settled, the action/response becomes habitual, until it is unsettled once more by doubt. Beliefs are formed and reformed in light of new enquiries, actions and their outcomes. The 2017 change to marriage laws in Australia provides an excellent example of the evolution of social norms.

This is an instrumentalist view of ideas and beliefs based on a method of induction from experience. As stated in the pragmatic maxim, the value of any idea is determined by its usefulness, where both scientific and moral knowledge remain fallible in light of the insufficiency and ever changing availability of empirical evidence. Like scientific knowledge, moral beliefs whilst fixed, remain open to revision and reconstruction in light of new understandings. Just as scientific research has the potential to uncover new facts and so change existing theories, moral beliefs have the potential to be transformed as new social norms are discovered, interpreted and incorporated. This leaves open the possibility that an alternate explanation and accompanying theory will surface as new evidence comes to light. Peirce's moral enquiry based on the scientific method marks the beginning of this pragmatic treatment of theory making.

Peirce further articulates what he means by a belief in "How to Make Our Ideas Clear".[22] It is worth quoting Peirce at length, as it clearly shows the foundations of his instrumentalist account:

---

[21] Peirce, 1878, p. 299.
[22] Peirce, 1878, pp. 286-302.

> And what, then, is belief?...it has just three properties: First, it is something that we are aware of; second, it appeases the irritation of doubt; and, third, it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of action, or, say for short, a *habit*. As it appeases the irritation of doubt, which is the motive for thinking, thought relaxes, and comes to rest for a moment when belief is reached. But, since belief is a rule for action, the application of which involves further doubt and further thought, at the same time that it is a stopping-place, it is also a new starting-place for thought…The final upshot of thinking is the exercise of volition, and of this thought no longer forms a part; but belief is only a stadium of mental action, an effect upon our nature due to thought, which will influence future thinking.[23]

Consider again Peirce's pragmatic maxim.[24] What does Peirce mean by "practical bearings"? Which contexts and consequences count? Peirce's example of 'hardness' is helpful.[25] As Peirce explains, hardness is a property that can only be judged by touching or feeling. Unless we are facing a situation where something's hardness makes a difference, the concept is empty. For example, it is by feeling hardness in the wood of a baseball bat, as opposed to, say, the softness of an inflatable one picked up at the funfair, that we settle on which bat will conceivably have the desired effect of hitting a home run. As Peirce states, "…our idea of anything *is* our idea of its sensible effects."[26] In other words, I use the concept *hard* in the context of considering what to do. This is a verificationist account of the practical import of concepts.

How does this type of contextual analysis play out in moral life? Peirce explains in terms of how we tell a true belief from a false one. According to Peirce:

> The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality…reality is independent, not necessarily of thought in general, but only of what you or I or any finite number of men may think about it; and that, on the other hand, though the object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is, yet what that opinion is does not depend on what you or I or any man thinks.[27]

There is a tension here between reality and opinions. Whilst the truth of a proposition is independent from our individual opinions, it is at the same time accessible through our enquiries, which in turn rely on convergence of opinion,

---

[23] Peirce, 1878, p. 291.
[24] "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." Peirce, 1878, p. 292.
[25] Peirce, 1878, p. 292.
[26] Peirce, 1878, p. 292.
[27] Peirce, 1878, p. 299.

on agreement between communities of enquirers. This reflects the inductive base of the scientific method. Building on the model, Peirce argues that truth emerges out of moral enquiries in the same way that it emerges out of scientific enquiries. Just as science makes discoveries through the testing of a hypothesis, so pragmatism empirically tests moral beliefs by carrying out philosophical 'experiments' through enquiries. Peirce thinks that with enough information and thought, and under similar circumstances, any mind will reach the same conclusion. He concludes that whilst truth and reality have a role to play in moral enquiries, the real test is agreement. Just like hypothesis testing in science, the more agreement there is, the more likely the conclusion will be true.

Peirce also contends that conceptual analysis provides the grounds for truth, as in the quote above when Peirce writes: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed upon by all who investigate, is what is meant by truth."[28] Where is the real? Where do we find that which is independent of how we think about it? Peirce explains that the real is something that influences our thoughts, and is not created by them.[29] Even though we only have our thoughts to work with, they have been caused by sensations, which in turn are constrained by something out of the mind, an objective reality. David Wiggins captures the form of this process of enquiry:

> …the idea of inquiry, seen always as a process that gathers rational strength as it gathers force and gathers force as it gathers rational strength, a process at once communal and personal, in which participants receive benefits that are indefinitely divisible among them and reciprocate, in the light of their own experiences and reflections, however they can or are permitted to do."[30]

Peirce theorises the struggle between doubt and belief. Whilst difference of opinion may hinder agreement, likewise, an individual's obstinacy may hinder and derail a search for truth.[31] The struggle, between doubt and beliefs, unfolds in the form of enquiry, of testing ideas in thought, the sole object of which, is the fixation of belief. When all who have carried out an investigation agree, then

---

[28] Peirce, 1878, p. 299.
[29] Peirce, 1878, p. 299.
[30] David Wiggins, 2004, "Reflections on Inquiry and Truth" in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, Cheryl Misak (Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 87-126, p. 90.
[31] An excellent outline of a pragmatist theory of truth is provided in chapter three "Pragmatism and Truth" of Talisse & Aikin, 2008, pp. 54-83.

doubt is fallibly settled and a true belief is identified. Agreement is, according to Peirce, based on a method of abduction, which will now be further explicated.

The final aspect of Peirce's contribution is his work on the logic of science. Peirce used 'abduction' to talk about inferences that are different to both inductive and deductive reasoning.[32] Peirce's logical abduction is the point of enquiry where we are discovering and generating theories that will then later be assessed. It is the hypothesis forming stage of moral enquiry: "Abduction is the process of forming explanatory hypotheses. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea."[33] Abduction is reasoning to the best explanation, and it recognises the role of forming possible explanations for the purposes of directing enquiry.[34] How then do we know when abduction is the best explanation? For Peirce, we form explanations and test them by a series of criteria including their explanatory power, falsifiability, economy, elegance, mechanism and so on. Peirce's abduction, or reasoning to the best explanation, is not subject to formal or universal proof in the same way as deductive reasoning is, as feelings or sensations have a role to play. The triad, (induction, abduction and deduction), "…has not for its principal element merely a certain unanalyzable quality *sui generis*. It makes [to be sure] a certain feeling in us."[35] Whilst feeling maintains the possibility of being communicated and evaluated by a community of enquirers, it is able to avoid charges of subjectivity.[36] We can only trust the feeling or sensation by checking with others.

---

[32] Analyses of Peirce's theory of abduction and it's role in contemporary debate can be found in: Campos, D. 2011, "On the Distinction Between Peirce's Abduction and Lipton's Inference to the Best Explanation" in *Synthese*, 180, pp. 419–442; Fann, K. T. 1970, *Peirce's Theory of Abduction*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff; McAuliffe, W. 2015, "How Did Abduction Get Confused with Inference to the Best Explanation?" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 51, pp. 300–319.

[33] Charles S. Peirce, 1958, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, A. Burks (Ed.), Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. Hereafter referred to by volume number as CP 5, p. 172.

[34] Peirce describes abduction as being "…the boundary between the black and the white, is neither black, nor white, nor neither, nor both. It is the pairedness of the two. It is for the white, the active secondness of the black, for the black, the active secondness of the white." CP 6, p. 203.

[35] CP 1, p. 473.

[36] John Kaag (2005, p. 533) notes that Peirce's abduction is not subject to formal or universal proof in the same way as deductive reasoning is. Rather, it is reasoning to the best explanation, which he argues is demonstrated in the third Critique in the form of the *sensus communis*. A conclusion I reach through different means in Chapter Five, where I draw a link from Kant through Mill to Dewey.

Peirce's scientific method of deduction, induction and abduction is more than a systematic logic; it is his instrumental account of seeking truth. The method starts with hypothesising, or abduction, a process that is triggered by doubt that arises out of a surprising situation. Deductive inference is then used to attempt to identify conclusions about the hypothesis and what it entails. Experiments (inductive reasoning) are then carried out to test whether the deducted conclusions really do obtain. The results either prove or disprove the original hypothesis. If proven, it is true, if falsified further processes of abduction, deduction and induction are needed. And so the method turns, formulation of hypothesis, deducing its possible conclusions and testing whether or not they actually do obtain. The results remain fallible and falsifiable, able to be usurped by more dependable hypotheses in the future.

Peirce's instrumentalist contribution to what I call Dewey's proceduralist account of enquiry, is evident here. Peirce posits that moral enquiries are socialised through the process of moving from doubt to fixed beliefs. This is an attempt to align moral enquiry and its aims with the method of scientific enquiry where truth remains fallible. As Hildebrand states, "Peirce's inquirer operates *within* a social world where the need to answer each other's questions is *felt* as real. Peirce's problem, then, concerns how a variety of individuals can fix their beliefs."[37] Hildebrand goes on to argue that a Peircean community of investigators carries out a moral enquiry and their conclusion is referred to as truth and its object is reality. "Truth…does not transcend experience and enquiry altogether: it has a fixed limit, an ideal, towards which a properly functioning community converges."[38]

As will become evident in later chapters, on cognitivism and non-cognitivism, monism and pluralism, there are some troubling consequences for positing that the main criterion for evaluating theories should be based on how well they perform in practice, particularly in terms of truth. As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, I argue that Dewey's expansion of Peirce's

---

[37] David L. Hildebrand, 1996, "Genuine Doubt and the Community in Peirce's Theory of Inquiry" in *Southwest Philosophy Review*, 12: 1, pp.33-43. p. 33.
[38] Hildebrand, 1996, p. 33-34.

enquiry takes him beyond instrumentalism to proceduralism. On this view, scientific and moral theories can only be judged in terms of their capacity to address scientific or moral problems, where success is not measured in terms of outcomes or solutions, but rather in terms of engagement in processes of negotiation and communication. It is clear that Peirce's instrumentalist method of moral enquiry based on the scientific method provides a foundation for Dewey's approach, however, I argue that Peirce's emphasis on truth finding and agreement marks a point of difference to Dewey, whose proceduralism turns the focus of enquiry away from agreement and outcomes and toward processes. Dewey's proceduralism outlines a process of two-way exchange between conceptual development and perception that enables him to transcend traditional metaphysical problems in regards to the relationship between the rational and empirical. As will be explicated in coming chapters, we are then able to avoid many inherent problems that instrumentalism has struggled to address, such as the seemingly intractable nature of some disagreements and the inability to hold a common conception of desirable consequences. This will become clearer in the next section through an analysis of James' notion of experience, developed through his Radical Empiricism.

2.3 William James

William James wrote *Pragmatism* in 1907. James also articulates his understanding of pragmatism as a philosophical method arguing for its usefulness primarily in terms of settling metaphysical disputes that may otherwise be interminable.[39]

> …to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives meant practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical difference that must follow from one side or the other's being right.[40]

[39] James, 1975, p. 28.
[40] James, 1975, p. 28.

James credits his method to the Principal of Pragmatism as set out by Peirce, arguing that Peirce demonstrates that our beliefs are really rules for action. Thus, in order to develop a concept's meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce.[41] "There can *be* no difference anywhere that doesn't *make* a difference elsewhere."[42] In other words, our ideas become clear when we consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind are involved—what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare.[43]

James' instrumentalist account of truth is a reconstruction of Peirce's pragmatic maxim with a focus on consequences, on outcomes of action.

> A pragmatist…turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and toward power. It means the empiricist temper regnant, and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth. At the same time it does not stand for any special results. It is a method only.[44]

According to James, we experience our theories as programs, as instruments for understanding the world. "*Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest.*"[45] The pragmatic method is an attitude of orientation. "*The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.*"[46] This indicates a change of focus, a movement away from finding fixed answers and toward a more consequentially grounded, outcome oriented method of decision making and settling of social norms.

As we began to see in the previous section, instrumentalism is the pragmatists' answer to conceptual analysis in general and truth in particular. On this view, ideas are true in so far as they help us to dispel doubt.

> Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true *instrumentally*.[47]

---

[41] James, 1975, p. 28.
[42] James, 1975, p. 30.
[43] James, 1975, p. 28-29.
[44] James, 1975, p. 31.
[45] James, 1975, p. 32. His italics.
[46] James, 1975, p. 32. His italics.
[47] James, 1975, p. 34. His italics.

James describes the process in terms of settling a new opinion. Truth in our ideas and beliefs means the same thing that it means in science, it means: "THAT IDEAS (WHICH THEMSELVES ARE BUT PARTS OF OUR EXPERIENCE) BECOME TRUE IN SO FAR AS THEY HELP US TO GET INTO SATISFACTORY RELATION WITH OTHER PARTS OF OUR EXPEREINCE".[48] The truth of ideas is in their power to work, to settle opinions by assessing new evidence as it comes to light in experience. Whilst social norms may be established and proved, they remain falsifiable, just like empirical facts. This sets the grounds for James's Radical Empiricism, where experience is the testing ground for reassessing social norms.

Mirroring Peirce, James's method circumnavigates the dogmatism of closed groups, avoiding methods that encourage tenacious holding of beliefs and appeals to authority (to use Peircean terms). Like Peirce, James explains this in terms of doubt, which is experienced as a feeling of inward trouble that must be settled in order to be relieved. Consideration of evidence, reason, hypothesising and testing are the basis of thought, reflection and enquiry into adjustments of such social norms. Out of this method, a new idea emerges that successfully mediates between the old stock of held opinions and the new experience, running them "into one another most felicitously and expediently. This idea is then adopted as the true one."[49] This contextual (not relative) instrumentalist method of assessing truth, where truth's function is to harmonise beliefs and action, is a key inheritance from Peirce and James to Dewey.[50] As Mark Uffelman points out, this is a fallibilistic empirical ethics that entails contingency and experimentalism: "The proper balance between inherited wisdom and social custom, on the one hand, and the emergence of new meanings, new values, and new forms of embodied experience, on the other, must continually be

---

[48] James, 1975, p.35. His emphasis.
[49] James, 1975, p. 35.
[50] Whilst there is not the time or space for a detailed analysis of correspondence and coherence, it is worth noting that Susan Haack acknowledges that one major strength of the pragmatist theory of truth is that: "The theory is a cosmopolitan one, in that it includes substantial coherence and correspondence elements; and it thereby acquires some of the strengths of the coherence and correspondence theories while avoiding some of the weaknesses." Susan Haack, 1976, "The Pragmatist Theory of Truth" in *British Journal of Philosophy of Science*, 27, pp. 231-249, p. 247.

reestablished."[51] This indicates the social dynamics found in James and Peirce that is extended by Dewey into a process of self and community realisation.

The classical American Pragmatists treat empirical facts and social norms as acquired through the same method and under the same kinds of restraints. Like empirical facts, social norms remain necessarily fallible and open to revision in light of new facts without being culturally or socially relative.[52] Pragmatist truth is neither untouchable, remote, exalted, what we ought to think unconditionally, nor is it free from utility and perspective.

> The pragmatist clings to facts and concreteness, observes truth at its work in particular cases, and generalizes. Truth, for him, becomes a class-name for all sorts of definite working-values in experience…When the pragmatist undertakes to show in detail just *why* we must defer, the rationalist is unable to recognize the concretes from which his own abstraction is taken. He accuses us of *denying* truth; whereas we have only sought to trace exactly why people follow it and always ought to follow it.[53]

This is important as it highlights how the pragmatists ground rational abstraction in empirical standards, such as their utility and satisfactoriness. This is a regulatory notion of truth. Experience corrects our beliefs and formulas by triggering the process of thinking. "*'The true'…is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving*."[54] Facts and norms simply are. They are identifiable, testable aspects of experience. Just as the laws of science are tested, verified and re-tested, lawful ways of behaving, right and wrong, good and bad, emerge from the interactions between people. Truth grafts itself on previous truth. So too with laws and idioms, these things *make themselves* as we go, as history proceeds, so our rights, wrongs, prohibitions, laws, penalties, words, idioms, beliefs get revised.[55] Truth is the function of the beliefs that start and terminate them.[56] Again, the recent revision of same sex marriage laws in Australia is a practical demonstration of such a revision of social norms in line with evolution of belief.

---

[51] Mark Uffelman, 2011, "Forging the Self in the Stream of Experience: Classical Currents of Self-cultivation in James and Dewey" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 47: 3, pp. 319-339, p. 330.
[52] Haack & Kolenda provide an interesting discussion of pragmatist fallibilism, truth and science in Susan Haack and Konstantin Kolenda, 1977, "Two Fallibilists in Search of the Truth" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 51, pp. 63-104, p. 81 & p. 101.
[53] James, 1975, p. 38.
[54] James, 1975, p. 106. His italics.
[55] James, 1975, p. 116.
[56] James, 1975, p. 108.

In *Pragmatism*, James argues that Kant's *denkmittel* that is, the means by which we identify facts by thinking them, form the foundations for an empirically grounded idealism – or Radical Empiricism, as he calls it. According to James's version of Kant, knowledge, logic, repetition, sameness of kind and so on, are useful *denkmittel* for finding our way among the many, for labeling experience.[57] James is treating ideals as "*live* possibilities, for we are their live champions and pledges, and if the complementary conditions come and add themselves, our ideals will become actual things."[58] The rationalist posits an ideal, an absolute finished edition of the world that orients us toward the future. James employs these ideals as a means of identifying moral truth.[59] For James, empiricism is directly related to psychology: in so far as the mind enables us to construct a worldview, it is an active participant in experience. This common sense conceptual process, *denkmittel*, is made clearer when situated within his empiricist approach.[60]

Perhaps the clearest iteration of James's Radical Empiricism is found in the preface of his later work, *The Meaning of Truth* where he states that it…

> …consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion. The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience…The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves. The generalized conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience.[61]

He goes on to argue that the greatest obstacle to his view is rooted in the rationalist belief that experience as immediately given necessitates the presence of an absolute, higher, unifying agency, some kind of "all-witness which 'relates' things together by throwing 'categories' over them like a net."[62] The outcome is that the relationship between the knower and the thing known is empty. On this view, the truth relation, is "…contentless experientially, neither describable, explicable, nor reduceable to lower terms, and denotable only by uttering the

---

[57] James, 1975, p. 88.
[58] James, 1975, p. 137. His italics.
[59] James, 1975, p. 128.
[60] James, 1975, p. 84.
[61] William James, 1979, (1909) *The Meaning of Truth*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, pp. 6-7.
[62] James, 1979, p. 7.

name 'truth.'"[63] In contrast, James's radical empiricism identifies that the truth relation has definite content, which is experienceable and as such is knowable. He is arguing that relations are just as directly experienced as the things that they relate – ideas are true insofar as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience, as quoted earlier. This is the 'radical' aspect of his empiricism.

This is an instrumentalist account of ideas, where their 'workableness' makes them knowable parts of concrete experience. In contrast, the "...relation between an object and the idea that truly knows it, is held by rationalists to be nothing of this describable sort, but to stand outside of all possible temporal experience."[64] James's thesis is developed further in his posthumously published *Essays in Radical Empiricism and a Pluralistic Universe*[65] where he identifies one fundamental quarrel between Empiricism and Absolutism (as he labels them). This is "...the repudiation by Absolutism of the personal and aesthetic factor in the construction of philosophy."[66] James notes that the empiricist emphasis on the usefulness of feelings in terms of prophesising moral beliefs is equally anticipatory of truth as anything else we have.[67]

> Now pragmatism, devoted tho she be to facts, has no such materialistic bias as ordinary empiricism labors under. Moreover, she has no objection whatever to the realizing of abstractions, so long as you get about among particulars with their aid and they actually carry you somewhere. Interested in no conclusions but those which our minds and our experiences work out together, she has no a priori prejudices against theology. IF THEOLOGICAL IDEAS PROVE TO HAVE A VALUE FOR CONCRETE LIFE, THEY WILL BE TRUE, FOR PRAGMATISM, IN THE SENSE OF BEING GOOD FOR SO MUCH. FOR HOW MUCH MORE THEY ARE TRUE, WILL DEPEND ENTIRELY ON THEIR RELATIONS TO THE OTHER TRUTHS THAT ALSO HAVE TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED.[68]

It is at this point that we can see James's Radical Empiricism as representing a development and expansion of Peirce's work. Peirce was hesitant to fully break from the tradition that set experience in contrast to the understanding (as argued shortly in the conclusion of this chapter), whereas James embraced their

---

[63] James, 1979, p. 7.
[64] James, 1979, p. 7.
[65] Chapter two in particular of William James, 1943, (1912), *Essays in Radical Empiricism and a Pluralistic Universe*, New York: Longmans, Green & Co.
http://topologicalmedialab.net/xinwei/classes/readings/James/RadicalEmpiricism.pdf
Accessed 24/02/2018.
[66] James, 1943, p. 106 (279).
[67] James, 1943, p. 106 (279).
[68] James, 1975, p. 70, his emphasis.

interdependence by synthesising the conceptual with the material aspects of experience. As Dewey affirms:

> We begin by noting that 'experience' is what James called a double-barrelled word. Like its congeners, life and history, it includes *what* men do and suffer, *what* they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also *how* men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine – in short, processes of *experiencing*…It is 'double-barrelled' in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality.[69]

On this view, qualities, such as values, beauty and indeterminacy are experienced as part of the relations between the self and the environment. James Gouinlock argues that they "…are traits of the situation, of nature: it is the inclusive situation which determines the nature of the subject as experiencer and the object as experienced."[70] James's richly empirical conception of experience provides Dewey with the tools needed for his non-dualistic treatment of the empiricist/rationalist divide.

The importance of James's Radical Empiricism' for this thesis is his grounding of abstracts and universals in sensible experience: "Only in so far as they lead us, successfully or unsuccessfully, back into sensible experience again, are our abstracts and universals true or false at all."[71] James's Radical Empiricism brings the real and ideal together in his relationally rich experience. However, I argue that James falls short of Dewey in terms of his reification of consequences as the relevant accessible and assessable parts of experience, this in turn provides the grounds for my reconstruction of Dewey in light of the fathers of analytic ethical theory – Hume, Kant and Mill.

2.4 Conclusion

Dewey inherited much from James and Peirce. Most relevant to our discussion are two aspects. Firstly, Peirce's method of enquiry based on the scientific method, including his triadic logic, can be understood as a description of a method of responding to anomalies in experience. As we will see in Chapter

---

[69] John Dewey, 1958, (1925), *Experience and Nature*, New York: Dover Publications Inc., p. 8. Hereafter *EN*.
[70] Gouinlock, 1972, p. 19.
[71] James, 1943, p. 39.

Seven, the footprint of Dewey's theory set out in *Logic: the Theory of Inquiry* (1938) mirrors the structure of the scientific method found in Peirce's work and relies on abduction for his proceduralist account of concept use and formation. Peirce argues that anomalous situations trigger the process of applying the scientific methodology, of hypothesis testing. The similarities between the two are clear: an indeterminate situation forces an ongoing process of formulating hypotheses and testing them. Most significantly, Peirce treats true beliefs as independent of opinions but nonetheless accessed through convergence of opinions under the constraints of the triad of reasoning. This lays the groundwork for Dewey's 'community of inquiry'.

Secondly, James's Radical Empiricism, which acknowledged the overwhelming rationalising power of experience,[72] can be seen as a first attempt to employ outcomes of action as accessible grounds for reconciling the real with the ideal. James describes his life's work as being an attempt to "be the happy harmonizer of empiricist ways of thinking with the more religious demands of human beings."[73] Like Peirce, James uses the pragmatic method as a way of testing ideas, of verifying moral beliefs by their impact or usefulness to us. Embedded in this view is the notion that until we encounter a situation that leads us to doubt, our beliefs remain fixed. We only feel the need to provide reasons for our beliefs, our established set of social norms, views and opinions and issues about what we believe to be right and wrong, good and bad when they are being challenged, when new experiences put them under strain.[74]

The classical American Pragmatists subvert the traditional distinction between knowledge and opinion, the rational and empirical, a priori and a posteriori. Whilst traditional views posit that rational *a priori* knowledge is certain, pure and untainted by experience, the pragmatist reconstruction of experience brings the view into question. As will be detailed in Chapter Four, this is a direct response to the Kant of the first Critique, who upheld that there are

[72] CP 7, p. 78.
[73] James, 1975, p. 70.
[74] It goes without saying that not all individual's beliefs changed in regards to the matter, however, it did demonstrate that enough of the populace supported the need to change the outdated law.

dualisms and that their components are radically different and distinct: phenomena/noumena, empirical observation/pure concepts, real/ideal. Peirce's triad of reasoning (deduction, induction and abduction) marks the beginning of the pragmatist endeavour to overcome these divides. Peirce's account falls short, however. Whilst he endeavours to demonstrate that pure concepts emerge out of and are informed by empirical observations, he becomes frustrated with the contradictions apparent in the *Critique of Pure Reason* leading him to, as some theorists argue, abandon Kant.[75] As will become evident in the ensuing chapters, if we focus on the third Critique, where Kant develops his conception of aesthetic reflective judgment, which brings the real and ideal together, we can address these problems. By not engaging with Kant's later work, Peirce missed this important aspect.[76] Peirce's failure to take Kant's third Critique into account limits his instrumentalism and indicates a point of departure for James. Whereas Peirce stops short of unifying experience with the understanding, James tackles the divide by unifying sense with reason from an empiricist position. I argue that Dewey offers a radical departure from empiricism and rationalism that goes beyond both Peirce and James's positions. This point can only be articulated by situating Dewey as responding to the theories of the analytic tradition that maintained such dichotomies and preceded classical American Pragmatism. I effectively take a historical step back, in order to move forward.

For the classical American Pragmatists, the empirical informs the rational, however both Peirce and James's accounts fall short. Neither quite manages to straddle the gap between the tangled realities of practice and the abstract forms of theory. In contrast, Dewey accepts that plurality and disparate forces are integral factors of moral life. His proceduralist account acknowledges that theoretically, there is no correct solution for every difficulty with which each and

---

[75] See: A. De Tienne, 1989, "Peirce's Early Method of Finding the Categories" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 25, pp. 385-407. Kaag argues that this view should be attributed to "Douglas Anderson's observation that, in his fixation on logic, Peirce "paid little attention to Kant's Third Critique" and might have overlooked Kant's development of "imagination," "genius," and aesthetic creation on the grounds that they had little to do with the formal subjects of the first two Critiques. There is scant evidence that Peirce carefully considered Kant's later works." Kaag, 2005, p. 516.

[76] M. Murphey, 1968, "Kant's Children: The Cambridge Pragmatists" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 4, pp. 3-34. From Kaag, 2005, FN 3.

every individual is confronted.[77] Seemingly interminable moral disagreements provide evidence for these tensions in our moral lives. I argue that Dewey transforms Peirce and James's pragmatic method into a process focused theory, which demands engagement in genuine communication. It is only through such a process that there is any chance of mediating seemingly intractable disagreements about values, laws and consequences.

It is clear that Dewey amalgamates and builds on the work of his pragmatist predecessors; his project is, at its core, a scientific approach to moral problems. This is, James Campbell notes, a kind of logic of practical activity, of testing and reassessing our morals as a means to foster social reconstruction.[78] Whilst Dewey is methodologically a pragmatist, I argue that positioning him within the historical trajectory of ideas found in earlier analytic ethical theory enables me to emphasise distinctive aspects of his theory and so present him in a new light. Hume's sentimentalism offers us an empiricist explanation for moral motivation based on the idea that humans naturally prefer to experience positive, not negative, sensations. Kant refutes this view, arguing that feelings are fickle and volatile matters of fortuitousness and character and as such cannot be grounds for morality. We must act according to the moral laws made accessible by human capacity for rational thought. Mill stresses the importance of consequences, in terms of being held accountable for actions and in regards to the formative effect of actions on self and society. In response, Dewey argues that their focus on attempting to find a unitary view, a single theory that can capture all aspects of moral decision making, oversimplifies the moral life.[79]

Hume's specific brand of sentimentalism acts as the starting point for tracing a way to Kant's aesthetic reflective judgment, where the divide between sense and the understanding, the real and ideal is first addressed in his notion of the *sensus communis*, or the common sense. Kant posits that our capacity to communicate and share aesthetic reflective judgments leaves room for debate and therefore disagreement. By looking at Kant in response to Hume, I am able to

---

[77] Dewey, *Independent*, p. 209.
[78] James Campbell, 1995, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence*, Chicago and Las Salle, Illinois: Open Court, p. 22.
[79] Dewey, *Independent*, p. 208.

trace the historical development of the idea and so emphasise its impact on Dewey. Reading Mill's *Utilitarianism* alongside his *On Liberty* supports the presentation of a more liberal and munificent reading of Mill's theory, highlighting his notion of community and so forging a strong association to Dewey that posits a reciprocal relationship between the self and community. This is an information loop, a process of enquiry and experience that includes the ongoing relationships between perceiving, sensing, thinking, acting and outcomes.

I render Dewey as engaged in a process of absorbing and responding to these different aspects of traditional ethical theories, facilitating me to present a richer and more well rounded reading of Dewey's ethical project. This allows us to see the origins of Dewey's ideas in contrast to what he found wanting in Peirce and James as well as in the ethical theories that preceded them. Whilst Peirce and James initiate the pragmatist endeavour to unite theory and practice, both accounts fall short of surmounting the rationalist/empiricist divide. By situating Dewey within the Hume-Kant-Mill historical trajectory, I am able to trace key relevant concepts that contribute to the maintenance of this divide. I am then in a position to proffer a hermeneutics of the sentimentalism-rationalism structure grounded in pragmatist assumptions concerning the two-way exchange between conceptual development and perception. The outcome is a proceduralist and pluralist account of Dewey, where morality emerges and develops through diversity, unfinished and progressing wherever thinking beings are at work. This in turn allows us to address more immediate problems, such as how to cope with moral disagreement, with clashes of judgment and value through a process of communication. Dewey's pragmatist inheritance became the foundations for his account of the metaphysical reality of our experience of relations, where the relations are just as real as the properties that they relate: subject and object; individual and society; self and other; theory and practice. This chapter demonstrates that whilst Dewey certainly inherited much from his pragmatist forebears, limiting our analysis to these precursors alone, limits our account of Dewey.

3. Making Connections: David Hume & John Dewey

David Hume was a methodological and conceptual empiricist. He aimed to develop a science of man through the experimental empirical method of careful observation of human life: of how people behave in company, in daily affairs and in pleasure. The result is a virtue theory of ethics that offers a sentimentalist explanation for why we are motivated to act morally. This is a description of what people's moral judgments are like and how, psychologically speaking, people go about making moral judgments and living moral lives. Through an exegesis of relevant Humean concepts, this chapter argues that traces of his explanation of moral motivation can be seen in John Dewey's proceduralist theory of morality. This marks the first step of locating Dewey within established analytic ethical theory.

3.1 Introduction

Hume's task was to describe, as opposed to prescribe, morality. According to Hume, the foundations of moral judgments stem from the human capacity to feel, to internally experience passions of approval and disapproval in response to actions. These affective aspects of morality form the bedrock of our moral selves and are an essential aspect of what it is to be human. By embedding morality in feelings, Hume assigns reason a secondary role, as the discoverer of means to ends. It is reason's job to work out how to achieve the moral ends that feelings identify, tempered by the human desire to live harmoniously with others.

Hume's concern for the effects of moral actions in terms of character is evidence of a broader theory of virtue. Traits that elicit approval are useful or agreeable to oneself or others and those that elicit disapproval are harmful or unpleasant for oneself or others. Virtuous acts demonstrate that a person is being courageous or kind or generous and in turn, the act stimulates a feeling sensation of pleasure in the chest, a feeling of approval. A virtuous character and the virtues themselves, arise both naturally and through social exposure. In terms of the former, it is natural for humans to pursue feelings of pleasure, as

humans, we have desires and these desires drive us to act. We are also fundamentally social creatures. The combination of the two enables Hume to extend the power of individual desire to a humanitarian sentiment of sympathy for other humans: we are motivated to act morally, to do what is morally right because it causes pleasant sensations, which are accentuated by being recognised and condoned by the greater community.

My account of Hume's particular brand of sentimentalism focuses on the interaction between what he calls 'the passions' and 'reason'. Section 3.2 offers an overview of Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas in order to clarify the connection between morality, the passions and reason in section 3.3 and an overview of the role of utility in terms of motivation to make moral judgments in section 3.4. Section 3.5, traces connections between Hume and Dewey and the final section, 3.6, concludes the chapter by arguing that Dewey's focus on the development of a method of reflective evaluation was a way of employing Hume's feelings of approval and disapproval as rational tools that make people more conscientious of their moral responsibilities within communities of enquiry.

3.2 Impressions & Ideas

Hume offers a thoroughly naturalistic description of humans that captures both sides of the nature/nurture debate. His account treats **natural** virtues as universal human dispositions that can then be nurtured and moulded through acculturation. For example, the natural virtue, 'sympathy'[1] enables us to communicate our pains and pleasures and understand the pain and pleasures of others. Our social selves desire to live in functioning societies, which are maintained by **artificial** virtues, such as justice. Natural feelings of empathy are the bedrock out of which broader artificial concepts such as justice emerge. While the latter emerge out of social conventions, the former are a precondition for the kind of social arrangements, which allow us to realise our humanity. The job of reason is to deliberate on actions in order to achieve our desired ends.

[1] Hume's 'sympathy' is more like what we call empathy today.

Thus Humean morality is both felt and judged. The initial feeling of pleasure or pain gives rise to the judgment of praise or blame.

This view stems out of Hume's epistemology, which posits that there are two routes to knowledge, via impressions or ideas. Impressions are primary, immediately perceived, direct sensory inputs. Interestingly, Hume does not restrict this category of immediate sensory input to the information garnered from the five senses. Impressions are any immediate perceptions **and/or** sensations; "all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will."[2] The knowledge accessible from impressions includes immediate perceptions such as the colour of a leaf as well as any immediate sensations, such as the feeling of happiness. So, in the case of moral motivation, our natural virtues arise from these primary impressions, which are immediate pre-cognitive sensed and felt responses to the environment. Ideas, on the other hand, are secondary because they involve reflection upon our impressions. So, for example, when you think about 'greenness' or remember a moment when you felt anger, you are reflecting on impressions and are thus toying with ideas. Moral knowledge reflects our capacity to reason, to formulate impressions into complex ideas that the form the basis of moral systems and rules for behaviour.

In *A Treatise of Human Nature*,[3] Hume explains his notion of complex ideas through an analysis of the concept 'causation'. This discussion helps to illustrate the process involved in the development of ideas through reflection on impressions. According to Hume's epistemic picture, we perceive impressions and from these we derive or conceive ideas. His analysis of causation begins by asking us to think about the causative link between a cause and its effect.[4] The argument starts with the claim that we must be able to perceive a direct connection between a cause and its effect if we are to have any certainty about the process of causation. But, the problem is that we have no direct impression

---

[2] David Hume, 1932, (1777), *Hume: Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principle of Morals by David Hume*, L.A. Selby-Bigge (Ed.), 2nd Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press. Hereafter *Enquiry* and *Enquiry Morals* respectively. *Enquiry*, II:12, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p.18.
[3] David Hume, 1973, (1739), *Hume's A Treatise of Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press. Hereafter referred to as *Treatise*.
[4] Hume, *Treatise*, I:III:VI, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), pp. 89-90.

or sensation of the connection. For example, we see heat under a kettle and we see steam rise and water bubble, but we do not actually see or perceive the connection between the heat and the bubbles or the heat and the steam. We **infer** a connection, between the heat and the water boiling, the 'causation', without any direct perception of it. We are not witnesses to causation itself.[5]

In Book I, Part III, section VI of the *Treatise* Hume identifies his concern about inferences concerning causal connections, "which can lead us beyond the immediate impressions of our memory and senses."[6] Causal connections are neither directly perceived nor deductively derived. This leads to the epistemological problem that if lots of our complex ideas are not experienced directly as impressions, then how do we formulate our idea of the concept? As the boiling water example demonstrates, we perceive a constant conjunction between two objects and through the imagination we conceive a relation between them of causality. This is a form of inductive knowledge as the product of the imagination, of **conceiving** rather than **perceiving** connections. He concludes that the problem of empiricism is that the objects of inductive reasoning are neither self-evident nor capable of logical demonstration.[7]

This is Hume's skeptical contribution to epistemology and its importance to our discussion is apparent when thought about in terms of the role that Hume awards inductive reason in moral judgments. Propositions such as mathematical axioms and formal logic are true because of their logical relations. This is an example of deductive reasoning where the truth of the proposition is accessible through the examination of the ideas themselves. In contrast, propositions derived from inductive reasoning are contingent. Such propositions are typically products of our ability to draw conclusions from experience through the combining of impressions (from memory and senses) with formerly conceived ideas. They are reasonably held judgments that hold true insofar as they are supported by our experience of them: "…there be something present to the mind, either seen or remember'd; and…from this we infer something connected with it,

---

[5] This became known as Hume's problem of induction and it forms the cornerstone of his overall problem of knowledge, a detailed account of which is not necessary to this thesis.
[6] Hume, *Treatise*, I:III:VI, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 89.
[7] Hume, *Enquiry*, IV, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), pp. 25-39.

which is not seen or remember'd."[8] As products of our experience, they are a contingent form of knowledge.

Morality, for Hume, is based upon one's own emotional reaction of approval or disapproval, which are generalised into rules, which necessarily remain contingent, given that they are the result of inductive reasoning. Hume's example of willful murder helps to clarify his point.[9] Even though we judge willful murder to be a vicious act, we cannot examine it and find the vice itself. Just as we do not directly perceive causation, it is not self-evident, so too is there no directly perceivable 'viciousness' in murder:

> The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in your self, not in the object.[10]

This leads Hume to conclude that when we make moral judgments, we are projecting onto the world. Like our concept of causation, moral responses are not qualities in objects, they are not perceived. Rather they are the result of induction, they are conceived by formulating ideas about our impressions, our experience of emotions in response to situations. When "such particular objects, in all past instances, have been constantly conjoin'd with each other"[11] we have the basis for knowledge. So, according to Hume, moral knowledge is inferred from the constant conjunction between our emotional responses to experiences. We feel an unsettling sense of disapproval when we witness willful murder. Through inference, we establish rules about justice.

Hume offers a naturalistic justification for this picture of how moral considerations affect us and why they succeed in governing our actions.[12] While morality is first and foremost a felt response for Hume, he does have a helpful account of two types of passions, which aids us in terms of connecting us back to his epistemic distinction between impressions and ideas.[13] Direct passions such as desire, aversion, hope, fear, grief and joy are impressions that "arise

---

[8] Hume, *Treatise*, I:III:VI, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 89.
[9] Hume, *Treatise*, III:I:I, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 468.
[10] Hume, *Treatise*, III:I:I, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), pp. 468-9.
[11] Hume, *Treatise*, I:III:VI, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 90.
[12] Hume, *Treatise*, II:I:III, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 280.
[13] Hume, *Treatise*, II:I:II, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 277-279.

immediately from good or evil, from pain or pleasure."[14] They are the immediate felt response, the fluttering in the breast of approval or disapproval, which make us feel pleasure (good) or pain (bad). Indirect passions, such as justice, on the other hand, are not immediately experienced. They are ideas that are generated via more complex amalgamations of the experiences of the self in all forms of relations.[15] Take the idea of the self, for example. Akin to the idea of 'causation', the idea of the 'self' is, for Hume, a product of inference, of our ability to connect successive perceptions. The self is evidenced by the affections we feel toward ourselves.[16] Different events trigger an array of association, which have over time become linked with pride and humility. For example, wit, good-sense, learning, courage, integrity, skills, beauty, and so on are virtues or qualities that evoke pride. So, the self will be elated by pride and dejected by humility.[17]

For Hume, there is a conceived causal link between motives, character, and action. So, for example, in order to hold someone morally responsible for their action, they must not only have acted abhorrently, but also have done so intentionally, as opposed to accidentally. Hume is embedding the causal chain in the character of the individual, so that responsibility and blame can only be administered if an individual has an enduringly bad character that causes their action. This evokes experience and in this case, the indirect passion of blame. Epistemically, this mirrors Hume's sceptical leanings. In the same way that observation of causal connections between objects, gives rise to the idea of causation, the causal connections between our sensations and another's motivation, character traits and actions in relation to human behaviour, gives rise to moral judgments. Like other kinds of inductive knowledge, moral knowledge results from our experience of acts upon the self. Perceiving blame and merit when in fact there are none to perceive. There are only passions we experience in response to some object or event.

---

[14] Hume, *Treatise*, II:I:I, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 276.
[15] As we will soon see, indirect passions are thus akin to inferred concepts such as causation: they are neither directly perceived (matters of fact), nor deductively derived (relations of ideas).
[16] Hume, *Treatise*, II:I:II, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 277.
[17] Hume, *Treatise*, II:I:II, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 278.

3.3 The Passions & Reason

Hume's overall aim is to articulate a common sense of morality, for if we understand the basis of human morality then we will be better equipped to reflectively improve our moral evaluations. This is a significant aspect of Hume's account as it marks the point of contact between the passions and reason. There is a great difference between pronouncing an action vicious and therefore morally wrong, and anything we can discover by simply perceiving an action.[18] So, to return to our earlier example, in the case of willful murder, reasoning allows us to infer that a person deliberately and unnecessarily took another's life and that this act caused suffering, pain, harm and so on. While Hume granted that when we observe and infer these characteristics in an act we could conclude that the action is vicious, from perception alone. However, such a perceptually based belief does not motivate us to act, or not act. Moral judgments differ from perceptions, as they are motivating. Otherwise we will never act on our inferences, or, in the case of murder, refrain from acting. This leads us to Hume's theory on the will.

Morality is something that makes you do something – it **necessarily involves reference to the will**. This is a relation of sorts, namely, a mental stance toward external objects, a relation between "internal action and external objects"[19] but it is more than a knowledge relation. This relates back to Hume's theory of mind and the necessary relation between motives, character, and action (3.2). Hume's empowerment of the passions as the director of the will disempowers reason. In doing so, he is able to account for someone who, whilst they reason their way to knowing what their moral obligations are and have the capacity to differentiate the virtuous from the vicious, still fails to act on their reasonings. As Hume puts it, "'tis one thing to know virtue, and another to conform the will to it."[20]

Hume treats the will as a faculty of consciousness, where the will has the power of control over the mind and as such is the director of actions. It is the will

---

[18] Barry Stroud, 1977, *Hume*, London: Routledge, p. 178. Commas are insertions by me.
[19] Hume, *Treatise*, III:I:I, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), pp. 464.
[20] Hume, *Treatise*, III:I:I, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 465.

that causes action, not reason. Hume argued that intentional actions are the product of the passions, for "reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will." Moreover, "reason can never oppose passion in the direction of the will."[21] Our passions, our immediate felt responses of pleasure or pain trigger the will to act. Reason steps in as a secondary arbitrator, weighing feelings of pain and pleasure against broader aims of what is good for us. The only way we are moved to do anything is through the will being stimulated by the passions to act.[22] Insofar as actions are directed at passion grounded ends, reason is enlisted to work out appropriate actions to achieve them.

Morally speaking, reason works out the actions that will cause us gratification if we engage in them, or that will at least be helpful or useful to ourselves and others. Reason helps agents see which actions and qualities are beneficial or efficacious but does not itself set the standard of morality or set the ends to be promoted. While reason determines which actions are conducive to calculating the utility of actions in terms of self and society, it can never motivate action on its own. We must first anticipate pleasure or pain from obtaining that end. The anticipation of pain or pleasure gives rise to feelings of desire or aversion for the object in question. As morality is felt, rather than judged, it is the passions, not reason that motivates us to act morally. The chosen actions, demonstrates our volition and motivation, as our desires reflect our appetites and inclinations. This means that some cultivation is necessary, in order to shape our desires and inculcate morality. Reason only steps in secondarily to direct the impulse. "Reason is, and ought only be, the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."[23]

Hume goes on to argue that moral distinctions of right and wrong are felt responses that stem from the 'moral sense'.[24] You know that something is virtuous by the pleasing sensation, an immediate response to human behaviours. This is a naturalistic account where feelings of approval and disapproval are our

---

[21] Hume, *Treatise*, II:III:III, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 413.
[22] This is a reflection of Hume's broader theory of mind, a detailed description of which is not necessary for our purposes.
[23] Hume, *Treatise*, II:III:III, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 415.
[24] Hume, *Treatise*, III:II:I, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), pp. 470-476.

natural sympathetic responses to behaviour.[25] By extension, when we are presented with other people's difficulties, the faculty of the 'moral sense' enables us to recognise and through generalisation of this sympathy, empathise with others. "We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous."[26]

This is not to say that every time we make a moral judgment, it is necessary to actually experience a feeling of disapproval. While feelings are a natural aspect of morality, moral judgments themselves are assertions about the morality of another's actions and character, not simply an individual's emotional response. Reason allows us to generalise passions and weigh them against broader aims of what is good for all. But it is the laws of human nature, in particular the sentiment of humanity, which, explains the power that the virtues have over us in terms of motivating us to act morally. As Hume explains, having a sense of virtue is the human capacity to feel satisfaction of a particular kind in the contemplation of a certain type of character. The feeling itself constitutes our praise or admiration. "We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner, we in effect feel that it is virtuous."[27] We perceive many things and then conceive that the act is virtuous.

Hume's legacy is to teach us that there is no necessary *a priori* relation between acts and judgments of virtue and vice. The problem of empiricism is that moral knowledge is neither self evident nor capable of logical demonstration. We infer connections between events without any direct perception of it, strictly speaking. We are not witnesses to badness itself. In terms of morality, this suggests that judgment is grounded in an inter-subjective calibration of value. This opens the way for Dewey's 'community of enquiry' where moral judgment is concerned.

---

[25] Hume, *Treatise*, III:II:I, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), p. 471.
[26] Hume, *Treatise*, III:II:I, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), p. 471.
[27] Hume, *Treatise*, III:I:II, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), p. 471.

3.4 The Role of Utility in Moderating the Passions

The Humean account of motivation is important to this thesis as it foreshadows many aspects of Mill and Dewey. Hume's particular brand of sentimentalism posits that without warm feelings arising from virtuosity or aversive feelings of disgust when confronted with vice, morality would not have any influence over us and as we saw in the previous section, reason has a secondary, instrumental role. Reason allows us to engage in a process of generalisation from experience, so that we can identify "those universal principles, from which all censure or approbation is ultimately derived."[28] It assists us to make judgments about our originally existing passions and it enables us to infer someone's character from their actions, leading to general rules based on historical precedence.

Hume provides a utility driven account of social virtues, which, as we will see in chapter five, foreshadows my social and political reading of Mill's utilitarian theory. Hume argues that social virtues are judged in terms of their benefits. This is not to say that there is something intrinsically or objectively good in something's being useful. As Hume argues, useful things incite a feeling of approbation in us, so long as we have the relevant background learning…

> A machine, a piece of furniture, a vestment, a house well contrived for use and convenience, is so far beautiful, and is contemplated with pleasure and approbation. An experienced eye is here sensible to many excellences, which escape persons ignorant and uninstructed…In general, what praise is implied in the simple epithet *useful*! What reproach in the contrary![29]

Hume grounds his theory on the relationship between the individual and society, where human nature is viewed as both self-interested and social.[30] "Morals excite the passions and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular."[31] Morality involves a felt response of sympathy that is mediated by considerations of utility, elevating moral over selfish passions. So, in terms of motivation, we care about others because we have the natural ability to sympathise. While moral judgments have their roots in subjective felt responses to objective circumstances, it is through the sympathetic passions

---

[28] David Hume, *Enquiry Morals*, I:I:138, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 174.
[29] Hume, *Enquiry Morals*, II:II:142, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 179.
[30] Hume, *Treatise*, III:II:I, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), p. 477-484.
[31] Hume, *Treatise*, III:I:I, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), p. 457.

tempered by considerations of utility that we are engaged by our moral lives so that our actions are adjudicated and regulated by moral principles. It is at this point that "*reason* and *sentiment* concur"[32]. Hume's moral judgments are generalised through intersubjective mediation and societal conventions, an idea that will be built upon in the following chapters.

While many actions will give rise to feelings of pleasure, only those which give rise to approval/disapproval are considered relevant to morality.[33] "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger."[34] This is a way of reinforcing the limitations of reason. Recall the role of reason as the discoverer of causal relations, as outlined in section 3.2. Whilst reason conceives causal connections, it does not, as we have just seen, motivate us to act. On the one hand we need to desire to do some thing or have an aversion to having it happen, in order for us to be motivated to bring it about or prevent it.[35] On the other we are motivated to engage in reasoning in order to promote positive, as opposed to negative affects – in order to realise our preferences.[36]

Reason can only tell us how to bring about whatever it is that we desire. As Paul Guyer argues, Hume is not out to prove that reason cannot produce passions that would be motivating, but rather that passions do not provide premises for reasoning.[37]

The relevant point to our discussion is that it is the passions, not reason that motivate actions, so it is the passions, not reason that must be moderated. As Hume puts it: "…we can change people's passions by changing their relation to relevant objects, which will naturally cause such a change although not give a reason for any change of passions."[38] Morality hinges on the cultivation of self-desires in line with society-desires. This process of modifying the passions

---

[32] Hume, *Enquiry Morals*, I:I:136, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 172.
[33] Paul Guyer offers a compelling analysis of the role of reason in terms of mediating moral feeling in chapter four "Reason, Desire, and Action" of Paul Guyer, 2008, *Knowledge, Reason, and Taste*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 161-197.
[34] Hume, *Treatise*, II:III:III, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), p. 416.
[35] Guyer, 2008, p. 168.
[36] Guyer, 2008, p. 168.
[37] Guyer, 2008, p. 169.
[38] Guyer, 2008, p. 173.

involves changing relations to relevant objects by changing perceptions, through custom and repetition.[39] Socially embedding desires allows Hume to explain how impulses and passions can be modified in order to effect change in our behaviour.[40]

As we will see in chapter four, Guyer argues that Hume and Kant are aligned in many ways. While their conceptions of reason were very different, their theories of moral motivation are comparable. Hume and Kant have similar "models of how our deepest moral commitments actually move us to action."[41] Hume's concept of the object of reason was narrow, defined in terms of real relations and real existences. As we will see in the next chapter, Kant's 'reason' was broader as it provides for a universally binding notion of obligation. For now it is enough to point out that in Book III of the *Treatise*, Hume argues that the passions are shaped by custom and a societal sense of approval and disapproval. He embeds the passions as moral desires within a social context rather that the individual or isolated mind, where constellations of feelings, outcomes and other's responses, which cohere over time and through association, impact on our subsequent desires and deliberations.

The other crucial aspect to moderating the passions is the end to which Hume thought all our desires ultimately aim namely, tranquillity – of both individuals and society.[42] This entails that an individual's morality is not idiosyncratic as it is intersubjectively constrained. The embedding of passions (both direct and indirect) in the broader utility of society, guards the virtuous life against being driven by idiosyncratic desires. As we will see more clearly in later chapters, and is of key importance to Dewey's proceduralism, objectivity emerges out of intersubjective agreement.

---

[39] A theme taken up by Dewey and expanded upon in his discussion of habits (5.2).
[40] Hume, *Treatise*, II:III:IV-V, Selby-Bigge, (Ed.), pp. 418-424.
[41] Guyer, 2008, p. 189. The problem that Hume and Kant identify is that those who cannot control their impulses are not free. For Kant, no one deserves esteem for what happens to him or her but only for what they freely do. Freedom of choice is a necessary but not sufficient condition of moral merit.
[42] Guyer argues that this is evident in Hume's treatment of reason. While it is neither natural or reasonable to prefer the destruction of the world over the scratching of one's finger, we can set ourselves the goal of a life that would satisfy a coherent set of desires in which the desire for tranquility is primus inter pares, or first among equals. Guyer, 2008, p. 165. See also Guyer, 2008, pp. 174-195.

3.5 Conclusion

A detailed account of Dewey's proceduralism is set out in chapters six and seven, however relevant connections between Hume and Dewey can be extrapolated from the information assembled above. Integral to their connection is the role that Dewey affords feelings and reason in relation to moral judgments, however this connection is limited. As we have just seen, Hume explained motivation at the most fundamental level, in terms of the individual's natural ability to sympathise. By extension, he claimed that the individual cares about society because she recognises that the satisfaction of the desires of others impacts upon the satisfaction of her own desires. In contrast, Dewey considers the individual as a product of society, rather than existing prior to it and rather than cooperating with it for her independently perceived interests. I argue that this, reversal of direction of relation between individual and society forms the basis for Dewey's non-dichotomous treatment of the sentimentalism-rationalism structure.

In Hume there is a weak sense of individual responsibility resulting from his grounding the fundamental aspect of morality in the passions, in the immediate felt response of dis/approbation. This is a result that Dewey sought to avoid, while maintaining certain aspects of Hume's empiricism. For example, Dewey extends Hume's sentimentalism regarding the cultivational aspect of sentiments, positioning them as an important feature of the moral life. For Dewey, the key to society's functioning and therefore the optimal functioning of human life is in the cultivation of the capacity to make moral judgments. This shifts the emphasis of morality away from the passions and refocuses it on learning to reflect responsibly when engaged in decision-making processes. For Dewey, actions are virtuous if they enhance "an individual's freedom to construct harmonious, flexible, stable life projects that further enhance the individual's

capacity to participate in his or her community's life."[43] The virtues and vices are thus identifiable character traits that can be cultivated, repaired and restored.

Associating Hume with Dewey enables me to draw conclusions otherwise overlooked. For example, Dewey argued that praise and blame are useful tools for ensuring that the broader outcomes of actions on society in general influence our moral judgments. These aspects can be seen in Dewey's analysis of the double sense of "judgment". On the one hand it is intellectual, a matter of reasoning, of weighing the pros and cons. On the other it is making a judgment of moral condemnation or approval. According to Dewey's reflective morality, a rational principle is discovered, which will make coherent "...the inconsistency and arbitrary variations in popular expressions of esteem and disapproval."[44] This does not mean that all our opinions will eventually converge. The toing and froing between self and society, the weighing and balancing of reasons allows us to arrive at a reasoned conclusion that will in turn shape our subsequent sympathies. This demonstrates that Dewey, like Hume, recognised the crucial role of sentiments in moral judgments and that he took Hume's motivational account of the role of social approval and disapproval seriously.

Making moral judgments is both an intuitive and reasoned endeavour for Dewey. Much like Hume's conception of the constellations of feelings and associated ideas, on Dewey's account 'intuition' combines the associations, reasons and feeling brought together in past experiences. One aim of Dewey's proceduralism is to cultivate deliberative decision-making, which is motivating.

> Moral judgments, whatever else they are, are a species of judgments of *value*. They characterise acts and traits of character as having *worth*, positive or negative. Judgments of value are not confined to matters which are explicitly moral in significance...poems, pictures, landscapes...economic standing...weather...all judgment is estimation, appraisal, assigning value to something.[45]

Dewey's focus on the development of reflective evaluation was a way of using the Humean feelings of approval and disapproval as learning tools that make people more conscientious of their moral responsibilities. This enabled him to shift the

---

[43] Jennifer Welchman, 1995, *Dewey's Ethical Thought*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, p. 216.
[44] John Dewey & James H. Tufts, 1932, *Ethics: Revised Edition*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, p.258.
[45] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p.290.

emphasis away from treating reason as an exercise to be carried out in an individual's isolated head and toward reason embedded within a community of rational interactions. Reason thus becomes an arbitrator of communication, where one is required to give an account of oneself in terms shared by that community. As we shall see in 6.2, this reflects Dewey's broader philosophy of mind, which identifies the irreducible interrelationship between nature and nurture, sentience and sapience. The social life shapes human nature just as human nature shapes the social life.

For both Hume and Dewey, the job of morality is to address ethical problems and in doing so, foster social cooperation.[46] Jennifer Welchman provides an insightful summary of the Humean aspects of Dewey's reflective morality:

> [T]o read Dewey as a pragmatic Humean is to highlight the nonteleological, antimetaphysical aspects of Dewey's thought, including the temporality and fragility of the values we cherish and pursue, their origin and dependence on the character of our transactions with our physical and social environments, and finally, the possibility of enhancing those values through the creative application of the latest insights and techniques of modern experimental science…Life, as Dewey sees it, is a process of continual change, the context of action ever varying…Since the social and physical environments in which human communities operate are not static, communal strategies for ameliorating the ills of the situations to which they fall heir will require continual reconstruction, renovation and replacement.[47]

Dewey develops Hume's idea of the socially embedded process of experience into a more explicit 'experience in community' concept. He also maintains Hume's reference to utility. Dewey treats morality as an ongoing process, where problems are to be addressed and readdressed in accord with the success or failure of their restorations. As will be established, Dewey's fundamentally pluralistic and non-absolute view of morality recognises the role of both feelings and reason, accommodating them in equal measure.

A philosophical moral theory addresses what constitutes being right and wrong regarding actions, which impact upon the concept of self and the rights of others. It also addresses why we are motivated to act in accord with these moral judgments. Hume's assertion that morality is primarily felt is a sentimentalist explanation for why we are motivated to act morally. Feelings of approbation

---

[46] Welchman, 1995, p. 216.
[47] Welchman, 1995, p. 217.

and disapprobation are natural, directly perceived impressions. They are sensations, felt responses, which like our senses, provide us with primary information. In terms of their content, they are an equivalent information source to seeing, hearing, touching, and so on. These feelings are what Hume calls the direct passions and when over time they are observed to be in constant conjunction with particular outcomes and responses, they are gradually calibrated with social norms. This is an empiricist account of moral motivation, where internal reasons are based in natural feelings. By including sociability as a natural feeling, Hume is able to explain how our common human nature is the foundation for morality.

The felt response to virtuous and vicious behaviour is also an essential part of making moral judgments for Dewey. His reflective theory of morality treats the positive affect of moral acts on the self and others as necessary aspects of moral motivation, moral judgment and character development. Praise and blame are useful as indicators of moral rightness and wrongness and as tools for the inculcation of the virtues. Reflective evaluation is developed through the inculcation of the self within society. This removes morality from the isolation of an individual's Humean flutterings of feeling and heady rationalisations. In contrast, the Deweyan self is embedded in society and that in itself entails that a community of rational interactions arbitrates feelings and reasoning. The social life shapes human nature just as human nature shapes the social life.

Hume's legacy is to provide an empirically grounded motivational account of moral action. Accordingly, as morality makes us do something, it necessarily involves the will. His explanation for how we are moved to act was that we are sentimental beings. Human sentience imbues us with the capacity to feel, to immediately be affected by our environment. By placing sentiments in the primary position and relegating reason to serving means to ends, Hume succumbs to the problem of division, as per standard 18th century philosophy of mind, discussed in terms of cognitivism and non-cognitivism in chapter eight. While Dewey concurs with Hume's internalist explanation of moral motivation, he argues that it is at the cost of reason and externalism. Thus, as I argue in the next chapter, Dewey turns to Kant for an account of the external and combines the two in order to transcend dichotomous analytic debates about the internal

and external (sentience and sapience). Dewey recognises that as they are integral aspects of how we experience the world, any ethical theory needs to be able to account for both.

Hume's defense of the role of feeling in moral judgment is informative. By allocating morality a place in our experiential reality, Hume paves the way for Dewey's conception of experience. "In his forward to the 1930 Modern Library edition of *Human Nature and Conduct*, [Dewey] wrote: "were it not for one consideration, the volume might be said to be an essay in continuing the tradition of David Hume.""[48] This one consideration makes all the difference. Hume does not satisfactorily acknowledge the two-way relation between social life and human nature. This is what Dewey emphasises: "[Hume] saw the part played by the structure and operations of our common nature in shaping social life…[but] failed to see with equal clearness the reflex influence of the latter upon the shape which a plastic human nature takes because of its social environment."[49]

While this indicates an important development in Dewey's thought further to Hume, the edifying role that Hume allotted passions in moral judgments is not to be undervalued. As Welchman states: "Hume anticipates Dewey's depiction of human acts and projects as the outcomes of human passions and dispositions to act rather than from the agency of a will governed by the faculty of reason."[50] To elaborate on Welchman's thought, we can stipulate that as Dewey would not separate passions from reason, the will would not be governed by reason alone. Dewey recognised that virtues and vices are socially constructed norms, ideals that 'fall out of' our communicative practices and in this respect are subject to the constraint standardly associated with reason.

---

[48] Welchman, 1995, p. 213. Quoting Dewey, 1930, Forward to the Modern Library edition, *HNC*, *MW* 14:228.
[49] Welchman, 1995, p. 214. Quoting Dewey, 1930, Forward to the Modern Library edition, *HNC*, *MW* 14:229.
[50] Welchman, 1995, p. 215. For Hume ref., Welchman, 1995, p. 215, *F/N* 24: "For example, Hume holds that "society is absolutely necessary for the well-being of men; and [moral conventions] are as necessary to the support of society. Whatever restraint they impose on the passions of men, they are the real offspring of those passions, and are only a more artful and refn'd way of satisfying them. Nothing is more vigilant and inventive than our passions." (*Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 526.)"

In the next chapter, further aspects of Dewey's account will come into focus by making connections between certain features of Kant and Dewey's ethics. At first glance, Dewey's assertion that the will is regulated by the passions and that moral values are whatever enhances smooth running societies, seems to signify a point of difference to Kant. However, by adopting a pragmatic reading of Kant via Paul Guyer and others, we can see aspects of Dewey's thought foreshadowed in Kant and consequently those aspects of Dewey's thought are brought to view in a new light. In Humean terms, the shared faculty of the passions ensures that we empathise with others and have a vested interest in creating amenable communities (Mill), a Humean conception of which emphasised the importance of acting in a way, which achieved tranquility.[51] In Kantian terms, right or virtuous acts are those that best contribute to individual freedom and the realm of ends. In Deweyan terms, they are those acts, which contribute to harmonious life and enhance an individual's ability to contribute to their community.

[51] Again drawing on Paul Guyer's analysis in chapter four of *Reason, Knowledge, and Taste*, 2008, this aspect of Hume in relation to Kant, will be further developed in 3.4.

4. Making Connections: Immanuel Kant & John Dewey

Immanuel Kant's aim was to provide a philosophical defence of our common sense knowledge of morality, where morality is objectively grounded. Kant identifies, through philosophical analysis, the most basic principle of the moral system. The outcome is a normative theory of morality that identifies duties and moral obligations to perform right actions, as the basis of moral responsibility. In this chapter I explore those aspects of Kant's moral theory that are relevant to Dewey's proceduralism. I argue that these aspects facilitated Dewey's establishment of the interface between experience, which engages subjectivity, and the social context in virtue of which, moral experience is possible.

4.1 Introduction

Given the historical trajectory of this thesis, I present Kant as responding to the shortcomings he saw in Hume. While for Kant, Hume's sentimentalism was a helpful description of how and why we act morally, it failed to provide grounds for moral obligation and by extension, take into account how we can be held responsible. Kant argued that a moral theory must do more than account for an individual's motivation: it must be able to explain how morality is universally and necessarily obligatory, while being grounded in human rationality. Kant argued that the moral law is identified and determined through rational deliberation. Maxims were derived from this law by a test of universalizability, that is, the categorical imperative. This will be discussed further in the sections below. While both Hume and Kant agree that motivation is a necessary component of moral judgment, they diverge on the source of motivation. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Hume argued that the source of moral motivation was the passions, although he admitted that these were constrained by intersubjectively mediated conventions of society. Kant's dissatisfaction was aimed directly at this aspect. His response was to embed moral motivation in respect for the moral law. In doing so he broke the mould regarding the separation of concept and feeling, another idea that I return to later.

Kant's aim was to provide a metaphysically robust normative theory of morality. What is generally called his deontic approach, awards primary place to acting in accord with universal moral laws, discoverable by all rational agents through reason. By grounding moral judgment in reason, Kant is attempting to eliminate private, arbitrary or idiosyncratic bases to morality, including eliminating prudential reason as a ground for morality. He thought that this was the only thing that made sense, lest rightness and wrongness be simply matters of fortuitousness, a person's natural characteristics (like height and weight) or, in regards to Hume, subjective and potentially volatile, feelings. To paraphrase Paul Guyer, at least *one* way of looking at Kant's conception of his philosophical task was to base the key principles of his moral theory on more secure foundations than the foundations identified by Hume, which rested at best, on experience and custom, and at worst on mere dogmatism.[1] For Kant, morality must be a set of necessary characteristics and behaviours, not matters of fortune and luck.

I argue that Kant's obligatory ends can be understood in the teleology of reason itself, which contains the idea of the moral world, or kingdom of ends, as well as the transcendental idea of the highest good.[2] On this view, virtue is understood as doing what is right, not just with a legalistic attitude, but striving to act always from the moral motive, which is a matter of obligation arising from one's respect for the moral law. As free rational beings, we self legislate the law and then out of respect for our own rational nature, we ultimately act from the moral motive – rather than, for example, for fear of externally imposed sanctions.

The general picture of Kant's deontic moral theory is outlined in section 4.2. His 1785 publication, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*[3] and his 1790 work, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*[4] provide the backdrop for the ensuing discussion on the relationship between reason and feeling in section

---

[1] Guyer, 2008, p. 1.
[2] Guyer, 2011, pp. 117-118.
[3] Immanuel Kant, 2002, (1785), *Immanuel Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals in focus*, Lawrence Pasternack (Ed.), H.J. Paton (trans.), London & New York: Routledge. Hereafter *Groundwork AK* reference *GW*.
[4] Immanuel Kant, 2000, (1790), *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Paul Guyer (Ed.), Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Trans.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Hereafter *CoJ*.

4.3.[5] It then outlines how Kant arrives at the fundamental principle of morality, namely, the categorical imperative, and how it is universalizable, that is, unconditionally valid for all rational creatures. Kant's view of the relation between reason, feelings and rational judgment is then outlined. In section 4.4 I offer a pragmatist reading of Kant drawn primarily from Paul Guyer's argument for interdependence between moral goodness and what constitutes the realm of ends. Section 4.5 examines the relation between Kant and Hume. Section 4.6 extracts connections between Kantian and Deweyan pragmatism and the conclusion, (section 3.7), offers an analysis of the influence of both Hume and Kant on Dewey.

4.2 The Theoretical Groundwork of Kant's Deontic Moral Theory

The basic picture of Kant's deontic moral theory is that virtue lies in the good will of the agent. The argument can be put simply: good will is manifested in the performance of an action for the fulfilling of a duty out of respect for the moral law that you have self-legislated as a free rational being. The test of universalizability, which is called the categorical imperative (hereafter CI), where the moral context is concerned, is to "act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law".[6] This test provides the means for the identification of moral laws and is accessible through the exercise of reason. It is only through the exercise of morality that we can be free, that is, free from acting merely from compulsion. As such, Kant identifies rationality's ultimate value as the means to freedom or autonomy. Central to Kant's commitment to the CI and the autonomy of the will is that the CI is synthetically true as an *a-priori* proposition, that is, necessary and universal. Before going into more detail about what this is and why it is important, I explain

---

[5] I am interested in the *Groundwork* in this section, as opposed to Kant's more mature work on morality, namely his 1797 *Metaphysics of Morals*, which is discussed later in the chapter. I start with the *Groundwork* as it precedes the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* in the *CoJ*, where Kant arguably unifies his theoretical and practical philosophy, thereby paving the way for Dewey's non-dichotomous conceptual framework. Keeping Kant's texts in their chronological order enables me to build toward this point.

[6] Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 421:52], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), p. 50.

the theoretical underpinnings, in particular the relations from which he builds his theory.

Kant's metaphysics was a response to both the rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and the empiricists (Locke, Berkeley and Hume). Kant thought that both the rationalists and the empiricists mistakenly assume that we can know things, as they are in themselves, independent of the conditions of our experience of them. His alternative was to offer a metaphysical account of truth that accommodated aspects of both rationalism and empiricism and in doing so he arguably paves the way for Dewey's non-dichotomous treatment of the sentimentalism-rationalism structure. The aim of Kant's *Groundwork* was to set out this metaphysics of rational, necessary, *a priori* yet synthetic moral laws. The sole feature that gives an action moral worth is not the outcome that is achieved by the action, but the motive that is behind the action. Moral acts are those done from duty, out of a feeling of respect for the moral law. The categorical imperative is Kant's statement of this duty and particular maxims drawn from it. We are bound by duty (hence deontology) to obey moral maxims, which are knowable via the test of universalizability (the CI).

The cornerstone of Kant's metaphysics is his argument for two irreducibly different types of necessary truth: analytic *a priori* and synthetic *a priori*. The latter is the revolutionary aspect of Kant's metaphysics and in conjunction with his work in the third Critique, paves the way for my pragmatist reading of him. Analytic judgments are *a priori* because they are necessarily true or false based on the relevant concepts. For example, the statement 'bachelors are unmarried men' is true because its negation necessarily leads to a logical contradiction. By identifying synthetic *a priori* truths, Kant is able to conceive of the necessity and authority of objects of reason, such as the moral law, over actions in the sensuous world. The outcome is a moral law that is just like a law of nature as described by physics. It holds true in all cases, independently of evidence from sense experience and is not negotiable – it is *a priori* and therefore necessary. This sets the moral law apart from practical rules, which rest on empirical grounds (*a posteriori*). Whilst the moral law is necessary, it is not analytic, like purely deductive inferences such as mathematical reasoning. The moral law is synthetic and hence involves drawing upon experience.

Kant's aim is to demonstrate that reason itself can establish a foundation for morality. He is responding to the question: what would need to be the case for morality to be possible? Whilst Kant relies on a broader conception of reason than Hume, he does concur that the moral law is not an empirical matter of fact (section 3.2). Insofar as it is not a logical relation either, it is not an analytic truth. Instead, Kant argued that the moral law (the CI) is a synthetic *a priori* transcendental deduction. He offered a transcendental proof, which took experience as actual. That is, synthetic truth is always calculated relative to experience, and in this case, moral experience.

Kant's combination of the *a priori* with the synthetic enables him to assert that the moral law is necessary and universal. As Guyer points out, this argument is based on the claim that causal laws of nature hold for all objects of experience, including our mental constructs (the conceptual).[7] This is a naturalistic explanation where *a-priori* knowledge is based on innate (or strictly speaking primitive[8]) categories, or key concepts, in our minds that are a condition of perception and cognition. These categories direct our ability to have experiences and in turn rely on experience, for their instantiation as concepts. As will become evident later in the thesis, this is an important aspect. As Guyer puts it, Kant is asserting that like mathematical relations, moral laws are not relative to culture or the individual.[9]

Kant argued that empirical explanations, including Hume's, were unable to provide an *a priori* account of the conceptual aspect of perception. This was a most unacceptable situation for Kant. Paul Guyer explains:

> He clearly thought that Hume had raised a genuine problem about the real foundations of the concept of causation and the necessary truth of both the general principle that every event has a cause as well as particular causal laws…unless the metaphysical concepts at stake were both properly founded *and* properly limited, that is, restricted to the properly demarcated sphere of human experience, perfectly reasonable doubts about their cognitive value *beyond* this sphere could end up undermining our confidence in their use *within* this sphere.[10]

---

[7] Guyer, 2008, pp. 163.
[8] Primitivism holds that the predisposition is innate, but will atrophy without the appropriate environmental triggers. See Fiona Cowie, 1999, *What's Within? Nativism Reconsidered*, New York: Oxford University Press.
[9] Guyer, 2008, p. 161.
[10] Guyer, 2008, pp. 2-3.

The identification of synthetic *a priori* truths, reached through the transcendental deduction, establishes the necessity of moral laws as *a priori* principles that assume the occurrence of human sense-experience. We might now think of the synthetic *a priori* as what the perceptual and cognitive seems assume about the world in order to provide coherent concepts of it. The conceptual captures the specifically human capacity to know what is seen through the manifold of intuitions, that is, anything that is brought to our attention through the senses.

Instead of drawing ideas from such impressions and finding relations between these ideas, as Hume proposed, according to Kant we subsume the manifold of intuitions, under a concept of the understanding. An example will help clarify this. Take seeing some trees. As 'intuitions', we come to understand trees via a manifold of various sensations available to us. We see a tree, perhaps hear its leaves rustling in the wind, then reach out and touch its rough bark. Each of these sensations (intuitions) are a part of the manifold of identifying the tree that stands in front of us. Identifying them as a discreet object, 'tree', presupposes the imposition of a concept. From there we are able not only to identify and name them as trees, but also count them, group them into broader concepts, such as 'species of trees', 'forest', and so on. Metaphysically, the former, the knowledge of sensible reality is only possible if we have the necessary concepts in the first place, so it is a mistake to think that we can know things as they are in themselves.

The *a priori* gives Kant moral truth, universality and necessity. The synthetic nature enables Kant to establish "*principles which lie at the basis of our knowledge*...[that]…*have no intrinsic necessity,* [they have synthetic *a priori* necessity, not analytic *a priori* necessity] *and cannot possess the absolute authority ascribed to them by rationalists.*"[11] Just as experience is not possible without concepts, concepts are not possible without experience.[12] As Kemp Smith explains, inductive inference from the data of experience is only possible,

---

[11] Norman Kemp Smith, 1962, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason* 2nd Ed., New York: Humanities Press, p. xxxv. His italics.
[12] Immanuel Kant, 1787, pp. 208-238. [*AK* IV: 177-218].

if previous acceptance of rational principles is independently established, we may not, therefore, look to experience for proof of validity.[13] Mirroring Hume's epistemological argument re impressions and ideas (3.2), Kant acknowledges that it is not revealed through analysis nor is it self-evident. Unlike Hume, Kant posits that this means that there is no intrinsic necessity to the moral law (the CI), rather, it is arrived at by assuming what must be the case transcendentally, in order for moral experience to be possible. The CI is established only as a condition of morality, without being demonstrable in actual experience.[14] This is transcendental idealism.

To paraphrase Guyer, Kant's Transcendental Idealism is the theory that we impose the *a priori* forms of cognition on our experience but that they do not reveal the real nature the objects of this experience as they are in themselves.[15] Kant's argument involves two stages. First, he demonstrates that ordinary cognitive capacities presuppose *a priori* cognition and second, he offers an explanation of such *a priori* cognition via a transcendental argument.[16] Kant's transcendentalist aim is to argue for the existence of fundamental cognitive capacities, of which intuition and concepts form the basis. Paul Guyer is useful on this point:

> In the metaphysical exposition, Kant pursues the antiskeptical strategy of arguing that what he clearly assumes to be several ordinary and fundamental cognitive capacities, namely the ability to represent objects as numerically distinct from one another and from ourselves (*Pure Reason*, A 23-24/B 37-38) and the ability to represent states of affairs, whether external or internal, as successive or simultaneous (A 30-31/B 46), as well as the perhaps less commonsensical disposition to represent space and time as single infinite wholes, of which particular bounded spaces and times are parts rather than instances (A 24-25/B 39-49, A 31-32/B 47-48), can all be explained only on the supposition that we have a priori representations of space and time as the forms of empirical intuitions, that is, immediate representations of particular objects in experience.[17]

Kant is positing that *a priori* cognition of space and time is the fundamental form of all intuition (sensation). That is, our ability to distinguish objects and moments from one another and to treat individual spaces and times as parts of all encompassing wholes is necessary. These *a priori* synthetic aspects of

---

[13] Kemp Smith, 1962, p. xvi.
[14] Kemp Smith, 1962, p. xxxv.
[15] Guyer, 2008, p. 42.
[16] Guyer, 2008, p. 40.
[17] Guyer, 2008, pp. 40-41.

common sense are the fundamental bases that facilitate our understanding of experience. The only basis that Kant provides for this claim is that it can be no other way. As Guyer notes, nothing else can explain, how we have *a priori* cognition of objects, that is, knowledge of the necessary features of all objects, prior to the experience of any particular object.[18]

Kant is asserting that human knowledge is relational. In the *Analogies of Experience*,[19] he argues that the concept of the understanding involves three regulative principles, namely, substance, cause and community, which we impose in advance on experience.[20] The first, the principle of the persistence of substance enables us to perceive qualitative change. For example, in order to know by experience that my lounge room wall has changed colours, I must not only perceive the different colours, but also that the wall endures over time. The concept of substance is an *a priori* condition for our experience of an external world of material objects. The second, the principle of causation, asserts that the experience of events, of things happening one after the other, is a synthetic condition that we determine prior to experience. For example, without the concept of causality, we cannot make sense of our experiences of successions of developments – of a fire causing a kettle of water to boil.

The final feature of nature that acts as a regulative principle imposed in advance on everything we experience is, community. The experience of a world of coexisting things requires the presumption of interaction between individual things. For example, in order to believe that the earth, sun and moon are a part of this solar system, I must make some estimation of the mass of each as well as take into account the reciprocity of the gravitational forces between them. As Garth Kemerling explains, on Kant's view, this notion of the natural world as a closed system of reciprocal forces is an *a priori* condition for the intelligibility of experience.[21] This is a naturalist explanation of the understanding.

---

[18] Guyer, 2008, p. 42.
[19] Kant, 1787, pp. 208-238, [*AK* IV: 177-218].
[20] Much of the following discussion on Kant's *Analogies of Experience* is drawn from Garth Kemerling, 1997/2011, *Kant: Experience and Reality*, http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/5g.htm Accessed 17th March, 2015.
[21] Kemerling, 1997/2011.

> Morality, no less than knowledge, presupposes *a priori* principles. These, however, are never self-evident, and cannot be established by any appeal to intuition. They have authority only to the extent to which they can be shown to be the indispensable presuppositions of a moral consciousness that is undeniably actual.[22]

Three of Kant's pure concepts of the understanding (substance, cause and community) are *a priori* features of nature, which are applied to the manifold of intuitions and enable unity of apperception. Without them, experience cannot be made intelligible. This forms the metaphysical foundation for Kant's Transcendental Idealism, where he applies the transcendental argument to morality in order to conclude that moral laws are of a universal nature and as such are universally binding – obligatory. As ideals that cannot be given in experience, moral laws can only be subject to this kind of transcendental proof. As will soon become evident, it is the *a priori* concept of 'community', which provides the grounds for my pragmatic reading of Kant (4.4).

4.3 Respect & Moral Motivation

In the last section we established that in terms of his moral theory, Kant sought the second category of necessary truth, the synthetic *a priori*, as a way of fortifying the authority of the moral law. The central metaphysical question in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*[23] is: 'how are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?' The answer is long and much argued over, however Kant's general point is that synthetic *a priori* claims, like those from geometry and natural science, are true because of the structure of the mind that knows them. As the *a priority* of the moral law enables it to transcend experience by ensuring that it is not situation specific, its validity is established neither through experience (induction) nor theoretical reason (deduction), but by its universal applicability to all rational beings. They are facts of which we are *a priori* conscious. So, our knowledge of the moral law is, like sense-experience, a given fact, our rationality enables us to then deduce its transcendental conditions and establish its validity.

---

[22] Kemp Smith, 1962, p. xxxvi.
[23] Immanuel Kant, 1788, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Mary Gregor, (trans. & Ed.), 1997, *Critique of Practical Reason/Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant's program can be read as an endeavour to construct valid foundations for pure moral philosophy, devoid of everything empirical, including anthropology, social norms, psychology, culture and so on. "Do we not think it a matter of the utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy completely cleansed of everything that can only be empirical and appropriate to anthropology?"[24] Kant thought pure grounds for morality were necessary because people do what they shouldn't do, so we cannot expect to derive what we **should** do from what we do.[25] Moral philosophy derives its force from reason and gives humankind, as rational beings, *a priori* laws. Kant's aim is to construct moral laws that are universal and necessary so that they are capable of providing a ground for obligation and thereby action.

Hume recognised that the validity of concepts (such as causation) is not an empirical matter, as it cannot be proven by experience. In contrast, Kant argues that experience is impossible without concepts as they describe the way the mind provides a systematic structuring, which in part constitute representations. This structure is prior, in explanatory terms, to the mental representations that both empiricists and rationalists analysed. Kant's methodological innovation, the transcendental argument, enables him to separate the moral law from experience. To put this in contemporary terms, with the tools we have available today, it is quite reasonable to replace the transcendental argument with a naturalist explanation regarding what would need to be the case in terms of cognitive processes in order for us to be able to perceive and cognise as we do. These explanations would demonstrate how such cognisance is possible in the mind, that is, how the brain would need to be structurally, in order for such reasonings to take place.[26]

---

[24] Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 389:vi], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), pp. 20-21.

[25] Or as Hume puts it: "'what is, is no test of what ought to be.'" in Kemp Smith, 1962, p. 572. This will be a recurring theme, for now we just need to acknowledge that Kant thought that the is-ought or description/prescription distinction was insurmountable.

[26] An excellent argument for interpreting Kant's work as a naturalistic endeavour can be found in Christine Korsgaard's "The Authority of Reflection". Christine M. Korsgaard, 1996, "The Authority of Reflection" in *The Sources of Normativity*, Onora O'Neill (Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 90-130. Evidence for this view of Korsgaard: David Copp, 2004, "Moral Naturalism and Three Grades of Normativity" in Peter Schaber (Ed.) *Normativity in Naturalism*, Rutgers University: Transaction Books, pp. 7-46, pp. 35-38. This does not entail that any of the aforementioned are pragmatists or that they offer a pragmatist reading of Kant. An argument

Where moral motivation is concerned, we might apply the same reasoning. Unlike the moral law, (the CI), moral judgments are context specific. They are informed by experience and are used to work out how to instantiate the moral law. Moral judgments involve the test for universalizability. This is categorical as we recognise that the demands of universalisability are unconditional. It remains an imperative because while we recognise that the resulting judgment is something that we ought to follow, it may subjectively be seen as a constraint, as something that we may not always want to follow, regardless of knowing that it is what we ought to. How then, is moral law affective? What is it that motivates us to follow moral laws, to act from duty and subscribe to obligation?

Kant's answer resides in the will, or more precisely the good will. "It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a *GOOD WILL*."[27] The will is a faculty of choosing only that which reason, independently of inclination, desire, or consideration of consequences, recognises as practically necessary (*a priori* synthetic). Kant is defining will through practical reason. He is moving moral goodness away from conditional goods, such as virtues and character, in order to exclude any taint of contingency, where their dependence on circumstances leaves too much leeway for their goodness.

> Morality is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will i.e., to the possible giving of universal law by the maxims of the will). The action which can be compatible with the autonomy of the will is permitted; that which does not agree with it is prohibited. The will whose maxims are necessarily in harmony with the laws of autonomy is a holy will or an absolutely good will. The dependence of a will not absolutely good on the principle of autonomy is…*obligation*. The objective necessity of an action from obligation is called duty.[28]

---

against Kantian naturalism can be found in Jennifer Uleman, 2010, *An Introduction to Kant's Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. A naturalist reading of Kant forms the foundation for a pragmatist understanding of Kant and underpins such interpretations as Guyer's and McMahon's. Eames offers an excellent outline of pragmatic naturalism in general: S. Morris Eames, 1977, *Pragmatic Naturalism: An Introduction*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, and chapter four of Talisse & Aikin, 2007, pp. 84-106.

[27] Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 393:1], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), p. 25.

[28] Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 440], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), p. 57.

Kant's unconditional good will is an attempt to insert necessity and for that matter, certainty, into goodness.[29] He advocated that reason requires acting from a sense of duty and as rational creatures we act dutifully. His point is that while we rightly consider the virtues to be valuable, they are not stable. So, in the *Groundwork* Kant discusses the limitation of the virtues in relation to what can or cannot be sacrificed. For example, one may forfeit bravery in the face of justice, or honesty in the face of cruelty. A 'good will', on the other hand, is valuable in and of itself.[30]

Kant recognised that while society has a role in sanctioning the moral law through punishment and so on, the motivational heart of cultivating a 'good will' can only be **respect** for the moral law. The good will is good as an end in itself, not because of its effects, of what it accomplishes, or because it is competent. It is good only because of its willing.[31] By outlining a morality of pure practical reason Kant is attempting to find a source of our personhood within a sensuous world because for Kant, personhood is constituted by our moral capacity. The challenge of morality is to be driven only by our naturally imbued rationality, the laws of reason, not the physical laws of nature. The function of reason is to secure an individual's happiness (conditional good) and to manifest a good will in itself, a will acting out of reason (unconditional good). Our rationality is our gift, which allows us to direct the laws of nature so that we secure our own happiness and manifest a will that is an end in itself, a will that is reasonable and that is effective. We recognise the power of reason to lift us above mere compulsions. In this sense, the respect for the moral law 'falls out of' reason, a hallmark of our rationality.

My claim is that this is a naturalistic explanation of the motivational aspect of the moral law, which as a law, stands as a command. Moral laws do not rest on any end or desire for an end. They are justifiable only if they are

---

[29] An excellent discussion, backed by contemporary scientific research, on the difference between auto-organisation (determinism) and auto-control (willed actions), how they are both organised and determined by nature and how they interface can be found in Barbara Maria Stafford, 2008, "The Remaining 10 Percent: The Role of Sensory Knowledge in the Age of the Self-Organizing Brain" in James Elkins (Ed.), *Visual Literacy*, New York: Routledge, pp. 31-58.
[30] The only good thing without any qualification is a 'good will'. The ensuing discussion is drawn from Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 437-443], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), pp. 54-59.
[31] Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 394:3], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), p. 26.

universalizable. If we can show that a fully rational agent should act in a certain way, then the act is not justified by experience and is therefore *a priori*, necessary and universal. However, as the predicate is not contained in the concept 'rational agent' so it cannot be derived by analysis. Therefore it is not an analytic truth but a synthetic truth (synthetic *a priori*). Paul Guyer explains:

> Now as Kant points out, there are actually two questions I must ask when I ask whether I could will my proposed maxim to be a universal law of nature: first, whether it would even be logically possible for me to act on my maxim if everyone else were to do so too; and second, even if it would be logically possible for me to will the universalization of my maxim, whether that is something I could rationally will, that is, something that would be consistent with my willing things in a rational way.[32]

If any being were perfectly rational, it would automatically act in accordance with this law, and the law would therefore not appear to be a constraint. But we are not perfectly rational, we have desires and inclinations, and so the moral law may end up conflicting with our irrational side. Kant insists that the essence of an act's moral worth is that it be based on an impersonal principle valid for all. To test the maxim of the proposed action, we must ask ourselves whether if universally adopted, would it further a systematic harmony of purposes of the individual and the human race? Kant argues that it must amount to this. As is about to become evident, I think it looks like the test of universalizability is catching moral worth up in outcomes – in a kingdom of ends – of what is best for humanity. This leads us to a pragmatist reading of Kant, which whilst not common, is well supported by Kant's later essays and third Critique, as evidenced in the ensuing sections.

4.4 The Interdependence of Moral Motivation, Moral Goodness & the Kingdom of Ends

The question of whether moral goodness is interdependent with or independent of a kingdom of ends is a contentious topic in contemporary Kantian scholarship. John Rawls is an advocate for independence.[33] He claims that the good will is

---

[32] Paul Guyer, 2006, *Kant*, New York & London: Routledge, p. 192.

[33] John Rawls, 1989, "Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy" in Eckart Forster (Ed.), *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum*, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 81-113, p. 93.

defined in terms of the moral law, which is arrived at through pure reason. So, the kingdom of ends does not need to be worked out, or explained, because if we act from duty, as Kant tells us to, then we will necessarily act in accord with the kingdom of ends. Paul Guyer, on the other hand, argues that they are interdependent, that is, a good will, goodness, is not possible without a community-derived ideal.[34] I argue that Guyer's pragmatist interpretation of Kant, based on an argument for interdependence between moral goodness and the kingdom of ends, explains inadvertently the basis of Dewey's non-dichotomous view of experience.

The view that moral goodness and the kingdom of ends are interdependent is useful as it explains the connection between reason and desire and provides an explanation of Kantian moral motivation. What's more, support for the interdependent interpretation can be found in several of Kant's texts. For example, in his essay "On The Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory" Kant writes:

> The need to assume, as the final end of all things a good that is the *highest good* in the world and also possible through our cooperation is a need [arising] not from a deficiency in moral incentives but from a deficiency in the external relations within which alone an object as end in itself (as moral *final end*) can be produced in conformity with these incentives. For without some end there can be no *will*…But not every end is moral (e.g., that of one's own happiness is not), but this must rather be an unselfish one; and the need for a final end assigned by pure reason and comprehending the whole of all ends under one principle (a world as the highest good and possible through our cooperation) is a need of an unselfish will *extending* itself beyond observance of the formal law to production of an object (the highest good).[35]

Kant's postulation of a moral final end provides further evidence for the interpretation of the interrelatedness between what constitutes moral goodness and what constitutes the kingdom of ends. On this view, the realm of ends is the goal of morality, what would be realised if everyone followed the categorical imperative. Guyer explains:

> I take Kant to mean that while adopting only maxims that treat all others as ends in themselves may require that one cannot regard one's own particular ends as sufficient and conclusive reasons for the adoptions of maxims, *what it is* to treat rational beings as ends and not merely as means is precisely to regard all of their ends as worthy of

---

[34] Guyer, 2011, pp. 88-120.

[35] Immanuel Kant, 1793, "On The Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory" in Mary J. Gregor (Trans. & Ed.), 1996, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, AK 8:273-8:313, pp. 273-310, [*AK* FN 8:280], p. 282. Hereafter *OCS*.

> promotion just because they have been set by those rational beings in the exercise of the rational and free agency that gives them their dignity as ends in themselves.[36]

We have a moral requirement to treat all rational beings as ends in themselves and not merely as means to ends.[37] This entails that the realm of ends formulation of the categorical imperative requires us to act in accord with moral or universalisable ends. Individual and community ends are promoted only if they conform to ultimate goodness, or the kingdom of ends. To paraphrase Guyer, a world in which the goal of the realm of ends was realised would be a moral world.[38]

This does not mean that the idea of a kingdom of ends is always explicit in one's moral judgments. The way we judge what is right implies such an end implicitly, even if we have never articulated it to ourselves and have never heard mention of it. Rather, the idea of an end 'falls out of' reason, through the process of rationalisation. The categorical imperative is, for example, a characterization of the idea of how a moral world would look and can be realised.

> The end that is natural for every rational being might be only his or her own happiness, but the end that is determined *a priori* and necessarily for every rational being through pure reason is surely the morality of all and the happiness of all as a consequence of that morality, so all rational beings must be able to believe in the possibility of this end for all in order to maintain their moral resolve.[39]

The realm of ends constitutes our goal for making choices about moral actions. Kant's further 'ends in themselves'[40] requirement reinforces the obligation to act from duty, or in accord with the realm of ends. The highest good is the condition reached if all rational beings were to act in accord with these moral laws. As laws they are prescriptions that are necessary components for the ideal moral world.

As demonstrated in previous sections, Kant argued that as the teachings of morality are universally applicable rationally accessible moral laws, they must command everyone, no matter what their personal inclinations are. Nonetheless, we may recognise that not all of our objectives are pursuable and it is here that feelings are pertinent. As Guyer explains, the realization that we cannot always

---

[36] Guyer, 2011, p. 91.
[37] Kant's second formulation of the CI: Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 4:429], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), p. 52.
[38] Guyer, 2011, p. 93.
[39] Guyer, 2011, p. 97.
[40] To treat all rational agents as ends in themselves and never as means.

satisfy both our inclinations and our duty causes us pain; this moral feeling is the result of respect for the moral law.[41] Respect is the moral feeling of pleasure that is produced by our decision to adhere to the moral law.[42] Unlike Hume, Kant argues that feelings are the result of adhering to the moral law, not the instigator of doing so. Feelings are not the source of the content of the moral law, nor our motive to adhere to it.[43] As Kant states in his *Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue*, the "very *concept of duty* is already the concept of *necessitation* of free choice through the law."[44] But what support do we have of this? What are the metaphysical grounds for Kant's position that reason affects our feelings? Guyer responds that there is none – this is a psychological, not a metaphysical, explanation. It is grounded in the observation that reason can affect our feelings and that developing one's feelings of respect and love for others inevitably follows from the duty of acting beneficently toward others.[45]

Kant's 1798, *Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View*,[46] elucidates this point in terms of the difference between anthropology for pragmatic purposes, as opposed to physiological ones.[47] This demarcation enables Kant to provide an explanation of how we discern our inner selves and thus have the uniquely human ability to have the idea of 'I'.[48] He calls this 'pragmatic knowledge of the world' and it involves what a person, as a free agent, makes, or can and should make of herself.[49] It is this power, this ability to think, or in Kant's

---

[41] Paul Guyer, 1993, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 360-1.
[42] McCarty offers an interesting and informative discussion of intellectualist vs. affectivist interpretations of Kant's notion of respect for moral law: Richard McCarty, "Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect" in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31:3, (July 1993), pp. 421-435, pp. 425-427.
[43] Guyer, 1993, p. 360.
[44] Immanuel Kant, 1797, "The Metaphysics of Morals. Part II: Metaphysical first principles of the doctrine of virtue", in Mary J. Gregor (Trans. & Ed.), 1996, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, [*AK* 6:373-6:493], pp. 507-603. [*AK* 6:379], p. 512.
[45] Guyer, 1993, p. 365.
[46] Immanuel Kant, 1798, *Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View*, in Mary J. Gregor, (Trans., Intro., Notes), 1974, The Hague: Martinous Hijhoff, pp. 3-27, [*AK*: 7: 119-148]. Hereafter *Anthropology*.
[47] Holly Wilson offers an excellent account of Kant's pragmatic anthropology as a method of teleological judgment (as found in *COPJ*) that evaluates contingent means to the final ends of human existence. Holly L. Wilson, 2006, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology: It's Origin, Meaning and Critical Significance*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 109-122.
[48] Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 9. [*AK*: 7: 127].
[49] Kant, *Anthropology*, Preface, p. 3. [*AK*: 7: 119-120].

words, 'the understanding' that gives us the ability to discern the 'I'. In turn, the 'I' must be cultivated to take into account the broader needs of the community, lest we end up an egoist.[50] Kant is making a connection between freedom and thinking that goes beyond learning and involves thinking for one self.

As we saw in the last section, Kantian 'understanding' is more than apprehending ideas; it is the ability to abstract what is common between them to produce a concept combined with reflection that produces knowledge of the object.[51] Freedom is increasing knowledge through experience and enlarging experience itself through understanding.[52] "The opposite of egoism can be only pluralism, that is, the attitude of not being occupied with oneself as the whole world, but regarding and conducting oneself as a citizen of the world."[53] This is the job of anthropology.[54] The human ability to abstract ideas from concrete objects, demonstrates a freedom of the power of judgment and the autonomy of the mind.[55] One can conclude from Kant's discussion in the *Anthropology* that he awards community the role of cultivation, development and tempering of our thinking.

People who have to force themselves to reluctantly abide by the moral law never get to feel the happiness and pleasure, via respect, that adherence to it produces. They have failed to cultivate the natural propensity of an inward commitment to duty. As Kant states: "That being able to communicate one's state of mind, even if only with regard to the faculties of cognition, carries a pleasure with it, could easily be established (empirically and psychologically) from the natural tendency of human beings to sociability."[56] What is important is that we

---

[50] Kant explains that there are three forms of egoism: logical, aesthetic and moral. Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 11. [*AK*: 7: 130]. The presumption of understanding, or logical egoist, deals in the deduction of truths and so considers it unnecessary to test his judgments against the understanding of others. The presumption of taste, or aesthetic egoist isolates himself in his own judgments of taste and the moral egoist in his own eudemonic happiness, with no thought of duty. Mere understanding is egotistic lest it is tempered by participation in community.
[51] Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 19. [*AK*: 7: 138].
[52] Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 20. [*AK*: 7: 140].
[53] Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 12. [*AK*: 7: 130]. The use of the term pluralism is not to be interpreted in light of value pluralism as discussed in chapter eight.
[54] The *Anthropology* can be viewed as Kant drawing on the practical conclusions he reached in "The Doctrine of the Right" in his 1797, *MOM*.
[55] Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 13. [*AK*: 7: 131].
[56] Kant, *COJ*, p. 103, [*AK* 5: 218].

recognise that these natural predispositions to feeling need to be cultivated under the guidance and motivation of the principle of duty.[57] Principles are incomplete without feelings. "Principles by themselves cannot constitute the perfection of ourselves or the happiness of our friends without tender feelings, but feelings themselves cannot be relied upon to keep and preserve even our deepest attachments without the firm hand of principles behind them."[58] Because feelings [inclinations] are easily way laid and fragile, they must always be governed and cultivated in accordance with reason, that is, in accordance with the moral law.

The connection between the development of understanding and knowledge in relation to culture is found in Kant's 1784 essay *Idea of A Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*.[59] Kant sets out ten propositions in order to argue that human actions are determined in accordance with universal natural laws.[60] He begins with the recognition that humans often act selfishly, foolishly, childishly and even destructively. He cites this as evidence that while we have the natural capacity to go beyond mere animal instincts, we are by no means perfectly rational citizens either.[61] This is an attempt to reconcile thinking and activity with the laws of nature. Ultimately, he is aiming to at the *a-priori* concept, a universal end, toward which human history is heading, which he calls 'cosmopolitanism'. This cosmopolitical end is unconditional and universal, a concept of moral and political perfection where the exercise of reason is the condition of freedom.

Humans are the only animals with the natural disposition to reason, however it is an ability that can be developed through "experimentation, practice and instruction"[62] within the species. This is evidenced by the historical progress of societies over time and is elucidated by Kant most clearly in propositions

---

[57] Guyer, 1993, p. 390.
[58] Guyer, 1993, p. 392.
[59] Immanuel Kant, 1784, "Idea of A Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective" Accessed & downloaded 28/05/2014: http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/excerpts/kant_perpetual.pdf pp.3-12 [*AK* 8: 15-26.] Hereafter *Cosmopolitan*.
[60] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 3, [*AK* 8:17].
[61] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 3, [*AK* 8:17].
[62] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 5, [*AK* 8:19].

three and four, where he discusses antagonism, or "unsociable sociability"[63] as nature's way of developing our rational predispositions to our highest humanity.[64] "*This means that nature employs in order to bring about the development of all of the predispositions of humans is their* ***antagonism*** *in society, insofar as this antagonism ultimately becomes the cause of a law-governed organization of society.*"[65] Kant is asserting that both sociability and unsociability are aspects of human nature that create an essential antagonism out of which **individual** will, desires, preferences, inclinations are forcibly moderated by our **communal** will, desires, preferences, inclinations.

Kant recognised that the human desire for sociability bolsters our natural inclination to selfishness. Allen Wood captures this aspect of Kant's ethical thought in his discussion of 'unsociable sociability'.[66] Wood points out that for Kant, the external means for limiting conflict is a crucial aspect of the natural development of our faculties.[67] Kant's ethical theory aims to lay out a rational plan for how humanity will find rational concord – that is a human society free from antagonism, where every free rational being is treated as an end and the free development of each has become the free development of all.[68] Sociability gives the individual recognition and enables her to measure her own self-worth. The resistance between the two, the antagonism between self interest and sociability, "awakens all human powers and causes human beings to overcome their tendency to idleness and, driven by lust for honor, power, or property, to establish a position for themselves among their fellows, whom they can neither endure nor do without."[69] As social beings we develop our rational powers and only become fully human when we feel and understand ourselves as individuals who belong to societies. In other words, it is only through community with others that we fully realise our individuality.

---

[63] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 6, [*AK* 8:20].
[64] Paul Nadal http://belate.wordpress.com/2011/12/26/kant-cosmopolitan-philosophy-world-history/ Accessed 15/06/2014
[65] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 6, [*AK* 8:20]. His italics.
[66] Allen Wood, 1991, "Unsociable Sociability: The Anthropological Basis of Kantian Ethics" in *Philosophical Topics*, 19: 1, pp. 325-351.
[67] Wood, 1991, p. 345.
[68] Wood, 1991, p. 345.
[69] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 7, [*AK* 8:21].

Kant's response to Hume captures the validity of the fear of subjectivity, lest moral judgments be whimsical, arbitrary, a case of anything goes.[70] The fear of incorporating feelings into moral judgments may also be seen as reflecting a deeper worry: that decisions based on feelings are irrational and unstable. The traditional alternative to such subjectivity is to institute absolutes, a rule-governed basis of some kind. Jennifer McMahon argues that a pragmatist reading of Kant offers us some middle ground in the form of intersubjective agreement.[71] Grounding her view on Kant's notion of universal communicability and the intersubjective validity of judgments of taste, McMahon extends the role that Kant awards community.[72] McMahon recognises that there is space for the incorporation of subjectivity and objectivity in both aesthetic and moral judgments precisely at this point of intersubjectivity.

Guyer's interpretation of Kantian moral motivation incorporated inclination by subsuming it under reason. McMahon builds on this picture: "cognition is always an exercise of concepts and understandings whose normative grounds involve adjudication between our own judgments and how we imagine others would judge."[73] Motivation is thus tied to community – to intersubjective agreement. "It is the dignity and sublimity of adopting an outlook that we judge all other rational beings would adopt."[74] This connects us back to Guyer's reading of Kant's theory of pleasure and its relation to communicability. Universality in Kant's sense is expressed in terms of a comparison between one's own judgment and the judgment of others. Within such judgments, there is an implicit aim of moving toward consensus, "even if only in direction rather than in actual outcome"[75] as McMahon points out.

As the fundamental principle of moral law, the categorical imperative is the result of a synthetic *a priori* judgment and as such exercises a relation

---

[70] Jennifer A. McMahon, 2014, *Art and Ethics in a Material World: Kant's Pragmatist Legacy*, New York and London: Routledge, p. 6.
[71] McMahon, 2014, p. 60.
[72] As we will see in chapter five, this pragmatic interpretation of Kant has its roots in Dewey's non-dichotomous treatment of the sentimentalism-rationalism structure. Dewey's 'enquiry into experience' aims at intersubjective agreement.
[73] McMahon, 2014, p. 60.
[74] McMahon, 2014, p. 60.
[75] McMahon, 2014, p. 60.

between pure reason and experience. The CI is the conclusion of any rational being who applies reflection to experience. As such it is a necessary conclusion. The *a priori* aspect enables Kant to assert that obeying the law is not a choice; it is a matter of self-constraint. The synthetic aspect provides that in practice, when thinking about actions, the individual considers their maxims in light of universal laws by implicitly weighing them against some concept of a relevant ideal. If we understand Kant as suggesting that we need to hold an ideal kingdom or realm of ends in view in order to decide whether the maxim on which one acts is universalisable (the interdependent view), we see that he does provide a motivational story that goes far beyond the rationalists before him, by incorporating key aspects of empiricism and in some respects a veiled and remote consequentialism.

A pragmatist reading of Kant asserts that there must be some interdependence between moral goodness and what constitutes the realm of ends in order for moral considerations to be motivating. This reading is justified by its ability to explain the Kantian relationship between self and society, which in turn facilitates a robust account of motivation within universalizability. Members of any community have an obligation, a moral duty to act in accord with principles that a community of rational agents would agree to and which treats all members as ends in themselves not as means. Individual actions are not constrained by the moral law in virtue of dogma or external authority. Reason finds the moral law in the context of community exchanges, not in a person isolated from community or the exercise of sociability. In this way, each of us becomes legislators of the moral law. Kant relies upon (and here we can see a shadow of Hume) the idea that there is a collective happiness: "…the highest good, at least insofar as that can be the aim of our own efforts, while still not the motive for morality, is the proper *object* or *goal* of it."[76] If the collective happiness is the goal, or proper object of morality, has Kant erased the deontic aspect of his theory and placed a telos, a felt response to actions (happiness), in its place?

---

[76] Guyer, 2008, p. 55.

4.5 Kant in Response to Hume

In treating Kant's transcendental logical argument as a response to Hume, certain aspects of it are foregrounded. By grounding our ideas of causation, moral law, the self, and so on, in the *a priori* Kant shifts our conceptual knowledge away from Hume's psychological account and toward a 'rational empiricism'. As noted above, the kingdom of ends is not a concept we hold prior to our morality. Instead, it 'falls out of' our exercise of reason. And so we are led back to the most apparent gaping fissure between Hume and Kant's accounts of morality: the role of reason. Hume acknowledges the instrumental role of reason, but argues that in terms of motivation, reason is impotent. Reason is assigned the role of determining the means that will achieve desired ends and a role in deliberating about what the desired end is, through the association of the objects of reason with particular sentiments. In contrast, Kant argued that reason provides the motive, the end and the principles.[77] Kant's emphasis is on grounding the moral self in the thinking self. Hume, on the other hand, viewed the self first and foremost as a feeling self. Nonetheless, both agree that any moral principle must also be a motive for action.[78]

In so far as Kant's philosophical aim can be described as finding secure foundations for key principles, it can be seen as a response to Hume's indictment of reason, that is, his assertion that principles rely on experience and custom at best or dogmatism at worst. In reply, Kant provides his transcendental proof of the synthetic *a priori* necessity of knowledge of moral laws. Guyer acknowledges that at face value the two answers seem worlds apart: "…the difference between a philosopher who held that the use of reason is never more than merely instrumental to the realization of goals set entirely by sentiment and one who held that the fundamental principle of morality must be founded in pure reason

---

[77] James King addresses this very point: "Kant and Hume construe differently how the self stands relative to morality: for the one being moral consists in being a will necessitated by reason, while for the other this is not the case (the will is not necessitated by reason nor can sheerly rational considerations account for our being moral)." James King, 1992, "The Moral Theories of Kant and Hume: Comparisons and Polemics" in *Hume Studies*, XVIII: 2, pp. 441-466, p. 451.

[78] Guyer, 2008, p. 164.

is obvious."[79] However, while their theories are in some ways in opposition with one another, there are, some points of convergence, particularly in terms of moral motivation. Their historical connections to Dewey can be more easily discerned by highlighting these similarities.

Hume outlined the general principles of morals, directly addressing the rationalist question of whether these principles are derived from reason or from sentiment.[80] As far as Hume was concerned, the problem with the rationalist's emphasis on reason was that they cannot account for motivation: "They discover truths: but where the truths which they discover are indifferent, and beget no desire or aversion, they can have no influence on conduct and behaviour."[81] This is why Hume asserts that initial feelings are only secondarily regulated by reason. The regulation is motivated by a desire for consistency with oneself and agreement and cooperation with others – feelings are mediated by reason in order to account for broader sympathetic concerns. Moral judgments are thus socially driven generalisations of feelings that assist us in our endeavour to form habits that engage with the virtuous and avoid the vicious.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant provides a response to Hume's skeptical inclinations. He even addresses Hume directly in his discussion of the similarity between his synthetic *a priori* judgments and Hume's judgments of certain kinds that go beyond our concept of the object, such as that of 'causation' (*AK* 764-66).[82] According to Kant, Hume's failure to recognise the second category of universal truth (synthetic *a priori*) leaves him unable to forge a path between the rational and the empirical. In response, Kant demonstrates that human cognitive capacities presuppose *a priori* cognition and that these are best explained by his Transcendental Idealism,[83] in which he provides certainty for the fundamental principles of experience by removing doubt via a

[79] Guyer, 2008, p. 8. As the most comprehensive contemporary discussion of the connections between Hume and Kant, Paul Guyer's, 2008, *Knowledge, Reason, and Taste*, provides the framework for this section. Due to topic and space restrictions, only a brief overview will be provided.
[80] Hume, *Enquiry Morals*, I:I 134, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 170.
[81] Hume, *Enquiry Morals*, I:I 136, Selby-Bigge (Ed.), p. 172.
[82] Cited in Guyer, 2008, p. 14.
[83] But as noted in section 3.2 above, explained in contemporary terms as principles used to explain the possibility of cognitive outputs, which are underdetermined by the nature of perceptual inputs.

transcendental proof. This provides assurance "…that there cannot be any theoretical knowledge of the application of these principles beyond the limits of experience, to things in themselves, although things in themselves can be conceived for practical purposes."[84] Thus in terms of moral law, Kant's aim was to provide a clear formulation of the principle of moral law. Has Kant simply found firmer grounds for the rationalist position that Hume derided? If happiness and inclination have nothing to do with morality and are perhaps even hindered by the moral calculations that we perform, why would anyone act morally? The problem of motivation remains for Kant: why would anyone follow the first principle?

An extension of the naturalised interpretation to a pragmatic reading of Kant is based on the idea that he thought that reason could be practical insofar as it can produce the motivation that moral action requires. Hume's reason is capable of supervising our desires, so while one **may** prefer the destruction of the world to the scratching of one's finger, in the context of our larger moral lives, this preference would be judged unreasonable. The charge of radical selfishness is countered by Hume's generalisation of humanity via the shared feeling of sympathy and it is here that Kant and Hume meet. Hume rightly identifies the role that desire plays in terms of motivation. Without feelings of concern, for the self, for others, for humanity at large, there is nothing that drives us to act. Reason works out which action will best meet our concerns, but it is our concerns that are in the driver's seat. While Kant's moral feeling results from pure practical reason making us feel respect for the moral law, his notion of 'collective happiness' allows him to ground reason in a motivational story similar to Hume's. Both cite humanitarian concerns as the source of our motivation to 'do the right thing'.

As Guyer argues, Kant and Hume agree that we can modify our passions and desires, not to extirpate them, because this would lead to "stupid insensibility", but to gain mastery over them or better still – harness them to fruitful ends.[85] Kant insists reason is the source of such mastery.[86] Hume and

[84] Guyer, 2008, p. 51.
[85] Guyer, 2008, p. 17.

Kant both understood that the principles of morality cannot be derived from self-love – community is essential. As Guyer explains, for Kant the feeling of respect for the moral law often recruits other more specific feelings to which we have some natural disposition, such as feelings of sympathy toward other humans or aesthetic feelings toward nonhuman nature, to its own cause.[87] In earlier writing, Kant had argued that we have a natural feeling for freedom, and pure reason is the only way to achieve it. In mature writing, he drops this instrumentalist approach but still maintains freedom and autonomy as the highest principle of morality.

4.6 Conclusion

Kant understood that rationality enables humans to rise above instinctual sentimental responses by ruling ourselves rather than being ruled by nature. Guyer explains: "Kant's ultimate idea seems to be that moral worth attaches to the active use of our free will, rather than to any inclinations we have, precisely because it is this which distinguishes us from all other animals as mere products of nature."[88] The rational capacity of humans to hold the concept of morality, to choose to rule ourselves by reason, enables us to rise above all other animals. This is a theme that Dewey picks up on and develops when he addresses the rational capacity of humans in terms of how morality manifests in action through reflection:

> Perhaps the most striking difference between immediate sensitiveness, or "intuition," and "conscientiousness" as reflective interest, is that the former tends to rest upon the plane of achieved goods, while the latter is on the outlook for something better. The truly conscientious person not only uses a standard in judging, but is concerned to revise and improve his standard.[89]

Dewey understood that sentiment couldn't be isolated from sentience as human feelings are saturated with the habits of thought, prior reasonings and social interaction. Acknowledging the fundamental role that both reason and

---

[86] Guyer, 2008, p. 178.
[87] Guyer, 2008, p. 179.
[88] Guyer, 1993, p. 347.
[89] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 301.

sentiment, for example, play in experience reflects aspects of Hume and Kant in Dewey's thought.

Whilst chapter two made it clear that the foundation of Dewey's rejection of dichotomies is laid by Peirce and James, shadows of this idea can be seen in Kant's treatment of respect. Kant recognised that human development includes cultural, moral and aesthetic cultivation. He also recognised that it is only through the reconciliation of the antagonism between the individual and social will that we can attain this. Without this reconciliation, "all human talents would thus lie eternally dormant, and human beings, as good-natured sheep that they put out to pasture, would thus give their own lives hardly more worth than that of their domesticated animals."[90]

> Men of intellectual ability and broadminded disposition! I honor your talents and love your feeling for humanity. But have you thought about what you are doing, and where your attacks on reason will lead? Without doubt you want to preserve inviolate the *freedom to think*; for without that even your own free flights of genius would soon come to an end.[91]

As rational beings we are imbued with the capacity to live freely within the bounds of sociability. Quarrelsome natures are but a part of what it is to be fully human for Kant and it is out of this very aspect of human nature, our penchant for disagreement and antagonism that the possibility of universality arises.

At the core of his difference to Kant's moral theory is Dewey's aversion to the idea that a moral theory must advocate for either 'being good' OR 'doing good'.[92] Where Kant is concerned with the former, Dewey recognised that means, ends and the processes involved in identifying them are equally fundamental to moral life. His instrumentalist approach to the deontic tradition changed the focus from the irrefutable and conclusive commands of the moral law to its various instantiations socially authorized flexible guides to moral action. This marks the beginning of Dewey's expansion of Kant's project.

Another parallel can be seen in their treatment of intersubjective agreement. A useful discussion is found in McMahon's argument for

---

[90] Kant, *Cosmopolitan*, p. 7, [*AK* 8:21].
[91] Kant, *Orient*, p. 16, [*AK* 8:144].
[92] Gregory Pappas, 2008, *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 133.

intersubjectivity being valuable in terms of leaving room for disagreement. Communal exchanges involve comparison and result in judgments that involve community endorsement. "Kant writes that aesthetic reflective judgment is a kind of *sensus communis* where the latter is "a power to judge that in reflecting takes account…of everyone else's way of presenting…to compare our own judgement with human reason in general.""[93] We can apply the same treatment to moral judgments. A direct example can be found in Kant's discussion on the relation between free speech and free thought, where he stresses that unless we are able to communicate our thoughts to others, our thinking will stagnate.[94]

Kant argued that we do not gain knowledge from either intuitions or general principles alone; it is always a complex relation between the two. Naturalised readings of Kant's view suggest that it is our humanness and our brain functions that imbue us with the capacity to carry out these relations, which are informed by the broader social responsibilities to the collective happiness. This can be seen in Dewey:

> Out of resembling experiences general ideas develop; through language, instruction, and tradition this gathering together of experiences of value into generalized points of view is extended to take in a whole people and a race. Through intercommunication the experience of the entire human race is to some extent pooled and crystallized in general ideas. These ideas constitute principles.[95]

And later he writes:

> *Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing things. But principles are intellectual; they are the final methods used in judging suggested courses of action…the object of moral principles is to supply standpoints and methods which will enable the individual to make for himself an analysis of the elements of good and evil in the particular situation in which he finds himself.*[96]

In Kant, the ideas of an end and respect for the moral law are transcendental. That is, they must be the case in order for morality to be possible. As I've expressed earlier, the moral law 'falls out of' reason. In Dewey reasoning exercised within a 'community of enquiry', that is, under the constraints of

---

[93] McMahon, 2014, p. 62. Quoting Kant *CJ* [*AK* 5: 293], (trans. Pluhar 1987) p. 160.
[94] Immanuel Kant, 1786, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" in Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, (Trans. & Ed.'s), 1996, *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-18, [*AK* 8:134-146], p. 16, [*AK* 8:144]. Hereafter *Orient*.
[95] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 304.
[96] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 309, their italics.

communicability, are social enquiries that identify principles that facilitate sociability – democracy 'falls out of' reason in this sense.[97]

As we saw in the previous chapter, Dewey takes Hume's psychological empiricism and incorporates it into his account of moral obligation. While he agrees that the root of moral obligation is embedded in our impulses and passions, he argues that the obligation to resist our immoral impulses and passions emerges out of the conflict and interrelationship between our interests and the interests of others in the context of intersubjectivity. This explanation is helpful in terms of making sense of interminable moral disagreement, particularly in terms of understanding how making wrong decisions and choosing actions that result in dubious and harmful consequences is possible, even with careful thought. According to Dewey, we are concerned to get things right, we are motivated to choose moral acts, because we implicitly recognise that well functioning communities depend on well functioning individuals. His recognition that feelings affect judgment-making at both an individual and societal level, alerted him to the need to offer an account that not only aims to get things 'right' but also to the development of tools, such as 'discursive' deliberation, that will facilitate such processes to create the context for incorporating another's feedback.[98]

Kant recognised that the rationalists and empiricists mistakenly assumed that we could know things, as they are in themselves, independent of the conditions of our experience of them. Dewey focused on what constitutes an experience and how it could interface with rational deliberation. This is where he draws upon aspects of Kant's formulation; an experience, which by definition is personal but which nonetheless, engages universal terms. To understand more fully how this interface between experience and rational deliberation manifested in practice, we turn in the next chapter to a consideration of John Stuart Mill's conception of experience.

---

[97] An interesting and enlightening discussion can be found in: Bradley Murray, 2015, *The Possibility of Culture: Pleasure and Moral Development in Kant's Aesthetics*, Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
[98] Welchman, 1995, p. 111.

5. Making Connections: John Stuart Mill & John Dewey

The phenomenon that is morality is, for the utilitarian, best explained in terms of its purpose, namely, producing happiness, rather than its cause, acting from duty (Kant) or its motivational capacity, giving rise to a sense of disapproval or approval (Hume). The telos thus dictates the morality of an act: acts are moral if their consequences contribute to happiness. The first principle of morality is therefore, to act so as to achieve or contribute to this ultimate end. In order to present a more liberal and munificent reading of John Stuart Mill's utilitarian theory and highlight the role that community plays in it, his *Utilitarianism*[1] is read in light of his thoughts in *On Liberty*[2]. I conclude that Mill can be considered, in some respects as the bridge between Hume and Kant on the one hand and Dewey on the other.

5.1 Introduction

John Stuart Mill was raised a utilitarian by his father, Scottish philosopher James Mill, who was the secretary to the forefather of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham. The principle of utility, or the "greatest happiness principle", was the foundation for all of Bentham's thought. It identified the telos of moral action as "happiness" which he understood as a predominance of "pleasure" over "pain":

> Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think.[3]

Bentham and Mill Snr emphasised the value of rationality and raised Mill on a highly intellectual diet in an isolated environment.[4] According to Isaiah Berlin, this took its toll on the young J.S. Mill and lead to an eventual breakdown and

---

[1] Mill, *Utilitarianism*.
[2] Mill, *On Liberty*.
[3] Jeremy Bentham, 1970, (1789), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, J.H. Burns & H. L. A. Hart (Eds.) London and New York: Methuen, p. 11
[4] John Stuart Mill, 1924, (1873), *Autobiography: with an appendix hitherto unpublished speeches and a preface by Harold J. Laski*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 112-119. Hereafter *Autobiography*.

rethinking of the utilitarian theory that he had inherited.[5] Mill recognised that his emotionally starved education had left a gap in his development.[6] He realised that while the happiness principle is to be upheld as the overall aim of morality, a broader conception of it was needed. A liberal reading of Mill, where the rational decision maker is embedded in the social and political realm in which they participate, underpins this interpretation. Mill's broad ends of diversity, versatility, spontaneity and uniqueness of a man or group or civilization emerges out of his political thought in *On Liberty*. This facilitates a liberal interpretation of his principle of happiness, as found in his *Utilitarianism*. Acting so as to achieve or contribute to happiness is no longer an immutable and fixed ultimate end, rather it is a guiding principle that can account for the multifaceted and complex nature of happiness of both the individual and society.

I argue that Mill's utilitarian telos of happiness must necessarily take the individual as well as the society into account, lest we end up with a selfish individualistic hedonistic morality. Drawing on his own highly intellectual upbringing and eventual mental break down, Mill realised that an internal make-up that disposes individuals to live moral lives is not only a necessary component of a well functioning society but also relies on living in societies that evoke sociable feelings. The individual cannot be happy living in a community in which a large proportion of people are unhappy. The resulting moral conscience is a product of both nature and nurture: it is in equal parts an innate or natural sense of duty that is then influenced by the society in which it participates. Embedding the telos of happiness within the self in relation to and within broader society, ensures that all rational persons will choose the moral act, or that which contributes to happiness, as it is in their own and their society's best interest.

Most of *Utilitarianism* is concerned with setting out, examining, and explaining utilitarianism – why we look at it as a desirable theory and why anyone would accept it. In section 5.2 I set out Mill's principle of moral

---

[5] Isaiah Berlin, 1991, "John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life" in John Gray & G. W. Smith (Eds.), *J. S. Mill On Liberty in Focus*, London & New York: Routledge, pp.131-161, p. 133.
[6] Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 112-119.

happiness. This allows me to assess if Mill succeeds in showing that morality is a matter of maximising desirable consequences and if his conclusion that the ultimate end of happiness is justified. I then examine what Mill understands as the sanction for the principle of happiness (5.3). Section 5.4 considers the implications of Mill's concept of 'experiments in living' through the lens of the collectivism found in *Utilitarianism* in order to mitigate the apparent individualism of *On Liberty*. The result is a liberal interpretation of Mill that introduces the points of connection between Mill and Dewey in section 5.5. The chapter ends with a final summary of the place Mill has in the tradition of Hume and Kant and how in the historical trajectory of this thesis, it provides a bridge from Kant to Dewey (5.6).

5.2 Mill's Principle of Moral Happiness

As we saw in chapter four, Kant determined the foundations for the possibility of morality. As we will see in the following chapters, Dewey focuses on how morality was manifested in experience. Mill took an *a posteriori* view, where judgments of right and wrong remained fallible. For example, a recurring theme in *On Liberty* is the value of freedom of thought in regards to forming opinions and warranted beliefs. "Strange it is, that men…acknowledge that there should be free discussion on all subjects which can possibly be *doubtful*, but think that some particular principle or doctrine should be forbidden to be questioned because it is so *certain*, that is, because *they are certain* that it is certain."[7] Mill champions the fallibilist idea that all topics, from science through to morality, remain in principle questionable and open to disproof. If Kant thought that we left behind dogma, then Mill surely goes much further. According to Mill, the best that human reason admits of are "beliefs which we have most warrant for, [but which nonetheless provide,] no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded".[8] Mill argued that the criterion of good opinion needed to be thoroughly questioned. For an empiricist like Mill,

[7] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 41.
[8] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 41.

this is the only way that knowledge can be attained and this is the sum total of certainty that is available to fallible human beings.

A difficulty facing Mill throughout his utilitarian treatise is the recognition that there is an ultimate end and that the positing of happiness as **the** ultimate end, does not admit of proof beyond intuition.[9] The positing of an ultimate end is nothing more than an empirical resort to one's own and other people's experiences. It is a conclusion about the purposes and goals of action. The proof rests solely on the intellectual perception of a basic 'truth'.

> Questions of ultimate ends are not amenable to direct proof. Whatever can be proved to be good, must be so by being shown to be a means to something admitted to be good without proof…If, then, it is asserted that there is a comprehensive formula, including all things which are in themselves good, and that whatever else is good, is not so as an end, but as a means, the formula may be accepted or rejected, but is not a subject of what is commonly understood by proof.[10]

Mill wants to demonstrate that the one and only morally significant consequence, or purpose of morality, can only be happiness. Happiness is the ultimate end and no other proof, other than the matter of fact that people desire their own happiness, is possible. Nonetheless, Mill develops the telos of happiness so that it incorporates the broad multifaceted end that he seems to have had in mind. For example, Mill treats the principle of utility as the 'Greatest Happiness Principle':

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals "utility" or "the greatest happiness principle" holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure…pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things…are desirable either for pleasure inherent in themselves or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain.[11]

It is important to remember that when Mill talks about pleasure, he isn't talking about "frivolity and the mere pleasures of the moment."[12] Morally significant consequences are those that lead to more than mere sensuous moments of happiness, or the hedonist gratification of individual pleasure. While utility equals pleasure and pleasure equals happiness, each aspect goes beyond how they are standardly conceived. Pleasure is what happiness is and happiness is **a**

---

[9] A problem faced by many philosophers on morality, such as Aristotle and Hume.
[10] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 4.
[11] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 7.
[12] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 6.

desirable consequence of actions. As Mill states: "I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions: but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being."[13]

In order to further restrain the hedonistic tilt, Mill embeds his notion of happiness relative to the good of the community, rather than any individual. In *On Liberty* Mill commits us to the cultivation of the intellect and judgment of mankind. He calls this the 'cultivation of the understanding'.[14] This is a direct criticism of and a call to revolt against the tyranny of the majority:

> There needs protection…against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development, and, if possible, prevent the formation, of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compel all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own.[15]

Mill offers the 'cultivation of the understanding' as a protective device against political despotism and calls for the recognition that rules merely seem self-evident and self-justifying because they are so embedded in custom. At the heart of these customs is the practical principle that human conduct is regulated by a "feeling in each person's mind that everybody should be required to act as he…would like them to act."[16]

The purpose of Mill's definition of utilitarianism as the attainment of pleasure and the absence of pain is to emphasise the production of consequences that produce pleasure not pain and thus contribute to happiness. Put plainly, we are striving for morally significant consequences because they are desirable in them selves, and produce happiness. More often than not, the principle of happiness, as qualified in this way, will be sufficient for making moral judgments, in suitably socialised individuals – a point we will return to later. The first principle of utility, namely that pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends, is based on the notion that pleasure is **the only** desirable end. The principle is a normative statement about moral ends: it is

---

[13] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 31.
[14] The notion of the 'cultivation of the understanding' is discussed throughout the second chapter of Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 36-71.
[15] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 26.
[16] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 27.

morally right or good to produce some desirable consequence. Things are thus desirable in so far as they are means to or tend to produce these ends.

Mill offers a weak justification for his normative conclusion that happiness is **the** only desirable consequence of actions. His answer rests on the ultimate end argument; happiness is what human beings are really striving for and as this is an ultimate end, it does not admit of proof, or at least not logical proof. Two related problems arise. Firstly, how does Mill contain his notions of pleasure and happiness to those that are morally significant? Secondly, happiness is a very ambiguous telos and qualifications in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain do very little to clarify exactly what Mill means by happiness. Reading *Utilitarianism* in light of *On Liberty* offers us some assistance in terms of containing and explaining what constitutes moral happiness.

Isaiah Berlin describes Mill's notion of happiness as something that "comes to mean something very like 'realisation of one's wishes', whatever they may be."[17] While Berlin's account captures the broadness of Mill's notion of happiness, it does not address the first problem outlined above, namely how Mill contains 'one's wishes' to morally significant consequences. After all, when we talk about anything being the only end or the only desirable end, there is a danger that the notion, in this case pleasure, will have to be so broad as to include everything. A solution is to embed Mill's notions of utility, pleasure and happiness in the good of the community, as described in *On Liberty*. This enables Mill to ensure that 'one's wishes' are moral.

When viewed as a socially grounded notion that is only ever fully realised within the broader context of the individual participating in community and leading a fulfilling, flourishing and moral human life, Mill's 'happiness' is accorded moral stability. Thus such pleasures as freedom, justice and liberty are the means, the instruments of happiness and so stand as exemplars of the moral life. Individual conceptions of happiness are not limited to self-regarding hedonistic pursuits of happiness. They include values such as democracy, liberty and freedom, that is, pleasures that are tempered by community values and promote the flourishing of everyone. This community-bound view of happiness

[17] Berlin, 1991, p. 138.

enables the incorporation of the broader factors involved in Mill's theory of the good, such as the community as a condition of individual happiness.

The second problem for Mill is that happiness is a very ambiguous telos. A possible response is to think about Mill's happiness as being more like Aristotle's *eudemonia*.[18] For Aristotle, *eudemonia* resulted from living an active life that is governed by reason. Thus *eudemonic* happiness is more akin to well being or living well than the highs of an individual's emotions, for example. The idea is that if we combine the happiness that is grounded in the good of the community with *eudemonic* happiness, or a 'life well lived' then we end up with a rich description of happiness that is morally significant. This interpretation is supported by Mill's own presentation of happiness in terms of a public and private life that is imbued with liberty, variety and justice. As Mill states:

> I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded in the permanent interests of man as a progressive being. Those interests, I contend, authorize the subjection of individual spontaneity to external control, only in respect to those actions of each, which concern the interests of other people. [19]

So, while the happiness telos is broad, in terms of potential contributors, it is also quite specific in terms of being more than, say, an individual's mood. We can see how Mill constrains the ambiguity of the telos of happiness by grounding utility in the permanent interests of humanity, rather than the interests of any one person's desires. While this provides evidence of his embedding morality in the good of the community, the question of what is/not included on the list of contributors to moral happiness remains.

Mill is careful to distinguish the relevant pleasure from mere gratification of individual desires. He does this by highlighting that there are qualitative differences between the higher (intellectual) and lower (sensuous) pleasures:

> Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in

---

[18] Aristotle, "Ethica Nicomachea" W. D. Ross (trans.) in Richard McKeon, 2001, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, New York: The Modern Library, [1094a1-1181b22], pp. 935-1126, [1097b22–1098a20], pp. 942-943.
[19] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 31-32.

> ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account…It is better to be a human dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.[20]

According to Mill, this is a naturalistic account based on the unique human feature of dignity. Pleasures of the intellect are preferable because they are dignified, whereas pleasures of sensation, which we share with other animals, are not.[21] The idea is that we prefer, or at least recognise the superiority of those pleasures, which take particular account of this feature of being human. Ranking intellectual pleasure, above sensuous pleasure because of the dignity it accrues to the subject, is analogous to preferring actions that represent our capacity to raise ourselves above self-interest. Human nature responds to the community context by choosing actions that have morally significant outcomes.

Mill's contention that humans will choose pleasures of the intellect over pleasures of the body is based solely on empirical evidence. Humans experience both the higher and lower pleasures and do in fact prefer higher pleasures (all else being equal) as those with the highest value. This is a naturalist account of preference that identifies as evidence the uniquely human capacity to find pleasure in the intellectual, to go beyond sensual pleasures, as evidence. Reading Mill's political and moral theories together strengthens this account. As John Gray argues, *Utilitarianism* provides an argument for the qualitative superiority of intellectual happiness, *On Liberty* analyses the social order in which these interests can be pursued and in which a certain level of cultural and moral development has been generally achieved.[22] Mill takes Hume's positive feeling and transforms it into a moral compass that demands intellectual understanding of one's actions. Empirical evidence supports his argument that humans prefer and therefore choose acts that demonstrate discrimination and judgment over and above those that do not. This is not to say that all people, at all times, will choose in this way, but that, as Gray states, "a preference for activities involving

---

[20] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 8-10.
[21] Arguably this too can be seen, as another element that provides the groundwork for Dewey's view of experience and the percept theory of perception as presented in 5.3 – that is, there is no perception without conception.
[22] John Gray, 1991, "Mill's Conception of Happiness and the Theory of Individuality" in John Gray & G. W. Smith (Eds.), *J. S. Mill On Liberty in Focus*, London & New York: Routledge, pp.190-211, p. 190.

the exercise of autonomous thought and of capacities of imagination and discrimination will dominate the lives of experienced judges."[23]

5.3 The Sanction of the Principle of Happiness

The community context is crucial to Mill's account. Perhaps the clearest way to demonstrate this is to examine the link between Mill's political and moral thought. As we saw earlier, the key principle of *Utilitarianism* is the Greatest Happiness Principle.[24] Mill states that the object of his essay *On Liberty* is to:

> …assert one very simple principle…that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral is not sufficient warrant.

On an individual level liberty includes the liberty of thought and feeling, the freedom of opinion and preference, of taste and pursuits. Societies are composed of individuals who all participate in various communities, so if we scale individual liberty to the level of community, we find that the two are inextricably linked and that link is through actions and their ensuing consequences. Merging the principle of liberty with the principle of happiness results in a community-bounded utilitarianism and a clearer statement of what constitutes moral happiness: that which produces the most happiness is a civilised community that promotes liberty of action.

In such a community, individuals participate in societies that recognise the higher pleasures as a way of conceiving of a state of affairs as unified and resolved. It is a mental state that is achieved through the taking of actions that result in consequences that contribute to the *eudemonic* happiness of the individual cognisant of the impact of their actions on others and their society in general. Humans are progressive beings and thus their interests and the interests of the societies in which they participate change, in accord with deeper

[23] Gray, 1991, p. 207.
[24] To repeat, "Actions are right in proportion, as they tend to promote happiness, wrong, as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure." Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 4.

and broadening understandings. While this view is not directly attributable to Mill, it does emerge out of the combination of his two principles. As we will see in chapter six, it is this aspect of utilitarianism, the self-realisation that Dewey extends to community-realisation.

In chapter four of *Utilitarianism*, "Of the Ultimate Sanction of the Principle of Utility", Mill offers a meta-ethical explanation of what gives the principle of happiness its binding force. The question driving this chapter is: Why would anyone take utilitarianism as their personal, prescriptive practical principal? What motivates us to act morally? He offers the relationship between laws and sanctions to illustrate his point. Laws are sanctioned by punishments, that is, the incentive to obey the law is to avoid punishment. For example, the law says that you cannot kill someone. The sanction or the motivation to obey this law is the consequence of defying it, that is, varying degrees of jail sentences. Thus people follow laws, act on them, because they are afraid of punishments. What is the sanction then for the utilitarian principle?

Mill is asking much broader questions of morality in general: Why should I be moral? Why should I behave according to what is morally required? Why should moral requirements matter to me when deciding what to do? The first principle of utilitarianism is grounded in the meta-ethical theory that the good is that which tends to promote happiness. This is a generalisation of the natural feeling of unity that we share with our fellow humans, a deeply rooted human characteristic and an essential aspect of our consciousness. The secondary principles of custom and the consecration of morality through education and opinion, builds the foundation for the role of duty.

> Those sanctions are either external or internal. The external…are the hope of favor and the fear of displeasure from our fellow creatures…for whether there be any other ground of moral obligation than the general happiness or not, men do desire happiness…they desire and commend all conduct in others toward themselves by which they think their happiness is promoted…The internal sanction of duty…a feeling in our own mind; a pain, more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty, which in properly cultivated moral natures rises…into shrinking from it as an impossibility. This feeling, when disinterested and connecting itself with the pure idea of duty…is the essence of conscience.[25]

Mill is asserting that duty has both an internal and external power over us. Our hope of favour and fear of displeasing others, or God, as well as our fear of

---

[25] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 28-29.

punishment, provide the external sanctions. The internal, our conscience, is a feeling in our minds, which can be cultivated and intensified by the pain (and presumably pleasure), which comes to be associated with it.

Mill recognised that external sanctions, in the form of punishments, are useful tools of moral development. So, for example, initially we obey and dutifully follow the laws of our society, then, with moral maturation, one begins thinking for oneself and will, at times, realise that the moral thing to do conflicts with external sanctions.

> So long as they are co-operating, their ends are identified with those of others; there is at least a temporary feeling that the interests of others are their own interests. Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others, it also leads him to identify his *feelings* more and more with their good, or at least with an even greater degree of practical consideration for it.[26]

Acting morally is in our own interest and the interest of others. This is the incentive to give and receive, to participate in society. This sounds somewhat like what a social contract theorist would say, that is, moral rules are the rules of cooperation that rational people would agree to comply with on the condition that others comply with them too. Mill would certainly agree with the idea that we are motivated to act morally by our desire to participate in and receive rewards from participating in well functioning societies, however he is not a social contract theorist.[27] For Mill, cooperation is something that emerges by being in a community, not something that motivates you to join that community.

Reading Mill's ethical and political theories together allows us to come to a pragmatic understanding of his concept of duty. Where Kant's duty is based on a concept of what constitutes rational behaviour, Mill argues that acting morally is in our own interest and the interest of others and it is this and this alone that sanctions moral action. Happiness is **the** one thing that **all** humans strive for – it is a part of human nature. Humans also live in societies. Being in societies raises sociable feelings hence individual happiness depends on community happiness. The incentive to give and receive, to participate in society, to act morally is thus inextricably tied to one's own happiness, which is heightened by the happiness of

[26] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 32.
[27] In chapter four, of *On Liberty*, Mill explicitly rejects the idea of the social contract. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 90.

others. Millsian societies cooperate with external sanctions, rules or laws, in order to maximise happiness. Moral obligation is manifested as a desire to maximise our own happiness, moderated by our participation in society, rather than as a contractual agreement conditioned on the compliance of others.

That happiness is the thing that all humans strive for and that pleasures of the intellect are prioritised, is an empirical fact for Mill. Moral acts are based on observation of particular instances in experience. Moral norms are nothing more than general principles, whether or not they are upheld is a matter of public (external) and private (internal) sanction based on the human disposition to seek pleasure and avoid pain. The sanction for the principle of happiness is thus both internal and external. Internally, all humans strive for happiness. Externally, there is the recognition that happiness is enhanced by well functioning societies.

5.4 'Experiments in Living'

In chapter three of *On Liberty*,[28] Mill offers an empirical account of learning to be good, based on the idea that we learn through 'experiments in living'.[29] This is also where Mill's ideas on the relation between the individual, society and collectivism are developed, where individualism is conceived of relative to the role that the individual plays in society. Mill recognised that as there are plural conceptions of the good, there are many different 'experiments in living'.[30] As liberty entails individual choices, be they good or bad, 'experiments in living' give people the opportunity to develop ideas, make mistakes and learn from them. The idea is that experimental lives are a valuable resource to the social progress of society and they validate the idea of freedom and liberty – individuals cannot be harnessed in case we limit the possibilities for social growth.

By reading the two texts together, the collectivism of *Utilitarianism* is balanced out by the individualism of *On Liberty*. Mill supports individualism only insofar as it is a way to develop better societies. Societies function better if they

[28] Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 72-89
[29] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 72 & p. 80.
[30] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 72.

are made up of excellent individuals, who are permitted to make mistakes and in doing so identify possibilities for growth. It is only through 'experiments in living' that unusual and different ideas will emerge. Our moral duty, which we identify in part by the pleasure it gives us, is to participate in society, to develop ourselves while holding the idea of the benefits to others in mind. This is a socially progressive view, where individual liberty is balanced against societal needs, as opposed to the pursuit of hedonistic self-interests. A commitment to collective happiness is therefore a pre-requisite to individual happiness.

We are now able to present morality and politics as two interrelated aspects of how to live a *eudemonic* life: how to make good choices that contribute to individual and societal happiness. When we view the Greatest Happiness Principle in light of his political theory, we save Mill from being labeled an ethical egoist, a hedonist or from thinking that society, government, institutions and so on, have no place in individual's lives. Quite the opposite is true. Evelyn Brister explains:

> Mill comes back again and again to the idea that society has, can, and will progress. But that progress is built on two things: first, that people have liberty to change their lives in ways that are an improvement over past ways of living; and second, that they are motivated to develop and build the society, as a collective, rather than (just) to tend their own self-interests.[31]

Moral happiness does not emanate from self-love, that is, from tending solely to one's own interests. The state has an interest in making sure that choices in how to live are available. The only stipulation is that an individual's choices do not harm others.[32]

Aspects of Dewey are foreshadowed in Mill when Mill discusses the connection between individual modes of life, character, conduct and judgments through an explication of experience.[33] For example, Mill relates in his autobiography that his experience of depression led him to realise that the experimental childhood his father James Mill and his mentor Jeremy Bentham

---

[31] Evelyn Brister, "John Stuart Mill and Liberty", http://knowledgeandexperience.blogspot.com.au/2013/06/john-stuart-mill-and-liberty.html. Accessed 10/06/2014.

[32] Notably, Kant also wrote that no one has a right to stipulate how others ought to find happiness in *OCS*, AK 8:290, (Gregor, Trans. & Ed.), p. 291.

[33] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 74.

subjected him to, was lacking. Mill was raised to "desire the maximization of social utility as his primary end"[34] which, as Elizabeth Anderson points out in her insightful analysis of the impact of Mill's depression on his theory, is no doubt a noble cause, but nonetheless one which failed to account for the higher pleasures and as such failed to be of any use to Mill when in the depths of depression.[35] Interestingly, Mill attributed the cure for his depression to the poetry of William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge,[36] a discovery that guided him to understand the qualitative differences between higher and lower pleasures.

Anderson argues that Mill's higher pleasures, namely the moral, aesthetic and sympathetic, are characteristic of the higher faculty of good.[37] On this view the moral perspective appeals to our conscience and arouses feelings of approval or disapproval in reaction to the pleasure or pain an action causes. There is a direct affect where the aesthetic, for example, appeals to our imagination, arousing feelings of admiration or contempt and the sympathetic appeals to fellow feeling, arousing feelings of love, pity and dislike. Mill realised that Bentham's account of happiness could not make sense of these characteristics, which are good in themselves and as such, seemingly pursued for their own sakes, while at the same time promoting the characteristics necessary for a functional community. Bringing his political and utilitarian theories together gives us a way through this dilemma.

Mill reconstructed his moral theory in light of its ability to provide him with the tools to face a crisis. He modified his conception of the good to include what was intrinsically valuable and then offered a cultivational account of how the individual is motivated to pursue these higher goods. Why? Because a creative life, an experimental life, a free life, is far more rewarding.[38] As Anderson points out, Mill's own experience of depression, forced him to engage with the crisis as a means to working out "a way of life that relieves the suffering and sets new goals [that Mill] recognizes as worthwhile, and for a new theory

---

[34] Elizabeth Anderson, 1991, "John Stuart Mill and Experiments in Living" in *Ethics*, 102: 1, p. 15.
[35] Anderson, 1991, pp. 4-26.
[36] See Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 112-119.
[37] The ensuing discussion of the three evaluative perspectives is from Anderson, 1991, p. 12.
[38] Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 72-89.

which can explain the failures of the old way of life and the successes of the new."[39] A key to Mill's moral theory is the recognition that the higher pleasures direct us to the ideals of action and are only experienced if we are free to experiment, free to explore different possible ways of life that may contribute to these higher community bound pleasures.[40]

5.5 Conclusion

The crucial role of feeling and attitude in Hume's understanding of moral motivation and ends, and the prominence of reason in Kant's, are, as we will see in chapter six, relevant to Dewey's conception of experience. Mill's view highlights an important aspect in regards to the relationship between theory and practice: we revise moral norms on the basis of intellectual reflection on actions and their consequences, in terms of the effects on the self and society in general. Rather than just pigeon hole this as consequentialism, it is important to keep in mind Kant's *a priori* synthetic moral law (the categorical imperative) as the basis for the possibility of moral norms. Norms are contingent (synthetic) while the moral speaks to us of universality (*a priori*). Further to this, borrowing from Hume, according to Mill, feelings like higher pleasures can be cultivated to guide us to moral ends. We will see that this liberal interpretation of Mill, fostered by reading his *Greatest Happiness Principle* in light of his *Principle of Liberty* provides us with the foundations for Dewey's proceduralist account.

Nobler sentiments, dispositions to experience Mill's higher feelings, enable us not only to judge what is moral, beautiful and brave, for example, but to also seek them over and above the lower pleasures. This is because they have a cognitive, not merely phenomenal, dimension.[41] Only those who have experienced the higher and lower pleasures are qualified to differentiate between higher and lower qualities of goods and so judge accordingly. As Anderson observes, Mill's psychological analysis offered utilitarian theory two new dimensions:

---

[39] Anderson, 1991, p. 24. See also chapter three of Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 72-89.
[40] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 74-5.
[41] Anderson, 1991, p. 14. See also Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 11.

> First…a new kind of sentiment...aroused a recognition of values distinct from pleasure... Cultivation aroused by the sentiments, not by associating their objects with external pleasures but by attuning the agent to dimensions of value internal to the sentiments—values which could not be experienced apart from sentiments…second...a new kind of pleasure…the pleasures we take in the conscious realisation of other values.[42]

Mill's personal experience, his own various life experiments, allowed him to strengthen the connection of the self to society. Underpinning his thesis is the understanding that one cannot maintain a passion for helping humanity unless they have cultivated a feeling of unity with other people. Without the cultivation of feelings of empathy, if we simply pursue our own pleasures, we miss out on the higher pleasures. By binding the attainment of higher pleasures to the cultivation of moral motives and by linking individual happiness to social happiness, Mill secures firm grounds for moral motivation.

Mill's ideas in regards to the higher pleasures and 'experiments in living' are arguably made more explicit by Dewey, who maintained that experience is an amalgamation of primary sensation AND reflection.[43] The reflective aspect of experience provides Dewey with an account that emphasises the role of both self and community-realisation.

> Our [Dewey & Tufts] own theory gives both self and consequences indispensable roles. We have held…that neither one can be made to be merely a means to the other. There is a circular arrangement. The self is not a *mere* means to producing consequences because the consequences, when of a moral kind, enter into the formation of the self and the self enters into them.[44]

Mill and Dewey recognised that actions have consequences – not only in terms of outcomes – but also in terms of transformation of the self and others (as did Hume, see 3.4). We can think of this in terms of actions being effective and affective. Effects are the outcomes or consequences of actions, accessible insofar as they contribute to adjudicating ethical problems. Affects are the consequences of actions that shape the formation of the self. So our actions impact on our environment and in turn, define the self.

Mill and Dewey agree that the inherent social nature of human beings entails that we weigh up our actions in terms of their possible consequences

[42] Anderson, 1991, p. 19.
[43] By 'experience' Dewey is expressing the pragmatist idea that perception is constructed, not given. It is always a combination of information from the senses AND reflection. Dewey's 'experience' (chapter five) and its relation to 'enquiry' is the subject of chapter six in this thesis.
[44] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 316.

both on others and ourselves, but Dewey did not think that this consideration alone was enough for motivational necessity.

> The identity of self and an act, morally speaking, is the key to understanding the nature of *motives* and *motivation*. Unless this unity is perceived and acknowledged in theory, a motive will be regarded as something external acting upon an individual and inducing him to do something…this view…leads to the conclusion that the self is naturally, intrinsically, inert and passive, and so has to be stirred or moved to action by something outside itself…the self…is always active; that it acts by its very constitution, and hence no external promise of reward or threat of evil to induce it to act. This fact is confirmation of the moral unity of self and action.[45]

Dewey is emphasising the point that selfhood, or character, is not a mere means of natural forces but rather it has agency. This active self is a causal agent that embodies the sentimental and rational aspects of human nature.

Dewey echoes Mill's distinction between low and high pleasures with his distinction between what is valued immediately in impulse and unreflective habit, as compared to what is valued reflectively. However, Dewey attempts to avoid separating them so categorically in practice. Dewey's unification of the two offers a naturalistic account of our highly sensitive capacity for awareness of incompatible preferences, a state of unsettledness that triggers reflection and the need for deliberative choice.

> Incompatible preferences hold each other in check. We hesitate, and then hesitation becomes deliberation: that weighing of values in comparison with each other of which we have already spoken. At last, a preference emerges which is intentional and which is based on consciousness of the values which deliberation has brought into view. We have to make up our minds, when we want two conflicting things, which of them we *really* want. That is choice. We prefer spontaneously, we choose deliberately, knowingly.[46]

Placing the reflective method of enquiry, the process itself, in the primary position rather than any fixed answers to questions about the good, distinguishes the implications of Dewey's account clearly from Mill's. No single outcome – such as happiness – guides all decisions, instead, emphasis is placed on the process and participation in enquiry. For Dewey, a moral life is participation in a process, which aims to identify best thinking practices that, will contribute to human life. This is a process that reduces the ills of society by reducing or removing obstacles to social cooperation through the implementation of (democratic) communication, or communication properly so

---

[45] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, pp. 319-320.
[46] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 317.

called.[47] While Mill recognised that communication is an essential part of criticism and verification, Dewey treated critique and warrantability as the defining features of social and individual development.[48]

Holding someone liable for their actions, holding them responsible, is a method of making people aware of their individual and social obligations to themselves and others. As Dewey puts it: “One is held responsible in order that he may *become* responsible, that is, responsive to the needs and claims of others, to the obligations implicit in his position.”[49] The idea of self-realisation is that holding someone liable for their actions, for what they do, is used as a tool for self-transformation. The processes involved in self-realisation create the conditions for the revision of action.

> In the strictest sense it is impossible for the self to stand still; it is becoming, and becoming for the better or worse. It is in the *quality* of becoming that virtue resides. We set up this and that end to be reached, but *the* end is growth itself. To make an end a final goal is to arrest growth.[50]

This emphasis on self-realisation echoes Mill, but Dewey makes it more explicit. This can be clearly seen in Dewey’s non-dichotomous treatment of motives as both those **interests**, which form the core of the self and supply principles; and as **objects**, be they perceived or thought of, which effect an alteration in the direction of activity.[51] As Dewey puts it, benevolence is not something, which a man **has**; it is something that a man **is**.[52] Such qualities are modes of activity, not forces that produce actions.[53]

Dewey’s vision is to instantiate the capacity to reflect as the bedrock from which all individuals conduct their behaviour. As there is no single fixed criterion for decision-making, no telos, all considerations about what to do are matters for (democratic) communication and decision-making. Democracy is not a political system for Dewey; it is a way of life. The democratic life is one where members of societies have relationships with each other that are grounded in mutual respect

---

[47] Welchman, 1995, p. 216.
[48] James Gouinlock, 1986, *Excellence in Public Discourse: John Stuart Mill, John Dewey, and Social Intelligence*, New York and London: Teachers College Press, p. 52.
[49] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 338.
[50] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 340.
[51] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 321.
[52] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 322.
[53] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 322.

and regard. Dewey turned the focus away from Millsian ends toward process. This emphasis on the value of the communication process, leaves room for disagreement as it appreciates that whilst a final, fix-all solution or universal agreement may not be found, it is this very scope for disagreement that characterises an evolving and dynamic community.

Moral judgments are not inclinations or personal preferences. As a judgment they are consistent with a constellation of feelings, associations, habits of mind (Hume) and are comparable, communicable judgments (Kant). In Kant the comparative aspect emerges out of intersubjectivity, that is, a comparison with what others would judge. Interpreting *Utilitarianism* in light of *On Liberty* enables us to explore the cultivational aspect of the higher pleasures within an individual's obligation to society. Mill is offering us a psychological explanation for why individual freedom, as set out in *On Liberty* is tempered by our understanding of the good. His assertion that the higher goods are good in themselves, allows him to incorporate ideals into his theory. Arguably, and given the historical tracing of ideas in this thesis, we can view Mill as tempering the Humean idea of the sentiments with these higher evaluative standards. Our moral judgments are justified if they refer to the higher goods, which importantly are not knowable *a-priori*, but are the outcome of 'experiments in living'. We appeal to ideals in order to make claims about some goods being intrinsically higher than others, or to criticize a decision, preference or desire. But it is experience, shaped by human constants, (a kind of Kantian *a-priority*) that gives us these ideals. In terms of experimenting with how to live, Mill's discussion of freedom is moderated by the individual's understanding of the intrinsic value of the higher goods, for both the self and the society.

The seeds of these ideas can be traced from Hume to Kant through Mill to Dewey. An idea shared by all four is that we can only be free as individuals within communities, lest we be brutes, compelled by our animalistic instincts. This is a naturalistic explanation of what it is to be human, explicitly, to have the rational capacity to temper our inclinations. Through the cultivation of the higher goods (Mill), including the sociability required of tranquility of the sentiments (Hume), reflective judgment and reason (Kant) and higher pleasures (Mill) we become truly free. Mill can account for why there is such human

diversity in terms of preferences and sources of pleasure and pain, a state that necessitates a corresponding diversity in modes of life.[54] The substantiation of ideals, of the higher goods, enables him to temper individual desire through the understanding that "it is possible to judge one way about the good, but to feel quite differently about it".[55] He is advocating for the freedom to live an experimental life that in turn arbitrates societal customs, lest they stagnate and fester, becoming impediments to progress.

Mill embeds the rational decision maker in the social and political realm, in which they participate, which in turn, embeds the telos of happiness in a self within broader society. By scaling individual liberty to the level of community, we end up with a broad community-bound utilitarianism that ensures that all rational persons will choose the moral act. Individuals participate in societies that weigh their moral judgments with consequences that contribute to *eudemonic* happiness simply because acting morally is in their own and others interests. Seeing Mill as a precursor to Dewey clarifies the community impact on the individual but in turn, seeing Mill's influence on Dewey, reminds us of aspects of Mill often overlooked. Mill introduces the idea of higher pleasures and accounts for how they emerge in experience through reflection. He attaches higher pleasures to ends, which enhance community and long term absence from pain. As such, Mill addresses the interface between rational deliberation and experience, accounting for how we are motivated to act to achieve rationally identified ends. It was now up to Dewey to flesh this out in terms of insights gained from both psychological theory and epistemological pragmatism of the early 20th Century. Our different historical trajectory sets us to now turn to Dewey's vision of instantiating habits of social enquiry, as the bedrock from which individuals conduct their behaviour through a process of democratic communication and decision-making.

---

[54] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 83.
[55] Anderson, 1991, p. 26.

6. John Dewey's Experience

I focus on the role of Dewey's conception of experience as a foundation for his revision of previous accounts of how an event either is meaningful or alternatively, acquires meaning. Dewey thinks of an event as experienced rather than perceived. In this way he can argue that in constituting an event, we imbue it with meaning – a process engages background and foreground learning respectively. Importantly for Dewey, experience is constructed by terms developed within communities and for this reason, language and communication feature in his account of experience, as I will demonstrate in this chapter.

6.1 Introduction

Throughout *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*,[1] Dewey addresses his theoretical predecessors, Hume, Kant and Mill. He demonstrates that as morality is largely concerned with controlling human nature, it is only from observation of human nature that we can learn how to be moral. Drawing on the shortfalls of the earlier theorists strengthens this thesis. The problem, as Dewey sees it, is that the rules of morality and the ends to which they aim have been so divorced from human nature that their realisation is impossible. He thus sets out to develop a moral theory, which offers a tenable and attainable moral life grounded in intelligent conduct.

Dewey thought that by divorcing morals from the actualities of human physiology and psychology, morality had become too caught up in the negatives; observing prohibition, avoidance of evil, not doing things, and so on. Treating morality in the negative has meant that we psychologise wrongness, badness and evil as reasons for social out-casting and rightness, goodness and altruism as indicators of Godliness. This, he argues, has led to morality being in the hands of religious institutions, which often cannot agree and fail to be consistent in their teachings. In response, Dewey locates the source of morality in intersubjective agreement, human relations and the nuances of a situation. Dewey recognised

[1] Dewey, *HNC*, 1922.

that an adequate ethical theory must be able to identify, explain and offer a process for taking all features of the moral life into consideration. Things such as character (virtues), acts (rules and outcomes), context, intelligence (rational reasoning) are all essential aspects of Dewey's proceduralist theory of reflective ethical conduct.

There is a sense in which, Dewey's ethics derives from considering Kant's unification of pure and practical reason in the third Critique (section 4.2) and Mill's idea of 'experiments in living' (section 5.4). Modeled on the method of scientific enquiry, Dewey's democratic, social or life enquiry is an active method of responding to moral disagreements through the identification of flexible sets of criteria (chapter seven). When he speaks about enquiry as methodologically akin to scientific study, Dewey has in mind a method of discovery and invention. This is a creative process where new ideas are cashed out and tested in the world with the aim of producing knowledge that remains fallible – open to change as it is assessed and reassessed in relation to experience. Dewey is endeavouring to capture this same process of experimental thinking. He applies it to the process of addressing moral disagreement and describes it as a form of enquiry. When Dewey considers moral judgments as the product of intelligent deliberation, the reflective nature of judgment is to the fore.

Primary textual evidence is used to explicate Dewey's notion of 'experience' in Section 6.2. The relationship between biology and behaviour is central to Dewey's theory and is the grounds for thinking about the role of habits, impulses and intelligent conduct in Section 6.3. In 6.4 we turn to communication and Dewey's argument for meaning being a language event. Section 6.5 concludes that the main lesson from Dewey's reconstruction of 'experience' is a shadow of Hume (3.2), namely that perception is always accompanied by conception. The final section (6.6) concludes the chapter and paves the way for analysis of Dewey's notion of 'enquiry'.

6.2 Experience

Dewey's *Experience and Nature*[2] presents us with hypotheses about how experience is experienced.[3] The basic empirical premise is that the qualitative aspects of experience, our sentiments and values, for example, are inextricable parts of how we understand the world. Expanding on the pragmatist foundations of his forebears Peirce and James (chapter two), Dewey constructs a non-psychodualist account of experience, where the knower does not stand outside of that which is known. He argues that when we talk about justification of beliefs we must talk about justification within the context of the process of enquiring into experience. If we fail to accommodate experience of our experiences into our theories of truth and knowledge, we end up with a dualistic and dichotomised notion of the "knower as a spectator".[4] The problem can be restated: some forms of empiricism are too restrictive and rigid in their treatment of objectivity and this leads us to falsely question the reality of affective qualities of our experience, such as values and aesthetics.

Dewey takes the Darwinian theory of natural selection and applies it to our experience of nature as a whole. This is a broad interpretation of nature that includes both physical and social processes, be they biological, social, aesthetic, moral or scientific.

> There are traits, qualities, and relations found in things experienced, in the things that are typically and emphatically matters of human experience, which do not appear in the objects of physical science; namely, such things as immediate qualities, values, ends. Are such things inherently relevant and important for a philosophical theory of nature? I have held that a philosophical empiricism must take the position that they are intrinsically pertinent.[5]

Peirce's enquiry based on the scientific method is fully developed by Dewey into an intricate process of observation of the social. The outcome is a method of social enquiry where the relationships between all the different features of nature, including generic traits, such as qualities, values, ends and so on are

---

[2] Dewey, 1958, (1925), *EN*.
[3] Gregory Fernando Pappas, "Reconstructing Dewey Today" *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012.
[4] Steven Fesmire, "Reconstructing Dewey Today" *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 09/03/2012
[5] John Dewey, 1940, "Nature in Experience" in *The Philosophical Review*, XLIX, pp. 244-258, p. 247. Hereafter *NE*.

studied. Dewey's aim is to embed experience in realism as a manifestation of nature, where poetry and art are as real and informative as science and mathematics.[6]

This is a simple claim: the social is as real and discoverable as the physical. Dewey is not claiming that there is no difference in ontological status – obviously trees and virtues do not exist in the same way, after all you cannot touch bravery, or turn it into a table. What he is claiming is that we are able to study and know about each directly. Our experience of bravery is equally as real as our experience of a forest of trees.

> The phenomena of social life are as relevant to the problem of the relation of the individual and universal as those of logic…nature is construed in such a way that all these things, since they are actual, are naturally possible; they are not explained away into mere "appearance" in contrast with reality. Illusions are illusions, but the occurrence of illusions is not an illusion, but a genuine reality.[7]

Dewey's investigation of 'how the world is' focuses on how things interact with one another and the effects that these interactions have. This form of social enquiry focuses on the observable relationships in physical and social processes of nature granting subjective, qualitative, phenomenal experience equal standing to physical objects. Earlier forms of empiricism, from Peirce, James, Hume and Mill, are used as a springboard.

We cannot underestimate the richness of Dewey's experience that incorporates cognition, as it indirectly marks the theoretical foundations of certain contemporary theories of value, such as John McDowell's.[8] The consequence is that there is no need to work out how to interface experience (sensation) and cognition (reason) as the two are bound up through and through in humans with higher cognitive processing. This means that social interactions are a contributing factor to the emergence and cultivation of higher cognitive processing. McDowell indirectly corroborates when he argues that we cannot

---

[6] Dewey, *EN*, p. 19.
[7] Dewey, *EN*, p. 20.
[8] John McDowell, 1983, "Aesthetic value, objectivity, and the fabric of the world" in E. Schaper (Ed.), *Pleasure, Preference and Value: Studies in Philosophical Aesthetics*", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-16. Connections between Dewey and McDowell will be made throughout this and following chapters. Understanding Dewey in light of Hume, Kant and Mill strengthens this connection.

fully describe the world in terms of properties without any reference to the way that they affect us.[9]

Dewey's 'experience' represents the pragmatist idea that perception is constructed, or perhaps interpreted, not given. Whilst my focus is on explaining what the conception is and what philosophical work it does, it is interesting to note that contemporary evolutionary biologists and neurobiologists essentially endorse this view.[10] Dewey employed 'experience' as a system of interactions observable and analysable through the process of enquiry. He argued that the starting point for enquiry is contained in this relationship between the world and the self.[11] This is a profoundly naturalistic approach: we can *know* what exists through the study of nature, where nature is understood as the *whole of what* is *experienced*, and we as social, cognitively active beings are construed as part of nature.

6.3 Habits & Perception

In *HNC* Dewey is particularly interested in the relations between habits, impulses and intelligent conduct in order to explain the relationship between our biology and our behaviour. As Dewey states:

> We can recognize that all conduct is *interaction* between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social…freedom is found in that kind of interaction which maintains an environment in which human desire and choice count for something…When we look at the problem as one of an adjustment to be intelligently attained, the issue shifts from within personality to an engineering issue, the establishment of arts of education and social guidance.[12]

Dewey is less concerned with the philosophical issue of interfacing the sensuous with rationality than with the more practical problem of explaining the role habit

---

[9] McDowell, 1983, p. 2.
[10] For example, Sperry's split-brain experiments and the abundance of literature and research that it instigated. R. W. Sperry "Brain Bisection and Mechanisms of Consciousness" in J. C. Eccles (Ed.,) *Brain and Conscious Experience*, New York: Springer-Verlag, pp. 298-313.
[11] An interesting transactional account of Dewey's Theory of Valuation can be found in Morris Eames, 1961, "The Cognitive and the Non-Cognitive in Dewey's Theory of Valuation" in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 58: 7, pp. 179-195, p. 192-195 in particular. Eames argues that experience is the starting point of enquiry, a theme arguably developed by Hildebrand's transactional analysis that posits the PSP: Practical Starting Point in David L. Hildebrand, 2003, *Beyond Realism & Antirealism*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
[12] Dewey, *HNC*, p. 10.

plays in moral judgments. He identifies habits as socially shaped dispositions or modes of response that inform the way we interpret experience and react to the environment. This description is an attempt to identify social interactions and customs as shared habits of a group that are passed on at a subconscious level. His broad aim is to bring habits into conscious awareness and thereby shift the focus of morality toward intelligent conduct. Regardless of whether conduct is good or bad, it is always social, so identification of ethical habits, of good social behaviours, provides us with fodder for reflective processes of social enquiry.

By stressing the sensual aspect of consciousness as an integral part of moments of perception, Dewey's account can accommodate the qualitative aspect of it: "…optical qualities do not stand by themselves with factual and emotive qualities clinging to their skirts."[13] In other words, there are no qualities with the unique phenomenological status of being objects of direct awareness. The quality, our experience of the object, is always had in virtue of a concept of the object in mind.[14] To cite Dewey's example: we cannot have the concept of liquidity without the liquidity of water.[15] In other words, the way the world is (the liquidity of water) gives rise to the concept (of liquidity) and as implied in his discussion, this means that we cannot perceive the liquidity of water without a concept of liquidity in mind. This is where Dewey is much clearer on the implications of his social theory than Mill was of his, railroaded as he was by his particular brand of empiricism. Dewey argues that nature cannot be split into perception and sensation, because perception includes consciousness of many qualities and these do not differ in their phenomenological status. All things, which are present in consciousness, including sensations, are present in the same way, that is, in virtue of structuring devices such as concepts.

The essence of this position is evident in Peirce: "We must not begin by talking of pure ideas—vagabond thoughts that tramp the public roads without

---

[13] John Dewey, 1934, *Art as Experience*, New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group, p. 128. Hereafter *AE*.
[14] Hark Kant in sections 4.2 & 4.3!
[15] Dewey, *AE*, p. 128.

any human habitation—but must begin with men and their conversations."[16] At the heart of Dewey's approach is the role that pragmatists afford language in regards to communication of meaning. As Dewey explains:

> The heart of language is not "expression" of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership. To fail to understand is to fail to come into agreement in action; to misunderstand is to set up action at cross purposes….Meaning is not indeed a psychic existence; it is primarily a property of behavior, and secondarily a property of objects….a distinctive behavior; cooperative, in that response to another's act involves contemporaneous response to a thing as entering into the other's behavior, and this upon both sides.[17]

Language is a natural function of human association that has consequences that afford changes in the world. These consequences produce effects that react upon other events, physical and human, giving them meaning or significance.[18] Dewey is treating language as an "experienced event",[19] as what constitutes the relations, between a speaker and an object or between speakers.

Dewey's 1896 article "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology"[20] helps to explain his view of language and meaning and their connection to communication as an event.[21] In terms of its historical context, Dewey's explanation of the reflex response can be seen as resisting the behaviourist trend of reducing the concept of being human to a physically and socially determined creature, explainable by prior conditioning. Dewey replaces the stimulus-response model of conditional learning with the reflex arc, which attempts to incorporate the overall experience, including the context, into the explanatory model. It is perhaps most easily explained by the child-candle instance that Dewey cites from James: Suppose…that we have a baby before us who sees a

---

[16] CP 8, p. 112. See also, Charles Sanders Peirce, "Volume 2, 1893-1913" Peirce Edition Project (Ed.'s), 1998, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

[17] Dewey, *EN*, p. 179

[18] Dewey, *EN*, p. 173

[19] Dewey, *EN*, p. 173

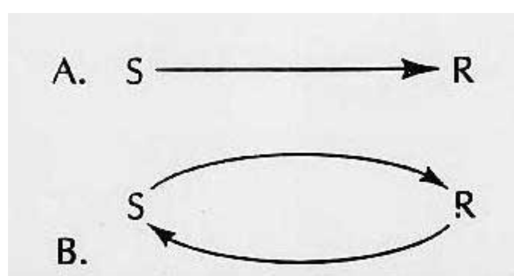
[20] John Dewey, 1896, "The Reflex Arc in Psychology" in *Psychological Review*, 3, pp. 357-370. http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Dewey/reflex.htm Accessed 22/03/2012

[21] Notably the article is a very difficult and convoluted piece. This may have been because it was written at the time when Dewey was emerging from his idealist Hegelian upbringing and replacing it with a Jamesian evolutionary naturalism. However, whatever the reasons for its convolutedness, the message is clear: the stimulus-response and the reflex circuit views are inadequate accounts of learning as they are unable to explain the broad view of an inclusive meaning.

candle-flame for the first time, and, by virtue of a reflex tendency common in babies of a certain age, extends his hand to grasp it, so that his fingers get burned.[22]

The behaviourist interpretation of this scenario is that the sensation of light is a stimulus to the grasping as a response. In turn, the burning is a stimulus to the withdrawing of the hand response. Dewey admits that while this account is adequate in a rough practical way, it is unable to account for the sensorimotor experience as a whole. The problem is that the stimulus-response picture maintains rigid distinctions between sensations (stimulus), ideas (central activity of making connections) and the resulting action (response). By treating each as a disjointed part it is unable to account for the coordination of the act as a whole.

Paul Ballantyne[23] argues that many responses to Dewey's Reflex Arc paper present an oversimplified view of his argument, portraying Dewey as calling for a "circuit" rather than an "arc" view of reflexive acts, portrayed here in diagram form:[24]



The diagram shows these two distinctions between a reflex act: the stimulus-response (A.) and the reflex circuit view (B.). The problem with the stimulus-response view (A.) is that it implies a one-way causal chain of events where environmental contingencies impose themselves on a passive organism. In turn

[22] William James, 1890, *The Principles of Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt. http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/j/james/william/principles/chapter2.html Accessed 05/02/2013.

[23] Paul F. Ballantyne, 2008, *History and Theory of Psychology: An early 21st century student's perspective*, "Section 4: Evolution and Psychology: In Darwin, Romanes, Morgan, James, Dewey, and the Chicago Functionalists" http://www.igs.net/%7Epballan/section4(210).htm Accessed 22/03/2012

[24] John G. Benjafield, 1996, *A History of Psychology*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, http://www.igs.net/%7Epballan/section4(210).htm Accessed 22/03/2012.

the organism is forced to respond. The reflex circuit view (B.) in contrast, replaces this one-way stimulus and response view with a bi-directional transaction between the environment and organism. While the latter picture does allow for some sort of active processes like a sensory-motor feedback loop and is thus able to account for the ongoing to and fro between organism and environment, it is also too narrow, falling short in its inability to take context into account. That is, the circuit view also falls short of capturing the complexity of Dewey's account, the reflex arc view, which is able to incorporate the broader naturalistic view of organism in communication with its environment in an interactive and transactive way.

Dewey is attempting to reorder the basic terrain that wrongly gives rise to understanding the human being as a determined product of nature or society, that is, with no genuine agency. There is an active relationship, an interactive process at play, between the nature of the organism and the contingencies of the environment.[25] Dewey explains this other dimension in terms of context within the process of experience. The problem with both the stimulus-response and the circuit view of reflex responses is that they treat the outcome as a separate experience to the stimulus. Dewey however, treats all aspects, including the initial ocular discernment of the flame, the movement towards it, the burning sensation, the cry of 'ouch', the tears and the movement away from it, as members of a whole experience: an all-inclusive context and so rejecting aspects of the stimulus-response model:

> …failing to see unity of activity, no matter how much it still leaves us with sensation or peripheral stimulus; idea, or central process (the equivalent of attention); and motor response, or act, as four disconnected experiences, having to be somehow adjusted to each other, whether through the intervention of an extraexperimental soul, or by mechanical push and pull.[26]

The recognition that both the sensation and the movement lie inside, not outside of the act, reflects the idea that all actions, processing and reactions occur in the one human. The stimulus-response and circuit views imply that the environment is responsible for the activity of the organism and its response, whereas the reflex arc places some responsibility on the shoulders of the experiencer.

---

[25] Ballantyne, 2008, http://www.igs.net/%7Epballan/section4(210).htm
[26] Dewey, 1896, pp. 360-361.

To return to our earlier example of the flame: while many animals learn to respond to flames just as humans do, they lack the conceptual capacity to give meaning to the experience. For humans, there is more to the experience than a simple stimulus and response, the experience itself includes affective responses that are informative in terms of what is learnt about fire in general, which is built upon with each new experience. The importance of contextual differences can be drawn out through the use of another of Dewey's examples, which he quotes from Baldwin's analysis of reactive consciousness in his 1891 chapter "Feeling and Will".

> In this there are, [Baldwin] says, "four elements corresponding to the four elements of the nervous arc. First the receiving consciousness, the stimulus – say a loud, unexpected sound; second, the attention involuntarily drawn, the registering element; and, third, the muscular reaction following upon the sound – say flight from fancied danger." Now, in the first place, such an analysis is incomplete; it ignores the status prior to hearing the sound. Of course, if this status is irrelevant to what happens afterwards, such ignoring is quite legitimate. But is it irrelevant either to the quantity or the quality of the stimulus?[27]

Dewey is emphasising the important difference that context makes in terms of mediating the impact of the stimulus and in turn the response. As Dewey explains, a loud bang will have a different effect in the middle of an otherwise quiet, lonely night than if it occurs during a hunting expedition. More than this, what one hears depends on context. In the first case, one might hear a threat, while in the other, an animal being killed. . In other words, the stimulus is a part of a larger coordinated experience that includes context. Dewey calls this an experiential matrix.

The overall point is that there is no metaphysical dualism according to which the sensation of the organism is distinct from the psychical idea or the physical response of action. Instead, the stimulus and response are teleological distinctions, that is, distinctions of function, in terms of the part they play with reference to reaching or maintaining an end.[28] There are two aspects of this teleological process, which are important to distinguish. Firstly, the relation represents an organisation of means with reference to a comprehensive end.[29]

---

[27] Dewey, 1896, p. 361. Quoting from James Baldwin, "Feeling and Will" in 1891, *Handbook of Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt.
[28] Dewey, 1896, p. 365.
[29] Dewey, 1896, p. 365.

This is a nod to the notion of Darwinian adaptation – the act is accomplished due to the ability of humans to be conscious of a stimulus as a stimulus and a response as a response. Secondly, the distinction of stimulus and response is one of **interpretation** of a continuously ordered sequence of acts.

Both the stimulus and response are acts that aim at reaching an end, which the individual learns to discern within contextual bounds. For example, a child who burns itself on a candle is not altogether put off reaching out and touching things in general. What the child has learnt is a response that is specific to the members of the context. With time this response will be generalised across all flames, but not, for example, across all sources of light. Thus both stimulus and response have functional value in so far as they, for example, facilitate learning. The resulting education will be modified by further experiences in accord with the source of the stimulus and the effect that stimulus has on the organism. What is important about this particular paper of Dewey's is that it establishes the backbone of his proceduralist account of ethics. The way we carve up moral concerns into themes or analyse morality into its elements depends on the ends at which we aim and the context in which actions and reactions take place.

6.4 Communication: Language & Meaning

Where does this leave us in regards to language and meaning? Dewey's criticism of the stimulus-response view is that it maintains dualistic conceptions about the nature of sensations and actions and ignores context. His alternative asserts that as actions are mediated by the context in which they occur, methodologically, no one principle can possibly explain in an interesting way the reason for what might appear to be the same kind of action in different contexts. This leads us to how Dewey thought meaning was created by us to include a place for 'self' and 'environment'. Dewey thought about this in terms of mind and consciousness.[30] He wrote:

---

[30] Dewey is not claiming to offer a theory of mind or consciousness; rather this is a useful explanatory model that enables him to better account for his notion of experience.

> Mind denotes the whole system of meanings as they are embodied in the workings of organic life; consciousness in a being with language denotes awareness or perception of meanings; it is the perception of actual events, whether past, contemporary or future, *in* their meanings, the having of actual ideas.[31]

For Dewey mind is responsible for operative meanings, constantly chugging away and enabling connections to be made via habits and impulses without direct awareness. Consciousness, in contrast, intermittently steps in to provide reflective power and draw out new and novel meanings and ideas. Effective communication is therefore a process that makes demands on individuals to consciously put themselves in another person's shoes, to take the stance of another person, in order to better understand and grasp meanings. This demand is in reaction to a problem, a disturbance that kick starts conscious thought and triggers the need for effective communication. So mind, consciousness and communication are the explanatory terms in his theory of meaning.

Dewey argues that meaning is a language event that includes aspects of both Idealism and epistemological realism. He argues that events acquire meaning by the way a community's conception of an event constitutes that meaning:

> In formulating the distinction between existences and objects of reference, whether cognitive, esthetic or moral, philosophy does not exact that violent break with common sense which is found in the assertion of Idealism that events themselves are composed of meanings. Nor does it involve that break with common sense found in epistemological realism, with its assertion of a direct dealing of mind with naked existences unclothed by intervention of meanings.[32]

His point against the realist is that they are unable to account for moments of conscious awareness where indeterminacy of meaning still endures. What they fail to take into consideration is that there is an antecedent stock of meanings (mind), which we take for granted and use without consciousness. Reflective thinking, conscious enquiry, is not demarcated as an isolated component of arriving at ideas and meanings. The standard realist view fails to take into account the implicit knowledge garnered from previous inferences and investigations explicitly operated on earlier in the mind.[33]

---

[31] Dewey, *EN*, p. 303

[32] Dewey, *EN*, p. 325-6.

[33] See, for example, Adam Morton, *A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 93-103 in particular.

Realism implicitly postulates a pre-established harmony of the knower and things known, that tends to pass over the fact that such harmony is always an attained outcome of prior inferences and investigations.[34] This approach leads to a conception of error that Dewey rejected. The practical problem of the view that Dewey sought to revise involves the assumption that the mind is capable of immediately grasping and registering objects in their entirety.[35] For Dewey, error is an important part of truth finding processes. Instead of assimilating error with falsity, or contrasting it with correctness, he incorporates it into his theory of perception, which in turn grounds his notion of meaning. Perception may be constituted by many aspects of mind, such as imagination, fancy, reverie, affection, love and hate, desire, happiness and misery, to name but a few.[36] This is an evolutionary view of perception where under the constraint of effectiveness relative to need or interest, an error is an important part.

Arguably for Dewey, by focusing on the functional role of each, perception and meaning are conceived as much in terms of their role in communication as in their role in knowledge formation. To use Dewey's example, a stick ceases to be a lever once it is no longer in use as a way of opening a tin.[37] It reverts to being a stick once the *relationship* between it and its consequence are no longer distinguished. Analogously, perception and meaning are shaped by consequences. Dewey discusses this idea in terms of language.[38] Language (and other artificial signs, such as pointing and so on,) is a means of interpreting, understanding and registering the relationships between things so as to have fruitful communication. It is important to stress that for Dewey, information processing and language operate interdependently. Language is a part of nature, not something over and above nature that simply describes or attempts to capture it. Language is part of what we describe when we describe nature, an implication of which is that while constrained by natural laws, it in turn constructs what we can know of nature.

---

[34] Dewey, *EN*, p. 309.
[35] Dewey notes that this may be a remnant of God having a perfect mind and man being created in the image of his maker. Dewey, *EN*, p. 309
[36] Dewey, *EN*, p. 310.
[37] Dewey, *EN*, p. 187.
[38] Dewey, *EN*, p. 188.

A recurring theme in Dewey's work in terms of language and meaning was that all thought has an aesthetic aspect that cannot be captured by literal propositions. Truth is therefore more than accurate correspondence and meaning is not merely propositional. Rather, context conditions, that is, qualitative responses, are equally authoritative. Dewey thus speaks about language and meaning as an experienced event. This is why the concept of experience is so central for Dewey. He wants to place the first person perspective at the heart of his philosophy, but he is not interested in the private, idiosyncratic or even the personal. It is the first person plural he is interested in; hence he constructs his account in terms of perception, meaning, language within broad conceptions of mind and consciousness. Dewey argued that a theory of language and meaning had to be able to account for broader meaningful experiences because qualitative experience is an aspect of understanding.

It is interesting to note that contemporary research in the cognitive sciences offers support for Dewey's theory. Tom Cochrane's work "Music, Emotions and the Influence of the Cognitive Science" focuses on whether it is the music itself that possesses aesthetic properties and/or any values that result from such possession, or whether it is purely a subjective matter.[39] Cochrane concludes that in order to account for the aesthetic meaning of musical experiences, we need to seek some kind of reflective equilibrium between how listeners do in fact respond to music, and what seems to be conceptually essential.[40] Cochrane identifies the affective capacity of the qualitative aspect as the source of music's meaning. The qualitative aspect refers to something that emerges from the notes that are played, defined by my experience of it. While this experience is not fully captured in a literal sense, by language, language nonetheless plays a part in the quality of my experience.

---

[39] Tom Cochrane, 2010, "Music, Emotions and the Influence of the Cognitive Science" in *Philosophy Compass*, 5: 11, pp. 978-988. See also Bence Nanay, 2012, "The Multimodal Experience of Art" in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 52: 4, pp. 353-363 and Jerome Feldman & Srinivas Narayanan, 2003, "Embodied meaning in a neural theory of language" in *Brain and Language*, 89, pp. 385-392.
[40] Cochrane, 2010, p. 986.

Jennifer Welchman talks about this aspect of Dewey's treatment of language in terms of how language and communication mark an important break between humans and other animal species.[41] The fact that there is something significantly different happening for the creature that is part of a language using community, cannot be undervalued. As Welchman observes, language use enables an opening up of an inner life, it gives users the ability to think about what one cares about and in turn this enables us to have values.[42] We value what we care about. When Dewey talks about a communicative practice, he is addressing this broader aspect of what it is to be language-using humans. Language use is an ability to engage in communicative practices, involving expressions of thought, which in turn allows for the construction of personhood and makes it possible to have values.[43]

Dewey's view of communication is reflected in the work of George Herbert Mead, who proffers an empathetic view of communication.[44] Mead's (1934) work emphasised the individual's capacity to take on the role of other persons as a way of understanding how they view the world. The ability to project oneself into the standpoint of another is an essential aspect of communication because communication is a relationship, a process rather than a particularity. As Dewey argued:

> Language is specifically a mode of interaction of at least two beings, a speaker and a hearer; it presupposes an organized group to which these creatures belong, and from whom they have acquired their habits of speech. It is therefore a relationship, not a particularity....When we attribute meaning to the speaker as *his* intent, we take for granted another person who is to share in the execution of the intent, and also something, independent of the persons concerned, through which the intent is to be realised....This community of partaking is meaning.[45]

While there are many contemporary accounts of what constitutes taking on another's perspective, or empathy, Dewey and Mead's accounts are not analysed in this light here. Rather, I draw attention to their notion of communication as

---

[41] Jennifer Welchman, "Reconstructing Dewey Today" *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] This aspect of how values are constructed through communication will be very important in the discussion of community and shared values in later chapters.

[44] George Herbert Mead, 1934, *Mind, Self and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[45] Dewey, *EN*, p. 185

interaction. This is very different to a 'pipeline' view of communication where information goes in one end and out the other unchanged. Mead and Dewey's view of communication is about transformation and interaction within the context of experience. As Larry Hickman puts it, there is never any immaculate transfer[46] – communication can never escape context because life experiences, interests and talents of the individuals involved always constrain and characterise it. There can be no meaning without the participation of language-users engaged in a communication event.

The whole of what is experienced is more than a particular situation; it is the entire context of who we are. As Gregory Pappas explains, for Dewey, context is the right here and now PLUS history, economic standing, religious beliefs, cultural identity, political climate and so on.[47] Dewey's 'situations' are, as Matthew Brown points out:

> …objective aspects of the agent-environment interactions. Situations are not subjective/mental entities; they are concrete elements of the natural world. Agents perceive not only the constituents of their situations but the "pervasive qualitative character" of the situation, a qualitative perception (or feeling) of the character of objective transactions between the agent and the environment…Dewey's theory requires the recognition of a background composed of ordinary objects, events, agents, and their interactions as the relevant context of a practice or inquiry, as well as a perceptual claim about the qualitative unity of that context.[48]

Hence, experience is multifaceted. Habits, including habits of thought that I inherited from my culture and philosophical education, for example, are all located in the context of experience. Insofar as context includes information garnered from past experiences, it is historical. This means that our interactions in experience are never uninformed, so we never have to start from scratch. The immediate environment, the individual situation in which the problem occurs, is also a part of the context, as Hildebrand puts it, the situation is the source of the means, criteria, and clues to problems.[49]

---

[46] Larry Hickman "Reconstructing Dewey Today" *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012
[47] Pappas, "Reconstructing Dewey Today" http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012
[48] Matthew J. Brown, 2012, "John Dewey's Logic of Science" in *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science*, 2: 2, pp. 258-306, p. 274.
[49] David L. Hildebrand, 2016, "The Paramount Importance of Experience and Situations in Dewey's *Democracy and Education*" *Educational Theory*, Vol. 66, No. 1-2, pp. 73-88, p. 84.

> I am doing-and-undergoing-amid-things, and *one* aspect of my doing is thinking. In the same way my breathing involves the atmosphere, my thinking involves whatever perceptual, conceptual, and physical elements are in play…All creatures are *organisms-in-environments* and all thinkers are experiencers-in-problematic-situations.[50]

Then of course there is the level of engagement of the individuals involved, which allows room for individual variations and explanations of behavioural differences. Dewey's method of incorporating a multi-faceted description of context in the construction of meaning makes space for him to accommodate difference and the disagreements that ensue.

6.5 Experience & Experiencing

The human capacity to review, interpret, record, search, select and experiment, to think reflectively about the events of experience, enables Dewey to account for the transformative process of experience. Situational traits such as uncertainty, questioning, hypotheses and alternatives, are integral aspects of the way we experience the world, triggering the need to attempt to arrive at conclusions. These traits are just as much a part of nature as height and weight. This must be the way the world is so as to generate ignorance and enquiry. Processes of doubt, hypothesising, trial and temporal conclusions are evidence of genuine hazard, contingency, irregularity and indeterminateness in nature. All are settled in the occurrence of thinking.[51] Whilst Dewey argues that the content of experience is neither subjective nor objective as such, it is important to remember that this is not a relativistic view. Dewey avoids 'the private' (the relativism or the subjectivism) of experience through his conception of the way experience is beholden to the concepts we apply, concepts that we have in virtue of being internalised through community exchanges.[52] Perception is internal **and** external, immediate sensations **and** interpretations, objective **and** subjective, perceiving **and** conceiving, sentience **and** sapience, evaluations **and** valuings.

[50] Hildebrand, 2016, p. 85.
[51] Dewey, *EN*, p. 69.
[52] The technicalities of which will be explored in detail in chapter seven.

As will be explored further in the ensuing chapters, John McDowell's rejection of the two-factor approach to perception in *Mind, Value & Reality*[53] can be viewed as a contemporary corroboration to Dewey's view of perception. The general theme of McDowell's work can be summarised as a refutation of subjectivist positions[54] from emotivism through to Simon Blackburn's projectivist quasirealism.[55] McDowell's position is based on the refutation of the subjectivist premise that phenomenological qualities, such as values, are not found in the world, but projected onto it, a mere reflection of subjective responses.[56] Reminiscent of Dewey, McDowell observes that this subjectivist position is embedded in a metaphysical error where the thesis that value is in the world is seen as interchangeable with the thesis that value is *objective*.[57] McDowell's point is that qualitative experiences are equally valid aspects of our perception; in fact they are inextricable aspects of perception, as experiences of objects. Nonetheless, values are not brutely there, independently of our sensibility, although, this does not prevent us from supposing that they are there independently of any particular apparent experience of them.[58] Values are understood as being objectively grounded – we cannot divorce our sapience from our sentience.[59]

Hildebrand explains that the pragmatist strategy was to turn away from redundant psychodualist traditions and replace it with a transactional analysis where the self is in an ongoing process, a toing and froing with the broader environment:

> Where traditional philosophy assumed the theory of psychophysical dualism and took as one of its primary tasks the explanation of how the apparent *interaction* between minds and the external world was possible, pragmatists began by accepting experienced *transactions* between organism and environment *as* real and then sought to describe the variety of ways such transactions happen. Thus, pragmatist metaphysics made continuity *through* change basic…and took inquiry-for-purposes as a natural complement.[60]

---

[53] John McDowell, 1998, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following" in *Mind, Value and Reality*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, pp. 198-218.
[54] Or "anti-anti-realism", as he calls it
[55] McDowell, 1998, p. *viii*.
[56] McDowell, 1998, p. 112.
[57] McDowell, 1998, p. 113.
[58] McDowell, 1998, p. 146.
[59] A phrase that McDowell attributes to Robert Brandom, McDowell, 1998, p. 295.
[60] Hildebrand, 2003, p.179.

John McDowell talks about this in terms of the mistaken separation of our capacity to feel from how we perceive and conceive the world.[61] Instead, these associations are treated as different modes of interaction, as transactions that form the bedrock for individual and social habits, customs, culture, politics and institutions, all of which are open to review, followed by revitalisation or rejection.

Dewey's main lesson in regards to experience is that perception is always accompanied by conception – which was why the one-way stimulus and response view and the bi-directional view were inadequate (6.3). Neither theory can account for context, or 'situation' as Dewey terms it. We are not passive receivers of stimuli; we are interactive organisms. Life is an ongoing interaction, a transaction between organism and environment, generally running smoothly through mechanisms of impulses and habits – walking, eating, talking, digesting and so on. A situation that is not satisfied by these primary responses disrupts this general flow and triggers the need for reflective thinking. Enquiry is the observation and analysis of the relations between events and objects within the field of experience.

6.6 Conclusion

Dewey's pragmatic treatment of meaning, language and communication turns the spotlight on the fullness of experience. Empirical evidence in support of the idea that consciousness of meanings denotes redirection of meanings, (which are always ultimately meanings of events), is supplied by obvious facts of attention and interest on one side and the working of established and assured habits on the other.[62] We trundle along, without need of conscious construction of meaning. It is only when something out of the ordinary, some startling and unexpected aspect of perception looms into view that we are forced to engage in the making of meaning: the "*re*-direction, *re*-adaptation, *re*-organization"[63] of

---

[61] McDowell, 1983, pp. 1-16.
[62] Dewey, *EN*, p. 311.
[63] Dewey, *EN*, p. 312.

meaning. Objects remain the same; it is our consciousness of their meaning that changes in line with context. In terms of its role in theory building, reflective thinking is just as much an activity as actions are. There is no question of priority or causal sequence as intentional change in direction of events *is* transforming change in the *meaning* of those events.[64]

This empirical method calls for direct assessment of the world in the here and now. It is only the empirical method that can do justice to this inclusive integrity of "experience".[65] Revising both Idealism and epistemological realism, Dewey writes:

> Non-empirical method starts with a reflective product as if it were primary, as if it were the originally "given."…object and subject, mind and matter…are separate and independent. Therefore it has upon its hands the problem of how it is possible to know at all; how an outer world can affect an inner mind….One thinker turns metaphysical materialist and denies reality to the mental; another turns psychological idealist, and holds that matter and force are merely disguised psychical events….To a truly naturalistic empiricism, the moot problem of the relation of subject and object is the problem of the relation of what consequences follow in and for primary experience from the distinction of the physical and the psychological or mental from each other.[66]

Dewey is responding to the idealist and the realist when he asserts that the problem with the non-empirical method is that it starts with the products of reflection and then works at applying them to the world as we experience it. The problem stems from beginning with the results of a reflection that has already dichotomised the subject matter experienced from the state of experiencing and ends in a debate about whether or not the products of reflection are real or ideal.

Dewey puts this metaphysical debate to one side and instead treats reflective thought as building upon and transforming what we know directly from experience where the whole is distinguished [but not dichotomised] into subject and object, nature and mental operations – to include experiencing in experience.[67] We love, know, act for and against things, have ideas, mental intents and emotions. These reactions, the attitudes themselves, then become the objects of reflection. As Dewey articulates, we primarily observe things, not observations, however, the act of observation may be enquired into and form a

---

[64] Dewey, *EN*, p. 316.
[65] Dewey, *EN*, p. 9.
[66] Dewey, *EN*, p. 9-10.
[67] Dewey, *EN*, p. 9.

subject of study and become thereby a refined object, as too the acts of thinking, desire, purposing, the state of affection, reverie, and so on.[68] Steven Fesmire's argument for the role of imagination in Dewey's ethics supports this account of moral judgment:

> Moral deliberation can be artfully developed only through a socially responsive imagination that skillfully perceives paths of mutual growth…Conceiving the aesthetic as a phase of everyday experience aids the development of moral ideals consonant with the central role of imagination. Intelligent dramatic rehearsals are directed toward the ultimate art of bringing about democratic consummations in experience. this is not a mechanical measure or a necessary and sufficient condition of moral value of the "X is good, Y is bad" variety. It is an ideal to strive for to consummate and revivify meaning and value.[69]

The objective things, say the history of a forest and the path of the river that runs through it are candidates for perception. The subjective, emotive reaction to the forest being turned into wood chips and the river being damned for power, are the qualitative candidates of perception. Both aspects are equally accessible, analysable and refinable through the activity of 'enquiry into experience'.[70]

This is a two-fold description of the interaction between the human organism and the environment. Human experience is treated as a process of loss and reestablishment of equilibrium with its environment. The experience of living is not just an organism **in** an environment, it is an activity that involves an interaction between the organism and the environment. Reflective analysis or conscious thought bisects this activity into its external and internal parts. For example, there are external conditions—air breathed, food taken, ground walked upon—as well as internal structures—lungs respiring, stomach digesting, legs walking.[71] Basic biology demonstrates that needs become apparent when there is a lack of environmental unity, a state that all animals have the capacity to address and satisfy. Humans, however have the capacity to be conscious of this disunity and reflect on it. It is at this point, the point of reflection, that internal responses, referred to earlier as qualitative responses inform the reflective

---

[68] Dewey, *EN*, p. 12.

[69] Steven Fesmire, 2003, *John Dewey & Moral Imagination: Pragmatism in Ethics*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 126-127.

[70] The topic of chapter seven.

[71] Dewey, *EN*, p. 9

enquiry process. Dewey views these as rationally grounded aspects of nature mediated by communicative restraints.

Dewey offers a change of focus from problems and solutions to process and demands a commitment to approach enquiry in the spirit of communication rather than coercion. I will not be focusing on the abundant literature on the difference between communication and coercion, although this literature arguably springs from Deweyan scholarship.[72] I have provided the foundations for arguing that for Dewey, genuine communication involves a relation and interrelation between people where values and terms of reference are constructed anew. That is, communication is not a matter of simply conveying information or forcing a conclusion. Furthermore, in Dewey's conception of enquiry, error and disagreement play a crucial role, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. We return to these themes again in chapter eleven, where a selection of case studies are analysed to demonstrate the role of disagreement in motivating thinking and action, when the grounds of disagreement are allowed to engage feeling and reason.

---

[72] See, for example, Habermas, 1984, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, T. McCarthy (trans.), Boston: Beacon Press.

7. John Dewey's Enquiry

Dewey structures enquiry by characterising the aim of it not in terms of discovering truth but in terms of unifying discordant situations.[1] We generally trundle along acting and reacting to our environment, but from time to time we come across a situation that requires interpretation. These 'problematic situations' or moments of incongruence emerge out of experience and force us to stop, evaluate and to ask: 'What is right?' 'What should we do?' The historical tracing if ideas presented in this thesis facilitates our appreciation of Dewey's social enquiry as addressing and responding to weaknesses in Hume's sentimentalism, Kant's rationalism and Mill's consequentialism. Dewey's enquiry can be seen to transcend Kant's pure and practical reason distinction, and provide the means by which to understand rationally grounded Humean feelings such as Mill's higher order pleasures.

7.1 Introduction

The aim of Dewey's enquiry is to provide a process that can account for the complex reality of moral judgments, without recourse to blaming a lack of rationality, to human shortcomings. The goal of social enquiry is to discover a new and modified understanding of a given issue, when opposing views threaten to derail a way forward. Opposing sides, are given the context to think of more compelling reasons for their positions; and this can inadvertently lead to a modification of their respective positions. The aim is to seek consensus through the identification of shared or common values. Finding shared terms of reference serves this aim without either side needing to abandon their principles or values. For Dewey, the spotlight is turned away from solutions and toward communication. The aim of the process of enquiry is discovery and in this context, this can involve a deeper engagement with unfamiliar terms of cultural or social reference.

---

[1] John Dewey, 2004, (1948), *Reconstruction In Philosophy*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., pp. 128-134. Hereafter *RIP*.

Section 7.2 outlines Dewey's notion of social enquiry, of 'enquiry into experience', as he calls it. Based on his description of the enquiry process in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, I then delineate the six stages of Dewey's method of social enquiry, highlighting the parallels and differences between it and the scientific method. Section 7.3 demonstrates that Dewey's notion of warranted assertability is an attempt to offer a pragmatic interpretation of how truth functions in moral and aesthetic enquiries – judgments of value – as opposed to how truth functions in science. This links back to Dewey's notion of experience, where values are an integral aspect of moral judgment. The final section, 7.4, summarises the impact that the particular historical tracing in this thesis has had. Dewey is presented as having established the foundations for contemporary understandings, which acknowledge that we cannot fully describe the world without any reference to the way that it affects us, for the simple reason that our sentience cannot be removed from the way we perceive and conceive the world.

7.2 Dewey's Process of Social Enquiry

Dewey takes the method inherited from his pragmatist forbears Peirce and James and develops a form of social enquiry that aims to minimise the influence of bias or prejudice and attain test results that are untainted by partiality.

> This particular affair is referred to here not so much as a matter of doctrine as to afford an illustration of the nature of empirical method. Truth or falsity depends upon what men find when they warily perform the experiment of observing reflective events. An empirical finding is refuted not by denial that one finds things to be thus and so, but by giving directions for a course of experience that results in finding its opposite to be the case. To convince of error as well as to lead to truth is to assist another to see and find something which he hitherto has failed to find and recognize.[2]

The appeal of the scientific methodology is its attempt to standardise procedures and criteria in order to minimise the influences of idiosyncratic beliefs and perceptions in the formulation of theories. The scientific method adheres to experience in terms of its rigorous allegiance to empirical methodologies and its aim to discover facts about the way the world is for creatures like us. It relies on observation as the impetus for hypothesising and as the grounds for testing.

---

[2] Dewey, *EN*, p. 31.

Clearly the parallel to scientific enquiry is limited, after all the good, beautiful and right cannot be looked at under a microscope or crashed together in the Hadron Collider. However, as seen in the previous chapter, when objectivity is not conceived to require a mind independent basis, they are observable aspects of experience. As science constructs hypotheses from observations, which are then subjected to testing, it tends toward using its body of theory as the basis from which to conceive problems that generally emerge from practice, or experience. Analogously, for Dewey, moral problems are conceived within the body of value already held and so they emerge from current practices or experience. Disanalogously, social enquiries are structured not in terms of discovering truth but in terms of unifying a discordant situation, where there may be more than one possible solution.[3]

Dewey's 'The Pattern of Inquiry' outlines the process: "Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of original situation into a unified whole."[4] Here Dewey outlines exactly what he means by 'situation'.[5] A situation is not a single object or event, or even a set of objects or events. A situation is a contextual whole that we experience. Within this contextual whole, objects and events interact and we form judgments about them. "In actual experience, there is never any such isolated singular object or event; *an* object or event is always a special part, phase, or aspect, of an environing experienced world—a situation."[6] Pappas argues that this situational approach to moral decision making "affirms that reasonable moral judgments and decisions come from intelligently exploring and assessing the situation in its qualitative uniqueness."[7] The situation triggers the enquiry process, a process of intelligently, critically and creatively engaging with problems as they crop up in experience. This aspect sets his theory apart from its predecessors.

---

[3] Dewey, *RIP*, p. 128-134.
[4] John Dewey, 1938, *Logic – The Theory of Inquiry*, New York: Henry Holt & Company, pp. 104-5 (his emphasis). Hereafter *Logic*.
[5] Dewey, *Logic*, pp. 66-7.
[6] Dewey, *Logic*, p. 67.
[7] Pappas, 2008, p. 302.

Dewey explains this process of enquiry as involving six stages. Firstly, there are the antecedent conditions of enquiry, namely, the indeterminate situation.[8] Dewey's conception of a "situation" refers to his inclusive, reflex arc theory of perception (6.3). By stressing the sensual aspect of consciousness as an integral aspect of perception, he identifies an indeterminate situation as marked by a disruption in perception. This disruption evokes doubt and instigates the need for enquiry. "To see that a situation requires inquiry is the initial step in inquiry."[9] The indeterminate situation may be something as benign as, for example, *a noise that wakes you up at night and suggests that there is a burglar in the house.* There are two important aspects to this first stage. Firstly, the doubt that arises is not simply a subjective feeling, it is the experience of registering an indeterminate situation. Secondly, the doubt emerges out of our experience of the situation. It is the situation, which is doubtful, and this in turn leads to the individual feeling doubt. The **situation** has these traits, these qualities.[10] As such our response is grounded objectively. The situation itself triggers a demand – "Address this problem now!"

The second stage is the institution of a problem, or the identification of what the problem is. *So, in the case of the mysterious noise in the middle of the night, the problem would be whether or not there is a burglar in the house.* The third stage involves the determination of possible ways to resolve it, where the solution is problematised in a process akin to the construction of a hypothesis, as opposed to a final end or answer. In determining possible relevant solutions one is at the same time determining relevant factual conditions, as secured by observation. Hence in the process of determining the problem, relevant possibilities or ideas emerge. Ideas, the 'maybe I should do this or perhaps that' are forecasters of anticipated consequences of what will happen if certain acts are instituted. As predictions about possible outcomes, ideas are equivalent to scientific hypotheses – *I could lay here and wait to hear more noises or I could get out of bed and check the house for burglars*.

---

[8] Dewey, *Logic*, pp. 105-7.
[9] Dewey, *Logic*, p. 107.
[10] Dewey, *Logic*, p. 105.

The examination of the problem aims at a progressive determination of a problem and some conception of a possible solution.[11] This is a form of reflective thinking as a reasoning process that interweaves the observable (facts AND values) with possible solutions in accord with their predicted outcomes. Reasoning is thus the fourth stage of the pattern of enquiry and is employed to examine and check the operational effectiveness of the idea in relation to the whole situation.[12] This is the equivalent of the way science tests a hypothesis against other preexisting conceptual structures – *if there is a burglar and they have a weapon…although it may have just been the house creaking…actually, it is most likely that the house is simply creaking.*

Dewey labels the fifth stage of the enquiry process as the "operational character of facts-meanings".[13] This is a functional analysis where ideas are operational insofar as they lead to changes in the situation and therefore the observable facts.[14] In turn, facts are operational in terms of their influence on making ideas. This stage is a process of action and reaction, of observation, experimentation and action. As such, it is akin to the experimental stage of science. Ideas are acted upon and consequences are observed, creating new facts to be incorporated back into ideas. *I'm going to get up and check the house, if only to put my mind at ease.*

The sixth and final phase is to distinguish between social enquiry and scientific enquiry. Dewey understood that there are indeed differences between these two modes of enquiry. For one, they have different subject matters, due to the difference in the problems involved respectively. This difference sets up a difference in the ends or objective consequences of each and it marks the point at which we move away from the problem/solution model.[15] What they do share is basic logical forms and relations. In terms of subject matter, the key difference

[11] Dewey, *Logic*, p. 110.
[12] In the context of this discussion, Dewey uses the term reasoning to refer to ratiocination or rational discourse. Dewey, *Logic*, p. 111.
[13] Dewey, *Logic*, p. 112.
[14] Dewey is not making a causal claim here. Facts and ideas are operational in so far as they can be used when making a decision, not as entities in themselves, which have some sort of a physical force upon us. He is describing the process of enquiry as a part of a continuous feedback system between the organism and environment, where experience includes the physical event as well as the qualitative reaction.
[15] Dewey, *Logic*, pp. 114-5.

is that social enquiry attempts to incorporate relevant aspects of social activities, traditions, occupations, interests, concerns of the groups involved, and so on. Social enquiry focuses on the relationship between humans and their broad environment, including religious, political and cultural institutions. Scientific enquiry, on the other hand, aims to free itself from such influences.

In science, relations are the objects of enquiry and qualities are relegated to a secondary status. A good scientific experiment is one in which the 'noise' of contextual qualities are kept to a minimum. In doing so, it is hoped that conclusions drawn from scientific investigations are generalisable rather than relative to particular times and places.[16]

> Nevertheless, although the idea of movement and change in has made itself at home in the physical sciences, it has had comparatively little influence on the popular mind as the latter looks at religion, morals, economics, and politics. In these fields it is still supposed that our choice is between confusion, anarchy, and something fixed and immutable…ideals of fixity persist in a moving world. A philosophy of experience will accept at its full value the fact that social and moral existences are, like physical existences, in a state of continuous if obscure change.[17]

Comparing, relating and distinguishing between social and scientific enquiry emphasises and accommodates aspects of social enquiry that are often sidelined and even disregarded in discussions about decision-making, the significance of which may be lost on someone who has not considered Dewey within the Kantian tradition.

Kant's concept of judgment, as outlined in his third Critique is significant here as it demonstrates the relation between theoretical and practical reason, or in Deweyan terms, between feelings and rational judgment. Kant's theory of pleasure is related to communicability. Universality – in Kant's sense – is expressed in terms of a comparison between one's own judgment and the judgment of others and tempered by the idea of intersubjective agreement. Within such judgments, there is an implicit aim of moving toward consensus, without resting on the assumption of actual agreement, or a final solution. Dewey's social enquiry formalises this process and makes it more explicit. As

---

[16] Dewey, *Logic*, p. 117.

[17] John Dewey, 1930, "What I Believe: Living Philosophies VII" in *The Forum*, pp. 176 – 183, pp. 178 – 179. http://www.unz.com/print/Forum-1930mar-00176/ Accessed 02/02/2018. Hereafter *Believe*.

Hildebrand describes it, Dewey's enquiry is an active method of responding to problems that involve feeling, abstract analysis, and practical experimentation.[18]

Dewey's notion of enquiry includes democracy as a corollary of scientific or inductive reasoning under the constraints of community, not as a political system, but as a method of communication, of making moral judgments.[19] This method incorporates the intellectual, reasoning judgment, particularly the comparative edge to judgment[20] and the role of feelings of condemnation or approval. Emphasising in effect that reason is not an exercise to be carried out in an individual's isolated head but instead embedded within a community of rational interactions. Dewey draws our attention not only to the way our reason and judgment references a network of minds, but also that Kant's conception of judgment anticipates this understanding of the nature of judgment. Reason, judgment and communication are interdependent. For example, the very terms we use to think are inherited from our communities, even to the level of giving an account of oneself, which we can only do in terms shared by our community.[21]

Deweyan moral democracy is the social embodiment of experimental intelligence informed by sympathy and respect for other members and the know-how involved in rational argumentation and inductive enquiry.[22] The outcome of this method is presented by Dewey as an ideal democratic society that institutionalises rational processes, that is, feedback mechanisms for informing lawmakers of the consequences for all of the policies they adopt. A process of self and community realisation:

> It is impossible, I think, even to begin to imagine the changes that would come into life – personal and collective – if the idea of a plurality of interconnected meanings and purposes replaced that of *the* meaning and purpose. Search for a single, inclusive good is doomed to failure. Such happiness as life is capable comes from full participation of all our powers in the endeavour to wrest from each changing situation of experience its full and unique meaning.[23]

[18] David L. Hildebrand, 2008, *Dewey: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld, p. 56.
[19] The ramifications of which will be more fully explored in 9.4.
[20] As set out in Kant's third Critique, see section 3.4, CJ AK5: 293-294.
[21] Dewey, *HNC*, p.10. See also section 5.3 of this thesis.
[22] John Dewey, 1916, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, The Free Press: New York, pp. 89-94. Hereafter *D&E*.
[23] Dewey, *Believe*, p. 179.

Dewey's process of enquiry is founded on the idea that a democratic moral life 'falls out of' the method of enquiry. The method is demonstrated to have been incorporated into a society when institutions facilitate: (1) habits of critical, experimental enquiry, (2) widespread communication of the consequences of instituting norms, and (3) extensive sympathy so that the consequences of norms for everyone are treated seriously and are engaged with for assessing alternatives.[24] The idea is that if societies improve their means of communication along democratic lines between citizens, between citizens and institutions and between institutions, then there would be a better chance that possibilities could be identified in the face of intractable disagreements. The emphasis is on the process of communication rather than on focussing on reaching a particular conclusion. All of his concepts are relative to this ideal: to the bettering of society via democratic enquiry.

7.3 Moral Judgments & Warranted Assertability

We are beginning to see that the inclusive theme – the intrinsic pertinence of the internal aspects of experience – forms the cornerstone of the importance and import of Dewey's work. Gouinlock captures the idea in his discussion of Dewey's philosophy of value: knowing, valuing, loving, worshipping, desiring and dreaming occur in nature, enquiry concerns identifying the irreducible traits of the nature in which such diversity of events occur.[25] Or in Dewey's own words:

> There are traits, qualities, and relations found in things experienced, in the things that are typically and emphatically matters of human experience, which do not appear in the objects of physical science; namely, such things as immediate qualities, values, ends. Are such things inherently relevant and important for a philosophical theory of nature? I have held that a philosophical empiricism must take the position that they are intrinsically pertinent.[26]

Nature is the whole of what is experienced and enquiry enables us to access and assess the way traits of nature interact. Dewey recognised that his account affects the status of truth. In adherence with his pragmatist roots, practical consequences are treated as fundamental components of meaning and truth

---

[24] Dewey, *D&E,* pp. 89-94.
[25] Gouinlock, 1972, p.6.
[26] Dewey, *NE*, p. 247.

whilst at the same time the truth of a situation is independent of our thoughts on it (2.2). As the end products of social enquiry, such as moral and aesthetic reflective judgments, remain contingent and fallible, rather than universal and correct, Dewey dropped use of the word truth arguing that moral judgments are more akin to what we are 'warranted to assert' at the end of an enquiry. This does not alter the metaphysical status of such judgments – they exist and are real – rather it stresses the idea that we are asking the wrong question regarding the basis of the judgments concerned, when we relegate them relative to the results of scientific enquiry.

The question of truth is undoubtedly simpler for physical objects. Whilst social aspects of experience such as honesty, beauty and democracy, do not have the same verifiable properties as physical objects, they are, nonetheless, aspects of experience that can be judged, more or less sensibly, more or less rationally, more or less reasonably.

> The 'truth' is, by the definition, subject to the outcome of continued inquiries; *its* 'truth', if the word must be used, is provisional; as *near* the truth as inquiry has *as yet* come, a matter determined *not* by a guess at some future belief but by the care and pains with which inquiry has been conducted up to the present time.[27]

This is an instrumentalist methodology where ideas and theories are treated as tools for deriving predictions from observational data. Ideas function as guides of action, as a means of control over the environment and in turn actions have ramifications in terms of changing the world. The value of ideas is thus in their demonstrable success, in their ability to go some way toward addressing a problem. This is a process of transforming a problematic situation through a practice where the "…primary object of our attempts to understand the world is not to describe it but to manage it."[28] Valuable ideas are thus successful ideas.

Moral and aesthetic reflective judgments, value judgments, are not inherently good or bad, justified or true. Steven Fesmire offers an interesting account of truth that reinforces this view by connecting it back to its

---

[27] From John Dewey's 1939 essay *Experience, Knowledge, Value: A Rejoinder*, quoted in Hildebrand, 2008, p.60

[28] Jennifer Welchman, 2002, "Logic and Judgments of Practice" in F. Thomas Burke, D. Micah Hester and Robert B. Talisse (Eds), *Dewey's Logical Theory: New Studies and Interpretations*, New York: Humanities, pp. 27-42, p. 39.

etymological roots.[29] 'Truth' can be traced back to the word 'treowth' or 'troth', connecting truth with pledges of faithfulness, with trust. For example, when two people pledge their faithfulness to one another in their marriage vows, they are then be*troth*ed; they are promising to be *true* to one another. A Deweyan assertion or belief is warranted (or true, if you prefer) only when it passes the test of enquiry, making it trustworthy. If there is reason to believe that you can trust it, that it will hold true in the face of ongoing experience, then it must be that it is faithful to the original, or to the real state of affairs of experience, as it is experienced. An essential part of something's being true is its ability to be faithful in some respect to what it is describing. For Dewey, a moral judgment is warranted when the effect of making the judgment brings about a desirable outcome for the community and the individuals comprising it. But he qualifies this further.

Dewey argues that moral and aesthetic truth is a contingent matter of what we are warranted to assert given our interpretations of experience. Enquiries aim at assessment, at examination of our theories, beliefs and ideas in light of experiential context through a process of criticism (deconstruction) and reinterpretation (reconstruction).[30] Concluding that this is the only view of truth that we can hope for in regards to social enquiries. Any other universal or idealist picture of truth fails on four counts:

> First, there is no verification, no effort to test and check…second…the things of ordinary experience do not get enlargement and enrichment of meaning as they do when approached through the medium of scientific principles and reasonings…third…this subject-matter becomes arbitrary, aloof—what is called "abstract"…something which occupies a world of its own without contact with the things of ordinary experience.[31]

There is a distinction between what is experienced as the result of a minimal incidental reflection and what is experienced in consequence of continued and regulated reflective enquiry.[32] The job of reflection is to derive and refine products through systematic thinking and expand our understanding.

---

[29] Fesmire, "Reconstructing Dewey Today" http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 09/03/2012
[30] A theme explored by John Dewey throughout his *RIP*, 1948.
[31] Dewey, *EN*, p. 6
[32] Dewey, *EN*, p. 4

At the heart of Dewey's 'truth as warranted assertability' argument is the realisation that social problems are not solvable puzzles. They are not privy to correct answers, like logic or math problems are. Rather they are ongoing processes of communication that afford new opportunities for more investigations yielding fruit in new and enriched experiences.[33]

> Thus there is supplied, I think, a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered us: Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful? Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before, and in depriving them of having in "reality" even the significance they had previously seemed to have?[34]

The criticism, the deconstruction of ideas and constructs in the light of lived experience, is for the sake of reconstruction. It is, as Dewey says, a process of sorting the wheat from the chaff, where ideas are redeveloped so that they are more appropriate for our place and time.

The only way to test moral assertions for warrantability is to reflect upon them in the light of lived experience. For example, there is no truth test for the assertion "gay marriage is a social good". In moral enquiries, warrantability is ascertained by a reasoned judgment and not subject to absolute proof and disproof like mathematical enquiries; nor aimed at context independence like scientific enquiry. It is only through reflection on current lived practices and values of our society and culture (that is, the context), that our ideas can be tested. This instrumentalist approach to ideas does not disregard truth per se; rather it acknowledges the functional role that truth plays when making judgments in relation to our actions being guided by tried and successful ideas. Insofar as they are successful, ideas are warranted, but there is never a guarantee that their success is universal.

This is not a relativist view. Just as Peirce taught us, there is a way the world is, independent of human opinion (2.2). Human rationality entails that we are capable of identifying this objectively and reasonably. What is more, the way the world is, is binding to anyone who is capable of appreciating the relevant evidence regardless of cultural/social perspectives. This is a naturalist morality,

---

[33] Dewey, *EN*, p. 7
[34] Dewey, *EN*, p. 7

or as Brodsky notes, a biological phenomenon that is part and parcel of being human:

> If…experience is identified as a function of a biological entity then it becomes obvious that it (1) is an organic phenomenon taking place within an environing world upon which it is dependent, (2) is both an active and passive affair, (3) involves numerous connections and continuities and thus is not merely a matter of the awareness of received unconnected sensa, and (4) is essentially projective and, in germ, inferential since it involves the anticipation of future events rather than the mere awareness of present and the recollection of past events…it is the business of inquiry not to transform the world as it is experienced into the unique and independent terms of reason but to resolve such problematic situations as it encounters in as secure and enduring manner as possible.[35]

While individuals may hold subjective and culturally, socially, religiously specific constructed values, there is still a way the world is. Nonetheless, values are not constructed in so far as there are moral properties of experience, mind-independent facts of a particular situation. This is mind-independence in the sense explained in the last chapter, where having an experience is explained and constituted by the language used to represent it, a language which has evolved at the community level.

Traditional views maintain the division between what is and how it is experienced, a Platonic redundancy that starts with a reflective product as if it were primary, as if it were the originally 'given'. This leads to metaphysical problems of explaining how the outer world can affect an internal mind and a debate about whether the products of reflection are real or ideal. Dewey's response is to incorporate the way we experience the world into our capacity to reflect. Brodsky captures this well in his examination of Dewey's instrumentalism:

> The burden of the position is that if reflective thought is examined as it actually functions then no dualism of reason and experience need emerge. That is, if we do not view inquiry as an attempt to proceed from the apparent to the real or as the work of a faculty which is essentially separate from other modes of experience and which seeks, as the idealists would have it, to reproduce the data of experience in the form of an ideal rational coherent system, but instead view it as a means of transforming experiential data which are confused and problematic into data which are clear and coherent then there will simply not emerge the gap between reason and experience."[36]

[35] G. M. Brodsky, 1969, "Absolute Idealism and John Dewey's Instrumentalism" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 5: 1, pp. 44-62, p. 56-57.
[36] Brodsky, 1969, p. 55.

For example, Dewey would say that 'wrongness' does exist in so far as it is a real aspect of our experiences. Perception includes qualities, such as the displeasing sensation of a felt response to a situation. We perceive 'wrongness' as a qualitative aspect of our experiences (Hume). However, 'wrongness' is not a property of stealing per se, it is a perceivable quality of the experience of the particular situation. Is 'wrongness' mind independent? Yes, in so far as it is a salient feature of a particular situation. No, in so far as it is a humanly constructed value.

7.4 Conclusion: Hume, Kant, Mill & Dewey

The full impact of Dewey's notion of experience and enquiry is gained by reading him in light of ethical theorists, Hume, Kant and Mill. Put simply, moral judgments are processes of rationality and the exercise of judgment (Kant), aligning the affective (Hume) with outcomes (Mill). Dewey's rich description of experience enables him to accord affect (Hume) equal footing with the effect (Mill). Rational (Kantian) enquiry and judgment are then complex processes of identifying the problem, working out what to do and taking actions with the awareness that decisions have consequences that affect and bring about change in all involved. The fall out, in terms of emotional, psychological and actual outcomes, is then incorporated back into the ongoing process of assessment of the problem through evaluation and continued rational debate.

The studies of Hume, Kant and Mill in the chapters above enable us to focus on how and why Dewey rejects the reductionist or dichotomous tendencies of traditional ethical theories. By outlining ethical enquiry in the light of empirical enquiry, reflective intelligence is used to revise judgments in light of actions (means) and their consequences (ends) within reasoning communities. As moral judgments are responses to problems that are experienced as an uneasiness and hesitation to an indeterminate situation that evokes a need for enquiry, reflection (enquiry) is needed to intellectualise the emotive qualitative response (Hume) to the situation, to articulate what the matter is and to identify possibilities for action. The goal of identifying an ultimate end (telos - Mill) or supreme principle that serves as THE ethical criteria (categorical imperative -

Kant) is adapted to the goal of identifying a method for improving social judgment-making.

Hume proposed that the cultivation of the sympathetic [empathetic] aspect of human nature was critical to the development of efficient, constructive and humane societies. Dewey demonstrates that he understood the importance of the human affective reaction of approval or disapproval in many ways:

> Upon this view, the problem of reflective morality is to discover the basis upon which men unconsciously manifest approval and resentment. In making explicit what is implicit in the spontaneous and direct attitudes of praise and blame, reflection introduces consistency and system into the reactions which take place without thought.[37]

Conceptual frameworks and enquiry underpin experience for Dewey. This is a very rational (Kantian) process that treats felt qualities as genuine features of the world. This understanding of experience and enquiry enables Dewey to derive a method that is alert to how things may strike us, without having his account diverted by metaphysical questions regarding the difference between this and the ways things are independently of mind. The moral challenge is then focused on how to reason well.

While Dewey's enquiry is conceived in terms of empirical psychology, he uses it in an analogous way to the way that Kant envisaged reason. Kant's notion of the role of community, or the constraints of communication where reason was concerned, is often downplayed. Dewey, however, recognised that Kant's *a priori* universality does have a regard for social consequences. It is worth quoting Dewey's discussion of Kant's *Groundwork* at length:

> The extreme and logical form in which Kant states the principle of Right as distinct from the Good, of Law and Duty, brings out the difficulty in all theories which separate the right entirely from satisfaction of desires and affections…Why may not a man go ahead in any line of conduct provided he is persuaded that his duty lies there?...how shall a man go from the idea of duty in general to that of some particular act or mode of conduct as dutiful?...[Kant's] answer takes the following form: The consciousness of duty is imposed upon us by our moral reason. We are not mere creatures of appetite and desire, of sense and nature, but there is within us a rational faculty which rises above desire and nature. It is the essence of Reason to express itself in universal and necessary terms…ask ourselves if the motive of that act can be made universal without falling into self-contradiction.[38]

---

[37] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 257.
[38] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 240-1.

A few pages on, Dewey claims that this method, instead of excluding all reference to consequences is but a way of securing impartial and general consideration of consequences. It tells us to consider as widely as possible the consequences of acting in this way.[39] We can read Dewey as interpreting Kant by way of his pragmatism. Doing so enables us to draw attention to the idea that in reality, if not in formal theory, Kant's universality holds social consequences in high regard. Kant drew away from this conclusion, as it seemed to suggest that the moral law might be context dependent. That is, if you consider consequences, and given consequences may be different in different contexts, then the moral law cannot be *a priori* universal. Kant's point was that moral law must be arrived at independently of consequences. However, this is not inconsistent with the possibility that the universal law may manifest differently in different contexts. Dewey did not shy away from this implication, finding in the constraints of community exchanges, the required stability and objectivity. For Kant, the moral law 'falls out of' reason in the same way that democracy 'falls out of' enquiry for Dewey.

Kant discusses this very point in his 1786 essay "What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?"[40] Here he acknowledges that unless we are able to communicate our thoughts to others our thinking will stagnate. To use his example, banning free speech is in effect, banning free thought.[41] The freedom to think relies upon free speech or writing, whereby one's thoughts can be challenged. Hence, without a context of communication there can be no genius, no creativity, and no exploration. "Yet how much or how correctly would we *think* if we did not think as it were in community with others to whom we *communicate* our thoughts, and who communicate theirs with us!"[42] This endorsement of the theoretical and practical role of reason makes Kant's pragmatist leanings clear. His account of freedom treats communication as the root of exploration of ideas. Theoretically, reason dictates that we search for the

---

[39] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 243.
[40] Kant, *Orient*, pp. 3-18 [AK 8: 134-144].
[41] Kant, *Orient*, p. 16 [AK 8:144]
[42] Kant, *Orient*, p. 16 [AK 8:144]

universal. This is a condition of identifying the moral law. Practically though, reason requires the conditions for communication and hence community.

Mill's influence can be seen in terms of the emphasis that Dewey placed on the importance of consequences in terms of who we are and what we will become of as individuals and societies.

> Our own theory gives both the self and consequences indispensable roles. We have held…that neither one can be made to be merely a means to the other. There is a circular arrangement. The self is not a mere means to producing consequences because the consequences, when of a moral kind, enter into the formation of the self and the self enters into them.[43]

Dewey recognised that whenever things have a bearing on the common good, they assume moral import[44] hence the need for mindfulness of self and community-realisation:

> Self-realisation may be the end in the sense of being an outcome and limit of right action, without being the end-in-*view*. The *kind* of self which is formed through action which is faithful to relations with others will be a fuller and broader self than one which is cultivated in isolation from or in opposition to the purposes and needs of others. In contrast, the kind of self which results from generous breadth of interest may be said alone to constitute a development and fulfillment of self…to make self-realisation a conscious aim might and probably would prevent full attention to those very relationships which bring about the wider development of self.[45]

Understanding that conduct and consequences have a formative affect on the self entails the recognition of the need to have regard for the self and for others. This understanding is, according to Dewey, a secondary phase of a more normal and complete interest: regard for the welfare and integrity of the social groups of which we form a part.[46] However, regard for self and regard for others are not *direct* motives to overt action. Rather, they should be forces, which lead us to *think* of objects and consequences that would otherwise escape notice. These objects and consequences then constitute the *interest* that is the proper motive of action.[47]

One of the distinct features of Dewey's account of morality, is its grounding in reflective experience, which incorporates the very terms of the debate that were the sticking point between Hume and Kant: feeling and reason.

---

[43] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 316.
[44] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 312.
[45] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 335.
[46] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 332.
[47] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 333.

In response, Dewey recognises the need for reflective appraisal of conduct in view of its wider context and consequences, with the aim of directing future conduct by means of these value judgments.

> The utilitarian theory of equation of acts with consequences is as much a fiction of self-conceit as is the assumption of a fixed transcendental world wherein moral ideals are eternally and immutably real. Both of them deny in effect the relevancy of time, of change, to morals, while time is of the essence of the moral struggle.[48]

Deweyan engagement in a process of moral reflection takes into account the effects of acting and their outcomes not only in terms of tackling morally problematic situations, but also in terms of the impact on the moral character of the individual and society. This is, as Brodsky notes, a radical claim, for Dewey "…theory is the changing of experiential data. It is not that theory, according to instrumentalism, has practical implications. Rather, theory is that species of practice which self-consciously and self-critically transforms problematic experiential data into clear and coherent experiential data."[49] The external criteria offered by traditional moral theories – principles of right, ideals of good, standards for praise and blame – are treated as hypotheses for the enquiry. They are helpful tools for taking into account the broad context and unique circumstances of a situation and making decisions about actions and appraising the consequences of said action. Signifiers of moral progress are visible in terms of the outcomes and their ameliorative effects and the moral progress of individuals and the broader community.

Kant warned us that feelings are useless moral compasses as they endlessly differ, change and fluctuate; they are therefore unreliable as grounds for making moral judgments.[50] Kant's commitment to the categorical imperative and with it the autonomy of the will, which are true and absolutely necessary as an *a-priori* proposition, reflects this. Mill recognised that communication is an essential part of the process of criticism and verification (as we also saw in Kant in relation to free speech and judgment). Dewey acknowledged this complexity and responded to it with a moral theory that does not make claims that dictate right and wrong, find fix-all solutions or dissipate disagreements. As Pappas puts

---

[48] Dewey, *HNC*, p. 51.
[49] Brodsky, 1969, p. 59.
[50] Kant, *GW*, [*AK* 443:60], (Pasternack, Ed., trans. Paton), p. 58.

it, morality is, for Dewey "a social, creative, imaginative, emotional, hypothetical, and experimental process to ameliorate present situations."[51] His basic aim was not to find solutions to problems, but to foster problem-solving abilities extending it as a necessary activity for social and individual development[52] – or self and community realisation.

Dewey offers a comprehensive moral theory that provides a practical method for the cultivation of moral societies. James Campbell clarifies; this is an intelligent ethics that encompasses the heterogeneity of goods.

> The morality that is to grow out of this stance, intelligent or scientific ethics, will need to be explicitly naturalistic rather than supernatural. It will also need to turn away from egoism and narrow individualism. The necessity for the cooperative searching for the 'good' also involves a great deal of toleration for those of differing perspectives and the fostering of all of these points in our social interactions and ultimately in our educational systems.[53]

Dewey inherited a non-metaphysically encumbered pragmatic approach, which enabled him to not only expand and generalise concepts so that they are applicable but to also explain the social applicability of self-realisation. It seems a simple truism to say that actions are never isolated to the individual, that everything we do affects others, but the impact of such a view in terms of moral theory, cannot be underestimated.

Dewey's is a profoundly naturalistic approach: we can know what exists through the study of nature, where nature is understood as the whole of what is experienced, not just that which is other than humanity. This represents the crucial difference between his position and that of Hume, Kant and Mill.[54]

> For will, as we have seen, means, in the concrete, habits; and habits incorporate an environment within themselves. They are adjustments *of* the environment, not merely *to* it. At the same time, the environment is many, not one; hence will, disposition, is plural. Diversity does not in itself imply conflict, but it implies the possibility of conflict, and this possibility is realised in fact…Our problem is to see what objectivity signifies upon a naturalistic basis; how morals are objective yet secular and social. Then we may be able to decide in what crisis of experience morals become legitimately dependent upon character or self—that is, "subjective."[55]

---

[51] Pappas, 2008, p.301.
[52] Gouinlock, 1986, p. 52. See also section 6.3.
[53] Campbell, 1995, p. 99.
[54] Arguably Hegel held this view, although grounded in his Idealism rather than naturalism. A fuller discussion of the influence of Hegel and Dewey's move away from his Hegelian roots can be found in section 10.2.
[55] Dewey, *HNC*, p. 52-3.

Dewey's aim is to embed experience in realism as a manifestation of nature. This enables him to grant subjective, qualitative phenomenal experience equal standing to physical objects. His "rules without railings"[56] dismisses the traditional view that the tracks that we follow are objectively there to be followed in a way that transcends the reactions and responses of participants in our practices.[57] Disagreement thus provides opportunities – opportunities for societal progress through communication without coercion.

The understanding of two key Deweyan notions, namely experience and enquiry, provides us with the theoretical tools to discuss contemporary related debates in moral philosophy in the ensuing chapters. Chapter eight, on cognitivism and non-cognitivism and chapter nine, on pluralism and monism, examine two contemporary debates about the character of moral disagreement before setting out contemporary theories of pragmatic proceduralism in chapter ten. The penultimate chapter, eleven, turns the framework provided by Dewey and tests its applicability to actual moral disputes – as opposed to idealized hypotheticals – through a case study analysis. We will see that his proceduralist account, particularly his characterisation of ethical disputes and his response of enquiry as a tool for an instrumental theory of moral judgment, does offer us a useful method for engaging with disagreement.

---

[56] "Rules without railings" paraphrases a metaphor used by McDowell: "rules as rails". His discussion of the point can be found in Chapter 10, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following" of McDowell, 1998, pp.198-218, in particular pp. 207-08.
[57] McDowell, 1998, p. 207.

8. Cognitivism & Non-Cognitivism

What makes moral judgments difficult is the tenacity of moral disagreement. It is not contentious to assert that there are moral disagreements and that such conflicts make moral judgments challenging and problematic. What is difficult is to clarify the character of persistent, seemingly intractable and pervasive moral disagreements. This has lead to much debate about what the relevant features of moral judgments are. Some claim they must be objective, authoritative, universal and impartial. Others assert that in the absence of moral facts, moral judgments are subjective – the best we can hope for is that they are demonstrative of having traversed well-informed opinions that go beyond individual feelings. In response to this seeming impasse, Dewey offers a process-driven, rather than solution-driven, view of judgments of value. This signals a move away from both the desire-driven non-cognitivist view that denies truth on the one hand, and the fact-finding cognitivist view that treats solutions as truth-apt correct answers on the other. The purpose of this chapter and the following is to begin to tease out the multifaceted and nuanced problem of what moral disagreement is, in order to motivate the need for the pragmatic proceduralist account, which is provided in chapter ten. This and the following chapter also demonstrate how interpretations of Dewey's ethics can by led astray when they are not grounded in the history of ideas as presented in this thesis.

8.1 Introduction

Often cited examples of persistent disagreement about ethical issues such as abortion, stem cell research or gay marriage are prime examples of the complexity of moral problems. For example, we can assert that the cornerstone of the abortion disagreement seems to be terminological. Even though both sides of the debate source scientific evidence to support their moral judgments, their assumptions and conclusions are vastly divergent. Pro-lifers rely on the presence of DNA as evidence for 'humanness' as soon as the zygote is formed. In response the pro-choicer concedes that while the zygote is human, 'personhood', or what it means to be human, is absent. In this particular case, differences in terms

reveal differences in many underlying assumptions about, for example, responsibility and purpose, the depth and divisiveness of which would seem to be intractable.

I argue that because moral disagreements are not defined in terms of a lack of information, disputant limitations, irrationality, foolishness, or cultural differences, it is often difficult, if not impossible to come to agreement. On the one hand, traditional cognitive views of moral judgments as statements of moral facts, such as ‘abortion is right' or ‘killing journalists is wrong' fail to capture the complexity of the debates and in doing so, underestimate the tenacity of moral disagreement. On the other hand, non-cognitivist conclusions, such as there are no moral facts or properties, or that moral facts and properties are relative, for example, overestimate the corrosiveness of disagreement. Dewey recognised this complexity and responded to it by developing a moral theory that does not aim to dictate right and wrong. By locating Dewey as responding to aspects of Hume, Kant and Mill regarding the nature of moral judgment, we can better understand his methodology for tackling moral disagreement. Dewey's basic aim was not construed in terms of finding solutions to problems, but rather to fostering problem-solving abilities.

In order to investigate the role that moral facts and cultural differences play in disagreement, section 8.2 looks at the contemporary debate regarding cognitivism and non-cognitivism. On the one hand we have the cognitivists, such as Michael Smith and Russ Shafer-Landau, who on the grounds of objectivity, deny the intractability of disagreement all together. Underpinning this position is the metaphysical claim that there is a discoverable correct answer. Some cognitivists argue that all moral disagreements are just apparent, that in fact at least one side of the disagreement are not engaged in moral judgments at all but are making a self-interested one, which by definition for these cognitivists, is not a moral judgment. Other cognitivists identify irrationality as the source of disagreement arguing that once all sides are cognisant of all the facts, and are able to exercise reason appropriately, consensus is eventually achieved.

On the other hand, non-cognitivists, such as Alfred Jules Ayer and John Leslie Mackie accept the intractability of disagreement by denying objectivity. For the non-cognitivist, disagreements are intractable and inevitable simply

because there are multiple cultures with multiple values that clash. This leads them to conclude that there is no single right answer to be identified – moral judgments are relative, subjective or emotive. Following Dewey, (who in this case is better understood through the ideas of John McDowell[1] who arguably owes much to him), I argue in section 8.3 that we cannot fully describe the world in terms of properties without any reference to the way that they affect us. This means that we can avoid the cognitivist's treatment of the subjective as a subversive eroder of moral facts and the non-cognitivist's denial of objectivism that leaves them in the weak position of some form of moral relativism. The conclusion (8.4) summarises the value of Dewey's notions of experience and enquiry in terms of releasing us from the cognitivist and non-cognitivist's ensnarement in the bifurcation of the objective and subjective.

8.2 Moral Disagreement: the Cognitivist vs. Non-Cognitivist

The problem of the persistence of moral disagreement underscores a much more general debate about the metaphysical character of morality, raising questions about the nature of moral properties and their objectivity or subjectivity. On the one hand the abortion example above might suggest that there is no reason to think that moral problems admit of objective solutions. It might also suggest that differences in culture or religious beliefs lead to interminable differences in perspective, which in turn leads to differences in moral judgments and seemingly intractable disagreements. Mackie's "Argument from Relativity" cites such "radical" differences in moral judgments as evidence for the idea that it is difficult to treat those judgments as apprehensions of objective truths.[2] In contrast, the prevalence of property description in the cognitivist camp, leads to claims that moral statements express beliefs that are apt for truth or falsity. The cognitivist limits the complex of experience to property descriptions alone, abjuring affective qualities inextricably linked to objective properties.

---

[1] See, for example: McDowell, 1983 and 1998.
[2] John Leslie Mackie, 1977, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, New York: Hamondworth, p. 36.

Dewey's proceduralism can be understood as denying the metaphysics from which these arguments emerge. His response is to circumvent the metaphysical debate by accepting that it is, as he puts it, yet another redundant hangover of the "false psychology of an isolated self".[3] In response, he brings the consensus aim of the cognitivist together with the motivational resources of the non-cognitivist. The former fuels our convictions in terms of principles and the latter accommodates feelings, attitudes and outlooks. The cognitivist's call for convergence as the best outcome of a process of enquiry is employed solely as an aim of thin agreement (10.3) not necessarily in actuality, but the possibility of it directs the process of enquiry and communication. On this view, there is an assumption that the deliberative process will eventually iron out disagreements only insofar as this assumption motivates us to continue engaging in communication regarding perceived problems and their possible solutions. First, we turn to the non-cognitivists and cognitivists in order to be clear about the terms of the debate.

At the extreme end of the non-cognitivist side, we find the expressivism of A. J. Ayer and as mentioned earlier, the emotivism of J.L. Mackie. In *Language, Truth and Knowledge*.[4] Ayer's expressivist "boo/hoorah" theory of ethics is grounded in non-cognitivist metaphysics: moral statements such as "stealing is wrong" cannot be empirically verified, as there are no moral facts to be known.[5] Ayer is claiming that because moral judgments do not correspond to something in the world that can be empirically verified, they are meaningless statements that are void of content. If a statement does have meaning, then it should be able to be verified for its truth or falsity, but wrongness is not something that we can discover.[6] Ayer concludes that 'wrongness' is therefore nothing more than an expression of our emotional response to a situation. All that moral statements do is express an attitude. So "stealing is wrong" simply expresses the attitude "Stealing, boo!"

[3] Dewey, *HNC*, p. 57.
[4] Alfred Jules Ayer, 1955, (1936), *Language, Truth, and Logic*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.
[5] Ayer, 1936, p. 108.
[6] Recall Hume's problem of induction, which recognised that moral statements are neither matters of fact nor relations of ideas (3.2).

It is important to note that Ayer's expressivism is different to subjectivism, a view that we will look at momentarily in regard to Mackie's error theory. The subjectivist can hold that moral judgments are about feelings of approval or disapproval that a particular person or group feels towards an action. Such responses, according to the subjectivist, can be truth apt because they have content; the badness of an act triggers a feeling of disapproval, which is directed toward that act. In contrast, Ayer's expressivism holds that rather than being descriptions that arouse feelings of approval or disapproval directed at relevant events, expressions of "boo" or "hoorah" are simply attitudes without rational foundations. Attitudes, in Ayer's taxonomy, are feelings that a person has about an event and feelings are the kind of things about which we cannot be held responsible. So, for example, my distress about force-feeding ducks to make *foie gras* bears no weight as a judgment, such as "*foie gras* is bad". My response cannot be considered a judgment, as the badness is nothing more than an attitude – "*foie gras*, boo!" This forces Ayer to admit that moral values are grounded in nothing other than impressions.

Whilst Ayer recognises that attitudes can be generalised and standardised into a social set of norms of rightness and wrongness, he does not acknowledge the normative implications of this very possibility. Another problem for Ayer's expressivism is that it cannot account for the idea that moral judgments look like assertions and as such they look as though they should be truth evaluable. Returning to the question of the character of disagreement will help to elucidate this point. Ayer's somewhat unsatisfactory response to the reality that there are often disputes about moral judgments, is to assert that these disputes are either not genuine, or that the disagreement reflects confusion about relevant aspects of the situation. Mackie's emotivist error theory offers a possible way out for Ayer by awarding subjective responses, or feelings, primary place in moral decisions.

Mackie admits that while moral decisions look like assertions and it does seem that moral value is a "part of the fabric of the world"[7] it is actually an illusion. Whilst they look like beliefs that should therefore be truth-apt, they are

[7] Mackie, 1977, p. 15.

actually nothing more than subjectively defined standards, hence not judgments as such. Mackie begins with the empirical observation that there is a lot of variation in moral views and that moral disagreements often look as though they are intractable. He argues that the best way to explain this is by understanding that moral judgments reflect adherence to and participation in different ways of life.[8] Morals are relative to culture thus disagreements result from the subjectivity of values. This is what Mackie calls The Argument from Relativity: from the observable factual anthropological description that there are different moral beliefs across different cultures that lead to radically different moral judgments and disagreements, he argues that there can be no objectivity of values.[9] He is careful to point out that unlike scientific endeavours, actual variations in moral codes are more readily explained by the hypothesis that they reflect ways of life than by the hypothesis that they express perceptions of objective values.[10] Thus disagreement about moral codes reflects people's adherence to and participation in different ways of life, whereas disagreements about scientific matters are due to problems with evidence.[11]

Like Ayer, Mackie's non-cognitivism is grounded in moral scepticism. Both deny the possibility of moral knowledge on the grounds of a lack of objective values, where for moral values to be objective, they must be real qualities in the world, where 'real', is conceived according to foundational empiricism. Mackie does not deny that we can make objective judgments about subjective values. For example, we can judge 'A to be braver than B', however this is only possible because we have already established inter-subjectively defined standards against which we make objective evaluations.[12] Mackie's ultimate aim is to demonstrate that the whole idea of striving for universalisability in morality is mistaken.[13] There can be no objective moral values because there are far too many different values and moral codes between

---

[8] Mackie, 1977, p. 36.
[9] Mackie, 1977, Part 1, Section 1, Subsection 8, pp. 36-38. The Argument from Relativity is often referred to as The Argument from Disagreement; the latter perhaps better capturing the root of the problem.
[10] Mackie, 1977, p. 37.
[11] Mackie, 1977, p. 36.
[12] Mackie, 1977, p. 36-7.
[13] Mackie, 1977, p. 37.

and within cultures – any general principles for which widespread acceptance could be claimed, may still arouse irresolvably different responses in others.[14] Intractable disagreement is simply a reflection of this.

By comparison, the key premise of the cognitivist position is that moral statements express beliefs that are truth apt and by extension, solution apt. As Smith states, moral questions have correct answers, which are made correct by objective moral facts and moreover, by engaging in moral argument, we can discover what these objective moral facts are.[15] The cognitivist therefore has an expectation that after enough of the right sort of argument, reflection and discussion, there will eventually be some kind of agreement, perhaps involving compromise, but agreement nonetheless.[16] How then, do cognitivists respond to the persistence of disagreement over issues such as abortion and gay marriage? Will all disagreements eventually be ironed out over time through deliberative persistence? Shafer-Landau explains that for the cognitivist, disagreement is not evidence for the non-cognitivist claim that there is no fact of the matter. Rather, disagreement indicates a fault of at least one of the interlocutors: a lack of information, a deliberative error, or some irrational emotional response that stands as a barrier to moral convergence.[17]

Shafer-Landau's assertion that most disagreement can be accounted for by insufficient knowledge and imperfect deliberation supports Smith's thesis in *The Moral Problem*, which generated a raft of responses that were then published in a 1997 issue of *Ethics*.[18] The cognitivist intuition that disagreement itself presupposes a belief that someone is in error, that they do not have all the

---

[14] Mackie, 1977, p. 38.
[15] Michael Smith, 1994, *The Moral Problem*, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell. p. 9, *cf.* 13. This is a realist position based on a correspondence theory of truth. The metaphysics of correspondence is very important to the cognitivist position, as it demands that the truth or falsity of a moral statement can be determined by how it relates to the world. If a moral statement actually describes or corresponds with the world then the cognitivist can claim that moral judgments will eventually converge – everyone will agree on the moral facts.
[16] Smith, 1994, p. 6.
[17] Russ Shafer-Landau, 1994, "Ethical Disagreement, Ethical Objectivism and Moral Indeterminacy" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54: 2, pp. 331-344, p. 331.
[18] See in particular: David Brink, 1997, "Moral Motivation" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 4-32; David Copp, 1997, "Belief, Reason, and Motivation: Michael Smith's *The Moral Problem*" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 33-54; Geoffrey Sayer-McCord, 1997, "The Metaethical Problem" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 55-83; Smith's response: Michael Smith, 1997, "In Defense of "The Moral Problem": A Reply to Brink, Copp, and Sayre-McCord" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 84-119.

available facts and that once they do a *solution* will be discovered, seems legitimate. This is certainly an accurate description of how we approach disagreement. However, if Mackie is right, if moral judgments do not involve 'objective truths' in the way that cognitivists want them to, then perhaps intractable disagreements do provide evidence for the non-cognitivist position: there are underlying clashes of attitudes that cannot be reasoned away. The worry with the non-cognitivist position is that if it is taken to its extreme, then we end up in a highly unsatisfactory relativist position where assertions such as 'Murder is wrong' hold no weight beyond that of opinion or weaker still, Ayer's sense of attitude.

One advantage of the cognitivist position is that their response can frankly deny the subjectivity that leads to cultural relativity. So, in regards to a cultural practice such as female genital mutilation, the cognitivist would simply say that the culture is wrong; the practice is immoral and they are violating universal objective principles concerning avoidance of doing harm and causing suffering. Cheryl Misak argues that the pragmatist, the 'deliberative democrat', must be a cognitivist by the very fact that communication and engagement with others involves believing, asserting and arguing:

> We do assert, we do believe, we do engage with others, we do take disagreement to matter…It is not just that we *take ourselves* to aim at something more than personal justification and community-wide justification. We *do* aim at something more and could not even make the attempt to stop.[19]

I think that whilst the cognitivist idea that moral arguments are rationally solvable is enticing, their account of objectivity guaranteeing the eventuation of convergence on the right answer through consensus is weakened by the empirical fact of persistent disagreement.[20] At the other end of the scale, the relativism of the non-cognitivist position is unsatisfactory. Morality must be more than mere subjective or emotional responses, cultural differences or

---

[19] Cheryl Misak, 2004, "Making Disagreement Matter: Pragmatism and Deliberative Democracy" in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 18: 1, pp. 9-22, p. 19.

[20] As John Doris and Stephen Stich point out, there is a striking lack of convergence even after protracted argument on many moral issues – abortion and capital punishment, for example. John M. Doris and Stephen P. Stich, 2005, "As a Matter of Fact: Empirical Perspectives on Ethics" in Frank Jackson and Michael Smith (Ed's.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 114-152, p. 131.

individual perspectives. After all, some individual and cultural practices, such as violence and killing in the name of religion, are incontrovertibly morally reprehensible.

As we saw with the slavery example, in the introduction to the thesis, there seems to be no question about the immorality of slavery. However there are morally questionable practices, such as child labour that we directly benefit from and as such, persist regardless of our moral condemnation of economic slavery. The cognitivist expectation that there will be a single solution that solves the problem of economic slavery not only seems overly optimistic but also trivialises the complexity of the problem. On the other hand, surely the non-cognitivist would not be comfortable with reducing the wrongness of child labour to a matter of perspective or hinging such judgments on the production of bad feelings. The cognitivist offers us more resources for defending principles or a position, but is weak in terms of explaining the source of motivation for doing anything about it, for taking action. The advantage of the non-cognitivist approach is that it taps into our feelings, however, whilst it is strong on motivation, it is weak on universalisable reasons for being moral, which is a gap that the cognitivist can fill.

Both approaches leave something out. The cognitivist's insistence on identifying solutions is unable to give an adequate account of the persistence of disagreements. It cannot be denied that disagreement persists even in accounts of hypothetical disagreement among idealized agents who are fully informed and perfectly rational. Traditional cognitive accounts that assert that there is a cognitive defect on the part of one of the interlocutors lurking somewhere deep down that will eventually be discovered, seems to be nothing more than an untestable hypothesis.[21] Regarding the non-cognitivists' insistence on a lack of objectivity, this view leaves them unable to adequately account for agreements and consensus when it does occur. This in turn incapacitates the possibility of action, regardless of whether general disagreements persist. What's more, non-cognitivist claims of wrongness in regards to morally reprehensible acts such as

[21] Shafer-Landau, 1994, p. 332.

slavery seem weak and insubstantial, as they are unable to be universally applied.

The cognitivist/non-cognitivist debate hinges on the metaphysical problems of the disjunctive exclusion of objectivism or subjectivism. The problem of the persistence of moral disagreement is troubling for both views. Applied to this debate, we can argue that both sides are simply asking the wrong question regarding the basis of the judgments concerned. The cognitivist and non-cognitivist are too restrictive and rigid in their treatment of objectivity leading them to falsely question the reality of affective subjective qualities of our experience. In contrast, Dewey's position takes the metaphysical status of moral judgments for granted – they exist and are real – they are the qualitative traits of experience that can be discerned and judged through social enquiry (chapter seven). We cannot isolate the world from our experience of it. We cannot remove our experiencing selves. Dewey's approach allows him to formulate a pragmatic process of problematisation (6.3), where the normative or prescriptive is constrained by descriptive considerations.

8.3 Pragmatism: Morality Without Metaphysics

A contemporary account that resonates with the Deweyan account presented in this thesis is presented in John McDowell's "Aesthetic value, objectivity, and the fabric of the world".[22] McDowell rebuffs Mackie's non-cognitivist position with the observation that he treats the thesis that 'value is in the world' as interchangeable with the thesis that 'value is objective'.[23] In other words, Mackie's implied doctrine that whatever is part of the world is objective, forces him into the misconstrual that we can fully describe the world in terms of properties, without any reference to the way that they affect us.

> It would be as if we tried to construct a conception of amusingness which was fully intelligible otherwise than in terms of the characteristic human responses to what is amusing, but which nevertheless contrived somehow to retain the "phenomenal" aspect of amusingness as we experience it in those responses.[24]

---

[22] McDowell, 1983.
[23] McDowell, 1983, p. 2.
[24] McDowell, 1983, p. 4.

McDowell argues that the problem for Mackie's explanation is that he equates disagreement with differences in valuations between or within communities.[25] Mackie also claims that the fact that there is variation in valuings is "'more readily explained by the hypothesis that they [the valuings] reflect ways of life than by the hypothesis that they reflect perceptions…of objective values.'"[26] McDowell's (and arguably Dewey's before him) point is that we cannot separate our capacity to feel from how we perceive and conceive the world.

McDowell argues that we cannot remove the subjective from the way we perceive the world because we cannot transcend our conception of the world, of reality. We can, following Kant, conceive of the world more or less rationally, more or less reasonably, but we cannot remove subjectivity from perception. The claim that we can conceive of the world objectively, where objectivity refers to the world as it stands independently of observers, is nothing more than, as Dewey put it, a myth perpetuated by the "Quest for Certainty",[27] a hangover of being caught staring at the wall of Plato's cave. McDowell concurs: to monopolise the 'reality' side of the distinction between reality and appearance depends on the possibility of extending it so as to become the absolute conception. That is, extending it so as to embrace and explain the particular points of view it transcends.[28] The idea of a view from nowhere is incoherent.[29]

The seeds of McDowell's position can be seen in Dewey. The aim of Dewey's method of 'enquiry into experience' was to accommodate the subjective within perception, as an inextricable part of how we understand the world. Dewey railed against the idea that the objective could be stripped free of the subjective. He recognised that **we**, human organisms, perceive the world. We cannot simply remove subjectivity from our observations, from our experience of the world.[30] Notably, this does not, as the cognitivist would assume, land us in a quagmire of relativism, or perspectivism, or a questionable reality.

---

[25] McDowell, 1983, p. 3.
[26] McDowell, 1983, p. 3. Quoting Mackie, 1977, p. 37.
[27] A poignant theme for Dewey that led him to write an entire book: John Dewey, 1929, *The Quest For Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*, New York: Balch & Company.
[28] McDowell, 1983, p. 9. Quoting Williams, 1978, pp. 245-6.
[29] McDowell, 1983, p. 6.
[30] For the relation of perception to experience see 5.3 of this thesis.

> It is pointless to chafe at the fact that what we believe is what we believe. We can justify beliefs we hold about how things are only by appealing to what are in fact further beliefs we hold about how things are; but it would be a mistake to let this tend to undermine our confidence in the beliefs, or in their possession of a subject-matter largely independent of themselves – our confidence that we have reality more or less within our cognitive grasp.[31]

McDowell argues that the problem for the non-cognitivist conception of values is that it mistakenly demands independence between how things are and how they strike us. The conception "how things really are is how things are in themselves"[32] leads to extensions where "secondary qualities, as we experience them are not genuine features of reality."[33] This is a mistake, according to McDowell.

Whilst McDowell argues that this is a mistake, it is important to note that he does not go as far as Dewey. McDowell offers an internalist explanation about moral motivation via rationalism, which leaves out attitudes altogether: moral duties can be intrinsically motivational without the need of pro-attitudes.[34] This position arguably reflects the fear first hailed by Kant: morality must be a set of necessary characteristics and behaviours that we are able to control, rather than a matter of mood or whim. McDowell is arguing against non-cognitivism from a firmly cognitivist position.[35] Dewey, on the other hand, recognises that if we are to stress that our perception of 'how things really are' cannot be isolated from how we conceive things to be, then we recognise that the cognitive and non-cognitive, subjective and objective, cannot be bifurcated in a way that forces us to choose one or the other.

One way of conceiving Dewey's position is that it is not a matter of cognitivism vs. non-cognitivism, but rather cognitivism **and** non-cognitivism. For example, we have senses that equip us with abilities such as colour discernment **and** we have affective and attitudinal propensities that equip us with the ability to morally and aesthetically evaluate experiences.[36] The crucial advantage of

---

[31] McDowell, 1983, p. 14.
[32] McDowell, 1998, p. 198.
[33] McDowell, 1998, p. 199.
[34] Brink, 1997, p. 6.
[35] Brink offers an excellent summary of contemporary philosophers and their positions in his reply to Michael Smith. Brink, 1997, pp. 6-7.
[36] McDowell, 1998, p. 199.

understanding experience in this way is that it is able to bring together the non-cognitive aspect of moral judgments that Mackie discusses in terms of social norms, with the cognitive aspect that Smith discusses in terms of convergence through reasonable exchanges. Mediation between the two is the responsibility of the community, the public arena.[37] Dewey is entitled to this more nuanced view because he anticipated what is now *de rigueur* in philosophy of mind positions such as embodied cognition. Cognition involves a network, which extends beyond the individual isolated mind.[38]

Traditional cognitivism suggests that the tracks we follow are objectively there to be followed, in a way that transcends the reactions and responses of participants in our practices.[39] While to some degree precedent and cultural tradition provides tracks to follow, ongoing moral disagreements around such topics as abortion and gay marriage indicate that the reactions and responses of participants cannot be dismissed and disregarded. Dewey's proceduralist account of moral judgment attempts to treat conflict and disagreement as opportunities for societal progress through communication without coercion. By engaging with disagreement, the reactions and responses of participants offer valuable insights into the problem and the identification of possible solutions. Tracks can be laid down anew.

McDowell reminds us that it is an illusory desire for security that is the driving force behind the traditional position. This is not to deny that this is a well-based worry. Social harmony demands that if there is going to be grounds for alleviating all our self-interests to some extent then there has to be some way to come to agreement or at least identify some shared values. But, as Stanley Cavell points out, there is no insurance, no guarantee that our practices will keep in line independently from our responses and reactions – nothing ensures that this will take place.[40] Both the cognitivist and non-cognitivist fail to see the far-

[37] This idea will be further explained through contemporary case studies of moral disagreement in chapter ten.
[38] McDowell, 1998, pp.207-08.
[39] McDowell, 1998, p. 207.
[40] Stanley Cavell, 2002, p. 52.

reaching ramifications of this: there is no independent Platonic perspective and there are cultural differences.

8.4 Conclusion

When subsequent moral philosophers overlook Dewey's conception of experience, they miss the crucial contribution he makes to moral theory. The naïve antirealism of the non-cognitivist dismisses the role of objectivity altogether. On the other hand, the naivety of the cognitivist is evidenced by their submission to the thesis that the world is fully describable in terms of properties without any reference to how the world affects us. This narrow view of objectivity cuts off the experiencer from experience, or simply treats experience as idiosyncratic.[41] Dewey's 'enquiry into experience' demonstrates that the cognitivist's insistence that moral judgments are eventually going to converge on **the** answer is equally as naïve as the non-cognitivist's insistence that there are no answers at all.

Notably, Dewey goes further than McDowell (who identifies as a cognitivist) and sidesteps the division altogether. This is achieved by addressing the role of habit, impulse and intelligence against the background argument that the function of judgments of value is to guide conduct. The problem with getting caught up in metaphysics is that we are led astray, away from the real work that distinctions of cognitive and non-cognitive, objective and subjective, for example, can do. On the one hand, as McDowell explains, the illusion is the misconception of the mathematical case; the idea that provable correctness characterises exercises of reason in which it is, as it were, automatically compelling. On the other hand it can be argued that the illusion is the idea that attitudinal responses amount to nothing more than attitudinal stances that lead to exclamations of 'boo' or 'hoorah' (in Ayer's case) or culturally relative subjective feelings (in Mackie's case), neither of which are rationally explicable.

---

[41] Dewey's percept theory of perception, provides the theoretical framework for this position (5.3).

Dewey's proceduralism recognises that any system of belief, desire and purpose is inextricably influenced by the interaction of biological aptitudes with a social environment. The problem with the traditional view that is prolonged in many of the current debates, is that they treat subject matter, and the reason brought to bear upon it, as a corollary of the state of experiencing. In contrast, according to Dewey, values and the judgments we make on the basis of them (valuings as Dewey would say) are very much characteristic responses to the world in which humans figure where the rational basis is comprised of the constraints of giving and asking for reasons (as Smith might argue). Moral judgments are evaluations of our experiences of the world, evaluations based on a world where reality is a flurry of facts and values, but nonetheless both objective and perhaps inter-subjective in the sense that they are not personal, idiosyncratic or whimsical.

The problem with traditional metaphysical positions is that they lead to dichotomies: external **or** internal, objective **or** subjective; cognitive **or** non-cognitive; plural **or** monist. In contrast, Dewey shows us that the orientation and mental processes represented by these terms cannot be separated as each is an aspect of how we perceive and conceive the world and therefore the way the world is – there is a grey scale. Ethical theories must be able to account for as Cavell puts it, "all the whirl of an organism"[42]: the external **and** internal, objective **and** subjective; cognitive **and** non-cognitive; plural **and** monist; properties **and** qualities of experience.

I have attempted to revisit Dewey's relevance to the present by setting his ideas within a broader historical context than he is normally located in the Pragmatist literature. When Dewey is understood historically in relation to Hume, Kant and Mill, his notion of a rationally grounded feeling as expressed through his idea of experience structured and made possible by concepts, is better appreciated and understood. He provides a groundwork that draws on the idea of evolving norms (Hume), conceptualised experience (Kant) and a mind, which extends into a community of giving and asking for reasons (Mill). This re-positioning of Dewey, more clearly reveals his account in a way

[42] Cavell, 2002, p. 52.

that highlights his relevance to the present, as I have demonstrated here and will continue in the next and final chapters.

9. Monism & Pluralism

This chapter offers a pragmatist response to a second contemporary debate that concerns moral judgment, namely, whether or not the possibility of moral disagreement supports any particular theory of value. Value pluralists assert that there are many different moral values. For example, value may be placed upon pleasure, or duty, or cooperation as ultimate ends in any particular moral judgment. In contrast, value monists argue that there is one fundamental overarching value that guides all moral decisions, such as, for example, happiness. There are two main schools of thought in the debate: foundationalist and decision proceduralist. The former is a metaphysical position that aims to pin down the **nature** of values and so either supports monism **or** pluralism as exhaustive and exclusive categories. The latter is a general decision procedural stance that employs pluralism to capture the **diversity** of values **and** monism to identify and instantiate an overarching value that **guides** decision procedures. Both accommodate the possibility of moral disagreement, although the former treats disagreement either as a sign of error or alternatively as an irresolvable conflict, whereas the latter treats disagreement as the catalyst of moral progress. I argue that Dewey adopts the latter decision proceduralist position.

9.1 Introduction

Dewey's method of engaging with ethical problems and making moral judgments, is driven by concern for who or what we as individuals or societies could become. He focuses directly on problems of decision-making, action and communication: on how to deal with and respond to disagreements and the conflicts that ensue from them. This focus is built on the back of his conception of 'experience', where sentience is not separated from how we perceive and conceive the world. This allows him to focus his attention on how morality is possible in a sentient world. His account posits that whilst an overarching monistic aim such as amelioration of a problematic situation or individual and community *eudemonia* may indeed guide our deliberations (social enquiries), given the complexity and diversity of individual, cultural, societal, and political values at stake, the most that can be hoped for is to find ways to proceed. As we

saw in the previous chapter, there is no cognitivist objective single correct answer to be found, nor are decisions based on subjective, idiosyncratic or personal preferences, desires or feelings, for Dewey. This treatment of values as affective and yet objective, mind independent qualities of experience enables him to sidestep the divisive metaphysical position of foundationalism. The instantiation of an overarching monistic value for practical purposes, such as the identification of a general goal or a common interest, indicates that decision procedural monism, which Dewey defends, is important to his account. Drawing from his conception of experience and enquiry (chapters six and seven), Dewey's account of social enquiry demonstrates that the decision proceduralist view has greater explanatory power than foundationalism.

The Deweyan picture, which is arguably indirectly substantiated by McDowell (chapter eight), transcends the metaphysical dispute and turns to the more practical problems of decision-making, action and communication. The terms of the debate are then employed as communication tools. A broadly pluralist stance toward values is central to the method or procedure of enquiry, but what 'falls out of' such an enquiry is an over-arching value such as toleration of diversity within a democratic life. On this account, values are reasoned attitudes, a kind of objective subjectivity arrived at through enquiry (chapter eight). The proceduralist account employs pluralism and monism as useful terms of description that give insight into the dynamics of disagreements (plural values clashing) and provide hope for minimal agreement by identifying a common interest (monist end), such as community well being.

Section 9.2 sets out the foundational account of value pluralism and monism. The following section, 9.3, argues that the proceduralist treatment allows the metaphysical status of values to remain unclear (or redundant, as Dewey would have it), and then extracts important lessons from the debate to build an account of the underlying problems at play in moral disagreements and conflicts. In the previous chapter, we saw that the cognitivist identified the aim of agreement, of consensus and convergence at the end of the right sort of argument, reflection and discussion, as important. I argue here that this aim is reflected in the proceduralist's identification of a broadly monistic goal. For the proceduralist, it is through the pluralistic informed process of enquiry that an

overarching monistic value 'falls out'. This leads to the concluding section 9.4, which argues that procedural pluralism makes room for the part that multiplicity plays in terms of compounding the complexity of disagreements. This reflects the non-cognitivist demand that the reality of cultural diversity entails value differences at individual and community levels.

9.2 Foundational Pluralism and Monism

Value pluralism is the view that there are many different moral values. Value monism is the view that there is one fundamental overarching value that guides all moral decisions. There are two main approaches: foundationalist and proceduralist. The foundationalist questions the **nature** of values by focusing on ascertaining whether values are metaphysically plural **or** monist. The proceduralist account is more general, employing the terms for pragmatic purposes, such as identification of conflicting values in a moral disagreement. The proceduralist account utilises value pluralism to capture the **diversity** of values and value monism to identify and instantiate an overarching value that **guides** decision procedures.

The foundational debate focuses on the metaphysics of values: what is the nature of values? Isaiah Berlin, who is arguably the father of the position, offers a naturalistic account.[1] According to Berlin, concepts and categories, including normative ones such as values, are a very important, natural part of what it is to be human, however, they are not discoverable in the same way as scientific concepts and categories, such as the laws of physics are, for example. Values are very much an essential element of human nature, but unlike physical laws, normative laws are **created** as responses to experiences.[2] He concludes that values are necessarily plural, precisely because human nature is so varied. As Berlin states: "These collisions of values are of the essence of what they are and

---

[1] Isaiah Berlin, 2002 (1952), *Freedom and its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*, Henry Hardy (Ed.), London: Chatto and Windus; Princeton: Princeton University Press.
[2] Following discussion is drawn from Isaiah Berlin, 23/09/2004, (1986), 'A Letter on Human Nature' a letter to Beata Polanowska-Sygulska, *New York Review of Books*. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2004/09/23/a-letter-on-human-nature/ Accessed 03/03/2014.

what we are."[3] This is just the way it is. The world that we know and understand is a world where some conflicts remain unsolved. Thus, in so far as there is no general procedure for resolving conflicts of value, disagreements are incommensurable. Berlin applies his thesis of incommensurability to moral judgment, arguing that morality does not need to be reduced to an unvarying essence in order to have descriptive and normative force. Values are 'objective' in so far as they are facts about the people who hold them.

Traces of Dewey can be seen here. While Dewey would concur that values are objective and natural, that they are indeed an intrinsic aspect of human nature, he and Berlin diverge at the 'meta' level. Dewey's account of value is predicated on an inclusive theory of experience that aims to render all types of experience intelligible. Berlin's account, in contrast, stops metaphysically short. Nonetheless, when analysing the character of disagreement, there are several points of convergence. Both Berlin and Dewey would agree that in terms of capturing the complexity of moral situations and judgment making, it is inadequate to simply set out a list of propositions and test their validity. They would also argue that we cannot know *a priori* which value is more important or most important and that there are many genuine values that may come into conflict with one another, conflicts that cannot be reduced to a misunderstanding or a lack of rationality. They diverge metaphysically. Dewey takes descriptions of disagreement as his starting point. Seemingly interminable and intractable disagreements are evidence of the existence of plural values clashing and that there is, therefore, no single, right answer to be discovered. Hence, decision-making procedures must be equipped to accommodate plurality. But we are getting ahead of ourselves and must return to explicating foundational accounts of pluralism and monism.

One idea shared by foundational pluralists, as opposed to foundational monists, is that diversity of values indicates that disagreement is not simply the result of some or all of the parties being ignorant. Both views grant that disagreements about the legality of gay marriage, for example, occur between intelligent and rational people who are aware of the various positions and what

---

[3] Berlin, 1952, p. 213.

they entail. Bernard Williams responds by arguing that these kinds of deep disagreements reflect the lack of conceptual homogeneity that exists between individuals, societies and culture.[4] Such differences are a fact of our moral landscape precisely because plural incommensurable values exist. The problem is that this foundational pluralism implies that there is no common basis from which to measure values and if this is so, then we are left with no way to compare values, rendering judgment making vacuous.

Fred D'Agostino argues that values are indeed plural precisely because they are incommensurable and incomparable. According to D'Agostino this is evidenced by difficulties in achieving consensus about how we should live, a difficulty that is due to the irreducible plurality of dimensions of choice.[5] Values are incommensurable because there is no common, "good-making" property, which can be identified and pursued. The foundational pluralist thus takes the existence of plural values that do indeed clash – hence ongoing disagreements – as evidence of there being no common factor. This renders plural values impossible to measure against one another and therefore incomparable. There exist plural values that have qualitative differences in terms of the goods that they produce, but these qualitative differences are incomparable. To use his example: a qualitative difference between environmental and economic goods renders comparison, ranking and measurement impossible.[6] This difficulty, they argue, of comparing the merits of different values, ranking them and choosing between them, is evidence of foundational value pluralism.

The foundational pluralist draws three conclusions. Firstly, the reality of disagreement, of what they see as intractable clashes of values, is the basis of the foundational pluralists conclusion that there exist many values. Secondly, that values are apparently incommensurable is taken as the basis of their argument that there is no common factor that is shared by competing values. Thirdly, that incommensurability or the qualitative differences between values, renders

[4] Bernard Williams, 1995, 'Truth in Ethics', *Ratio*, VIII: 3, pp. 227-242, pp. 239-240.
[5] Fred D'Agostino, 2003, *Incommensurability and Commensuration: The Common Denominator*, Hampshire, England: Ashgate, pp. 429-431.
[6] A point that is addressed and overcome in Case Study 3 (section 11.4).

comparisons impossible.[7] Michael Stocker explains incomparability in terms of a failure of substitutivity – one good is no substitute for another.[8] The emphasis is on the difference in the qualities of the values themselves. Different values have qualities that the other lacks in an important way, so they are no substitute for each other. Again, conflicts between environmental and economic goods are a good example of incomparability. The problem is that if there exist plural values that are incommensurable and incomparable then surely there is no point in attempting to find consensus, for consensus is not possible.[9]

As Axel Honneth observes, the reality of moral judgment is that there are often times when there are two equally viable alternatives, that embody various values and goods, the realisation of which are mutually exclusive.[10] John Kekes concurs when he cites Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel, arguing that morality makes different types of claims on moral agents, such as claims of duties, rights, virtues, personal ideals, the general welfare, conceptions of the good life, and so on.[11] He concludes that this alone, provides evidence for the pluralist assertion that there are qualitative differences between types of goods that are not reducible to each other.

> The struggle is not between a good which is clear to him and something else which attracts him but which he knows to be wrong. It is between values each of which is an undoubted good in its place but which now get in each other's way. He is forced to reflect in order to come to a decision.[12]

---

[7] Stocker's example of the qualitative difference between sensual pleasures such as lying on a beach and intellectual pleasures such as discussing philosophy is reminiscent of Mill's demarcation between higher and lower pleasures (4.2). The point is that choices between goods are due to different sorts of goods, not just different sources of one sort of good. Michael Stocker, 1990, *Plural and Conflicting Values*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 169.
[8] Stocker, 1990, p. 165.
[9] Robert B. Talisse and Scott F. Aikin, 2005, 'Still Searching for a Pragmatist Pluralism' in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 145-160, p.145. Hereafter 2005B. This paper is a response to the responses to their original paper: Robert B. Talisse and Scott F. Aikin, 2005, "Why Pragmatists Cannot Be Pluralists" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 101-118. Hereafter 2005A. Responses: Michael Eldridge, 2005, "Why a Pragmatist May Be a Pluralist" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 119-122; Henry Jackman, 2005, "Jamesian Pluralism and Moral Conflict" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 123-128; Cheryl Misak, 2005, "Pragmatism and Pluralism" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 129-135; Michael Sullivan & John Lysaker, 2005, "You Talking to Me?" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 137-141.
[10] Axel Honneth, 1998, "Between Proceduralism and Teleology: An Unresolved Conflict in Dewey's Moral Theory" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 34: 3, pp. 689-711, p. 696.
[11] John Kekes, 1992, "Pluralism and Conflict in Morality" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 26, pp. 37-50, p. 37.
[12] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 162.

Plural values exist and they have qualitative differences. This renders them incommensurable there is no single measure: there is no one property of value at the most basic level, no property of 'goodness'. This in turn has the knock on effect of making comparisons, ranking and by extension, evaluation of options, difficult. In so far as this is a useful distinction in terms of its explanatory power, the proceduralist indirectly agrees. Incomparability, a lack of substitutivity and qualitative differences are evidence of why moral disagreements are so persistent and seemingly intractable. In contrast, these qualitative differences do not render comparison impossible, for the proceduralist. They simply indicate that exercising judgment is going to be complex and difficult and arguing contrary to this is simply begging the question.

In "Value Pluralism: Some Problems", Peter Schaber offers a defense of foundational monism that responds to this pluralist conundrum. Schaber argues that the mere assertion that there are many prudential and moral values does not rule monists out of the picture. Monists are able to account for this multiplicity of values by asserting that they all contribute to a fundamental, overarching value, such as happiness or promotion of community well being.[13] Schaber discusses Ruth Chang's pluralist argument for incomparability as evidence for siding with monism. Like many pluralists, Chang focuses on finding examples where two possibilities are incomparable, enabling her to take the position that such disagreements leave us bereft of being able to say what is morally good or what we ought to do in such cases.[14] The pluralist is worried that if we cannot rank values because they are incomparable and if we cannot choose both, then we cannot determine which is more valuable. This means that we have to make a decision without having reasons to prefer one option over another. Thus all resolutions of value conflicts are arbitrary, in as much as there is no reason to prefer one value over and above another value.[15] But does the

[13] Peter Schaber, 1999, "Value Pluralism: Some Problems" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 33, pp. 71-78, p. 71.
[14] Ruth Chang, 1997, "Introduction" in Ruth Chang (Ed.), *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, p. 9.
[15] Schaber, 1999, p. 76.

instantiation of an overarching monistic value, such as *eudemonia*, pleasure or happiness, assist us in any way? Schaber thinks that it does.

Schaber notes that one benefit of instantiating an overarching monistic value is that it enables comparisons to be made in morally complex and difficult situations. He argues that having any sort of guiding value minimally allows us to compare possibilities against it, so that we can identify not solutions, but resolutions:

> There could be a vague ordering among the options, which is possible because "goodness" allows for vagueness…Where the values of different options are roughly equal we do not seem to have a correct solution with regard to what should or ought to be done. But there may be a correct resolution, even so.[16]

Schaber's idea is that if two actions are equally viable then comparison with a higher value, such as the good of the community, may help an individual resolve to do one action over another. There is no expectation that the problem will be solved and dissolved, only that an action will be taken; and that that action will be correct to the degree that it contributes to the well being of a community. Undoubtedly the decision proceduralist would agree. The instantiation of an overarching value certainly does make the possibility of comparison and choice more probable.

Hilary Putnam rejects foundational monism on these grounds, identifying its deductive method as the source of its failure.[17] Putnam cites solution driven views as the problem: the very words *solution* and *problem* may be leading us astray—ethical problems are not like scientific problems, they do not often have "solutions" in the sense that scientific problems do.[18] The scientific problem-solution metaphor that the monist approach is embedded in fails because of the emphasis it places on the existence of one right, identifiable answer that attains outcomes that reflect the overarching monistic value. This has the knock on effect of either displacing disagreement, or representing it as involving an error of some kind. That is, if a single solution is not identified, then we as humans have failed and are either irrational or lazy deliberators, giving up before a solution has been found. In contrast, Putnam proposes that we replace the

---

[16] Schaber, 1999, p. 78.
[17] Putnam, 1990, p. 181.
[18] Putnam, 1990, p. 181.

problem-solution model with an adjudicatory model based on a metaphor from the law. In doing so, he also rejects foundational pluralism.

Reminiscent of Dewey's process of social enquiry, Putnam's adjudication model aims to engage both sides in communication that is not aimed at solving the problem in any predetermined way. Instead, the aim is engagement in the process itself, where no end point is stipulated. The idea is that regardless of whether or not common ground is established, opposing sides, are at least pressured to think of more compelling reasons for their positions. The dynamic is to seek consensus through the identification of shared or common terms of reference amongst the pool of disparity. Finding similarities, or points of confluence through shared terms, offers a way to progress without either side needing to abandon their own principles or values. By sharing terms of reference, I mean agreeing as to what is in the mix, what is at stake and to some degree, what makes the particular context what it is. This view is able to take into account the complex reality of moral judgments without explaining away disagreement as being due to irrationality or human shortcomings. The inadvertent objective is a new and modified understanding of the issue at hand and the other side's position, which allows for the possibility to better cope with the conflict. Reminiscent of Dewey, Putnam in effect changes the emphasis from finding solutions to finding common ground.

Dewey's process of enquiry identifies the priorities of a community, within the context of addressing a problem. The broad overarching monistic value reflects a common interest by accommodating the manifestation of values in different ways at both societal and individual levels. Dewey's conception of an overarching value is not made explicit as such and can be clearly distinguished from foundational monism. For example, one problem with a monistic value is that it is so ambiguous that it is vacuous. It seems obvious that we all aim to live some sort of a good life and Aristotle's *eudemonia* is quite possibly the best descriptor of such a life (5.2). As Pappas reminds us, this is not an "either-or" metaphysical dilemma: "The pragmatist holds that our realm of live options is not limited to the extremes of *either* there being an absolute standard *or* end to our lifes [sic] or its being the case that "everything goes," *either* there being unchanging truths *or* that what we should believe is matter of taste and

convention."[19] The pragmatist understands that "both the precarious and the stable are general traits of reality and one should be faithful to both."[20] The problem is that if we require metaphysical explanations, in this case about the nature of values, then the debate becomes ensnared in arguments about whether or not values are plural or monist. The pragmatist generalisation of the debate incorporates both for practical purposes. The clashing of different values is a useful way of understanding why disagreements are often so entrenched and interminable. The instantiation of a monistic general aim aids decision-making procedures. So, while Dewey rejects foundationalism about values, he retains the distinction between pluralism and monism, but unifies them as two sides of the value coin.

9.3 Pragmatic Pluralism & Monism

The pragmatist's generalist description of pluralism captures the complexity of moral situations. Disagreements aren't simply matters about which we are confused, where we do not know what we want, or we do not know how to achieve a desired end. This is why Putnam argued for the need for an adjudication model rather than a problem-solution model at the evaluative level. Ethical questions and answers are reasonable or unreasonable, better or worse, under an evaluative method that…

> …redirects the understanding of what it is to think morally, such that decision-making is no longer merely rule driven activity but rather involves the ongoing dynamic interplay between rule development and rule application; and that offers an alternative way to view the moral situation that undercuts the dichotomies inherent in these traditional theories, the dichotomies of rights vs. community interests, of consequences vs. actions, and relativism vs. absolutism."[21] [And monism vs. pluralism].

Plural values do not entail that all value claims are equal, after all not everyone's beliefs, opinions, or perspectives are equally viable. What is of interest is the legitimacy of the conflict itself. As Dewey puts it: "…the elimination of conflict

---

[19] Gregory Fernando Pappas, 1996, "Open-mindedness and Courage: Complementary Virtues of Pragmatism" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 32: 2, pp. 316 – 335, p. 327.
[20] Pappas, 1996, p. 328.
[21] Rogene A. Buchholz and Sandra B. Rosenthal, 1996, "Toward a New Understanding of Moral Pluralism" in *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 6: 3, pp. 263-275 p. 266.

is…a hopeless and self-contradictory ideal."[22] Robert Talisse and Scott Aikin deny pragmatists this position and claim that pragmatists must be monists as pluralism denies one or both of the following essential aspects of pragmatic practice: (1) conflicts are resolvable by intelligent means, and (2) it is better to resolve conflicts intelligently than to let them stand.[23] Their argument rests on the idea that foundational pluralists must view enquiry as *in principle* completely useless, in regard to certain moral conflicts.

As seen in the last section, the pluralist's commitment to incommensurability and incomparability leaves them in a difficult position, where no single outcome or solution is identifiable. This lack of measurement and failure of substitutivity, Talisse & Aikin argue, voids the idea of consensus, thus rendering attempts to find a solution futile.[24] They conclude that foundational pluralists are committed *in principle* to disengage from enquiry. Talisse & Aikin base this conclusion on the idea that disagreements about values demonstrate that there **exist** plural values that are not consistent with each other and are therefore incomparable and incommensurable, so it is unreasonable to expect moral consensus. In other words, they take a foundational approach to the metaphysics of values. This in turn facilitates their conclusion that as the pluralist has no moral reason to adopt any view over another, they must disengage from enquiry altogether.[25] From here Talisse & Aikin are then able to argue that the pragmatist's *in principle* commitment to the process of enquiry is incompatible with the foundational pluralist's *in principle* commitment to disengagement from enquiry, therefore pragmatists must be monists.[26]

Talisse & Aikin are making two claims, based on a foundational account of pluralism and monism (or deep pluralism as they call it). First that pluralism, or at least incommensurability, entails that enquiry is in principle useless. Second

---

[22] John Dewey, 1894, *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr, via On Openlibrary.org, p. 210. https://archive.org/stream/studyethicsasyl00dewegoog#page/n110/mode/2up/search/desire. Accessed 04/08/2014

[23] Talisse & Aikin, 2005B, p.145.

[24] Talisse & Aikin, 2005B, p.145.

[25] Talisse & Aikin, 2005A, p. 113.

[26] Talisse & Aikin, 2005B, p.145.

that the pragmatist's commitment to enquiry means that they cannot be pluralists. Their argument is based on the idea that there is an internal contradiction in pragmatism between rational resolvability, that is, a commitment to enquiry on the one hand and non-resolvability, hence disengagement from enquiry, on the other. I concur with Talisse and Aikin, pragmatists are not foundational pluralists. However, nor are they foundational monists.

Pragmatists are not asking questions about the **nature** of values at all. The pragmatic proceduralist account uses pluralism to account for **cultural diversity** and monism to identify and instantiate an overarching value that **guides** decision procedures. The terms are employed to capture the experience of moral life. Talisse & Aikin recognise this when they describe what they think pragmatists mean by pluralism. They write: "...by 'pluralism' pragmatists typically mean a *principled* commitment to admirable habits of openness, inclusion, tolerance, anti-hegemony, and experimentalism in all aspects of moral, political, and intellectual life."[27] The problem with this position, according to Talisse & Aikin, is that it is not a pluralist position. Further, given the reality of conflict, pragmatists must oppose views commonly known as pluralism. "We today confront a social, political and moral landscape that invites analyses according to which deep and pressing conflicts are the manifestation of incommensurable world views and as such are beyond intelligent or rational amelioration."[28] Fundamental to Talisse & Aikin's position is the idea that the pragmatists' commitment to amelioration entails that they must oppose pluralism, or else accept that such disagreements mark the end of rational debate.

Talisse & Aikin's conclusion, that foundational pluralism necessitates the termination of rational debate, reflects a real but unfounded fear reaction to pluralism: if values are plural, where plural means that they are incommensurable and incomparable, then rational discourse is pointless. Michael Stocker captures this fear when he makes the observation that many

---

[27] Talisse & Aikin, 2005A, p. 112 & 2005B, p. 145.
[28] Talisse & Aikin, 2005B, p. 146.

now hold that there is no possibility of sound choice between a liberal and an out-and-out religious conception of a good social life. At best there are compromises, unsatisfactory to all sides; at worst, there is coercion.[29] This is a well-founded fear. Stocker argues that if values really are different, if there is plurality, then there can be no sound way to compare them, and thus no sound way to make judgments about situations that involve plural values.[30] This is certainly something to be fearful of, for if we accept that societies have plural conceptions of the good then there is no possibility of reasoned social choice and action. This is why Schaber argues (9.2) that we must aim for foundational monism. It is also exactly why pragmatists abandon the metaphysics that the foundational debate is grounded in and instead argue for the procedural view that incorporates aspects of both pluralism and monism.

The point of Dewey's account is that it focuses on the process, rather than the metaphysics of the values themselves. The proceduralist starts out with a conception of communication, not values. Communication is understood as grounded in or conditioned on, 'enquiry into experience'. Values 'fall out of' the enquiry process, when conducted in a community, that is, where each member is an equal participant who can give and ask for reasons.[31] Dewey focuses on the nature of 'enquiry into experience' relevant to morality rather than specific ends or values. The plurality of values is merely a catalyst for Dewey, which is not incompatible with there being commonly held objectives which might take on different hues in different contexts.

Talisse & Aikin accuse the pragmatists of employing pluralism as a blanket term for their admirable commitment to noble moral, political and intellectual habits. While I agree that pragmatists do hold such commitments, I do not think that this captures the way that pragmatic proceduralists employ the pluralist and monist terms. Like the cognitivist, the proceduralist aims to engage

---

[29] Michael Stocker, 1990, p. 165.
[30] Michael Stocker, 1990, p. 166.
[31] A popular term coined by Wilfred Sellars in Wilfred S. Sellars, 1997, (1956), *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and often used by, for example: Robert Brandom, 2000, "Facts, Norms and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 8: 3, pp. 356-374 and Jürgen Habermas, 2000, "From Kant to Hegel: On Robert Brandom's Pragmatic Philosophy of Language", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 8: 3, pp. 322-355.

in enquiry with the broad expectation that after enough of the right sort of argument, reflection and discussion, there will eventually emerge some kind of agreed action, perhaps involving compromise or resignation. Nonetheless, the enquiry involved is crucial for progress. Unlike the cognitivist, the pragmatist does not view these agreements as statements of belief that are apt for truth or falsity. Moral judgments are not 'correct answers'. They are identified possibilities that point toward the best way to begin to resolve the problematic situation, or at least begin to re-instate equilibrium in the community. They are what we are warranted to assert (7.4). For the proceduralist, genuine agreement, resolution or absolute monism, would lead to stagnation and moral torpor.

Talisse & Aikin do, to some extent, capture the Deweyan pragmatist in their discussion of two types of pragmatists. The first is the 'meaning pragmatist', who translates cases of theoretical disagreement into a tractable practical vocabulary. The second, Deweyan type, is the 'enquiry pragmatist', who finds that it is not the meaning of terms or theories that drives the tension between competing conceptions of the good, but a lack of criteria for judgment. They argue that because the 'enquiry pragmatist' does not have an adequate criterion for judgment, they must limit their aims to researching positive resolutions, rather than actually resolving conflicts.[32] To some extent, this reflects the proceduralist position that I have been outlining, however it falls short in its appreciation of the impact the process itself has on disagreement.

The proceduralist employs the pluralist and monist terms to capture the experience of moral life. Putting aside the question of the metaphysical nature of values turns the spotlight away from questions of existence and toward practicalities. What is unambiguous is that our moral experiences involve many values and that identifying and instantiating a broad monistic aim assists with decision-making. From a practical perspective, working under the premise of pluralism helps to explain, understand and elucidate methods for tackling clashes of value and the disagreements that ensue from them. Instantiation of an overarching monistic aim as an achievable general end offers an opportunity to identify broad goals and in doing so find some grounds of cohesion and clarity. A

[32] Talisse & Aikin, 2005A, pp. 105-106.

value (overarching monistic aim) is uncovered through the application of a procedure of weighing competing interests (plural values) within a 'community of enquiry', of giving and asking for reasons. The identified value, or common interest, be it harmony, happiness, cooperation, the health of the local environment, and so on, 'falls out of' the exchange. Unlike the foundationalist account, the values themselves are not the starting point, rather they are arrived at through the process of trying to negotiate competing interests, that is, employing induction within a 'community of enquiry'.

Rogene Buchholz and Sandra Rosenthal explain that Dewey's notions of experience and enquiry provide a conceptual framework that offers an intertwined understanding of self, community, and values in a way that brings out the inextricably linked dynamic interrelation of these components.[33] The result is the recognition that values are plural because as humans, we are unable to assign priority to one basic value, nor arrange them in any rigid hierarchy.[34] The essential benefit of this proceduralist account is that it leaves space for ongoing disagreement – something which is a reality of our complex moral lives. Shifting the focus away from the metaphysics enables the proceduralist to focus on the practical problem of how to cope with moral disagreement, with clashes of judgment and value.

This is a broad consequentialism in many respects. Consideration of affective outcomes has implications in terms of character development for both the self and society. Dewey recognised that choices have both affective and effective consequences in terms of the self **and** the society. The role of self-realisation that Mill recognised (5.5) is extended to a concern for community-realisation.

> Consequently, it is proper to say that in choosing this object rather than that, one is in reality choosing what kind of person or self one is going to be. Superficially, the deliberation which terminates in choice is concerned with weighing the values of particular ends. Below the surface, it is a process of discovering what sort of being a person most wants to become.[35]

---

[33] Buchholz & Rosenthal, 1996, p. 266.
[34] Buchholz & Rosenthal, 1996, p. 270.
[35] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 317.

Dewey argued that concern for self and community realisation is a far more valuable thing to keep in mind when making moral decisions, than a broad monistic value such as happiness. Living a moral life is a complex process of making decisions, which must be cognisant of practical effects of actions **and** the affects they will have in terms of character of the self and society. Morality is affective and effective.

9.4 Conclusion

Although a somewhat cumbersome task, Dewey's method does reflect the complexity of moral life. By focusing on process rather than specific ends, or 'right' answers, or single fix-all solutions, Dewey offers a proceduralist account that treats moral judgments as our best attempts to respond to complex problems that involve all that it is to be a sentient organism interacting with a complex world. Axel Honneth notes that Dewey manages…

> …to avoid handing the ethical question over to an uncontrollable pluralism [by adopting] the proceduralist course that Kant, by reason of the same considerations, recommended for the question of the morally right: Moral theory is to be conceived of as a "generalized extension" or "reflective form" of the ethical deliberation "an individual engages in when he attempts to find general principles which shall direct and justify his conduct."[36]

There is a sense then, in which Dewey does not reject the role of reason in Kant's moral theory, but rather shows how while it answers Hume, it is only directed to a workable manifestation in practice by Mill's recognition of the role of a community in allowing individuals to realise their morality. Dewey spells out how this would work and in turn, what kind of grounding it implies. This view of Dewey is only possible within the context of the historical tracing of ideas from Hume to Kant to Mill as set out in this thesis.

Dewey offers a method for engaging with plural values and making moral evaluations. His acceptance of conflict as a necessary aspect of morality is an acceptance that moral collisions, even if unavoidable, can be softened, claims can be balanced and compromises reached. Disagreements reflect the lack of conceptual homogeneity that exists between individuals, societies and culture.

[36] Honneth, 1998, p. 698, quoting Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 163.

These differences are a fact of our moral landscape. While the plurality of values does make communication difficult, it does not render participants inactive. One clearly has convictions regarding one's values and system of belief but one recognises the need to entertain the possibility that foreign systems of belief have equal merit. This may or may not result in being swayed towards a different set of values. A commitment to approach enquiry in the spirit of communication rather than coercion is needed.[37] Foundational accounts of pluralism and monism preclude this kind of cooperation and motivation, which are a condition of communication, on issues pertaining to value between those holding different values.

No ethical theory can gloss over the complexity, plurality, changeability, and uniqueness of our moral lives, the values involved and the differences of those who participate in it. Attempts to determine and apply the *right* action prior to and across situations are an overestimation due in part to an oversimplified view of moral experience. What makes pluralism attractive is that it can account for the complexity and conflict that is part of our moral experiences. If values are plural, then choices between them will certainly be complex. This complexity is reflected in our experiences of making moral judgments. Decisions about what to do are not simple puzzles, where one value clearly outweighs another and calculations allow us to arrive at **the** answer. Pragmatic dedication to habits of inclusiveness, non-repressiveness, toleration, open-mindedness, experimentalism, anti-dogmatism, diversity, and so on, signals that the plurality of values is recognised, even if they are instantiated under a monistic umbrella such as betterment of society.

The monistic aims of earlier theorists are easily identifiable: Aristotle identified *eudemonia*, Hume tranquility, Kant approximation to the moral law, and Mill higher pleasure. While an overarching monistic aim such as amelioration of a problematic situation or *eudemonia* may indeed guide a Deweyan moral deliberation, given the complexity and diversity of individual,

---

[37] This idea is explained in terms of Benjamin Gregg's thin agreement, in particular his demarcation between identity values vs. common interests in 9.2. Benjamin Gregg, 2002, "Proceduralism Reconceived: Political Conflict Resolution under Conditions of Moral Pluralism" in *Theory and Society*, 31: 6, pp. 741-766, p. 754.

cultural, political and social values at stake, the most we can hope for is finding ways to proceed. This is not simply recognising that there are many possible ways of achieving the one end; it is that there are many values, which are valued differently. While there is no single objective solution to be found, at the same time, decisions cannot be based on subjective, idiosyncratic or personal preferences, desires or feelings. This is why Dewey identifies taste as one of the most important aspects of moral cultivation.[38] Taste, as Dewey notes, far from being that about which one cannot argue, is one of the most important things to argue about. The cultivation of taste is the cultivation of the correct infusion of valuings with evaluations, with a sense of the valuable.[39]

---

[38] Due to conceptual and word limits I am unable to investigate this topic further, however much has and could be said about the role of 'taste' in Dewey's work. Particularly relevant to future work would be an investigation of the connections between Kant's, 1790, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and Dewey's, 1934, *Art as Experience*. Some relevant contemporary work on Dewey's notion of 'taste' and moral aesthetics are: Scott Stroud, 2011, *John Dewey and the Artful Life: Pragmatism, Aesthetics, and Morality*, Penn State University Press: University Park; Alexander Thomas, 1998, "The Art of Life: Dewey's Aesthetics," in Larry Hickman (Ed.) *Reading Dewey*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 1–22; Alexander Thomas, 1999, "John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Human Existence," in Sandra Rosenthal (Ed.) *Classical American Pragmatism: Its Contemporary Vitality*, Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois Press, pp. 160–173.
[39] Buchholz & Rosenthal, 1996, p. 271.

10. Pragmatic Proceduralism

Dewey's moral theory was a response to the reality of moral problems, the complexity of moral conflict and disagreement, and the effects of such conflicts on the self and society. He outlines a method of social enquiry that offers moral guidance but also offers a philosophical answer to how a reason can be motivating or conversely, an attitude can be rationally grounded. I have argued that Dewey's proceduralist theory achieves this by bringing the motivational resources of the non-cognitivist together with the consensus aim of the cognitivist. The latter is fuelled by convictions for our principles and the former is fuelled largely by affective responses, both social and self interested. Social enquiries motivated by the pervasiveness of pluralistic values are aimed at the possibility of monistic ends such as convergence regarding courses of action to be taken. Insofar as there are many public and private, cultural and individual preferences, belief systems and therefore values, social enquiry necessarily involves context sensitive adjudication between plural values. It is the way disagreement is conceived and responded to that defines a moral community for Dewey, rather than adherence to a shared system of belief or self interested reciprocity. As we will see, disagreement is the sign of a healthy community.

10.1 Introduction

Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism marks a dramatic shift in the way we think about moral theory. His ethics has been represented here as a proceduralist account of moral judgment which focuses on processes rather than end points. Dewey argued that reflection prompted by disagreement is central to this proceduralist account as it is instrumental to modifying unsocial predispositions. Just as scientific theories are revised in the light of new evidence, moral theories are revised and developed in response to conflicts between ends, responsibilities, rights, duties and principals.[1] For Dewey, a condition of the

[1] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 175.

possibility of morality is a capacity for reflection and the context, which would prompt it.

> Moral theory can (i) generalize the types of moral conflicts which arise, thus enabling a perplexed and doubtful individual to clarify his own particular problem by placing it in a larger context; it can (ii) state the leading ways in which such problems have been intellectually dealt with by those who have thought upon such matters; it can (iii) render personal reflection more systematic and enlightened, suggesting alternatives that might otherwise be overlooked, and stimulating greater consistency in judgment.[2]

In effect the reflective process involves transformation of theory into practice, into an intelligent method of engagement with moral problems, so that values do not stagnate and lose cultural significance. In situations where different desires compete and in which incompatible courses of action seem to be morally justified, the process can seem more like a mediation process.[3] Even when an individual carries out the deliberation, the judgment one makes inadvertently considers what one would consider others would judge. It always has a comparative edge.

Dewey's social enquiry identifies a community of shared terms as the condition of intersubjective agreement. Community and communication are therefore an important part in the realisation of an individual's and community's moral capacities and choices. Dewey understood enquiry as a process of continued re-evaluation, whose outcomes are a testable and observable aspect of the psychology of social obligation and its influence on individual desires and preferences. Dewey's acceptance of the plurality of values and the role they play in terms of moral disagreement is testament to this. Nonetheless he also recognised the dynamic of a community attempting to identify a common interest, a monist guiding value, if you would. This dynamic guides the response to disagreement. Without the possibility of disagreement, our principles would languish and our affective responses would remain idiosyncratic.[4]

Pragmatic proceduralism treats ethics as an opportunity for individual and societal self-realisation. Moral disagreements mark opportunities for engagement, change and progress toward more cohesive societies. This optimistic view of the role of moral disagreement has not escaped criticism.

[2] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 175.
[3] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 173.
[4] A point made by Mill in *On Liberty*, 1910, pp. 122-23 and discussed at 5.4.

Section 10.2 outlines one such criticism from Axel Honneth who argues that Dewey's optimism demonstrates an underestimation of the potential incompatibility of individual interests. According to Honneth, Dewey attempts to incorporate the orientation toward community-wellbeing into the parameters of rationally weighing future ends in life, and this Honneth rejects as just too optimistic.[5] I respond by arguing that such criticisms misunderstand Dewey. Section 10.3 compares Benjamin Gregg's account of normatively thin proceduralism to Dewey's account, as represented in this thesis. Although not founded on Deweyan theory, Gregg's account captures many aspects of Dewey's social enquiry, but falls short in terms of the democratic implications of Dewey's account (10.4). The chapter concludes with a general summary of the overall implications of the historical and theoretical path that the thesis has traversed (10.5), leaving us in good steed to apply Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism to some real case studies in the penultimate chapter, eleven.

10.2 Proceduralism

Honneth argues that while Dewey's proceduralism is a valiant attempt to bring Aristotelian virtue theory together with the universal duties of Kantian theory, the end result falls short in terms of stipulating how to prioritise and weigh virtues against moral obligation. This problem, of balancing moral ends of social harmony with preordained moral rules is, according to Honneth, the unresolved conflict in Dewey's moral theory. Presenting Dewey's theory as a pragmatist evaluative method that is a corollary to Humean sentimentalism, Kantian universality and Millsian consequentialism offers us an answer to this conflict and allows us to respond to Honneth's criticisms: Dewey's proceduralism is able to do more than just synthesise virtue and deontic theory, it is also consequentialist in a pragmatic mode. The result is a proceduralism that allows Dewey to balance moral principles with the moral ends of social harmony.

---

[5] Honneth, 1998, pp. 693-694.

Honneth takes a more traditional historical approach, attributing Dewey's idea of personal self-realisation to his early Hegelianism.[6] Honneth identifies Hegel's influence in terms of "an intersubjectivity-theoretic concept of self-realization" that provides the normative framework for Dewey's intersubjective process of assuming social obligations.[7]

> A concept of morality can do justice to the psychological presuppositions of human subjects only if it does not permit a gap to emerge between moral demands and personal ends; every formulation of a moral point of view must therefore be composed in such a way that it does not impose duties or demands on human beings from without but can make these obligations comprehensible as immanent aspects of a good life.

According to Honneth, Dewey's interest in attempting to reconcile Aristotelianism and Kantianism was spurred on by a conviction that was a determining factor for him already in his early Hegelian period. In contrast, my tracing of Dewey's historical trajectory identifies the foundations of this psychological account in Kant's moral self, which is orientated in a sensuous world, as is presented in the third Critique. This has enabled me to arrive at a similar conclusion without Hegel, whose influence on Dewey has been much contested.[8] It is a similar conclusion but has different implications when understood in light of Hume, Kant and Mill. Importantly, the historical trajectory behind the conclusion in my account brings different implications to the fore, compared to Honneth's interpretation.

Explanations of the historical foundations of Dewey's proceduralism can be proffered without referencing his early Hegelianism – an influence that he

---

[6] A view that James Good discusses and attributes to Morton White's *The Origins of Dewey's Instrumentalism*. James A. Good, 2006, "John Dewey's "Permanent Hegelian Deposit" and the Exigencies of War", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44: 2, pp. 293-313. Morton White, 1943, *The Origins of Dewey's Instrumentalism*, New York: Columbia University Press.

[7] Honneth, 1998, p. 690. Although not directly pertinent to our discussion, it is interesting that Honneth identifies the Hegelian idea that personal self-realisation is only possible via the intersubjective process of assuming social obligations, as the root of Dewey's concern for self and societal-realisation. According to Honneth, Hegel's intersubjectivity-theoretic concept of self-realisation provides the normative framework within which the ethical orientation toward the good life is to be integrated in a single model with moral obligations to the social community (Honneth, 1998, p. 690). Hence, according to Honneth, Hegel thought that self-realisation, the socialization of one's self in line with socially identified intersubjective norms was sufficient for the establishment of moral societies. Again, according to Honneth, Dewey's incorporation of Kant enabled him to extend Hegel's goal, adding a prescriptive procedure that helps us find the most rational possibilities through reflective deliberation (Honneth, 1998, p. 699).

[8] Good, 2006, p. 293.

himself rebuts in the early 20th century.[9] Honneth criticises Dewey's moral theory for not being able to stipulate how to prioritise and weigh moral obligation against virtues. This problem can be overcome if we accept that Kant's account for the moral self when understood in the light of the third Critique includes a relationship between moral goodness and what constitutes the realm of ends. This makes sense of the relation between pluralism and monism and explains how moral ends can be weighed against moral obligations in Dewey. Dewey offers a social model of character development, where harmonious and stable characters are evidenced by their ability to weigh ends that are judged to satisfy desire AND the claims of right and duty, which inhibit desire.[10] That is, virtues require an end in order to emerge. And so do moral rules.

Honneth argues that Dewey pursues the goal of attaining an appropriate determination of the rational resolution of moral conflicts by attempting to combine the most valuable insights from the Aristotelian and Kantian traditions in a relation of complementarity.[11] This means that the practical role of Dewey's moral theory is to outline the orientation points of a reflective procedure whose implementation makes it possible for subjects to identify shared ends and means. Honneth describes this aspect of Dewey's conception of morality as "contra-Kantian"[12] but this description is based on an assumption that the relationship between moral goodness and what constitutes the realm of ends is one of independence in Kant. Following Paul Guyer (4.4), I offered an alternative to this position with an argument for interdependence. My alternative understanding is useful as it explains the connection between reason and desire in a Humean vein whilst also providing an explanation of Kantian moral motivation. The categorical imperative emerges from reason as a deep underlying end, to which we are committed. Positing dependence between

[9] See the first four chapters of John Dewey, 1903, *Studies in Logical Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-85. While Dewey never speaks directly of Hegel, it is clear that Hegel's transcendentalism is rejected along with Dewey's rejection of absolutism. Good, 2006, pp. 293-294. Perhaps the Hegelian lineage of Dewey is only supported if one limits their interpretations to his early and middle works, such as: James Scott Johnston, 2006, "Dewey's Critique of Kant" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 42: 4, pp. 518-551, p. 545. My focus on Dewey's later works moves us away from such views.
[10] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 257.
[11] Honneth, 1998, p. 690.
[12] Honneth, 1998, p. 691.

goodness and an end as a legacy of Kantian ethics provides us with a response to Honneth's argument.

Dewey's process of enquiry (7.2) treats ideas as instruments. Treating ethical disputes as occasions for ethical progress in virtue of the enquiry to which they give rise leaves open the question as to how an end comes to be shared. This question is answered by intersubjective agreement, which involves both the prioritising and the identification of ends.

> There is difference between esteem and estimation, between prizing and appraising. To esteem is to prize, hold dear, admire, approve; to estimate is to measure in intellectual fashion. One is direct, spontaneous; the other is reflex, reflective. We esteem before we estimate, and estimation comes in to consider whether and to what extent something is *worthy* of esteem. Is the object one which we *should* admire?...Does it have qualities which *justify* our holding it dear?[13]

The process of intersubjective agreement refers as much to our affective responses as to the outcomes of our judgments. The crucial point, for Dewey, is that it is the process shaped by these aims, which is important due to the scoialising or civilising impact on all concerned, regardless of actual agreement being reached.

Dewey thinks of these issues always in terms of what difference a particular way of conceiving an issue has on practice. According to Dewey, the qualities (non-cognitive aspects) of acts are felt, just as one feels with the hands the qualities of roughness and smoothness in objects, before one has an inducement to deliberate or material with which to deliberate.[14] The crucial focus for morality must therefore be the cultivation of the ability to marry, through intelligent reflection, the colours of feelings with moral judgments, lest morality never influence behaviour.

> Wherever we strongly hate or love, we tend to predicate directly a lovely and loving, a hateful and hating being. Without emotional behavior, all human being would be for us only animated automatons. Consequently all actions which call out lively esteem or disfavor are perceived as acts *of* persons: we do not make a distinction in such cases between the doer and the deed. A noble act signifies a noble person; a mean act a mean person.[15]

Hume, Kant and Mill are clearly evident. As Dewey himself states, it is only through sympathy, that the cold calculation of utilitarianism and the formal law

---

[13] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, pp. 290-1.
[14] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 296.
[15] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 297.

of Kant are transported into vital and moving realities.[16] Ethical intelligence requires us to not only take standards into account when judging, (referred to above as the comparative edge of judgment), but to also revise and improve our standards in light of the interests of the society and all members within it. Dewey thus treats ideals and moral principles not as fixed, remote goals, nor as vague emotional inspirations.[17] Dewey defines morality in terms of the conditions for a moral community and concludes that this is a matter of the kind of communication that characterises an ethical enquiry.

This outline of Dewey's procedural account allows us to respond to Honneth's criticism of Dewey. By limiting his Deweyan account to the importance of the contribution of universal duties [Kant] and how they are embedded in the context of personality formation, ends in life and value orientations [Aristotle], Honneth is left with the problem of how Deweyan deliberations can weigh moral goods. As he states: "If moral obligations are given unconditional priority, then we are again approaching the Kantian position; if, on the other hand, the question of weighing is left normatively unanswered, then the problem of social disharmony and ethical unsustainability arises."[18] Honneth is left with this gap because he overlooks the consequentialist and above all pragmatic aspects of Dewey's theory in terms of the broader implications of self and community realisation, namely, the value of the act of participation itself as an expression of our sociable selves.

For Dewey, the answer is equal participation. The process of 'enquiry into experience', when exercising induction under the constraints required of communicability in a systematic fashion, is the key. As Honneth reminds us, Dewey wants to distinguish a particular procedural form normatively, which serves to guide and orient us in our daily lives.[19] However, Honneth neglects significant aspects of Dewey's account. He ignores Dewey's contention that ethically intelligent decisions are only so defined in so far as they are responsive to the needs of others. Furthermore, a decision is intelligent only if it recognises

---

[16] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 298.
[17] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 301.
[18] Honneth, 1998, p. 703.
[19] Honneth, 1998, p. 699.

and questions the redundancy of outmoded or un-useful custom and habit. Benjamin Gregg's account of 'thin proceduralism' incorporates this aspect of Dewey's account and builds on our response to Honneth.[20] However, as we will see, even Gregg's account lacks a crucial emphasis on experience as defined by terms shared by a community, without which Dewey's account would appear incomplete.

10.3 Thin Proceduralism

Dewey understood that engaging in ethics through a process of reflection enables revision and growth in the face of ever changing conflicts between ends, responsibilities, rights, duties and principals.[21] He thus shifts the task of moral theory away identifying definite precepts, rules, definitive injunctions and prohibitions toward conflict identification and resolution. No ends or absolute values are identified prior to enquiry. The idea is grounded in the acknowledgment that plurality of values is at the root of disagreement. While no end is stipulated, an overarching aim of amelioration guides enquiries. Acceptance of these two features changes the method and aim of engagement with moral problems. The pragmatist does not need to address whether moral disagreements are necessarily ultimately solvable (cognitivism), nor whether they reflect insurmountable differences in affective responses (non-cognitivism). Instead, the pragmatist, in realising the community based nature of the possibility of individual experience (chapter six), posits 'enquiry into experience' as the relevant structure which overtakes for them, redundant oppositions between cognition and affective responses.

The overall aim is decision-making momentum, based on processes of enquiry that identify rational possibilities for action. Ideas are agreed upon if they are deemed instrumental, that is, they minimally begin to address the problem. Gregg labels this ameliorative aim of proceduralism 'thin agreement'.[22] How is even minimal agreement possible if individual values are different and

---

[20] Gregg, 2002.
[21] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 175.
[22] Gregg, 2002, pp. 743-764.

conflicting? Gregg argues that while differences in identity-based values, such as those based on ethnicity, sexuality, gender or religious beliefs may never be ironed out – we can find some agreement in terms of general interests. The aim of 'thin proceduralism' is to find common interests (thinly monistic aims) that guide the process of identification of courses of action based on general interests, while leaving personal integrity, values and identity unaffected. The goal of the procedure is mutual accommodation rather than substantive agreement.[23]

Gregg recognises that accommodation of conflict places limits on the scope of thin proceduralism. Firstly, no end, value or solution is identified prior to enquiry – or expected as an outcome of enquiry. The only thing that enquiries have to start with is the identification of a problem and the aim of thin agreement. Secondly, enquiries are not out to rank values or change individual values. The thinness of the process enables participants to hold onto their individual values but agree to participate in finding common interests.

> The normative thinness of thin proceduralism does not mean the absence of *all* normativity; thinness is not *neutrality*, nor is it *indeterminacy*. Proceduralism must be sufficiently thick, normatively, to generate answers to difficult questions about the good, the right, and the just. Yet it must be sufficiently thin to appeal to people who disagree about the nature of the good, the right, and the just.[24]

Gregg presupposes that difference, divisiveness and local loyalties are not merely contingent and ultimately surmountable features of human existence, but are permanent if shifting, unavoidable if malleable. Normative thinness facilitates thin agreement.

Theoretically, Gregg positions his account as a response to John Rawls' and Jürgen Habermas'[25] proceduralist accounts, however he is careful to differentiate his normatively thin proceduralism from theirs. According to Gregg, both Rawls and Habermas are constrained by the universal validity requirement

---

[23] Gregg, 2002, p. 763.
[24] Gregg, 2002, p. 744.
[25] See in particular Rawls's reworking of Justice as Fairness to accommodate pluralism in John Rawls, 1993, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press and Habermas, 1984. With more time and space, a fruitful comparison between Dewey, Habermas and Rawls could be made. For example, in response to universality and rationality, Habermas offers a naturalistic, 'post-metaphysical' account of practices of communication, discourse and enquiry. It could also be argued that Rawls rejects the very idea of a coercive social-moral integration, after all he recognises a notion of civic friendship based on universal respect for persons as free rational beings by focusing on the maintenance of a stable society that respects basic human equalities while tolerating difference.

of their accounts of morality, as universality requires that norms are capable of being shared by everyone.[26] The problem with such views, as Gregg sees it, is that they are aiming for social integration, where everyone eventually converges on a shared moral viewpoint and therefore similar political and normative convictions, psychological dispositions, and need-structures.[27] Setting aside the fact that Habermas does not postulate eventual convergence as suggested here and that it could be argued that Rawls rejects the idea also and so putting to one side the validity of his criticism of Rawls and Habermas, what we can garner from his argument is the importance of normative thinness.

Thin agreement is achievable when outcomes are embraced based on their rationale, not their content. This can be accomplished if the focus is on participants' interests rather than their identities. As Gregg argues, in democratic societies a great deal of political agreement is possible only *as* compromise. Given the intensely normative nature of many identities, compromise over (some) *interests* is likely to be more possible than compromise over (some) *identities*.[28] Gregg recognises that the incommensurability of individual values and preferences can only be responded to by employing thin proceduralist techniques such as 'balancing' the interests of individual members with those of the group, or 'bracketing' differences, or reducing normative complexity.[29] Normative commitments and viewpoints are treated as generalisable interests that can be calibrated sufficiently for weighing, comparing, and making trade-offs. Procedural legitimacy replaces the search for rightness. Underpinning this is the idea that enquiry will lead to beliefs and viewpoints that are informed and rational, rather than simply a matter of unreflected upon preferences.[30]

By pursuing a modus vivendi in the sense of mutual accommodation rather than agreement on substantive matters, the process itself must remain fallibilistic and always open to challenge and possible revision.[31] Gregg notes that like Habermas' epistemic proceduralism, or 'discourse ethics', thin

---

[26] Gregg, 2002, p. 747.
[27] Gregg, 2002, p. 747. Reminiscent of the earlier conclusions we drew re cognitivism (7.3).
[28] Gregg, 2002, p. 755.
[29] Gregg, 2002, p. 758.
[30] Gregg, 2002, p. 761.
[31] Gregg, 2002, p. 763.

proceduralism endorses the idea of collective reasonableness emerging out of the operation of the democratic process of enquiry.[32] Gregg sees his view as different from Habermas in that his thin proceduralism is not seeking substantive agreement among participants, although arguably neither is Habermas' Discourse Ethics nor Rawls' social contract theory. In any case, for Gregg, the focus is on accommodation of difference. It is sufficiently normatively thin so as to allow people who disagree about the nature of the just, good, and right to generate answers to difficult questions. This reflects the rational instrumentalism found in Dewey, where the exercise of reason incorporates instrumental concerns. Changing the focus away from agreement and toward accommodation of difference, including Humean style differences in moral sentiments, enables thin proceduralism to bear diversity.

The attraction of Gregg's account of thin proceduralism is its' focus on thin normativity, which in turn enables the accommodation of disagreement. The process of finding thin intersubjective agreement centres on identifying a monistic common interest without impact on identity values. So, while a disagreement may at some level involve clashing identity values, they are sidelined in the interests of communication. Emphasis is placed on the process itself. Honneth and John Farrell indirectly corroborate this view when they argue that Dewey's method is a kind of democratic will-formation that does not rely on citizen's virtues, but on morally justified procedures.[33] According to Honneth and Farrell, and here Honneth moves beyond the conclusion of his sole authored paper of the same year, it is the change of focus from traditional conceptions of virtue ethics, which enables Dewey to avoid the moral stand-offs that foundational pluralists find themselves in. The problem for the foundational pluralist is decision inertia. For if values cannot be ranked or compared because they are incommensurable, then moral judgments are rendered vacuous (9.2). Pluralism, as construed by Dewey, on the other hand, sidesteps this problem by focusing on morally justified procedures. Leaving room for identity values to go

---

[32] Gregg, 2002, p. 748.
[33] Axel Honneth & John M. M. Farrell, 1998, "Democracy as Reflexive Will Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today" in *Political Theory*, 26: 6, pp. 763-783, p. 763.

unchallenged facilitates a process that is more likely to succeed at identifying and evaluating possibilities and making way for decision-making.

Robert Talisse explains that the (foundational) pluralist's difficulty with these kinds of moral stand-offs is due to an agent's choices in the hard cases reflecting not only a judgment or an assessment, but also an **expression** of the agent's moral standpoint (their identity values), which are, on the pluralist view, not susceptible to moral criticism.[34] The (foundational) pluralist's denial of overarching aims (common interests) means that they exclude themselves from participation:

> …liberal views…which place public discourse at the core of proper democratic practice are at least implicitly committed to the idea that sincere debate over deep moral disagreements *could* yield reasoned agreement, or at least *need not necessarily* bottom-out in a stand-off between incommensurable standpoints. In short, the discourse-based forms of liberalism to which many contemporary pluralists are committed are premised on the *possibility* of Dworkinian integrity among our deepest values. But it is this possibility which pluralism denies.[35]

Gregg's normatively thin proceduralism supports the possibility of amelioration by assigning participants individual "expressions of moral standpoints"[36], a secondary role to the overall aim of identifying common interests that can then form the foundation for thin agreement. Talisse points out that Ronald Dworkin describes this in terms of a 'common ground' in the form of a highly abstract conception of human dignity shared by all.[37]

According to Talisse, Dworkin's aim is to make this common ground explicit so that he can demonstrate that our political divides represent different interpretations and understandings of the same moral commitments.[38] Here again we see echoes of the social integration aims that Gregg identifies in Rawls and arguably mistakenly in Habermas. Dewey's proceduralism, on the other hand, has no call for social integration, as such, social enquiry involves people engaged in conflict dissolution regardless of whether decisions will solve or dissipate disagreements. The focus is on process without expectation of deep

---

[34] Robert B. Talisse, 2011, "Value Pluralism and Liberal Politics" in *Ethic Theory Moral & Practice*, 14, pp. 87-100, p. 98.
[35] Talisse, 2011, p. 99.
[36] Or as Talisse, calls them, expressions of the agent's moral standpoint (2011, p. 99).
[37] Ronald Dworkin, 2006, *Is Democracy Possible Here? Principles for a New Political Debate*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 9.
[38] Talisse, 2011, p. 99.

consensus or substantial agreement.[39] The commitment instead is to discovery and progress, which in the moral context might be, for example, tolerance and understanding.

Regardless of Dworkin's call for finding commonalities between moral and political commitments, we can see that Talisse, *pace* Dworkin, reaches the same conclusion that we reached *pace* Dewey and Gregg: we must differentiate between proceeding from shared moral commitments and commitment to the possibility of uncovering or forging common moral ground. This is what sets Dewey apart from his predecessors, whose focus was on identifying shared values, universal rules or a common aim prior to engagement in rational deliberation. In contrast, Dewey focused on a method of enquiry, a rationally grounded process that begins with the identification of a problem and ends in the discovering of ideas. This requires some commitment on behalf of participants, but it is a willingness to cooperate borne of their sociability. Thin agreements emerge through the process of communication. A democratic relation between participants 'falls out of' communication, properly so called, according to Dewey.

While Gregg's position is not Deweyan, it certainly reflects Deweyan social enquiry. Gregg's normatively thin agreement implicitly reflects an understanding of the way that Dewey rejected the treatment of virtue ethics, deontology and consequentialism as exclusive and exhaustive categories. Instead, Dewey saw in each of these positions some merit and his response is in some respects accurately represented by Gregg's thin proceduralism. Gregg's account of thin proceduralism reflects the pragmatic proceduralist account of the relationship between experience and enquiry found in Dewey (discussed in chapters six & seven). Dewey himself states that the sociability of the method is more fundamental than the following of principles or reaching decisions:

> The facts…bear *upon false statements of the nature of the problems at issue; they do not in any way resolve the actual and important conflicts which exist*…What do exist are conflicts between *some* individuals and *some* arrangements in social life; between groups and classes of individuals; between nations and races; between old traditions…and new ways

[39] Gregg, 2002, p. 747-8.

> of thinking and acting…No general theory about the individual and social can settle conflicts or even point out the way in which they could be resolved.[40]

It might be argued that the goal of Deweyan deliberation is respect because not actually reaching agreement is not a failure of the process. It is the process itself that sets the conditions for community. Dewey supports pursuing enquiry with a spirit of "*willingness to reexamine and if necessary to revise current convictions, even if that course entails the effort to change by concerted effort existing institutions, and to direct existing tendencies to new ends*."[41] This cultivational aspect, of self and community realisation demonstrates that Dewey is concerned with outlining a social morality that highlights the relationship between social life and character, but the latter only emerges in the context of social life. While Gregg's thin agreement captures the normative goal of accommodation of difference in Dewey's proceduralism, it fails to fully appreciate Dewey's broader educative goals. A crucial aspect of this was Dewey's realisation that experience itself could be cultivated by social norms.

10.4 Self and Societal Realisation

Dewey's theoretical position begins with the idea that desire is intrinsic to the nature of humanity, that humans have wants that are pursued in forms of purposes, plans, aims and so on, and that humans need to live together in societies to realise fully their humanity. The combination of these aspects, coupled with our natural Humean capacities to approve and disapprove, empathise and resent, enables Dewey to conclude that moral conceptions and processes grow out of the very conditions of human life itself.[42] Thus any ideas about "common good" (monistic aims) are predicated on the very idea of community, of a willingness to share, participate and work together to achieve well functioning democratic societies:

> …the democratic ideal poses, rather than solves, the great problem: How to harmonize the development of each individual with the maintenance of a social state in which the activities of one will contribute to the good of all the others. It expresses a postulate in

---

[40] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 359.
[41] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 366, (their italics).
[42] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 343.

> the sense of a demand to be realised: That each individual shall have the opportunity for release, expression, fulfillment, of his distinctive capacities, and that the outcome shall further the establishment of a fund of shared values.[43]

Pragmatic proceduralism is not claiming to be a solution that will iron out disagreement. The suggestion is only that it is a hopeful method of tackling moral problems thereby providing the methodological framework for well functioning societies.

The aim of reflection, of enquiry, is to identify non-moral individual desires that have the potential of being transformed through reflection into moral desires, that is, of becoming society's desirables. As individual desires form the bedrock of what is to be deemed morally desirable, the emphasis must be on the development of ethical intelligence in all individuals. Objects have moral value when they make a difference in the *self*, as determining what one will *be*, instead of merely what one will *have*. Moral deliberation deals not with quantity of value but with quality.[44] Gregg's thin proceduralism provides an account of normativity that captures the immediate goal of Dewey's social enquiry but falls short in terms of explaining these broader cultivation goals.

Throughout his life, Dewey was very concerned with the role that education can play in establishing democratic social (as opposed to political) life. Grounded in his notions of experience and enquiry, Dewey's progressive educational philosophy encourages the learner to reconstruct their experience through experimental intelligence.[45] He proposes that sound educational experiences involve both continuity and interaction between the learner and what is learned.[46] Two basic premises underwrite this position. One, that education is intelligently conducted upon the basis of experience and two, that we prefer democratic and humane conditions to autocratic and harsh ones.[47] Echoing Mill's account of the higher pleasures, Dewey attributes this preference

---

[43] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 389.
[44] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 302.
[45] As space is limited, a full explication of the educative and cultivational potential of Dewey's enquiry will not be outlined, however it would certainly be an interesting area to pursue in the future. Two key primary texts: Dewey, *D&E*, and John Dewey, 1938, *Experience and Education*, New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, hereafter *E&E*.
[46] Dewey, *E&E*, p. 10.
[47] Dewey, *E&E*, p. 10.

for democracy to natural preferences for freedom, decency and kindness over repression, coercion and force, a preference for the satisfaction of achievement and striving rather than dull, pleasure of mere appetite.[48]

Dewey argued that the overall aim of education should be to encourage balanced conduct through the cultivation of intelligent, rational, reflective citizens who have fostered deliberative skills and can thus control their actions and reactions.

> The ideal aim of education is creation of self control…Impulses and desires that are not ordered by intelligence are under the control of accidental circumstances.…A person whose conduct is controlled in this way has at most only the illusion of freedom. Actually he is directed by forces over which he has no command.[49]

Dewey's ideal was to educate societies in the task of problem identification and engagement through a process of self-critical enquiry. This task of revision, of re-evaluation of beliefs in light of new evidence, was conceived as society's ethical and educational goal. On the one hand, Dewey's enquiry is a democratic process of decision-making that holds the preliminary aim of thin agreement. On the other, it is a social theory of self and community realisation.

Robert Westbrook explains the relationship between democracy and education in Dewey in terms of three important premises.[50] First, Dewey understood democracy as an ethical ideal, rather than a political movement. Second, he thought that the essence of democracy was participation and third he thought that democracy as a decision procedure was akin to the scientific method. Democracy as an ethical ideal is encapsulated by Dewey's method of enquiry, which aims for "...freedom to frame purposes and to execute or carry into effect purposes so framed."[51] Through the instantiation of intellectual freedom under the constraints of communicability, democracy 'falls out of' experienced reason, out of intelligent, rational communities of 'enquiry into experience'.

---

[48] Dewey, *E&E*, pp. 34-35.
[49] Dewey, *E&E*, pp. 64-65.
[50] The ensuing discussion is taken from Robert B. Westbrook, 1991, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, Cornell University Press, pp. 158-159.
http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;idno=heb00586.0001.001;node=heb00586.0001.001%3A14;view=toc
Accessed 03/06/2015.
[51] Dewey, *E&E*, p. 67.

Dewey advocated for education, which would allow each of us to be active and participatory in making decisions that shape our lives. This idea is predicated on the premise that we have a natural preference for self-determination tempered by sociability. Dewey's educational philosophy thus has broad social aims that involve educating children in freedom to question and reconstruct societal norms through 'communities of enquiry'. Hence, the broader goal of his method of enquiry is to cultivate moral individuals and societies through critical awareness of moral decision-making.

Notably, Dewey's aim was not to create virtuous characters, as, for example, the Ancient Greek and Chinese philosophers argued. Rather he aimed at outlining a method for living a moral life. This rejection of relying on virtue has been shown recently to be empirically cogent. As John Doris and Stephen Stich argue, empirical studies in psychology demonstrate that virtue ethics is unsupported. For example, the Aristotelian conception of traits as robust dispositions that lead to trait-relevant behaviour across a wide variety of trait-relevant situations is radically empirically unsupported.[52] The conception of character that virtue ethics presupposes is empirically inadequate, not just in terms of how insubstantial the situational influences effecting troubling moral failures seem to be, but that people are readily induced to fail such ideals of fortitude and virtue.[53]

Gregg's account of thin proceduralism captures one aspect of Dewey's enquiry in terms of normatively thin agreement but ignores the broader cultivational aspect. This may be because Dewey's idealisation of the human condition in terms of self and community realisation, has been much criticised and led to the ostracism of Dewey and his writing for many years.[54] Nevertheless, it marks an important point of difference that is worthy of attention. When understood as a unified theory, Dewey's conception of education, enquiry and experience offer an idealisation of the moral life, according to his critics. However, the relevant point is this. The grounds of morality are in the very act of

[52] Doris & Stich, 2005, p. 119.
[53] Doris & Stich, 2005, p. 118-119.
[54] For a detailed historical analysis see in particular "Part 4: Democrat Emeritus (1929-1952)" of Robert Westbrook, 1991, pp. 319-536.

enquiry (reason) when it engages the individual's experience (feeling) in the context of a community (inter-subjectivity). Communication is the normative constraint. The common ground cultivated is tenuous and constantly evolving. But this is all there is to morality for Dewey hence the crucial role of education.

10.5 Conclusion

Communication is predicated on getting it right and consensus. Our language is structured in this way. We attempt to achieve veracity and reach agreement, that is, these aims drive the process. But communication occurs whether or not these aims are actually achieved. Dewey argued that the attainment of any form of moral progress is through genuine, full participatory enquiry rather than achieving actual agreement on a specific topic.

> The moral function of law and institutions, as well as of freedom of inquiry and expression, is in last analysis educative. Their final test is what they do to awaken curiosity and inquiry in worthy directions; what they do to render men and women more sensitive to beauty and truth; more disposed to act in creative ways; more skilled in voluntary cooperation.[55]

By not positioning Dewey within the relevant aspects of the traditions of Hume, Kant and Mill, contemporary Deweyan scholars, such as Honneth and Talisse cannot fully appreciate the point of Dewey's proceduralism. Dewey puts as much emphasis on enquiry as Kant put on reason. It is 'enquiry into experience' that ensures our motivational selves are engaged (aka Hume). It is a 'community of enquiry' that ensures the rational rather than idiosyncratic is to the fore (aka Mill). In effect, his very terms are better understood in light of these theorists. In contrast, Honneth and Talisse evaluate Dewey within the analytic contemporary position whose alternatives are the very positions Dewey seeks to overcome: objective and subjective, cognitive and non-cognitive, plural and monist, for example. This distorts where they place the emphasis in their interpretation.

When one keeps Hume's cultivation of sentiments to social norms in the frame and remembers that Kant's *a priori* universality better equips one to grasp the idea of ideal ends rather than actual ends, as in the case of consensus where

[55] Dewey & Tufts, 1932, p. 405.

Dewey is concerned, a better understanding of Dewey's proceduralism is possible. The principle of consensus for Dewey drives the process regardless of whether it is actually achieved. Adding Mill as a precursor to Dewey, we can better appreciate the role of community exchanges in terms of being crucial to grounding the constraints of consensus. Once one recognises Dewey's indebtedness to this tradition, as setting out the terms of reference and the problems consequent upon them, which Dewey set out to solve, one better understands Dewey's proceduralism. The theorists discussed in this chapter who fail to understand Dewey's proceduralism, do so because they have not considered Dewey's position in the light of certain key ideas found in Hume, Kant and Mill, which I argue, set the terms of reference for Dewey's ethics.

In order to more fully understand Dewey's theory of reflective morality, the penultimate chapter offers three contemporary case studies as exemplars of what is and what is not a Deweyan 'community of enquiry'. The first case demonstrates immorality by Dewey's account (after Mill) because there is no space for community exchanges, only conformity. The second case study demonstrates a fledgling community, where there is a fork in the road, which prompts enquiry. The third case study shows a successful Deweyan account of 'community of enquiry' in action. These cases are very different from cases often presented in analytic ethics classrooms, which are typically thought experiments that involve hypothetical disagreement among idealised agents who are fully informed and perfectly rational. In contrast, the ensuing case studies are not extreme or idealised cases, but actual cases.

11. Three Case Studies

Through assessment of the social circumstances from which different moral responses emerge, we can see Dewey's system of ethics operating in practice. The aspect of Dewey's theory demonstrated in this chapter is his advocacy of a shift from promoting particular moral views to emphasising process. In this respect he continues in the direction of Mill's utilitarianism, but arguably under the overarching constraints of Hume's sentimentalist and Kant's rationalist views on the way the sociability of humankind is manifested in taste and rationality, (and a common sense). Dewey emphasised the need for ethics to address the bigger questions regarding how we should live as individuals-in-communities. He concluded that well-functioning societies, *eudemonic* communities, consist of individuals who participate in communicative processes, not as a form of politics, but as a condition of a moral life.

11.1 Introduction

This thesis acknowledges and honours Dewey's pragmatist roots before re-situating him within a different theoretical timeline via Hume, Kant and Mill. The importance of plugging into feelings as motivators and contributors to moral judgment is taken from Hume. A pragmatic account of Kant's unification of theory and practice, sentimentalism and rationalism, pure and practical reason, which also draws upon his notion of judgment in the third Critique, becomes the background to Dewey's non-metaphysically burdened conception of experience and enquiry. Reading Mill's *Utilitarianism* in light of his political philosophy as elucidated in *On Liberty* emphasises the role of consequences, in terms of cultivation of individual and societal character. The outcome is a robust account of pragmatic proceduralism.

The ensuing three sections outline three case studies involving moral disagreement. The purpose is not to provide evidence of the applicability of Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism, but rather to demonstrate its explanatory power. Applying Dewey's theory to three actual ethical problems assists us to not only flesh out the process of disagreement and amelioration but also to

better appreciate the value of both. The first case study (11.2) focuses on the fundamentalist Christian organisation, the Westboro Baptist Church (hereafter WBC). This sectarian case is used to investigate the applicability of normatively thin pragmatic proceduralism to extremist positions. WBC's leaders refuse to discuss, debate or question their own actions (not to mention their beliefs) and they claim that this is justified because they are following the direct commandments of God. By Dewey's account, as they do not engage in the space of reasons within the context of their society, they are immune to the critiques offered by their contemporaries and peers. This locates them outside of the moral arena. Interviews with two recent defectors provides the evidence for asserting that this is their position and demonstrates that the absolutism of the WBC forbids disagreement altogether, thereby preventing the possibility of genuine communication, enquiry and any chance of amelioration. The example demonstrates that without the possibility of disagreement, there is no community in Dewey's terms, and hence no opportunity for morality.

The second case study (11.3) focuses on a disagreement that recently played out in the Australian media over whether the comedian and writer Chris Lilley's Australian Broadcasting Corporation (hereafter ABC) television series *Jonah from Tonga* was racist. It is an interesting case as while both sides agree on the non-moral facts and are able to present rational, well-reasoned arguments, they are still unable to reach a consensus. The third case study (11.4) offers a brief overview of the complex, multifaceted and persistent environmental and commercial ethical problems of the Murray Darling Basin (hereafter MDB), an important water resource in Australia. The MDB is a rich habitat for flora and fauna and a major resource in terms of hydroelectric power generation, irrigation, domestic, industrial and stock water supply, recreation and leisure and so on. In this case, a shared (monistic) agreement about the value of the river to the whole of Australia has been identified and is employed as a guide for decision-making processes. However, as 'value of the river' means very different things to different groups, disagreement persists. The practical question of how to proceed in the face of plural values, be they commercial or economic, public or private, local or governmental, remains. This case study highlights the relevance of Dewey, who reminds us of the importance of conflict in terms of instigating

societal change and progress through communication and negotiation. Section 11.5 concludes the chapter, drawing attention to the aspects of Dewey's account highlighted by the case studies.

11.2 Case 1: The Westboro Baptist Church

Pastor Fred Phelps established the WBC, a multigenerational church group based in Topeka, Kansas, in 1955. In their official statement, they claim that they "adhere to the teachings of the bible, preach against all form of sin (e.g. fornication, adultery, sodomy) and insist that the sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace be taught and expounded publicly to all men."[1] The WBC engages in daily sidewalk demonstrations that oppose…

> …the homosexual lifestyle of soul damning, nation-destroying filth. We display large, colorful signs containing Bible words and sentiments, including: GOD HATES FAGS, FAGS HATE GOD, AIDS CURES FAGS, THANK GOD FOR AIDS, FAGS BURN IN HELL, GOD IS NOT MOCKED, FAGS ARE NATURE FREAKS, GOD GAVE FAGS UP, NO SPECIAL LAWS FOR FAGS, FAGS DOOM NATIONS, THANK GOD FOR DEAD SOLDIERS, FAG TROOPS, GOD BLEW UP THE TROOPS, GOD HATES AMERICA, AMERICA IS DOOMED, THE WORLD IS DOOMED, and so on.[2]

Between 1991 and 2014, the WBC conducted 52,684 demonstrations, including demonstrations at "homosexual parades", the funerals of "impenitent sodomites (like Matthew Shepard)" and more than 400 military funerals of American troops.[3] The WBC rationale is that the legalization of homosexuality in the U.S. brought on the righteous judgment of God whose retribution is to kill U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. They cite America's 2003 Supreme Court ruling "that we must respect sodomy"[4] as an expression of evil whose supporters they feel themselves called upon to vilify.

The members of the WBC believe themselves to be guided by the supreme authority of God on all normative matters and reject engaging in any form of reasoning or debate on any matter. They repeatedly state, on the website and in

---

[1] In order to ensure faithful representation of their position, this description directly quotes the main WBC website: http://www.godhatesfags.com/wbcinfo/aboutwbc.html Accessed 13/05/2014.
[2] *Ibid.* Caps theirs.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

documentaries[5] that they have no interest in debating their beliefs with anyone. As the WBC represents the word of God, no further justification is needed. Their messages are often insulting, vitriolic and are designed to offend. For example, on the home page of their www.godhatesfags.com website they provide a running tally of the number of "people whom God has cast into hell since you loaded this page" and the value they place on the opinions of others: "0 - nanoseconds of sleep that WBC members lose over your opinions and feeeeellllliiiiiings."[6]

The now 40-member church is made up largely by Fred Phelps' own family, which consists of 13 children, 54 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren. Since 2004, over 20 members, mostly family, have left the church and ostensibly his family.[7] The most prominent recent family members to leave the group were Fred Phelps' granddaughters Megan and Grace Phelps-Roper in 2013. In an interview with author and journalist Jeff Chu at the 2014 Level Ground Film Festival, Megan Phelps-Roper talks in detail about why she and her cousin Grace left, citing internal inconsistency and changes in eldership that led to structural changes in the church as the main reasons.[8]

The realisation that there were internal inconsistencies, between the actions of the WBC and the biblical word of God, became apparent to Megan in the spring of 2009 through a twitter exchange with blogger and creator of Jewlicious.com, David Abitbol, over the sign "Death Penalty for Fags".[9] David pointed out that while Leviticus does condemn sodomites to the death penalty, it also condemns adulterers and fornicators to the same punishment. Further, the

---

[5] Such as: Louis Theroux, 2007, "The Most Hated Family in America" on *BBC TV, YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9mi1RX7Ttg Accessed 05/2014 and Louis Theroux, 2011, "America's Most Hated Family in Crisis" on *BBC TV, YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMIJpWwX68Q Accessed 05/2014.

[6] *Op. Cit*.

[7] Arnett, Dugan, 21/11/2012, "Megan Phelps-Roper of Westboro Baptist Church: An heir to hate" in *Kansas City Star*. http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article299767/Megan-Phelps-Roper-of-Westboro-Baptist-Church-An-heir-to-hate.html Accessed 22nd October 2014.

[8] Jeff Chu, 2014, *Megan Phelps-Roper at the 2014 Level Ground Film Festival*, Pasadena, California. http://vimeo.com/90865308 Accessed 20/10/2014.

[9] The ensuing description, unless otherwise stated, is from: Megan Phelps, transcribed from Chu, 2014, interview: http://vimeo.com/90865308

bible and in particular Jesus of the New Testament[10] preaches forgiveness and the chance for everyone to be given the chance to repent. Megan realised that the church was only advocating the death penalty as a fitting punishment for homosexuals, not adulterers and fornicators. When she raised this point with the board of elders, they justified it with the reasoning that "you cannot repent of something that you are proud of; there are no adulterous pride parades."[11] While this initially seemed consistent, Megan realised that if you repent of something, then you are no longer proud of it. So, by logical reasoning, a homosexual should be given the same opportunity to repent as an adulterer or fornicator. What is more, death means that there is no chance of repentance, which directly contradicts the life of forgiveness that Jesus advocates. Megan's realisations are of particular import as they demonstrate that she had not lost complete control over her rational mind and will.

Whenever she raised these concerns, Megan was told to toe the party line; we must be of the same mind; and if everybody else in our group is saying it then it must be right. She realised that their answer was always: "We're right, you're wrong. Accept it."

> At WBC you cannot disagree. There is no appropriate disagreement. If you bring something up, everybody else has decided that they are right about it and then you have to believe that it's right. You have to go along with it. And you certainly can't say, ok well you can believe that and I'm going to believe this. Because you'd be *outa* there, like, you can't push.[12]

It took Megan and Grace four years to eventually leave the church. Megan cites cognitive dissonance, the compartmentalisation of conflicting beliefs coupled with a lifetime of indoctrination, particularly the reinforcement that nobody but the WBC had the truth, as the reasons for it taking so long. The final straw came in the form of internal structural changes that led to a change in the way that concerns were addressed.

Previously, a board of elders would meet and individual members could raise their concerns for detailed discussion with them. Even though these meetings were not conducted in the context of an open group of members,

---

[10] The irony of this being pointed out to her by a Jewish man and thus non-believer in the New Testament was not lost on Megan.

[11] Megan Phelps, transcribed from Chu, 2014, interview: http://vimeo.com/90865308

[12] Megan Phelps, transcribed from Chu, 2014, interview: http://vimeo.com/90865308

nonetheless it did appear to introduce some possibility of genuine advancement in thought, an opportunity for genuine arguments deserving of a genuine response. But with the ageing and ailing of Pastor Fred Phelps and his eventual excommunication in 2013, the eldership board was deposed and grievances were to be taken up with direct familial elders.[13] Already marred by dogmatism, the church's eradication of the board marked a dictatorial shift in the organisation. Megan's direct familial elder was her father, who dismissed her concerns and told her to toe the church's line. Unable to convince her father of the legitimacy of her worries, she was left with no other avenue to follow. By this stage, the things that they were worried about had become worse not better, and thinking about the future made them realise that they had to leave. Transcribed from Megan's account: "I'll spend my days here and doing these things and trying to make everything fit into this perfect box, having all the answers but really having all these little doubts…these little things that were not little things, they were big things."[14]

Since leaving, Megan and Grace have recognised that the church actions that they participated in, which they had thought were a good thing – they thought they were helping people – were actually hurting a lot of people.

> We thought it was changing our neighbour and it wasn't. It was hurting people and there was so much more room and questioning than we were ever allowed. They don't believe in interpretation at all. They don't even believe that people can read the same words and come out with a different idea. They don't believe that that's legitimately possible…that was the point at which it became less terrifying to leave and more terrifying to stay…we are struggling but we know that we want to 'do good', not sure what that is yet, but…'do good' is what life is about…I can't go back and change anything. I can only change what I do from here on.[15]

This case study highlights the importance of disagreement in terms of engagement in communication and argument. The WBC asserts that they have access to the word of God and that as their actions are in accord with God's word,

---

[13] While the church confirms that Pastor Fred Phelps was excommunicated the details of why are sketchy. See, for example, Daniel Burke, 25/03/2014, "Westboro church founder Fred Phelps dies" in *CNN*. http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/20/us/westboro-church-founder-dead/ Accessed 28/10/2014, or Jan Biles and Steve Fry, 16/03/2014 "WBC spokesman said Fred Phelps Sr. was 'healthy' a month before he entered hospice" in *cjonline.com*. http://cjonline.com/news/2014-03-16/wbc-spokesman-said-fred-phelps-sr-was-healthy-month-he-entered-hospice Accessed 28/10/2014.

[14] Megan Phelps, transcribed from Chu, 2014, interview: http://vimeo.com/90865308

[15] Megan Phelps, transcribed from Chu, 2014, interview: http://vimeo.com/90865308

they are exempt from compromise with the broader community and from engaging in any form of justification.

The denial of disagreement enables the WBC to isolate itself from internal and external criticism. Two dimensions emerge: the im/morality of the social impact of their actions and the im/morality of the internal organisation. The WBC's internal rejection of disagreement provides the bedrock for not participating in external criticism. By rejecting the possibility of disagreement amongst its members, the WBC isolates itself from any possibility of negotiation internally by denying anything other than wholesale agreement. Either you conform to 'the truth' as it is revealed through the word of God or you leave. This is then extended to the way they engage with external communities – we are right and you are damned.

Recent questions about the viability and structure of the church following the death of Pastor Fred Phelps in March 2014 have been met with similar defiance and non-cooperation. In the official statement issued by the church in response to this matter, they state: "Listen carefully; there are no power struggles in the Westboro Baptist Church, and there is no human intercessor – we serve no man, and no hierarchy, only the Lord Jesus Christ.""[16] Commenting on who is the leader of the WBC, church spokesman, Steve Drain said: "The church of Jesus Christ doesn't have a head…the Lord Jesus Christ is our head."[17] Eight unnamed elders lead the congregation.

Somewhat ironically, it is the denial of disagreement that pushes many members out of the church. Megan and Grace could no longer envision a future in a community that refused to address their questions about how the church interpreted and enacted the word of God. The very thing that the WBC denies, namely legitimate interpretation, undermines the stability of the future of the church.

> …that questioning proved difficult, due to the strict interpretation of scripture that Mr. Phelps…insists WBC members adhere to. "It was always very much all-or-nothing," Megan explains. "The way the church presents it is, there's the WBC and the rest of the world. And the rest of the world is evil. The WBC is the only place in the world in our

---

[16] Daniel Burke, 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/20/us/westboro-church-founder-dead/
[17] Biles and Fry, 2014, http://cjonline.com/news/2014-03-16/wbc-spokesman-said-fred-phelps-sr-was-healthy-month-he-entered-hospice

> generation that is telling the truth of God. Over time, those little things built up, and there were so many of them. Once you step out of it for a second, and you're out of that vacuum, things change."…When they were with the WBC, "You feel like you know everything," Megan says. "you know what's right and wrong." But now, Grace says, "We can be sure of nothing."[18]

Engagement with disagreement through a need to question the church's interpretation of scripture, forced the two women to re-evaluate the legitimacy of the values into which they had been indoctrinated. This led to dramatic changes, which have left them somewhat bewildered. They acknowledge that leaving the group which operated on the basis of dogma, came at the expense of certainty and family.

The two dimensions of internal processes and external impact, combined with the relationship between them, marks the WBC as having removed itself from the broader societal moral arena. This self-isolation is purposive and fruitful insofar as it enables WBC leaders to reign supreme. Gregg summarises the effects of such dogmatism:

> Thus, communities that reject the very possibility of disagreement among their members will refuse participation in a social order organized along thin proceduralism. Thin proceduralism can work for groups in contention, but only if they are not fanatic or absolutist. Not fanatic or absolutist is the concession, for example, that means and ends can stand in normatively problematic relation to each other.[19]

In 10.3 we learnt that thin agreement is only possible if participants in a disagreement are willing to put aside their identity based values and find common interests as goals for thin agreement. The WBC aims to indoctrinate the young so that they grow into a system of dogma and toe the church's line, rather than having the opportunity to cultivate judgment. By elevating themselves to be the sole holders of divine knowledge, the WBC isolates itself from engaging in consultation, argument or discussion. In effect it operates like a unit of dogma rather than a community. As such, while the WBC thinks they are holding the high moral ground, by Dewey's account they do not hold moral ground at all. They are simply setting down rules of attitude and conduct imposed without allowing and facilitating enquiry.

---

[18] Matthew Hays, 28/10/2013, "Granddaughters of an infamous homophobic U.S. pastor find grace in Montreal" in *Special to The Globe and Mail*. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/after-break-from-westboro-baptists-sisters-find-new-freedom-in-montreal/article15130964/ Accessed 24/10/2014.

[19] Gregg, 2002, p. 765.

11.3 Case 2: Chris Lilley's *Jonah from Tonga*

A 2014 ABC television series, *Jonah from Tonga*, written by Australian comedian Chris Lilley, has reignited public debate about racism in Australia. The mokumentary's central character, Jonah Takulua is an unmanageable and rebellious 14-year-old boy of Tongan descent who first appeared in Lilley's previous 2007 series *Summer Heights High*. Played by Chris Lilley, who is not of Tongan descent, the story of Jonah unfolds in the schoolyard. A survey of two responses to the first episode of the six episode series demonstrates that the show has created much division. For example, on the one hand, Lilley's work is dismissed for perpetuating racist agendas and creating stereotypes. On this interpretation, Lilley's impersonation of a Tongan teenager is an example of 'brownfacing'. Brownfacing is a racist depiction of persons of colour on par with the minstrel theatrical makeup 'blackfacing' of the 19th century. It is considered racially offensive because it is seen as a stereotypical caricature of people of colour. On the other hand, Lilley's work is applauded by others as cutting edge, hard-hitting comedy that challenges racist stereotyping existing in Australian society. This side dismisses the accusation of 'brownfacing'. Citing Lilley's previous characters such as a teenage girl, a black American rapper and a grandmother, supporters assert that he is a satirist and amateur sociologist who uses his comedic genius to question and challenge societal assumptions and force us into some healthy introspection.

In his article, *Jonah from Tonga: genius or racist?*[20] TV critic Giles Hardie argues that Lilley is a comedic genius who operates on the edge of racism without ever succumbing.

> There is…a world of difference in the hair's breadth that lies between such mimcry and genuine satire. One is a social putdown, the other a social comment. It is a semantic distinction, but a vital one, and one that must be earned – but one that must also be recognised.[21]

---

[20] Giles Hardie, 09/05/14, Jonah from Tonga: genius or racist? in *In Daily*. http://indaily.com.au/arts-and-culture/2014/05/09/jonah-tonga-genius-racist Accessed 13/05/14.

[21] *Ibid*.

Hardie's argument rests on a demarcation between mimicry and satire, claiming that Lilley's work is clearly located in the latter. His justification for this claim is that Lilley does not make patronising and deeply concerning observations of Tongan culture. Lilley's aim is to make people laugh at societal norms rather than make people think "aren't those coloured people funny". Hardie admits, that to "surf that line is incredibly dangerous" but maintains that Lilley does not cross it. Hardie also rejects the charge of 'brownfacing'. He quotes Rick Kalowski, the ABC's head of comedy, to justify his stance:

> "*Jonah From Tonga* plays with stereotypes, but it's doing so to make an observation about the narrow-minded attitudes expressed by some of its characters, including Jonah's own. Indeed, prejudice by and against Jonah is clearly shown to be at the root of the problems he faces in the series."[22]

Hardie argues that the show can be indemnified from being labelled racist as it plays on the cultural traits and responses to a variety of ethnicities. He argues that *Jonah from Tonga* is not creating the stereotype; rather Lilley is "challenging an existing one that is found in society. The comedy then emphasises how wrong it is."[23] Hardie treats the disagreement as due to interpretation, where criticism of Lilley is based on misunderstanding his comedic genius. "It is fantastic that people are accusing this show of being racist, because that is exactly the way to start the relevant and important conversation."[24]

Blackface in a white nation[25] is a response from Maori writer Morgan Godfrey. Godfrey's primary argument is that any kind of 'blacking up' is racist. The problem is that in addition to Lilley wearing brown makeup, he also wears fake curls, a fake tatatau, uses a fob accent and adopts what he thinks are Polynesian mannerisms. Godfrey argues that the latter is racially cross-dressing, which is as offensive as 'blacking up' or 'brownfacing'.

> Australia has a comedy problem if a guy who dresses in blackface, brownface and yellowface is considered a 'genius'. In what other country could a comedian earn a pass, let alone praise, for resurrecting minstrelsy? Not many, if any.[26]

---

[22] *Ibid*.
[23] *Ibid*.
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] Morgan Godfrey, 12/05/14, "Blackface in a white nation" in *Overland*. http://overland.org.au/2014/05/blackface-in-a-white-nation/ Accessed 13/05/14.
[26] *Ibid*.

Godfrey does not deny that Lilley is a good satirist, but argues that acting out stereotypes risks reinforcing them. Some people who watch the show will view it as confirming their racist stereotypes about Polynesian communities, others will view it as Lilley presumably intends, as a critique of stereotypes.

> Prominent Tongan community member Meliama Fifita believes the former is true…To ridicule Australian racism Lilley has to show it. [But] The method – brownface – overcomes the message about Australian racism.[27]

Godfrey maintains that his response is not a case of over-sensitivity and political correctness gone mad:

> I, for one, am sick of being told it's 'just a joke', 'you're too sensitive' and 'get off your PC high horse'. The implication is that being offended is something disadvantaged people do while joking around is something that people with privilege do."[28]

Godfrey identifies the way that we perceive racism as the core of the problem. He explains that many

> …white Australians would think a charge of racism requires an intention to be a racist. However, many people of colour look at racist impact. On the first view Lilley can't be perpetuating racism because he doesn't intend to be racist. On the second view Lilley is perpetuating racism because brownface has an impact that is racist.[29]

Godfrey thus summarises the disagreement as being due to a difference of focus. If we view *Jonah from Tonga* with Lilley's intention in mind then we can conclude that it has successfully negotiated the fine line between mimicry and genius. If we focus on the impacts of his brownfacing on the group of people he portrays, then his actions have contributed to the perpetuation of racist stereotypes.

In August 2014, Jarom Vaha'i, a Tongan-American, unsuccessfully started a Change.org petition against HBO running the show in the U.S.[30] Vaha'i argues that it's not just the brown facing that is offensive; it is also that Lilley misrepresents Tongan culture. Executive Director of the National Tongan American Society O. Fahina Tavake-Pasi points out that the character's swearing, graffiti, rude gestures and disrespect for elders would not be tolerated in any Tongan community – and that if Lilley had been more accurate in his portrayal, it may not have been so offensive: "it's offensive that a white guy who knows

---

[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid*.
[30] Emily Orley, 8/8/2014, "The Brownface Controversy Surrounding "Jonah From Tonga"" in *BuzzFeed*, http://www.buzzfeed.com/emilyorley/the-brownface-controversy-surrounding-jonah-from-tonga#fz5utf Accessed 22/08/2014.

nothing about the community tries to be funny with it, and it's not funny. It's just ignorance."[31] While Chris Lilley has not directly contributed to the current debate, he does defend his research process in one interview: "I try to make my shows really accurate… I get to know the families and I think if they watch it and see how accurate it is, then it's going to be funny for everyone."[32]

This is not the first time that Lilley has faced accusations of racist stereotyping. In a 2011 interview with American magazine *Vulture*, Lilley admitted that blackface was a "big deal" (that is, unacceptable) "even in Australia".[33] At the time HBO were about to screen his show *Angry Boys*, which features several 'blackface' characters whom he plays, such as a Japanese mother and a black rapper called S'Mouse. In the interview his defense centres on the idea that he has always played multiple characters, pushed boundaries and tried new things. He acknowledges that Australians understand the historical significance of blackface, but thinks that his character (S'Mouse) is more than just a blackface joke. Lilley asserts that the joke isn't the blackfacing, but the characters:

> It's kind of funny that there's only certain races that it's an issue — yes, it's that history with blackface — but, I don't know. There's no comparison. I think it's a bit stupid that you would shut yourself off to being able to do that.[34]

Unlike his previous series, *Jonah from Tonga* was a "ratings disaster" for the show's producers ABC, BBC and HBO.[35] Initial plans to tour the series in Australian cinemas followed by a Q&A with Chris Lilley, were cancelled and the show's website, which promoted the tour, was removed.[36] This case study is interesting as it demonstrates a disagreement in process. The disagreement is perpetuated by a lack of consensus about what constitutes racism and whether

---

[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Emma Soren, 07/08/2014, "Becoming 'Jonah from Tonga' with Chris Lilley" in *Splitsider*, http://splitsider.com/2014/08/becoming-jonah-from-tonga-with-chris-lilley/ Accessed 22/08/2104.
[33] Jean Bentley, 12/29/2011, "Chris Lilley on Angry Boys, the Blackface Taboo, and Laughing at His Own Jokes" in *Vulture*. http://www.vulture.com/2011/12/chris-lilley-on-angry-boys-the-blackface-taboo-and-laughing-at-his-own-jokes.html Accessed 22/08/2014.
[34] *Ibid*.
[35] Amanda Meade, 15/05/2014, "Chris Lilley tastes ratings disaster as just 287,000 viewers tune in" in *theguardian.com*. http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/may/15/chris-lilley-tastes-ratings-disaster-as-just-287000-viewers-tune-in Accessed 29/10/2014.
[36] http://www.jonahfromtonga.com.au

Lilley's portrayal is mimicry or satire. While consensus has not yet been reached, the ongoing interaction between the two views does demonstrate that both sides are engaged in a communicative process. The show's failure in terms of ratings does indicate that the general populace does not support the show.

This is a case of proceduralism in progress, of rational toing and froing between identity values (ethnicity and racism, for example) and general interests (satire and social commentary verses humour and entertainment at a minority group's expense, for example). In terms of Gregg's thin proceduralism, there is a lack of normative consensus in regards to what constitutes racism. The lack of normative consensus indicates the need to identify thin norms, or common interests, in order to better understand the other's position.[37] The problem then seems to be one of isolating or ranking them. Which is more significant, artistic expression or developing ongoing positive stereotypes concerning a minority group? However, neither side defended free speech over respect to racial minorities. The desired end for the defending side reflected the same end as the opposing side. Both defended their positions on the basis of facilitating a non-racist community. That is, neither side of the debate is saying that racism is fine – so there is thin agreement. Both sides hold this value regarding respecting all races and they are both respectful of Chris Lilley's comedic genius. This provides them with a common ground, a shared interest, from which to engage in the disagreement.

On the one hand, one limit of thin proceduralism is highlighted by this case study. Normative thinness is successful insofar it facilitates communication, thereby opening the way for the discovering of common ground from which thin agreements can be established. However, as the success of the process relies on the sidelining of identity values and the dismissal of the possibility of substantial agreement, processes can stagnate. In this case, the two sides seem to have reached a stalemate, where they continue to view the conflict differently and retain competing narratives. While there is no likelihood of substantial agreement over whether or not *Jonah from Tonga* is racist, currently in sight, it will be interesting to see what Chris Lilley does next – whether or not he

[37] Gregg, 2002, p. 748.

continues to exploit the medium of 'brownfacing' and 'blackfacing' – or whether the community eventually decides that these are not genuine forms of satire.

On the other hand, in particularly hard cases of conflict that have, for example, a fundamental difference in identity values at their core, such as religious beliefs, it is this very limit that facilitates thin agreement. Thin agreements – such as a desire to end violence – have, in places such as Northern Ireland, fostered the continuance of fragile peace agreements since the late 1990's. Tensions remain within the devolved government and between the unionist and nationalist communities.[38] Broader issues such as the need to address ongoing sectarian sticking points, fully grappling with Northern Ireland's legacy of violence (often termed "dealing with the past"), curbing remaining dissident activity, and fostering economic development, still persist.[39] However, in this case a long history of excluding people from equal participation based on their religion and race, has left a legacy that impacts still on the possibility of community; and the kind of communication required of a 'community of enquiry'.

The explanatory power of Dewey's account is to suggest that it is these sorts of disagreements that offer opportunities for change, lest norms and values remain static. Dewey goes beyond finding common ground. The ideal democratic moral life uses enquiry to externalise these attitudes and values, allowing them to become the objects of debate and thereby opening the possibility for cultural and moral development. This debate is in the moral realm in Dewey's terms. On one level, this is why Dewey's particular brand of proceduralism is relevant. In identifying problems and finding common interests, we live morally enriched lives.

11.4 Case 3: Murray Darling Basin

[38] Kristin Archick, 11/03/2015, "Northern Ireland: The Peace Process", prepared for *Congressional Research Service*, p. 11. Accessed 05/06/2015 https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21333.pdf
[39] *Ibid*.

The Murray Darling Basin (MDB) is a large area that spans five states in eastern Australia. The many rivers of the basin are a valuable resource for irrigation, industrial use and domestic supply. Though for different reasons, the economic and social importance of the Murray makes its health a primary concern for all of Australia. However, the water supply and ecological health of the river has been adversely affected due to a number of factors: many years of drought (2002-2012); waterlogging and salinization resulting from irrigation and clearing of red gum forests and reed beds; livestock grazing on river banks; industrial, storm water, pesticide and sewage pollution; and growing recreation and tourism activities.[40] In response to these widespread water supply problems, in 2008 the Australian Commonwealth Government established the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), a single body responsible for overseeing water resource planning in the MDB. The current…

> Murray–Darling Basin Agreement aims to 'promote and co-ordinate effective planning and management for the equitable, efficient and sustainable use of the water and other natural resources of the Murray-Darling Basin, including by implementing arrangements agreed between the Contracting Governments to give effect to the Basin Plan, the Water Act and State water entitlements.'[41]

The MDBA uses scientific and research expertise to inform their work. They also consult with a number of local committees that advise on community issues in the Basin and provide regional community views on the Basin Plan.

> Aboriginal people on cultural and natural resource management issues in the Basin, primarily working with the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations and the Northern Murray–Darling Basin Aboriginal Nation…regularly liaise with state and regional committees and agencies including 13 Catchment Management Authorities, 8 Local Land Services and Natural Resource Management Boards throughout the Basin…[who in turn]…work directly with their local communities to restore and improve natural resources. We liaise with the Murray Darling Association that represents more than 90 local government municipalities in the Basin, in addition to working directly with many of the Local Councils.[42]

The establishment of the MDBA is acknowledgement that effective action requires collaboration between Commonwealth, Local and State governments and local communities.

---

[40] http://www.murrayriver.com.au/about-the-murray/the-murray-a-river-worth-saving/ Accessed 01/06/2014.
[41] http://www.mdba.gov.au/about-mdba/governance/murray-darling-basin-agreement Accessed 01/06/2014.
[42] http://www.mdba.gov.au/what-we-do/working-with-others Accessed 01/06/2014.

The vastness of the area combined with its multiple and diverse value on both a local and national level means that the health of the MDB is one of Australia's biggest environmental, economic and social problems. There is no disagreement between government bodies and the community about the urgency of the water crisis. Everyone agrees that current usage must change in order to facilitate the Murray River’s health and sustainability. However, competing interests between environmental sustainability and commercial viability persist. While positing the overall health of the river as **the** overarching monistic value is a good start, the issue is compounded by the multiplicity of stakeholders, who hold conflicting public and private interests. Disagreement persists, on how to achieve the health of the river and what kind of benefits to us is the true objective of the exercise. Multiple incompatible values at the general interest level compete with each other. Rice growers clash with fruit growers, environmentalist groups clash with commercial developers and industry, cattle farmers clash with grape growers and wine makers clash with still others, to name a few.

Since the MDBA was set up, government agencies have used community consultation as a way to investigate individual and public interests, exploit local knowledge, collect scientific evidence and weigh possibilities. These consultations have had mixed success. While in some areas individuals and communities have been able to express their concerns, voice their opinions and be heard, in others many people feel that the government is simply paying lip service to their views and that the consultation process has not had much influence at the decision making level. Even if we grant this, we can see that there has been some progress over the last seven years that has contributed to advancing the health of the river, in turn boosting local morale by dispelling feelings of futility in the face of such a huge crisis.

In South Australia, the Murray Mouth, Coorong and Lower Lakes area is one of Australia's most important wetland areas. In 1985 the Commonwealth Government designated the site as a “Wetland of International Importance under

the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands."[43] Actions up river have the potential to have a significant impact on these areas that are of…

> National Environmental Significance including: wetlands of international importance; listed ecological communities; listed threatened bird species; listed threatened plant species; listed migratory species; and listed fish species.[44]

The problem is that the driving forces up river are largely economic, whereas the driving forces down river are largely environmental. On top of this there are political associations to be considered. While everyone agrees that there is a crisis and a balance between competing economic and environmental values needs to be found, the complexity of the problem makes reconciliation and consensus between these conflicting values difficult and probably not solvable in the near future.

As a member of this Lower Lakes community, I participated in many government consultations over the years. While disagreement over the balance between environmental and economic outcomes continues, ongoing community consultations, local meetings and schemes such as the Community Nurseries Network's re-vegetation program that is run through The Lakes Hub in Milang, have made a visible difference to the Lower Lakes community and the river that sustains it. The Lakes Hub is an initiative of the Milang and District Community Association Inc. and is part of the South Australian Government's *Murray Futures* program, funded by the Australian Government's *Water for the Future* initiative.[45] The resulting project is believed to be one of the largest restoration projects of its kind in the world, with more than 500,000 plants of 180 different local native species propagated and planted in 2013.[46]

As well as providing a conduit for consultation, the Lakes Hub encourages people to become involved in environmental restoration projects such as water, soil and fish monitoring, participating in revegetation, producing seedlings, saving turtles and so on. The variety of projects, working on many different issues that affect many different members of the community has led to some

---

[43] http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/coorong-and-lakes-alexandrina-and-albert-ramsar-wetland-fact-sheet Accessed 04/06/2014.
[44] http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/coorong-and-lakes-alexandrina-and-albert-ramsar-wetland-fact-sheet Accessed 04/06/2014.
[45] http://lakeshub.com/about/ Accessed 25/07/2014.
[46] Statistics garnered from: http://lakeshub.com Accessed 25/07/2014.

cohesion and reconciliation between competing interests and rendered formerly fragile relationships robust. Of particular import is the rejuvenation of respect and self worth within local indigenous groups whose wealth of local knowledge has proven to be instrumental to the decision making process. Conflicts between competing economic, environmental and social interests have been tempered over time by the overarching aim of the one thing that all community members agree upon - the health of the Murray.

While incompatible values, such as those between industry, agriculture and environment, entail that disagreement persists; thin agreements have enabled ongoing courses of action to emerge. As an ongoing process, successful outcomes, in terms of sustainable agricultural practices and environmental regeneration accumulate and emerge over time. This demonstrates that thin agreement is a potent catalyst for effective agency of a community. Dewey argued that engaging in ethical problems through a process of reflection enables self and societal revision and growth in the face of ever changing conflicts between ends, responsibilities, rights, duties and principals. Isolating identity values from the process enables participants to find thin agreements based on rational identification of shared interests. These Murray-Darling projects and collaborations are examples of the kinds of cooperation, participation and willingness to compromise that thin agreement can motivate from all participants. Ongoing consultation and commitment between stakeholders has produced an enduring method of identifying shared interests and ways of achieving them over a seven-year period, resulting in a project that is one of the largest restoration projects of its kind in the world – officially acknowledged by the United Nations Association of Australia when it named the Goolwa to Wellington Local Action Planning Association Inc. as the 2014 winners of the World Environment Day Biodiversity Award.[47] This is pragmatic proceduralism in progress.

11.5 Conclusion

---

[47] http://www.unaavictoria.org.au/awards-programs/world-environment-day-awards/winners-finalists/ Accessed 21/11/2014.

Dewey argued that it is the very complexity of moral problems and judgment making, the weighing of conflicting values and making decisions, which necessitates a 'community of enquiry'. Without careful, rationally grounded decision-making procedures, disagreements can halt decision-making and ultimately action-taking. Dewey's proceduralism is a theory of practice that responds to the reality and complexity of living an ethical life and is reflected in my own experience of participating in a community facing an ethical crisis. As discussed above, often difficult and wrought with disagreement, the complex public meetings I attended eventually led to possibilities for action. Steered by minimal consensus, thin agreements were attained, projects were undertaken and the local environment, economy and community began to thrive. I realised that I was observing a Deweyan community in action.

The overarching concern for the health of the river drove most of the project planning and tempered the oft-fractious process of reaching decisions that always involved compromise. Underlying these processes was an expectation that the decisions would be fair, carefully thought through and well intentioned. Many different and clashing individual, environmental and commercial values needed to be weighed before decisions could be made. Quite often, disagreement over these competing and conflicting values stalled the process and stalemates would ensue. But, with enough rational deliberation, compromises were sought, made and decisions about what to do were agreed upon and implemented. Theory met practice.

Most of the public meetings focused on scientific and commercial proposals that weighed ideas on how to benefit the regeneration of the environment against the need to support commercial interests and small businesses. Many of these decisions led to the establishment of local projects, for example, regenerating the shoreline ecosystem. What was underestimated were the broader social benefits, an aspect that Dewey theorised about in terms of self and societal realisation. For instance, an unforseen outcome of the crisis has been the realisation that the health of the river impacts on the health of the community. When the river is flourishing, the community flourishes, environmentally, commercially and socially.

The social benefits that emerged, in terms of a stronger and more cohesive community, were mostly unanticipated and have proven to be the cohesive force needed when making difficult decisions. One early example of this was the putting up of fences along the lakeside in order to block cattle from accessing the environmentally delicate shoreline. Many (initially grumpy) farmers, citing historical precedence and cost, were resistant. Scientists and environmentalists insisted that it was absolutely necessary as the cattle's hooves did irreparable damage to the delicate lakeside ecosystem, which had knock-on effects for the turtle, bird and fish populations. After many months of sometimes quite heated meetings, a compromise was reached. The farmers agreed to the fencing on the condition that the government funded the project. Not only did the project generate new jobs and skills, it also brought together members of the community, such as indigenous and non-indigenous, agricultural and environmental, who had not formerly associated with each other. Like a ripple effect, the social ramifications of such projects were unforseen and incidental.

Decisions for action were only made after much well informed, rational, and often heated deliberation. The environmental crisis and the conflicts that arose out of it transformed the social fabric of the community and became opportunities for change and growth. While in theory Dewey's optimism seems naïve, my own experience of living in a community, that found cohesion in the face of difficult and compromising decisions time and time again, demonstrates in practice that full participation in rational decision-making procedures (enquiry) within a community, form the basis of self and societal progress.

The purpose of this chapter has been to present three actual cases of persistent disagreement in order to demonstrate the explanatory power of Dewey's theory when applied to such cases. The analysis shows that the success of the procedural account hinges not only on the process itself, but also on the willingness of participants to participate. Although this seems somewhat obvious, it highlights an important aspect of Dewey's broader theory and educative aims. Dewey thought that systemically exercised rationality leads to respect for others, which in turn leads to the cultivation of self and society. Democracy 'falls out of' rational deliberation on moral matters when a community of diverse interests is addressed in order to serve our sociability. We

all have self-interests,[48] but we can recognise that individual values can hamper rational deliberation. Dewey thought that a genuine 'community of enquiry' draws us away from the self-interest that thwarts rationality. Pursuing common interests such as equality, justice, societal and individual eudemonia and so on, requires individuals, institutions and societies to engage in critical assessment and argument. Dewey offers an optimistic view of moral conflicts by treating them as opportunities for engagement in processes of individual and societal change. In doing this, he summons his philosophical framework, directing philosophical enquiry into morality away from the binaries or dichotomies related to sentiment and reason. Dewey's enquiry-into-experience is both a practical solution and a philosophical one.

[48] Or identity values as Gregg calls them (10.3).

12. The Good, The Right & The Exigencies of Life

This thesis has reconfigured the structure of ethical engagement by showing how John Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism answered problems that arose in the development of ideas as represented through David Hume, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. I demonstrate that by concentrating on the process at the practical level in the manner of Hume and Mill, rather than universals per se, Dewey was able to sidestep the metaphysical problems presented by Kant. By focussing in particular on the relation between disagreement and motivation to act, Dewey was able to progress beyond the dichotomies found in Hume between sentiment and reason, and in Mill between individual and community. Dewey's conception of 'enquiry into experience' facilitated a method of evaluation and valuing that circumvented questions about the nature of values and turned instead to identifying a method of communication and decision-making that did not require participants to share a system of belief. Viewing Dewey in light of these theorists, reinforces his conception of experience, which includes experiencing, (subjectivity and intersubjectivity) and rejects the reductionist or dichotomous tendencies of traditional moral theories. His move away from conceptual exclusivity (a conceptual framework only available to those born into a community) facilitates a notion of experience according to which experience is not an irreducible aspect of mind and sensing, but rather susceptible to acculturation. For Dewey, experience incorporates the rational and sentimental, the objective and subjective, theory and practice, and cognitive and non-cognitive.

Dewey argued that moral judgments come into focus more clearly when they are conceived as responses to problems that are experienced as an uneasiness and hesitation to a situation, evoking the need for enquiry. Dewey places reflection (enquiry) as central to what constitutes a moral judgment. This can be seen as a response to Hume's sentimentalism. Dewey in effect puts Kant's categorical imperative, when understood as a tool for identifying goods that are interdependent with the realm of ends, to work. Both the goal of identifying a Kantian supreme principle that serves as THE ethical criterion and Mill's goal of identifying an ultimate end are adapted to accommodate the conditions

presented by a multi-cultured society. Dewey bases his thesis on the understanding that both feeling and reason are part of the self's expressive impulses, which in turn, influence what are deemed the relevant premises in any decision making process. The outcome is a theory of ethical enquiry outlined in the light of empirical enquiry, where reflective intelligence is used to revise judgments in light of actions (means) and their consequences (ends) within reasoning communities.

Whilst not denying the inheritance of his pragmatist forebears, Peirce and James, the historical timeline of this thesis sheds new light on Deweyan concepts. I have argued that the central role of feeling and attitude in Hume's understanding of moral motivation and ends, and the prominence of reason in Kant's, are, as we saw in chapter six, relevant to Dewey's conception of experience. I then argued that it is possible to view Mill as an earlier forerunner to Dewey's conception of the relationship between theory and practice. In terms of moral disagreement, by motivating us to make decisions on moral issues, feeling is the compass for Hume. Dewey would agree to the extent that disagreements about what is valuable, particularly clashes over personal identity values, are painful and emotionally charged. However, Dewey did not conceive such feelings as irrational. Benjamin Gregg's idea that such values can be put to one side in the interests of finding common ground, is an appealing and practical response. However, for Dewey, feelings are accommodated as an important aspect of judgment making, but the process of community enquiry provides the context in which they are mediated against broader community interests.

Our pragmatist reading of Kant led us to the conclusion that respect for the moral law 'falls out of' reason. Kant argued that both the rationalist and empiricist mistakenly assume that we can know things, as they are in themselves, independent of the conditions of our experience of them. He responded with a metaphysical account of truth, the synthetic *a priori*, which accommodates both. Dewey can be seen as having continued this project. Neo-Kantians such as John McDowell reinforce and develop this aspect of Kant's theory when they argue that sentience cannot be removed from sapience.

By reading Mill's utilitarian theory in light of his theory of liberty, we were able to highlight this important, often overlooked aspect of Mill: we revise

moral norms on the basis of intellectual reflection on actions and their consequences, in terms of the effects on the self and society in general. Arguably, Dewey expands upon Mill's distinction between low and high pleasures when he distinguishes between what is valued immediately in impulse and unreflective habit, as compared to what is valued reflectively. As with other distinctions we have encountered, Dewey always avoids separating them categorically in practice. This unification of unreflective and reflective value represents a naturalistic account of our highly sensitive capacity for awareness of incompatible preferences. Our experience of a state of unsettledness initiates reflection and the need for deliberative choice.

Dewey's moral theory is an attempt to capture ethics as an art of living in a complex and multi-cultural world. His inclusive conception of experience captures the actual, the way the world is, and the felt, the way we react to the world. This view is based on a theory of perception that recognises that experience involves our experience of it. It is important to remember that this is not a theory of the hard problem of consciousness. Dewey is not trying to explain the metaphysical or epistemological foundations of subjective experience, the 'what' or 'where' of experience. Rather, he is accepting that because perception involves experiencing the experience, the subjective is an integral part of facts. This is a biological, not a metaphysical, starting point where both the objective and subjective are essential aspects of the way we perceive the world and therefore the way the world is.

Through an expansion of Kant's bridging of the sentimentalism/ rationalism structure, Dewey's theory amalgamates theory and practice, the ideal and real. His notion of moral life as community enquiry is presented both as an ideal and as a practice. As an ideal, democracy 'falls out of' rational enquiry. As a practice or method, it exercises induction under the constraints of community interests and hence communicability. The ultimate claim is that a moral life gives rise to democracy. Dewey does more than offer a description of rational deliberation; he proposes that participation in such endeavours within a community is a natural part of what it is to be human due to our sociability. Furthermore, humans develop their capacity for intelligent action through participation in community via rational deliberation and decision-making. In

turn, democracy is presented as a condition of moral life where there is genuine scope for disagreement, and representation.

The cognitivist argues that with enough of the right sort of rational debate, solutions will be found and problems will be solved. However, this position seems somewhat naïve when faced with such difficult and fraught disagreements such as those that arise during an environmental crisis. The cognitivist treats disagreement as a solvable problem, as if the answer is out there waiting to be discovered. This underestimates the complexity of disagreement. Admittedly the source of some disagreements can be pinned down to a lack of rationality, or misinformation, or self-interest of some sort, but as the Murray Darling Basin case study demonstrates, some disagreements are grounded in genuine difference – of aims, values, opinion and preferences, such as short-term economic versus long-term environmental, for example. Proceduralists advocate for enquiries, for debate and argument, for the weighing of values and negotiating outcomes, with the hope that they will at least find better ways of understanding the positions involved. From this general understanding, it is hoped that possibilities for action will be identified, that at least thin agreements will be made.

Seemingly interminable conflicts and disagreements over values, is evidence of the complexity and difficulty of making moral evaluations. Theoretically, we can see this problem reflected in the foundational pluralist's identification of incommensurability and incomparability as key features of interminable moral disagreement, leading them to give up on consensus altogether. The foundational monist responds by instantiating an overarching monistic value against which comparisons can be made but which rapidly becomes so vague that it is vacuous. The problem for the foundational pluralist is that if disagreements are interminable, then deliberation is rendered vacuous and futile. The problem for the foundational monist is that the overarching value, such as happiness or wellbeing, for example, is so broad that it is meaningless. The pragmatist argues that regardless of the metaphysical nature of values, there are disagreements, which involve clashes in value at both an individual and societal level. In response to the problem of disagreement the pragmatist

advocates that we turn away from questions about the metaphysical nature of values and toward identifying ways to tackle such difficult situations.

Dewey's ethical theory turns away from the problem-solution metaphor and replaces it with an adjudicatory model based on 'communities of inquiry'. This represents a shift in focus from solutions to resolutions, and facilitates the adoption of a procedural stance toward pluralism and monism. That is, pluralism is employed to recognise the diversity of values and monism to identify that everyone wants to find a way forward. This involves accepting that some moral disagreements may not be solved. Instead, focus is on identifying the relevant issues and concerns, that is, a shared set of terms of reference, and perhaps at least beginning to chip away at the problem. There is a sense that even for the 'common' person, the wrong, deeply engraved philosophical position can hamper progress in these matters. Sidestepping the metaphysical question opens up the way for engagement in process and offers us a lesson in realistic expectations of outcomes of conflict.

For Dewey, the root of conflict can be found in the clash between ends that cannot be realised simultaneously because they get in the way of each other's realisation. The very existence of moral problems, of clashes in value that lead to seemingly interminable disagreements indicate that morality is very much a part of the human condition, hence the need for a method that can foster intelligent responses. Pragmatic proceduralism is optimistic in the face of persistent disagreement. The optimism of Dewey's account can be seen in his notion of self and societal realisation. The idea is that rational democratic communication will lead to rational democratic decisions that have ramifications on the individual and the society in which they live. His educative ideal is that if we cultivate rational individuals, we will end up with ethically intelligent, more unified societies that have the capacity to engage in disagreement without conflict. Unencumbered by expectations of solving problems once and for all, the pragmatist applauds participation and willingness to compromise, negotiate and cooperate through the identification of a common way of setting up the problem.

In this thesis I have argued and demonstrated that Dewey's ethics accounts for the way we conduct ourselves in the face of disagreement on values, when that disagreement leads to constructive lines of communication. I have

argued that the power of Dewey's conceptions of 'experience' and 'inquiry' for understanding morality is overlooked when they are not located within the oeuvres of Hume, Kant and Mill. Gregory Pappas affirms my collaborative approach when he observes that Dewey's ethics:

> …is not a consequentialist, deontological, or a virtue ethics, but it tries to recover some insights of these views. This recovery is developed by a reconstruction that abandons the metaphysical and methodological assumptions that ground debates between competing views in ethical theory…If philosophers could curb their theoretical and self-serving tendency to latch on to one aspect of moral experience and make it primary, they may be able to embrace a pluralistic and richer view of morality.[1]

Dewey's solution was based on construing the problems he inherited as only apparent due to a misunderstanding of the very terms of the debate, which he set about reconstructing. As such I hope I have successfully highlighted the significance of Dewey's pragmatic proceduralism for contemporary ethical debate.

By treating disagreement as an opportunity for deliberation, Dewey shifts the focus of ethical reflection away from finding solutions and toward engagement in communication. This reflects his more general view of the self as an active participant in the environment. As Pappas puts it:

> For Dewey, we are always doing something and the only meaningful question is how we are doing it: are we aggressive? Assertive? Willing to go as far as we can? Willing to experiment or disposed to become inhibited in the face of risk?[2]

Dewey's process encourages individuals and communities to value and engage in reflection and deliberation, communication and interaction. Dewey's process orientated approach encourages community engagement with practical problems through tolerance and reflection on disagreements without reducing them to misunderstanding, differences of opinion, or irrationality. Dewey's method not only successfully blurs the line between theory and practice, the ideal and the practical, but also calls for creativity, for reflection on entrenched customs and habits in the light of broader community needs.

Bearing in mind the environmental crisis that my community was facing and participating in Deweyan-esque 'communities of inquiry' throughout my PhD has resulted in a thesis that is grounded in practice. Just as Dewey theorised,

---

[1] Pappas, 2008, p. 303.
[2] Pappas, 2008, p. 203.

there has been an unexpected transformative aspect to the process of engagement with moral disagreement in my local community. Democratic decision-making procedures have led to an enriched cultural life unknown in this region before the environmental crisis arose. In terms of future theoretical development, many possibilities have emerged. A closer examination of Dewey's theory of aesthetics,[3] and in particular his conception of taste as one of the most important aspects of moral cultivation would prove a useful way of developing a more robust view of his cultivational account of self-realisation and social-realisation and its impact in terms of education. While I have focused on John McDowell's neo-Kantian approach, an equally fruitful comparison could be drawn from Peter Railton's neo-consequentialist moral realism and Simon Blackburn's neo-Humean quasi-realism, particularly given the historical tracing of ideas that I have outlined in this thesis. I am also interested in developing a clearer understanding of different types of disagreement, their character and what each means in terms of the proceduralist approach – a kind of systematised taxonomy that delineates specific indicators and criteria of disagreement.

In terms of practical development, I am working with Prof. Rob Wilson who formed the PEiPL network (Philosophical Engagement in Public Life) in Nov. 2017.[4] My team and I are in the process of adapting the Canadian *Eurekamp: Adventures in Ideas for Curious Children*[5] summer camp program to the Australian context as a school holiday program, Young PEiPL, at La Trobe University, Melbourne. In the future I would like to work on the link between activity based critical and creative thinking and neural plasticity in children affected by Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Another area of interest is the development of a proceduralist toolkit for communication as a method for facilitation of disagreement, which could then be implemented as a program in prisons, for example.

---

[3] An approach laid out in detail by Steven Fesmire, 2003.
[4] https://www.peipl.net
[5] http://p4c.ualberta.ca/eurekamp

Bibliography

Anderson, E. 1991, "John Stuart Mill and Experiments in Living" in *Ethics*, 102: 1, pp. 4-26.

Aristotle 349 BCE, "Ethica Nicomachea" Ross W.D. (trans.) in McKeon R. 2001, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, New York: The Modern Library, [1094a1-1181b22], pp. 935-1126.

Ayer, A.J. 1955, (1936), *Language, Truth, and Logic*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

Baldwin, J. 1891, "Feeling and Will" in *Handbook of Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt.

Ballantyne, P.F. 2008, *History and Theory of Psychology: An early 21st century student's perspective*, http://www.igs.net/%7Epballan/section4(210).htm Accessed 22/03/2012.

Bentham, J. 1970, (1789), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, J.H. Burns & H. L. A. Hart (Eds.) London and New York: Methuen.

Benjafield, J.G. 1996, *A History of Psychology*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, http://www.igs.net/%7Epballan/section4(210).htm Accessed 22/03/2012.

Bentley, J. 29/12/2011, "Chris Lilley on Angry Boys, the Blackface Taboo, and Laughing at His Own Jokes" *Vulture* http://www.vulture.com/2011/12/chris-lilley-on-angry-boys-the-blackface-taboo-and-laughing-at-his-own-jokes.html Accessed 22/08/2014.

Berlin, I. 2002, (1952), *Freedom and its Betrayal: Seven Enemies of Human Liberty*, Henry Hardy (Ed.), London: Chatto and Windus; Princeton: Princeton University Press.

_____, 23/09/2004, (1986), 'A Letter on Human Nature' a letter to Beata Polanowska-Sygulska, *New York Review of Books* http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2004/09/23/a-letter-on-human-nature/ Accessed 03/03/2014.

_____, 1991 "John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life" in John Gray & G. W. Smith (Eds.), *J. S. Mill On Liberty in Focus*, London & New York: Routledge, pp.131-161.

Biles, J. and Fry, S. 16/03/2014 "WBC spokesman said Fred Phelps Sr. was 'healthy' a month before he entered hospice", *cjonline.com*. http://cjonline.com/news/2014-03-16/wbc-spokesman-said-fred-phelps-sr-was-healthy-month-he-entered-hospice Accessed 28/10/2014.

Brandom, R. 2000, "Facts, Norms and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas" in *European Journal of Philosophy*, 8: 3, pp. 356-374.

Brink, D. 1997, "Moral Motivation" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 4-32.

Brister, E. "John Stuart Mill and Liberty", http://knowledgeandexperience.blogspot.com.au/2013/06/john-stuart-mill-and-liberty.html. Accessed 10/06/2014.

Brodsky, G.M. 1969, “Absolute Idealism and John Dewey’s Instrumentalism” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 5: 1, pp. 44-62.

Brown, M.J. 2012, “John Dewey’s Logic of Science” in *HOPOS: The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science*, 2: 2, pp. 258-306.

Buchholz, R.A. and Rosenthal, S.B. 1996, “Toward a New Understanding of Moral Pluralism” in *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 6: 3, pp. 263-275.

Burke, D. 25/03/2014, “Westboro church founder Fred Phelps dies”, *CNN*. http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/20/us/westboro-church-founder-dead/ Accessed 28/10/2014.

Campbell, J. 1995, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence*, Chicago and Las Salle, Illinois: Open Court.

Campos, D. 2011, “On the Distinction Between Peirce’s Abduction and Lipton’s Inference to the Best Explanation” in *Synthese*, 180, pp. 419–442.

Cavell, S. 2002, (1976), *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays: Updated Edition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chang, R. (Ed.), 1997, *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Chu, J. *Megan Phelps-Roper at the 2014 Level Ground Film Festival*, Pasadena, California. http://vimeo.com/90865308 Accessed 20/10/2014.

Cochrane, T. 2010, “Music, Emotions and the Influence of the Cognitive Science” in *Philosophy Compass*, 5: 11, pp. 978-988.

Copp, D. 1997, “Belief, Reason, and Motivation: Michael Smith’s *The Moral Problem*” in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 33-54.

Copp, D. 2004, “Moral Naturalism and Three Grades of Normativity” in Peter Schaber (Ed.) *Normativity in Naturalism*, Rutgers University: Transaction Books

Cowie, F. 1999, *What’s Within? Nativism Reconsidered*, New York: Oxford University Press.

D’Agostino, F. 2003, *Incommensurability and Commensuration: The Common Denominator*, Hampshire, England: Ashgate.

De Tienne, A. 1989, "Peirce's Early Method of Finding the Categories” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 25, pp. 385-407.

Dewey, J. 1894, “The Study of Ethics: a Syllabus” Ann Arbor, Michigan: George Wahr. https://archive.org/stream/studyethicsasyl00dewegoog#page/n110/mode/2up/search/desire Accessed 04/08/2014 via On Openlibrary.org.

_____, 1896, “The Reflex Arc in Psychology” in *Psychological Review*, 3, pp. 357-370. http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Dewey/reflex.htm Accessed 22/03/2012.

_____, 1903, *Studies in Logical Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

_____, 1916, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: Free Press.

_____, 1922, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

_____, 1958, (1925), *Experience and Nature*, New York: Dover Publications Inc.

_____, 1929, *The Quest For Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*, New York: Balch & Company.

_____, 1966 (1930), “Three Independent Factors in Morals” in *Educational Theory*, Boydston J.A. (Trans.), 16, pp. 198-209.

_____, 1930, “What I Believe: Living Philosophies VII” in *The Forum*, pp. 176 – 183. http://www.unz.com/print/Forum-1930mar-00176/ Accessed 02/02/2018

_____, 1934, *Art as Experience*, New York: The Berkeley Publishing Group.

_____, 1938, *Experience and Education*, New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

_____, 1938, *Logic – The Theory of Inquiry*, New York: Henry Holt & Company.

_____, 1940, “Nature in Experience” in *The Philosophical Review*, XLIX, pp. 244-258.

_____, 1946, *Problems of Men*, New York: Greenwood Press.

_____, 2004, (1948), *Reconstruction In Philosophy*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Dewey, J. & Tufts, J.H. 1932, *Ethics: Revised Edition*, New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Doris, J.M. and Stich, S.P. “As a Matter of Fact: Empirical Perspectives on Ethics” in Jackson F. and Smith M. (Ed’s.), 2005, *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 114-152.

Dugan, A. 21/11/2012 "Megan Phelps-Roper of Westboro Baptist Church: An heir to hate" *Kansas City Star* http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article299767/Megan-Phelps-Roper-of-Westboro-Baptist-Church-An-heir-to-hate.html Accessed 22nd October 2014.

Dworkin, R. 2006, *Is Democracy Possible Here? Principles for a New Political Debate*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Eames, S.M. 1961, “The Cognitive and the Non-Cognitive in Dewey’s Theory of Valuation” in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 58: 7, pp. 179-195.

_____, 1977, *Pragmatic Naturalism: An Introduction*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

Eldridge, M. 2005, “Why a Pragmatist May Be a Pluralist” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 119-122.

Fann, K. T. 1970, *Peirce’s Theory of Abduction*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Feldman, J. & Narayanan, S. 2003, "Embodied meaning in a neural theory of language" in *Brain and Language*, 89, pp. 385-392.

Fesmire, S. 2003, *John Dewey & Moral Imagination: Pragmatism in Ethics*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

_____, "Reconstructing Dewey Today" *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012.

Godfrey, M. 12/05/14, "Blackface in a white nation" *Overland*. http://overland.org.au/2014/05/blackface-in-a-white-nation/ Accessed 13/05/14.

Good, J.A. 2006, "John Dewey's "Permanent Hegelian Deposit" and the Exigencies of War", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44: 2, pp. 293-313.

Gouinlock, J. 1972, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value*, New York: Humanities Press.

_____, 1986, *Excellence in Public Discourse: John Stuart Mill, John Dewey, and Social Intelligence*, New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Gray, J. "Mill's Conception of Happiness and the Theory of Individuality" in John Gray & G. W. Smith (Eds.), 1991, *J. S. Mill On Liberty in Focus*, London & New York: Routledge, pp.190-211.

Gregg, B. 2002, "Proceduralism Reconceived: Political Conflict Resolution under Conditions of Moral Pluralism" in *Theory and Society*, 31: 6, pp. 741-776.

Guyer, P. 1993, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____, 2006, *Kant*, New York & London: Routledge

_____, 2008, *Knowledge, Reason, and Taste*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

_____, "Kantian Communities: The Realm of Ends, the Ethical Community and the Highest Good" in Charlton Payne & Lucas Thorpe (Ed.), 2011, *Kant and the Concept of Community*, Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, pp. 88-120.

Haack, S. 1976, "The Pragmatist Theory of Truth" in *British Journal of Philosophy of Science*, 27, pp. 231-249.

_____, 2007, "The Legitimacy of Metaphysics: Kant's Legacy to Peirce, and Peirce's to Philosophy Today" in *Polish Journal of Philosophy*, 1: 1 pp. 29-43.

Haack, S. and Kolenda, K. 1977, "Two Fallibilists in Search of the Truth" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 51, pp. 63-104.

Habermas, J. 1984, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, T. McCarthy (trans.). Boston: Beacon Press.

_____, 2000, "From Kant to Hegel: On Robert Brandom's Pragmatic Philosophy of Language", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 8: 3, pp. 322-355.

Hardie, G. 09/05/14, "Jonah from Tonga: genius or racist?" *In Daily* http://indaily.com.au/arts-and-culture/2014/05/09/jonah-tonga-genius-racist Accessed 13/05/14.

Hays, M. 28/10/2013, "Granddaughters of an infamous homophobic U.S. pastor find grace in Montreal" *Special to The Globe and Mail*. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/after-break-from-westboro-baptists-sisters-find-new-freedom-in-montreal/article15130964/ Accessed 24/10/2014.

Hickman, L. "Reconstructing Dewey Today" *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012.

Hildebrand, D.L. 1996, "Genuine Doubt and the Community in Peirce's Theory of Inquiry" in *Southwest Philosophy Review*, 12: 1, pp.33-43.

_____, 2003, *Beyond Realism & Antirealism*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

_____, 2008, *Dewey: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: Oneworld.

Honneth, A. 1998, "Between Proceduralism and Teleology: An Unresolved Conflict in Dewey's Moral Theory" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 34: 3, pp. 689-711.

Honneth, A. & Farrell, J.M.M. 1998, "Democracy as Reflexive Will Cooperation: John Dewey and the Theory of Democracy Today" in *Political Theory*, 26: 6, pp. 763-783.

Hume, D. 1973, (1739), *Hume's A Treatise of Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge (Ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.

_____, 1932, (1777), *Hume: Inquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principle of Morals by David Hume*, L.A. Selby-Bigge (Ed.), 2nd Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jackman, H. 2005, "Jamesian Pluralism and Moral Conflict" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 123-128.

James, W. 1890, *The Principles of Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt. http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/j/james/william/principles/chapter2.html Accessed 05/02/2013.

_____, 1975, (1907) "Pragmatism" in Burkhardt F.H. (Ed.) *The Works of William James: Pragmatism*, Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press.

_____, 1979, (1909) *The Meaning of Truth*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

_____, 1943, (1912), *Essays in Radical Empiricism and a Pluralistic Universe*, New York: Longmans, Green & Co.

http://topologicalmedialab.net/xinwei/classes/readings/James/RadicalEmpiricism.pdf Accessed 24/02/2018.

Johnston, J.S. 2006, "Dewey's Critique of Kant" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 42: 4, pp. 518-551.

Kaag, J. 2005, "Continuity and Inheritance: Kant's "Critique of Judgment" and the Work of C. S. Peirce" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 3, pp. 515-540.

Kant, I. 2004 (1783), *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science* with Selections from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hatfield G. (trans. & ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____, 1784, "Idea of A Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective" pp.3-12 [AK8: 15-26.]. http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/excerpts/kant_perpetual.pdf Accessed & downloaded 28/05/2014.

_____, 2002 (1785), *Immanuel Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals in focus*, Pasternack, L. (Ed.), Paton H.J. (trans.), London & New York: Routledge.

_____, 1786, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" in Wood A.W. and Di Giovanni G. (Trans. & Ed.'s), 1996, *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-18.

_____, 1787, *Critique of Pure Reason*, in Smith N.K. (trans.) 1929, *Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'*, London: Macmillan and Co.

_____, 1788, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in Gregor M.J. (trans. & Ed.), 1997, *Critique of Practical Reason/Immanuel Kant*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____, 1790, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in Guyer P (Ed.), Guyer P. and Matthews E. (Trans.), 2000, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____, 1793, "On The Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory" in Gregor M.J. (Trans. & Ed.), 1996, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, AK 8:273-8:313, pp. 273-310.

_____, 1797, "The Metaphysics of Morals" in Gregor M.J. (Trans. & Ed.), 1996, *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, AK 6:373-6:493, pp. 507-603.

_____, 1798, *Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View*, in Gregor M.J. (Trans., Intro., Notes), 1974, The Hague: Martinous Hijhoff, pp. 3-27, [AK: 7: 119-148].

Kekes, J. 1992, "Pluralism and Conflict in Morality" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 26, pp. 37-50.

Kemerling, G. 1997 (2011), *Kant: Experience and Reality*, http://www.philosophypages.com/hy/5g.htm Accessed 17/03/2015.

Kemp Smith, N. 1962, *A Commentary to Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason* 2nd Ed., New York: Humanities Press.

King, J. 1992, “The Moral Theories of Kant and Hume: Comparisons and Polemics” in *Hume Studies*, XVIII: 2, pp. 441-466.

Korsgaard, C.M. 1996, “The Authority of Reflection” in *The Sources of Normativity*, O’Neill, O. (Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mackie, J.L. 1977, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, New York: Hamondworth.

McAuliffe, W. 2015, “How Did Abduction Get Confused with Inference to the Best Explanation?” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 51, pp. 300–319.

McCarty, R. 1993 “Kantian Moral Motivation and the Feeling of Respect” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 31: 3, pp. 421-435.

McDowell, J. “Aesthetic value, objectivity, and the fabric of the world” in E. Schaper (Ed.), 1983, *Pleasure, Preference and Value: Studies in Philosophical Aesthetics*”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-16.

_____, 1998, *Mind, Value & Reality*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

McMahon, J.A. 2014, *Art and Ethics in a Material World: Kant’s Pragmatist Legacy*, New York and London: Routledge.

Mead, G.H. 1934, *Mind, Self and Society*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meade, A. 15/05/2014, “Chris Lilley tastes ratings disaster as just 287,000 viewers tune in” *theguardian.com*. http://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/may/15/chris-lilley-tastes-ratings-disaster-as-just-287000-viewers-tune-in Accessed 29/10/2014.

Mill, J.S. 1859, “On Liberty”, in John Gray & G. W. Smith (Eds.) 1991, *J. S. Mill On Liberty in Focus*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 21-130.

_____, 2001, (1861), *Utilitarianism*, 2nd Edition, Edited with an Introduction, by George Sher, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

_____, 1924, (1873), *Autobiography: with an appendix hitherto unpublished speeches and a preface by Harold J. Laski*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 112-119.

Misak, C. 1999, *Truth, Politics Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, London GBR: Routledge.

_____, 2004, “Making Disagreement Matter: Pragmatism and Deliberative Democracy” in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 18: 1, pp. 9-22.

_____, 2005, “Pragmatism and Pluralism” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 129-135.

_____, 2008, “Pragmatism on Solidarity, Bullshit, and other Deformities of Truth” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 32: 1, pp. 111–121.

Moore, G.E. 1971, (1903), *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Morton, A. 1977, *A Guide Through the Theory of Knowledge*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Murphey, M. 1968, “Kant’s Children: The Cambridge Pragmatists” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 4, pp. 3-34.

Murray, B. 2015, *The Possibility of Culture: Pleasure and Moral Development in Kant’s Aesthetics*, Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Nadal, P. http://belate.wordpress.com/2011/12/26/kant-cosmopolitan-philosophy-world-history/ Accessed 15/06/2014.

Nanay, B. 2012, “The Multimodal Experience of Art” in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 52: 4, pp. 353-363.

Orley, E. 08/082014 “The Brownface Controversy Surrounding “Jonah From Tonga”” *BuzzFeed*. http://www.buzzfeed.com/emilyorley/the-brownface-controversy-surrounding-jonah-from-tonga#fz5utf Accessed 22/08/2014.

Pappas, G.F. 1996, “Open-mindedness and Courage: Complementary Virtues of Pragmatism” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 32: 2, pp. 316 – 335

_____, 2008, *John Dewey’s Ethics: Democracy as Experience*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

_____, “Reconstructing Dewey Today” *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012.

Peirce, C.S. 1877, “The Fixation of Belief” in *Popular Science Monthly*, 12, pp. 1-15. http://www.peirce.org/writings/p107.html Accessed 24 Oct. 2017

_____, 1878, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” *Popular Science Monthly*, 12, pp. 286-302. http://www.peirce.org/writings/p107.html Accessed 24 Oct. 2017

_____, 1958, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, A. Burks (Ed.), Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

_____, 1998, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Peirce Edition Project (Ed.’s), Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Putnam, H. 1990, *Realism With a Human Face*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

_____, 1995, *Pragmatism: An Open Question*, Oxford UK & Cambridge USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Rawls, J. 1989, “Themes in Kant’s Moral Philosophy” in Eckart Forster (Ed.), *Kant’s Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the Opus postumum*, California: Stanford University Press.

_____, 1993, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press.

_____, 2000, *Lectures on the History of Ethics*, Barbara Herman (Ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Rosenthal, S.B. 2002, "A Pragmatic Appropriation of Kant: Lewis and Peirce" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 38: 1/2, Essays in Honor of Richard S. Robin, Indiana University Press, pp.253-256.

Sayer-McCord, G. 1997, "The Metaethical Problem" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 55-83.

Schaber, P. 1999, "Value Pluralism: Some Problems" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 33, pp. 71-78.

Sellars, W.S. 1997, (1956), *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Seth, J. 1908, "The Alleged Fallacies in Mill's "Utilitarianism"" in *The Philosophical Review*, 17: 5, pp. 469-488.

Shafer-Landau, R. 1994 "Ethical Disagreement, Ethical Objectivism and Moral Indeterminacy" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54: 2, pp. 331-344.

Shaw, D. 1993, "Hume's Moral Sentimentalism" in *Hume Studies*, XIX: 1, pp. 31-54.

Smith, A. 2002, (1759), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Knud Haakonssen (Ed.), Boston University: Cambridge University Press. http://assets.cambridge.org/97805215/91508/sample/9780521591508ws.pdf . Accessed 04/02/2018.

Smith, J.E. 1985, "The Reconception of Experience in Peirce, James and Dewey" in *The Monist*, 68: 4, pp. 538-554.

Smith, M. 1994, *The Moral Problem*, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

_____, 1997, "In Defense of "The Moral Problem": A Reply to Brink, Copp, and Sayre-McCord" in *Ethics*, 108: 1, pp. 84-119.

Soren, E. 07/08/2014, "Becoming 'Jonah from Tonga' with Chris Lilley" in *Splitsider*. http://splitsider.com/2014/08/becoming-jonah-from-tonga-with-chris-lilley/ Accessed 22/08/2104.

Sperry, R.W. 1966, "Brain Bisection and Mechanisms of Consciousness" in J. C. Eccles (Ed.,) *Brain and Conscious Experience*, New York: Springer-Verlag.

Stafford, B.M. 2008 "The Remaining 10 Percent: The Role of Sensory Knowledge in the Age of the Self-Organizing Brain" in James E. (Ed.), *Visual Literacy*, New York: Routledge, pp. 31-58.

Stocker, M. 1990, *Plural and Conflicting Values*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Stroud, B. 1977, *Hume*, London: Routledge.

Stroud, S. 2011, *John Dewey and the Artful Life: Pragmatism, Aesthetics, and Morality*, University Park: Penn State University Press.

Sullivan, M. & Lysaker, J. 2005, “You Talking to Me?” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 137-141.

Talisse, R.B. 2011, “Value Pluralism and Liberal Politics” in *Ethic Theory Moral Practice*, 14, pp.87-100.

Talisse, R.B. and Aikin, S.F. 2005A, “Why Pragmatists Cannot Be Pluralists” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 101-118.

_____, 2005B, “Still Searching for a Pragmatist Pluralism” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 41: 1, pp. 145-160.

_____, 2008, *Pragmatism: A Guide For The Perplexed*, London: Continuum International Publishing.

Theroux, L. 2007, “The Most Hated Family in America” on *BBC TV, YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9mi1RX7Ttg Accessed 05/2014.

_____, 2011, “America's Most Hated Family in Crisis” on *BBC TV, YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMIJpWwX68Q Accessed 05/2014.

Thomas, A. 1998, “The Art of Life: Dewey's Aesthetics,” in Larry Hickman (Ed.) *Reading Dewey*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 1–22.

_____, 1999, “John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Human Existence,” in Sandra Rosenthal (Ed.) *Classical American Pragmatism: Its Contemporary Vitality*, pp. 160–173, Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Uffelman, M. 2011, “Forging the Self in the Stream of Experience: Classical Currents of Self-cultivation in James and Dewey” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 47: 3, pp. 319-339.

Uleman, J. 2010, *An Introduction to Kant’s Moral Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Welchman, J. 1995, *Dewey’s Ethical Thought*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

_____, 2002, “Logic and Judgments of Practice” in Burke, F.T. Hester D.M. and Talisse, R.B. (Eds.), *Dewey’s Logical Theory: New Studies and Interpretations*, New York: Humanities, pp. 27-42

_____, “Reconstructing Dewey Today” *Dewey Scholars in Dialogue with Interactive Constructivism Perspectives Of Pragmatism: Video interviews*, Dewey-Center Koln http://www.hf.uni-koeln.de/dewey/31783 Accessed 07/03/2012.

Westbrook, R.B. 1991, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, Cornell University Press, http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=acls;cc=acls;idno=heb00586.0001.001;node=heb00586.0001.001%3A14;view=toc. Accessed 03/06/2015.

Morton White, 1943, *The Origins of Dewey’s Instrumentalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, from *Internet Archive*. https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.504975 Accessed 09/08/2014.

Wiggins, D. 2004, "Reflections on Inquiry and Truth" in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, Misak, C. (Ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 87-126.

Williams, B. 1978, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Inquiry*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

_____, 1995, "Truth in Ethics" in *Ratio*, VIII: 3, pp. 227-242.

Wilson, H.L. 2006, *Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology: It's Origin, Meaning and Critical Significance*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Wood, A.W. 1991, "Unsociable Sociability: The Anthropological Basis of Kantian Ethics" in *Philosophical Topics*, 19: 1, pp. 325-351.

WEBSITES:

http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/what_is_modern_slavery.aspx Accessed 23/05/2014.

http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/coorong-and-lakes-alexandrina-and-albert-ramsar-wetland-fact-sheet Accessed 04/06/2014.

http://www.godhatesfags.com/wbcinfo/aboutwbc.html Accessed 13/05/2014.

http://www.jonahfromtonga.com.au Accessed 22/08/2014.

http://lakeshub.com/about/ Accessed 25/07/2014.

http://www.mdba.gov.au/about-mdba/governance/murray-darling-basin-agreement Accessed 01/06/2014.

http://www.mdba.gov.au/what-we-do/working-with-others Accessed 01/06/2014.

http://www.murrayriver.com.au/about-the-murray/the-murray-a-river-worth-saving/ Accessed 01/06/2014.

http://www.unaavictoria.org.au/awards-programs/world-environment-day-awards/winners-finalists/ Accessed 21/11/2014.

http://www.state.gov/j/tip/what/ Accessed 23/05/2015.