

Moral Education in the Philosophy of John Dewey: Towards an Integrative Educational Framework

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ABSTRACT:

This research explores moral education in John Dewey's philosophy as a cornerstone of both his pedagogical and ethical frameworks. It begins by highlighting Dewey's view that morality is not a fixed set of prepackaged rules or instructions but rather requires methods of inquiry, reflection, and creativity. Through examining Dewey's work, the study demonstrates that his conception of moral education cannot be understood apart from his instrumentalist philosophy, which emphasizes practical outcomes and lived experience in shaping ethical conduct.

The research underscores the central role of experience in forming moral values. Dewey links education as a means of social growth and human development with logic as a method of inquiry that guides ethical behavior. In this context, the child becomes the focal point of the educational process: curricula and teaching methods must cater to children's psychological and social needs.

Dewey believes that linking education to the productive environment and society enhances the effectiveness of moral education and ensures the building of generations capable of facing real challenges. The school should be a miniature image of society and a real environment for learning through practice and experience, not an isolated place for teaching abstract lessons. The research confirms that Dewey's moral education is based on the idea of responsible freedom and providing children with the opportunity to research, investigate and deduce results, which ensures conscious and continuous moral growth.

The study concludes with several key findings, notably:

- Family-school integration is essential for shaping moral behavior.
- It is imperative to align school curricula with societal realities and needs, particularly in productive spheres.
- Logical thinking, infused with real-world experience, bolsters moral conduct.

Overall, the research presents a comprehensive view of the place of moral education in Dewey's philosophy, demonstrating it to be a

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continuous process of reconstructing and directing experience for the benefit of both individuals and the community. **Keywords:** Self Help Groups, Women, Financial Independence, Economic Empowerment, Savings, Credit, Income Generation.

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1. Introduction

The American philosopher John Dewey (1859–1952) is regarded as one of the most significant pillars of American philosophy in general, and as the true cornerstone of Pragmatism in particular. This philosophical current calls for adopting the outcomes of practical actions and grounding thought in real-life issues. Accordingly, Pragmatism arose as a strong reaction against those who were concerned with metaphysics and the search for what lies beyond the visible. Dewey's instrumentalist philosophy epitomizes this practical stance in American life. His writings powerfully express the contemporary American viewpoint and culture, as well as its cultivated and discerning spirit. Indeed, Dewey's philosophy was not merely an expression of any one American state but rather a genuine reflection of the continent as a whole. In Will Durant's words, "Dewey wrote the philosophy of the American continent just as Whitman wrote its poetry."

John Dewey published a number of philosophical and educational works that served as beacons of enlightenment in what were then the dark pathways of life. His works represented a significant leap from "idealism" to "realism," introducing a new intellectual trend that stood on solid ground instead of exploring the invisible or the theological. Each of his books stands as a landmark in its respective field. It is no surprise, then, that his book *The School and Society* has been translated—according to Zakariyya Ibrahim—into thirteen languages, including Arabic. It is likewise unsurprising that most of Dewey's works have been translated into Arabic, given their major importance in shaping contemporary human behavioral experience. Among Dewey's greatest achievements was his renowned book *The Quest for Certainty*, which is considered one of the most significant

philosophical contributions, encompassing a broad range of philosophical thought from moral education to logic and epistemology. Dewey also wrote *Human Nature and Conduct*, *Art as Experience*, and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. These works, among others, are of primary importance to the present study, prompting the researcher to focus on Dewey because his writings have engendered a genuine transformation in our understanding of human behavior.

A second reason that highlights the importance of this research lies in its title, "Moral Education in the Philosophy of John Dewey." Dewey was not merely an educator or a professor of education; rather, he was the leading figure among modern educational philosophers. He moved moral education from being confined to written texts into a realm of real-world application and abundant productivity in both education and society at large. Previously, education was centered on rote memorization for the purpose of passing standardized examinations prepared by schools, relying on old textbooks and volumes. During that time, the prevailing view was that "the child exists for the school." Dewey proved the shortcomings of this perspective and shifted it to "the school exists for the child."

The third point of significance in this research concerns how education can be made truly productive. In Dewey's philosophy, moral education does not take place solely within the classroom; rather, it is also cultivated at home, in playgrounds, and even in cinemas. Moral education, in this sense, results from the convergence of multiple efforts that collectively build a child's ethical behavior. It begins when the fetus forms in its mother's womb and continues throughout old age. The school

functions as the smaller community in which a child's moral conduct is shaped, yet it remains inextricably linked to the broader society that forms the surrounding environment in which every individual both influences and is influenced by others.

The main problem that this research addresses can be summarized in the need to answer a core philosophical question: To what extent have Dewey's ideas changed contemporary education? Did his educational theories indeed yield a pragmatic effect in reforming children's behavior? How far can his moral ideas be applied in our current reality? Or are they merely theoretical constructs similar to Plato's in *The Republic*? What is the true value of the experience on which Dewey built his philosophy? Finally, can all of his ideas be gathered under the umbrella of "instrumentalism"?

All these questions demand individual studies to explore them in depth. Nonetheless, I have endeavored—as much as possible—to address them within the scope of this research, employing the analytical method to examine Dewey's educational thought through his seminal works.

2. Morality and Human Experience.

What is "experience"? What is "mind"? What is the domain of experience, and what are its limits? To what extent does "experience" provide solid ground for belief and serve as a reliable guide to conduct? Can we trust it in the realm of science and rely on it for human behavior, or does it turn into a swamp from which we cannot escape once we stray from concrete, material concerns? Does it offer a firm foundation and a safe passage to security, or does it prove shaky, quivering, and superficial, liable to change and thereby betray our trust? Is there a need for a mind that surpasses and transcends experience in order to supply science with established principles and guide conduct? (5)

Such questions call for individual studies to answer them thoroughly. Nonetheless, I will endeavor to address them to the best of my ability within this research. John Dewey is considered one of the most important American

philosophers of the twentieth century, and he is even described as "the window through which one perceives and understands America" (16). His philosophy ushered in a philosophical revolution in various domains, most notably education. He initiated his educational revolution by founding an experimental school, where he applied his educational theories to demonstrate the success of his pragmatic system of education, which rejected the traditional method based on rote memorization. Instead, he adopted an approach that appeals to the student's thinking as the ideal method. Thus, through his educational writings, many of which have been translated into numerous languages—Dewey offered a philosophical and educational treasure. Examples of these works include: "Human Nature and Conduct", "A Treatise on the Philosophy of Modern Education" "Reconstruction in Philosophy", "Freedom and Culture", "Democracy and Education", "The School and Society", "Experience and Education". Particularly noteworthy are his well-known work *How We Think* (1910) and his last book, *Problems of Men* (1946), among many others. These writings immortalized Dewey's name in the field of moral education, as he sought to prove that the student is the central focus of the educational process, basing his argument on the concept of "experience" (14).

From an examination of Dewey's conception of morality in *Human Nature and Conduct*, we observe that he stresses a significant point: "Ethics is, in truth, the most human of all subjects and the closest to human nature, because it possesses a sensory aspect that cannot be eradicated. It is neither theological, metaphysical, nor mathematical, precisely because it is directly tied to human nature. Everything knowable about the human mind and body through physiology, medicine, anthropology, and psychology has relevance for ethical inquiry. Human nature operates within an environment and lives in it—not like money stored in a box, but rather like a plant in soil and sunlight. The plant is of that environment, remains in continuous interaction with its energies, depends on its assistance, and can grow only by utilizing

it.” (6)

Accordingly, nature, chemistry, history, statistics, and the engineering of science all become part of organized moral knowledge, if they help us understand the circumstances and institutions under which human beings live and upon which they base and implement their plans. Morality does not have its own separate field; rather, it is material, biological, and historical knowledge placed in a human context, illuminating and guiding human behavior (6). Any moral principles that seek to elevate themselves by degrading human nature are, in fact, committing intellectual suicide; otherwise, morality and human nature end up locked in an endless civil war, as if viewed as a hopeless amalgamation of warring forces (6). Therefore, we are compelled to examine the nature and origin of the authority that came to dominate human nature and became the focal point of ethical philosophy.

Separating morality from human nature leads to divorcing the moral aspects of human nature from the rest of nature, as well as from the usual social customs and human endeavors found in work, civic life, companionship, and various forms of recreation. At most, these areas are seen merely as fields in which moral orientations must be applied, rather than arenas in which moral ideas are studied, or moral energies are generated. In brief, detaching morality from human nature pulls morality inward, removing it from the public, external realm—where the light of day shines—and forcing it into the darkness and privacy of one’s inner life (6). By contrast, an ethics grounded in the study of human nature, rather than in its neglect, sees the particular facts of humanity as continuous with the facts of the broader natural world, linking morality to nature and biology. It further discovers that the individual’s nature and activity overlap with the nature and activity of others, thereby connecting ethics with the study of history, sociology, law, and economics (6).

John Dewey emphasizes that the moral philosophy he advocates will not automatically eliminate ethical dilemmas or end the state of perplexity and confusion surrounding them.

Rather, it helps us formulate our problems in ways that encourage bold and intelligent efforts to resolve them. It will not protect us from failure, yet it will make failure itself a resource for learning. Nor can it shield us from future circumstances in which serious moral difficulties emerge, but it does help us address recurrent problems by means of our expanding knowledge—thereby adding meaningful values to our conduct, even when we experience outright defeat, as long as we persevere in our endeavors (6). Unless we acknowledge that morality is integral to human nature, and that both are inextricably tied to the environment, we will be deprived of the assistance of experience in grappling with the most profound and intense problems of life. Precise and wide-ranging knowledge will continue to deal only with technical issues, whereas an intelligent recognition of the continuity of nature, humanity, and society alone guarantees moral growth that remains serious without fanaticism, aspiring without feigning benevolence, adapted to reality without slavish convention, and rational without being reduced to mere profit calculation—idealistic yet not romantic (6).

For Dewey, “experience” always involves nature and is therefore an inseparable part of it. Experience is an active, positive inquiry; accordingly, Dewey is keen to highlight the dynamic quality of experience as a vital interaction between the organism and its environment (14). He repeatedly insists on considering the importance of the “ordinary experience” lived by every human being in their surroundings. This is why he uses the term “life” to signify “experience” in its fullest scope—both individual and communal. Consequently, any renewal in a person’s existence is accompanied by renewal in their beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, suffering, and actions. The continuity of any experience is guaranteed by the renewal of society; and education, in its broadest sense, is the instrument through which this continuity of life is maintained on the social plane. Consider how each member of society, whether residing in a modern metropolis or a more primitive tribe—is born immature, lacking self-reliance, language,

beliefs, opinions, or social standards. Meanwhile, the individual bearer of the group's life experience ultimately ages and dies, yet the community itself endures (4).

Here, Dewey demonstrates the importance of experience within human nature by stating: "Just as we have grounded knowledge on the experimental method arising from active thought, so we must ground our ideals upon experience—upon knowledge of actual conditions and present needs. We ourselves frame the ideal of beauty in art, even as we frame ideals of goodness and perfection in conduct. Moral abstractions and exalted ideals originated in tangible, practical action; yet people, having once abstracted them, forget their sensory origins and imagine them as eternal transcendent realities. Accordingly, value judgments are not derived from preexisting rules and transcendent first principles but are judgments about the conditions, outcomes, and organization of our desires, emotions, and enjoyments." (7).

This means that "the good" does not exist in and of itself, nor is it some transcendent Form, as Plato claimed; rather, it arises from experience itself, and human beings are the ones who create it—just as they create other intellectual and artistic constructs (7). Consequently, the subject of philosophy for Dewey is to recognize the nature of values and how they take shape within the organization of experience. It is the task of philosophy to free our minds from prejudices, to enable us to understand the world, and to find ways to solve society's problems and foster its progress (13). The sanctity of the human personality does not, in reality, lie in the celebration of certain "holy days" or set-apart occasions; virtues such as honesty, chastity, and generosity, if detached from concrete outcomes, end up consuming themselves and dissipating in vain. Moreover, separating motive from actual power of implementation is what leads to the frailty and triviality of "practical goodness" and underlies the subconscious disdain people show toward the morals of those who habitually lack the strength to act but claim high ethical standards. In contrast, people tend to value those

who genuinely accomplish deeds (6).

John Dewey holds that if we were to apply the experimental method to matters of religion, morality, and society—those areas we typically regard as bearing inherent value—we would witness a profound transformation similar to what occurred in the natural sciences. Instead of anchoring these areas in antecedent principles, we would seek to align them with human conduct, that is, direct them toward the future and the outcomes they might yield. In other words, we would employ past experience as an "instrument" for improving the future, and our reflections on what we have previously enjoyed would guide us in choosing the best paths forward (7). This does not imply abandoning the past altogether, for severing ties with custom and tradition would unleash a violent upheaval in the course of humanity. Moreover, such a total severance is impossible given that human nature itself is intrinsically conservative. What we do fear, however, is that changing circumstances on their own may lead to confusion in our shifting values. But if this change emerges as the fruit of thoughtful reflection and enlightened direction, it will help future generations find the right path (7).

From the above, Dewey insists that morality consists in developing a spirit of justice and fairness, and the ability to discern the meaning of our actions and use this understanding to shape what we do. This is not done by directly cultivating something called "conscience," "reason," or a "moral faculty," but rather by nurturing those impulses and habits that experience has shown render us empathetic, imaginative, and fair-minded in how we perceive the direction of our nascent activities. Every attempt to foresee the future is ultimately accountable to our present motives and tangible habits. Therefore, the important thing is to nourish precisely those habits and impulses that compel us to examine various situations with breadth and impartiality (6).

Dewey further argues that there is indeed a rationale for the common assumption that actions cannot be properly judged without taking

into account their motivating dispositions and concrete outcomes. The underlying reason, however, is not that these dispositions can be isolated from results, but rather that we need a sufficiently expansive view of consequences. Any particular act is just one component within a network of multiple actions. If we confine ourselves solely to the results of that single act, our conclusion will be meager. Moreover, a disposition is a lasting tendency; hence, it manifests across many actions and yields numerous outcomes. We cannot assess such a disposition nor refine its direction by considering only incidental factors, unless we maintain prolonged engagement with it. Once we form a reasonable idea of the disposition's trajectory, we can then situate the specific consequences of a single act within a broader frame of ongoing results. This prevents us from dismissing a serious habit as insignificant or exaggerating the importance of an isolated act, which may be quite simple when viewed in light of the sum total of outcomes—much like the medical record every competent physician keeps as an essential tool for treating patients (6).

3. The Philosophy of Education

It is hardly surprising that a thinker who constantly felt the need to apply his ideas and verify their soundness in the realm of practical experience would, at the first suitable opportunity, move from the field of psychology to that of education. It seems that John Dewey sensed a necessity to test the validity of his theories on intelligence and mental activity—in a general sense—by putting them into practice in the domain of educational endeavor. One of the reasons he accepted the University of Chicago's invitation in 1894 was that education, at that institution, was considered a fundamental subject within the Department of Philosophy and Psychology (14).

In this regard, Dewey states: "The first and most important factor in the development of my thought was the theoretical and practical significance of education, especially the education of children. I have never been overly optimistic about the possibilities of higher

education if it rests upon weak foundations. My concern for education was interwoven with my interests in psychology, social institutions, and social life—any of which might otherwise have remained separate." (1)

In Chicago, Dewey was able - thanks to the material and moral support provided to him by the group of parents - to open an elementary school (under the auspices of the Chicago group) which later became known as the "Experimental School", although it was customary to call it the "Dewey School". Dewey soon published his first book on education in 1900, entitled: "The School and Society", in which he tried to explain to the group of educators how the focus of the educational process is the "learner" and not the "subject" of the subject being studied, and how the school students form among themselves a small community similar in its life and activity to the larger society in which we live(1).

Through his works, particularly *The School and Society*, which has been translated into more than thirteen languages, including Arabic—John Dewey endeavored to demonstrate the bankruptcy of traditional (transmissive) educational theories. Such theories had dominated educational and social systems without effecting any real progress or shift; on the contrary, they widened the gap between education and social reality. Accordingly, Dewey introduced a practical, pragmatic educational system that renews itself as social realities and human experiences evolve, aiming to serve the individual rather than the individual serving it. By means of his philosophical thought, Dewey sought to effect a transformation in human life, basing his educational approach on his pragmatist perspective, which embraces constant change and renewal across all areas of life (12). As such, he focused on the applied dimension of philosophy, locating it in education, and held that genuine philosophizing should center on education because it engages humanity's most pressing concerns related to universal, ethical, and logical problems (1).

From Dewey's viewpoint, education requires that society involves children in all aspects of life.

Children should be integrated into the interests, goals, knowledge, skills, and various types of work pursued by adults—otherwise, society loses the vital dynamic that distinguishes it. Children are born without any awareness of the aims or life of the community, nor do they initially care about it. Therefore, it is incumbent upon society to enlighten them and awaken their active interest in it. The only means to narrow the gap between the child and the community—and thus integrate children effectively—is education (4).

John Dewey based his educational philosophy on the method of critically evaluating experience, viewing philosophy as a continuous process of building upon human experience. The selection of any philosophical ideas, in his view, depends on the outcomes they yield within the framework of collective experience (14). According to Dewey's statement in *The Quest for Certainty*, knowledge "aims at transforming the world, rather than existing as an end in itself" (7). Philosophy, therefore, does not possess a special storehouse of knowledge that sets it apart from other forms of thought. Its task is simply to accept the best knowledge available in a given time and place and to utilize it for a "goal" or "purpose." This goal is to "critique institutions, traditions, beliefs, and policies in light of their impact on values" (7). Furthermore, Dewey affirms that philosophy did not originate in purely intellectual subject matter or exclusively rational cultural topics; it arose from social and affective conditions. Hence, it can succeed in modifying how people view traditional philosophies and adopt a new attitude toward them—seeing them from a fresh vantage point (5).

Nevertheless, Dewey makes clear that philosophy and education are one and the same: philosophy is education, and education is philosophy. Education, he says, is at once a science, a philosophy, and an art (1). Consequently, philosophy alone does not resolve the tension between the "ideal" and the "real." What it can do is pave the way for humanity to engage with this issue by freeing human beings from the mistakes it (philosophy) may have committed,

rather than compelling them to recognize pre-existing conditions as fixed and independent of human agency. Philosophy, in Dewey's view, is always in search of something new and different (5). Thus, for Dewey, philosophy is intimately bound up with life itself, drawing its essence, nature, and function from life, and then striving to organize and guide it. This undertaking, in fact, is none other than education (1).

From the foregoing, it is evident that Dewey managed to integrate pragmatic philosophy, grounded in human experience, with educational thought, believing that philosophy is the practical application of ideas. Dewey maintains that the philosophy we speak of is essentially an education "of experience, by experience, and for experience." It serves as the general theory that elucidates the educational process, meaning there is a tight-knit relationship between philosophy and education. Philosophy provides a theoretical framework, whereas education is the dynamic, effective dimension of a philosophical outlook. In other words, philosophy identifies principles that can be deemed valid, and education applies to bring about changes that elevate society (12). Consequently, it can be said that experience lies at the core of Dewey's philosophy: it is the source of knowledge, values, and all intellectual and practical interactions, including the acquisition of knowledge, the formation of stances, and the undertaking of actions. It likewise ensures the continuity of life, as contemporary experience is now equipped with scientific methods that enable the development and organization of human behavior. Despite its inherent limitations, experience, as Dewey sees it, nevertheless provides the light by which people can be guided in their lives and actions (5).

Because experience for Dewey serves as the center of the educational process—and given that Dewey is, in the truest sense, "the philosopher of experience"—it was imperative for him to find a "laboratory" where his experience-based philosophical ideas could be applied. Education, in Dewey's view, was precisely the right context in which to test their validity (16). Hence, his philosophy has been called a "philosophy of

experience—an experience lived by human beings” (16). For Dewey, experience is a guide to scientific inquiry and a director of moral life (5). Moreover, what sets the educational domain apart is its focus on social and human phenomena—issues that lie at the heart of Dewey’s experiential philosophy.

Philosophy of education represents the application of formal philosophy to the field of education. It provides the theoretical framework that guides society in shaping educational practice. Furthermore, philosophy of education is intrinsically linked to human beings themselves, given that humans are conscious living creatures who require something to organize their activities and help them make conscious and practical use of their surroundings. Indeed, humankind employs all its faculties to exploit whatever it can from the environment so as to advance through education (12).

Thus, John Dewey proposed several definitions of education, the most important of which states that education is “a way of life, not merely a preparation for future living.” It is also the fundamental means of social progress and the cornerstone of reform; it constitutes a continuous process of reconstructing experience so as to broaden and deepen its social content. Its role is to enable a vulnerable, immature creature to become a happy, moral, capable, and competent human being. Education, accordingly, is not something forced onto children and youth from the outside. Rather, it is the growth of innate capacities that lie dormant in human beings at birth (10). Hence, philosophy of education involves using a philosophical mode of thinking to address educational issues; indeed, Dewey viewed philosophy itself as a general theory of education (4). Consequently, one could argue that philosophy and education are interwoven. Dewey expresses this idea by stating: “Education is much like philosophy in that it is difficult to isolate any one of its inquiries for special discussion. Both draw on the same moral principles and pursue similar social aims. Their subject matters are so interlaced that to choose one and not the other risks ignoring numerous

considerations.” (3).

From the above, one can conclude that philosophy, as a form of experience, aligns with education, which is also a form of experience, to the extent that we might speak of a “philosophy of experience,” a “philosophy of education,” or an “experiential philosophy of education.” Dewey did not aspire to erect lofty, transcendent systems of thought, as earlier or classical philosophers had done. Just as he grounded knowledge in the experimental method arising from active thought, so too did he ground ideals on experience—on an understanding of actual conditions and current needs. Humans are the ones who construct ideals of beauty in art and ideals of goodness and perfection in conduct. Ethical ideals, originally rooted in concrete, practical behavior, were later abstracted and, once abstracted, were mistaken for eternally preexistent realities (7).

For that reason, Dewey insisted on strengthening the bond between philosophy and education, considering education the mechanism by which one might test the validity of philosophical principles and use them to reform and change society, urging it to keep pace with the rapidly shifting conditions of life (16). In this regard, educational problems have a broad philosophical character, and no educational theory or method can be properly founded or succeed without attending to philosophical questions about life. Progressive education is life itself, and it is fundamentally a social process aimed at uncovering reality and working to reshape it (16). Dewey’s philosophy of education is, therefore, based on real-world experience—since the philosopher is a product of society and expresses the collective interests of humanity.

4. Logical Thinking as a Method for Moral Education.

John Dewey contends that morality is not, as some might assume, a “catalog” or list of actions and rules to be applied like medical prescriptions or cookbook recipes. Rather, morality calls for methods of inquiry, reflection, and innovation. By employing methods of inquiry, we can identify

points of difficulty and detect sources of evil; then, through creative processes, we formulate plans or “working hypotheses” to address these challenges (5). Consequently, moral values now occupy center stage in contemporary philosophical studies, with most modern philosophers focusing on humanity to such an extent that the study of values has become an urgent and ongoing necessity, in line with the perennial nature of philosophical problems and the endless cycle of human crises. Indeed, humankind constantly needs to rediscover its essence by returning to what is noblest in its nature—namely, its human values. Hence, the topic of value has sparked intense debate, as the contemporary philosopher sees the issue of values as intimately tied to human destiny. No longer is the philosopher merely a sage speaking in the name of humanity; rather, they articulate universal human values on behalf of all. Although “axiology” (philosophy of values) in the direct sense is a relatively recent branch in modern philosophy, emerging in the late nineteenth century, it would be incorrect to claim that ancient or medieval philosophy lacked any notion of values. Rather, earlier philosophers investigated values not as a separate subject but through their exploration of “being,” so that “value” was often conflated with the absolute good—an ultimate object of the philosophers’ contemplation and the pinnacle of existence that the human soul longs to grasp (11).

From this perspective, if epistemology (theory of knowledge) in the realm of education is of great importance and necessity, then moral and logical values are likewise essential to every educational endeavor. This explains Dewey’s keen interest in studying the conditions surrounding the inquiry into values—whether related to logic and the mental processes of thinking, or to moral and aesthetic values that reveal how professional and ethical interests contribute to the evolution of human experience (21). Being one of the most prominent figures of the pragmatic school, Dewey, like the pragmatists in general, devoted particular attention to conceptualizing values, especially logical values. Pragmatists maintain that logic is not a science of “what is” but rather

a science of verification and argumentation (19). This view aligns with Charles Peirce’s “logical” pragmatism, whereas William James’s pragmatism reflects a more humanistic orientation. Dewey’s pragmatism, by contrast, took on a dual character as both a “theory of logic” and a “guiding principle for ethical analysis” (14). Thus, pragmatic logic reoriented philosophical inquiry, steering it away from purely metaphysical speculation and basing the truth of any belief on its practical, empirical consequences (22). Within pragmatic philosophy, the “idea” itself is essentially a “plan of action,” a radical redefinition that constitutes the core of the pragmatic revolution in modern thought (17).

John Dewey shared the overarching principle of pragmatism with his colleagues Peirce and James, despite not using the term “pragmatism” in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*—largely because the term had become susceptible to misunderstandings and relatively fruitless debates. As Dewey himself remarked, that work was “pragmatic from beginning to end,” even if he avoided the label (9). In general, the common principle of all pragmatists is that the validity of an idea is measured by the benefit it yields; ideas, after all, are merely “plans for action.” Dewey’s distinguishing contribution was his emphasis on linking truth to the process of “inquiry,” holding that the relationship between “truth” and “inquiry” is one of “resolving” a “problem.” Whatever leads to resolving the problem that necessitated inquiry, he says, is “true” (20). Dewey thus asserts that we must employ consequences such as tests or indicators of the truth of propositions, on the condition that we view these consequences as procedures capable of being carried out and as means conducive to solving the particular problem that prompted them (9).

John Dewey views logic as a theory of inquiry, one that explains how thought operates not in the abstract or formal manner typical of traditional or modern logic, but rather in an instrumental way, oriented toward productive scientific research and the resolution of everyday problems. For Dewey, ideas capable of solving both scientific

and ordinary problems are the ones that can be deemed true (15). Accordingly, Dewey proposes a criterion for judging ideas and differentiating between truth and falsehood: namely, an idea's ability to accomplish human purposes in practical life. If these ideas conflict, then the more "useful" one proves to be the most valid and truthful. Consequently, pragmatism places its faith in practical success as the realization of benefit for those seeking truth (18).

What applies to other life domains—those grounded in experience, according to pragmatic philosophy—also applies necessarily to the field of education in Dewey's philosophy. This is because experience, as Dewey understands it, is not merely experimental but empirical (4). Hence, in Dewey's view, experience serves as the foundation for progressive education. He believed that sound education is attained through experiences specifically, productive experience that fosters interaction between the individual and their environment. Experiences lacking such interaction, which fail to bring about the desired changes in a person's behavior, are excluded from this view (8). Dewey thus argues that present activity cannot be likened to a narrow, sharpened blade such as a knife. The present is complex, comprising numerous habits and motives; it persists through time and constitutes the channel through which action flows. It is a process that involves memory, observation, foresight, and progress guided by a glance backward and outward. For Dewey, this moment is inherently moral, as it marks a transition either toward expanding action with clarity and completeness or toward triviality and confusion. Progress entails reconstructing the present in such a way that it adds clarity and perfection to meaning, whereas regression is an escape from meaning, design, and understanding (6).

Experience and concrete realities form the primary basis of Dewey's philosophy, prompting him to assert: "We cannot accept formal propositions about the moral aim of education. All such formal propositions offer only an unproductive notion of 'mental faculties.' We must bring moral ideals down to earth and

interpret them according to the actual work of students in school. The collective life of a school must be a true life, not a mere exercise for a future life. Failing to meet this requirement breeds an unhealthy condition in students, as teachers focus their attention on correcting mistakes rather than developing the students' mental capacities." (3)

According to Dewey, "the community"—a term he uses to refer to the moral framework and instructional methods in education—must be thoroughly imbued with reality and with a sense of social purpose. Likewise, instructional methods should not reduce language to a mere formal tool but should use it for present, active communication, ensuring each student finds in it a unique means of self-expression. Teachers must also elucidate the role of history for children, as accounts of the past often depict simpler scenes yet must remain connected to the present (3). Based on the foregoing, it becomes evident that logic, in Dewey's view, is tightly interwoven with real-world experience. If logical thinking becomes detached from reality and its demands, it cannot yield meaningful results for education. Dewey underscores this point, stating: "We hope that ethics will employ the method of logical thinking that has proven successful in formulating judgments about natural phenomena. The reason for advocating this approach is the same: although the old method exalted reason and encouraged reliance upon it, such encouragement has ultimately led to neglecting the painstaking exploration of finer details and the effort to learn and scrutinize them."(5).

5. Schooling and Education.

At the outset, John Dewey affirms that "school-based education is essential, and knowledge is the goal" (6). He posits that the school ethics he seeks to establish represent only one facet of a broader ethical theory, to be addressed under two headings: the social aspect and the individual or psychological aspect—two dimensions of human conduct. Moreover, the social values in school ethics exceed mere training for citizenship; they extend to every sphere of social activity the child

will eventually participate in, including obedience and leadership within the modern democratic community (3). Thus, as Dewey insists, we must not confine our reflection on education solely to the school. While the school is indeed an important instrument for shaping young people's tendencies, it remains only one among multiple instruments. Compared to other modes of influence, it is relatively superficial. We cannot grasp the true role of school methods in education until we recognize the necessity of other, more enduring and consequential means (4).

Hence Dewey's assertion—and emphasis—that “the transformation taking place in our schools will shift the center of gravity. Indeed, it is a change and even a revolution akin to Copernicus's revolution in astronomy, when he moved the focal point of the heavens from the Earth to the Sun. In the realm of education, the child becomes the Sun around which educational systems revolve. In the principles of education, the child alone is the center of gravity” (2).

Dewey points out that “with the dawn of the idea of improvement and progress, and the emerging interest in using motivation in new ways, it became evident that we could achieve a more deliberate and humane handling of children's impulses, thereby creating a new society in the future—one in which goals and desires undergo transformation. This is the essence of education. True human education is the intelligent steering of innate activities in light of the possibilities and necessities of the social context. Yet in most cases, adults offer training more than they provide genuine education, as they want to force the impulsive, immature energy of young people into the rigid patterns of adult habits—both intellectual and emotional” (3). Consequently, Dewey strongly insists that the life of the school community must be an authentic life, not just a rehearsal for a future existence. Failing to meet this demand, he warns, gives rise to an unhealthy situation in which the teacher's focus shifts to correcting errors instead of fostering the educational development we need and aspire to (3).

John Dewey underscores the importance of curriculum and teaching methods in the life of the school community, maintaining that the curriculum must incorporate real-life experiences and integrate social goals. Language should not be reduced to a mere formality; rather, it must be used in an active, practical sense, ensuring each student finds a personal means of expression therein. Students must recognize that history—often presenting simpler scenarios from the past—should nonetheless be tied to the present. The teacher, moreover, should possess genuine faith in the moral principles being taught (3).

Dewey further assigns considerable weight to the psychological perspective on behavior in moral education, which must address the question of how an individual acts. Meanwhile, the social perspective must clarify what the individual does and what they need to do as part of a broader community. A prime example is that of a person who starts manufacturing cotton textiles. One can regard this craft from two angles: First, the individual who produces textiles does not create the need for them, since society itself demands such goods. Thus, society provides the artisan with a purpose or an aim—namely, a specific quantity of cotton fabrics in different types and models. This external context, beyond the mere processes of the textile producer, determines the meaning and value of what they produce. If the work does not fulfill these societal needs and demands, then the artisan's craft is merely a formal occupation, hardly distinguishable from someone who goes to the desert to build piles of sand only to demolish them again (3).

Consequently, activities such as woodworking, metalwork, weaving, sewing, and cooking should be understood, according to Dewey, not as confined “subjects of study” but as ways of living and learning. They must be viewed in their social significance as types of processes that enable society to function, while also offering the child certain fundamental necessities of communal life and fulfilling societal needs by broadening human foresight and resourcefulness. Put simply, these activities should allow the school to become a vivid microcosm of social life, rather than an

isolated place where lessons are merely taught (2). This emphasis on interaction between school and society again highlights the importance of experience in moral education, disallowing any separation between societal needs and schooling. Society consists of individuals bound together through shared objectives, collective efforts, and mutual goodwill. These common aims and needs demand an ever-growing exchange of ideas and a continuously evolving sense of shared empathy. One key reason schools today struggle to organize themselves as natural social units is the absence of precisely this element, namely broad-based productive engagement (2).

At the conclusion of *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey states that morality is education itself, inasmuch as it teaches us the meaning of our goals and how to employ that meaning in action. The highest good we can control or bear responsibility for is the ongoing growth of present action in all its degrees and scope; everything else is a matter of chance and circumstance. The tragedy, Dewey notes, is that moral orientations insisted upon by those with acute ethical sensitivity too often push aside the only real good that can fully engage our minds: the present meaning of action (6). This idea is strongly reinforced by Dewey in *The School and Society*, where he asserts that “a school cannot prepare its students for social life unless its organization mirrors social life. The only way to train a student for community living is through participation in social activities. If we claim that students can develop social habits without engaging in social endeavors, it is as though we attempted to teach a child to swim by performing motions on dry land, far from any river, lake, or sea” (2).

John Dewey clarifies the foregoing ideas by stating: “What is crucial to remember regarding the introduction of varied productive occupations into schools is that these occupations renew the entire spirit of the school, providing it with an opportunity to connect itself with real life and become the child’s environment—where he learns through direct experience—rather than remaining merely a

place for teaching lessons of remote or abstract relevance to a life that might be lived in the future. The school thus gains a chance to become a miniature model of society or a society in its earliest formation. This fundamental reality gives rise to orderly methods of organization. In the industrial system we have described, the child participates not for the sake of involvement in the abstract, but for the sake of production. As a result, the educational outcomes attained are genuine and reliable.” (2)

Through such productive occupations, the human species has achieved its historical and political progress, simultaneously refining emotional and cognitive interpretations of nature. By shaping the world with the help of the world itself, we can grasp its meaning and evaluate its worth. In educational terms, this implies that these occupations should not be regarded merely as practical tools, forms of routine use, or as training in advanced technical skills—be they cooking, sewing, or woodworking. Rather, they must function as vibrant centers that spark scientific foresight regarding natural processes and materials, serving as transition points that guide the child toward recognizing humanity’s historical development (2). As the philosopher under discussion emphasizes, such an occupation provides the child with genuine motivation and direct experience, enabling them to engage with concrete matters. It also liberates minds by revealing their historical and social values. As the child’s intellect matures in both strength and knowledge, the occupation ceases merely to be enjoyable; it increasingly becomes a means—or instrument—of understanding. At that juncture, its form changes yet again, a transformation that in turn is linked to science instruction (2).

“Progress,” Dewey remarks, entails an enrichment of tangible benefits, alongside greater harmony and integration. One could generalize this notion to encompass the collective human experience. If history demonstrates progress, we can hardly locate it elsewhere than in the increased complexity and expansion of meaning discernible in experience. Such progress does not

necessarily forestall disturbance or complexity. Indeed, if we wish to render this generalization truly universal, Dewey advises us to say: "Carry out your work in such a way as to enhance the meaning of present experience" (6). Regardless of how effective the present may be at tackling difficulties or eliminating forms of conflict, new problems will undoubtedly arise in the future, manifested in fresh shapes or at novel levels (6).

Ultimately, every school must become a miniature social life or a nascent social life, brimming with various occupations that reflect a larger community and advance in the spirit of art, history, and science. When a school introduces every child into membership in a communal setting, training them in a small-scale society that instills a sense of service and equips them with the tools for dynamic self-guidance, this provides the strongest and most profound assurance of a broader society characterized by value, beauty, and harmony (2).

6. Search Results:

From the preceding discussion, we can extract the following key findings concerning moral education in John Dewey's philosophy:

1. **Inseparability of Moral Education from Dewey's Broader Ethical Philosophy** It is impossible to understand Dewey's conception of moral education independently of his ethical philosophy in particular. Nor can one interpret his ethics apart from his instrumentalist philosophy and results-oriented approach, as all of his ideas were born from and shaped by this framework.

2. **Moral Education as Life Itself**, In Dewey's view, moral education is essentially life itself and represents the genuine growth of any society aspiring to progress. Hence, education assumes the role of social guidance that educators must provide to younger generations.

3. **Collaboration between Family and School**, Collaboration between parents (the family) and the school-based educational system is vital for nurturing and advancing the concept of moral education. School is only one facet of the educational process, and it cannot replace the role of the family. Rather, family involvement precedes and supports formal schooling.

4. **Linking Schooling to the Productive Environment**, There must be a connection between school-based education and the productive environment, as well as the broader societal needs. Education should be designed to meet the requirements of society so that its outcomes serve both the community and its surrounding environment.

5. **Consideration of the Child's Interests and Psychology**, Children cannot be creative if they are subject to constant psychological or societal pressure. Thus, moral education relies on the principle of freedom, allowing children the opportunity to gather facts and draw conclusions independently.

6. **Integral Role of Experience and Logical Thinking**, Moral education cannot be interpreted in isolation from the concept of experience and the role experience plays in establishing an ethical community. Likewise, logical thinking must not be divorced from the development of moral education.

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