

INTRINSIC VALUE IN DEWEY

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Abstract:

It is widely believed that John Dewey completely rejected intrinsic value. The objective of the paper is to show this belief mistaken. Several different concepts of intrinsic value have been offered by philosophers. I argue that while Dewey rejected much in these various concepts, a careful examination of his writings reveals that he still retained the view that at least some things may be worth having, doing, enjoying for their own sakes. Perhaps the major point established is that Dewey's doctrine of the means-ends continuum does not deny the possibility of intrinsic value as he conceives it. This is shown by calling attention to his discussions of ends incorporating means and of consummatory experiences.

Intrinsic Value in Dewey

There is a long-standing interpretation of John Dewey's value theory which has it that he completely rejected intrinsic value. Typical of this opinion is the comment that Dewey insists "there is no such thing as a final end, one which can be worthwhile in itself, or intrinsically good."¹ "To Dewey," another writer remarks, "the term 'good' never seems to mean anything else but 'good for'."² Many interpreters reflect the received opinion, some opposed and some sympathetic to Dewey's viewpoint.³ And there are those who admit a strong influence from this pragmatist in their own criticisms of the notion of intrinsic value.⁴

I shall argue that Dewey has been misunderstood. It may be admitted that his views on the subject are scattered widely throughout his writings, often embedded in

¹Richard T. Garner and Bernard Rosen, Moral Philosophy (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1967), p. 129.

²A. C. Garnett, in Value: A Cooperative Inquiry, ed. Ray Lepley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 314.

³Among critics are, for example, E.M. Adams, Ethical Naturalism and the Modern World-View (Chaple Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 58; and, Brand Blanshard, Reason and Goodness (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1961), pp. 172-173. Other critics shall be noted later. Among Dewey's most sympathetic expositors who seem assiduously to avoid ascribing the notion of intrinsic value to his way of thinking are: Richard J. Bernstein, John Dewey (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966); George R. Geiger, John Dewey in Perspective (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958); and, Sidney Hook, John Dewey: An Intellectual Portrait (New York: The John Day Col., 1939).

⁴For example, Monroe Beardsley, "Intrinsic Value," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 26 (1965-66), 1, 17.

an underdeveloped way in his critical discussions of various theories. So it is somewhat understandable that so many readers have misconstrued his position. But the time for laying to rest this mistake is long overdue.

Of course, 'intrinsic value' has been variously conceived or defined. We may note here at least the following four ways. Something can be said to have intrinsic value if and only if: (1) it is desirable for its own sake, or as an end in itself; (2) its value depends upon its intrinsic nature, not upon its relations to other things (non-derivative value); (3) it would have value even though it existed alone in the universe; or (4) it possesses a non-natural value property—whether we call the property 'goodness' or something else. I shall contend that, although Dewey rejected much of the above, he nevertheless retained a view which, in short, says that some things are valuable in the sense that they are worth desiring or enjoying for their own sake, as ends in themselves. In what follows, when I claim that Dewey retained a concept of intrinsic value, it is this meaning of 'intrinsic value' which I have in mind. It is this meaning which so many readers have failed, or refused, to find in Dewey.

I

I shall begin by calling attention to some explicit statements in Dewey's writings which oppose the received opinion. Let us start with the following assertion: "That men form purposes, strive for the realization of ends, is an established fact. If it is asked why they do so, the only answer to the question, aside from saying, that they do so unreasonably from mere blind customs, is that they strive to attain certain goals because they believe that these ends have an intrinsic value of their own; they are good, satisfactory."⁵ Now Dewey does not mean that, while other people believe certain things are intrinsically valuable, he rejects that belief. This is plain from a specimen of his frequent criticism of the

⁵John Dewey and James H. Tufts, Ethics, 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1932), p. 193.

age-old bifurcation between ideal spiritual goods and material means: "No one can possibly estimate how much of the obnoxious materialism and brutality of our economic life is due to the fact that economic ends have been regarded as merely instrumental. When they are recognized to be as intrinsic and final in their place as any others, then it will be seen that they are capable of idealization, and that if life is to be worth while, they must acquire ideal and intrinsic value."⁶ However, lest it seem, as it has to some, that Dewey was exclusively concerned with material, economic goods, let us observe his estimate of knowledge, a 'spiritual' good. There can be no denying that he placed heavy emphasis upon the instrumental value of knowledge. But he did not ignore the fact that frequently "the pursuit of science is sport, carried on, like other sports, for its own satisfaction;" he did not hesitate to speak of rational reflection as "a unique intrinsic good."⁷ These and other statements from Dewey certainly bring into question the received opinion.

But what has brought about the wide-spread opinion that Dewey rejected intrinsic value in toto? Broadly speaking the belief has been fostered by Dewey's repeated criticisms of absolutism in value theory. However, we may divide his attack into three categories, a division which is not found clearly in his writings but which does nothing to violate his thoughts on the subject and which will facilitate treatment of them here. In the first category we may place any view which maintains that intrinsic value exists independently of the interests, needs and attitudes of people. In the second we may place his objections to views which maintain that intrinsic value constitutes one universally recognized good, or is something fixed and eternally unchanging, or is unvarying between people, places and contexts. In the third category we may place any view which separates means from ends, instrumental from intrinsic values. I

⁶John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, enlarged ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 171.

⁷John Dewey, Experience and Nature, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1929), pp. 151, 406. See also, John Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization (New York: Minton, Balch and Co., 1931), p. 35.

shall now consider, in the order given, Dewey's rejection of these kinds of absolutism in value theory, while arguing that he still retained the notion of intrinsic value as specified above.

II

The first sort of absolutism to which Dewey objected is the attempt to portray the very existence of values as being independent of the desires, interests, feelings or attitudes of people. An example of such an attempt may be found in G. E. Moore's assertion that whatever things are intrinsically valuable are "such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good."⁸ For Moore, at least at one stage in his thought on the matter, the intrinsic value of a thing depends completely upon its intrinsic nature, that is, upon the kind of thing it is in itself apart from any relations it may have to anything else. This implied, he believed, that a thing can be intrinsically good (or bad) even if it existed entirely alone.

Now Dewey was not opposed to the idea that things have their own natures. From his pluralistic vantage-point he was even willing to claim that everything in the universe is unique in more than a numerical sense. But this does not imply that the intrinsic nature of a thing, the set of properties which together make the thing what it is, must be such that it can have no relations with other things without becoming something other than what it is. Dewey simply rejected the belief that a quality said to be intrinsic to one thing cannot be the result of another. As he in one place put the point: "Relational properties do not lose their intrinsic quality of being just what they are because their coming into being is caused by something 'extrinsic'. The theory that such is the case would terminate logically in the view that there are no intrinsic qualities whatever, since it can be shown that such intrinsic qualities as red, sweet, hard, etc., are causally conditioned as to their occurrence."⁹

⁸G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), p. 187.

⁹John Dewey, Theory of Valuation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 28.

The case is not different with regard to value qualities. "The extreme instance of the view that to be intrinsic is to be out of any relation," he suggested, "is found in those writers who hold that, since values are intrinsic, they cannot depend upon any relation whatever, and certainly not upon a relation to human beings."¹⁰ So Dewey was highly critical of the idea of something being valuable (or disvaluable) in itself where 'in itself' means 'independently of the desires, interests, feelings or attitudes of people'. Toward those who taught that values exist in some unalterable, ready-made, completed way in this world, or in some non-natural realm of essences or spiritual truths, Dewey directed charges of wishful thinking, sentimentality, groundless leaps of rationalistic metaphysics, and miraculous supernaturalism. Things may be said to have value qualities, he believed, but such qualities are dependent upon natural interactions between persons and their environments—physical, biological, social, and so on. In Dewey's account, value qualities are dispositional; they do not simply belong to things per se, but as a function of relationships. To say that something has a quality of value (whether intrinsic or extrinsic) is to imply that someone values; the thing acquires the value quality from someone's valuing of it; valuing confers value upon it. In Dewey's terms: "As a thing previously hard becomes soft when affected by heat, so, on this view, something previously indifferent takes on the quality of value when it is actively cared for in a way that protects or contributes to its continued existence."¹¹

Three comments need to be made here. First, Dewey's position regarding value qualities is not a reductionist thesis. Value qualities are neither reducible to, nor completely explainable in terms of, the qualities and categories of specific sciences such as physics, chemistry or biology. Value qualities, on Dewey's view, are just value qualities, not something else. "If experience actually presents esthetic and moral traits," he asserts, "then these traits may also be supposed to reach down into nature, and to testify to something that belongs to

¹⁰Dewey, Theory of Valuation, p. 28.

¹¹John Dewey, Problems of Men (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 277.

nature as truly as does the mechanical structure attributed to it in physical science....They are found experienced, and are not to be shoved out of being by some trick of logic."¹² Among Dewey's critics are those who have mistakenly believed that his views are such that value qualities would be but physical or biological properties. "Perhaps Dewey's denial of intrinsic goods," Charles Baylis remarks, "is motivated in part by his behavioristic trends. Looking for intrinsic goods among physical objects or occurrences, he naturally finds none."¹³ This of course ignores Dewey's explicit claim that "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."¹⁴ Secondly, however, it is not my purpose to argue the issue whether there are value qualities, natural or non-natural. I am not about to attempt a defense of Dewey's view that there are natural value qualities. My purpose is merely to show that Dewey retained a concept of intrinsic worth. A necessary condition for the applicability of the concept, on his view, is the valuing of something by some person or other. Whether or not a value quality actually does come about when a person values a given thing, Dewey did believe: (a) that we can and do value things for their own sake, (b) that things can be and are valuable for their own sakes, and (c) that (a) is a necessary condition for (b). Thirdly, given the immediately preceeding, it may appear that I am urging that Dewey taught that for something to be valued and for it to be valuable are identical. I am not saying this however. He was certainly aware of the necessity of distinguishing between the valued and the valuable, the desired and the desirable. But neither am I concerned here to argue, as many have, the question of whether Dewey successfully shows how we may move inferentially from the valued to the valuable. For that question is irrelevant to the question of whether he retained a concept of intrinsic value.

¹²Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 2. See also, Problems of Men, pp. 213, 216.

¹³Charles Baylis, "Grading, Values and Choice," Mind, 67 (1958), 490.

¹⁴Dewey, Problems of Men, p. 196.

III

Given Dewey's position that a thing can possess intrinsic value even though that value is dependent upon the thing's relationship to valuing persons, it should come as no surprise that he would reject absolutistic concepts of intrinsic value which contained explicitly or implicitly such ingredients as monism, universality, eternality, or immutability. There is little need to call lengthy attention to his position on these matters. It is well known that his writings abound with opinions of such views, and I suspect that few today would take serious exception to his appraisals. From a naturalistic and empirical perspective he argued that there is no one thing only which people can and do hold to be intrinsically good. Dewey observes: "Certain acts and times are devoted to getting health, others to cultivating religion, others to seeking learning, to being a good citizen, a devotee of fine art and so on. This is the only logical alternative to subordinating all aims to the accomplishment of one alone—fanaticism."¹⁵ Again, he denies that values are universal and unchanging, or must be so: "just what is taken to be so fixed and final that man may repose upon it, differs with race, clime, epoch and temperament."¹⁶

None of this means, however, that Dewey gave up the notion of intrinsic value in the sense specified. There is nothing about this concept which requires that whatever it might apply to must be everlasting, or timeless. The length of time an object, event, or activity persists, or the length of time it is valuable, is irrelevant to the notion of its having worth for its own sake. Again, this concept does not imply that only one thing (or kind of thing) could possess it. To say something is of worth for its own sake entails neither that there must be only one, nor an infinite number, nor some definite plurality of such things. Concerning value change, there are various senses of 'change' which could be discussed but I shall mention only one. Value change occurs when a person (or a group of persons for that matter) adheres less (more) to something which he previously adhered more

¹⁵Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 167-168.

¹⁶John Dewey, Characters and Events, ed. Joseph Ratner (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1929), Vol. II, p. 453.

(less) to; this is value change in the ordinary sense in which we say that something is less or more important or valuable than it once was. Such value change may or may not occur in the context of reordering priorities or reranking a set of values. But once more, such value change does not imply that one must give up the notion of intrinsic value completely. It is quite possible on Dewey's view for something to be of worth for its own sake to a person at two or more different times in life, though it is of less (more) worth at one time than at another. Regarding the question of universality, the opinions of many philosophers, both ancient and modern, may be summed up in C. A. Campbell's claim that intrinsic goods are the "good for man," they are "specifically qualified objects of liking to human nature."¹⁷ But it may be denied, and I believe Dewey did deny, that the concept of intrinsic worth necessarily implies this; that something is of intrinsic value for one person in no way entails that it is, or must be, so for every person or for any specific number of them. Dewey's criticisms of theories which attempt to attach these non-essentials to the concept of intrinsic value are frequent and, perhaps, even devastating. But he does not completely toss out the concept along with the non-essential accretions.

IV

The third sort of absolutism which Dewey attacked is that which fails to see, or neglects, connections between ends and means. Even more so than his objections to the sorts of absolutism discussed in the previous two sections, Dewey's stance on the means-ends issue has led interpreters to the belief that he rejected entirely the notion of intrinsic value. For he contends that values are also relational in the sense that the worth of ends (or 'goals', 'aims' as Dewey also calls them) people want to achieve are affected by the means to their achievement, and that ends achieved become means for the possible achievement of other ends. In both cases, where there is neglect of the fact that ends become means, we have an abstraction from the actual conditions of life, which can lead to the belief that ends alone justify means and

¹⁷C.A. Campbell, "Moral and Nonmoral Value: A Study in the First Principles of Axiology," Readings in Ethical Theory (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952), edd. Wilfrid Sellars and John Hospers, p. 347.

eventually that any end justifies any means, and the belief that it is unimportant whether or how goals of people are related. Monroe Beardsley is on the right track, then, when he says of Dewey: "What he exposes over and over again is the danger of fixing on goals without reasonable regard to their means and consequences, and he is convinced that the belief in intrinsic value fosters this fixation, with its attendant train of ills; fanaticism, utopianism, opportunism and the rest."¹⁸ For Dewey certainly opposed theories of value which contain or imply fanaticism, utopianism, and opportunism. And he was convinced that various ways of conceiving intrinsic value foster such ills. But it remains to be seen to what extent the danger of fixing on goals without reasonable regard to their means and consequences implies a total rejection of intrinsic value.

Means-Affecting-Ends

Not many today will object to Dewey's arguments showing the influence of means upon ends. In fact, most consider this one of his substantial contributions, despite his belaboring of the point. But not enough attention has been paid to its connections with intrinsic value, presumably because of the pervasive opinion that Dewey did not, or could not, retain anything of this latter idea. What is implied by the view that the value of an end is relative to the means for its attainment? It may look as though ends could be considered intrinsically valuable up to the point where we bring means into the picture, but at that point ends can no longer possess such value; for, since means contribute to the worth of ends, ends are no longer valuable in themselves, for their own sake. If the value we attribute to an end is relative to the means to it, then the value of the end cannot possibly be a function of the features of the end alone.

But what if ends and means are so related in the actual affairs of life that the worth of an end incorporates within itself the worth of the means to it? Instead of viewing the worth of an end and the worth of means separately, there is nothing to prevent us from viewing them together as a continuum or whole, and so find the continuum or whole intrinsically valuable or not. And this, in

¹⁸Beardsley, "Intrinsic Value," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 26, 17.

fact, is Dewey's approach. Though it may be surprising to some to find him admitting that "certainly nothing can justify or condemn means except ends,"¹⁹ it should be less surprising that he maintains that ends contain within themselves as a part of their very significance for us the means to them. The following is but one of many places where he makes this point:²⁰

Paints and skill in manipulative arrangement are means of a picture as end, because the picture is their assemblage and organization. Tones and susceptibility of the ear when properly interacting are the means of music, because they constitute, make, are music. A disposition of virtue is a means to a certain quality of happiness because it is a constituent of that good, while such happiness is means in turn to virtue, as the sustaining of good in being. Flour, water, yeast are means of bread because they are ingredients of bread; while bread is a factor in life, not just to it.

However, to say that the worth of an end contains the worth of its means is not the same as saying that the worth of the end is only, no more than, the sum of the worth of means. Some of Dewey's interpreters have been misleading at this point. For example, Sidney Hook has remarked that for Dewey "the character of the goal 'ultimately' reached depends completely upon the character of the 'transitional' instruments used. Not that the aesthetic quality is the same, but rather that the end actually achieved, the end-in-fact, is the result of the whole series of 'transitional' states which precede it, and nothing more."²¹ Put into value terms Hook appears to be saying that the value of an end is nothing more than the combined value of the means. But, apart from the possibility of a composition fallacy, it is no marvel that there should be reactions to such thinking, as represented by the following assertion: "Our ability to show that a given interest or desire has been framed in accordance with the conditions

¹⁹John Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct (New York: Modern Library, 1930), p. 228.

²⁰Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 367.

²¹Hook, John Dewey: An Intellectual Portrait, p. 147.

needed to realize it does not automatically 'warrant' that end. A goal is not good merely because it can be reached."²² But I suggest that Dewey did not believe, or teach, that an end is good merely because it can be reached. For example he reminds us that he has "repeatedly and explicitly insisted upon the fact that there is no way of telling what the consequences [or ends] are save by discovery of antecedents [or means]"; but he goes on immediately to add that "the latter are necessary and yet are subordinate in function."²³ Antecedents or means are subordinate in function to consequences or ends. Does not this imply that consequences or ends have a significance which is more than the sum of antecedents or means? And even if there is no way of telling what ends are except by reference to means, it does not follow strictly that the nature of an end and of its means are identical. I repeat, it is one thing to say an end can be valuable for its own sake while including within that value its means; it is quite a different thing to say that it is the means alone which makes an end valuable. So far as I can see there is nothing impossible about thinking of ends as being of worth for their own sake though they be relative to means; the meaning of 'their own sake' may include, but not be exhausted by, the meaning of 'means'. However, even if this be erroneous, if it could somehow be shown that Dewey does hold that the value of ends is nothing more than the value of means, the main point still stands—that Dewey conceives of the means-ends relation to be such that the intrinsic value of ends can incorporate the value of means.

Ends-Becoming-Means

Turning now to the other side of the means-ends continuum, we may note immediately some representative statements of the received opinion. In the words of Baylis, "Dewey objects to intrinsic goods on the ground that nothing is an end and merely an end. Life and time and fortune march on and whatever is a result has a result."²⁴ On Dewey's view

²²John Smith, The Spirit of American Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 154.

²³Dewey, Problems of Men, p. 199.

²⁴Baylis, "Grading, Values and Choice," Mind, 67, 491.

of the continual and changing flow of human desires and activities, A. E. Murphy opines, "ends can be justified only as means, as ends-in-view or next-things-to-be-aimed-at, whose function is to direct choice intelligently in the fruitful furthering of on-going activity and whose worth is to be appraised by their adequacy to perform this function."²⁵ Thus, it is claimed, the justification of ends is always to be found, and found only, in their instrumental role of elimination of blocks and tensions so that human activity may continue. We are supposed to believe that Dewey thought nothing can be valuable apart from its consequences, and therefore that nothing can be intrinsically valuable, of worth for its own sake.

It may be admitted that his persistent emphasis upon this aspect of the means-ends continuum can leave this impression. But the impression is mistaken. In one place where he is discussing the ends-means relation, he characteristically reminds us to be alert to the consequences of our achieved aims. But in the midst of it he asserts: "There is no call for anxious solicitude as to the contributory property of every immediate good. On the contrary, such a preoccupation would obviously interfere with the whole-hearted, integral present good and thus reduce or destroy its intrinsic worth."²⁶ Moreover, it is well known that Dewey's view of the means-ends relation includes the proposition that consideration of means is so crucial to the formation of ends that care and concern for means should be as serious as for ends; means are of such importance that they may be, and sometimes are, treated as themselves ends of interest and effort. This is, of course, implied in our previous discussion of how the value of means is integral to the value of ends. Now means are by definition relational, but this does not imply that things which are means can have no value other than that of being means. As Dewey puts it: "The notion that, when means and instruments are valued, the value-

²⁵A. E. Murphy, "John Dewey and American Liberalism," Journal of Philosophy, 57 (1960), 425.

²⁶John Dewey, "Valuation and Experimental Knowledge," in Pragmatic Philosophy, ed. Amelie Rorty (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1966), p. 269. This paper appeared originally in Philosophical Review, 31 (1922), 325-351.

qualities which result are only instrumental is hardly more than a bad pun. There is nothing in the nature of prizing or desiring to prevent their being directed to things which are means, and there is nothing in the nature of means to militate against their being desired and prized."²⁷ By 'prizing' and 'desiring' in this statement Dewey must be referring to something other than prizing and desiring things merely as means. Otherwise his statement would not make any sense. And the implication of this for our present concern is not difficult to see. An end achieved may become a means for achieving other ends, and as a means for achieving other ends it will have utilitarian value. But there is nothing in the nature of prizing or desiring ('holding dear', 'loving', 'caring for', 'holding precious', 'honoring', 'esteeming', and 'appreciating' are other terms used by Dewey) to prevent their being directed to ends-which-will-become-means. And there is nothing in the nature of ends-which-will-become-means to prevent their being desired and prized for their own sakes. As the terminology indicates, the distinction is temporal, contextual. Achieving an end occurs at some specific point in time, in some context. After this, however, the end achieved can become a means to other ends. To hold that an end of a given action is intrinsically valuable is to hold that it is such at some given time, in some context of life. But to say that an end is sought or achieved in some context, at some time, is not to deny that it can be intrinsically valuable. The importance of this point, and the amazing fact that so many of Dewey's readers have missed it, justifies I trust, extended discussion of it in the next section.

V

The belief that Dewey thought ends are valuable only as means to further ends does not take account of his explicit teachings about consummatory experiences which occur with the achievement of ends-in-view. Contrary to the opinion of Henry Aiken, Dewey did not ignore the consideration that "ends-in-view themselves would be regarded as vain, apart from the genuine consummatory satisfactions and enjoyments which they envisage and to which they may lead."²⁸ Generally it is this point which

²⁷Dewey, Theory of Valuation, p. 26.

²⁸Henry Aiken, "Reflections on Dewey's Questions about Value," Value: A Cooperative Inquiry, ed. Lepley, p. 38.

Dewey's critics are concerned to make when ascribing to his value theory the absence of a concept of intrinsic value. Without at least something which is valuable for its own sake, these critics charge, no one would have adequate motivation or reason to do or achieve anything; as Aristotle claimed long ago, if we desired everything for the sake of something else ad infinitum, our desires would be empty and vain. Whether this really is so or not—and it has been argued (for example, by Paul Taylor) that a world without intrinsic values is not logically impossible or unimaginable--Dewey's critics have mistakenly interpreted his position.

Readers familiar with Dewey will recall that what he means by 'end-in view' is tied to his notion of 'problematic situation'. The latter is a context, a situation of life where a person finds himself confronted with the need to decide what to do from among alternative courses of action. Different and incompatible ends present themselves, and so judgment between ends is required in order to resolve the problematic situation. How does a person go about making this judgment? He considers each alternative end being contemplated to see what it involves. That is, he must become as fully aware as he can of both the means necessary to achieve each alternative end and the consequences of the necessary means used to achieve each alternative. Such 'dramatic rehearsal', as Dewey calls it, requires the ascertaining of facts of many kinds—physical, psychological, social, economic, and so on; and it is in the light of this that he pleads with us to recognize the possible relevancy to values and morality of all knowledge gained through the various sciences. Having completed inquiry into each alternative end, a person must then make a decision as to which of them he shall actively pursue in that situation.²⁹ The decision will be, or

²⁹As Charles L. Stevenson notes in expositing Dewey: "We cannot go on, indefinitely, with our deliberations about whether or not to yield to certain desires, but must often, in practice, let them freely move us, and set about finding the means of satisfying them. So we temporarily privilege their objects, taking them as ends in view." (Facts and Values (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 111). Stevenson's discussion, by the way, is the best interpretation of Dewey's stance on intrinsic value with which I am familiar.

should be if it is reasonable, based upon the most acceptable means and consequences. As Dewey puts it in one of many places: "Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. We give way, in our mind, to some impulse; we try, in our mind, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow; and as we then like and approve, or dislike and disapprove, these consequences, we find the original impulse or plan good or bad."³⁰ This selection of an end from among alternatives is the taking of an end-in-view. Ends-in-view are "aims, things viewed after deliberation as worthy of attainment and as evocative of effort."³¹ Or, an end-in-view may be described as that plan which a person has decided upon from among alternatives as the best way to resolve a problematic situation. The latter is unsettled, indeterminate, disturbed; we want to settle it, bring it into balance and harmony. Ends-in-view are objectives, purposes, goals consciously employed to help us see what we are about; they enable us to understand what we are doing, why we are doing it and where our doings lead.

But people do not just keep ends-in-view in view; they attempt to, and do, attain at least some of them. People do not want to live continually in problematic situations; they want to, and do, straighten out at least some of them. And with this we come to the major point. The achievement of an end-in-view, the resolving of a problematic situation, is not merely a termination of a natural process, a closing of a temporal episode, a last event in a series of events. Rather, it is the realizing of an aim, the purposeful restoration of harmony and stability to a discordant and unstable state of affairs, the culmination of natural processes by insightful control of appropriate means. Dewey thus refers to ends-in-view-achieved as "fulfillments", "completions", "perfections", "secondarily natural, or practical, moral" endings.³² Such endings are consum-

³⁰John Dewey and James H. Tufts, Ethics (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1908) p. 323.

³¹Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 104.

³²Dewey, Experience and Nature, pp. 102,104.

nations, and he speaks of our experiences of them as consummatory experiences, experiences which stand on their own as meaningful, significant, valuable:³³

A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency.

This is not just an experience the meaning and value of which is to be found elsewhere; its meaning and value is to be found in itself. As Dewey remarks elsewhere in a passage dealing with the dual meaning of 'value':³⁴

Such terms as 'meaning', 'significance', 'value', have a double sense. Sometimes they mean a function: the office of one thing representing another, or pointing to it as implied; the operation, in short, of serving as a sign. . . . But the terms also sometimes mean an inherent quality, a quality intrinsically characterizing the thing experienced and making it worth while.

Then he goes on to say:

In the situation which follows upon reflection, meanings [significances, values] are intrinsic; they have no instrumental or subservient office, because they have no office at all.

By 'in the situation which follows upon reflection' he is of course referring to a resolved situation which was problematic, to a consummatory experience which comes with satisfactorily achieving an end-in-view.

³³John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: Minton, Balch and Co., 1934), p. 35.

³⁴John Dewey, Essays in Experimental Logic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), pp. 16-17.

That moments of consummatory experience, in the ever moving stream of life, can and often do become stepping stones for further experiences may easily be admitted without damage to their presentation of intrinsic worth. Dewey does dwell much on the future as the locus of the meaning of ideas and actions; and it may appear, since the future is always receding, that we never arrive at it, and so never arrive at the meaning of ideas and actions. However, though we never arrive at the future, we do arrive at moments which were, in the past, future moments. Some of these moments are moments where we are aware of having arrived there through choice and action based upon knowledge of ourselves and the environment, moments where the outcome of nature's processes is to some extent guided by our preferences, attitudes, likings and by our abilities to order and control forces. Such moments taken one at a time do give meaning and value to ideas and actions; for they are moments when ideas and actions have made possible the direct delights and enjoyments which might not otherwise have occurred, or occurred to a lesser degree. We should not assume that Dewey's attack on theories which place intrinsic values beyond the temporal process contains the implication that there are no moments in time where such values can be found. While noting his rejection of final values existing beyond the natural realm, we must not fail to see the sense in which values can be final within that realm.³⁵

A value is final in the sense that it represents the conclusion of a process of analytic appraisals of conditions operating in a concrete case, the conditions including impulses and desires on one side and external conditions on the other. . . . The quality or property of value that is correlated with the last desire formed in the process of valuation is, tautologically, ultimate for that particular situation.

Contrary to wide-spread opinion, then, intrinsic worth present at moments of consummatory experience is so much a part of Dewey's value philosophy that it is no exaggeration to say it is a central theme. This fact has been obscured no doubt by so much discussion and controversy revolving around certain of his emphases, such as his problem-oriented instrumentalism, his appeal to scientific

³⁵Dewey, Theory of Valuation, p. 45.

method, his concern with educational and social reform, and his denial of dualisms of various sorts. But I think we may fairly say that these emphases serve his interest in developing a naturalistic philosophy of human experience which makes room for as many, and as rich, consummatory experiences as possible. When Dewey emphasizes the importance of scientific method, it is because he is convinced that this method is the best possible way of understanding and controlling ourselves and our world so as to create conditions for consummatory experience. "Thought, intelligence, science," he claims, "is the intentional direction of natural events, to meanings capable of immediate possession and enjoyment."³⁶ When he stresses the practical, problem-solving character of thought, it is because consummatory moments of life occur in concrete conditions as a result of practical thinking. When he argues for economic, political and social reform, one of his chief concerns is the creation, multiplication and distribution of opportunities for consummatory experiences. And, one of his purposes in dealing with education was to rid people of the notion that the experiences of childhood are, or should be, but instrumentally valuable to later adult life.

VI

I cannot close without calling attention to what seems to be another misunderstanding of Dewey. Some interpreters believe that, whether he was aware of it or not, Dewey's value theory does contain reference to at least one intrinsic value—problem solving. For example, Gail Kennedy has suggested that there is a 'hidden link' in Dewey's theory of value which critics have failed to see. Various critics have complained that in Dewey's discussion of means and ends, and of resolving problematic situations, he never really tells us how statements about the facts of a situation imply judgments about what ought to be done, what is best to do in the situation; he does not relate why or how it is that certain means and consequences of action justify choice of some alternative ends over others. What these critics have missed, Kennedy thinks, is that for Dewey the justification for moving from factual statements to normative judgments is simply the demand, the need, of problematic situations to be adequately settled,

³⁶Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 358.

resolved. Says Kennedy: "If the question is raised, 'Why this alternative rather than another?', the answer is, 'Because it is a more adequate solution of the problem.' Since what the situation demands—the claim made by it—is the most adequate solution possible, it follows that whatever proposed alternative does seem more adequate is within that context better—it is the 'good' of that situation or it is the right thing to do in that situation."³⁷ Now what Kennedy's thesis amounts to, suggests George Geiger, is that Dewey is using the fundamental assumption—It is good to solve problems. "Dewey, like anyone else," Geiger claims, "has to rely on some primitive, undefined elements—or at least one such element—to serve as a postulational basis. If some such assumption is not accepted, then discussion ceases."³⁸

It must be admitted that sometimes Dewey's assertions seem to warrant this line of interpretation. The "sole meaning of aims and purposes," he says in one place, is "to liberate and guide present action out of its perplexities and confusions" in problematic situations.³⁹ It may even seem that Dewey is giving a definition of 'good' consistent with this view in the following: "Good consists in the meaning that is experienced to belong to an activity when conflict and entanglement of various incompatible impulses and habits terminate in a unified orderly release in action."⁴⁰ However, I suggest that the above interpretation of Dewey leaves out something crucial, that it neglects the most important 'hidden link' in his theory of value. My contention is that we should understand Dewey as holding, at least most often, that it is some object, event, or activity internal to the situation, not the resolving of the situation itself, which is the motive of the agent's thought, choice and action, and also the source

³⁷Gail Kennedy, "The Hidden Link in Dewey's Theory of Evaluation," Journal of Philosophy, 52 (1955), 94.

³⁸Geiger, John Dewey in Perspective, p. 56. See also, Adams, Ethical Naturalism and the Modern World-View, pp. 60-61.

³⁹Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, p. 261.

⁴⁰Dewey, Human Nature and Conduct, p. 210.

of satisfaction, appreciation or enjoyment in consummatory experience. Moreover, this interpretation is required, I believe, to counter the view that Dewey's pragmatism is but a reflection of the 'American way of life', wherein the purpose and goal of life is merely to stay active, be busy, solve problems, do for the sake of doing without proper regard for where the doing may lead. Certainly Dewey himself did object to this way of looking at his philosophy,⁴¹ and I believe his reaction makes sense only if we assume that he has something more than resolving problems in mind as motives of action and sources of consummatory satisfaction. I am not suggesting that Dewey thought we never solve problems for the sake of solving them. Readers familiar with him will be aware of his frequent arguments to the effect that oftentimes there is as much enjoyment in the struggle to achieve some end as in the achievement of it, or even more; and in a discussion of work and play, he suggests that both can be "equally free and intrinsically motivated, apart from false economic conditions which tend to make play into idle excitement for the well to do, and work into uncongenial labor for the poor."⁴² But, the task of moral and value theory, our pragmatist tells us, is to "frame a theory of the true, as distinct from the specious, good," and this means "the discovery of ends which will meet the demands of impartial and farsighted thought as well as satisfy the urgencies of desire."⁴³ It is far from obvious that by 'ends' Dewey here means simply 'problem solving'. In fact, though we do sometimes find problem solving worthwhile for its own sake, would there be any problems to solve if there were no conflicts between our ends? It is concern for the worth of ends which gives seriousness and importance to settling conflicts between them. To say that a given situation 'demands' action X over action Y is but to say that action X will lead to something which, in that situation, is considered more valuable or worthwhile than the end of action Y.

⁴¹See, for example, Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, pp. 15-16.

⁴²John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: Macmillan Co., 1916), pp. 205-206.

⁴³Dewey and Tufts, Ethics (1932, 2nd ed.), p. 205.

Thus, problem solving can be an intrinsically valuable experience or activity in Dewey's account, but it is not the sole kind of intrinsically valuable thing for him. In case this has not been made clear enough we may note his recognition that appreciations of strictly aesthetic objects, for example, are "not dependent upon definite prior desire and effort as is the case with the ideally satisfying quality of practical and scientific objects. It is part of their peculiar satisfying quality to be gratuitous, not purchased by endeavor."⁴⁴ Such occasions, he notes elsewhere, are "dispensations of fortune or providence."⁴⁵ As might have been expected, some of Dewey's critics have also missed this aspect of his value theory.⁴⁶

Summary

In summary, Dewey's rejection of various ways of conceiving of intrinsic value did not lead him to abandon totally this notion, as so many have believed. Rather, we find him holding that objects can be worth having, activities worth doing, events worth enjoying sheerly for the sake of having, doing and enjoying them. However, objects, activities and events have no worth-in-themselves, that is, apart from the interests and attitudes of people toward them. Moreover, since the interests and attitudes of people vary: (1) there is no one kind of object, activity or event only which must be of worth intrinsically, (2) there is no object, activity or event, or set of them, which must be of worth intrinsically to everybody or to any given number of people, and (3) there is no specifiable period of time over which an object, activity or event must be of worth intrinsically. Because the interests of people in objects, activities and events (as ends) must be satisfied through the use of natural conditions (as means) which make satisfaction possible, the intrinsic worth of objects, activities and events to people must incorporate the conditions.

⁴⁴Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 63.

⁴⁵John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty (New York: Minton, Balch and Co., 1929), p. 243.

⁴⁶For example, Philip Blair Rice, "Science, Humanism, and the Good," Value: A Cooperative Inquiry, ed. Lepley, p. 289; see also comments by Aiken (p. 42) and Harold N. Lee (p. 160) in this same volume.

And since the satisfaction of a given interest in an object, activity or event is a point in life from which to move to other interests, the satisfied interest becomes a natural condition for satisfaction of other interests without deriving all its worth from being a condition for their satisfaction. And, we might add here, since the interests of people in objects, activities and events do extend through stretches of life, they become kinds of objects, activities and events which, though their exact meaning must be contextually determined and though we frequently must choose between them in problematic situations, nevertheless act as ideals, generic goals motivating and guiding conduct over the long-run of life without reference to any non-natural entities or forces.

Dewey's views on intrinsic value do not solve all the problems connected with this concept. In addition to his highly questionable belief in the existence of value qualities, it is the judgment of many, including myself, that he did not satisfactorily deal with certain logical problems surrounding the distinction between the valued and the valuable. Again, one of the serious gaps in his philosophy is the failure to work out, consistent with his pragmatic naturalism, a theory on how the conflicting intrinsic values of different persons (situationally, or in the long run) should be treated morally. Finally, one searches in vain in Dewey's writings for consistent non-instrumental criteria by which to distinguish between more important and less important intrinsically valuable things. So it is easy to sympathize with Beardsley's confession that he is "always frustrated in reading Dewey, trying to separate the enormously good points from the confusing ones."⁴⁷ Many of Dewey's readers have been similarly frustrated, including the author of this paper. But there should no longer be frustration and confusion concerning whether Dewey retained a concept of intrinsic value.

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⁴⁷Beardsley, "Intrinsic Value," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 26, 17.