4 Dewey's Reexamination of Self-realization Ethics, 1891–1894

Philosophy in maintaining its claim to be a superior form of knowledge was compelled to take an invidious and so to say malicious attitude towards the conclusions of natural science.

The Quest for Certainty

The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus is probably the most poorly written book Dewey ever published.[1] Readers, then and now, have been reluctant to give this extremely difficult work close critical attention. It received only two reviews in English-language periodicals following publication of the first edition[2] and has been given little critical attention since. Some of the book's unpopularity can be safely attributed to what Royce called the "rough-hewn and fragmentary" nature of what were evidently lecture notes hastily compiled for publication without much attention to style, clarity, or at times even grammar.[3] The quality of the prose was not the only feature to hinder the book's success. Although published as an introductory textbook, the *Study of Ethics* is neither a survey nor an outline of ethical philosophies. It is a study of what Dewey had come to see as the central problems of his own ethical theorizing. As Royce remarked in his review, the book "supplements and extends the *Outlines*" rather than replaces it.[4] Consequently, the text would have been useful only to those instructors who happened to

1. See John Dewey, *The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (1894), *EW* 4:221–362.

2. Reviews appeared by Josiah Royce, *International Journal of Ethics* 6 (1895):110–32, and Roger B. Johnson, *Psychological Review* 2 (1895): 2. Descriptive notices appeared in two French periodicals: *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* 3 (March 1895, Supp.): 5, and François Pilon, *Revue Philosophique* 43 (1897):328–32.

3. Royce, review of *Study of Ethics*, p. 113.

4. Ibid., p. 110.

share Dewey's peculiar concerns. Even then, were they unacquainted with the earlier text revised by the *Study of Ethics*, the main points of the latter would have seemed as fragmentary and obscure as Dewey's prose.

For all its vices, and they are legion, the *Study of Ethics* is worth reading as a partial statement of a highly original reworking of idealist conceptions of personality and self-realization. Dewey called his revised idealism "experimental idealism."[5] Royce, disapprovingly, called it "ethical realism." Despite his misgivings about Dewey's new idealism, it was for its originality that Royce was willing to recommend the text to his reader. "As a sketch of such a theory," he wrote, "the present volume, despite its hasty form, seems worthy of this somewhat extended notice."[6]

CRITIQUE OF SELF-REALIZATION

Having been accused by the then preeminent American idealist, Josiah Royce, of gaily ignoring the antinomies of self and task, ideal and fact, Dewey set out to prove that such antinomies ought to be ignored. From 1891 to 1894, he devoted his publications in moral philosophy to showing his idealist critics how the antinomies could be dissolved. Beginning with the antinomy of 'self' and its 'task' of self-realization, Dewey launched an outright attack on the conception of self-realization.

In the 1892 paper "Green's Theory of the Moral Motive," he draws upon the epistemology developed by Bosanquet and Bradley in their respective logical works.[7] Dewey argues that the function of judgment and idealization is the construction of adequate representations of our experience. The mark of a successful representation is its agreement with reality as we experience it: its ability to organize our experience into coherent systems of objects and relations. A mark of the failure of a representative conception or judgment is its disagreement with our experience: its inability to work in application to our experience. Green's conception of self-realization, Dewey holds, is a clear example of an unacceptable representational conception. It does not organize our moral experience but instead renders it irremediably incoherent.

Such an argument would naturally be of most interest to idealist philosophers who shared these epistemological conceptions. Dewey leaves no room for doubt in the paper that his fellow absolute idealists are his intended audience. In the course of his criticism of Green's work, Dewey

5. *Study of Ethics*, *EW* 4:264.
6. Royce, review of *Study of Ethics*, p. 113.
7. See "Green's Theory of the Moral Motive," *EW* 3:155–73.

pauses to remark: "I may have appeared to some to have dealt with it rather harshly, though not, I hope, unjustly. But aside from the fact that the truest reverence we can render any of the heroes of thought is to use his thinking to forward our own struggle for truth, philosophy seems, at present, to be suffering from a refusal to subject certain ideas to unswerving analysis because of sympathy with the moral atmosphere which bathes those ideas" (*EW* 3:170). The target here, in other words, is not Green himself but those idealists who refuse to approach Green's work in the same critical spirit they would assume toward any non-idealist moral philosophy.

Whether Dewey included himself among the idealists chastised is unclear. Probably he should have done. In his earlier publications, Dewey had uncritically adopted the prevailing conception of self-realization despite the fact that it was inconsistent with his own stated views on the nature of consciousness. In his papers of 1886, he had argued that time was a mere appearance of the absolute. If so and if, as Dewey believed, whatever is true of the absolute (the concrete universal) must be true of its instantiations (individual selves), then time should also be a mere appearance of individual selves. So in the *Outlines*, Dewey should not have defined the goal of moral agency as 'self-realization.'

The metaphysical views Dewey held were heterodox, and wisely he does not appeal to them in his attack on self-realization. Instead, he simply tries to bring his readers to feel the failure of Green's conception of self-realization to fit or agree with our experience. Again and again, Dewey argues that the conception if applied to experience renders that experience incoherent. At the level of personal experience, for example, he urges:

> Instead of being a tool which can be brought into fruitful relations to special circumstances so as to help determine what should be done, it remains the bare thought of an ideal of perfection, having nothing in common with the special set of conditions or with the special desire of the moment. Indeed, instead of helping determine the right, the satisfactory, it stands off one side and says, "No matter what you do, you will be dissatisfied. I am complete; you are partial. . . . you are a fragment, and a fragment of such a kind that no amount of you and such as you can ever afford satisfaction." (*EW* 3:163)

At the level of the social or historical experience of humankind, the conception of self-realization advanced by Green is equally useless. According to Green, the history of our social development gives evidence

of a progressive advance toward absolute self-realization. Dewey responds by asking "whether the thought of an advance *towards* the goal had any meaning, and whether we have any criterion at all by which to place ourselves; to tell where we are in the movement, and whither we are going—backward or forward" (*EW* 3:166). Since each and every social institution that has been or could be constructed fails to realize us absolutely, how can reference to an ideal of perfection afford grounds for choosing one failure over another? The upshot of all this is as follows. In no conceivable concrete situation can Green's conception of self-realization afford any instruction, insight, or aid to intellectual organization of one's experience, nor can it act as a standard by which possible courses of action could be graded. Since it is incapable of guiding action, Dewey insists that Green's conception of self-realization is a demonstrably false representation of the object of moral agency.

A year later, Dewey began to mount a case for a new conception of the object of life and action, one consistent with his own conception of the nature of absolute and human consciousness, in particular his belief that selfhood is not 'realized' over time: 'self-expression.' To make his peculiar conception plausible, Dewey had to give some explanation of why the error of supposing time transforms human beings comes about. This he began to do in an article of 1893, "The Superstition of Necessity."[8]

In this paper, Dewey argues that the error originates in the confusion of the contents of our *judgments* with the contents of our *experience*. The confusion is generated by our failure to recognize that the contents of judgments (and so of our knowledge) are only representations of what is given in immediate experience. What is given is an undifferentiated whole of immediate feeling. Attention and interest pull apart the whole, becoming absorbed in certain elements, leaving the rest a blurred, buzzing, disordered confusion at the periphery of consciousness. The fragments that interests select are used to compose an experiential foreground, the 'landscape' of ordinary perception. Our judgments are about the relations of this constructed landscape and its components to the given from which it was derived. Though all judgments make reference to reality, the given, it is important to recall that they are never about reality *as* it is given.

Interests drive the construction of the landscapes we compose for ourselves. These interests can and do generate inconsistencies in those land-

8. See "The Superstition of Necessity," *EW* 4:19–36.

scapes. According to Dewey, we ignore the contradictions that typically arise in their composition so long as they do not hinder our current activities. He writes:

> [The] confused and hypothetical character of our first objects does not force itself upon us when we are still engaged in constructing them. On the contrary, it is only when the original subject-matter has been overloaded with various and opposing predicates that we think of doubting the correctness of our first judgments, of putting our first objects under suspicion. At the start, these objects assert themselves as the baldest and solidest of hard facts. . . . The objects which are the content of these judgments thus come to be identified with reality *par excellence*; they are *facts*, however doubtful everything else. (*EW* 4:23)

Succeeding interests reveal the inadequacies of our first representative schemes of the given. Elements of practical concern to our new interests are discovered to be missing from the conceptual landscape. The mind's first reaction to such discoveries, according to Dewey, is invariably conservative. Rather than solve the problem by reconstructing the whole original representative scheme from the ground up, we first try a less radical course. We retain the original landscape and simply add on the hitherto neglected experiential phenomena. If we have mistakenly identified the original landscape with reality, we explain the addition of new elements to ourselves as product of some transformative process occurring within reality itself. And so the 'myth' of necessitation arises. The landscape is supposed to contain unrealized powers to produce novel effects. Dewey states:

> As time goes on, the series of independent and isolated objects passes through a gradual change. Just as the recognition of incompatible qualities has led to setting up of separate things, so the growing recognition of similar qualities in these disparate objects begins to pull them together again. Some relation between the two objects is perceived; it is seen that neither object is just what it is in its isolation, but owes some of its meaning to the other objects. While in reality (as I hope later to point out), this "relationship" and mutual dependence means membership in a common whole . . . a midway stage intervenes before this one fact . . . comes to consciousness. . . . This passage-way from isolation to unity, denying the former but not admitting the latter, is necessity or determinism. (*EW* 4:25)

Consider, for example, a child whose first interest in mapping her experience results in the construction of a representational landscape, complete with the trees, grass, houses, sky, sun, clouds, as in her earliest paintings and sketches. Later, rain, not built into the original representative scheme as a normal feature, becomes an object of the child's interest. This object is then inserted into the original landscape, its presence accounted for as an effect of one of the original constituents: the clouds. Should the child take further interest in meteorology, she would eventually perform a thoroughgoing reconstruction of her conceptual landscape, doing away with the connective device of 'determination' with which she joined the original object 'cloud' with the subsidiary object 'rain.' She would then see both objects as parts of the definition of one whole fact, 'weather systems.' She would no longer superstitiously think of clouds as *causing* rain.

A few months after the appearance of "The Superstition of Necessity," Dewey repeated his attempt to dissolve our belief that there is, in reality, growth and transformation, but in this case he focused on the belief that there is growth and transformation in ourselves. In the 1893 paper "Self-realization as the Moral Ideal," Green is again the foil.[9] Dewey takes the position that self-realization ethical theories typically commit the error of confusing the contents of judgments with the contents of given experience, citing his earlier discussion of the same error in "The Superstition of Necessity." He writes:

> This division of the self into two separate selves (one the realized self, the other the ideal self), is again the fallacy of hypostatizing into separate entities what in reality are simply two stages of insight upon our own part. This "realized" self is no reality by itself; it is simply our partial conception of the self erected into an entity. Recognizing its incomplete character, we bring in what we have left out and call it the "ideal" self. . . . [and] we insert the idea of one of these selves realizing the other. (*EW* 4:52)

Dewey remarks that "as a *practical* fact we do, at a given time, have unrealized powers, or capacities" (*EW* 4:44) and that 'realization' of these capacities is the end of moral action. But the unrealized capacities or powers are not, he argues, as yet unreal capacities. They are capacities we have not yet come to *recognize* as real.

Just as the self constructs a landscape of 'objects' of interest from the given, so also it constructs a representational image of itself as an actor

9. See "Self-realization as the Moral Ideal," *EW* 4:42–53.

in its landscape. The process by which these representations are constructed is in each case subject to the same flaws. Our first attempts to give representational expression to 'ourselves' as distinct from the landscapes in which we act are incomplete and often inconsistent. The pressure of neglected interests periodically forces us to revise our conceptions of ourselves.[10] Again, Dewey says, our first response to such pressure is conservative. We try to resolve detected problems in our representations by simply tacking on hitherto neglected items of our experience. If we have mistaken our concept of ourselves for the reality of ourselves, we will naturally imagine that the transformation has been effected by some hitherto latent causal power within us, falling prey yet again to the myth of necessitation.

Green's conception of 'capacity' and of the realization of capacity is a manifestation of this error. For example, if we were to describe a child as having artistic capacity on Green's theory, Dewey suggests, what we must mean is that in this partially realized person there are ideal, as yet unreal, powers of action that when realized will transform the child into an artist. Dewey's reply is to demand to know how the child's artistic potential is detectable if it is an ideal, merely latent capacity. If it is detectable, as Dewey sees it, then that artistic potential is neither latent nor ideal but already manifest in the child's behavior. It is an unrealized potential only if by 'unrealized' we mean uncomprehended *by the child.* Parents, educators, or philosophical observers do realize the child's capacity, which is just to say that they better understand the meaning of the child's activity than the child. Dewey says, "It is not a case of contrast between an actuality which is definite, and a presupposed but unknown capacity, but between *a smaller and a larger view* of the actuality" (*EW* 4:45).

Clearly, if 'self-expression' is to be the ideal of a reconstructed self-realization ethics, the concepts of 'self,' 'realization,' and the moral ideal will have to be reinterpreted. 'Realization,' Dewey says, will mean

> to act concretely, not abstractly; it is primarily a direction to us with reference to knowledge, not with reference to performance. It means: do not act until you have seen the relations, the content, of your act. It means: let there be for you all the meaning in the act that there could be for any intelligence which

10. By 'neglected,' he presumably means 'not given conscious attention.' The neglected interests would have been operating before they came to be specifically noted. Interests to which we are not attending, then, come to be noted whenever we inadvertently thwart their expression.

> saw it in its reality and not abstractly. The whole point is expressed when we say that no possible future activities or conditions have anything to do with the present action except as they enable us to take deeper account of the present activity . . . to see it in its totality. Indeed . . . I think it could be shown that these future acts and conditions *are* simply the present act in its mediated content. (*EW* 4:49)

What Dewey is saying is that reality is given but *meaning* is not. The activity peculiar to self-consciousness (as opposed to mere consciousness) is realization of meaning, that is, a system of ideal relations by which the self organizes its world of experience. A change in the meanings (or representations) we assign to the given does not entail a change in the content of the given; it merely involves a change in our notions of what the given is like. But although meaning is not given or innate, in Dewey's view, the activity of realizing meaning is both. Realization of meaning is an essential activity of the self, not a contingent activity occurring only when certain preconditions happen to be in place. Hence Dewey's assertion that realization has more to do with our knowledge than our performance. That we shall realize meaning is not a matter of choice or dependent on acts of will. But how we shall realize meaning, whether consistently, inconsistently, in piecemeal fashion, or according to a general plan, is a matter we can control. For Dewey, morality and moral realization consist in regulation of the realization of meaning.

Throughout "Self-realization as the Moral Ideal," Dewey uses the term 'self-realization' to cover both the activity of and the object of realization of meaning. But clearly, he does not suppose that just any meaningful interpretation of experience is the moral goal. On the contrary, Dewey holds that some interpretations are better than others. In the absence of any explicit characterization of the goal of realization, the term 'authenticity' suggests itself. Or in case that particular term is too laden with existentialist associations, one might substitute 'soundness' or 'truthfulness.' Dewey stresses that it is the *truest* interpretation of experience that is our goal, the system of meanings that most nearly corresponds to the organic unity of the given itself. His characterization of the difference between selfish and unselfish men illustrates his position. Dewey claims that it is a difference of interpretation, specifically of interpretation of the moral imperative "fiat justitia, ruat coelum." An unselfish man, according to Dewey, takes it as enjoining him to "let the needed thing be done though the heavens of my past, or fixed, or presupposed self fall"; the selfish man, by contrast, takes the same impera-

tive as enjoining him to "let me keep my precious self moral, though the heavens of public action fall" (*EW* 4:51). The selfish man, Dewey says, is bad and selfish because "he has identified himself with his past notions of himself, and, refusing to allow the fructifying pollen of experience to touch them, refusing to revise his conception of himself . . . begins to disintegrate and becomes a standing menace to his community or group" (*EW* 4:51). The selfish man, it appears, is the man who maintains an inauthentic conception of himself (or his world of experience) in the face of obvious disparities between the real and the ideal. The meanings he had assigned his experience are either incomplete or incoherent, distorting or neglecting much that is real though deliberately disregarded in his activities. Presumably, his fault does not lie in his failure to have constructed a truer representation of himself or his activities in the first place. His fault lies instead in his failure to accept the corrections that subsequent experience provides.

Thus far, we have overlooked the fact that latent causal forces are not the only mythic entities to which change and transformation in the self are superstitiously attributed. Idealists and intuitionists (together with some hedonists) also believe in the existence of a nonphysical latent force or capacity that human agents gradually realize over time, the capacity of free volition or free will. By means of this capacity, we are supposed to be able to effect essential changes in our own characters and activities. It should be noted that this view is not advanced or endorsed in "Self-realization as the Moral Ideal."

In this paper, the will is not an essential factor in self-realization. Realization is described as an autonomous process that proceeds without self-conscious initiation or effort. Realization of meaning can and should be directed, according to Dewey. But the regulation is attributed to interest rather than to volition. In the case of the bad or selfish man, it is to be noted that Dewey does not attribute badness to a failure of will. Nor does he urge the bad man to reform his will. Instead, he insists that realization can be regulated only by the knowledge of what our interests really are. He writes: "To find the self in the highest and fullest activity possible at the time, and to perform the act in the consciousness of its complete identification with self (which means, I take it, with complete interest) is morality, and is realization" (*EW* 4:51). The bad man is bad because he fails to understand and act on his true interests. His improvement depends not on the reformation of his will but on the education of his understanding.

In a paper of the following year (1894), "The Ego as Cause," a short

discussion of libertarianism, Dewey attacks the traditional attribution of agency to the will as yet another instance of the superstition of necessitation.[11] In brief, he argues that accounts of human agency based upon the premise that human beings have a faculty or power of volition fail so dismally to explain human behavior as to render the premise incredible. Theories defining the will as an efficient cause of action, Dewey calls 'libertarian' to distinguish them from both determinism and indeterminism. Determinism (either as Dewey defines it in "The Superstition of Necessity" or as it is more commonly defined) neither requires nor supports the supposition that the will exists or plays a role in conduct. Indeterminism, defined as the 'liberty of indifference,' likewise neither requires nor supports the supposition that the will plays a role in determining conduct. Libertarianism alone makes this supposition. Nevertheless, Dewey continues, no libertarian has succeeded in explaining how it is that a single 'cause,' in the absence of contributing external forces, can at any one time be the source of alternate incompatible effects. Consequently, libertarianism, when pressed, has invariably devolved into some variety either of determinism or of indeterminism. And so, Dewey concludes, no justification has ever successfully been given to support the supposition that the will exists or plays a role in conduct. Continued assertion of the existence of the will is thus insupportable.

Now this was not the position Dewey held in 1891. In *Outlines*, following Green and Bradley, he had held that the activity of will was what distinguished voluntary from involuntary conduct. Moral agents, persons, were distinguished from nonmoral agents, animals, on the grounds that the latter lacked will—the capacity voluntarily to endorse ideal courses of action. And the will played a role in the *Outlines'* analysis of desire. Will was the element that distinguished human desire from animal passion and impulse. Animal action, it was suggested, was merely reaction to the stimuli of impulse. Moral or voluntary conduct, by contrast, was the manifestation of an agent's willing the realization of consciously endorsed impulses. Development of a theory of conduct in which the will played no role was thus a novelty both for Dewey and for idealist ethics,[12] one that undoubtedly merited Royce's 'somewhat extended notice' in 1895.

11. See John Dewey, "The Ego as Cause," *EW* 4:91–105.

12. Though it was not, of course, such a novelty for ethical philosophy generally, as Royce noted in his review; see Royce, review of *Study of Ethics*, p. 111.

THE END OF MORALITY IN THE *STUDY OF ETHICS*

Dewey's critique of idealist conceptions of the self altered his view of the facts of moral life and, consequently, of moral science. In 1891, moral science was a material science of self-realization. The moral scientist was (1) to describe and explain just what ideal personal capacities had historically been realized by human agents and (2) to suggest ways ideal personal capacities (and so persons themselves) could be more freely and fully realized. By 1894, Dewey's conception of moral science had changed.

First, moral science need not now concern itself with the historical realization of ideal capacities, since Dewey had rejected the existence of ideal capacities whose progressive realization could be the goal of social and personal life. He now held that the only capacities a self may have are the capacities it already has as a self-conscious being. Since the self's capacities are given, all that waits to be 'realized' is their meaning. In effect, Dewey had reversed the relation between the real and the ideal. Instead of trying to grasp how human agents have realized ideals, the moral scientist has now to grasp how agents *idealize* the real.

This further relieves the moral scientist of trying to understand and to explain how persons have come to be what they are. Realization of ideal capacities was a historically determined process. What could be realized by a particular agent was determined at least in part by the historical development of his society or group. This was the case because the social roles or niches available to be realized by any agent are always peculiar to a society's stage of historical development. Dewey's rejection of time as a condition of the self's reality ruled out this sort of historical determination. In the *Study of Ethics*, it is what persons understand themselves to be, rather than what they actually are, that is context-dependent. It is ways of expressing ourselves that we learn from others rather than ways of being.

And so in the *Study of Ethics*, the moral scientist is also relieved of the task of making practical suggestions for the literal improvement of persons. Idealization of the real, not realization of the ideal, is the object of his studies. Any practical suggestions will have to do with the quality of contemporary idealizations. In other words, his practical suggestions will be aimed at reforming his fellows' understanding of their own nature, not at reforming his fellows. The moral scientist has turned out to be a sort of moral psychologist, one who undertakes "a thorough psy-

chological examination of the process of active experience" to improve our understanding of what "the free and normal living of life as it is" actually involves.[13] His job is to describe how the expression of impulse occurs, what constitutes an obstacle to expression, and how these obstacles may be overcome. In one respect, however, the moral scientist's task is unchanged. It remains practical. For on this account of morals, the distinction between truth and goodness is wholly collapsed. Since knowing and expressing the self is our true end, then obviously any science that increases our understanding of ourselves is inherently 'practical.'

The *Study of Ethics* is divided into two parts of unequal length. Part I is a brief overview of the main points in Dewey's theory of ethics. Part II, the bulk of the text, demonstrates and defends Dewey's conception of ethical theory as a branch of psychology. Central to the project of Part II is elimination from moral science of those survivals of 'faculty' psychology lingering in common-sense moral views. Dewey had, of course, already attacked the faculty of will in articles preceding the appearance of the *Study of Ethics*. But his critique had been metaphysical and epistemological, unsupported by a strictly 'psychological' examination of human thought and action. This deficiency was remedied in the *Study of Ethics*. Dewey's psychological analysis begins in Part I and continues in Part II, accompanied by a related analysis of the phenomena of moral judgment and the 'faculty' of conscience.

Customary analyses of moral conduct, Dewey argues, agree in differentiating moral from nonmoral action on the ground that the former is voluntary and the latter not. Conduct is voluntary and so of moral significance whenever the agent is self-conscious, well informed regarding and interested in a given act, whose projected consequences coincide with the agent's preferences and/or long-term projects. This partial analysis of moral or voluntary conduct Dewey fills out as follows.

All conduct, voluntary and nonvoluntary, originates in conscious impulses—the spontaneous autonomous activity that is the essence of any conscious entity. To this collection of impulses, self-consciousness contributes another: the impulse to idealize experience that Dewey variously calls "idealization," "mediation of experience," and "definition."[14] For example, oysters and infants are similar in that each lives in a world

13. Preface to *Study of Ethics*, *EW* 4:221.

14. Dewey is also loose in his characterizations of the functions of the self, sometimes distinguishing them as consciousness and self-consciousness, sometimes as consciousness and unconsciousness. The first usage seems more precise and is followed in this chapter.

of immediate experience, organized by the percipient's impulsive activity. Neither creature experiences the world as meaningful. The similarity is of course superficial, because the infant has, in addition to the impulses shared with the oyster, the impulse to idealize or define experience. In the child's self-consciousness, impulse and its experiential import will merge, so that the original impulse and its effects on the self-aware agent form one concept. Take, for instance, a child's first experience of a lump of sugar. The results of acting on an impulse to put a white cube in its mouth becomes for the child the meaning of the impulse. The impulse is 'idealized,' or defined, in terms of its experiential concomitants. Dewey writes: "It is not simply that these results *do* follow, but that the child becomes *conscious* that they follow; that is, the results are referred back to the original impulse and enter into its structure in consciousness. It is evident that these mediations, or conscious back references, constitute the *meaning* of the impulse—they are its *significance*, its *import*. The impulse is *idealized*." (*EW* 4:237). Henceforth, the child will see lumps of sugar as meaningful, their meaning being the satisfying experiences they represent.

Dewey warns us not to confuse the self-conscious process of idealization with the merely conscious process of association. Animals can be habituated to associate the impulses with their results and to behave accordingly. But the impulse and result, Dewey theorizes, remain separate events in the animal's consciousness. For the child, associated events merge into one conceptual construction. And this construction replaces the two original experiences in the child's mind. In place of the separate experiences of a white lump and the sweetness experienced from it, the child now operates with a single representative idea, a 'sweet-white-lump.' Dewey goes on to say that "*the expression of every impulse stimulates experiences and these react into the original impulse and modify it. This reaction of the induced experience into the inducing impulse is the psychological basis of moral conduct*" (*EW* 4:236–37).

The child has the capacity to be a moral agent because he has the capacity to know what he is about. This same capacity is the ground from which spring the other two essential characteristics of voluntary activity: interest and the coordination of plans of action. As the child or moral agent idealizes his impulses, defining them in terms of their experiential import for his self, the agent at the same time constructs a representation of himself as possessor of these idealized impulses. The mature moral agent understands that these idealized impulses, which Dewey calls 'interests,' are not necessarily transient but can become long-term

commitments. His particular acts, his instantiations of meaning, come to be recognized as concrete expressions of his general lines of interest. So Dewey argues that voluntary activity is essentially creation and expression of meaning. Consistent with this view, he for the most part drops the term 'self-realization' in speaking of conduct and its peculiar function for the self, in favor of 'self-expression.'

Dewey tries to support this account, in part, with an explanation of why voluntary action was erroneously supposed to be the product of a faculty of 'will.' Impulses or interests, he explains, do not operate singly. The organization of experience in terms of any one interest or set of interests invariably has implications for the expression of others. The various interests of the self compete in and for its attention and for space in the self's construction of a world of meaning. The competition of interests regularly requires the agent to revise his representations, to adjust and readjust the terms in which he expresses his impulses in coordinated projects. The feeling of inner turmoil accompanying the thwarting of interests provided the stimulus for postulation of the faculty of will.

Dewey argues that it is "not difficult to detect the source of the error. We necessarily tend, during the struggle, to identify ourselves especially with that phase of the process which is prominent in consciousness, and to regard the other phase (although equally an expression of ourselves) as indifferent or even as hostile to ourselves" (*EW* 4:254). Different sets of competing interests suggest alternative possible representations of the self and its world. The set suggesting a self-image most attractive to an agent's dominant interests tends to be identified as the 'true' representation. The opposing interests and the self-image they generate are then rejected by the agent as alien, products of external force working against his 'true' self. If the 'true' interests suppress the opposing interests, then the agent rationalizes the outcome as a victory of his true self over alien impulses. If the opposing interests suppress the 'true' interests, then the agent interprets the outcome as the subjugation of his true self by hostile, alien influences. But in fact, Dewey argues, there are no external forces to be feared or opposed. There are only the agent's own real interests collectively driving his activity. The real outcome is establishment of an equilibrium among the agent's interests—the balance that seems best to express all the competing interests demanding recognition.

Having advanced and to some extent defended his account of voluntary activity, Dewey proceeds along established idealist lines to attack the ethical theories of rival philosophies on psychological grounds. The

new wrinkle to this old strategy is that in the *Study of Ethics*, self-realization ethics is one of the rival theories attacked. Where Dewey had previously criticized hedonism and Kantianism, he here targets 'empirical idealism' (hedonism) and 'abstract idealism.' This division of rivals to his own theory, called 'experimental idealism,' was not a happy one, fully justifying Royce's complaint of inattention to important details in some of Dewey's discussions. The category of 'abstract idealism' includes Kantianism, intuitionisms loosely derived from Kant (e.g., James Martineau's), and the self-realization ethics of Green, Caird, Royce, MacKenzie, and, to some extent, Bradley. The disparity of the doctrines represented by the term 'abstract idealism' defy reduction to a common set of doctrines. The variety of characterizations Dewey resorted to in his attempt to make the reduction testifies to the difficulty of the task ('abstract idealism,' 'perfectionism,' 'rationalism,' 'ethical rationalism').[15]

So disparate were the views of the philosophers Dewey grouped under the rubric of 'abstract idealism' that he wisely made no serious attempt to refute their 'shared' view. After a few pot shots delivered at random, he argues as follows. Abstract idealists all subscribe to the existence of the will. Hedonistic or 'empirical' idealists do so likewise. In effect, both agree that violating the principle of Occam's razor by postulating the existence of will is necessary to explain human conduct. Dewey then proceeds to attack the hedonistic idealist's doctrine of the will and, by analogy, to undermine abstract idealism at the same time. Neither camp is said to have been able to grasp that impulse and interest are self-originating and thus do not need the assistance of another force to generate (and explain) human conduct. Instead, we are asked to believe that feeling (empirical idealism) or reason (abstract idealism) present the will with potential stimuli of action. A given thing or event becomes an active stimulus only if it is endorsed by the will. 'Desire' names this relation of the will to the thing it endorses. The processes of feeling and reason, though they can provide objects for desire, do not of themselves give rise to action.

Hedonism holds that our infantile reflexive behavior suggested to our infant minds that pleasurable states of feeling result from particular sorts of action, after which they became objects of interest to our developing wills. Henceforth we desired or disliked things or events as means or obstacles to the promotion of pleasant states of feeling. Our reflexive behavior was thus replaced by voluntary acts performed as means to this

15. See, e.g., *Study of Ethics*, *EW* 4:256, 263, 264, 270.

object. Subsequent efforts to promote (or avoid) pleasure (or pain) provided further insights into the relation of feelings and actions. Experience of new states of feeling suggested new stimuli to the will. But all our voluntary as opposed to nonvoluntary action, whether it proceeds on crudely formed or more sophisticated ideals, originates in the will's endorsement of ideal states of feeling.

Dewey rejects the account as palpably false. He argues: "This theory presupposes that the mind is, like Micawber, passively waiting for experiences to 'turn up'. . . . As a matter of fact, even a child is actually engaged from the outset and all the time in activity. He has his own impulses, or lines of discharge. . . . The child's immaturity chiefly consists not in the fact that it is passively dependent upon external excitations, but in the lack of continuity in the activities set up by the organs themselves." (*EW* 4:267). If the account were correct, it would follow that an infant, like the proverbial ass, set between two equivalent stimuli to reflexive action could not respond to either. Were it true, both children and asses would be a great deal less trouble than we know them to be. The child (and the ass) will move, no matter how we balance the environmental stimuli, because impulses do not require external stimuli to generate action. Impulses are simply spontaneous urges to act. Hence we do not need to postulate a faculty of volition in order to explain how and why agents are moved to act.

Dewey then proposes an alternate account of desire. The relation of desire and the feeling of volitional effort in our experience suggest that they are analogous phenomena of the competition or clash of impulses and interests. The experience of volition, as Dewey has explained, is a symptom of the competition of interests for control of an agent's activity. Desire can be given a similar explanation. In certain situations an impulse may arise that we cannot readily interpret or readily harmonize with the interests and impulses driving our activities. 'Desire' stands for the feeling of frustration that arises whenever an impulse cannot find an outlet for its own expression. Desire, like volition, is to be interpreted as a product of the interactions of impulses in certain configurations.

Dewey raises further objections against hedonistic psychologies, but the analysis of desire completes his main argument against rival theories of voluntary action. And by implication, since the alternatives to 'experimental idealism' have been shown to operate on false theories of voluntary action, Dewey's 'experimental idealism' is left as the only game in town.

Having removed the encumbrance of 'will' from the ground to be covered, Dewey proceeds to show how the phenomena of moral experi-

ence, volition, desire, pleasure, pain can be accounted for purely in terms of interactions of impulses or their idealized representatives, interests. But before he could proceed to do the same for the phenomenon of obligation, yet another encumbrance had to be removed: belief in the existence of the faculty of 'conscience.'

MORAL JUDGMENT IN THE *STUDY OF ETHICS*

Dewey's second main line of argument, the attack on the faculty of conscience, also begins in Part I and continues in Part II. Dewey opens this line of argument by pointing out that judgment, moral and nonmoral, is a species of action or conduct. Likewise, voluntary conduct invariably involves judgment. He remarks: "Every act (consciously performed) is a judgment of value: the act done is done because it is thought to be *worth while* or valuable. Thus a man's real . . . theory of conduct can be told only from his acts. Conversely, every judgment about conduct is itself an act" (*EW* 4:224). Or in other words, 'judgment' and 'conduct' are virtually convertible terms. What we call 'judgment' is, of course, a stage within the process of conduct, a stage in which the agent, though active, has not succeeded in determining how some impulse or interest is to be expressed. Common sense, in effect, distinguishes judgment from conduct by spatiotemporal 'location.' Judgment is treated as an 'inner' activity that precedes or follows 'outer' conduct. Dewey does not forbid such distinctions in the *Study of Ethics*, provided the distinction is recognized as one made between elements of a single process. That is, the distinction is permitted as long as the two stages of the expression of impulse are not hypostatized into separate events or things.

Depending on whether we choose to concentrate on the inner or outer elements of the process of the concrete expression of the self, Dewey says, we may define conduct either as "*co-ordinating or bringing to a unity of aim and interest, the different elements of a complex situation*," or as "*co-ordinating, in an organized way, the concrete powers, the impulses and habits, of an individual agent*" (*EW* 4:232). The first definition characterizes conduct in terms of the relatively internal activity of proposal and selection of possible lines of concrete expression of interests demanding expression ('judgment'). The second characterizes conduct as the expression of interest in accordance with some plan ('action'). Either the internal or the external elements of self-conscious conduct may thus be made the focus of special attention and analysis. But neither occurs or ultimately can be accounted for except in relation to the other.

Judgment, Dewey holds, is itself an expression of impulse: the im-

pulse to idealize our experience. Spontaneous idealization, typical of small children, automatically refers back to an impulse the consequences of its expression. Judgment is the self-conscious counterpart of this spontaneous activity. Undirected by self-consciousness, the impulse to idealize may make incoherent assignments of meaning to experience. When the incoherence becomes dysfunctional in some striking way, our attention becomes focused on the idealization process. Our attempts self-consciously to bring the process to a functional conclusion constitute 'deliberation' and 'judgment'—'deliberation' being that stage in the process of judging previously referred to as 'inference' or 'ideal experimentation.'[16] It is thus a consequence of Dewey's view of judgment that every self-conscious act, since it is or expresses a judgment, necessarily involves deliberation.

This conclusion may seem obviously untrue. Dewey admits that it would be false if it entailed the further conclusion that every act must be the outcome of an immediately preceding process of deliberation. He argues, however, that it entails only the conclusion that every act is ultimately traceable to *some* prior instance of deliberation. And this is not obviously false. Mental acts, like their bodily counterparts, can become habitual. Translation of a foreign language, for example, is an activity that initially involves deliberation but later becomes habitual. When it does, we no longer need to deliberate about the meaning of words or sentences in that language. Assignment of meanings to impulses proceeds along the same lines. When an impulse is first felt, deliberation is entered into and an assignment of meaning (judgment) consciously made. If the process is frequently repeated and no anomalies arise requiring new deliberation, henceforth the impulse will be immediately recognized as having the meaning it was previously assigned. No deliberation will then take place. Nevertheless, the immediate recognition of the impulse is ultimately due to some one or more acts of explicit deliberation.

Some but not all of our actions are routine applications of previously adopted meaning assignments. Hence some but not all of our conduct is habitual. Some attempts to assign meanings to certain complex acts are never so complete or detailed as to obviate any need for further reflection. These meaning assignments are the general 'ideals' (or 'life plans') upon which our lives are centered. Included in this category are actions taken in the furtherance of complex plans whose general lines need not

16. See above, Chapter 3.

be reconsidered from moment to moment. The complex notions we each have of our careers and the duties they involve are, Dewey says, instances of such meaning assignments that "without being fixed habits, yet form the limits within which one's other acts fall" (*EW* 4:241).

Whenever action is neither habitual nor guided by previous deliberations, we are conscious of choices to be made among the alternatives open to us. Deliberation is the process by which we compare and assess those alternatives. The alternatives are alternate ways the agent's representation of himself or his world may be reconstructed. Since deliberation focuses on alternate ways or acts by which reconstruction may take place, Dewey says that when we are deliberating, "only an act (and a conscious act) has moral significance" (*EW* 4:240). In this respect, deliberation and judgment part company. For judgment, the act is morally significant only as an expression of the agent's character.

But although it is only with the value of acts that deliberation is concerned, this should not be interpreted as meaning that our judgments and deliberation are just about the properties of acts. Voluntary actions, Dewey reminds us, are always an expression of the self. (Character, in turn, is a way of acting, the way an agent typically expresses himself.) So when we judge projected options, we judge them not in themselves but *as* expressions of the self. The real if unstated subject of our judgments of acts is the relation the act bears to our self-expression.

Dewey describes deliberation as the process of ideal experimentation in which we seek to discover which of the alternatives available to us best fits or represents us as a whole or on the whole. He writes:

> It is a process of tentative action; we "try on" one or another of the ends, imagining ourselves actually doing them, going, indeed, in this make-believe action just as far as we can without actually doing them. In fact, we often find ourselves carried over the line here; the hold which a given impulse gets upon us while we are "trying it on" passes into overt act without our having consciously intended it. Particularly is this the case so far as our character is immature. . . . Decision, *resolution*, the definitely formed plan, is the proper outcome of consideration.[17] (*EW* 4:251)

Deliberation investigates the fit between ideal alternatives and the reality of our situations insofar as we can represent it. Judgment asserts that

17. Note the close resemblance to Bradley's formulation; cf. Bradley, *Principles*, bk. 1, chap. 2, secs. 46–48, and especially his description of 'ideal experimentation' in *Principles*, bk. 1, chap. 2, sec. 48, pp. 85–86.

the alternative act that performed best in the process of ideal experimentation is the best representation of the self. Hence the subject of judgment is not the act chosen but the self.

As we discussed above, the verbal expressions we give of our judgments are misleading in Dewey's estimation, because they fail to make explicit what is always the case, that the subject is reality and that they predicate our representations of our experience as true to this reality. For Dewey, the subject of every moral judgment is likewise reality, the reality of self in distinction from its world of experience. Taking as his example the purported judgment, 'this act is right,' he offers the following analysis: "The subject, 'this act,' in the judgment 'this act is right,' is an act mediated by reference to the other experiences it occasions—its effect upon the self. The predicate 'is right' simply traces out such effects more completely, taking into account, so far as possible, the reaction into the future character of the self, and in virtue of this reaction, judging the act" (*EW* 4:244). What is offered as a judgment, that is, 'this act is right,' is only the predicate of the judgment actually made: that is, 'I am the sort of person to be truly expressed in this action' or 'I am such that this act rightly represents me.'

Deliberation and judgment in ordinary moral contexts can, Dewey thinks, be explained without reference to nonnatural entities or peculiar psychological 'faculties.' It seems almost as if he means them to be explained without reference to 'reason.' In a way, this is the case. As Dewey conceives of deliberation, what determines the outcome as right is not that it is supported by explicit discursive reasoning (although this could be involved). What makes it right is the outcome's being *felt* to agree with reality—that conflicting impulses be felt to be harmonized in the plan of action arrived at. What makes an act right is its correspondence with reality. But correspondence is not to be deduced from some set of theoretical principles of reality. Theoretical principles are after all just another sort of representation of reality. The best and most ultimate test we are able to apply to any representation is the test of its coherence with our nonrepresentational, raw experience. For this, logical reasoning is not necessarily required. Nor need we suppose that what makes an act true is the endorsement of some special faculty of rationality. Dewey appears to believe that the practical necessity of getting as many of our representations as true as possible is entirely sufficient to account both for how deliberation results in right conclusions and for why we care so much that it should. Logic is a useful tool for reflective deliberation, but we can probably account for its existence without appeal to special mental faculties.

One might object, however, that although ordinary deliberation can proceed along the lines Dewey suggests, the reflective deliberation that issues in remorse, regret, and the effort to reform one's self cannot. An act that is 'right' because it is true to myself may still be wrong because the sort of self I am is a wrong or bad self. The more truly I express this self, the more badly and wrongly I act. Thus it seems impossible that a self who deliberated along the lines Dewey gives us could ever recognize its need to reform or, having done so, feel remorse for its past failings.

Dewey's answer would be that we need not suppose that all deliberation about an act ceases with the judgment that the action is right. Implementation of selected courses of action produces consequences, and these consequences are naturally reflected back into the impulses from which they sprang, modifying their meaning to some (possibly negligible) degree. Dewey remarks:

> The identity of agent and act has been our guiding principle. . . . But so far we have overtly considered this identity only on the side of the passing forth of the agent into act, showing that the act is the conclusion of the process of estimating value entered upon whenever any impulse is referred to its probable consequences. This also means . . . that the act in manifesting character reveals it—makes *it* a subject of judgment. This reaction of a deed back into the estimation of character, the reflective weighing of character and motive in the light of the acts which express it, constitutes conscience. We measure the act by our controlling standard—*direct* approbation; we must equally measure our standard by the act as seen in its expression—*reflective* approbation and reprobation. (*EW* 4:292)

Where we do not act purely from habit, acts are selected as authentic expressions of particular interests (idealized impulses). Because the act was felt to afford 'true' expression of those recognized interests, the act was 'directly approved' and so selected. But every act has unanticipated consequences. These consequences, if significant, may cause us to rejudge the original situation, considering both the expressive value the ideal seemed to have and the actual experienced value on implementation.

If the further import of an act includes unanticipated benefits, the original judgments and ideals are reflectively approved. The experience of reflective approval is, Dewey says, signaled by satisfaction and feelings of pleasure, for there is no conflict between the agent's new and former self-expressive representations. The agent's original pleasure in having resolved his interests into an act is simply increased with the

realization of how much more than expected the original act has achieved. In retrospect, says Dewey, the agent sees that "his intent lines up, focuses the demands of life. In doing the deed, then, the universe of Reality moves through him as its conscious organ. . . . Hence the joy, the feeling of full life, and the peace, the feeling of harmonized force, which accompany the good act." (*EW* 4:293).

If the further import of an act is conflict and disharmony in the agent's self-expression, this will be signaled by dissatisfaction and pain. Reflecting back the unanticipated results of an earlier judgment, the agent becomes aware of a tension between the values of the act as predicted and as experienced. The discrepancy indicates a flaw of some kind in the agent's reasoning, possibly his representation of himself and his impulses. What he took to be an interest of a certain sort may turn out to have arisen from quite a different sort of impulse. Or what was taken to be a peripheral interest of no importance may turn out to have been central to the agent's satisfaction. His earlier valuative judgment would be seen on reflection to have operated on a false standard, that is, a false conception of what his impulses and interests really are. So Dewey argues: "The moral condemnation, in other words, is directed essentially at the ideal and standard of the act. Not because the agent consciously aimed at evil does he have the guilty conscience, but because the good (ideal) aimed at was of such a kind as to show a character which takes for good that which in light of enlarged character is seen as evil" (*EW* 4:296).

If the error is detected, Dewey argues, it is sufficient in itself to give rise to reflective deliberation. If the agent appreciates the consequences of his antecedent judgment as dissatisfying, then he is able to imagine outcomes that would have been better and regret his choice. These ideas point the way to reform of one's self-representation. What is needed is a reform of the self adequate to guarantee that in similar circumstances one will not err in the same way again. That entails reconsideration and reform of those ideals of what one really is and wants and needs that were the source of the error. Dewey remarks: "If the agent is still on the same level as that in which he performed the act, no compunctions arise. The act is still good to him, and he is still good as exhibited in that act. Only because the bad act brings to light a new good is its own badness manifested. . . . Only because to some extent the self is moving more organically does it realize the disorganic character of its past efforts" (*EW* 4:297).

Thus the phenomena of regret, remorse, and the desire to reform can

be explained without appeal to a faculty of conscience or practical reason. Of course, if we do, we cannot claim infallibility or a priori certainty for our moral judgments. But since humanity's moral judgments were not, in his opinion, marked by either infallibility or a priori certainty, Dewey did not see this as a problem for his theory.[18]

Dewey, as we have seen, was opposed to any sort of faculty psychology in 1894. Thus he was no more inclined to suppose that a faculty of pure practical reason gave rise to remorse and reprobation of the self than he was to suppose conscience did. Dewey thought that even reasoning could be accounted for in terms of the self's expressive impulses. The practical necessity of discovering reasonably adequate ideals of one's self and one's world was sufficient in his view to account for our concern to get our ideals right and for our development of tools, such as 'discursive' deliberation, to facilitate the process. Dewey's discussion of Kant's theory of pure practical reason was constructed to bring the reader to a similar view.

Kant argued against the possibility that obligation could be a product of our impulses and passions. Obligation involves resistance to passions and impulses. Thus there must be in the self some source of directives to action other than impulse and having some higher (if not more powerful) claim to our attention than our passions do. This source of higher authority is the faculty of pure practical reason. Dewey responds that Kant's account begs an important question. How does reason assert its claim over impulses and how is this claim to be distinguished from the claims of our impulses? He writes:

> If there is no *intrinsic* connection between desire and reason, how can the former, even when checked and held in by reason, give rise to the feeling of moral humiliation? This presupposes some moral capacity already *in* the desires: something capable of recognizing the authority and value of law—which is not only the thing to be explained, but also impossible if desire had

18. Believing the case against the existence of conscience or moral intuition already solid, Dewey was fairly dismissive. He remarks: "The development of historical and comparative science and of the doctrine of evolution have dealt the theory hard blows. The former has revealed the great variety of ideas conscientiously maintained upon matters of right and wrong in different ages and in different peoples, and also largely accounted for this variety of ideas by showing their relativity to types of social life. The latter theory, as it gains in acceptance, leaves no room for belief in any faculty of moral knowledge separate from the whole process of experience, and cuts the ground out from under any store of information given directly and immediately. The modern standpoint and method in psychology also make it almost impossible to attach any intelligent meaning to the thought of a special faculty of knowledge" (*EW* 4:307).

> the purely low and selfish character Kant attributes to it. At most, the desire would simply feel restraint, coercion, and would be . . . desirous of breaking away—the reverse of humility. . . .
>
> Moreover the whole question is begged from the start. It is only in so far as the reason is already itself impulsive or moving that it can check and restrain the sense-nature and thus occasion humility. To hold that "whatever diminishes the obstacles to an activity, furthers this activity itself" . . . is to admit that reason already possesses an active, self-realizing power, *i.e.*, is impulsive.[19] (*EW* 4:327)

Dewey argues that insofar as any claim seems truly to express something we believe essential to ourselves, it is an object of reverent attention. That is, its expression is and is felt as deeply important to us. And anything that takes the form of a demand for expression is an impulse. Thus if practical reason behaves as Kant supposes it does, then practical reason must be an impulse. And since Kant thinks the claims of impulse are all of the same order, practical reason's claims cannot be of a different or higher order than the claims of other impulses. So even if it existed, a faculty of pure practical reason would make no difference to our moral experience.

Dewey's alternative is an explanation of obligation purely in terms of the conflict of impulse and interest. Not infrequently, we fail to anticipate or to appreciate fully the undesirable consequences of the actions we choose, even consequences so bad that we later wonder how the act could ever have appealed to us in the first place. After the fact, disastrous acts force us to ask ourselves such questions: How could I have wanted such an action? And why did I not recognize the true tendency of my interests and desires? Probably more of our actions ought to give rise to these questions than actually do so. But although there are always discrepancies between expectations and actual experience, the mind is conservative, overlooking small discrepancies where it can. Only when the gap between reality and our expectations has become too wide to overlook do we make the effort to reconstruct our (ideals of) our characters so as to bring them into better alignment with our experience.

When we have been forced to reflectively reformulate our conceptions of ourselves, we endorse the newly reformed conception as a truer

19. Dewey's reference is to *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and Other Works on the Theory of Ethics*, 3d ed., trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbot (London: Longmans, Green, & Dyer, 1883).

representation than the old. But we are unaccustomed to interpreting our impulses and actions in terms of this new model. The habit of using the old self-image is hard to break, and the newer self-image, by contrast, seems irksome and difficult to implement. We use it because we feel we must, and we use it despite the existence of an easier, less irksome alternative. Dewey's suggestion is that the experience of 'obligation' is accounted for by the peculiar relation in which we stand to such novel ideals. Because they are truer and better, we prefer them. But because we are not habituated to them, we find them tedious to employ. We act on them neither joyously nor miserably, but 'dutifully,' that is, against our inclinations to ease and comfort.

Because there are two self-images competing for our attention, one on the basis of habit, the other on the basis of instrumental superiority, we can readily understand why the phenomena of volition and obligation so typically occur together and how mistakes are made about their relation. The agent feels drawn to two self-images in different ways. Until the novel self-image becomes familiar, the agent may feel as if he is somehow being constrained against inclination to acknowledge the truer self-image by a force other than inclination. But in fact it is simply *another* inclination constraining the first. The agent's discomfort is a result of an interplay of conflicting inclinations. When eventually the habit of thinking of himself as he was used to doing is broken, the agent will find the conflict and with it the feeling of constraint are ended. He will see that "in spite of all the apparent opposition and resistance between the agent and ideal, the consciousness of duty carries with it the sense of a fundamental underlying identity. The sense of obligation is not the sense of a stronger alien force bearing down; it is rather the sense that the obligatory act is somehow more truly and definitely one's self than the present self upon which the obligation is imposed" (*EW* 4:311–12).

From this point, Dewey returns to the question of the nature of moral science. As we have seen, he believed that moral science is systematic, critical judgment of our ordinary judgments of the value of ideals of self-representation. Its task is to understand how far these judgments succeed in facilitating self-expression and to determine where they manifestly go awry. Dewey no longer supposed, as in his *Outlines*, that moral science had the further task of correcting our ideals as well as our reasoning about them. He here states that although every person estimates ideals in terms of the same standard (completeness and consistency of self-expression), what each has to express is unique. So any one ideal

will have a different value to different individuals, or to the same individual at different times. Likewise, one ideal will be obligatory for one agent but not for another, and not for the same agent at a later time. An act that is good in terms of one agent's experience may be wrong and false in terms of another's. So it is not and cannot be up to moral science to say what is good for persons generally or what persons ought to do and be. Dewey states:

> Let theorists deal with the facts as they may, the fact remains that no two persons have or can have the same duties. It is only when we are dealing with abstractions that they appear the same. Truth-telling is a duty for all, but it is not the duty of all to tell the same truth, because they have not the same truth to tell. . . . The great underlying contradiction, the lie, in modern moral methods, is the assertion of individuality in name, and the denial of it in fact. Duty always expresses a relation between the impulses and habits, the existing structures of a concrete agent, and the ideal, intention, purpose which demands a new service of that structure. By the necessities of the case, it is only the general form of duty, the relationship of habit and demand which is alike in different individuals, or in the same individual at different times. (*EW* 4:317–18)

There is a good deal more to the *Study of Ethics* than the arguments I have discussed. I have, for example, ignored most of Dewey's criticisms of Kantianism and hedonism together with his account of the virtues. His treatment of these topics, though not wholly without interest, is neither as original nor as expressive of the developments in his thinking as are the topics on which I have focused. In any case, Dewey's interest in them was clearly subsidiary to his main concern. So hurried are the discussions of these topics that one gets the feeling they have been tacked on solely in order to give the *Study of Ethics* the appearance of a textbook. Dewey's concern throughout was to advance the program of reform for absolute idealism that he had first announced in 1886.

The *Study of Ethics* was Dewey's last and arguably most systematic attempt to demonstrate both that philosophy was a kind of psychology and that philosophy would benefit from the adoption of 'psychological methods.'[20] In this and the papers that preceded it, Dewey articulated a

20. Priority would go to Dewey's earlier book, *Psychology*, but the reforms of absolute idealism suggested in that text are by no means as far reaching as those proposed in the *Study of Ethics*.

radically revised sort of absolute idealism, free of the more peculiar features to which some of its many critics had objected. His was an idealism that was not committed to the existence of an overmind imposing itself on human selves or to a teleological theory of the development of the universe, which idealism's contemporary philosophical audience might reject.[21] Yet he had not abandoned the conceptions central to absolute idealism. He maintained the absolute nature of consciousness, the dependence of relations on the activity of mind, identity in difference, the existence of concrete universals, and the denial of the real existence of temporal succession. Thus Dewey's reexamination of self-realization between 1892 and 1894 was a noteworthy contribution to contemporary idealist thought.

As a contribution to idealist ethics it was equally original. First, by interpreting voluntary activity as self-expression, Dewey eliminated any real distinction between moral and nonmoral conduct. Any and all conduct is after all expressive of the self. Consequently, any and all conduct comes under the purview of ethical theory. Second, by collapsing the distinction between goodness and truth, Dewey offered a definitive answer to Bradley's assertion that idealist ethical theory could not be a practical science. Since good self-expression is just truthful self-expression, any theory that improves our understanding of ourselves is ipso facto practical. Third, Dewey eliminated any and all nonnatural entities from morals. Only impulses, habits, and interests remain. One can readily understand why Royce called Dewey's 'experimental idealism' an ethical realism and why he was reluctant to embrace it.

Nevertheless, the *Study of Ethics* shows no signs of movement toward pragmatism. In 1894, Dewey seems still to have been committed to the idea that a true belief is a belief that corresponds to reality, even though agreement with experience, the only real test of beliefs we have, does not guarantee that our beliefs are true. Although he frequently makes analogies between consciousness and its 'environment,' its experiential world, he had not yet come to think of consciousness as constituted by nature, as simply another natural process. Finally, he was still working with a conception of science and its 'method,' psychology, that is inconsistent with his later pragmatic views. For Dewey in 1894, science is the

21. It must be noted, however, that this was something of a mixed blessing. By his ejection of teleology from his absolute idealism, Dewey might gain the sympathy of that part of his audience which viewed teleological explanations as no more than ill-disguised Christian apologetics, but on the other hand, he forfeited the sympathy of absolute idealism's traditional audience, which looked to philosophy to support natural theology.

construction of classificatory schemes elucidating the underlying structure of human experience, with each classificatory scheme of each special science ultimately being subsumed under the psychological categories that constitute philosophy's 'method.' It is still the product rather than the tools or techniques that distinguishes science from other forms of investigation. Thus Dewey's moral science is scientific just because the end product is an interpretation of human conduct in terms of its underlying (psychological) categories and relations. His *Study of Ethics* testifies to a considerable dissatisfaction with contemporary absolute idealism, but it does not testify to a conversion to pragmatism.

True to the logic of his own arguments, Dewey was to merge his research in ethics and psychology in the final years of the nineteenth century. To be more precise, he merged it with theoretical and child psychology upon his appointment in 1894 to the joint chairmanship of the Departments of Psychology and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago.