Review
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NOTES

1. Cf. especially Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

2. Cf. also the earlier collection of addresses and essays, John J. Mcdermott, *The Culture of Experience: Philosophical Essays in the American Grain,* New York: New York University Press, 1976.

3. Cf. "Nature," in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson,* vol. 1, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-1904, p. 3. Cited by McDermott, *Streams of Experience,* p. 31.

4. Emerson, "Education," *Works,* vol. 10, p. 132. Cited by McDermott, *Streams,* p. 34.

5. James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976, p. 86n.

6. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience,* New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1902, pp. 501-2.

7. McDermott offers here the interesting observation that in America "philosophers and theologians of the eternal are second-rate thinkers" (p. 72).

8. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems,* vol. 2 (1984) of *The Later Works,* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981 —, pp. 328-330.

John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953
Volume 7: 1932, *Ethics*
Jo Ann Boydston, ed.
Introduction by Abraham Edel and Elizabeth Flower
Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985
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John Dewey and James H. Tufts first published *Ethics* in 1908, with an extensively revised second edition appearing in 1932. Although Part II of the second edition, written by Dewey, was subsequently published separately under the title, *Theory of the Moral Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960, ed. by Arnold Isenberg), the present volume is the first republication of the entire *Ethics* since the 1932 edition. It contains an introduction by Abraham Edel and Elizabeth Flower.

Ethics was intended primarily as a college textbook but its breadth and scope go considerably beyond what one typically finds in textbooks today. Part I, entitled, "The Beginnings and Growth of Morality," and written by Tufts, traces the development of morality from early group life, through the transition from custom to conscience, to the moral thinking of the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans and early Christians. It concludes with a brief sketch of "modern moral consciousness," including the theories of Kant and Mill. Highly interpretive, as any such account must be, this nonetheless is admirably done and clearly written, and provides a good background to what is to follow. Part II, written by Dewey, focusses upon the ideas of the Good, the Right and Virtue. It contains some of Dewey's best work on moral philosophy, and decidedly some of his best writing – perhaps because the material was extensively rewritten from the earlier edition. Dewey integrates historical and literary references into his analysis, giving it both continuity with the background material in Part I and a sense of being part of the larger fabric of humanistic inquiry in general. Part III deals with what has come to be called "applied ethics." It ranges over various social, political and economic issues (including business ethics) and concludes with a chapter on marriage and the family. It is the only part of the book that has not held up well over the years; Dewey himself noted in 1949 that it had already become dated. Dewey wrote chapters 16 and 17 on social problems and the political order, and Tufts wrote the remainder.

Part II contains the most challenging material, philosophically. Although Dewey does not claim to be setting forth a complete moral theory his analysis provides the broad outlines of such a theory, and contains much that would repay careful study by contemporary philosophers. That it should do so, when it was intended originally for students, attests to the extent to which quality philosophy, properly presented, can be accessible to both professionals and non-professionals alike.

His account builds upon the historical examination in Part I, and also upon the brief account of morality as growth in the introduction. In the latter, Dewey and Tufts argue that as bodily needs gradually became more adequately met in earlier man, new ends emerged, pre-

senting new challenges to reason. "Psychologically this means," they say, "that whereas at the beginning we want what our body calls for, we soon come to want things which the mind takes an interest in" (p. 13). As this "rationalization" of conduct proceeds, with the development of poetry, myth and theories about the world, conflicts among the emerging ends develop. Reason must adjudicate those as well as seek means to uncontested ends. Meeting this challenge marks the transition from customary to reflective morality. It is not, however, until "the more rational and social conduct" is itself valued as good that morality in its distinctive form begins to emerge. Moral theory itself is just an extension in a sustained and systematic way of the kind of thinking the ordinary person engages in when questioning custom, tradition and parental or societal authority in asking how he ought to act.

On this view, it becomes important to be able to assess competing ends, or goods. Here Dewey challenges the standard hedonistic account, dating at least as far back as Epicurus, that maximizing pleasure is the criterion; and he rejects as well the more recent account of Mill's that seeks to establish qualitative differences among pleasures. The pleasures associated with most actions are so unpredictable, Dewey thinks, as to make it pointless to try to guide conduct by calculating them. If, on the other hand, we limit the relevant pleasures to those that are relatively predictable, because they are associated with the kind of person one is, then, Dewey says, "we have really set up the man's existing character as the criterion" (p. 193). The kind-hearted man will derive pleasure from one thing, the malicious from another. If, then, we say with Mill that some pleasures are simply "higher" than others, we find that this cannot be sustained either. Pleasures in isolation cannot be so compared. "There is nothing intrinsically higher," he says "in the enjoyment of a picture or an instructive book than there is in that of food – that is, when the satisfaction is taken apart from the bearings and relationships of the object in life as a connected whole" (p. 197). To establish this bearing requires reflection. We are confronted continuously, not only with pleasures, but with feelings, desires, wants and approvals. These are among the data of the moral life. What is required is that we reflect upon

these, seeing what we like, desire, or approve *after* reflection, with only that constituting what is desirable or likely to afford satisfaction.

One cannot be sure here whether Dewey is denying that there *is* anything which can properly be considered intrinsically good in isolation from other things, or whether he is saying that what is intrinsically good is not, in the end, what is important, and that only those things which are found to be good in their interconnections with the whole of life can be called morally good.

In any event, the process of reflection also requires that we take into account the various claims, demands and expectations we encounter as part of our social life. William James before him had located the source of obligation in claims; and earlier the Stoics had seen that duties arise from the relationships we hold to others. For Dewey, these considerations give rise to the notion of Right. He says that

> . . . these demands of others are not just so many special demands of so many different individuals. They are generalized into laws; they are formulated as standing claims of "society" in distinction from those of individuals in their isolated severalty. When considered as claims and expectations, they constitute the Right in distinction from the Good. But their ultimate function and effect is to lead the individual to broaden his conception of the Good; they operate to induce the individual to feel that nothing is good for himself which is not also a good for others. (p. 225)

This establishes the Right as a moral category independent of the Good. But it still leaves open the question of how one goes about determining what is right; it leaves us still in want of a moral criterion.

Two particularly timely ideas emerge in this connection. First when a claim a person is assessing turns out to be one that he himself sets forth, then he must, "in the degree in which he is fair-minded, acknowledge it to be a common good, and hence binding upon his judgment and action" (p. 230). In more contemporary terms, the appeal here is to a principle of universalizability. If you make claims against

others, and take them to be justifiably made, then to be consistent you must be prepared to honor similar claims against yourself; the good they represent must be taken to be a common good. Relatedly – and it is not clear that Dewey sees a distinction between these two ideas – he also appeals to a principle of reciprocity.

> A man would not steal if there were no value placed by him on property; even a thief resents having what he has stolen taken from him. If there were no such thing as good faith, there could be no fraud. The wrongdoer counts upon good faith and honesty and good faith in others; otherwise there would be nothing beneficial to him in violating these ties. Wrong consists in faithlessness to that upon which the wrongdoer counts when he is judging and seeking for what is good to him. (p. 230)

In short, the wrongdoing consists in violating a principle of reciprocity. But now, when one has reflected on proposed courses of action – gone through the imaginative rehearsal that provides his model for deliberation – what assurance does he have that he will have judged rightly? None, of course. But the Right, Dewey says, "expresses the way in which the good of a number of persons, held together by intrinsic ties, becomes efficacious in the regulation of the members of a community" (p. 228). So there is always a ready test of the soundness of one's judgment. In making a judgment and affirming its correctness, one is "implicitly putting forth a social claim, something therefore to be tested and confirmed by further trials by others" (p. 231).

Virtue, the third of the main concepts Dewey examines, likewise requires recognition of the underlying distinction between customry and reflective morality. Virtues *may* stand for nothing more than conventionally approved acts; but for reflective morality they consist of dispositions rooted in interests in reflectively approved objects. These objects may vary, however, so the most that can be specified are certain *qualities* of interest. These are wholeheartedness, persistence and impartiality. Dispositions rooted in interests having these qualities constitute virtues. This gives them a unity:

> At one time persistence and endurance in the face of obstacles is the most prominent feature; then the attitude is the excellence called courage. At another time, the trait of impartiality and equity is uppermost, and we call it justice. At other times, the necessity for subordinating immediate satisfactions of a strong appetite or desire to a comprehensive good is the conspicuous feature. Then the disposition is denominated temperance, self control. When the prominent phase is the need for thoughtfulness, for consecutive and persistent attention, in order that these other qualities may function, the interest receives the name of moral wisdom, insight, conscientiousness. In each case the difference is one of emphasis only. (p. 258)

So we can say that when a sustained and abiding interest in objects approved by reflection upon the Good and the Right becomes dispositional – that is, when it becomes a trait of character in the person in whom the interest inheres – that trait becomes a virtue. This confirms Dewey's further claim that in judging, one's *self* is in the making, for better or worse, and that for this reason character and conduct cannot ultimately be separated. Judging morally is part of a process of determining what sort of person one is going to be. This means furthermore that there is no conflict between a morality of right and an ethics of virtue. Both are required to complete the moral picture.

Where does this leave us, then, with regard to understanding Dewey's normative theory. Is he, in contemporary terms, a teleologist or a deontologist; and in either case, of what sort?

Here one finds Dewey's account frustrating. It helps little to say that he was little interested in such classifications. Properly understood, a moral theory about rightness must *be* one or the other, whether or not its proponent has an interest in establishing which it is. And being able to make such a determination enables one more easily to place in perspective the rest of what he says. It helps a little more to remember that Dewey does not claim to be setting forth a complete moral theory but only to be highlighting the truths that lie within

the different theories he examines. But even then, one wants those truths to be consistent with one another. Dewey *says* that moral judgments are judgments of value (p. 263). This makes it sound as though he is a teleologist of some sort. But he also says that wrongness consists in violating a principle of reciprocity. And that is the sort of thing one would expect a deontologist to say.

Let us explore this further by noting that Dewey rejects the standard teleological account which takes happiness to be the ultimate end, whether, as for the egoist, it be happiness for oneself, or, as for the utilitarian, of people generally. Happiness, rather,

> . . . is a cautionary direction, saying that when we judge an act, accomplished or proposed, with reference to approval and disapproval, we should first consider its consequences in general, and then its special consequences with respect to whatever affects the well-being of others. As a standard it provides a consistent point of view to be taken in all deliberation, but it does not pretend to determine in advance precisely what constitutes the general welfare or common good. (p. 281)

The end itself is neither happiness nor self-realization, but growth (p. 306). The process of pursuing that end reflectively, persistently and with integrity is virtue. Understood in this way, Dewey's account anticipates in many ways Simone de Beauvoir's in *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* in which the only absolute end becomes creative freedom – a notion not altogether dissimilar from Dewey's growth – where that comprises the qualities of continuity and consistency that give life authenticity.

But does not this whole account feed back into itself? We act rightly and virtuously by pursuing the end of growth; but that end itself consists in the process of acting rightly and virtuously. Tacitly appealing to a principle of universalizability does not help because that requires of us only consistency, and that is a purely formal notion that cannot provide content to right conduct. And appeal to a principle of reciprocity – which, on the face of it, would seem to

confirm a deontological criterion – does not help either, when we take account of Dewey's understanding of principles in general.

> *Rules are practical; they are habitual ways of doing things. But principles are intellectual; they are the final methods used in judging suggested courses of action.* . . . A moral principle, then, is not a command to act or forbear acting in a given way: *it is a tool for analyzing a special situation, the right or wrong being determined by the situation in its entirety, and not by the rule as such.* (p. 280)

This suggests that neither rules nor principles can ultimately provide the criterion of right conduct. They are just among the tools for analyzing particular situations, in much the way that happiness as a standard provides a point of view from which to approach moral problems. This means that the principle of reciprocity must be viewed in the same light.

But if the above militates against reading Dewey as a deontologist, it does so equally against reading him as a teleologist. If he is denying that principles of any sort can ultimately tell us what is right and wrong then no teleological theory can be adequate either, for teleological theories of *any* sort can only be stated in terms of principles. It seems, then, that no regulative theory of ethics (as we may call any theory which founds morality upon rules or principles) adequately captures his view. His position cannot even be understood on the model of a situation-ethicist, since the situationist dispenses only with rules (and in a wholesale way that is out of keeping with the spirit of Dewey's approach) and retains a clear commitment to a principle, which must be applied directly in particular situations.

What then is Dewey's position? I suggest that he is holding a deontological position that might be called *contextualist*. His view seems to be that there is *no* set criterion that always and unfailingly tells us what is right or wrong in particular cases. Many things are relevant: principles of consistency and reciprocity, what sort of self is in the making, whether or not one is furthering a common good, whether one is seeking satisfaction in objects which constitute goods

for others, and so on. But no one of these (or, we may suppose, any particular combination) dictates in advance what we should do. One must simply weigh *all* of the considerations one finds to be relevant in the fullness of the context, and then make the best judgment he can. This may sometimes require giving precedence to standard teleological considerations; at other times it may require giving precedence to considerations more generally regarded as deontological. To do this in a sustained way, cultivating a virtuous character in the manner described, is to pursue growth as an end. As with the existentialists, everything in the last analysis comes down to personal decision. But for Dewey it must be personal decision that is the product of reflective judgment, where this requires all the sensitivity, wisdom, and consideration of self and others that one can bring to bear. What that outcome should be in any particular case, Dewey is telling us, moral philosophy itself cannot say.

In their introduction, Abraham Edel and Elizabeth Flower discuss the changes that occur between the 1908 and the 1932 editions of *Ethics*. These they see traceable in part to historical events, particularly increasing industrialization and the trauma of World War One, and partly to changes in the social sciences, particularly psychology and anthropology. The latter led, they argue, to a rejection of a linear view of moral evolution in favor of a more complex account of the relationship between customary and reflective morality. It also led to a replacement of the traditional account of reason in ethics by the notion of intelligence, resting on a new psychology. All of this is underpinned by Dewey's reconstructed notions of the individual and society.

The changes in the sociocultural dimension from 1908 to 1932 were "slow, uneven, and not for the most part self-consciously announced," they maintain, whereas those in the analysis of ethical concepts were more clearly articulated. Here they find particularly noteworthy Dewey's analysis of the right in terms of claims arising from inherent relationships. They point out that this marks a conceptual shift away from the nineteenth century's individualism in which duties were conceived as arising out of transactions.

The introduction will mainly interest those who approach the

Ethics from a scholarly and historical standpoint. There remain the further questions of how the sociocultural analysis has held up in the intervening years since 1932 and, as importantly, how the philosophical analysis holds up in its own right.

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John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953
Volume 5: 1929-1930
Jo Ann Boydston, ed.
Introduction by Paul Kurtz
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John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953
Volume 6: 1931-1932
Jo Ann Boydston, ed.
Introduction by Sidney Ratner
Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984
xxiii + 616 pp. $35.00

A review of two volumes of an ongoing series collecting a writer's complete works must respond to the scholarly interest for which this series is necessarily intended and which it serves very well. It should describe the particular works present in these volumes, how they both grow out of prior works and prepare for those yet to come and the themes which these writings share. There is also, however, the experience of reading straight through the 890 pages comprising 139 separate works in Volumes 5 (1929-1930) and 6 (1931-1932) of *The Later Works of John Dewey* (which are also Volumes 25 and 26 of the 36 in *The Complete Works*) and the 400 pages of introductory and editorial material. Taking two two-year slices out of the middle of a