

PHI 325

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John Dewey

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### John Dewey Paper

In John Dewey's "Reconstruction in Moral Conceptions", there are several topics that are written about that I would consider integral to his overall thesis. Some of these topics being, the fixed end (and its problems), intelligence as a choice, the morality in intelligent action(s), and moral inquiry (and how ends can grow and be flexible). In this paper, I will briefly discuss John Dewey's life and a few important things about him, then I will delve in to the reading and further explain each of the above concepts, as well as relate one of the concepts to the Ben & Jerry's case that we briefly discussed in class.

John Dewey was born in the year 1859, at the beginning of the Civil War, and died in 1952, which is post World War II. He attended John Hopkins, as it was the first secondary school to offer a Ph.D.. In the late 1800s he was offered a job at the University of Chicago. This is where he meets Jane Adams, who was a big influence in immigration policies at the time. The rest of his life involved

writing more works about concepts in philosophy. At one point he resigned from his position at the University of Chicago and got a job at a University in the NorthEast region of New York. He continued to teach and write until his death on June 2, 1952. Dewey was alive for such a long period of time and there is no way possible that it didn't change the way he thought about mankind and the morality of some of the choices made during his lifetime from the Civil War to the end of World War II, the slavery in the South to the atom bomb in Japan.

Dewey believed mainly, that we as citizens who live together in a community, need to apply intelligent thought to every decision we make and every action we carry out, so that we can make decisions and act in such a way that we are bettering our community and in turn bettering our own lives, because the two work hand in hand. These actions would change the conditions that we, as a community are living in and this can help us in many ways, whether it be economical, socially, or otherwise. Dewey says on page 432 *"The submission of a generic end and law to determination by the concrete situation entails us to transfer the weight and burden of morality to intelligence."* What he [Dewey] is saying is that when people try to go by a "one size fits all" kind of law, people who are having moral "dilemmas" are going to rely on their intelligence to help them determine the morally right thing(s) to do and this can be a bad thing sometimes, because some people are not as intelligent as others and this can lead them to

making the morally wrong decisions and thus being a detriment to the community.

He also says on page 432 that every situation is unique. Every choice is unique to the experience. There is a missed opportunity if you don't act on some good. What he means here is that people who decide to skip out on taking advantage of a productive opportunity, they could possibly miss out on doing some good for not only their self but others and the community as well. I think that any opportunity you get to make a difference in the community you live in, you should do it, because you don't always know the extent of the good you could be doing, and the way I see it, some good is better than none at all.

The case that I thought related to Dewey's writing the most was the Ben & Jerry's case. We briefly discussed in class the Ben & Jerry's case and how they had set up the company to where the highest paid employee could only make 7 times what the lowest paid employee can make. This fits in to what Dewey says about using intelligent choice in the actions you make so that you are bettering the community and not just your own life. This is because when the company decides to do something this way and make sure that the wage gap from top to bottom is not astronomical, they can do things with the rest of their profits they don't use on payroll to better the community around them, as well as keeping their top to bottom wage gap at a fair range. Some of the things that Ben &

Jerry's do with their profits are help with revitalizing the community they are in by doing service projects as well as being able to spend more for their products they need to make their product.

This ties in to my next point in how they are actually making morally conscious decisions to make the community a better place. They only buy locally sourced organic products they need to make the ice cream. They buy the milk from farmers in the community who don't give the cattle growth hormones, they buy all their produce locally, and I also read in another article they are making breakthroughs in reducing their industrial carbon footprint and reducing emissions from their plants however they can. I also found out in my own research, that Ben & Jerry's also uses their money to invest and donate to other causes like medical research and school funding for lower income areas to help the community grow instead of remaining stuck in poverty.

John Dewey believed in making morally conscious decisions and using intelligence to make said decisions, so that we as individuals can improve the community we live in, which will in turn make our own lives better. I think Ben & Jerry have been making decisions the exact way that Dewey would make them. They donate to good causes and are constantly giving back to the community that they live in. I discussed John Dewey's life, his principles that he wrote about in our reading, and explained how Ben & Jerry's related and follow Dewey's basic

principles. I have created a way to better understand the main points of Dewey's writings and made clear sense of everything, and hopefully we as individuals can continue to follow these and make the world a better place.