

Liberalism and the Moral Significance of Individualism: A Deweyan View

H.G. Callaway, *Institute for Philosophy, University of Erlangen*

A liberalism which scorns all individualism is fundamentally mis-guided. This is the chief thesis of this paper. To argue for it, I look closely at some key concepts. The concepts of morality and individualism are crucial. I emphasize Dewey on the "individuality of the mind," and a Deweyan discussion of language, communication, and community. The thesis links individualism and liberalism, and since appeals to liberalism have broader appeal in the present context of discussions, I start with consideration of liberalism. The aim is to dispute overly restrictive conceptions and explore a broader perspective. To bring the argument to a close, attention turns first to Dewey on value inquiry, to Dewey's "democratic individualism" (cf. Dewey 1939, 179), and to the concept of moral community. Disputing the acquisitiveness of utilitarian influences in classical liberalism, a Deweyan argument from the nature of moral community supports re-emphasis on individualism in contemporary liberal thought.

1. The Ordinary Language of American Liberalism

Reigning confusions persist in contemporary American usage linking liberalism with a specific American form of the mid-twentieth century - and often with specific debates, issues, and campaign strategies. Liberalism as a leading principle, and its deeper meaning, are lost from sight. In popular perception, former Presidents Reagan and Bush are conservatives and other prominent figures such as the Kennedy brothers are liberals. "Liberal" is the opposite of "conservative," one point beyond dispute.

Liberalism favors an active role for government and scorns the "individualism" espoused by the conservatives, as an ideology of economic powers that be. Liberals hanker after the "Roosevelt coalition" including minorities, labor, and the "little man." Liberalism is against big business. It has, at least until recently, favored labor unions, the welfare state, and affirmative action programs. Liberals tax and spend. Yet, they feel guilty. They are soft-hearted but maybe hard-headed enough to have vested interests in expanding bureaucracy. Such is the picture.

At a higher level of sophistication, we recognized that some labelled "conservative" in the American political context have claims on the mantle of liberalism: the point is made by distinguishing modern liberalism from "classical liberalism." But classical liberals count as conservatives, and they stand on the right. Our classical liberals usually acquiesce in this classification (otherwise they are "libertarians" and do fit among the orthodox right). A problem for classical liberals irked by the label "conservative" is that "liberalism," as normally used, represents a movement of the orthodox left. But classical liberals usually stands in the orthodox right. Thus, paradoxically, a classical liberal is not

a liberal. Fuzzy adversarial thinking effectively insulates us from in-depth re-evaluation of the liberal tradition. Aim for an overview of liberalism: to recover the continuity of the liberal tradition.

The categories are strained to the breaking point. Part of the reason is that the US is founded on government of, by, and for the people. Thus, we would think that the established order (the right? . . . the left?) favors democracy and popular government. Moreover, America was largely peopled by emigrants seeking to escape economic, political, or religious oppression. That they came, and continue to come, is an affirmation of American ideals. But on the other hand, no diploma of moral virtues was required to get through Ellis Island. The conviction lingers that our established order requires opposition on the left to defend those exploited or discriminated against, though there is also much suspicion of ideology. The question arises: does "liberalism" now represent an elite antithetical to the origins and proper development of fundamental ideas?

Just how respectable is the orthodox right in terms of our founding traditions? If it fully owned up to them, we would have little need of an opposition to the left (cf. Dewey 1957). On the other hand, it's unclear what the orthodox left has to complain about. They seem to have the system (since 1933) which they want. Has this system failed to deal with the problems of abuse of power against the disadvantaged? What, by the way, does the left have to be so guilty about? Similar questions can be multiplied. But my point is to urge that the oppositions are fundamentally flawed: a "modern" liberalism with no room for genuine individualism has surrendered its soul (we suspect it has become the political representative of the bureaucracy and its retainers); a classical liberalism of atomized economic individualism undermines the independence which it claims to support. It provides no effective criterion of value beyond material success, fostering its purchase at too high a price.

All liberalism has lost its good name in American politics. Politics has often been paralyzed. We have repeatedly elected a Democratic congress and a Republican President in recent decades. The American people, in their wisdom, decided they wanted to have their cake and eat it too. The bills have been sent to coming generations. We may doubt that America knows what it stands for in the world - now that "real existing socialism" has failed. This is a potentially dangerous situation both for the US and for the rest of the world. Given that major political and social currents of American thought are rooted in the liberal tradition, but that "modern" liberal politics threaten to grind to a halt, we need to reinvent liberalism. What follows is a basic value-orientation for that goal.

2. Individualism and Early Liberalism

A central point of reference is the early modern movement in Western Europe and America connected with the revolt against oligarchical government and officially established religion. This movement is provided with historical identity by the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 - though the "revolution" was more like a bloodless coup in which the people (including commercial interests) and the aristocracy rose against the absolutist pretensions of James II. 1688 established the predominance of parliament over the monarchy. In philosophy, this is the liberalism of John Locke (and later Montesquieu), the liberalism

incorporated into the Declaration of Independence by Jefferson and into the US constitution. We think of it primarily in terms of government existing for the sake of the governed, the bill of rights, democracy, and the division of powers. We think of it too in terms of its continued development in 19th century Britain, J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*, and the progressive reforms of the liberal party during the last century. Somewhere in the nineteenth century it seems to merge with that "classical liberalism" which appears (not completely without justification) in the demonology of critics as the ideology of big business. This breach in the liberal tradition represents the intrusion of romantic collectivism (whether in the self-aggrandizement of the business world, as nationalism, or in the form of state socialism). This was a revolt against and within liberalism, symbolized by the effective dissolution of the British liberal party following World War I. To recover continuity in the liberal tradition, we must see through and heal this breach.

Liberalism originated in the demands of citizens and taxpayers to be free of arbitrary governmental actions ("no taxation without representation") and perhaps more basically with a demand by early protestants, and others, for freedom of religious confession - thus in opposition to established churches. In significant degree, the early victories of liberalism in Britain and in the US may properly be viewed as victories won by "non-conformist" protestants over established aristocratic-theological powers. The two demands are closely related, though we are now more concerned with freedom from the demand for ideological conformity that we are with religious freedom.

In pre-modern societies, government was often a matter of rule by self-selecting aristocracies which had a primary eye for their own narrow interests. Moreover, religion played a role binding populations and their local hierarchies, so that to "step out" of the established religion (as we so mildly put it today) was to effectively isolate oneself from society (cf. Dewey 1948, 46-47).

There can be no doubt that early liberal movements drew powerful support from new economic interests in commerce and from the early industrial middle classes. These people rose up against the hegemony of the landed aristocracy in Europe. If there had been no new economic forms to support their efforts, they would not have been nearly so successful. These economic developments - linked to fundamental discoveries and developments in science and technology - served to "empower" a religious expression (including, certainly "left-wing" protestantism) which emphasized each individual's personal relationship to God and the ideal of life based on a personal reading or interpretation of scripture. In contrast with traditional established religion (where interpretations are provided by the priesthood) this new expression was distinctly individualistic. In Catholic countries, similar attitudes to traditional religion and its place in social power structures took the form of anti-clericalism - including Marxist anti-clericalism. In Judaism, powerful movements toward reform and liberalization were also evident.

It appears that placing religion on a personal basis, as among the radical protestants, had the effect of de-politicizing basic value orientations. (If each is entitled to his or her own interpretation, then these interpretations become poor instruments for mobilizing great masses under opposing banners.) The development of religions of conscience also paved the way for greater individualization in other areas of life. De-politicalization of

deeper personal beliefs and values was needed in the victory of parliamentarianism: we require a certain detachment and tolerance to accept the notion of "loyal opposition" at all. In much of the world, "loyal opposition" has remained a contradiction in terms. Consider the prevalence and motivation of the one party state.

The point provides some insight into the origins of liberal tolerance out of earlier religious wars. We suspect that pre-modern religions played the role in the religious wars of prior centuries that various political ideologies have played in the present century: that of social-moral "justification" for collective conflicts and the static hierarchies required for their prosecution. If we are to avoid large-scale collective conflicts in the future, then a similar de-politicalization of moral conflicts recommends itself by its historic role in the origins of parliamentary democracy (cf. Russett 1993). I return to this point in my discussion of moral community.

It is difficult to imagine the prosperous members of the new economic class, in the early modern period, not feeling somewhat uncomfortable - still sitting in the lesser pews of the established churches - where a doctrinal twist favoring the aristocracy in the superior pews might have proved helpful in advancing a theological career and settling a local dispute. In opposition to the traditional (pre-industrial, pre-democratic) interrelations of church, aristocracy, and community, liberalism may be viewed as a political expression denying old and hallowed wisdom: "salvation" may indeed be found outside the established community religion and independent of the established forms of the political and social order. Dissent from the established order can empower itself, once tolerance is established, by means of social-political, religious, and economic reforms.

Liberalism became a political force instituting new forms of social organization (such as commercial and industrial enterprises, new religions, etc.) and ultimately defeated traditional aristocratic powers based upon the ownership and control of land. Still, it is the worst sort of Marxist pandering to resentment to see this as a purely economic movement, so that all talk of "the rights of man" and limited government is an excuse for the power of a new class. I have no doubt that these doctrines have been misused in this way, but to stigmatize early liberalism as *merely* a rationalization for power throws out the baby with the bathwater. This is not to deny that otherwise unemployed aristocrats may have continued careers of influence, or propagated typical attitudes, within the new forms of economic power. Instead the point is placed in an appropriate context of large-scale developments.

We need greater appreciation of the extent to which oppression of the many was a regular feature of traditional social organization. That this has been carried over into modern social forms, to some degree, is a point beyond reasonable doubt. However, modern social forms also allow for progressive liberation of human energies via reforms. In order to effectively reinvent liberalism, means must be found to further reforms. Supporting means of economic empowerment are central in this: it must be possible for people to become economically independent - to set themselves up in business for instance.

Reform is an unending enterprise. In a changing social world, new opportunities for abuse of power (niches for would-be aristocrats, one might say) are always with us. Innovation, insight, and reforms are needed to control these developments. Thus liberalism cannot put the requisite individualism aside, for extended periods, without risking retrograde developments - infestations of new forms of oppression. Still, there is reason to think this is just what we have done. From the Great Depression, through World War II, and 45 years of the Cold War, liberalism has been on a war footing (cf. the discussion of Hook and Niebuhr in Westbrook, 1990). We are yet to recover.

3. Science, Individualism and the Modern World

Individualism was an element in early modern science, and just as new economic forms must be viewed as the empowering condition of new, more democratic, and liberal political organization (people tend not to listen to the powerless), the new science of nature was the essential empowering condition of the new economic forms of early liberal society. As Dewey put the point, there is a "mutual interdependence of the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution" (Dewey 1948, 41). My point is to underline the role of independent judgment, or intellectual conscience, in these developments. I agree with Dewey in seeing political changes made possible by science and industry as "emancipating the individual from bonds of class and custom" and "producing a political organization which depends less upon superior authority and more on voluntary choice" (ibid, 44), and I want to focus on the role of individuality in scientific innovation.

Dewey argued that "the only creative individuality" is "that of mind" (Dewey 1930, 91). The point can be expressed by the opposition between individuality of opinion or viewpoint on the one hand and conformity or rebellion on the other. For, both conformity in opinion and rebellion involve an essentially "other-directed" element. Basically, to conform, one must conform to a particular group, and much the same goes for rebellion. It is essentially a reversal. There is no creativity in difference for its own sake.

The social benefits to conformists have never been easily overlooked. Insofar as we acquiesce in the views and purposes of those around us, we put ourselves into a position to take part in pre-existing joint activities and become part of a going social concern. Integration is vastly simplified where the accepted goal of the individual is to seek honor in the established terms of his or her own society. For social honor is the expected result of meeting (or exceeding) established expectations. Rebellion is the normal result, when social pressures for conformity become too great.

To think for ourselves, on the other hand, requires that we question and examine accepted belief, though this questioning tends to create a gap and tension between the questioner and social environment. The paradox is that viable community life requires both that conformity to established standards be rewarded and that critical insight not be destroyed.

Thus, the most profound social-intellectual accomplishments of humanity are closely connected to those institutional and political frameworks which enable the questions, doubt, and hypothesis formation of independent thought to proceed without generating

destructive consequences. The most profound questions of human nature are those which relate creative thought to its social and political expression and infrastructures. Whatever the established social and political structures of a time, there will always be temptation to insulate them from change (along with one's position) by means of control over the powers of innovation. Thus, there is good reason to insist that freedom of thought, and its expression in speech, are crucial to any viable, human political order, though this requires renewed elaboration in a technological setting where even the printed word seems under threat of obsolescence and communication has gone global and electronic. Freedom cannot maintain itself easily as something purely internal or spiritual, and there is good reason to insist that "we must turn to the general human struggle for political, economic, and religious liberty, for freedom of thought, speech, assemblage and creed, to find significant reality in the conception of freedom of will" (Dewey 1922, 9). Freedom requires outer expression, and it obtains a paradigmatic expression in science.

Modern science is a paradigm of undistorted human cognitive efforts and undistorted communications - science is rational, if anything is. Wherever it is threatened with censorship or distortions of any sort, social problems will be found brewing beneath the surface. For the impetus to censor the sciences and other scholarly disciplines arises primarily from the force of established patterns of thought - and the social and professional arrangements (including personnel decisions) erected upon such patterns. Just because there is no final and foolproof definition of good scientific practice and method (the methods of the sciences draw upon new paradigms of scientific success and thus evolve), they are ever open to tampering and slanted judgments which take more interest in who knows whom than in who knows what. Though not prominent, as Russell put it, "the element of individualism in scientific thought . . . is nevertheless essential" (Russell, 1945, 599)

When an investigator arrives at a new hypothesis or theory, the chief concern is that the idea seems right. The investigator does not surrender insight to the force of reigning doctrine, for if he or she did, there would be no venture into new possibilities. Moreover, the investigator hopes to persuade others by means of rational argumentation, experimentation, and evidence. (Or, in the extreme, to persuade others to accept new forms of evidence and argumentation.) Those who do otherwise are not practicing science. Though the forms of evidence and argumentation are variable, scientific practice - culminating in experiment and prediction - also provides a test of variations. Hence, however much evidence the history of science may provide regarding "irrationality" within science as institutionally defined, failing arguments to overcome our conviction of the reality and efficacy of scientific thought (thus upsetting our conviction of the lack of physical/natural efficacy in mere social connivance), history will produce no convincing grounds to question the potentiality of the investigator's novel insight. Individualism of the mind is crucial to science.

We retain good grounds for accepting modern science's self-description as a progressive liberation from prejudice and authority as the final tribunals of belief. It is still the independent variable in the expansion and correction of knowledge claims, and individuality of mind remains central in the potentialities of the modern world. Thus, we have an epistemic argument for individuality. It is required for scientific development and a key

to the human potentiality for control over nature. It is also a requirement of social-scientific understanding of the human world, its evolving problems, and the formulation of reforms. Individuality as required for scientific progress is a social good, a condition of human societies which we can preserve or destroy. It is a social condition of the possibility of knowledge - with definite normative implications.

The facilitation of individual differences by political and moral means, in the modern world, is doubtlessly a partial reflection of the role of differences in coming to know. In order to facilitate the preservation, development, and correction of knowledge claims, we are restrained from overly strenuous regulation of individual belief - regulation which cannot be effected by rational means. As the case of Galileo shows, neither can we expect some *a priori* limits on the kinds of beliefs which science may pronounce upon. It made no sense, in terms of traditional religious world-views, that God should create the world as the stage of our moral tribulations and *not* put us at the center of creation; but it was precisely such elements of human worth and dignity, as traditionally conceived, which were subverted by the Copernican theory of the heavens.

The example does not bode well for absolute or *a priori* distinctions between natural sciences and human sciences or *Geisteswissenschaften*. It is *not* that science prevents us from bestowing meaning on human life; but it does *constrain* us, in spite of all sentiment to the contrary, in what meaning we bestow. The meanings we create for human life and efforts (our values and value claims) are subject to correction in this sense. For science, and the progress of science, show us that even our values are no mere internal development of mind or spirit. We are in constant intercourse with a world we can never completely know or control. In Deweyan terms, science shows us that we can never completely escape contingency in favor of absolute security. Thus it advises that we accept the contingencies of human life which arise from within the thinker - freedom of thoughts and conscience - as the root of collective intelligence, as against collective egoism. This is clearly the paradigmatic attitude of liberal thought. Accepting these internal contingencies gives us a better shot at controlling external contingency.

Moral strengths exhibited by traditional empiricisms, realisms, and materialisms are evidence of the power over nature arising from acceptance and scientific conceptualization of its contingencies. Nature, to be controlled, must first be obeyed. In this way, the ancient conception of fate is shattered into a multitude of facts subject to control and prediction. Strongly rationalist and idealist philosophies, on the other hand, suggest a hopeful and hopeless acquiescence in community denial of contingencies - a romantic collectivism. Escape from contingency is sought in stability of beliefs and attitudes serving to support a given social structure (cf. Dewey 1929b, ch. 1). Thus undue emphasis upon security by means of preserving established values and beliefs is conservative in the most fundamental sense. Such conservatism is always with us, and requires the counterbalance provided by the liberal emphasis on the freedom of thought and action. For, where given free reign, this perennial conservatism, founded on "existential" angst as one might say, (exaggerated fears of disrupting basic social and economic relations) is inconsistent with the development and maintenance of knowledge: it tends to undermine the social conditions

tions for the possibility of knowledge. Moreover, much of human history has been darkly ruled by this conservatism. We dare not ignore the danger of falling into it.

4. Creativity, Language and Community

A chief contemporary problem of liberalism is apparent conflict with the felt need for community; moreover this need for community is no phantom of the contemporary social imagination. It is a consideration forced upon American society, for instance, by the continual disintegration of our cities and corresponding social isolation of considerable segments of the population. It is a consideration forced on us by the persistence of racism and prejudice. America has always been a moral problem seeking a solution; and the sure sign of this problematic status is our history of slavery and the persistence of poverty and racial prejudice.

Before turning to these problems, however, I will sketch a conception of moral community and its relationship to individualism. This conception is modelled on the social character of language. It involves an epistemic concept of moral community in analogy with an epistemic conception of the social character of language.

It is a mistake to hold that either language or morality are social because "society" decides, once and for all, the rules of the respective "games." This I want to designate as the social-conventional conception. (It embodies a typically rationalist over-idealization in attenuated form). Just as semantic rules of language evolve in the face of social and cognitive development, so that definitions may be modified or thrown out and supplanted by others (cf. Callaway 1981, 64-67, 1985, 51-59 and 1988, 13-15) moral norms are subject to evolution and development.

More specifically, language is social, because it involves a concern for the beliefs and knowledge claims of others. Different and even conflicting claims may be mediated through language, and argumentation mediates this process. A special form of the mistake involved in the social-conventional conception of language is quite commonly expressed by over-reverance for conventions of everyday language. Over-reverance for existing semantic conventions has a special role in this. The point is closely connected with the decline of "ordinary language" philosophy.

Rather than thinking of ordinary language as isolated and insulated from language developed in specialized spheres of inquiry, e.g. within the natural and social sciences, I want to emphasize the mediating function of ordinary language. It is the broadest common forum of a society capable of mediating development of knowledge within specialized forums and capable of mediating our particular experience. It facilitates the interaction of individuals and subgroups and their differing contexts of knowledge. Mediation of differing contexts of knowledge is carried out by means of argumentation, and semantic rules slowly evolve to reflect conclusions established.

Similarly, according to Dewey, moral values are distinguished from values generally, not because "society" defines moral norms once and for all, as valid in all possible circumstances. (This is impossible, since we keep inventing new kinds of situations.)

Instead, moral values are distinct because they involve consideration of the interests of others. We each depend on cooperation in most areas of life, and this forces a consideration of, and concern for, the interests of others, as a condition of cooperation. Emphasis on potentialities for cooperative activities is fundamental in Dewey's conception of moral values. In contrast with prior liberal thought, Dewey's work involves a sharper focus on the value of cooperative activity, rather than the ends to be achieved in abstraction from social means.

5. Dewey on Utilitarianism and Value Inquiry

Dewey rejected the conception of values most closely associated with classical liberalism - the utilitarian calculus of pleasures (cf. Dewey 1939, 144-45; 1948, 180ff). His arguments serve as an antidote to narrowly empirical conceptions of values. The argument is partly historical. "Since pleasure was an outcome, a result valuable on its own account independently of the active process that achieved it," on the utilitarian view, Dewey argues that "the acquisitive instincts of man were exaggerated at the expense of the creative." Moreover, "in making the end passive and possessive, it made all active operations *mere* tools. Labor was an unavoidable evil to be minimized. Security in possession was the chief thing practically. Material comfort and ease were magnified in contrast with the pains and risk of experimental creation" (1948, 181). The point is that human *activity* is crucial to human good (a point appreciated by the unemployed), and that pleasures obtained without activity are ultimately corrupting of productive and creative powers. This is a point against welfare, and in favor of finding social arrangements which better integrate those now effectively excluded from employment. Welfare is no substitute for fuller social integration. (Similarly, foreign aid is no substitute for freer trade, and charity no substitute for collaboration.)

While utilitarianism and associated liberal movements did facilitate social reform by an attack upon the "evils inherited from the class system of feudalism," still, even where "property was obtained through free competition and not by government favor," the effect was that utilitarianism "gave intellectual confirmation to all those tendencies which make 'business' not a means of social service and an opportunity for personal growth in creative power but a way of accumulating the means of private enjoyments" (1948, 182-3).

The utilitarian conception of value tends to make competition destructive of higher values. It leaves too much scope for cyclical development of destructive forms of competition - prosperity has too often culminated in the recurrent phenomenon of the "gilded age" of conspicuous consumption and new forms of exclusion and class divisions (as "cleverer" forms of competition come to the fore). A deeper concern for liberty, however, provides grounds for Dewey's focus on equality and cooperativeness - "fraternity" in the classical French formulation. For, where legal protection of freedoms of thought and action tend toward empty formalism, undercut by the practices of exclusion and destructive competition, liberalism in outer form with an inner structure akin to feudalistic dependence and manipulation, liberties also come under threat.

A chief fly in the ointment of classical liberalism (as associated with Bentham and the Mills, for instance) is that though we cannot significantly choose whether we are

capable of pleasure and pain, we can significantly choose in what ways we will experience them. The capacity for pleasure and pain has its importance as an element of original human nature. Of greater importance are the various culturally developed and embellished derivative motivations. Utilitarianism provides no significant grounds for selecting among cultural developments of our capacity for pleasure and pain: all preferences count as equal. To the extent that this conception of value came to dominate liberal thought, it undercut higher values.

We choose among our pleasures by projecting values and realizing them. When the values projected depend upon the cooperation of others - as is the case with most basic values - then the values take on a social and hence moral character. What people value is a matter of fact, regardless of how difficult it may be to accurately ascertain these facts. But what is *valuable* is also a matter of fact - of a more theoretical character - and inquiry into the latter presupposes answers to questions regarding what people presently value. Our inquiry on the question of what is valuable (proposed reforms, for instance) presupposes original human nature and its cultural elaborations. We ask how realization of these values may be optimized, given the technological and social means at our disposal and our overall knowledge of the physical and social world around us.

An optimization may require us to introduce some new values and throw out some old ones. Thus, Dewey could write in his 1948 Introduction to the enlarged edition of *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, of his aim to "carry over into any inquiry into human and moral subjects the kind of method (the method of observation, theory as hypothesis, and experimental test) by which understanding of physical nature has been brought to its present pitch." For Dewey, there is no essential difference with moral inquiry, though the needed methods or "intelligence" are not something "ready-made" (Dewey 1948, ix).

We invent new forms of inquiry, and neither is there a once-and-for-all valid form for society. What we will regard as better depends upon a sound social-scientific understanding of existing tendencies and social developments, and we need to keep track of forces tending toward the intensification of destructive competition and deep social and economic inequalities. For the internal threat to freedoms develops out of these forces. We should expect such threats to first manifest themselves via social-economic suppression of critical perspectives and new social-economic formations.

6. Relativism and Value Inquiry

Alternative optimizations may be rendered plausible at a given point in time, calling for different prunings and developments of existing values. Still, Dewey sees this as not essentially different from developments in the natural sciences. When dualities arise, we live with them until further experience provides some resolution. To view them as unresolvable differences, is inconsistent with fallibilism. Tolerance of difference recommends itself but not an acquiescence in fundamentally "irrational" or "incommensurable" differences - which would exclude the possibility of criticism. The latter attitude blocks the road of inquiry. Dualities which arise in accounts of the valuable are a general reflection of our cognitive capabilities, like pluralities of explanation in science. Acquiescence is unalterable dualities, or pluralities of incommensurably different fundamental

values - the usual form this takes is "cultural value-relativism" - amounts to a sceptical stance. It has no greater cogency than a scepticism regarding decisions between scientific alternatives.

For Dewey, there are better and worse solutions to human and social problems (Dewey 1929a, 430), and solutions may require a revision of existing values suited to a superior overall optimization. Moreover, any optimization must reflect a continually evolving awareness of the world, and our means (technical and social) of accomplishing human aims. What was not possible yesterday may become possible today or tomorrow; prediction of the future results of value inquiry is, therefore, no more feasible than is prediction of the development of knowledge.

The evolution of values over time is no more proof of their subjective character than is evolution of natural science over time a proof of its subjectivity. Dewey's position is that value inquiry is empirical in character - much in the sense that inquiry on theoretical postulates retain an empirical character. It is only the failure to relate value claims to evidence which renders them incapable of selection on the basis of evidence. As he put it, "sentences about what *should* be done, . . . are sentences, propositions, judgments, *in the logical sense* of those words only as matter-of-fact grounds are presented in *support* of what is advised, urged, recommended to be done, . . ." (Dewey 1945, 686). Though neither theoretical nor value postulates are logically implied by evidence supporting them, such postulates are supported by the evidence which they systematize and comprehend. Just as a theory in the natural sciences may be rejected in light of the failure of its predictions, a value claim is reasonably rejected on evidence that it cannot be realized. Just as logical inconsistency between two theoretical systems in the natural sciences counts against their conjunction (whether or not they conflict as regards observable predictions), so inconsistency between value claims counts against their conjunction. Just as we have no right to claim an infallible knowledge of the ultimate truth concerning nature, we have no right to claim infallible knowledge of ultimate values. But this does not prevent our making sound judgments regarding better and worse.

The very distinction between "absolute" or "ultimate" values and instrumental values is one which Dewey rejects. (A point, by the way which cuts *against* the notion of pragmatism as mere expediency. First, because Dewey is against ultimate values as unrealizable ideals, thus against any unworldly or "other-worldly" conception of finalities or goals; and second because higher values must optimize and systematize more specific values.) Thus, his value-cognitivism, as we may describe it, does not depend upon any "metaphysical" (or metaethical) proof of the "absolute" possibility that "one form of social life can be better than another," except "relative to the principles and practices of some social world or other" (cf. Williams 1985; Putnam 1990, 1682). William's idea here is that we cannot prove that there is an absolute rather than a relativistic sense to talk of better and worse forms of social life. But Dewey (as Putnam argues) rejects this distinction. His "metaphysics" of values (or finalities) is empirical and anti-essentialist. Our knowledge of the "better" always depends upon empirical research.

Consider the parallel argument that physics does not allow of a "proof" that it is possible to unify the four known fundamental forces in a single theory. Clearly, it would

be silly for physics to give up the search for lack of a proof of the possibility of success. Nor is this conclusion dictated, because the search is only rendered plausible "relative to the principles and practices" of contemporary physics. It would be no less silly to give up moral inquiry while awaiting from metaphysics a "proof" that there exists an "absolute" distinction between better and worse. Proof comes in practice. As in science, the required practice involves room for innovations, and room for innovations requires critical tolerance of alternative proposals and claims: Dewey's "individuality of the mind."

7. Individualism and Moral Community

The argument for the connection between individuality and moral community seeks to show that genuine moral community is impossible without individualism. This is not to deny that moral community is needed to constrain the excesses of individual strivings, including acquisitiveness and destructive competition, it is crucial to see that similar excesses are not exclusively the errors of individuals. Historically, groups have been primarily guilty of them. All tyranny represents excessive expression of collective power over relatively unempowered individuals. (Though there is a blindness regarding this point induced by the inclination to blame great social evils upon those at the top (one thinks of Stalin or Hitler for instance), while forgiving or forgetting all those who cooperated or merely went along. The typical result of excesses on the part of groups and their leadership is to destroy or undermine moral community - to render independent judgment impossible.

Genuine moral community must sustain independent individual perspectives and judgments upon its operations and activities. Where this is not so, the community degenerates into a small-scale "block-universe." All essential questions are regarded as already answered and all chief issues are settled by a (more or less self-interested) conventionalistic-conformist consensus. Strongly ideological conflicts are the precursor of a single social "block universe."

It is a condition for the existence of genuine moral community that an individual in moral conflict within society be able to appeal to the independent judgment of various individuals for support. (This is the idea behind the judicial right to trial by a jury of "peers.") However, where relevant opinion is subject to manipulation and prejudicial pre-conceptions, especially as enforced by various forms of centralizing social-economic dependence, then appeal to independent judgment is pointless. Genuine moral judgment is no longer exercised where effective overall community opinion is dictated by conformity to reigning orthodoxies collectively enforced.

We do not expect a free and independent press where all economic activities, and thus all publication, falls under direct government ownership or control. Where the careers and prospects of editors are subject to governmental whim, we rather expect the public press to be excessively timid. Suspicions also fall heavily upon newspapers whose supply of newsprint is subject to administrative whim. This is a less direct but equally effective means of censorship. Private ownership is a means of empowering independent voices. It is not that control of the public press by vested interests becomes utterly impossible, but the problems are more manageable. We come to think of government and business as

being held up to public scrutiny by the press; and though the independent public press may have its own vested interests, still a division of powers facilitates freedom.

My point concerning the value of independent thought to moral community is essentially similar. Genuine moral community cannot exist where social-economic dependence enforces a uniformity of thought and feeling in conformity with the perceived requirements of an established system. Any social system or organization becomes impressed with the particular interests of those occupying its positions of power and influence. They resist developments which threaten those particular interests, so long as people in positions of power have effective control over the careers and incomes of anyone expressing contrary points of view. The problem is endemic to human organizations and societies: conflicts of interest. The classic liberal answer to this problem, in political terms, is to implement a separation and balancing of powers. However, separation of powers on the individual level will be ineffective where there is no moral empowerment of individual thought and conscience. Thus, individualism is crucial to political freedoms, because it is crucial to the existence of genuine moral community. Moral support for individuals, combined with needed criticism of acquisitiveness and destructive competition, is central to any viable liberalism. Where it is missing, liberalism has lost its soul.

It is only in the context of this conclusion, I believe, that the deeper significance of racism can be deciphered - in American society and elsewhere. It is the pervasive evidence of moral blindness and lack of genuine moral fiber in our communities. Genuine moral fiber, and independent judgment, would enable those treated unjustly to appeal to their peers for vindication and redress of grievances. The existence of racism makes clear that entire identifiable sub-populations are disadvantaged in this regard and treated as scapegoats - people made to suffer and carry the blame for the mistakes and errors of others. Racism, though, is a symptom of broader moral weaknesses, evidence of broader and diverse self-serving prejudices which operate to distort moral judgments to favor established powers and their supporting, and privileged, entourages (cf. Axelrod 1984, 145-50 on the relation of hierarchy, stereotypical labelling and collective identities, and Callaway 1992 for elaborations on the social conditions for the possibility of knowledge).

The existence of distortion and self-interested moral blindness is no news to anyone. What does seem like news, partly in view of the fall of "real existing socialism," is the near ancient liberal truth that suppression of individuality is the key instrument of collective moral blindness and distortion: that moral community requires individualism. It requires more, more realistic opportunities for economic independence, but the moral point has a certain priority. It represents the problem of social respect for independence.

8. Conclusion

If the classical liberal emphasis upon individuals and their rights is not *merely* an ideology, then there is some genuine point in their related critique of "modern" liberalism. I would emphasize, for instance, Hayek's disdain for administrative regulation of markets in favor of legal changes or reforms where they are genuinely needed. There is a justified fear of the paralyzing effects of administrative caprice, and a fear of the growing power of bureaucracy. The law is the legal infrastructure of the market, and established definitions

of property and its legal exchange cannot be viewed as immutable - since new forms of property and market transactions are being invented. These reflections provide room for much study of how redefinition of legal relations might "canalize" competition into more constructive forms.

The classical liberal emphasis upon individuals and their rights has a role to play in contemporary discussions of Dewey and Deweyan liberalism. Thus Westbrook, in his recent intellectual biography of Dewey, disputes the received wisdom (due in part to Arthur Schlesinger) that Dewey's liberalism was effectively criticized by Reinhold Niebuhr. As Westbrook puts the differences between Dewey and Niebuhr, "If Dewey flirted with sentimentalism about what might be, Niebuhr flirted with complacency about what must be . . ." (Westbrook 1991, 530). Though Niebuhr no less than Dewey "could declare his faith in an ethical ideal that tightly wedded self-realization and community" (ibid) differences in emphasis between the two figures was drawn upon to discredit Dewey's liberalism as unrealistic.

Niebuhr said Dewey lacked appreciation of "predatory self-interest." Failing to understand "the brutal character of the behavior of all human collectives, and the power of self-interest and collective egoism in all intergroup relations," Niebuhr argued that Dewey could not see that "relations between groups must therefore always be predominantly political rather than ethical, that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group" (Niebuhr 1932, 135, cited in Westbrook, 525). The arguments above for a democratic individualism and Deweyan conceptions of cooperation and moral community show the limits of purely political approaches.

Individualism and moral community decline in plausibility in the kind of political situation which Dewey and Niebuhr faced - the great depression, threats to democracy from both right and left, and a growing threat of war. In these situations people feel the need to bury their differences and work in collective unity against outstanding dangers. But this tendency has its excesses. The present perspective is that "modern" or contemporary liberalism, "corporate-bureaucratic" liberalism, as it is sometime characterized, including a prevalent disdain for individualism, is a liberalism continually on a war-footing - and which seems to have reached a paralyzed dead end.

Dewey's thought holds out promise for reinventing liberalism: and this must include emphasis on the moral significance of individualism. It is precisely a great "complacency about what must be" at the root of recent political paralysis and America's inability to set domestic priorities. Dewey's democratic individualism is no call for the submission to the group. Individuals are to act in cooperative engagement for reforms and against established injustices.

"I should now wish to emphasize more than I formally did," Dewey wrote in 1939, "that individuals are the finally decisive factors of the nature and movement of associated life . . ." Contrary to Niebuhr, Dewey's does not ignore or underestimate the power of organized collectives of the subdued. In 1939, he was aware of the dangers, but still "led

to emphasize the idea that only the voluntary initiative and voluntary cooperation of individuals can produce social institutions that will protect the liberties necessary for achieving development of genuine individuality" (Dewey 1939a, 91-92. Cited in Menand 1992, 55).

Works Cited:

1. Axelrod, R. (1984) *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Basic Books, New York.
2. Callaway, H.G. (1981) "Semantic Theory and Language: A Perspective," *Proceedings of the Southwestern Philosophical Society/Philosophical Topics*, summer issue, 93-103.
3. Callaway, H.G. (1985) "Meaning without Analyticity," *Logique et Analyse*, 109, Mars, 41-60.
4. Callaway, H.G. (1988) "Semantic Competence and Truth-conditional Semantics," *Erkenntnis* 28, No. 1, 3-27.
5. Callaway, H.G. (1992) "Does Language Determine our Scientific Ideas?" *Dialectica*, 46, Fasc. 3/4, 225-242.
6. Callaway, H.G. (1993a) "Democracy, value inquiry, and Dewey's metaphysics," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 27, 13-27.
7. Callaway, H.G. (1993b) "Emerson and Romantic Individualism," *Journal of Humanism and Ethical Religion*, 5.1, 66-74.
8. Dewey, John (1922) *Human Nature and Conduct*, in Jo Ann Boydston (ed) (1983) *The Middle Works*, Vol. 14.
9. Dewey, John (1929a) *Experience and Nature*, 2nd ed. (1958) Dover Publications, New York.
10. Dewey, John (1929b) *The Quest for Certainty*, in Jo Ann Boydston (ed) (1988) *John Dewey the Later Works*, Vol. 4, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville.
11. Dewey, John (1930) *Individualism Old and New*. Reissued (1962) Capricorn Books, New York.
12. Dewey, John (1939) *Freedom and Culture*, in Jo Ann Boydston (ed) *John Dewey: The Later Works*, Vol. 13 (1991) Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville.
13. Dewey, John (1939a) "I Believe," in Jo Ann Boydston (ed) *John Dewey: The Later Works*, Vol. 14 (1992) Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville.
14. Dewey, John (1945) "Ethical Subject Matter and Language," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XLII, No. 26, 701-12. Reprinted in S. Morgenbesser (ed) (1977) *Dewey and his Critics*, The Journal of Philosophy, Inc. New York, 676-87.
15. Dewey, John (1948) *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, enlarged edition, Beacon Press, Boston.

16. Dewey, John (1957) *The Living Thoughts of Thomas Jefferson*, Fawcett, New York.
17. Menand, Louis (1992) "The Real John Dewey," (Review of Westbrook 1991), *New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 12, June 25th issue, 50-55.
18. Niebuhr, Reinhold (1932) *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Scribner's, New York.
19. Putnam, Hilary (1990) "A Reconsideration of Deweyan Democracy," *Southern California Law Review*, 63.6, September, 1671-1697.
20. Russell, Bertrand (1945) *A History of Western Philosophy*, Simon and Schuster, New York.
21. Russett, Bruce (1993) *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*, Princeton Press, Princeton, NJ.
22. Williams, Bernard (1985) *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
23. Westbrook, Robert B. (1991) *John Dewey and American Democracy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.