DEWEY AND NIETZSCHE: THEIR INSTRUMENTALISM COMPARED

Alfred Castle
Roswell, New Mexico

Careful comparative scholarship has shown clearly that John Dewey’s instrumentalism is not a peculiarly unique formal articulation of the realistic and democratic temper of the American people. Students of the “internal” history of ideas, i.e. those who examine the “relationship between what some men write or say and what other men write or say,”¹ have noted similarities between Dewey’s experimentalism and Hume’s empirical analysis, Kant’s phenomena (but not the noumena), Hegel’s phenomenology, the social orientation of the Utilitarians, the positivism of Comte and Haeckel, and Bergson’s emphasis on activity.² Dewey himself recognized and expounded upon the logical connections between his brand of pragmatism and the separate thought of several European philosophers.³ Although many comparative studies have discouraged the parochial misprizing of instrumentalism, further work needs to be done. No account of experimentalism’s European resemblances can be complete without the recognition of similarities with the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate likeness of thought in three areas: attitude toward metaphysics, concepts of truth, and ideas on the nature of value. My hope is that such a demonstration will enlarge the conceptual Euro-American background against which instrumentalism must be understood.

John Dewey’s claim that ideas are instruments of action and that their usefulness determines their truth had profound implications for his view toward metaphysics. He agreed with Arthur Lovejoy that metaphysical constructions have been the dominant concern of intellectual mankind throughout history⁴ but found this pursuit to be rooted in man’s deep sense of insecurity. Man, long before the Heideggerian angst became fashionable, had found himself confronted with a dark, uncertain world infused with peril and mystery. Such a cosmos demanded appeasement but the available manipulative arts were often futile. Tools were often inadequate and the senses never fully reliable. In reaction to his natural condition, early man compensated with myth, ritual, and most importantly, protometaphysics. This latter device would contribute an a priori order and rationale to the fanciful belief systems and
practices of mankind. As Dewey tells it, “Exaltation of pure intellect and its activity above practical affairs is fundamentally connected with the quest for a certainty which shall be absolute and unshakeable.” Significantly, then, these beliefs and practices attempted to deal with the vicissitudes of secular life by celebrating the transtemporal perfections of another life.

Construction of such a perfect world provided early humans with access to a secure arena of action (Dewey might say “non-action”). Correlative to this construction was the establishment of special techniques which would allow knowing that was sure, universal, and revelatory; such knowledge was quite different from the fumbling way of the senses used by artisan and esclscientist who were involved in a world of mere fact, imperfection, and uncertainty. The methods of attaining to this genuine reality, then, were extraordinary and purificatory. Dewey finds evidence of such catharticizing methodology in early Greek philosophy:

If one looks at the foundations of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle as an anthropologist looks at his material, that is, as cultural subject-matter, it is clear that these philosophies were systematizations in rational form of the content of Greek religious and artistic beliefs. The systematization involved a purification. Logic provided the patterns to which ultimately real objects had to conform, while physical science was possible in the degree in which the natural world, even in its mutabilities, exhibited exemplification of ultimate immutable rational objects. Thus, along with the elimination of myths and grosser superstitions, there were set up the ideals of science and a life of reason. Ends which could justify themselves to reason were to take the place of custom as the guide of conduct. These two ideals form a permanent contribution to western civilization.

But ... they brought with them the ... notion, which has ruled philosophy ever since the time of the Greeks, that the office of knowledge is to uncover the antecedently real, rather than, as is the case with our practical judgments, to gain the kind of understanding which is necessary to deal with problems as they arise.

Hence, for our instrumentalist, metaphysical systems are a response to a complex of culturally conditioned experiences. The search for reliable knowledge must rest elsewhere.

Though it was clear to Dewey that metaphysics could be “reduced” to the perennial quest for certainty, he realized that instrumentalism must still deal in its own way with questions traditionally addressed by the former “official philosophy.” The
questions about what is most important in life and what is most real could be “explained” by his antimetaphysical reduction but not answered per se. Dewey, assuming that humans live in and adjust to their social and physical environment experientially, felt that most metaphysical questions could be “answered” by distinguishing between events and objects. These two terms are the key to his characteristic experimentalist approach to pseudo-problems long agonized over by “first philosophy.”

Dewey distinguishes between “events” (or “existences”) and meanings. An event is “ongoing” and its nature is revealed in experience “as the immediately felt qualities of things.” Thus events are the ingredients of ordinary experience. (Dewey felt that science also conceptualizes in terms of events.) An object is defined as an event with meaning. We are asked to consider tables, the Milky Way, chairs, dogs, electrons, and to appreciate them as examples of “objects.” Dewey would have us further appreciate that every event may have numerous explicit meanings with differing consequences for action. The best example he himself elucidates is that of paper.

Thus an existence identified as ‘paper,’ because the meaning uppermost at the moment is ‘something to be written upon,’ has as many other explicit meanings as it has important consequences recognized in the various connective interactions into which it enters. Since possibilities of conjunction are endless, and since the consequences of any of them may at some time be significant, its potential meanings are endless. It signifies something to start a fire with; something like snow; made of wood-pulp; manufactured for profit; property in the legal sense; a definite combination illustrative of certain principles of chemical science; an article the invention of which has made a tremendous difference in human history; and so on indefinitely... We are saying in effect that its existence is not exhausted in its being paper. 10

In experimentalism, then we are introduced to a tool that can powerfully respond to the traditive metaphysical conundrums. Perhaps one example of such a response will suffice. Beginning with Plato, philosophers of various intellectual persuasions have attempted to reason with the concept of essence. But for John Dewey, these philosophers (including some Existentialists with whom he has important points in common) have been pursuing a chimera. “Essence,” we are told, “is but a pronounced instance of meaning; to be partial, and to assign a meaning to a thing as the
meaning is but to evince human subjection to bias." Hence, there is no reason why the traditive explanation of essence as one, immutable, and constitutive of a thing should exhaust the various meanings the word may have. The traditive claim for legitimacy only reflects the interest that the definer happens to have in the concept. Dewey concludes as follows:

Since the consequences which are liked have an emphatic quality, it is not surprising that many consequences, even though recognized to be inevitable, are regarded as if they were accidental and alien. Thus the very essence of a thing is identified with those consummatory consequences which the thing has when conditions are felicitous.¹²

Thus this pragmatist argues that we are in error when we repose in ideas and concepts; all ideas and meanings are instruments for dealing with concrete problems. If this be deemed a delirious metaphysic, it is at least an unusually "open" and flexible one.

Nietzsche was never as systematic or methodical as Dewey. Often his ideas on metaphysics are inconsistent, although we know that he, like Dewey, was hostile to such traditional notions as substance, cause, effect, and Being. The difficulty for the scholar wishing to analyze Nietzsche's own brand of antimetaphysics is due in part to his peculiar modus operandi. Unlike Dewey, he never fights thoroughly or scientifically but rather assumes the role of intellectual warrior using clubs and sledge-hammers to impress the truth upon his readers.¹³ Despite these differences in style, however, both men were very similar in their anthropological and psychological analysis of metaphysics.

Nietzsche, like Dewey, felt strongly that the entire metaphysical enterprise results from a maladjustment to a changing environment. "First philosophy" develops when, in the pursuit of security, man avoids the world of Becoming for an absolute world of Being. Man seeks the "true world," a world where there can be no suffering. Nietzsche believes that the unique psychological mind of the average human propends toward happiness. This happiness, as most men see it, can be achieved only in the realm of Being since change and happiness exclude each other.¹⁴ Pain is a leading inspiration for these fanciful conclusions: at bottom they are wishes that such a world might exist because of the hatred men feel toward a world full of suffering. As with Dewey, Nietzsche takes Plato to task for indulging the "metaphysical need."
An artist cannot endure reality; he turns away or back from it: his earnest opinion is that the worth of a thing consists in that nebulous residue of it which one derives from colour, form, sound, and thought; he believes that the more subtle, attenuated, and volatile a thing or a man becomes, the more valuable he becomes: the less real, the greater the worth. This is Platonism: but Plato was guilty of yet further audacity in the matter of turning tables — he measured the degree of reality according to the degree of value and said: The more there is of ‘idea’ the more there is of Being . . . . At bottom, Plato, like the artist he was, placed appearance before Being! and therefore lies and fiction before truth! unreality before actuality!\textsuperscript{15}

Thus, metaphysics is a sign of “ill health” or at least a pernicious weakness in the human psyche. As such, it may be designated as the “science which treats of the fundamental errors of mankind but treats of them as if they were fundamental truths.”\textsuperscript{16} Clearly Dewey and Nietzsche are in agreement here.

Both philosophers also claimed that metaphysical structures were too often caused by linguistic traps that tend to rigidify concepts. Dewey, for example, criticized thinkers for allowing the concepts of “essence,” “universals,” “appearance,” and “reality” to become static entities each endowed with but one meaning. Nietzsche also excoriated the rigid use of such concepts as “true,” “apparent,” and “reality.”\textsuperscript{17} Finally, both men felt that the solutions to many of the old metaphysical puzzles would be forthcoming if the philosopher accepted man as active and not passively receptive. For both men, thinking and perceiving are acts of interpretation in which we perceive or contemplate.

Although many thinkers today, particularly the sociologist of knowledge, take for granted that men’s subjective interests and expectations influence their perception, Nietzsche was one of the first to use such information to attack the petrified concepts of metaphysics. Like Dewey, he argued that once we have achieved a conceptual framework, we tend to persist in interpreting our experiences statically even though circumstances inevitably change. This sort of “laziness” increases when the conceptual framework is given a linguistic formula. When this occurs, the concept becomes a closed “self-evident” structure that all experience of the world is required to fit.\textsuperscript{18}

To obviate the problems posed by such a conceptology, Nietzsche would have us remember that meaning (like life) is fluid and can take almost illimitable forms. The “interested” subjective thinker
should become aware of the intellectual cul-de-sac he prepares for himself when he employs ossified thoughts. For example, Nietzsche panned Kant’s stringent bifurcation between a “thing-in-itself” and mere appearance. This stiff ontological schism was absurd because of the reasons indicated below.

A ‘thing-in-itself’ is just as absurd as a ‘sense-in-itself,’ a ‘meaning-in-itself.’ There is no such thing as a ‘fact-in-itself,’ for a meaning must always be given to it before it can become a fact.

The answer to the question, ‘What is that?’ is a process of fixing a meaning from a different standpoint. The ‘essence,’ the essential factor, is something which is only seen as a whole in perspective, and which presupposes a basis which is multifarious. Fundamentally the question is ‘What is that for me?’ (for us, for everything that lives, etc., etc.).

. . . In short: the essence of a thing is really only an opinion concerning that ‘thing’ or, better still; ‘it is worth.’ is actually what is meant by ‘it is’ or by ‘that is.’

For Nietzsche, then, the putative independently existing object that rigid concepts attempt to mirror is an enduring myth perpetuated by linguistics and human psychology. An uninterpreted “original” is never available to an ideally objective mind; there are only the various “meanings” that an existent can have at different times and for different individuals. For both Dewey and Nietzsche, cognition of metaphysical absolutes must of necessity be a subjective on-going process.

Further similarities of thought are evinced in their theories of truth, although the correspondences are not exact ones. In general, both men argued against the validity of objective truth and argued for the beneficial nature of subjective truth, consciously arrived at. As might be expected, much of what they say about truth follows from their analysis of “first philosophy.”

John Dewey’s attack on “inexpugnable” objective truth took the form of criticizing two widely held theories. One of these theories avers that there is little distinction between truth and reality. In other words, this Platonic concept claims that truth already exists (as does reality) whether one comes upon it or not. Attendant to this belief is the notion that there is but one truth for everyone at any given time. Dewey answers this by pointing out the obvious empirical refutation that various people do not attain to the same truths. Another difficulty with this former hoary argument is that it finds the subject matter of truth to be reality at large, “a
metaphysical heaven to be mimeographed at many removes upon a badly constructed mental carbon copy which yields at best only fragmentary, blurred, and erroneous copies." The only proper object of truth is and must be that relationship of organism and environment in which functioning is most amply and effectively attained. Truth can not be monistic as the Platonist asserts.

The second attack on "objective" verity is against another major defense: the correspondence theory of truth. This is the idea that truth is a duplicate or copy of an independent reality. Dewey admits the innate plausibility of this account because it does distinguish between truth and reality. Since such a distinction is made, the correspondence theory does include statements men make about the world. As such, it involves meaning or discourse and refers to ideas and their validity. However, Dewey complains, the claim that veracity equals a one-to-one relation with objective existents opens up the old (and still unsolved) Descartean problem of dualism. The correspondence theory can not explain how mind, world, and body interact to produce knowledge and "truth." He further argues that even if this theory could explain the ontological abyss between facts and ideas, we would still not know why the mind should make a copy of the world at all. Hence, Dewey finds two venerable supports for objective truth to be unconvincing. Not content to merely analyze, he has synthesized a positive, subjective approach to truth.

Such an approach he calls the instrumental or consequence theory. Dewey states that truth or falseness is a property of ideas. This property is chiefly one of predictions of what consequences will follow if any given plan of action, communicated by an idea, is carried out. All ideas are hypotheses continually being verified or disverified in the light of predictable results. The particular consequences or results are those in terms of which a problem has arisen. Pretend, for example, that you hear a noise in the street. The meaning suggested to you is that a street-car has caused the sound. To test the idea you walk to the window and through observation organize into a unity elements of existence and meaning which previously were disconnected. In this way your idea is rendered true; that which was a proposal or hypothesis is no longer a mere educated speculation. Apart from your forming and considering some interpretation, the category of truth has neither meaning nor existence. Your idea, in other words, had to be acted upon to become a truth. As Dewey concludes about his "non-objective" theory,
Truth... is a just name for an experienced relation among the things of experience: that sort of relation in which intents are retrospectively viewed from the standpoint of the fulfillment which they secure through their own natural operation or incitement. Thus the experimental theory explains directly and simply the absolutistic tendency to translate concrete true things into the general relationship, Truth, and then to hypostatize this abstraction into identity with real being, Truth per se and in se, of which all transitory things and events—that is, all experienced realities—are only shadowy futile approximations.27

In conclusion, truth belongs to humans actively engaged in a changing world. Verity, as Dewey sees it, is a satisfactory response to a problem originating in the world. Because truths are not monolithic or fixed in a rigid matrix forever, they can be transformed by the subjective, interested thinker who must consciously and continuously strive to cope with his environment. Since there is no final and absolute truth, there can be no further test of veracity other than its ability to work and to organize facts.28 Objective truth, moreover, must be recognized as yet another symptom of man’s quixotism and quest for security; subjective truth must be recognized as successful and dynamic “interpretations” proposed tentatively by adaptive and creative individuals.

Nietzsche would appear to agree fully with the above conclusions of Dewey. He, too, devastated pretensions to objective truth by revealing the psychology on which they are based and the thin reasoning which disguises them. He too relativized truth to a context of person, world, and problem. And he too, though less carefully and systematically, posited a subjective brand of truth to replace impossible, surreal objectivity. Nietzsche is perhaps most effective in analyzing the psychological bases of cognition and truth.

Even the greatest philosophers, we are told, think that they can achieve the Truth through elaborate reasoning. But the theories of men like Spinoza, Wolff, Descartes, and Plato are only fatuous efforts to justify the beliefs they hold on instinctive or pre-reflective grounds. Behind even the purest logic, there are subjective prejudices and physiological demands.29 Far from being disinterested and objective, Nietzsche sees the intellect as the instrument of something nonintellectual;

The unconscious disguising of physiological requirements under the cloak of the objective, the ideal, the purely spiritual, is carried on
to an alarming extent, and I have often enough asked myself, whether on the whole, philosophy hitherto has not generally been merely an interpretation of the body, and a misunderstanding of the body.\textsuperscript{30}

The concept of transcendent and final truth must, then, be an illusion.

In addition, Nietzsche uses an epistemological argument to attack any claims that "objective" truth can be supported by a strictly empirical outlook. His argument is that we have the kinds of sensations and perceptions we do because of their "utility." The product of our senses reflects our values, and the senses are pragmatic just as our conceptual abilities are. He denies, furthermore, that our sensations and perceptions are uninfluenced by the concepts and prejudgments which we all hold; our conceptual life mandates, in large part, our sensory life.\textsuperscript{31} Hence, in contraposition to empiricists such as Locke, the senses cannot absolutely and objectively verify the concepts we may hold as the senses are pre-influenced by beliefs and values. Nietzsche tells us that "faith is the primal beginning even in every sense impression."\textsuperscript{32} Consequently, the quest for the Platonic realist version of truth as static and independent of humans may not rest on our conceptual or empirical abilities. No "truth" about the "world of appearances" or phenomena can be any more than a perspectival interpretation.

Finally, Nietzsche shares Dewey's odium for the Kantian noumenon or absolute "thing-in-itself" (or "Truth-in-itself") which so many thinkers for centuries had pursued. Nietzsche in his writings not only denies that our knowledge could transcend the limitations of the senses, but also writes that the very concept of noumenon which we seek to know is an \textit{ignis fatuus}. First, he offers the now familiar psychological explanation (and reduction) of the origin of the notion: the realm of absolute reality was concocted by weak intellects who do not dare to live and adjust in a changing world. The quest for the fictional transcendent and inaccessible noumenon serves as an escape mechanism for such weak spirits.\textsuperscript{33} Secondly, he finds the Kantian belief in noumenon useless and superfluous and therefore refuted.\textsuperscript{34} Although many reasons are given for the contradictory character of an objective realm of truth, Nietzsche's greatest complaint is that it makes no difference for our quotidian engaged life. With Dewey, he believes that nothing possesses a constitution in itself apart from active interpretation and subjectivity. As Nietzsche understands it,
Every centre of energy has its point of view of the whole of the remainder of the world—that is to say, its perfectly definite valuation, its mode of action, its mode of resistance. The ‘world of appearance’ is thus reduced to a specific kind of action on the world proceeding from a centre.

But there is no other kind of action; and the ‘world’ is only a word for the collective play of these actions. Reality consists precisely in this particular action and reaction of every isolated factor against the whole.35

Consequently, there can be no truth apart from the subjective engaged thinker.

Although denying the possibility of inaccessible verity, Nietzsche proposed that a subjective truth could yet be very instrumental to the man who has the courage to live with perspectivism. Interpretative truths, the only ones we are really capable of, can still give us practical guidance in life. Subjective truth is or can be a useful tool. It can observe how elements in the world affect us, noting their actual benevolence or malevolence, and can draw up from this very personal angle of vision a picture or scheme of the world. With the aid of ideas we can make our way through life’s mazes with more confidence because we can handle the empirical world more easily.36 Those ideas which have life-preserving consequences should be labeled as “truths”, while ideas which decrease our chances of coping with the environment should be abandoned as “lies.” Truth is human and only individuals who possess it give it importance. With Dewey, Nietzsche concludes that this importance lies in our confrontation with a problematic world. For both men, there is no shame in the fact that we do not have entry into the fictive mansion of static and transcendent verity. Alethiology belongs only and fully to mankind.

The last general area of substantive agreement lies in their axiology. Although their ideas do not correspond exactly in this field of inquiry or any other, we can discern important similarities. Dewey and Nietzsche tended to understand value and experience as inextricably mixed; for both discovered that value cannot exist independently of nature. Lastly, they thought that what was valuable was a practical and not a metaphysical problem. “Solutions” for traditional axiological questions rested in an empirical methodology and were always considered tentative by our two philosophers.

John Dewey’s discussions of value parallel his writings on philosophia prima; he characteristically saw most of the traditional
questions about values as mere pseudo-problems. According to this pragmatist, too many philosophers have agonized over the “status” of value or about the rank of values in some transempirical hierarchy. That these false problems seemed real to metaphysicians was because of the ancient search for certainty and security. The conatus to build a “realm of values” which would contain especially sublime goods caused the netting split between this world of shadows and the “real” world of sempiternal worth. With this division the philosopher has a new problem with which to deal: what is the relationship between such different domains? Is the transcendent domain that of ultimate Being from which the life we know is but an unfortunate fall? Or is the world of “real” value a mere subjective creation of minds desperate to order their world, as William of Ockham averred? The metaphysicians who select the first alternative usually spend the rest of their intellectualizing on determining the special and fixed order of values in the transcendent realm; their concern for actual choice in mundane life is neglected. Other scholars choose the second alternative, thus rendering values completely subjective and therefore unable to provide a criterion for successful choice among current options. Both choices are meaningless because the problem is arbitrary. Characteristically, Dewey’s approach to axiology was empirical and antimetaphysical.

What then is a proper approach to axiology? Dewey’s theory is, as might now be anticipated, existential in that he emphasizes the concrete context in which value judgments proceed. Humans are continually faced with situations in which lie conflicts and they are forced to decide which course of action should be pursued. The fundamental question of an involved individual is not what is the “eternal good” that he should emulate but rather what should he do? Typically, value is rendered dynamic and experiential.

To elucidate the process of valuation Dewey distinguishes two meanings of “to value.” First, like Ralph Barton Perry, Dewey says we value something when we take an interest in it; to value in this manner signifies an immediate experience. However, such a rendition of value is incomplete as a prizing in itself does not specify any course of action; it provides no means of determining what the consequences of pursuing it will be. Therefore, Dewey advances an additional and vital meaning for value. The alternate meaning of “to value” means to judge or to evaluate. Clearly, it is a process ending in a value judgment. It is an endless proceeding just as change in our environment is perpetual.
Dewey suggests that this process of valuation is similar in many ways to scientific judgment. Valuation arises when there is conflict within the course of experience and we must attempt to understand the nature of the conflict, suggest various alternative actions, and judge the consequences of each. As in science the existential results of a given course of an action can verify or disprove a given value judgment. Also, as in science, the leading principles used in a given valuation are derived from past experience. Hence, valuation proceeds during conflicts of our immediate values and of what we directly prize. It is a reflective process in which we must decide what we should desire. In making a value judgment we ascribe worth to something rather than merely describe a hierarchy of values. To repeat, “value” for Dewey is a dynamic idea.

Significantly, Dewey argued that values are not greatly different from other facts in the world. There are initial enjoyings just as there are initial impressions of physical objects. Insofar as and only as long as the initial enjoyings are enjoyed, they are good. Naturally experience may come to show some initial enjoyments as deceptive just as it may find some immediate sense experiences deceptive. Just as initial sense data that survive the subsequent empirical testing become “facts” so immediate enjoyments that survive the same test become values.

Finally, Dewey’s axiology includes the notion that values are as unstable as clouds; we can never be sure that what we value as good will continue to be desirable. Good things vanish not only with alterations in the environment but with changes in ourselves. Be that as it may, knowledge that a particular object or experience is good—that is, it has survived the best available examinations—will have to be sufficient. Such knowledge will be a reasonable rule for directing behavior. In any case, it is far more usable and trustworthy than depending on revelation or waiting for the philosopher-king to re-enter the reechy cave. The rational, courageous man, Dewey reminds us, will face up to the lack of absolute merit and will strive to improve criteria for choice. In a world of becoming, any other approach would be fatal.

Since it is relative to the intersection in existence of hazard and rule, of contingency and order, faith in a wholesale and final triumph is fantastic. But some procedure has to be tried; for life itself is a sequence of trials. Carelessness and routine, Olympian aloofness, secluded contemplation are themselves choices. To claim that intelligence is a better method than its alternatives, authority,
imitation, caprice and ignorance, prejudice and passion, is hardly an excessive claim. These procedures have been tried and have worked their will. The result is not such as to make it clear that the method of intelligence, the use of science in criticizing and recreating the casual goods of nature into intentional and conclusive goods of art, the union of knowledge and values in production, is not worth trying.\textsuperscript{46}

Perhaps this implies an ability only found in the strangest kind of individual, but Dewey believed it an ability that any reasonable man could possess.

The idea that values are by and for men appealed also to the mind of Nietzsche. He states often that there is no absolute, self-existent, supreme standard of valuation distinct from volition.\textsuperscript{47} Not surprisingly he attacks any belief concerning independent, objective merit as yet another sign of mediocrity and bestial fear in the face of relentless change. Men, as is the consuetude, gladly accept the proposition that values have an independent origin and sustenance.\textsuperscript{48} In addition to this familiar posture, he also asserts that the only world which exists for the individual is the empirical one. For the reason discussed above there can be no Kantian thing-in-itself or in this case value-in-itself. For example, Christian theology is wrong most egregiously because it demands complete acceptance of an empyrean realm of objective value. As Nietzsche puts it,

> In Christianity neither morality nor religion has even a single point of contact with reality. Nothing but imaginary causes... nothing but imaginary effects... intercourse between imaginary beings... an imaginary natural science... an imaginary psychology.

> This world of pure fiction is vastly inferior to the world of dreams insofar as the latter mirrors reality, whereas the former falsifies, devalues, and negates reality. Once the concept of ‘nature’ had been invented as the opposite of ‘God,’ ‘natural’ had to become a synonym of ‘reprehensible’: this whole world of fiction is rooted in hatred of the natural... it is the expression of a profound vexation at the sight of reality.\textsuperscript{49}

No values can exist outside of the phenomenal world and man’s active confrontation with it.

Another major reason why Nietzsche refused to grant values an individual ontological status is his much discussed theory of psychology and morals. He deflated the claims of absolute value systems by arguing that such systems are actually based on human psychological propensities and should be adjudged as artificial self-justifying superstructures (Nietzsche sounds more like Pareto than
Dewey here). The desire for something is the primal ground that “independent” ethical systems cover, consciously or otherwise. Nietzsche says that he can account for the differences in valuational constructions whereas seekers after absolute and fixed systems can not. He tells us that there are as many moralities or values as there are human psychological desires because all moralities are tied to them. In his book, *Human, All to Human* he gives numerous examples of values which are tied to human needs; these needs have, in effect, “chosen” a moral rationalization in order to realize a goal. In one such example he informs the reader that the quality of pity we are given to admire is not disinterested:

All those who are not sufficiently masters of themselves and do not know morality as a self-control and self-conquest continuously exercised in things great and small, unconsciously come to glorify the good, compassionate, benevolent impulses of that instinctive morality which has no head, but seems merely to consist of a heart and helpful hands. It is to their interest even to cast suspicion upon a morality of reason and to set up the other as the sole morality.

In another example, Nietzsche exposes one instance of philanthropy as also related to ulterior motives:

Why beggars still live—If all alms were given only out of compassion, the whole tribe of beggars would long since have died of starvation . . . The greatest of almsgivers is cowardice.

Hence, all morality is subjective and interlocked inextricably with secular experiences. Nietzsche, it should be noted, did not deplore this fact as such because he claims that apart from the involved subject, no value could exist. With Dewey, he deplores those who would not have the intellectual integrity to face the ultimate connection between value and experience. For both men, valuation becomes most meaningful when employed consciously by individuals engaged in an active confrontation with a changing world.

Like Dewey, Nietzsche advanced a reconstruction of a sounder ethic which would be based on subjectivity. The function of anyone courageous enough to face existential connection between psychological inclinations and value is to create or to will a value system which corresponds to the needs of the subject. The most fundamental instinct which requires realization is the “will to power” or the desire of the subject to control his personal and
external world. This presupposition, roughly similar to Dewey's belief that humans seek to form a propitious environment for their actions, provides the substructure for any realistic value. If Nietzsche is correct, we can call an event or an experience "valuable" only if it aids us in preserving and furthering our life and our ability to successfully manipulate the world. No ethics can subsist independently of individuals in possession (or possessed) of a subjective consciousness which above all includes a drive of "power" striving for self-realization. Hence values are always to be judged by their relations to active subjects.

Furthermore, Nietzsche agrees that values are transient and a continual challenge to a person. He too feels that an ethic is dynamic and process oriented. An engaged subject must repeatedly experiment with values in order to increase his ability to "build" a world in a favorable image, i.e. to facilitate the realization of personal strength and power. Those goods which are instrumental in furthering one's capacity to realize personal goals in the world should be retained until better goods are discovered through experimentation. Significantly, there is no ethical repose here. As the world alters, so must our means to achieving our goals. It is indeed even possible that the interpretation of our instinctive needs and their attendant values will be transmogrified in the future. The rational and practical thinker will accept this possibility and yet affirm the existence of a meaningful ethical system. Such an individual would have

the means of enduring it: the transvaluation of all values. Pleasure no longer to be found in certainty, but in uncertainty; no longer 'cause and effect,' but continual creativeness; . . . no longer the modest expression 'it is only subjective' but 'it is all our work! let us be proud of it.'

Thus for Nietzsche, as for Dewey, the best valuations we can have are grounded in humanity. However, far from being an excuse for an aporetic nihilism, this fact can be a beginning for a new and more efficacious concept of value.

The conclusion to this comparative study should not imply that Dewey and Nietzsche possessed identical thoughts, attitudes, or styles of expression. In regard to the three areas of interest discussed above, the major difference between the two men was attitudinal. They particularly differed in their emotional response toward and expression of the over-arching discovery that life is insecure. Nietzsche's style of expression was, characteristically,
metaphysical, eristic, and idiosyncratic. His emotional reaction was typically (particularly as seen in his later writings) as semi-hysterical affirmation of life and meaning despite its horror and objective purposelessness. Paroxysmally he urges us to bite the snake of nihilism that crawls into our throats, while we wax complacent in our fictional metaphysical explanations. In contradistinction, Dewey’s communication of the ground of metaphysics was calm, scholarly, and exact. Since he did not feel an abyss within himself he was not personally involved with the threat of insecurity. As was his wont, he viewed man’s commerce with insecurity as a physician might. Perhaps he also felt that the “cure” for insecurity (i.e. the use of instrumentalism to effect proximate solutions) was not overly difficult; no overman would be necessary to implement a realistic axiology or alethiology. In any case, no desperate ophiaphagous measures need be taken to create a solid niche for mankind.

Be this as it may, the discovery of important generic correspondences of substantial thought in Dewey, an American, and Nietzsche, a German, forces us to broaden the view we take of formal instrumentalism. The similarities in their ideas on the nature of metaphysics, truth, and value are no less remarkable for their developing independently of one another. Indeed, their ideational correspondences provide an eloquent instance of congruence in Hesperian thought. Nietzsche’s ideas should, then, be added to the conceptual Euro-American community in which the Experimentalism of Dewey grew and prospered. The intellectual historian, in a continuing effort to obtain full understanding of the possible novelty of “Dewey’s theory,” should not then ignore the reality of shared beliefs between two of the Occident’s finest thinkers.

NOTATIONS

10. Ibid., pp. 318-320.
11. Ibid., pp. 182-183.
12. Ibid., p. 183.
15. Ibid., pp. 74-75.
22. Ibid., p. 190.
25. Ibid., p. 73.


Ibid., p. 395.


Ibid., p. xxxv.


Ibid., p. 437.


Ibid., pp. 581-582.


Ibid., p. 222.

Ibid., p. 317.

John Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche* (Ann Arbor: University of