Among the group of New Englanders established in Chicago at the beginning of the century, Mr. John Dewey was perhaps the most distinguished. Among all the writers of this milieu and period, he expressed in his philosophy something more than the mere welter of existence. From the beginning Mr. Dewey was bracketed with William James as one of the founders and developers of pragmatism, or as he himself preferred to call it, instrumentalism; but, in spite of similarities of approach, there were differences between these men which at bottom reflected the intervening of almost a generation between the birth of James and that of Dewey.

William James had a style. Dreiser, Dewey, the commanding writers of the early Chicago school, were at one on this point: they had no style: they wrote in a language which, however concrete its objects, was as fuzzy and formless as lint. There is a homely elegance in James's writing, a beauty in the presentation of the thought, even if the concept of beauty was absent from his philosophy; in the earlier writing of Dewey, on the other hand, one looks in vain for either the concept or its literary equivalent. The comedown is serious. Style is the indication of a happy mental rhythm, as a firm grip and a red cheek are of health. Lack of style is a lack of organic connection: Dreiser's pages are as formless as a dumpheap: Mr. Dewey's pages are as depressing as a subway ride—they take one to one's destination, but a little the worse for wear. Mr. Randolph Bourne once characterized this quality of Mr. Dewey's mind as "protective coloration;" and the phrase is accurate enough if one means that the creature has identified himself in shape and color with his environment. No one has plumbed the bottom of Mr. Dewey's philosophy who does not feel in back of it the shapelessness, the faith in the current go of things, and the general utilitarian idealism of Chicago—the spirit which produced the best of the early skyscrapers, the Chicago exposition, Burnham's grandiose city plan, the great park and playground system, the clotted disorder of interminable slums, and the vitality of a handful of experimental schools.

Mr. Dewey's philosophy represents what is still positive and purposeful in that limited circle of ideas in which the American mind was originally born; he is at home in the atmosphere of protestantism, with its emphasis upon the rôle of intelligence in morals; in science, with its emphasis upon procedure, technique, and deliberate experiment; and he embraces technology with the same esthetic faith that Mr. Henry Ford embraces it. Above all, Mr. Dewey believes in democracy; that was at the bottom of his many acceptances of the milieu; what had been produced by the mass of men must somehow be right, and must somehow be more significant than the interests which occupy only a minority! In Mr. Dewey the American mind completed, as it were, its circle, and returned to its origin, amplifying, by the experience of a century, the essential interests of an Edwards, a Franklin, a Paine.

To the things that stand outside this circle of ideas, Mr. Dewey has been essentially antagonistic, or at least unsympathetic. He has been a severe and just critic of conventional education; and he has undermined conceptions of philosophy, art, and religion which represented merely the mummified experiences and aims of other generations: but his criticisms have been conducted with an unqualified belief in the procedures of common sense and technology, because these procedures have led to practical "results." Happiness, too, for him "is found

only in success; but success means succeeding, getting forward, moving in advance. It is an active process, not a passive outcome." That is quite another definition of happiness than the equilibrium, the point of inner rest, which the mystic, for example, seeks; but for Mr. Dewey a less active kind of happiness always tends to be "totally separated from renewal of the spirit." In other words, happiness means for Mr. Dewey what it meant for the pioneer: a preparation for something else. He scarcely can conceive that activity may follow the mode of the circle or the pendulum, rather than the railroad train.

In spite of all these opacities, it would be absurd to ignore the great service that instrumentalism has performed; for it has crystallized in philosophic form one of the great bequests of science and modern technology: the respect for coöperative thinking and for manual activity—experiment and invention—in guiding and controlling this process. The notion that action by itself was undignified and foreign to the life of the mind was, of course, a leisure class superstition. Creative thought is not a polite shuffling of observations, memories, and *a priori* logic: that is but one phase of the whole process: man thinking is not a spectatorial "mind" but a completely operative human organism, using in various degrees and at various stages every part of his organism, down to his viscera, and every available form of tool, from the finger which might trace a geometrical theorem in the sand to the logarithm table or the electric furnace. The otiose, leisure-class notion of thinking is that it is the reflection of what one reads in a book or gets by hearsay from other people: the great achievement of the scientific method was to supplant the scholar's chair—which does in fact peculiarly serve one phase of the thinking-process—by the work of the field and the laboratory, by exploration, observation, mechanical contrivance, exact measurement, and coöperative intercourse. With the introduction of the scientific method, men began to think consciously as whole human beings: the worker, the rambler, the traveler, the explorer, enlarged the scope of the mind. If this movement was accompanied by some loss, perhaps, in that part of the thinking process covered by dialectics, the gain was nevertheless a great one.

Mr. Dewey seized upon this achievement and brought out its significance admirably. Its implications should not be neglected. According to Dewey, thought is not mature until it has passed into action: the falsity of philosophy is that it has frequently dealt with ideas which have no such issue, while the weakness of the practical world is that its actions are unintelligent routine, the issue of an unreflective procedure. Action is not opposed to ideas: the means are not one thing, and the final result of attending to them quite another: they are not kitchen maids and parlor guests, connected only by being in the same house. Means which do not lead to significant issues are illiberal and brutal; issues which do not take account of the means necessary to fulfill them are empty and merely "well-meaning." A transcendentalism which takes such high ground poor humanity cannot stand on it, or an empiricism which takes such low ground that it introduces no excellence into brute existence—both these things are inimical to life, and absurd—and it has been Mr. Dewey's great merit to point out this

absurdity, and so open the way to a more complete kind of activity, in which facts and values, actualities and desires, achieve an active and organic unity.

In its flexibility, in its experimentalism, in its emphasis upon the ineptitude of any finality, except that involved in the process of living itself, with the perpetual intercourse between the organism and its implicated environment, Mr. Dewey's philosophy expresses a continuously formative part of our American experience. For the European, roughly speaking, history is what prevents anything new or fresh from being done. It needed the dislocation of settling a New World to discover a to-morrow not actually given in a host of yesterdays. In so far as Mr. Dewey has given expression to these things, his work has been to the good: it is not that flexibility and experiment are good in themselves: there are times when it is necessary to be as stiff as a ramrod and as dogmatic as a Scotch dominie—but these things represent a genuine addition to the European experience of life, and to introduce them as categories in philosophy is to extend its boundaries.

The deficiencies of Mr. Dewey's philosophy are the deficiencies of the American scene itself: they arise out of his too easy acceptance of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century framework of ideas; and although he has written about the influence of Darwinism on philosophy, and has done some of his best work in enriching the concepts of philosophy with biological illustrations and clues, he has not been sufficiently critical of the doctrines and writers whose works lean closest to his own habits of thinking. The utilitarian type of personality has been for the instrumentalist a thoroughly agreeable one: I recollect eulogies of Bacon in Mr. Dewey's works, but none of Shakespeare; appreciations of Locke, but not of Milton; of Bentham, but not Shelley and Keats and Wordsworth and Blake. The thinkers who saw social welfare as the principal object of existence, and who naïvely defined it in terms of man's control over the externalities of his environment, through the employment of science and technology, have been nearest to Mr. Dewey's heart. He has even written as if the telephone did away with the necessity for imaginative reverie—as if the imagination itself were just a weak and ineffectual substitute for the more tangible results of invention!

This aspect of Mr. Dewey's instrumentalism is bound up with a certain democratic indiscriminateness in his personal standards: a Goodyear and a Morse seem to him as high in the scale of human development as a Whitman and a Tolstoi: a rubber raincoat is perhaps a finer contribution to human life than "Wind, Rain, Speed." What indeed is his justification for art? Let him answer in his own words. "Fine art, consciously undertaken as such, is peculiarly instrumental in quality. It is a device in experimentation, carried on for the sake of education. It exists for the sake of a specialized use, use being a training of new modes of perception. The creators of such works are entitled, when successful, to the gratitude that we give to inventors of microscopes and microphones; in the end they open new objects to be observed and enjoyed." This is a fairly back-handed eulogy, unless one remembers Mr. Dewey's intense gratitude for all mechanical instruments.

In a similar mood, Mr. Dewey speaks of the

"intrinsic worth of invention;" but the point is, of course, that except for the inventor, who is *ipso facto* an artist, the invention is good for what it leads to, whereas a scene in nature, a picture, a poem, a dance, a beautiful conception of the universe, are good for what they are. A well-designed machine may also have the same kind of esthetic value: but the independent joy it gives to the keen mechanic or engineer is not the purpose of its design: whereas art has no other purpose; and when a Duchamps-Villon or a Man Ray wants to create the esthetic equivalent of a machine, he does not employ an engineer, but goes through the same process he would undergo to model the figure of a man. Esthetic enjoyment will often lead to other things, and it is all the happier for doing this: the scene in nature may lead to the planting of a park, the dance may promote physical health: but the essential criterion of art is that it is good without these specific instrumental results, good as a *mode of life*, good as a beatitude. An intelligent life, without these beatitudes, would still be a poor one: the fact that Bentham could mention pushpins in the same breath as poetry shows the deeply anesthetic and life-denying quality of the utilitarian philosophy.

There are times when Mr. Dewey seems ready to admit this deficiency. In Reconstruction in Philosophy he was aware of the danger of utilitarian monsters, driving hard bargains with nature, and he was appreciative, to a degree unusual in his thought, of the contemplative life, with its loving intercourse with forms and shapes and symbols in their immediacy. The weakness of Mr. Dewey's instrumentalism is a weakness of practical emphasis. He recognizes the place of the humane arts, but his preoccupation has been with science and technology, with instrumentalism in the narrow sense, the sense in which it occurs to Mr. Babbitt and to all his followers who practice so assiduously the mechanical ritual of American life. Conscious of the weakness of the academic critic, who may take art as an abstract end-in-itself, quite divorced from life and experience, he forgets that Mr. Babbitt treats showerbath fixtures and automobile gadgets in the same way—as if a life spent in the pursuit of these contrivances was a noble and liberal one. What Mr. Dewey has done in part has been to bolster up and confirm by philosophic statement tendencies which are already strong and well-established in American life, whereas he has been apathetic or diffident about things which must still be introduced into our scheme of things if it is to become thoroughly humane and significant. What I have said of William James applies with considerable force to his disciple.

V

In the revulsion that followed America's entry into the war, Randolph Bourne, one of Mr. Dewey's most ardent and talented disciples, found himself bereft of the philosophy which had once seemed all-sufficient; its counsel of adjustment left him rebelliously turning his back on the war-situation and the war-technique. In his recoil, Bourne put his finger upon the shallow side of Mr. Dewey's thinking; and his criticism is all the more adequate and pertinent because it rested on a sympathetic understanding of the instrumentalist philosophy.

"To those of us," he wrote, "who have taken Dewey's philosophy almost as our American religion, it never occurred that values could be subordinated to technique. We were instrumentalist, but we had our private utopias so clearly before our minds that the means fell always into place as contributory. And Dewey, of course, always meant his philosophy, when taken as a philosophy of life, to start with values. But there was always that unhappy ambiguity in his doctrine as to just how values were created, and it became easier and easier to assume that just any growth was justified and almost any activity valuable so long as it achieved its ends. The American, in living out his philosophy, has habitually confused results with product, and been content with getting somewhere without asking too closely whether it was the desirable place to get. . . . You must have your vision, and you must have your technique. The practical effect of Dewey's philosophy has evidently been to develop the sense of the latter at the expense of the former."

Without these superimposed values, the values that arise out of vision, instrumentalism becomes the mere apotheosis of actualities: it is all dressed up, with no place to go. Unfortunately, since the break-up of medieval culture, with such interludes as humanism and romanticism have supplied, men have subordinated the imagination to their interest in practical arrangements and expediences, or they have completely canalized the imagination itself into the practical channels of invention. This has led not alone to the conquest of the physical environment but also to the maceration of human purposes. The more men go on in this way, the farther they go from the domain of the imagination, and the more impossible it becomes for them to recognize the part that vision must play in bringing all their practical activities into a common focus. Their external determinism is only a reflection of their internal impotence: their "it must" can be translated "we can't." As Bourne said, the whole industrial world —and instrumentalism is only its highest conscious expression—has taken values for granted; and the result is that we are the victims of any chance set of values which happens to be left over from the past, or to become the fashion. We are living on fragments of the old cultures, or on abortions of the new, because the energies that should have gone into the imaginative life are balked at the source by the pervasive instrumentalism of the environment.

An instrumental philosophy which was oriented towards a whole life would begin, I think, not by a criticism of obsolete cultural values—which are already criticized by the fact that they are obsolete and inoperative and the possession of a small academic class—it would begin, rather, by a criticism of this one-sided idealization of practical contrivances. We shall not get much nearer a genuine culture by ignoring all the products of the creative imagination, or by palming off our practical instrumentali-

ties—excellent though they are in their place—as their full equivalent. "If your ideal is to be adjustment to the situation," as Bourne well said, "in radiant coöperation with reality, then your success is likely to be just that, and no more. You never transcend anything. . . . Vision must constantly outshoot technique, opportunist efforts usually achieve even less than what obviously seemed possible. An impossibilist *élan* that appeals to desire will often carry farther. A philosophy of adjustment will not even make for adjustment."

Brave words! The pragmatists have been defeated, these last few centuries, because they have not searched for the kingdom, the power, and the glory together, but have sought to achieve power alone; so that the kingdom ceased to be a tangible one, and they knew no glory, except that which flowed out of their pursuit of power. Without vision, the pragmatists perish. And our generation, in particular, who have seen them fall back, one by one, into commercial affairs, into administrative absorption, into a pained abandonment of "reform," into taking whatever fortune thrusts into their laps, into an acquiescence even more pathetic, perhaps, than that of the disabled generation which followed the Civil War—our generation may well doubt the

adequacy of their complaisant philosophy. "Things are in the saddle," Emerson said, "and ride mankind." We must overthrow the rider, before we can recover the horse: for otherwise, horse and rider may drive to the devil.