Dewey advanced his own theory of the moral life through an indirect strategy that first exposed the psychological and logical weaknesses of the principal competing theories: utilitarianism and Kantian formalism. When the shortcomings of each of these theories was repaired, he argued, the differences between them were blurred and the strengths of each could be incorporated into an ethics of self-realization in which both happiness and the dictates of practical reason called for the cultivation of democratic character.

Following his argument about the logic of ethical judgments, Dewey characterized moral action as a particular form of voluntary action or conduct, distinguished from nonmoral conduct by the presence of a choice between competing values. All conscious human life was conduct, but much of it was nonmoral, a "technical rather than a moral affair" in which the questions one faced were those of indifferent preference or means-end efficiency. As moral, conduct was "activity called forth and directed by ideas of value or worth, where the values concerned are so mutually incompatible as to require consideration and selection before an overt action is entered upon." In a moral situation the problem was one of determining "what is really valuable." 5

In the analysis of the moral situation the differences between utilitarianism and Kantian rationalism appeared at first glance to be fundamental and irreconcilable, for the two schools of thought could not even agree on what constituted the object of moral judgment. For the utilitarians it was the consequences of an action that were to be judged, while the Kantians insisted that the object of moral deliberation was the motives of the actor. Each of these positions found support in the moral discourse of ordinary life, which, on the one hand, held that "a tree is to be judged by its fruits" and noted that "Hell is paved with good intentions" and, on the other, valued the man whose "heart was in the right place" and with Shakespeare believed "there's nothing right or wrong, but thinking makes it so" (E, 214–215).

Here as was often the case when Dewey called in the common man for consultation, he was setting the stage for attack on yet another pernicious dualism. Popular appreciation of both sides of this argument led, he said, to the suspicion that philosophers were once again erecting false distinctions and overlooking an inclusive perspective that


4. My focus here is on the third of these elements of Dewey's ethical theory, though I indicate how Dewey drew on the other two strands of thought (which we have already examined in some detail) to buttress his normative vision of self-realization as the cultivation of democratic character. In the interest of ease of expression I attribute the arguments of the Ethics to Dewey alone. Dewey wrote the key middle part titled "Theory of the Moral Life," and the chapters "Social Organization and the Individual" and "Civil Society and the Political State" in the final part ("The World of Action"). Tufts wrote the historical first part, about which I say nothing. The only problem the dual authorship creates here lies with Tufts's authorship of the important concluding sections of the third part on economic life and the family. I simply attribute the views expressed there to Dewey as well on the grounds that Dewey and Tufts said that each had "contributed suggestions and criticisms of the work of the other to sufficient degree to make the book throughout a joint work," and Tufts's arguments are forecast in earlier sections of the book written by Dewey (Ethics [1908], Middle Works 5:6).

would resolve their disagreement. In this case, they had split voluntary action, which was “always a disposition, or habit of the agent passing into an overt act” producing certain consequences, into two unrelated “inner” (motive) and “outer” (consequences) parts that destroyed its integrity. A ‘mere’ motive which does not do anything, which makes nothing different, is not a genuine motive at all, and hence is not a voluntary act. On the other hand, consequences which are not intended, which are not personally wanted and chosen and striven for, are not part of a voluntary act” (E, 218–219). Both sides seemed to recognize these difficulties and often hedged their position to shore up its weak flank. Utilitarians emphasized foreseen consequences, absolving agents of responsibility for reasonably unforeseen and unintended consequences and focusing judgment on foresight, “a mental act whose exercise depends on character.” Kantians linked motives to consequences by regarding motives as forces that worked toward certain results. Each theory thus began with a firm commitment to judge only consequences or motives but, faced with the unity of the two in moral conduct, took account of the concerns of the competing perspective in a fashion that nearly canceled the original opposition. The result was an unacknowledged consensus that the object of moral judgment was “an outcome, forethought and desired, and hence attempted” (E, 230).

All schools of moral theory agreed that the consequences agents foresaw and desired in a particular moral situation were profoundly shaped by the stable dispositions they brought to it. The sorts of consequences which appealed to a person depended on the sort of person he or she was. Thus, though on the face of it moral situations presented an agent with a decision about what to do, they were, at bottom, situations that called for a decision about what one was to be. “When ends are genuinely incompatible,” Dewey remarked, “no common denominator can be found except by deciding what sort of character is most highly prized and shall be given supremacy” (E, 195). Dewey defined “character” as “that body of tendencies and interests in the individual which

6. As this suggests, Dewey required that Kantians give more ground than the utilitarians in defining the object of moral judgment. As we will see, this distribution of relative advantage was also apparent in his discussion of the criteria of moral judgment, though I would not go as far as Charles Stevenson does in his introduction to the Ethics in viewing Dewey’s position as “a modified but still not recognizable form of utilitarianism” (E, xxxiii). Nonetheless, utilitarianism did fare consistently better with Dewey than Kantian rationalism, and the neo-utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill came away with the fewest bruises of all. Dewey’s antipathy to Kantian formalism was, of course, long-standing, though how deep his aversions ran would not be evident until the polemics of German Philosophy and Politics (1915), in which responsibility for German authoritarianism was laid at Kant’s doorstep (see Chapter 7).
not to say that all men desire pleasure but that all men seek to satisfy their desires in appropriate objects. Insofar as the characters of agents differed, their desires differed. Hence, their conceptions of happiness differed:

If the desire is the desire of an honest man, then the prosperous execution of some honorable intent, the payment of a debt, the adequate termination of a trust, is conceived as happiness, as good. If it be the desire of a profligate, then entering upon the riotous course of living now made possible by inheritance of property is taken as happiness—the one consummation greatly to be wished. If we know what any person really finds desirable, what he stakes his happiness upon, we can read his nature. In happiness, as the anticipation of the satisfaction of desire, there is, therefore, no sure or unambiguous quality; for it may be a token of good or bad character, according to the sort of object which appeals to the person (E, 249).

All character types found happiness in the satisfaction of the desires peculiar to that character, and for this reason happiness as a conceived good was not an ethical standard. Only happiness as a rightly conceived good could serve as such a standard. Since the nature of conceived happiness varied with character, the conceived happiness of the agent of “good character” was the ethical standard.

The hedonistic calculus of Jeremy Bentham, Dewey argued, was not up to providing a measure of true happiness or good character. Bentham held that the standard for judging an action was a calculation of the future pleasures and pains of all those affected by the action. This standard was faulty in two respects. First, it took pleasures to be isolated entities, alike in quality and differing only in quantity, when in fact pleasures were qualitatively distinct and incommensurable (a point made against Bentham even by such sympathetic utilitarians as John Stuart Mill). Second, it misconceived the calculations involved in the moral situation. We do not, Dewey said, measure an act against the future quantum of pain or pleasure it will produce but against its effect on our present dispositions or character. “The practical value of our acts is defined to us at any given time by the satisfaction, or displeasure, we take in the ideas of changes we foresee in case the act takes place. The present happiness or distaste, depending on the harmony of the idea in question and the character, defines for us the value of future consequences.” This, he observed, still left us with no ethical standard, for “the idea of a certain result warms the heart of each, his heart being what it is. The assassin would not be one if the thought of a murder had not been entertained by him and if the thought had not been liked and welcomed—made at home” (E, 254–255). The ethical problem was to distinguish the good heart.

Dewey argued that if one replaced the hedonism, atomism, and sensationalism of utilitarian psychology with the superior scientific understanding of human action afforded by the functional psychology he, James, and others had worked out in the 1890s it would be possible to make this crucial distinction. From the functionalist point of view, pleasure was the result of the realization of some capacity (“function”) of the agent in an object. There was no such thing as pleasure itself, only pleasant objects. Pleasure was derived from “the way some object meets, fits into, responds to an activity of the agent”: “To say that food is agreeable, means that food satisfies an organic function. Music is pleasant because by it certain capacities or demands of the person with respect to rhythm of hearing are fulfilled; a landscape is beautiful because it carries to fulfillment the visual possibilities of the spectator” (E, 257). Functional psychology thus provided a better interpretation of happiness as a conceived good. As such, happiness was not a sum of pleasures but the “agreement whether anticipated or realized, of the objective conditions brought about by our endeavors with our desires and purposes” (E, 256).

More important, Dewey asserted, functional psychology pointed to an ethical standard of happiness as rightly conceived, a meaning for real or true happiness. The truly happy agent, he argued, acted so as to develop and express a character that desired ends that unified the powers and interests of the whole self. “We can,” he said, “distinguish between the false and unsatisfactory happiness found in the expression of a more or less isolated and superficial tendency of the self, and the true or genuine good found in the adequate fulfillment of a fundamental and fully related capacity” (E, 246). From the functional perspective, “harmony, reinforcement, expansion are the signs of a true or moral satisfaction.” True happiness lay in the pursuit of ends harmonious with all the capacities and desires of the self and which expanded them into a cooperative whole. Unhappiness or false happiness lay in the pursuit of ends that divided the self, failing to take account of some of its capacities or desires. The critical question, Dewey said, was “what is the good which while good in direct enjoyment also brings with it fuller and more continuous life” (E, 259).

Dewey argued that the social good—the welfare of all those affected by an action—was the only good that met this demand for an inclusive
and expanding end. The human self was inherently social, bound to other selves by instinctive social affections, and these sympathetic affections made the well-being of others the direct object of desire and endeavor. "We cannot think of ourselves save as to some extent social beings," he observed. "Hence we cannot separate the idea of ourselves and our own good from our idea of others and of their good" (E, 268). Because the self found its good in the good of others, an act that harmed others harmed the agent as well, for it thwarted his social interests and powers, denying him a "full" and "continuous" life. A "selfish" act was not one that set the good of the self against the good of others but an act that set the self against itself by curtailing the social interests and desires. "The fact which constitutes selfishness in the moral sense is not that certain impulses and habits secure the well-being of the self, but that the well-being secured is a narrow and exclusive one" (E, 343). The genuinely moral person was thus one "in whom the habit of regarding all capacities and habits of self from the social standpoint is formed and active" (E, 271).

Dewey went on to argue that the development of a character that aimed at the social good was not only necessary but sufficient for true happiness. The sympathetic tendencies of the self, he argued, were capable of harmonizing and expanding the capacities and desires of the self into a cooperative whole. The moral ideal—the unified, growing self—could be produced by "a blending, a fusing of the sympathetic tendencies with all the other impulsive and habitual traits of the self":

When interest in power is permeated with an affectionate impulse it is protected from being a tendency to dominate and tyrannize; it becomes an interest in effectiveness of regard for common ends. When an interest in artistic or scientific objects is similarly fused, it loses the indifferent and coldly impersonal character which marks the specialist as such, and becomes an interest in the adequate aesthetic and intellectual development of the conditions of a common life. Sympathy does not merely associate one of these tendencies with another; still less does it make one a means to the other's end. It so intimately permeates them as to transform them both into a single new and moral interest. . . .

The result of this reciprocal absorption is the disappearance of the natural tendencies in their original form and the generation of moral, i.e., socialized interests. (E, 272–273)

This fusion of sympathy with the other capacities and desires of the self was, for Dewey, the task of the moral life. Moral conduct was a process of self-creation and growth of what might be termed "sympathetic character." Self-realization as an ethical ideal was "the formation, out of the body of original instinctive impulses which compose the natural self, of a voluntary self in which socialized desires and affections are dominant, and in which the last and controlling principle of deliberation is the love of the objects which will make this transformation possible" (E, 357). Therein lay true happiness.

Kant had shared Dewey's dissatisfaction with the hedonistic psychology that underlay utilitarianism. His concern, however, was not that it was an inaccurate description of human desire but that it was too accurate. Consequently he attempted to formulate an ethics designed to counter the heteronomy of desire. Morality required laws that were unqualified, necessary, and universal—categorical imperatives—and hence moral reason had to free itself from experience and substantive desires that were partial, temporary, and relative. Morality should be the product of a reason that operated "a priori to all experience of desire, pleasure, and pain"—a purely formal reason. The moral life, for Kant, lay not in happiness but in following the dictates of this purely formal, transcendental faculty of reason.

The trouble with Kantian practical reason was that it was empty; that is, it did not seem capable of indicating in any given case what in general should be done or, more important, what sort of person one should be. It enjoined one simply to follow the law of reason, which was to follow the law of reason. Kant thought that one could derive some more helpful prescriptions from this law, but Dewey argued that he succeeded in this task only by smuggling some important substantive assumptions into his formalism. 7

For example, Kant's maxim to act as if the motive of one's action were to become a universal law did not, as Kant believed, inhibit such things as lying and selfishness but only less-than-thoroughgoing lying and selfishness. Dewey observed that "there is no formal contradiction in acting always on a motive of theft, unchastity, or insolence. All that Kant's method can require, in strict logic, is that the individual always, under similar circumstances, act from the same motive. Be willing to be always dishonest, or impure, or proud in your intent; achieve consistency in the badness of your motives, and you will be good!" (E, 287).

7 Students of contemporary political philosophy may recognize in Dewey's critique of Kant elements of Michael Sandel's criticism in Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) of the Kantian self at the heart of John Rawls's Theory of Justice (1971). Caught in the same dilemma as Kant, Rawls has been accused of smuggling the substantive assumptions of a welfare-state liberal into what appears to be a set of purely formal procedures for determining what is just.
Kant’s examples of universalization and the “contradictions” of such things as suicide, sluggishness, and selfishness showed that he was not relying on purely formal reasoning but on an appeal to the agent to consider the ways in which generalizing a particular concrete end would conflict with other concrete ends to which he was committed; the contradictions involved were not formal but substantive, as was their resolution. Thus what Kant was really getting at with his maxim was that “the right as the rational good means that which is harmonious with all the capacities and desires of the self, that which expands them into a harmonious whole” (E, 285). Similarly, another famous Kantian maxim—always to treat others as an end and not merely as a means—was an ill-disguised version of the substantive proposition that “the good for any man is that in which the welfare of others counts as much as his own” (E, 286). When one put these two maxims together one arrived at the injunction to put the “social relations of an act” foremost in moral reasoning and a definition of right action as “that action which, so far as in it lies, combines into a whole of common interests and purposes the otherwise conflicting aims and interests of different persons” (E, 286). Stripped of its apparent formalism, Kantian rationalism once again met on common ground with a utilitarianism stripped of its faulty psychology.

When one exposed the substantive, experiential character of Kant’s purportedly formal, transcendental reason, Dewey said, one was left with an important lesson about the place of thought, of judgment, in moral situations. What Kant was really insisting on, from Dewey’s perspective, was the use of careful deliberation “for such a revision of desire as it casually and unreflectively presents itself as would make the desire a consistent expression of the whole body of the purposes of the self” (E, 287). This argument, as Kant’s maxim about others as ends indicated, meant that truly moral judgment was informed by social sympathy, for “sympathy supplies the passion for an effective, broad, and objective survey of desires, projects, resolves, and deeds” (E, 303). In reconstructing Kant’s theory, Dewey thus provided a normative ideal of scientific practical reason which went beyond the descriptive analysis of moral judgments he offered in his logical writings. Here, that is, he indicated what sort of character should enter into ethical reasoning as a “determinant of this content-value of judgment rather than that.”

Moral moral reasoning, in brief, was the judgment of an agent possessed of sympathetic character.

In concluding his “theory of the moral life,” Dewey briefly assimilated a third tradition of moral argument to his portrait of the good democrat: the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics. “The habits of character whose effect is to sustain and spread the rational or common good,” he said, “are virtues” (E, 359). Virtues were “numberless” because they were intimately connected with all sorts of individual capacities and endowments and varied with changes in social life. Hence, “every natural capacity, every talent or ability, whether of inquiring mind, of gentle affection, or of executive skill, becomes a virtue when it is turned to account in supporting or extending the fabric of social values” (E, 360). Nonetheless, all virtuous action displayed wholeheartedness, persistence, and sincerity and required the exercise of a few cardinal virtues: self-control of passions and appetites in the interest of the largest values at stake in any action (“temperance”); a willingness to face often painful obstacles in the pursuit of the common good (“courage”); fairness, impartiality, and honesty in dealings with others (“justice”); and intelligent, deliberate judgment (“conscientiousness”) (E, 363–379). This latter cardinal virtue was preeminent because “of all the habits which constitute the character of an individual, the habit of judging moral situations is the most important, for this is the key to the direction and to the remaking of all other habits” (E, 375). Wisdom (“the nurse of all the virtues”) was knowledge as “intimate and well-founded conviction . . . directly connected with the affairs of common associated life”—thoughtfulness infused with sympathetic affections and producing insight into the common good (E, 364, 375–376). Whatever their various virtues, all virtuous men and women were temperate, courageous, just, and, above all, wise, for “genuine conscientiousness is guarantee of all virtue” (E, 376). Thus, beginning from three very different theoretical starting points, Dewey arrived in each instance at a similar portrait of the good agent.

The elements of continuity between the theory of the moral life advanced in the Ethics and Dewey’s earlier idealist ethics are clearly evident. Self-realization was no longer conceived as the human approximation of the divine Self, but the more or less aesthetic criteria of self-realization characteristic of Hegelian “expressivism” were still very much in evidence. Self-unification, harmony, wholeness, plentitude, richness, and growth remained the key normative terms for Dewey. “The end, the right and only right end, of man,” he argued, “lies in the fullest and freest realization of powers in their appropriate objects” (E, 273). Powers were full and free in their realization only when they worked together in a complex, diverse, expansive yet unified whole.
Moral man was akin to an artist or craftsman drawing on his powers of judgment and social sympathy to shape his desires into a well-wrought self.  

As we saw, Dewey had begun to move in the early 1890s from a grounding of this ethics of self-realization in idealist metaphysics to an appeal to experimental experience for support, and the Ethics offered full-scale confirmation of this naturalization of the moral life. This move, as I noted, deprived his ethics of the certainties and guarantees of transcendent authority, but given the problems his authority was having establishing its credentials as well as the abuses to which human beings claiming access to such authority were liable, this did not disturb him. Good reasons—careful argument and the knowledge provided by modern science—were, he believed, sufficient grounds for his moral vision. Functional psychology, in particular, was friendly to his ethics, which was not surprising since he and James had from the beginning forged an alliance between their moral and scientific concerns. Indeed, in the Ethics he came perilously close to the “conceit of knowledge” against which he later warned by seemingly suggesting that self-realization as the harmonizing of the desires and capacities of a growing self was an ideal not only consistent with but authorized by psycholo-

8. On the “expressivist” tradition in romantic and Hegelian thought see Charles Taylor, Hegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), chap. 1. The aesthetic character of Dewey’s ideals of self-realization and “consummatory experience” would, as we will see, become fully explicit in the late 1920s and 1930s. In light of the attention that historians led by Jackson Lears and Warren Susman have recently given to the emergence in this period of an ethic of self-realization at the root of the therapeutic self-seeking of modern consumer culture it is perhaps worth distinguishing Dewey’s position from it. First of all, Dewey retained a loyalty to the concept of “character”—the stable dispositions of a coherent self—against the blandishments of emerging notions of a more protean “personality.” Although his ethic was profoundly social, it was, to use David Riesman’s terms, an “inner” rather than an “other”-directed ethic, an ethic of what is often described as the “transcendent” ethics of modernism.

9. In an excellent review George M. Stratton took Dewey to task for his use of the concept to pretend to a conceit of knowledge about the standard of ethical judgment. Although published prior to the Ethics and addressed to The Study of Ethics (1894), the criticisms of Stratton’s review apply to the later book as well. See Stratton, “A Psychological Test of Virtue,” International Journal of Ethics 11 (1901): 200-213. The Psychology of Social Behavior” (1914). Middle Works 7:494; William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (1891), in Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James (Boston: Little Brown, 1935), 2:517. Kloppenberg has an excellent discussion of the differences between James and Dewey on this point in Uncertain Victory, pp. 132-144. For a persuasive argument that there is nothing inherent in Dewey’s ethics that was less the findings of psychology than his ingenious reconstruction of Bentham and Kant that lent the argument of the Ethics its power. If Dewey’s ethics was now bereft of claims to certitude, it was not relativistic in any crude or simple sense. Some theories—those most fully decked out in the garb of science and logic capable of appropriating the best insights of their competitors—were clearly superior to others.

The ideal self in Dewey’s ethics was that Green (and young John Dewey) had made available only to God. By the turn of the century, Dewey confidently, too confidently some argued, was offering it to man. Although he admitted elsewhere that “a wholly consistent self is a practical impossibility,” his effusive celebration of the powers of social sympathy in the Ethics suggested a rather close approximation was not. It might be said that he was advancing a regulative ideal and not a standard to which he anticipated human action would regularly measure up—“unity of personality,” he noted, “is a moral ideal rather than a fact.” Yet one might fairly expect that he would have made the consequences of this more explicit. William James, in an essay Dewey admired a great deal, had done so. The good man, he said, must vote always for the richer universe, for the good which seems most organiz-

able, most fit to enter into complex combinations, most apt to be a member of a more inclusive whole.” Yet James couched this ideal in terms that lent it a tragic dimension: “that act must be the best act, accordingly, which makes for the best whole, in the sense of awakening the least sum of dissatisfactions.” In the casuistic scale, therefore, those ideals must be written highest which prevail at the least cost, or by whose realization the least possible number of other ideals are destroyed.” Dewey’s reluctance to admit with James that “some part of the ideal must be butchered” in the quest for wholeness lent a Pollyannaish flavor to his ethics, though Dewey no doubt preferred to think of it as the persistence of a sinewy optimism.
The persistence of this optimism was also apparent in the social ideal Dewey more briefly advanced in his Ethics, an ideal that naturalized his earlier idealist conception of the ethically sound social organism. This ideal, which he termed “moral democracy,” was a macrocosm of the ethical standard guiding individual action. The good society was, like the good self, a diverse yet harmonious, growing yet unified whole, a fully participatory democracy in which the powers and capacities of the individuals that comprised it were harmonized by their cooperative activities into a community that permitted the full and free expression of individuality.

The creation and sustenance of such a society was an end dictated by moral reason: “the good is the activities in which all men participate so that the powers of each are called out, put to use, and reenforced” (E, 286). The good agent was a good democrat. To act with the social good as the controlling end-in-view was to act with a regard for the consequences of one’s action for the happiness of all those affected by this action. The happiness of others was, generally, the same as one’s own: “the expression of the active tendencies of the self in their appropriate objects.” Thus one should act with regard for “those conditions and objects which permit others freely to exercise their own powers from their own initiative, reflection, and choice” (E, 275). This, Dewey admitted, was a very difficult task:

The chief thing is the discovery and promotion of those activities and active relationships in which the capacities of all concerned are effectively evoked, exercised, and put to the test. It is difficult for a man to attain a point of view from which steadily to apprehend how his own activities affect and modify those of others. It is hard, that is, to learn to accommodate one’s ends to those of others; to adjust, to give way here, and fit in there with respect to our aims. But difficult as this is, it is easy compared with the difficulty of acting in such a way for ends which are helpful to others as will call out and make effective their activities. (E, 275–276)

Reiterating the critique of paternalistic benevolence he had advanced in the 1890s, Dewey suggested that the difficulties of this task were most clearly evident in the failure of many social reformers to meet its demands because they were committed to doing good for rather than with others. Moral democracy called not only for the pursuit of worth-
committed to those with greater needs—but everyone would have what he needed. Equality of opportunity did not mean for Dewey that everyone would be given an equal chance to run a competitive race with others nor even that such a race would be handicapped so as to equalize the capacities of the runners. For Dewey, the race metaphor was utterly inappropriate to an ethical social life, for it implied that everyone was attempting to cultivate the same capacities (speed afoot) for an exclusive end (winning the race). If anything, a society was more like a track team in which every individual participated in a different event or, better yet (if I may provide my own favored analogy), like a basketball team in which the different skills of the members of a team worked together for a common end. As he defined it, equality of opportunity should enhance rather than inhibit individuality (E, 487–492).  

In 1908 modern industrial society was far from providing the conditions for effective freedom for most of its members, a situation, Dewey argued, that called out for democratic reform that would advance equality of opportunity, foster individuality and self-realization and hence secure effective freedom. Here too, though he confessed that such reform “has yet made little progress,” Dewey was flush with a confident “optimism of will” (E, 276). Although he lambasted those who continued to believe in automatic, inevitable progress (especially those who tried to reconceive Darwinian theory as an argument for providential “design on the installment plan”), his faith in “the application of intelligence to the construction of proper social devices” was undiminished, and he seldom displayed the “intellectual pessimism” he believed to be “a necessary part of the moral optimism which actively devotes itself to making the right prevail” (E, 371).  

11. To continue the basketball metaphor a bit, it seems to me that the virtues and “internal goods” of this practice (to use philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre’s term) are quite helpful in illuminating Dewey’s ideals of equality and moral democracy. The game calls upon players to develop some common skills and virtues while at the same time specializing in some of each in accordance with individual talents and desires and to coordinate these talents with other members of their team to advance common goals. Because the best teams effect such coordination, some players play better on different teams and a great team like the champion 1977 Portland Trailblazers could hardly defeat a more talented but ill-harmonized group like the Philadelphia 76ers. Every team has leaders, and these leaders are akin to Dewey’s “moral democrats”—players who use their skills to actively draw out and even enhance the skills of their teammates. For this reason Larry Bird and Magic Johnson, exemplary moral democrats, were the best players in the National Basketball Association in the 1980s, and Michael Jordan, “human highlight film” though he was an individual talent when he entered the league, is rightly said to have become a better player as he has learned to play this leadership role and assumed the mantle of heir apparent to Bird and Johnson. For a persuasive defense of a notion of equality much like Dewey’s as the “true egalitarian attitude” see John Baker, Arguing for Equality (London: Verso, 1987).  


SCHOOLS OF TOMORROW

Until World War I, Dewey’s own efforts as a reformer to secure the conditions of effective freedom for others moved in familiar channels. He dearly missed Jane Addams and the fellowship of Hull House and maintained a connection to the social settlement movement by taking part in activities at Lillian Wald’s Henry Street Settlement in New York. He also played a minor role in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and, with Alice, was more active in promoting equal education for women and women’s suffrage. Asked to comment on the latter issue, he replied that “it is my belief that women’s political enfranchisement is necessary not only to complete the democratic movement, but that till so completed many present evils which superficial observers attribute to democracy instead of to the inadequate character of our democracy, will persist.” (He is also said to have marched in a suffrage parade unknowingly carrying a banner thrust into his hands which read “Men can vote! Why can’t I?”)  

The primary focus of Dewey’s energies, however, remained the nation’s schools. His Laboratory School at Chicago was one of several widely publicized precursors to experiments in “progressive education” under way in the early years of the new century, and he followed these experiments closely, lending his support to those with which he felt an affinity. Although his connections to Teachers College were not partic-