



## Capítulo 12

# El pensamiento pragmatista en la actualidad: conocimiento, lenguaje, religión, estética y política

Pablo Quintanilla y Claudio Viale

Editores



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## JOHN DEWEY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE «QUALITATIVE» FOR DEMOCRACY

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In spite of the fact that Dewey wrote about the importance of the «qualitative» (i.e. what is non-cognitive, non-linguistic, and has been associate with «feelings»), there are only a few Dewey scholars that have stressed or have continue to reconstruct this aspect of his philosophy<sup>1</sup>. This is puzzling, especially when there is a growing body of research in social psychology and the cognitive sciences that supports Dewey's view of thinking as qualitative (see Green & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2001, and Varela, 1999). My concern here, however, is not to ponder critically on the motives why deweyeans have been conservative on this issue, but to provide a positive argument why deweyeans (and pragmatists in general) must, more than ever, embrace and continue to inquire about the «qualitative» in experience.

I will argue that if you care about democracy, and most deweyeans do or are supposed to, then you must inquire about the function of the qualitative in democracy. Dewey argued that democracy was a never ending task. I will suggest some positive and promising tasks for us (deweyeans) as we reconstruct his philosophy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The poor quality of public discourse in America requires us to expand Dewey's logic to include and elaborate the insights that he left us about the unavoidable role of the qualitative in thinking. There is a need for more interdisciplinary research, an embracing of the «affective revolution» in the sciences, but one that is critical of the dualism of reasoning and sentiment.

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<sup>1</sup> Is it because they consider Dewey's claims too radical or fear that talk about the «qualitative» would make them vulnerable to the non-sense charges of subjectivism, the «myth of the given», and even mysticism? Perhaps they just do not see much future in exploring this aspect of Dewey's philosophy. I am open to hear an argument.

### A DEWEYEAN APPROACH TO THE PERVERSE OR PROBLEMATIC WAYS IN WHICH THE «QUALITATIVE» DOES RULE TODAY

Anyone trying to show why the qualitative is important for democracy is faced with the challenge that its reputation is not very positive. We all know the perverse or problematic ways in which the «qualitative» does rule today public discourse in America and elsewhere. The dangerous aspects of rhetoric and emotional persuasion are more significant today than during Dewey's time. The people are swayed by irrelevancy, amusement, and fear. They are seduced by images, propaganda, and demagoguery instead of by the force of argument. Today, there are new forms of emotional persuasion that are the consequence of the medium in which dialogue in public life is had. We live in a world in which images and other non-cognitive and non-verbal means preclude or divert inquiry.

There is, however, a sharp difference between a deweyean approach to these problems created by the qualitative and the ones usually favored by philosophers. The non-propositional «stuff» that is «amusing the public to death» (Postman, 2005) is easily dismissed by intellectualist philosophers as simply irrational, psychological, subjective, and beyond the realm of logic. This is the same sort of magical safeguard that Dewey criticized in philosophy: just label something as «unreal» or «irrational» and somehow it will go away. A deweyean view of public deliberation is not as prone to this mistake because it holds that what is emotional, qualitative, imaginative, non-cognitive, non-verbal is an important aspect of any genuine process of deliberation. A deweyean solution does not pretend to repress what cannot be repressed. Moreover, Dewey would be skeptical of the notion that the solution to our problematic situation lies in a return to a print-centered culture. Those days are gone. Instead, as we will see, Dewey's solution to the problems caused by the qualitative is more not less of the qualitative (just as his solutions to the problems of Democracy are more democracy).

The word «quality» may create difficulties in understanding Dewey's view. In philosophy it is usually associated with either some abstract metaphysical property or some «subjective» phenomena (as in emotivism). With Dewey, it simply points to our pre-theoretical and pre-cognitive experience in the world. A qualitative world of persons and things is the most basic and inclusive context where one finds language, knowledge and all of our more discursive activities (including philosophy). «A universe of experience is the precondition of a universe of discourse» (*LW.12.74*)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Standard references to John Dewey's work are to the critical (print) edition, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953* (1969-1991), and published in three series as *The Early Works* (EW), *The Middle Works* (MW) and *The Later Works* (LW). These designations are followed by volume and page number. «LW.12.74» refers to *The Later Works*, volume 12, page 74.

Thinking arises from within and emerges out of the pervasive qualitative situations that make up the moments of our lives. All thought is situated, embodied, and interfused with feeling. As Mark Johnson claims in *The Meaning of the Body*: «Even our most abstract and formal concepts have no meaning without some connection to felt experience» (2008, p. 93). Thinking is a process that requires felt experiences in all of its stages, and even logical relations are felt transitions. Dewey's view is quite radical. It is not the view that feelings accompany our cognition of logical relations, but rather «feelings of quality, connection, and direction lie at the heart of logical reasoning, as it carried out in actual inquiry» (p. 103).

For Dewey, the qualitative and imaginative are integral aspects of any deliberation; moreover, they are key to its own regulation. Deliberation may require reasoning and examination of propositions, but it is also an imaginative process and, more importantly, it is the qualitative aspect that provides the guidance needed in reaching judgment. While contemporary political theories have made «public reason» more historical, epistemic, dialogical, and linguistic, one could question whether it has embrace wholeheartedly its qualitative dimension in the way Dewey did<sup>3</sup>. For Dewey, communal or public inquiry is the exploration and examination of proposed solutions and assertions in light of and because of a «felt» and shared problem. While it is important in a democracy that this process includes appeals to arguments and experience, that is not all that is needed. This process itself is qualitative and depends on the qualitative for its own transformation. Therefore, inquirers must have more habits than the ones associated with the intellect, they must be «sensitive» in ways that can be and should be spelled out. For Dewey, even the proper deliberations characteristic of scientist require qualitative sensitivity. He wrote, «scientific thought is, in its turn, a specialized form of art, with its own qualitative control. The more formal and mathematical science becomes, the more it is controlled by sensitiveness to a special kind of qualitative considerations» (*LW.5.252*).

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<sup>3</sup> There are, of course, neo-Aristotelean (e.g. Martha Nussbaum), neo-humean (e.g. Sharon Krause), and feminist views (e.g. Iris Young) that have stressed emotions and have criticized the rationalistic conceptions of public discourse by deliberative democrats. A subject for a different inquiry and paper is the extent to which these views are a radical departure from tradition in regard to the qualitative as conceived by Dewey. I have a few prima facie reasons to be skeptical. First, in so far as many of these recent views are re-adopting the aristotelian and humean models of cognition they are in danger of presupposing the same dualisms and faculty psychology that Dewey argue against in his reconstruction of the qualitative. Secondly, many of the recent anti-rationalists views are simply stressing the cognitive status of the emotions in order to validate their role in public deliberation. Dewey's view is much more radical. Emotion is not all there is to the qualitative, inquiry is guided by what is «felt» in more fundamental ways (see Johnson, 2008). Moreover, Dewey issue warnings against the traditional tendency to hypostatize «emotions». Dewey wrote «Experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it» (*LW.10.48*).

Deliberation requires the learning and operation of certain embodied habits. Some of these habits go beyond the intellectual capacities associated traditionally with reason or logic. The ability or disposition to evaluate the logical implications of our beliefs and the habit of not making inferences that are not warranted by the evidence may be important, but so are habits of imagination and emotional sensitivity. In democratic deliberation, it is important to have citizens willing to take the standpoint of others and, in sum with all of the doing and undergoing habits that are required for a meaningful, educative, and democratic interaction.

According to Dewey's view of the ideal character, what we need to counteract the seduction of images and emotional appeals that distort inquiry is more —not fewer— emotional and imaginative habits. As he notes, «[t]he conclusion is not that the emotional, passionate phase of action can be or should be eliminated in behalf of a bloodless reason. *More "passions"*, not fewer, is the answer. To check the influence of hate there must be sympathy, while to rationalize sympathy there are needed emotions of curiosity, caution [...]» (*MW.14.136*, my emphasis).

Pragmatists understood the force of habits. It is not enough to become consciously aware that we are emotionally manipulated in order to protect ourselves from being emotionally manipulated. What we need are people who possess a character that is *emotionally* receptive to doubt and possess a habitual *passion* for criticism. To counteract the craving and comfort provided by absolutisms, we must learn to habitually find some emotional zest and thrill in facing uncertainty and contingency. One could also argue that, against the seduction of images, what we need are people whose character can negotiate more not less images. Visual literacy, communication, and criticism may well have their own logic and the proper place in the sort of education that is needed. This is obviously a very different prescription than the repression recommended by many philosophers in the name of reason and democracy.

One reason why the usual model of public reason in political theory downplays or ignores the qualitative is because philosophers have associated the affective with what is personal, private and idiosyncratic, and it is therefore what must transcend if we are to have public democratic discourse in a pluralistic society. For Dewey, this view of the affective should be questioned (<sup>4</sup>). In a democracy, we do want the people to have the sort of communication where most are able to transcend their beliefs and values to address citizens that have different beliefs/values, but this is done best by having citizens who are embodied with certain imaginative and emotional habits. There is no neutral, value-less, emotion-less, universal point of view that we must strive for, and from which, we can adjudicate in public deliberation. This should not

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<sup>4</sup> For Dewey's view of the affective and similarities with recent feminist thought, see Pappas (1993).

be a cause of despair but a reason to learn to discriminate between better and worse habits of affection and imagination. As Dewey said,

One can only see from a certain standpoint, but this fact does not make all standpoints of equal value. A standpoint which is nowhere in particular is an absurdity. But one may have an affection for a standpoint which gives a rich and ordered landscape rather than for one from which things are seen confusedly and meagerly (*LW.6.15-14*).

Dewey, for example, presented the hypothesis that when *sympathy*<sup>5</sup> becomes fused with other virtues such as openness it becomes part of the democratic readiness to listen to others and look at things from their point of view whether we agree or not. He claimed that «to put ourselves in the place of another, to see things from the standpoint of his aims and values... is the surest way to appreciate what justice demands in concrete cases» (*LW.7.251*). However, Dewey's inquiry into better and worse habits of affection in light of the problems of democracy remain an incomplete and open-ended task for philosophy and other empirical disciplines. Deweyans should take this task seriously, especially in light of the problem of poor quality public discourse in America. We find in Dewey's philosophy the possibility of developing a new and promising approach to this problem. According to Dewey, the neglect of the aesthetic and affective factors («direct sensitiveness») in American education is «the greatest deficiency in our educational systems with respect to character building» (*MW.6.386*). We need a view of education for democracy that emphasizes —more than ever before— visual literacy, habits of imagination and feelings. This inquiry must, however, be informed by an empirical inquiry into *both* the distortions and positive function of the qualitative in public discourse. In what follows, I will show how such an inquiry is possible, starting with Dewey's insights about the different phases of inquiry in his *Logic*. What I offer here is just a sketch, one that should be further developed and that should consult the most recent research about human judgment and deliberation in the sciences. Deweyans must open themselves to such an interdisciplinary research if they want to ameliorate present conditions.

### QUALITATIVE DISTORTIONS AT DIFFERENT PHASES OF INQUIRY

The qualitative must be studied as it relates to very specific phases of inquiry in Dewey's *Logic*. Inquiry is the transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinate situation. This is a continuous process with phases that require

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<sup>5</sup> What Dewey meant by *sympathy* is closer to what feminist writers today have identified as *empathy* (Meyers, 1993).

operations of reasoning, observation, experimentation and culminates in a final warranted judgment. The sad truth is that many of us live more and more in a society where this process of inquiry gets diverted. While it is true that many times the «qualitative» can be blamed for such diversions and distractions, Dewey does not share the common demonization and repression of the qualitative in thinking about the threats to democratic public discourse. For Dewey, the problem is not with the «qualitative» *per se* because all thought is qualitative. In general, «feelings» are one of the important resources we have to guide inquiry at every step in the process. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey says that quality is not only important as a «motive in undertaking intellectual inquiry: but in «keeping it honest» (2005, p. 40). If Dewey is correct, then mistakes in deliberation and communal inquiry may be «qualitative» and not just «logical» (i.e., mistakes of reasoning). For instance, just as one «jumps to a conclusion» (a logical leap or mistaken inference), there are also disturbing «jumps» that have to do with the qualitative. A person or a community can have great logical or reasoning powers but a distorted sensitivity may retard the inquiry. In sum, from the standpoint of Dewey's philosophy, there are failures to guide deliberation by not paying attention to what is «felt» throughout the entire process of transforming an indeterminate situation into one that is determinate. These failures are serious since they threaten democracy. In what follows, I will outline some of the common failures to guide inquiry by the qualitative (in the proper way) at different phases of inquiry.

### **The failure to «feel» the problem**

Both Peirce and Dewey stress how inquiry is a middle phase that starts with the non-cognitive qualitative experience of doubt or indeterminacy. «A problem must be felt before it can be stated» (*LW*.12.76). Genuine thinking starts with feeling a disruption when a problem is perceived and an explicit reflection about «what is the problem?» There are two possible «qualitative» failures at this phase of the process: (a) inquirers fail to experience the disruption or indeterminacy of a situation, or (b) although they «feel» the indeterminacy, there is a «leap» or disconnection between this initial phase and the more reflective phase of stating what is the problem. I am afraid that my use of Dewey's technical language can get in the way of understanding what is concrete and commonplace. Therefore, in what follows, I want to show how these two failures —(a) and (b) above— are a common threat to democracy.

The ideal of democracy requires citizens that are thoughtful or prone to deliberate about the shared significant problems of democracy. Today, perhaps even more than Dewey's time, the lack of publics prone to do such a thing is a serious problem. This is often described as the lack of reflective-intellectual habits in the people. Indeed, one of the oldest objections against democracy is that the people do not think, and are



in fact stupid or non-intelligent, especially about public matters that should be the object of their public deliberations. Concern about the personal failings of individual citizens cause many contemporary political theorists to prescribe the existence of public spaces that encourage the people to reason together while putting aside their private feelings and values. For the classical pragmatist, however, this is a rather narrow diagnosis of the problem and an impractical solution.

We must consider what the pre-required conditions of genuine thinking are. The dependence of thinking on suffering indeterminate situations implies that failure to experience these sorts of situations, especially when one should, may be the culprit. To put it bluntly, how can we expect people to think about the key problems of our counterfeit democracy if they do not first experience these problems as problems? People don't think merely because they're asked to. How can we expect people to eat if they are not hungry? We wish more people would think, but «how to make people think» cannot be separated from «how to make people «feel» the indeterminacy of certain situations». The latter is, in fact, a precondition.

There are people that, for whatever reason, lack the capacity to qualitatively experience (i.e., feel or suffer) certain important problems. Sometimes we call them «insensitive» and at other times just «apathetic». Apathy has been a serious problem of democracy, and it points to the importance of the qualitative for thinking to even get started. Democratic reformers and revolutionary leaders want the people in a particular society to become aware of their own oppression and to seek change, but this is not a mere matter of knowledge or lack of reflective capacities. It is first and foremost a matter of feeling that something is not right in the present statu quo or relationships with others. If the people do not first suffer their oppression on their own (in an immediate and qualitative way), there is no hope that they try to find the source of the problem and find ways to transform their situation. It is true that arguments and even theories can sometimes be effective tools to «provoke» immediate indeterminacy in the people. As intellectuals, we often lose sight of the fact that our success in provoking inquiry is not proportional to the strength or validity of our intellectual arguments, but by the sheer qualitative effect we have with the people. There are different means to break the apathy of the people and made them think: arguments, novels, movies, music, satire, parody, sticks, stones, and bombs. One has to be open and pluralistic about the possible means, even though there are good reasons for preferring some means in lieu of others. I am worried that, as intellectuals, we tend to overestimate the potency of intellectual means to provoke reflection, especially today when people are bombarded with plenty of stimuli to get their attention and prevent them from thinking. In sum, there is no hope for democracy if the people fail to feel the lack of democracy to be a problem.

### Wasted disruptions: diversions and the failure to «feel» the same problem throughout

Another implication of the pragmatist view of inquiry is that seriously disruptive social or natural events (e.g., 9/11, injustices, Katrina, wars, terrorism, economic crisis and unemployment) can be opportunities for reflection, sometimes for even long overdue thinking that could ameliorate present conditions. This is not the optimism that denies the evil and tragic character of such events. While it is hard to speak of serious problems and crisis as «opportunities», this is what they are from the point of view of the pragmatists. Indeterminate situations are not only painful but «wasted» when they either do not provoke inquiry (no learning) or lead to a diverted inquiry. In recent articles in the *New York Times*<sup>6</sup> there have been some reflections about how to name the first 10 years of the 21st Century, based on the most important events and developments of this decade. Good candidates were «The Era of Misplaced Anxiety», «The Decade of Disruption», and «The Decade of the Unthinkable». One could make the case that the appropriate name should be «The Decade of Wasted Disruptions». For example, after 9/11 and after the onset of the economic crisis, leaders and the people diverted inquiry into formulations of the problem and views about the facts that had nothing to do with the indeterminate situation experienced. We had leaders that described the disruptive events in terms of the dichotomies of good versus evil (and us versus them). Many people were led to believe that those responsible for the 9/11 attacks were all from Iraq. Some in the left were quick to construct their own conspiracy theories. These are just some examples of how events can be wasted disruptions because inquiry is diverted.

Inquiry can be diverted or distracted in many ways, and for Dewey the qualitative is key to diagnosing these problems as well as their solution. Inquiry is diverted when there is a «leap» or disconnection between experiencing the initial indeterminate situation and the phase of inquiry that Dewey calls «institution of a problem» (in his *Logic*). The indeterminate situation is at first precognitive, but it is soon experienced as «problematic», that is, as reflecting on answering, «What is the problem?» At this point, Dewey says, «[t]o mistake the problem involved is to cause subsequent inquiry to be irrelevant or go astray» (*LW*.12.112). For Dewey, it is the qualitative that guides the inquirer in knowing whether he/she is still dealing with the same problem or is venturing into a different one. Dewey explains how «feeling» the problem is what protect us from «leaps» or diversions in the process of inquiry. Attention to the continuous but changing feeling is what «enables us to keep thinking about one problem without our having constantly to stop to ask ourselves what it is after all

<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/15/weekinreview/15segal.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/15/weekinreview/15segal.html?_r=2)

that we are thinking about. We are aware of it not by itself but as the background, the thread, and the directive clue in what we do expressly think of. For the latter things are its distinctions and relations» (*LW*.5.248).

More examples may help illustrate how common diverted inquiry is. Today, many people are experiencing a serious disruption in their life, related to a drastic change in their social environment, economic conditions, unemployment, and etcetera. They are suddenly angry and feel an acute uncertainty and indeterminacy of their situation. However, they do not know why or have yet to be reflective about their situation. In many cases, instead of attending to the concrete indeterminacy felt, it is repressed, avoided, or dissipated by quickly latching on to an articulation of what the problem is (and its possible solution) that is *unrelated* to the initial experienced problem. This is sometimes described as the proper object of ones feelings (e.g., anger, fear) that is misplaced by some other convenient object that is unrelated. Sometimes, we latch onto the first articulation of «what is the problem» that gives us immediate release, comfort, certainty or afford some release or venting. We feel the indeterminacy of our situation, but instead of guiding our inquiry by paying attention to the quality (feeling or pain) we latch on to someone's simplistic and immediately gratifying description of the problem. Hence, the experienced indeterminacy does not function in the initial phases to guide the inquiry, as it should. What is initially felt is not transformed as inquiry proceeds. Instead it is repressed or displaced.

I submit that we should not call these last sorts of problems «failures of reasoning» or problems caused by the lack of reasoning. Thinkers with perfect logical abilities are susceptible to the problem of diverted inquiry. There are plenty of highly intelligent individuals that while good at reasoning, tend to get lost and diverted because they quickly lose, are insensitive to, or do not sustain the immediate felt sense of the problem that started their inquiry. In these situations, their capacity for reflective detachment hardly functions as a virtue. They in fact «jump» into different inquiries that, to someone with a good sense of the problem at hand, are unrelated. The habit of going off on tangents and intellectual analysis that are irrelevant to the concrete problems that initiate inquiry is a common vice for the intellectual person who lacks sensitivity. To have this sort of intellectual leading the discussion is unwise for a democratic community of inquiry.

The problem of diverted inquiry is of course more common among the non-intellectual types, those that are way too prone to be emotionally manipulated by others. This is a problem today that may account for the some of the «grass roots» populist movements that we are experiencing. In a recent op-ed in the *New York Times*, Jürgen Habermas expressed concern with the state of democracy in Europe

because «politicians are discovering that they can divert the social anxieties of their voters into ethnic aggression against still weaker social groups» (2010). In America and Europe, we are witnessing right-wing populists stirring up political prejudices against immigrants by invoking phobic images and other techniques. Habermas, however, reflects upon the problem in terms of a relapse into an «ethnic understanding of our liberal constitution» (instead of the liberal state). He gives his characteristic call for a more civic discourse, but the concrete problem is that, for in many people, their felt social anxiety (caused by many factors) is being diverted or displaced by a felt anger, hostility, or fear of immigrants. The problem is not just a failure of reasoning, nor is it a problem that is reduced to a faulty political system. Popular prejudices and mob mentality are problems of diverted inquiry that occur because many are incapable of guiding their deliberation in a sustained way by the felt indeterminacy they experience. The people's qualitative sensitivity is either easily diverted (e.g., from feeling anxiety to hate) or it is easily distracted in too many directions that provide the promise of immediate gratification. Dewey was aware of this contemporary problem, but that problem is more serious today. The people are easily distracted by entertainment, immediate gratifications, and have short attention spans. From a deweyan perspective, the problem is not that the qualitative intrudes and diverts (so that we must appeal to «reason»). Instead, it is a failure to guide inquiry by the qualitative. Sustained, disciplined, and continuous inquiry is not a matter of an emotion-less will to inquire or rational discipline. Ideal inquirers are sensitive to the qualitative transformation that is occurring as they think; their doing is guided by undergoing. Ideal inquirers are not easily distracted or diverted by what is not felt as relevant to the problem at hand. They are sensitive to the unique doubt of each inquiry.

### **The failure to «feel» what is relevant**

So far, I have claimed that the qualitative is important in order not to mistake the problem and avoid diversions and distractions, which are common deficiencies in our democracies. Yet the qualitative also has the important function of guiding inquirers in their immediate sense of what is relevant and irrelevant as inquiry proceeds. Dewey says that emotion is not just the moving force of inquiry but the «cementing» that «selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials disparate and dissimilar» (2005, p. 44). In his *Logic*, Dewey presents us with two «evils» that can occur if the inquirer is not sensitive enough to the situation as a whole. There are inquirers who gather too many facts, while others force the facts into a predetermined conceptual or theoretical

scheme. But Dewey remedy is clear: «The way, and the only way, to escape these two evils, is sensitivity to the quality of a situation as a whole...If the unique quality of the situation is had immediately, then there is something that regulates the selection and the weighing of observed facts and their conceptual ordering» (*LW.12.76*, my emphasis).

This prescription is relevant to the two evils of «factual overload» and «ideological thinking» in the contemporary scene. Because of technological advancement, contemporary citizens suffer from «information» overload. We have never had so many «facts» at our disposal, but it is not clear what to do with them, whether to select them as relevant or even to accept them as facts. The segment of the public that cares to make an informed judgment about an issue feels lost and overwhelmed<sup>7</sup>. This situation feeds into the twin evil mentioned above by Dewey: people seek instead the guidance provided by a predetermined ideology. The relevance of information or facts in deliberating about some social problem (e.g., health care, education) is therefore determined by the predetermined right wing or left wing theoretical framework of the inquirers. In other words, in the process of inquiry the problem «felt» (its quality) plays no role in regulating where inquiry is going to go. In fact, one can predict where inquiry will go; just find out if the person is right wing or left wing.

The importance of sensitivity to the problems experienced underscores Dewey's reply to Lippmann about the elite not «feeling the pinch». Lippmann had an elite-model form of democracy, and Dewey's responded that the elites are not in a position to come to a better judgment about what is good for the people because they is too far remove from the concrete problems that are directly felt and suffered by the people. To make this point, Dewey made the following analogy: «The man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied» (*LW.2.364*). How the shoe feels is critical to the process of fixing it, and illustrates how important the qualitative is to the inquiry. Today, the intellectual elite continues to ignore the importance of «feeling the pinch» while the people have many distractions and diversions that does not permit them to guide their inquiries by how the shoes feel. This is perhaps something that Dewey could not have foreseen.

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<sup>7</sup> For a recent book with evidence that this is a good characterization of the life of many people today see Gitlin (2002).

**THE RELATION BETWEEN REASONING AND SENTIMENT IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE**

I have so far given reasons why philosophers, in particular, we pragmatists committed to Democracy should embrace the recent «affective revolution» in social psychology and other sciences<sup>8</sup>. The findings by scientists have called into question the traditional downplaying of emotions and intuitions in comparison to reasoning in deliberation. The research shows that the «rational choice» models used in political science, and the conceptions of public deliberation in philosophy, are out of touch with the way average citizens actually make their decisions. The recent scientific research confirmed one of Dewey most radical assertions in regard to the guidance function of the qualitative: «Reflection and rational elaboration spring from and make explicit a prior intuition» (*LW*.5.248). All thought begins with feeling, namely the immediate quality of the whole situation. Feeling guides reflection; in fact «intuitions» guide the search for evidence and justification. According to Jonathan Haidt and Selin Kesebir, Hume was not totally right because there is primacy but not dictatorship of sentiment over reason. They write, «the precise roles played by intuition and reasoning in moral judgment cannot yet be established based on the existing empirical evidence» (2010, p. 807) and «a central challenge of modern moral psychology is to specify when, where, and how reason and sentiment interact» (p. 802).

While pragmatist should embrace this recent research I must however present a word of caution about not adopting a critical attitude towards some of these recent findings Scientists are no more immune than philosophers in presupposing or adopting dualisms. For instance, according to Haidt and Kesebir, Hume was not totally right because there is primacy but not dictatorship of sentiment over reason. They write, «the precise roles played by intuition and reasoning in moral judgment cannot yet be established based on the existing empirical evidence» (p. 807) and «a central challenge of modern moral psychology is to specify when, where, and how reason and sentiment interact» (p. 802). For Dewey and James, however, reason and passion are nothing but two mutually dependent functions of the same integral experience or process, i.e., of thinking.

Secondly, when we are defending the more normative stance presupposed by Dewey, we must be clear about the limitations of science. Research shows that people sometimes override their initial gut feelings, but Haidt and Kesebir ask: «do these occasional overrides show us that moral reasoning is best characterized

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<sup>8</sup> Most of this research is done in terms of the role played by moral emotion-intuition and moral reasoning in moral judgment. For a good summary and bibliography of this area of research see Haidt and Kesebir (2010).

—contra Hume— as an independent process that can easily veto the conclusions of moral intuition (Greene, 2008)?» (p. 807).

These social psychologists raise these questions to prompt more scientific research, but it is not clear how much of it will help settle the more normative issues. To determine how often initial judgments are revised does not tell us how often they *should* be revised. On this normative issue, Dewey's position is clear. In the ideal deliberation and in the ideal character, the relation between these two aspects of thinking should be one in which they mutually affect each other in the process of coming to a final judgment as to what the situation requires. We start with the intuition and then look for the reasons, but ideally this reflective search for reasons has an effect on the intuition or feel of the entire situation.

I return once again to the question: Why is this important for democracy? The neglect and repression of the qualitative is of consequence. As Haidt and Kesibir have observed, «liberals in the United States have made a grave error in adopting a rationalist or «Enlightenment» model of the human mind, and therefore assuming that good arguments about good policies will convince voters to vote for the Democratic Party. Republicans, they show, have better mastered intuitionist approaches to political persuasion such as framing and emotional appeals at least in the three decades before Barack Obama became president» (p. 823).

The repression of the qualitative in philosophy will likely prevent socio-political philosophers from understanding political movements. The recent «tea parties» are purported to have the «grass roots» elements of any ideal democratic movement, except that we worry about how many of the participants are just too emotionally ready to receive the narratives formulated by conservative talk radio hosts about what their problem are and the solution. It is simplistic to argue that the problem with these groups is that they do not reason enough, or are driven merely by passion. There have also been plenty of left-groups prone to accept the comfort of conspiracy theories or single accounts of all of our socio-political problems. How can one counteract these tendencies that continue to impair and embarrass public discourse? Dewey does not have a simple answer, but for him repression is not the answer. We must revise our notions of public discourse in a way that gives the qualitative its due function.

Let me close by considering some possible objections to Dewey's anti-rationalism. If, as Dewey believes and recent research confirms, we all look for evidence or reasons that fit or reinforce our first intuitions or «gut reactions», then how is this nothing but claiming that all thinking is «rationalizations» or «ideological»? Is not this anti-rationalistic/intuition-accommodating obviously false and thus the «qualitative» is and should be discredited?

What is problematic about the ideological mindset of a public is not that they allow the qualitative to guide their thinking, but that there is something too simplistic, unified, or homogenous about what they «feel». In ideological thinking, inquiry is at the mercy of a mindset or a set of beliefs, but what makes this sort of thinking dangerous and contagious is that it is at the mercy of, and is controlled by, a single intuition or «gut feeling» (such as the fear of government, a love of nation, etcetera). Even when we are sympathetic to the pervading qualitative concern or value that guides an ideological thinker, we think that their single passion has taken them over, has made them insensitive to other competing ones in situations requiring a reflective decision. In other words, ideological thinkers are not just closed-minded, but also one-sided in allowing only one «intuition» to dominate their inquiry into facts and reasons. The proper alternative to having a single and fixed felt value or emotion frame an entire inquiry is *not* to repress all intuition and pretend to adopt a neutral value less «objective» standpoint of public reason. Instead, the antidote to an ideological approach to problems is to have inquirers become sensitive to the variety of conflicting values at stake in the problematic situations of social life. They must come to appreciate in an immediate and qualitative way that ideological solutions tend to oversimplify problems. Therefore more, not fewer «gut feelings» may help with ideological thinking as a cognitive distortion<sup>9</sup>. People with a character that is capable of experiencing the plurality of values (conflicting intuitions) in these sorts of situations appreciate the ineptness of ideological solutions. What we need in a democracy are people with character that is more receptive to intuitions.

Is Dewey prescribing that all thinking be a form of rationalization? Rationalizations are usually not a good thing, but again the culprit is not the qualitative. In rationalizations, the problem is not that we look for evidence or reasons that fit or reinforce our first intuitions or «gut reactions», but that this is where we stop. The problem is that intuitions or feelings are not open to change or transformation by further inquiry into reasons. The problem is not that there are passions but that they are fixed. To provoke them in such a way as to weaken their hold upon the process and on us may require *more* passions.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in many social issues, such as what to do about abortion or about the homeless, there is disagreement about the facts, but how one «feels» about the issue usually determines how well one attends to the facts. In the case of the homeless, someone with a single very strong feelings against encouraging vice makes her blind to the fact that not all homeless are parasites. On the other hand, someone with a single very strong feeling about the importance of helping others tends to disregard that not all homeless are victims. This is how sometimes issues get polarized and how two sides on an issue become incapable of attending to each situation on its own merits.



There is something simply insincere about rationalizations; because they may be a case of divergent inquiry that has already been explained. Feelings are explained in a rational or logical manner to avoid the true explanation of the behavior or feeling in question. It is a case of providing reasons that do not have anything to do with the initial intuition. This failure of continuity could well be caused by not attending to the qualitative. However, Dewey does say that the qualitative is what helps keep inquire «sincere».

While I have shown the importance of the qualitative for public deliberation, for Dewey there is more to democracy than the thin notion of communal deliberation. The «qualitative» is also integral to democratic relationships and it plays a function in monitoring how democratic our relationships are. For example, the concern for democracy emerges when some group «feels» excluded because the government does not represent their opinions. Of course, some of these feelings are sometimes, upon reflection, unwarranted. Still, it is with these sorts of feelings we must start and continually address in order to find out whether democratization is happening. What we want in a democratic society is that no one «feels» excluded from the democratic process. One obvious objection is that, in emphasizing the qualitative, one risks neglecting the concrete conditions (e.g., political, economic) that must be changed. Finding a way to make people «feel» that they are not alienated and oppressed, even though they are, is probably the most ideal totalitarian scenario. This objection, however, merely points to a danger about overemphasis, one that we can acknowledge without giving up the thesis about the importance of the qualitative in a democracy.

In sum, there is no denying the perverse or problematic ways in which the «qualitative» does rule today in public discourse in America. However, pragmatist's philosophers of democracy must not under-emphasize or neglect the importance of the qualitative dimensions of democracy. This amounts to trying to repress what cannot and should not be repressed. It amounts to providing views of democracy that are too «thin» to deal with the contemporary challenges that we face. Pragmatist socio-political thinkers would be better intellectually equipped to confront the challenges the country faces if they followed Dewey's more radical insights. We need to expand Dewey's logic to include and elaborate the insights that he left us about the unavoidable role of the qualitative in thinking and how it bears on democracy. The problem of democracy is not just that the people do not think but that they do not «feel» as they should. We are going to need a view of education for democracy that emphasizes —more than ever before— visual literacy, habits of imagination and feelings.

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