

SEMINAR ON THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY:
MATTHEW LAMB'S FIVE MODELS OF
THEORY-PRAXIS AND THE INTERPRETATION
OF JOHN DEWEY'S PRAGMATISM

I

In the present theological discussion of the theory-praxis relation not much is made of the possible contribution of the American philosophical tradition. In his chapter on practical theology in *Blessed Rage for Order*, David Tracy calls attention "to the implications for critical social analysis exemplified in the American situation by the liberating influence of John Dewey or Charles Sanders Peirce."¹ It is one of the very few references to American theorists in his discussion of the theory-praxis relationship. Matthew Lamb makes none in his paper read to the Society in 1976.² Nor does Charles Davis in his 1973 essay on "Theology and Praxis."³

Matthew Lamb performed a valuable service for the Society when he analyzed dialectically the positions available among theorists of theory-praxis. His five models not only clarify the present theological context for those of us who have little acquaintance with the European background and foreground of the debate, but provide us as well with a very helpful analytic tool for use in our various areas of concern. I am particularly grateful to him, for his models make possible further questions on the American discussion of theory-praxis among the philosophers of the so-called Golden Age, and lead, I think, to a reinterpretation of some of the elements and participants in that discussion. I intend to use Professor Lamb's criteria for inclusion in a model to clarify John Dewey's position on theory-praxis and to place him among the models. The value of the paper is that: (1) it demonstrates the theoretic worth of Lamb's suggestion and indicates its broad application; (2) it urges a reinterpretation of Dewey's work in relationship to the present discussion by theologians of the theory-praxis issue; and (3) it points to Dewey as a bridge between European and American theories of theory-praxis.

Before turning to Professor Lamb's models a few remarks ought to be made on the American context and on Dewey. Reading

¹D. Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975), p. 246.

²M. Lamb, "The Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," *CTSA Proceedings* 31 (1976), 149-78.

³C. Davis, "Theology and Praxis," *Cross Currents* 23 (1973), 154-68.

the American philosophers in the debate on pragmatism in the light of Professor Lamb's essay teaches one that the American thinkers at the beginning of our century were engaged in an exploration of the theory-praxis question, as inchoate as that exploration may have been in some cases. Lamb's essay significantly expands the interpretative context for that debate. We ought not be misled by the use of the classical epistemological jargon by most of the figures and their occasional conceptual lapses. Theirs is not the technical language of classical Marxist social theory or contemporary critical theorists. Nonetheless the relation between thinking and acting absorbed them. Even so classical an epistemologist and metaphysician as Frederick Woodbridge, Dewey's colleague at Columbia and his mentor in metaphysics, was fascinated by the directive relation of idea and ideal to experience and the corrective relation of experience to idea and ideal.⁴ C. S. Peirce anticipated but did not quite inaugurate the debate in his essay, "How to Make our Ideas Clear."⁵ He wondered how a concept is actually used by a scientist and how its meaning is specified, rather than how concepts come to be, *überhaupt*. Peirce came up with the first pragmatist definition of meaning. When James "retrieved" and transformed Peirce's position a decade later the American theory-praxis debate began under the title "Pragmatism."⁶ Peirce and Dewey are the ones who did most to clarify the structure of scientific inquiry, and remain the only ones thus far to have attracted the attention of contemporary European critical theorists.⁷ Santayana, whose language is often lovelier than his thinking clear, beat off the Naturalist champions of scientific method (Dewey among them) by an appeal to an aesthetic salvation, several parts classical Greek to one part Christian, and had as a consequence to

⁴ See his criticisms of Dewey, "Experience and Dialectic" and "Of What Sort is Cognitive Experience?" in his collected essays, *Nature and Mind* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965) and his treatment of language and the supernatural in *An Essay on Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 209-330. Also, see my essay "Woodbridge on Experience and Understanding," *The Thomist* 39 (1975), 712-26.

⁵ *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 5:388-410.

⁶ See Dewey's own distinction between Peirce, James and himself in "What Pragmatism Means by Practical," *Essays in Experimental Logic* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1916), pp. 303-29. Peirce was concerned with *scientific* theory and practice. James translated Peirce's pragmatic principle into the *Lebenswelt*—much to Peirce's chagrin. See James' *Pragmatism and Other Essays*, ed. by Joseph Blau (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), esp. pp. 22-38. For a handy collection of essays by important pragmatists see H. S. Thayer, ed. *Pragmatism: the Classic Writings* (New York: Mentor Books, 1970).

⁷ J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 121-39. Peirce is Habermas' primary interest.

work out a theory in aesthetics and metaphysics of the relation between the ideal and human action.⁸ William James, as befits a psychologist, was inclined to analysis of human subjects rather than societies, yet his chief objective was liberation of the individual from personal and societal constraints and the needed reinterpretation of the relation between thinking, believing, and doing.⁹ G. H. Mead, Dewey's closest friend and intellectual companion, made a significant contribution to an understanding of the ways of social intelligence and shared experience.¹⁰ Even Josiah Royce, the inheritor and transformer of nineteenth-century Idealism, spent the last decade of his life working out a theory of acting, thinking, interpreting, and tradition; he meant to explain what a community is. He ended calling his system Absolute Pragmatism and himself a Pragmatic Idealist.¹¹ I mean with these remarks to indicate that there are in the American tradition resources of no mean sort for social theory and the theory-praxis discussion, and that Professor Lamb's essay provides a conceptual scheme for interpretation of those resources. As the preceding paragraph suggests, Dewey does not exhaust the resources.

But Dewey is the outstanding American theorist of theory-praxis. It would be and has been a serious mistake to brand him a

⁸Santayana's attempt to reconstitute the classical tradition befuddled many of his fellow Naturalists. Part of the difficulty is his consistent refusal to draw a line in his own work between poetical and philosophical discourse. See his *Realms of Being* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1975), *passim*. Also, his critique of Dewey, "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of John Dewey: The Library of Living Philosophers* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1939), I:243-61, and Dewey's response, pp. 530-4. For Santayana's theory of religious language and cognition, see W. Shea, "Religion and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of George Santayana," *The Dunwoodie Review* 12 (1972), 56-75 and "Santayana on Knowing and Being," *The New Scholasticism* 49 (1975), 32-50.

⁹See especially W. James, *Essays on Faith and Morals*, selected by R. B. Perry (New York: Meridian Books, 1962) and the final chapter to *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1961).

¹⁰See *Works of George Herbert Mead I: Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. by C. W. Morris (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1934). For a representative selection of essays, see *George Herbert Mead on Social Psychology*, ed. by A. Strauss (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964). For his analysis of the social conditions of American intellectual life, see "The Philosophies of Royce, James, and Dewey in their American Setting," *International Journal of Ethics* 40 (1930), 211-31.

¹¹For interpretations see J. E. Smith, *Royce's Social Infinite: The Community of Interpretation* (New Haven: Archon Books, 1969) and R. Imbelli, "Man's Quest for Salvation in the Thought of Josiah Royce," (unpublished dissertation, Yale, 1973). For the startling development of his thought—at least as startling as that of Dewey himself—compare his early essay on the Absolute, "The Conception of God," in J. J. McDermott, *The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), I:355-84, with the later *The Problem of Christianity* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1968), esp. II on community, interpretation, and history.

philosophical naive realist, an ideologue of American capitalism, a hawker of American Booster optimism, and a relativizer of morals.¹² He was none of these things. Those who suggest that he was are either ignorant or ideologues themselves. To move closer to our topic we need only note that he sat at Hegel's feet for a decade, from his graduate days at Johns Hopkins where he wrote a Hegelian criticism of Kant's first *Critique* through his academic appointment at Michigan. He departed from Hegel for reasons remarkably like those offered by Marx for his own departure.¹³ And, although it is impossible to smooth a path between Dewey and Marx in their solutions to the collapse of Hegel's system, there are some parallels between elements in their solutions, especially with reference to the theory-praxis relation. In fact, theory-praxis concerned Dewey focally within a few years of the beginning of his career and absorbed him to its end.¹⁴ Dewey did not read Marx or pay much attention to him until well into his middle years.¹⁵ But he read Hegel and never stopped reading him. Hegel is the indispensable background for Dewey interpretation.

¹²The list of anti-Dewey froth is extensive. For example, see J. D. Fearon's contribution to a dialogue on Dewey, "John Dewey and American Thomism," *American Benedictine Review* 10 (1959), 219-28, and 11 (1960), 261-70. Also, P. K. Crosser, *The Nihilism of John Dewey* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955). For a designation of Dewey as a spokesman for the *petite bourgeoisie* and industrialists, see D. H. DeGroot, "Intelligence and Radicalism in John Dewey's Philosophy," *Telos* 2 (1969), 72-81.

¹³On Hegel's influence see the third and fourth chapters of George Dykhuizen, *The Life and Mind of John Dewey* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973) and Dewey's own comment in his autobiographical essay, "From Absolutism to Experimentalism," reprinted in R. Bernstein, ed., *On Experience, Nature, and Freedom* (New York: Library of the Liberal Arts, 1960), esp. pp. 9-12. Dewey's early Hegelianism was sparked by his graduate school professor and later chairman at Michigan, George Morris. On Morris and other influences on Dewey, see N. Coughlin, *Young John Dewey: An Essay in American Intellectual History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975).

¹⁴In 1892 he outlined a course entitled "Introduction to Philosophy," the historical section of which is an interpretation of the major figures according to the theory-practice distinction. The distinction and its meaning is crucial through all his mature work, including his last, J. Dewey and A. F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1949).

¹⁵Dewey published a dialogue in 1909 in which a Marxist disagrees with the Pragmatist and Naturalist participants: "Nature and Its Good: A Conversation," *Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 20-45. Dewey was fifty at the time. His interest increased as the Russian revolution settled. He visited and inspected the Soviet school system. I will comment on his connection with Trotsky below. His most specific criticism of Marxism appeared in *Freedom and Culture* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1939), pp. 74-102. For a comment see W. W. Brinkmann, "Dewey's Social and Political Commentary," in J. Boydston, ed., *Guide to the Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), pp. 239-42.

Professor Lamb points out that for Aquinas *praxis* or practice does not distinguish between the acts of a citizen and *poesis* or the production of natural objects: *praxis* is *actio* and *factio*.¹⁶ For Dewey the usage is similar. Human action is doing and making; the human person is *homo faber* and only then *homo sapiens*. The paradigmatic human act, that by which all other acts are to be interpreted, is the creative act of the artist. The paradigmatic experience is aesthetic enjoyment of the work of art, and other human experience is to be measured by it. Politics and the sciences are arts for Dewey.¹⁷ Human action or art is the discovery, creation, communication, and implementation of meaning and value. Action or practice is the basic mediation of the immediate world of impulse and natural environment.¹⁸ The world is made by practice, by the artist, politician, poet and philosopher, and such is the human world.

Theory (reflective or cognitive experience) is indirect action, action distancing itself for more subtle action, a further mediation of the elements of direct action as well as nature.¹⁹ Practice, while it ought always be intelligent, is not itself cognitive in the strict sense; it is the world of intelligent common sense operation. Theory is knowledge in the strict sense—but here again we must be careful. Theory for Dewey is a far broader category than it is in ordinary speech. Theory is the operation (the *act*) which concludes in a “warrantedly assertible” judgment, whether in the hard sciences, aesthetics, engineering, or historical research.²⁰ To sharpen Dewey’s meaning for those who are familiar with Bernard Lonergan’s work I would point out that there are passages in which Dewey’s “experimental method” and “the method of intelli-

¹⁶Lamb, “Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies,” p. 55. For a discussion of the terminology see R. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. ix-83.

¹⁷*Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), p. 358. Any idea is a “work of art”; in this case the art is “inquiry”; see *Experience and Nature*, pp. 366-8. And Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, p. 219.

¹⁸“Action” and “practice” are the terms that Dewey uses. He does not use “praxis.” On action as basic mediation see “Theory of Emotion” in *Early Works IV*:176ff.

¹⁹*The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), pp. 223-31.

²⁰Dewey often enough chooses the physical sciences to exemplify “method” because the operations are simpler and clearer than in other fields—much as Lonergan chooses mathematics to illustrate insight. As Dewey indicates, the physical sciences are far from defining the limits of the possibility of knowledge: “We know whenever we do know; that is whenever our inquiry leads to conclusions which settle the problem out of which it grew . . . the physician, engineer, artist, craftsman [can] lay claim to scientific knowing . . .” *Quest*, pp. 198-9; see pp. 220-1.

gence" are explicated in terms close to Lonergan's "levels of intentional operation"; in which "warrantedly assertible" corresponds to Lonergan's "virtually unconditioned." It seems to me that Dewey's "experimental" or "scientific method" is equivalent to Lonergan's "intellectual pattern of experience," and that practice for Dewey is Lonergan's "fourth level of intentional consciousness" while theory is the second and third levels.²¹

A final point: I will be unable to use in my attempt to outline Dewey's position in relation to Professor Lamb's models the third element by which Lamb indicates the horizon of each model—or at least I will be unable to use it as Lamb states it, i.e. as the relation of the Christian language to theory-practice. For Dewey, as for Marx, the Christian language is alienated and alienating discourse. He substituted terms such as Democracy, Creative Experience, Shared Experience, Freedom, and Faith in Intelligence and meant them to function as secular replacements of the language which no longer made sense to him. For Dewey as for Marx religious language and theology "can only be negated as the quintessential alienation of man. . . ." ²² I shall substitute a phrase which I hope does not violate Dewey's own understanding of his substitution for the Christian language: "the order of the Ideal." ²³ I mean by its

²¹"The Pattern of Inquiry," *Logic: the Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1938), pp. 101-19; and on the distinction between understanding and asserting, pp. 154ff; on what Dewey means by "scientific method" see *Quest*, pp. 82ff, 197-9, 212-3, 220-1. I do not overlook serious problems in a Dewey-Lonergan comparison, but I am serious in proposing these parallels. I will make some remarks below on further research on this question.

²²"It offers only alienating theoretical salvation." Lamb, "Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," pp. 161-2. See Davis on Marx's position. As Marx turned from Hegel's Absolute, so Dewey would part from Marx himself and pronounce a similar judgment on the Marxist myth. Dewey would take Lonergan's definition of God as "pure act of understanding" to mean that somewhere all has been accomplished—a denial of the historicity of human existence and so an end to the possibility of a genuine praxis. See B. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), pp. 644-69 on the idea of being and the notion of God.

²³The phrase sufficiently specifies what Dewey means by God, yet leaves open alternative Naturalist judgments on the legitimacy of an explicitly religious language. On Dewey's side of the inter-school disagreement see S. Hook, *Religion in a Free Society* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); Corliss Lamont, "New Light on Dewey's Common Faith," *Journal of Philosophy* 58 (1961), 21-8; or Ernest Nagel, "A Defense of Atheism," in Edwards and Pap, eds., *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 462ff. On the other, more "liberal" side, see G. Santayana's attempt at an interpretation of the New Testament, *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels or God in Man* (New York: Scribners, 1946); F. J. E. Woodbridge, *An Essay on Nature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), Chap. V on the supernatural; S. P. Lamprecht, *Our Religious Traditions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); or J. H. Randall, Jr. *The Meaning of Religion for Man* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968).

use that Dewey does have a language for transcendence and that one can, for present purposes, substitute the phrase for Dewey's language and for Lamb's "Christian language." I leave aside questions of meaning and relative adequacy.

II

And now to Professor Lamb's models and Dewey's position in relation to each. Lamb notes three basic terms which specify for theology the limits of the models: (1) the reflex character or inter-relationship of theory-praxis; (2) the derivation of the norms for practice; and (3) the implication of religious categories for theory-praxis or, in Dewey's case, the relation of "the order of the Ideal" to theory-praxis. In proceeding through the models I shall, where appropriate, refer to the three basic terms.

1. *The Primacy of Theory Model.* The model is marked by a theory of knowledge wherein thinking or theory grasps the already present rational structure of being, where true knowledge is of the eternal and immutable, and where enunciated truths are themselves eternal and immutable. Norms for action are derived from the knowledge of nature and from God's temporal revelation of his eternal truths. These revealed and saving truths are directly and intrinsically related to theory or "reason." The model is exemplified in neo-scholastic philosophy and theology.²⁴

For Dewey, on the other hand, the ontological character of reality is intrinsically changed by practice and by knowing as a form of practice.²⁵ Thus his lifelong and interminable assaults on what he called "antecedent Being." Secondly, norms for practice are never eternal and necessary but are derived from experience and constantly tested by it. Thirdly, the order of the Ideal is not intrinsically related to theory but mainly to practice as the creation, expansion, and maintenance of human meaning, to practice in which must be included the order of the Ideal itself, as the consummatory aspects of experience are related to the instrumen-

The phrase "order of the Ideal" is my adaptation to Dewey of Randall's "order of splendor." Randall is a Calvinist in theology; Dewey a Pelagian.

²⁴Lamb, "Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," pp. 155, 156.

²⁵See, for example, his use of Heisenberg's principle to justify (or, better, to exemplify) his own conviction that knowing is an act that transforms materials, *Quest*, pp. 204-5. He claims that knowing is a "physical" act. On his distinction between data (givens), idea (takens), and the object of knowledge (constructs), see *Quest*, pp. 99ff., 122ff., 175ff. Or, *Quest*, p. 245: "... knowing is an act which modifies what previously existed, and ... its worth consists in the consequences of the modification."

tal or ends to means.²⁶ The Ideal is related to theory only in so far as theory is a critical moment in the practice which ever strives to realize it. Dewey is not on any of the three counts an instance of the primacy of theory model.

2. *The Primary of Praxis Model.* The model rests on the convictions that theory is only secondarily and externally related to practice and not intrinsically determinative of it; that theory provides no norms for practice; and that the truth and norms for decision are somehow available "in emotive-intuitive experience." The examples Lamb offers are L. Dewart, G. Moran, P. Van Buren, and Van A. Harvey.²⁷

Dewey cannot be said to hold practice primary in this sense, for theory or the method of intelligence is determinative of an authentic practice (there are two and only two basic types of practice for Dewey, intelligent and unintelligent).²⁸ Secondly, theory does provide and articulate norms for practice (apart from inquiry and criticism there are simply no norms for Dewey, only immediately experienced goods and bads).²⁹ And, finally, truths and norms are never available in emotive or intuitive experience but only in reflective experience (all that is available in emotive or intuitive when these mean direct unreflective experience is an immediate which may become questionable and so a matter for inquiry).³⁰

3. *The Primacy of Christian Faith-Love Model.* Its heart is an assertion of the non-identity of salvation with theory-practice. It is exemplified in Barthian neo-Orthodoxy.

It is reasonable to interpret Lamb's third term in a Deweyan context of rejection of explicit Christian faith as "the non-identity of the possibility of authentic existence in the world and theory-practice." If so, it suffices to state Dewey's already well-known position: there is no source of salvation outside of or different from historical theory-practice. Theory-practice is exhaustive, and this puts clearly what Dewey intended by his exclusion of the super-

²⁶The possible can be realized only by action and never by "mere thought. For the distinction and relation in practice of the actual and the ideal, see *Quest*, pp. 299-300.

²⁷Lamb, "Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," p. 159.

²⁸*Experience and Nature*, p. 358. *Quest*, pp. 83, 245.

²⁹For a full statement of this frequently-stated position, see *Logic*, pp. 139-80.

³⁰His best and most effective statement on unreflective and reflective experience remains the introduction to *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pp. 1-74. His criticism of utilitarian and positivist ethics, from Mill to Carnap, is based on this distinction. In Dewey's view, failure to so distinguish makes a critical ethics impossible.

natural. There is no private or communal supernatural experience transforming or liberating human life.³¹ The order of the Ideal is generated in the interaction of theory-practice. Explaining the ideal in its relation to the real or the possible in relation to the actual may be the task of metaphysics but its grounding in and generation from human experience is beyond question.³² To think otherwise is to alienate human experience from itself.

4. *Critical Theoretic Correlation Model.* Here Lamb suggests Rahner and David Tracy as examples. In the model the correlation between theory-practice and the order of the Ideal is mediated theoretically. The model is marked by an uncommon concern to articulate the theoretical issues confronting theology (here, philosophy) and by the elaboration of a metaphysical reflection on the ontological structures of human experience in order to establish the relation of theory-practice to the order of the Ideal.³³ Dewey fits uncomfortably here, if at all.

On the first count, Dewey's urging that philosophers attend not to the problems of philosophers but to the "problems of men" is not empty rhetoric.³⁴ He would agree with Marx that philosophy is not meant to interpret the world but to change it.³⁵ Dewey meant by "attending to the problems of men" what he himself did: intellectual criticism of positions, issues, structures and institutions that express dominant ideologies and control the life of the masses—from whose rank and responsibilities Dewey never exempted himself. Theory's task is to serve practice; philosophy's task is to enrich common human experience. The theory of theory-practice and a theoretical discussion of the order of the Ideal are entirely secondary, if necessary, functions of theoretical intelligence. Such discussion is defensive against empiricist and idealist obfuscation, and critical of all those claims to special hold on the ideal which would destroy the availability of the ideal in ordinary experience.³⁶

³¹See Dewey's "Anti-Naturalism in Extremis," in Y. Krikorian, ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp. 1-16 or any of the texts on the incompatibility of an authentic practice and belief in an existant transcendent, for example: *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York: Modern Library, 1957), pp. 300-2.

³²*Quest*, pp. 299-302.

³³Lamb, "Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," p. 166.

³⁴See Dewey's introduction to *Problems of Men* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), pp. 3-20 where the contrast is made, and the essays that follow for examples of what he means.

³⁵"Mere" thought is thought that makes no difference in practice; see *Quest*, pp. 38, 138.

³⁶The task of philosophy is to uncover obstructions to inquiry, to criticize inherited habits and their biases, to focus reflective efforts on genuine social needs

Nor could metaphysics be "basic." It is descriptive, hypothetical, one type of reflection among many.³⁷ If there is a "basic" reflection for Dewey, it is on methods, and it intends a clarification of a model or paradigm of methods that is universally applicable and necessary to intelligent practice (in effect, a transcendental method).³⁸ But the point of such reflection is not primarily a mediation of the ideal and theory-practice, but the liberation of methods or the arts of inquiry for broader use and application through which may come the liberation of primary experience from its psychological and sociocultural chains. Norms can only be derived from such liberated inquiry, ideals from such liberated practice. It might even be said that philosophy knows nothing—except how to free methods and so enrich the possibilities of ordinary experience.³⁹

5. *Critical Praxis Correlation Model.* The correlation between theory-practice and the order of the Ideal is in practice. In the model's reflex character, practice grounds theory. Practice is the foundation in fact as well as the fundamental subject matter and the goal of theory. Theory as critical theory is the self-understanding of practice, explicating and thematizing its own foundations in practice and corrected in the light of practice. Theory, then, is a "self-corrective process of reflection for action" where action and its consequences dictate changes in theory and theory directs action.⁴⁰

On the methodological and foundational level of this correlation—the level on which Lonergan has so successfully worked—the aim is control of meaning and value in terms of the critical experiment of self-appropriation. Note the experimental

and mediate the conclusions of science for beliefs about values (the "problems of men"). See *Quest*, pp. 309-13 for a convenient summary; also pp. 46-7, 67-71, 77-8, 252-5. "Philosophy, then, is a generalized theory of criticism. Its ultimate value for life experience is that it continuously provides instruments for the criticism of those values—whether beliefs, institutions, actions, or products—that are found in all aspects of experience" *Experience and Nature*, p. xvi.

³⁷"The Subject Matter of Metaphysical Inquiry," in R. Bernstein, ed., *On Experience, Nature, and Freedom*, pp. 211-33, or Dewey's own formulated metaphysics in *Experience and Nature*.

³⁸Admittedly this is an assertion that calls for extensive argument and textual support. I believe it can be supported. To put the assertion in another form: perhaps Dewey's greatest contribution to philosophy was to shift attention from concept to method, and within method from rule and law to intelligent procedure. His long struggle to effect such a shift received its definitive form in the *Logic*. The reader will note the similarity to Lonergan's struggle within the Catholic context.

³⁹See note 36 above and *Experience and Nature*, pp. 394-437, on the essentially critical and liberating function of philosophy.

⁴⁰Lamb, "Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," p. 173.

and experiential aspect of the demand, for the critical problem can never be solved by theory *qua* theory. In such a context one can understand the importance of conversion to theology in Lonergan's *Method*.⁴¹

It is through method or practice (for both Lamb and Lonergan, praxis is operative transcendental method) that fields of theory are interrelated rather than through the mediation of another theory (philosophy); and through critical self-reflection that the norms of practice are revealed and articulated.⁴² Both the reflex character and the normativity question involve a concomitant change in social structures and in consciousness. Although it may seem as if this version of theory-practice is highly individualistic in its attention to self-appropriation and to a critical theory of subjectivity, in fact it opens out on and grounds a critical investigation of social consciousness and cultural institutions.⁴³ Finally, the correlation recognizes that traditions undergird all action and theories; even the theory critical of traditions has itself a tradition which supplies its goals and language.⁴⁴

In any attempt to locate Dewey in this fifth model there are several things clear and indisputable and some which are not, and which in fact contravene much Dewey scholarship. In the first place, it is clear that Dewey was convinced against Hegel that salvation comes through intelligent works rather than through thought, and through the shared experience that such action-with-theory controls and directs. Secondly, with Marx he was convinced that action is necessarily social and political if the community of the redeemed is to come into existence.⁴⁵ Thirdly, although he displayed less expertise and originality than Marx in his historical and sociological analyses of concrete situations, his work in these areas ought not be sneezed at: witness, for example, his sociocultural and economically informed interpretations of major

⁴¹Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 267-71 on conversion as the reality foundational to theology.

⁴²Lamb, "Theory-Praxis Relationship in Contemporary Christian Theologies," p. 175.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.

⁴⁴In a discussion following the reading of this paper, Professor Lamb pointed out the importance of this to a distinction between the critical theory and praxis correlation models. I hope I have not misrepresented him. I am not quite sure how this provides a distinction from the fourth model, nor in what way it challenges the autonomy of theory vis-a-vis all traditions, or whether and how Dewey and Tracy would disagree with Lamb on the issue. See below, further question 2.

⁴⁵*Quest*, p. 80 on the necessity of a transformation of social (legal and institutional) conditions if knowledge is to be shared; and *Liberalism and Social Action* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963) on the politics of liberalism. See Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, pp. 227, 228.

figures in the history of philosophy, especially the Greeks on theory-practice;⁴⁶ or his interpretation of the Stalin purges of the thirties and Trotsky's expression of admiration and gratitude;⁴⁷ and, in a minor key, the insights afforded by his analysis of the economic, military and ideological factors involved in the rise of the European museum system.⁴⁸ Dewey's work in culture criticism remains valuable. Of overriding importance there still stands the life-long and monumental interest in the American, European, Middle Eastern, and Asian educational systems, an interest that was pedagogical secondarily and political primarily. Dewey was vitally interested in better schools and teachers because he was committed to the "democratic experience."⁴⁹

I think it can be argued that Dewey allowed himself to spend far too much time on "the problems of philosophers." An endless series of philosophers felt obliged to attack or support him on sometimes obtuse and insignificant points and he felt just as obliged to respond and clarify what could be clarified by him no further. But even this engagement was political: he actually believed in an active politics of communication among scholars and acted accordingly.⁵⁰ But there is no doubt that much of his work quite explicitly concerned the "problems of men" in the social and cultural orders, and that he fully realized that the politics of freedom required close criticism of economies and ideologies. It was the politics of freedom that Dewey urged and implemented by his

⁴⁶The political and economic hermeneutic is constant from his "Introduction to Philosophy" in 1892 (*Early Works* III) through *Quest* in 1929.

⁴⁷*The Case of Leon Trotsky* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1937), a stenographic report of the hearings in Mexico City on Stalin's charges against Trotsky which Dewey chaired and with which Trotsky cooperated fully. The final report was issued under the title *Not Guilty: The Report of the Commission* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1938). A short statement is available: "Truth is on the March," American Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky, 1937. For the personal and illuminating reflections of Dewey's student and companion on the journey to Mexico, see J. T. Farrell, "Dewey in Mexico" in S. Hook, ed., *John Dewey: Philosopher of Science and Freedom* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), pp. 351-78 and Dykhuizen, pp. 281-3.

⁴⁸*Art as Experience* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1934), pp. 8-10.

⁴⁹On democracy, pluralism and education see *Democracy and Education*, pp. 81-9. The criteria for the worth of a society are shared interests and freedom of interaction (p. 99). For the distinction between the democratic institutions of the United States and their limitations and "Democracy" or the democratic ideal which informs Dewey's thinking see "Creative Democracy—the Task Before Us" in *The Philosopher of the Common Man* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), pp. 220-8.

⁵⁰No wonder John Randall, in his eulogy for Dewey, called him "the Yankee saint." See J. H. Randall, Jr., "John Dewey 1859-1952," *Journal of Philosophy* 50 (1953), pp. 5-13.

analyses of social conditions and constant attacks on the ideologies of alienated human existence, including religious discourse.⁵¹

But if that much is clear, could it be true that Dewey was a *critical* theorist where critical means self-critical and where the solution is not a theory of theory but self-appropriation? Would he not have denounced such self-reflection and appropriation as "introspection"? Of course he would—and there is much to argue that he was not critical in Lamb's technical sense. Most Dewey exegetes would so argue, I am sure.⁵²

Dewey had two major problems that bear on this question: (1) a set of philosophical enemies in the empiricists and idealists whose faults he well knew but against whom he sometimes had difficulty clarifying himself and whose gifts (especially the idealist tendency to see philosophy as self-knowledge and self-possession) he had trouble appreciating and accepting as a legitimate achievement; and (2) a lack of a technical language to express what he knew and an unwillingness to forge a rigorous systematic language for what he knew. His antipathy to the Hegelian system and his very theory of theory made him nervous about systematic language—as did his sensibilities.

However, I believe that a strong case can be made out textually that Dewey was substantially aware of the issues of self-understanding and self-appropriation and had in fact solved them for himself. Note, for example, the following clues: how he shifted the inherited distinction between reason and experience or theory and practice to a distinction between unintelligent and intelligent practice with reflective and non-reflective experience as a sub-heading to intelligent practice;⁵³ his constant call for the reader to

⁵¹Dewey consistently put his practice where his theory was. The list of his social and political involvements and achievements is remarkable for an academic figure. For the extent of political involvement he rivals Marx, Satre, and Russell among modern philosophers. See Dykhuizen's biography.

⁵²And with good reason in the texts. For example, the contrast of introspection and experimental method in *Quest*, pp. 228-9 or p. 289. His attitude toward introspection as a technique was favorable early on (see "The New Psychology" in *Early Works I*), then unfavorable in *Essays in Experimental Logic* (e.g., p. 364). For whatever his difficulties with the term and the method indicated by it, the acceptance of what Lonergan calls consciousness and self-knowledge is reasonably clear, for example, in "Naive Realism" in *Essays in Experimental Logic*.

⁵³See "The Significance of the Problem of Knowledge," *Early Works V:3-25* (1897) where epistemologies are read in terms of the question of theory-practice, and priority is given to practice; and *Experience and Nature*, p. 358, *Quest*, pp. 83, 245, where the theory-practice distinction is replaced by the distinction between unintelligent and intelligent practice.

"turn to experience"—where such a turn in several contexts means appropriation of consciousness and its dynamism as well as empirical verification;⁵⁴ his reversal of the separation of theoretical and practical judgments and his proclamation of an end to the separation of theory and practice, and this in a contemporary praxis of methods;⁵⁵ that education theory involved for him primarily the context for the implementation of two possibilities: intelligent and reasonable practice in methods and responsible practice in politics.⁵⁶ And, finally, note the sometimes awkward yet extraordinarily accurate delineation of the structures of the intellectual pattern of experience in *Logic* (1938) and *How We Think* (1910) as well as the aesthetic pattern in *Art as Experience* (1934).⁵⁷ Dewey not only operated under the transcendental imperatives; he knew that he did and what they are. A recognition of his failure to put the position adequately and systematically is no longer reason for the failure of theologians and religionists to recognize that he wrote more than one of the worst books on religion by a major philosopher. He left us more than hints, in my estimation, of his appropriation of his self-consciousness; he left us an important theory of theory-practice based on that self-appropriation, and a sizable body of social criticism and a theoretic analysis of its methods.

Again, I do not deny that one side of Dewey lends itself to a positivist interpretation; I merely suggest that this side is not the only, nor the more significant, nor the philosophically more fruitful side.⁵⁸ Which is the real Dewey? To put it pragmatically, the

⁵⁴ See, for example, *Philosophy and Civilization* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1968), p. 104 where, if one wishes to understand what Dewey means by "quality" one is invited to "re-live" the experience; or, *Art as Experience*, pp. 119, 192 and *Quest*, pp. 227, 289. In each case some term is identifiable or claim verifiable on condition of consulting one's experience. The problem with Dewey's explanation of such a procedure is that he insists on speaking about it as if it were a matter of "observation" under a behaviorist observability criterion.

⁵⁵ "The Logic of Judgments of Practice," *Essays in Experimental Logic*, pp. 335-442 and Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, pp. 215-7.

⁵⁶ Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, pp. 219-29.

⁵⁷ For example, on the "pattern of inquiry," *Logic*, pp. 101-19. Or the delicate dialectic of concepts regarding consciousness in *How We Think*: concrete-abstract, present-absent, near-far, immediate-mediated, practical-theoretical, pp. 26, 75, 84, 122, 136-8, 214-6, 221ff. Dewey's account of art and aesthetic experience in *Art as Experience* would have been impossible without an extraordinary self to be known and a considerable knowledge of that self.

⁵⁸ The two definitions of Naturalism and the two lines of interpretation of Dewey are set in the collection of Naturalist essays, *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*. Contrast in that volume a "hard" definition of scientific method with "scientific method broadly understood" (Lavine and Nagel vs. Randall). The latter better accounts for Dewey's "method of intelligence." Again, both sides can claim support in Dewey texts.

Dewey who helps. Of course he has no philosophy of religion, but he has a philosophy of art and an aesthetics which tells us more about religion and religious experience than do many philosophies of religion; and a theory of theory that suggests and supports a contemporary theory of theology. The hypothesis of this paper, yet to be argued textually, is that Dewey can be so reinterpreted and snatched from his positivist disciples that he can claim the attention of students of American theology and critical theorists. The intent of the paper is to inform the Catholic Theological Society that Matthew Lamb's typology for theory-practice enunciated at last year's meeting is an invaluable tool for the reinterpretation and "retrieval" of significant figures in and elements of the American debate on pragmatism.

III

Further Questions

1. The paper points up the need for research in several areas. First, there should be a study of Dewey's works from the point of view of theory-practice. This task was recently addressed by Richard Bernstein and H. S. Thayer.⁵⁹ But a detailed textual analysis remains to be done. Secondly, a fruitful way of clarifying Dewey's position and its value for critical theorists would be a dialectical study of Dewey and Lonergan: for example, a reading of *Logic* against *Insight* on the issues of cognitional theory, or a comparison of their thought on the function of formal logic, or a reading of Dewey's education theory under Lonergan's derivation of the transcendental imperatives and his explanation of self-appropriation and conversion, or a comparative study of their notions of the good and value and of the relationship between feeling, knowing, and deciding, or a study of their understandings of what philosophy is. Much the same kind of work could be asked for Dewey in relation to the major critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. Dewey's work is a bridge, it seems to me, between American empiricism and pragmatism on one side and transcendental method and European critical theory on the other.

2. What is the function of orthodoxy and the orthopraxis of the past in a present critical moment? Can they be anymore than an "assumption," a point of departure, a guide, a leading idea, a clue, a hypothesis, a datum to be understood in a present problematic

⁵⁹Bernstein, *Praxis and Action* and H. S. Thayer, *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969).

situation? So Dewey would look on them.⁶⁰ What is the relation of traditions, particularly religious traditions, to theory in the service of practice? I think Dewey and Tracy would agree this far: all cultural expressions, all doctrines and beliefs, are subject in principle to questions on meaning and truth.⁶¹ Is such a position necessary to a theory of theological reflection? Does insistence on the autonomy of theology vis-a-vis all authorities and traditions mean that the correlation is theoretical rather than practical and that theory in such a view is not responsible and responsive to practice? It is at this point that Professor Lamb's distinction between models four and five slips from my hands. Does Lamb's recognition of the fact that even theory critical of traditions has its own tradition somehow limit the in-principle autonomy of theory? Or, on the other hand, does close reading of Dewey and Tracy suggest that there is little significant difference between Lamb's fourth and fifth models?

3. Although I am not inclined to exaggerate the differences between Lonergan and Tracy, on some points they are notable. I tried to suggest some in my article in the *Heythrop Journal* of last year; I am grateful to Professor Lamb for putting the difference far more systematically than I could.⁶² It would be helpful to fundamental theologians if the differences were made precise—Lamb's models are a step in this direction. Tracy's occasional criticisms and reservations on Lonergan tend to support Lamb's contention that in the area of theory-practice the difference is important.⁶³

4. According to Tracy one of the blessings bestowed upon us by liberation and political theologies is a "rediscovery of and theological interpretation of the classical Hegelian-Marxist notion of praxis."⁶⁴ Does this rediscovery present us with the alternative of "revolutionary praxis" on the one hand and, on the other, alienated ideological reflection or "analysis"? Dewey's "recon-

⁶⁰For example, see *Quest*, pp. 272-3: "... past experiences are significant for giving us intellectual instrumentalities of judging just these points. They are tools, not finalities." See also the texts listed in note 36.

⁶¹Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, pp. 6-8, on autonomy. On the problem in revisionism, see W. Shea, "Revisionist Foundational Theology," *Anglican Theological Review* 58 (1967), 263-79 and "The Stance and Task of the Foundational Theologian," *Heythrop Journal* 17 (1976), 273-92. Another interesting convergence in Dewey and Tracy is the common rejection of the "supernatural" from quite different metaphysical positions.

⁶²See note 61.

⁶³See Tracy's "Lonergan's Foundational Theology," in P. McShane, ed., *Foundations of Theology* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publications, 1971), pp. 197-234, and Lonergan's response in the same volume.

⁶⁴Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 243.

structive practice" (the phrase is mine, not Dewey's) is neither naively and universally revolutionary nor, I hope, merely analytic.⁶⁵ It seems to me that Dewey's concept covers varied societal contexts more adequately, is open to differentiation of contexts, and offers the possibility of many forms of policy and strategy. Is this finally a palsied Liberalism, or a more nuanced theoretic of intelligence, action, and society?

5. Finally, can Dewey's position on theory-practice be called a "critical correlation" at all? This needs far more textual analysis and substantiation than I have thus far engaged in. But pending the analysis, I would answer "perhaps" if: it is possible to be critical without the use of the technical language of the critical schools; theory-practice is recognized as the central philosophical issue—as it certainly is by Dewey; inquiry and its imperatives are appropriated and articulated—as in Dewey's experimental method and intelligent, reasonable, and responsible practice; the major uncritical positions, the empiricist-positivist and rationalist, are thoroughly rejected; there is admitted in principle and practiced in fact a criticism of infrastructures and superstructures; and one doesn't fit at all Lamb's models one, two and three.⁶⁶

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⁶⁵For the distinction, see Davis.

⁶⁶I am grateful to the following for their generous support for a year of research during which this piece was written: the Ludwig Vogelstein Foundation of New York, the Committee on Faculty Research of the Catholic University of America, Harvard Divinity School, and the Reverend John Dunne and the people of St. Jerome's parish in Arlington, Mass.