

DEWEY'S 'EXPERIENCE AND NATURE'

- A TALE OF TWO PARADIGMS

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ABSTRACT: John Dewey's book, *Experience and Nature*, perplexed his readers and also himself to the end of his life. Sense can be made of this puzzle by attention to his claim that he was attempting what we would now describe as a paradigm shift and to his radical doctrines on "language", "meaning" and "mind" (doctrines that have been overlooked by the literature). Papers he wrote at the time focus on these radical doctrines. In this paper a few of his sentences on "meaning" are formalised into a unit of analysis called the Minimum Interaction for Meaningfulness (MIM) that implements his concept of 'the social' as 'the inclusive category' which cannot be reduced to a collection of individuals. It is shown that the MIM can achieve Dewey's paradigm shift, implies his theory of "mind" ('the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind'), and can achieve the 'continuity' between 'the physical' and 'the ideal' that was the purpose of the book. The book is shown to fall into two parts: the second attempting to implement the new paradigm but the first being in terms of his concept of 'experience' which belongs to the previous incommensurable paradigm.

the social ... furnishes philosophically the inclusive category

John Dewey (1928) [LW3:45]¹

It is not easy to break away from the current and established classifications and interpretations of the world

John Dewey (1928) [LW1:170]

Experience and Nature [E&N]² is agreed to be the magnum of John Dewey's massive opus - it has always confused and perplexed readers and Dewey was perplexed by it until the end of his long life. This paper offers an explanation.

There are four keys to it. The first is that Dewey said he was offering what we would now call a paradigm shift in philosophy. Unfortunately - but understandably - he failed to realise his vision. Nevertheless he adumbrated

¹ From 'Social as a Category' which was republished as 'The Inclusive Philosophic Idea' in 1930 - the latter is the title used in [LW3] (this is Volume 3 of the Collected Works of John Dewey which are divided into Early [EW], Middle [MW] and Later Works [LW]).

² *Experience and Nature* is [LW:1] it is referred to herein as [E&N] for convenience and clarity.

the implications of the new paradigm in the second half of E&N. In discussion of E&N at the end of his life he can be seen struggling again with the paradigm shift he had adumbrated but was unable to achieve.

As the first Motto to this paper indicates: the paradigm shift was to be achieved by a concept of 'the social' ('mind is seen to be a function of social interactions' [E&N:6]) to which a concept of "meaning"³ is central ('ability to respond to meanings and employ them ... makes the difference between man and other animals' [E&N:7]). As the Motto also implies by 'inclusive category': Dewey's vision of 'the social' cannot be reduced to a collection of "individuals": 'no amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes a community' [LW2:330]. In the present paper a concept of "meaning" that is an implementation of Dewey's concept of 'the social' will be extracted from only a few sentences of E&N; it is a unit of analysis (called the MIM, Minimum Interaction for Meaningfulness) and is labelled sociocentric⁴ because it necessarily includes two participants and is not reducible to a collection of "individuals". It will be shown that it enables the paradigm shift from previous philosophies that Dewey hoped for.⁵ The implications are significant: for example 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind' ([E&N:170]. It is argued that Dewey's failure to implement such a sociocentric concept of "meaning" consistently in E&N is the underlying reason for the continuing perplexed response to E&N, including by Dewey, himself. The first half of the book is then seen to be individuocentric (using a unit of analysis based on the "individual"): it

³ Because the discussion is in terms of paradigms - terms that are part of the rejected paradigm (and hence in effect no longer Meaningful) are distinguished by double quotes (also used as 'scare quotes'); single quotes are used for quotation.

⁴ The common use of sociocentric is 'a focus on a particular social group' herein it refers to a unit of analysis.

⁵ It has been shown that this sociocentric paradigm can address the range of topics in Social Inquiry and Philosophy in the Western Tradition. See [Duff:2012] and [Duff:2011] which are two versions of the same material - the latter contains detailed references to Dewey's writings which have largely been removed from the former (shorter) version.

uses Dewey's concept of 'experience' (which is wholly "individual") as the unit of analysis.

Dewey argued persistently in the period between the two editions of E&N (1925 - 1929) that "meaning" and 'the social' are 'distinctive' and the latter is 'inclusive' but did not define them as a sociocentric unit of analysis. A MIM is not a dyad (a pair of units treated as one) and (as will be demonstrated) the "individual" is developed in MIMs as Dewey envisioned: 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind' ([E&N:170]).⁶

The second key is that readers have simply failed to see and hence to deal with what Dewey actually wrote in his attempt to realise the new paradigm! Even though Dewey did not realise his vision he made many startling claims (such as those quoted in the previous paragraph) which readers should have seen and at least puzzled over but even a recent "review"⁷ failed to address the startling statements that Dewey all but shouted - for example: 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind', and the establishment of 'continuity' between the 'physical' and the 'ideal' such that they belong to one 'world' [E&N:9] that is the 'purpose' of E&N. As will be shown in the Conclusion herein: Dewey issued precisely this challenge in 1928. The question for the reader of E&N today is: 'Where in the literature - nearly a century after E&N - are these radical and startling claims discussed?'

The third key to E&N is that soon after the second edition was published in 1929 Dewey's radical vision of "the social" all but disappeared from his writing.

The fourth key is that confusion was and is caused for readers by Dewey's persistent use of key terms in multiple senses and different ways. For example 'meaning' is arguably the fundamental term but Everett W. Hall demonstrated that Dewey used it in many

different ways.⁸ Similarly 'language' is a central term but Dewey equates it with 'signs' [E&N:140] (which is individuocentric) but also says it is a 'mode of interaction' [E&N:145].

Conventional interpretation or exegesis of E&N cannot succeed because the second half of E&N is an inchoate attempt to implement a new paradigm but the first half is inquiry within the received paradigm in the Western Tradition of Philosophy - labelled 'individuocentric' herein - and hence no coherent account of it as a whole can be given. Hence this paper attempts to make sense of E&N by showing how it can be reformulated as a coherent whole using the sociocentric paradigm; the changes Dewey considered making to it even at the end of his life are discussed and give further support to this strategy.

E&N: reception and second edition

A sympathetic colleague summed up the response to E&N: 'Dewey's *Experience and Nature* is both the most suggestive and most difficult of his writings, the source of the most wide-spread objections by hostile critics, and of the most diverse interpretations by sympathetic critics' [E&N:vii-viii]. Somewhat more extravagantly Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., a contemporary, wrote: 'But although Dewey's book is incredibly ill written, it seemed to me after several re-readings to have a feeling of intimacy with the inside of the cosmos that I found unequalled. So methought God would have spoken had He been inarticulate but keenly desirous to tell you how it was'. Such responses are expected to an attempt at a 'paradigm shift' not fully implemented.

⁸ 'Some Meanings of Meaning in Dewey's *Experience and Nature*' [LW3:App3] exposes the confusion its title promises. The introductory paragraphs of Dewey's reply [LW3:82-91] reassert the ideas of E&N that are central in the present paper ('the need of a shared situation whenever the understanding of ideas and symbols enter into question') but then writes as if symbols can have "meanings". Dewey's reply is convoluted. See [Duff,1990:463-70] for details of Dewey's multiple uses of 'event' - a fundamental concept in E&N ('nature' consists 'of events' [E&N:5-6]).

⁶ See [Duff,2012:B2], 'The Individual and its Genesis' for the development of a notion of an individual.

⁷ [Godfrey-Smith, 2014] has the brief of reviewing E&N as if published now.

Dewey responded to criticism of the first edition (1925) by writing a new first chapter (the original 'failed of its purpose' [E&N:3]) and a preface for the second (1929) edition. In these he warned the reader that the book was attempting what we would now call a 'paradigm shift' in Philosophy: 'I have not striven in this volume for a reconciliation between the new and the old' [E&N:4]. He argues: 'We cannot lay hold of the new ... save by the use of ideas and knowledge we already possess' but 'just because the new is new it is not a mere repetition of something already had and mastered. The old takes on new color and meaning in being employed to grasp and interpret the new' [E&N:3]. And he asserts Kuhnian incommensurability: 'To many the associating of the two words ['experience' and 'nature'] will seem like talking of a round square' but 'I know of no route by which dialectical argument can answer such objections. They arise from association with words and cannot be dealt with argumentatively'. The following can be interpreted now as describing a Kuhnian conversion process: 'One can only hope in the course of the whole discussion to disclose the [new] meanings which are attached to "experience" and "nature," and thus insensibly produce, if one is fortunate, a change in the significations previously attached to them'⁹ [all E&N:10].

"Dewey's" new paradigm of "meaning": the MIM

Readers of the 1925 edition of E&N should have been alerted to the importance of Chapter 5 'Nature, Communication and Meaning' by the ever sober and honest Dewey making perhaps the most extravagant claim ever made by a "non-idealist" philosopher in the Western Tradition: 'Of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful ... that the fruit of communication

should be participation, sharing, is a wonder by the side of which transubstantiation pales' [E&N, p132]¹⁰. The 1929 Preface makes clear that this is not an exaggeration or rhetorical flourish: 'the social participation [e]ffected by communication, through language and other tools, is the naturalistic link which does away with the often alleged necessity of dividing the objects of experience into two worlds, one physical and one ideal' [E&N:7] - it is vital to see what Dewey is saying here: the 'physical' and 'ideal' are part of a single "world". Dewey is at pains to make clear that he was proposing a revolution: 'that character of everyday experience which has been most systematically ignored by philosophy is the extent to which it is saturated with the results of social intercourse and communication' ([E&N:6]). Note that it is "the social" that creates - is prior to - "individual" experience. This is from the discussion of Chapter 5 in the Preface and should have suggested to Dewey that he should have started the book with Chapter 5 on communication not with a discussion of "experience". And he adds - which makes his vision crystal clear - that once we so conceive "language" and 'communication' 'mind is seen to be a function of social interactions, and to be a genuine character of natural events' [E&N:6].

There is of course no problem in seeing that 'social interactions' are 'natural events' but what Dewey has not shown is how 'mind is ... a function of social interactions' and how his continuity [E&N:9] between the 'physical' and the 'ideal' [E&N:7] is established or how it is possible that 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind' ([E&N:170]). There is no doubt that this is what Dewey intends: in beginning his discussion of the following chapter, Chapter 6, he reiterates 'that the social character of meanings forms the solid content of mind' [E&N:7] but does so by telling us that we have "realized" it - however it needs more "realization" and it is one of the purposes of this paper to show how a concept of 'the social' which is 'the inclusive category' (in the sense that it is clearly

⁹ See also 'When an old essence or meaning ... ' [LW1:171]; Dewey argued this again in 1939 - see [LW14:142] where he uses the word 'shift' in Kuhn's sense and argues (p143) that 'the historic development of the natural sciences' leads to changes in perspective (p141) which is vital to explanation of the means by which a paradigm shift is decided (see [Duff,2012:C1]).

¹⁰ C. S. Peirce used transubstantiation as an example in Section II of 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear'.

not reducible to a collection of individuals no matter how complex their interactions) can be extracted from E&N.

While Dewey was developing the Preface from which the quotations in the previous paragraph were taken he argued vigorously that 'the social' is 'inclusive' in a paper 'The Inclusive Philosophic Idea' [LW3] (originally published in 1928 as 'Social as a Category') although he did not define it as a unit of analysis. Unfortunately this paper shares the confusions of E&N but it is important for the present essay because it shows the strength of Dewey's focus on "the social" during the development of E&N.¹¹

All of this and Dewey's belief that he was developing a paradigm shift in philosophy and his perplexities over E&N justifies very selectively extracting the following quotations from the plethora of uses of 'meaning' in Chapter 5 and using them to formulate 'a unit of analysis' that is irreducibly social.

Language is specifically A MODE OF INTERACTION of at least two beings, a speaker and a hearer; it presupposes an organized group to which these creatures belong, and from whom they have acquired their habits of speech. It is therefore a relationship [E&N:145, emp added]

later in the same paragraph Dewey requires:

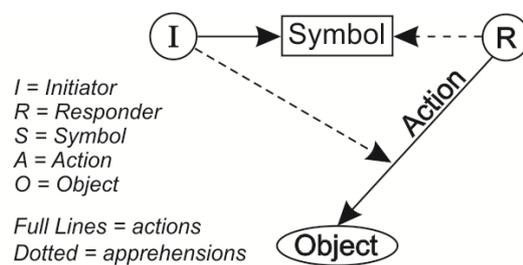
something common as between persons and an object. ... Persons and thing must alike serve as means in a common, shared consequence. This community of partaking is meaning [E&N:145-6, emp added].

¹¹ 'The inclusive Philosophic Idea' [LW3:41-54] considers 'belief' in 'the intrusive intervention of unnatural and supernatural factors in order to account for the differences between the animal and the human' [LW3:48] and argues for 'an alternative' (to the "mental" as a 'mysterious intrusion', or an 'epiphenomenon' or 'ontological' [LW3:49]) although it is argued vaguely in terms of 'human society' [LW3:48]) but then the argument is presented again in the terms to be formulated herein as the concept of a MIM: 'communication effects meaning and understanding as conditions of unity or agreement in conjoint behavior' - meaning is not an 'accidentally supervening quality but a constitutive ingredient of existential events' [LW3:49-50].

Note: a "meaning" is not something a sentence "has" or "expresses" nor something conveyed but is a 'community of partaking' - something social.

To fail to understand is to fail to come into agreement in action; to misunderstand is to set up action at cross purposes [E&N:141, emp added].

These statements can be expressed in the concept of a Minimum Interaction for Meaningfulness (MIM) illustrated in the following diagram:



The Minimum Interaction for Meaningfulness

In a MIM we have Dewey's requirements: a Symbol ("language"), two people (Participants), and the Responder does an Action on the Object in response to the Symbol expressed by the Initiator, I. (The terms of the MP have been capitalised - Action, Symbol - to distinguish them from the use of those words - action, symbol - in ordinary use.) For example: if I asks R to "Bring the red ball" and R does so a MIM might be assigned (by observers): S = Bring the red ball, A = R brings the red ball, O = the red ball. (MIMs can be assigned to the "same" situation in many ways.¹²) If I accepts the Action that R does and R is happy with (accepts) his or her own Action also then the two participants have 'come into agreement in action' and it would accord with normal usage to say that the interaction was Meaningful. A Meaningful MIM is called a MeMIM. A MIM is a sociocentric unit of analysis because it necessarily includes two people and is the

¹² 'The same existential events are capable of an infinite number of meanings' [E&N:241], also [E&N:132,241].

minimum unit to which the term 'Meaningful' can be applied; in this paradigm 'Meaningful' may not be applied to the Symbol or anything else only to a complete MIM. The paradigm of Social Inquiry which the MIM generates is called the MeMIM Paradigm (MP).¹³

The Action of a MIM can be a tangible¹⁴ Action (in response to S = 'Bring the red ball'), or a sentence ('No I won't'), or it can be intangible when it is a perception (such as in response to 'Can you see the red ball'), thought ("I is wrong"), or emotion (response to S = 'Isn't that music beautiful' or S = 'I love you'). A MIM with a tangible Action is an experiment.

Note that neither we, observers, nor the two Participants need make any assumptions or judgments about whether the two Participants in a MeMIM perceive the Object similarly nor that they do not perceive it similarly¹⁵: if R does an Action that is acceptable to I in response to I's Symbol ('Bring the red ball') and R was happy to do that Action then there is nothing further needed in that interaction.

The quotations from E&N above are highly selective but are consistent with the concept of 'the social' that Dewey argued for strongly at that time: the Motto to this paper [LW3:45] with his call for 'the frank acknowledgment of the social as a category continuous with and inclusive of the categories of the physical, vital

and mental' [LW3:46] and 'when we turn to the social, we find ... a describable, verifiable empirical phenomenon whose genesis, modes and consequences can be concretely examined and traced [LW3:49-50]. Finally: 'Opinion and theory as long as ... they are unconfirmed in conjoint behavior are at best but candidates for membership within the system of knowledge' [LW3:50]¹⁶; of course 'conjoint' can be interpreted individuocentrically but in the quotations from which the MIM was developed and in (for example), the Motto to this paper and [LW2:330] it is clear that 'conjoint' indicates an irreducible unit such as the MIM. The selective quotations are consistent also with many doctrines of E&N such as 'Meaning ... is ... a distinctive behaviour' [E&N:141] and (as will be demonstrated in detail below) 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind' [E&N:170].

Unfortunately Dewey also continued to describe words, signs, and other things as having "meaning" and sometimes he used 'meaning' in ways that are ambiguous generating the confusion discussed above and documented by Hall (see n8). For example he said a 'word' gains "meaning" when its use 'establishes a genuine community of action' [E&N:145] instead of consistently describing a 'meaning' as a complete 'community of action' (as he had also defined it) and a Symbol as an essential part of such a community. His continued use of "meaning" in many senses confuses and undermines 'the social' as the 'inclusive category'.

All of this suggests also the necessity of specifying the unit of analysis of any philosophy and using it rigorously (as in Science) in order to procure 'for philosophic reflection something of that cooperative tendency towards consensus which marks inquiry in the natural sciences' [E&N:34,389].

¹³ See n5 above.

¹⁴ In the MP a tangible action is defined as an 'Imitable Action' [Duff,2012:15,17,35,A4].

¹⁵ The MP - in the Peirce /Dewey Pragmatist tradition - rejects the question of whether the Object is "real" independently of the Participants (or any other observers): two Participants can change the Action they accept on an Object - for example before Newton's Physics the Earth was stationary and after it was moving. Borrowing Kuhn's terms: after the paradigm shift the Participants live in a different world and they will participate only in the new MIM and in this sense the Object has changed. In explaining the Theory of Relativity Einstein gives the example of a stone dropped from a moving train. To an observer on the train its path is a straight line but to an observer on the platform the path is a parabola - Einstein asked whether 'in reality' the path of the stone is a straight line or a parabola and answered that 'there is no such thing as an independently existing trajectory' (see [Duff,2012:6-7]). For further discussion see [Duff,2012:19-20, Appendices VI, VIII].

¹⁶ However - as will be argued - the MP has no need for Dewey's contention that human beings combine like atoms and cells [LW2:330,250] - indeed it is the fact that symbols are arbitrary (which will be argued in detail below) that gives human beings their distinctive power.

The diagram of a MIM does not include one part of the quotations above: 'language ... presupposes an organized group to which these creatures belong, and from whom they have acquired their habits of speech' - this can be captured in the notion of a Common Background of previous participation in relevant MeMIMs (Meaningful MIMs) that enables the two Participants to agree in the current MIM [Duff:2012:20-2,80f]. If I ask you (whom I have never seen nor met before) to 'Pass the salt' and you can do what I want it can only be because you were taught to do the required Action in response to the Symbol by your mother and I was taught the "same" by my mother - and our mothers (who never met) were taught the "same" by their mothers and so on. If R is happy to do the Action that I wants but there is no Common Background then the Action must have been done by chance or coercion and the MIM is not Meaningful.

A set of MIMs that is Meaningful to all of a set of Participants pairwise is called a MeMIMset (a Kuhnian paradigm of Science is a MeMIMset). The MeMIMset of Physics aspires to be formally unified but others - such as the MeMIMset of ordinary English (all the things about which all English speakers agree: 'Bring the red ball', 'It's 30 degrees today', 'That is a dog', etcetera) - are not but the members are able to participate in the MIMs of the MeMIMset and judge whether other people are able to participate (are members of the community) just as they can speak grammatically without necessarily being able to specify a grammar. In the MP (MeMIM Paradigm) a 'language' is merely the set of symbols used to constitute the Symbols of a MeMIMset [Duff,2012:21] and thus the elements of a language are not and cannot be Meaningful; it is only MIMs - interactions - that can be Meaningful; "language" is conceived as for coordinating our actions not for describing "the world".

The concept of a MIM can be used to achieve the vision of E&N - 'mind' and 'the ideal' will be discussed briefly as illustrations later herein.¹⁷

¹⁷ [Duff,2012] and [Duff,2011] each give a full development.

How the MP achieves Dewey's vision

The concept of a MeMIM - a sociocentric unit of analysis - has been shown to implement Dewey's theses on 'the social' and on communication and can be stated axiomatically and hence independently of Dewey's work. This section will give arguments that support the adoption of a sociocentric unit of analysis, will show how it implies the theory of mind that Dewey adumbrated, and a theory of ideal objects that demonstrates the 'continuity' [E&N:9] between the 'physical' and the 'ideal' [E&N:7] that Dewey envisioned.

"Language" is necessarily social because Symbols are entirely arbitrary

There is a simple and decisive fact that establishes that "meaning" is necessarily social: "Symbols" are obviously entirely arbitrary¹⁸: the symbol 'dog' - written or spoken - does not resemble the animal or anything else in "the world". Hence: symbols cannot have any connection to anything in "the world" except that given to them (ultimately) *by the tangible actions* of the users. You cannot teach someone how to respond to 'Bring the red ball' by using symbols (words) alone but must show them what to do; must demonstrate. Hence to communicate with the user of a symbol there are three options: you must accept their use of the symbol, or they must accept yours, or you and the other participant must mutually agree to a new symbol-use. Thus a person who needs to - or must learn to - use a symbol has no choice but to have the use imposed on them and of course this applies to an infant who must accept its mother-tongue.¹⁹

¹⁸ [De Saussure,1974:67] argued that 'the bond between the signifier ['sound-image'] and the signified ['concept'] is arbitrary' not as here with the thing (Object). De Saussure's ideas are complex but he claimed a notion of language as 'social' but 'it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual' to learn it 'the individual must always serve an apprenticeship' and 'speaking ... is an individual act' OpCit p14 - this is individuocentric.

¹⁹ [Madzia,2015] - which offers only a speculative conclusion - illustrates the gulf between the paradigm

In a MIM (see diagram) there is no "direct" connection between the Symbol (words) and the Object (things). Thus the arguments in this paper may be based either on symbols being entirely arbitrary or an axiomatic adoption of the MIM as a unit of analysis.

Dewey's theory of "mind"

In the Preface to the second edition of E&N Dewey argued: 'the social character of meanings forms the solid content of mind' [E&N:7] which he had argued in the first edition: 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind' ([E&N:170] and 'It is heresy to conceive meanings to be private, a property of ghostly psychic existences' [E&N:148].²⁰ These are startling claims that should arrest and focus the reader! However Dewey did not provide a clear account of "mind" or "minds" as social not "individual" but the MP shows how mind is social.

There is no direct connection between the Symbol (words) and the Object (things) in a MIM hence it is only by showing the learner (R) what to do - making the

advanced herein and individuocentric treatments of 'social construction'. Madzia asserts 'As far as its content goes, we have no reason to question Mead's claim that the self is entirely a product of inference, in other words – that it is socially constructed all the way down' (p 86) but the MP explains how the 'content' is 'socially constructed' by imposition of MIMs on infants learning to engage in interaction using symbols. The incommensurability of the two paradigms is clear because the MP's rock-bottom is MIMs with tangible Actions whereas Madzia's individuocentric treatment is 'down' to 'primal self-awareness' which is a concept that is more complex than the phenomena that it is hoping to explain. In the MP self-awareness is not a 'primitive' attribute of a person but a later development requiring competence to participate in second level MIMs (see below) in which oneself is one of the Participants.

²⁰ Some readers might look for discussion of the work of Wittgenstein in this paper but this would be an irrelevant distraction: as Quine has pointed out [1969:27] the so-called Private Language Argument was formulated by Dewey. Incidentally it has become common to say that Dewey anticipated Wittgenstein when Wittgenstein is to be strongly criticised for failing to read Dewey. Note that Quine's remarks include some of the quotations from which the concept of a MIM was developed.

learner do a tangible Action - that I is able to teach R how to respond to 'Bring the red ball'. In a MeMIM the "connection" ("reference") is achieved by the actions and acceptances of the Participants and does not exist apart from them. R cannot respond to the sentence until shown how to but once R is able to respond correctly we know that something has changed - been internalised - in R as a result of being taught and it is that change that we call the development of "mind".

The development of "mind" in this paradigm can be complex and subtle: in learning to use Symbols learners usually learn patterns of action not just "bare" Actions: "Bringing the red ball" could be fun but 'Bringing the full cup' requires care and attention [Duff,2012:16,42]. And clearly this applies to all learners: the "everyday" sentences taught to infants and those taught to Physics students.

The internalisation of the capacity to use Symbols - the development of 'mind' - determines how an infant interacts with others and with "the world" thus 'mind is seen to be a function of social interactions' [E&N:6]; if an infant were not "taught" to 'Bring the red ball' in a MIM they would not perceive red ('taught' is in scare quotes here because the infant has no choice; the Action in response to 'Bring the red ball' is imposed). A learner must learn also to participate in each MeMIM as I after being taught to participate as R thus each MeMIM is the same for both Participants and what is internalised is (merely) the capacity to interact. Thus a "meaning" is not something that can be the exclusive possession of an "individual": a mind is the ability to participate in MIMs thus 'the mind that appears in individuals is not as such individual mind' ([E&N:170] and 'mind is seen to be a function of social interactions' [E&N:6]²¹. If S = 'See (perceive) the red ball' then A is a perception - is intangible²² - but if a person cannot "Bring the red ball"

²¹ See also 'Soliloquy' [E&N:135], 'heresy' [E&N:148], 'meanings are objective because they are modes of natural interaction' [E&N:149].

²² In the MP intangible Actions are captured by a definition of 'Unimitable Actions' [Duff:2012] p35, p38, p42, p98, p161, Section A4.

we know that they cannot perceive it. Thus the MP implies a (Pragmatist) theory of mind acceptable "naturalistically" and to Dewey.

A person has "non-verbal knowledge" - such as not walking into trees - but we know that this has been "taught" by evolution: without such "knowledge" human beings could not have survived. 'Everything which is distinctively human is learned, not native, even though it could not be learned without native structures which mark man off from other animals' [LW2:331].

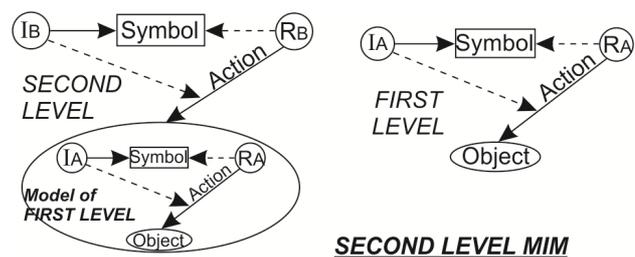
Symbol-use is an ubiquitous and essential activity in peoples' interactions with each other and their "worlds" - but because symbol-use and patterns of action must be imposed on the learner symbol-use determines the nature of the symbol-user to a very significant extent.²³ Hence human beings are symbol-using animals reproduced from the previous generation and hence historical beings.²⁴

'Existence and Essence': Ideal Objects

In Chapter 5 of E&N (which has the ideas from which the concept of a Meaningful MIM - MeMIM - is derived) Dewey argued 'Failure to acknowledge the presence and operation of natural interaction in the form of communication creates the gulf between existence and essence' [E&N:133]; he stressed the centrality of this in the Preface [E&N:6-7]. The MP shows precisely how the gulf is bridged - except "existence" and "essence" have to be re-conceptualised in the sociocentric paradigm (MP); which of course is what Dewey hoped to achieve.²⁵

In the MP an 'existence' is simply an Object in a MeMIM: because the Symbol refers to the Object it exists for the Participants. Scientific and "empiricist" standards can be ensured by insistence on Actions being tangible.²⁶

Observers are necessary in the MP: a MIM is posited by observers who assign the elements of a MIM to parts of an interaction. When discussing observers assigning a MIM we, I the writer and you the reader, must also assign a MIM (called a Second Level MIM) to the interaction of the observers (because only a MIM can be Meaningful). In the following diagram IA and RA are the mother and infant (when the mother is teaching 'Bring the red ball') and IB and RB are the observers.



The second level MIM is assigned by me, the writer, and you, the reader. Because only MIMs can be Meaningful our assignment of a MIM must be analysed also as a MIM thus the relevant sentences of the present paper are S in our Third Level MIM (because it takes the second level as its Object) and we are observers of both the observers and the first level Participants. First and second level MIMs are a clearer formulation of Dewey's distinction between primary and secondary experience [E&N:15-16].

In the diagram above of a second level MIM the second level Object is a model. If I say 'This is a whale' while pointing to a drawing, model, or an actual whale I can make that thing a model of all whales: my sentence is S in a second level, O is the model, and the first level MIMs are all the MIMs of the past in which S is 'This is a whale' and the Object is a whale.²⁷ Ditto for 'This is red' using any red thing as Object in a second level. Thus concepts, ideals, and types²⁸ - second level Objects - can be things - existences - on which we can do tangible Actions.

²³ The other factor is temperament see [Duff,2012:247].

²⁴ This implies a Theory of History but in contrast to Marx's is general and not confined to the economic. See [Duff,2012] p41-2, App III.

²⁵ 'one can only hope' [E&N:10].

²⁶ [Duff,2012:A3,D4(b)].

²⁷ The second level Object in this example is the model of the whale (not of the whole first level MIM as in the diagram above) and the MIMs of the two levels are correlated by convention.

²⁸ Thus a "Theory of Types" is implicit in the MP not added gratuitously to preclude paradoxes.

Participants learn to participate in the second level MeMIM the same way they learn the first: by having it imposed on them; but it obviously requires greater complexity of intellectual operations.

A second level MIM is Meaningful if the Participants in it agree and all the first levels that it implies are Meaningful. If someone disagrees in a first level that it is a whale ('This is a fish') then that single first level that is not Meaningful may be sufficient to cause inquiry into the Meaningfulness of the second level.²⁹

The Object of a second or higher level MeMIM can be intangible. Consider Blindfold Chess: the two players construct a board "in mind" on which they play. For example a MIM could be assigned to the moves taken in pairs with S being the move of one player and A the responding move by the other (which becomes S for the next pair and so on) and O is the Blindfold chess-set (pieces and board). The "chess-set" constructed by the players in imagination must be the same set for each of them or they could not play a legitimate game. Their set could be O in a second level MIM and may be monitored on an actual set which would be O in a first level MIM. The moves on the monitor set are tangible and the moves of the players are perceptible (they say their moves) or they could not interact. The monitor set is not necessary for the game (only for lesser mortals such as judges and spectators) hence we could also analyse the players' interactions as first level MIMs and the Blindfold chess set as O. Thus the players do perceptible moves on an intangible set but it is appropriate to say it is real.

A similar analysis can be given of music: the player(s) are I, the audience (individually or collectively) is R, S is the notes played (considered as "bare" notes which can be recorded as marks on paper or as audio). I and R construct (as in Blindfold Chess) a performance, O (which is not S which is the "bare" notes), and A is the perception by R of the performance.³⁰ Science can be distinguished by requiring that all Actions be tangible: perception of a meter reading must be wholly equivalent

to pointing to 3.75 on the scale.³¹ Aesthetic communities do not want the response to an aesthetic Object to be equivalent to a tangible Action. Under the MP all formal inquiries are the result of simple restrictions on inquiry ([Duff,2012:Chapter D]). Thus the MP fulfils Dewey's vision for E&N as the result of applying 'in the more general realm of philosophy the thought which is effective in dealing with any and every genuine question, from the elaborate problems of science to the practical deliberations of daily life' [E&N:3,11].

In the MP ideal things (blindfold chess-sets, the type of a whale, a performance of music) are second or higher level Objects thus the MP fulfils Dewey's claims that 'the social participation [e]ffected by language ... is the naturalistic link which does away with the often alleged necessity of dividing the objects of experience into two worlds, one physical and one ideal' [E&N:7]³² and that his concepts of "meaning" and communication were the means of achieving the ulterior purpose of E&N: 'Ability to respond to meanings and employ them ... is the agency for elevating man into the realm of what is usually called the ideal and spiritual [E&N:7].³³

The arguments in this section show why Dewey responded (in 1928) to Hall's criticism of his treatment of 'meaning' in E&N with 'the topic of meaning is certainly one of the most important in contemporary philosophical discussion' [LW3:91] and stressed 'the need of a shared situation whenever the understanding of ideas and symbols enter into question' unfortunately in this response as in E&N itself Dewey was unable to find a means of achieving his vision of 'the social' as 'the inclusive category' without including individuocentric concepts in his explanations.

³¹ Thus an "empiricist" criterion of "meaning" could be imposed by insisting that MIMs are not Meaningful unless the Action is tangible but a Pragmatist would accept that an aesthetic MIM could be Meaningful.

³² In 1920 Dewey did not believe this possible see [MW12:154].

³³ This was argued also in the first edition 'Failure to acknowledge ...' [E&N:133].

²⁹ [Duff,2012:A3]

³⁰ See [Duff,2012:D4(d) and D4(e)].

Of course "physical" and "ideal" in the sociocentric paradigm are different concepts (from the concepts of non-Pragmatist philosophies): a thing is 'physical' if it is the Object of a MeMIM with tangible Action and is 'ideal' if it is the Object of a second (or higher) level MeMIM but as argued: an ideal thing can be tangible and can have tangible Actions done on it; it is the role it plays (the actions and acceptances of the Participants in the different MIMs) that makes it ideal.

Dewey was always perplexed and dissatisfied with E&N

The central thesis of this paper is that Dewey had a vision for E&N in which 'the social ... furnishes philosophically the inclusive category' but failed to achieve it. This is clear in his reconsiderations of E&N prompted by the opportunity in 1949 (twenty years after the second edition) to write a new introduction to it [E&N:330-61] which shows that he was again perplexed and dissatisfied.

His attempt to write a new introduction turned into a proposal for writing a new book [E&N:329]. He postponed this but returned to it in 1951 when he 'transformed the task of finishing the Introduction into a formidable new problem' [E&N:361]: 'Were I to write (or rewrite) *Experience and Nature* today I would entitle the book *Culture and Nature* ... I would abandon ... "experience" and 'substitute ... "culture" because with its meaning as now firmly established it can fully and freely carry my philosophy of experience' [E&N:361] but in the next paragraph he resiled: 'there is much to be said in favor of using "experience"' [E&N:361-2] which was his opinion two years earlier when E&N was to be 'reprinted unchanged' E&N:330]. Dewey then (1951) re-asserts that "'experience" ... must designate both what is experienced and the ways of experiencing it' [E&N:362,12-3] but reflects that this insistence was 'a mere ideological thundering' because he had ignored the historical changes which had made his 'use of "experience" strange and incomprehensible'

[E&N:362]³⁴. In fact he had almost the same arguments with himself in the first edition in which he discussed the relationship between 'experience' and 'culture' [E&N:42] referring to the 1925 Chapter 1 in which he speculated also that 'the word and the notion of experience might be discarded' [E&N:372].

Here we see Dewey vacillating between 'culture' which is a "social" (but not necessarily sociocentric) concept and 'experience', an individuocentric concept, but the change is not of the order of a paradigm shift if 'the social' is conceived conventionally as a product of the interaction of "individuals" who are prior to "the social". But as was shown above herein: parallel to E&N Dewey had argued clearly for a concept of 'the social' as prior to "the individual" that accords with the same ideas as expressed in E&N but in 1951 there is no sign that this was relevant to or the cause of Dewey's vacillations twenty years later. As argued above: around the time of the second edition of E&N this radical concept disappeared from his work; certainly "the social" remained strong in Dewey's thought but only as consistent with a writer for whom education and politics remained central concerns.

The thesis that Dewey was never able to crystallise his vision of 'the social' is supported by evidence from a "new" book by "Dewey" compiled by Phillip Deen from notes by Dewey that are believed to be part of his attempt to write a new book. On his attempts to write a 'social interpretation of the history of philosophers - if not of philosophy' Dewey says 'it never would jell'³⁵.

If Dewey had a clear concept of 'the social' such as the MIM he could not have had such a dilemma between 'culture' and 'experience' hence it is arguably due to the presence in E&N of two (incommensurable) paradigms: the not fully realised 'sociocentric' (concept of "meaning") and the 'individuocentric' concept of "experience" that necessarily includes only one person

³⁴ I wonder if there is another writer who has at the end of his life so honestly criticised his major work?

³⁵ [Deen,2012:loc108], also compare [loc111] with [E&N:329], see also for example loc87-8, loc93.

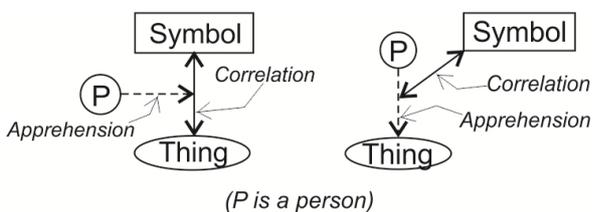
'things in their immediacy' are 'a direct and ineffable presence' [E&N:74-5].

The two paradigms in E&N

In 1929 Dewey distinguished E&N into two parts by identifying a 'pivot' [E&N:6] between chapters 4 and 5. The second part - conceived herein as sociocentric - includes the quotations from Chapter 5 from which the MP was developed, Chapters 6-10, and the summaries of 5-10 in the new Preface [E&N:6-9]. It is in discussion of Chapter 5 that Dewey asserts the claim that 'social cooperation and mutual participation' [E&N:6] is the key to the 'continuity' [E&N:9] between the 'physical' and the 'ideal' that is the purpose of the book (a continuity which as shown above can be explained and developed in detail in terms of the MP).

The first part is based on Dewey's concept of "experience" which he later described as 'strange and incomprehensible' for historical reasons [E&N:361] - however the problems with "experience" are not historical but theoretical.

In Dewey's concept of 'experience' - as in the "received" concept - it is the individual who expresses, perceives, and correlates. In the view that a "meaning" is the use of the linguistic entity it is the individual who "uses". In spite of the diversity in ideas in Philosophy since Plato the following two diagrams can serve to consider the issue.



Individuocentric Units of analysis

A comparison of these diagrams with the diagram of a MIM above shows that a MIM is not reducible to any combination of individuocentric units and hence it is appropriate to describe the MIM as part of a different paradigm. The onus is on those who disagree to show

how the MIM is reducible to a combination of individuocentric units of analysis given that symbols are entirely arbitrary. If a MIM is not reducible then the MP demonstrates Dewey's claim that 'no amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes a community' [LW2:330].³⁶

In Dewey's concept "experience" is of 'things in their immediacy' which are 'a direct and ineffable presence' [E&N:74-5]. He claims also that in immediacies there is a 'self-disclosure of nature itself' [E&N:5]: 'the intrinsic nature of events is revealed in experience as the immediately felt qualities of things' [E&N:6]³⁷ but of these immediacies it is 'impossible to say anything to another ... Immediate things may be *pointed to* by words, but not described or defined' [E&N:74-5]; they are "private" "perceptions". Thus Dewey's "immediacies" and hence "experience" are individuocentric concepts and raise the problem of how Dewey can know that what is 'ineffable' is a 'self-disclosure of nature'. Note also that the first part of E&N implies that 'the intrinsic nature of events' - 'nature' - can not be 'described or defined'. As discussed earlier herein Dewey in response to Hall explained 'pointing' as a matter of 'a shared situation' but this faces the problem of how what is 'private' ('ineffable') can be 'shared' by two "individuals". Dewey's 'experience' is indeed a 'weasel word' [E&N:365].

In contrast: in the MP attributions of Meaningfulness are based on the acceptances by the Participants of the Action of a MIM hence a concept such as 'immediately felt qualities' is irrelevant. In teaching an infant 'red ball' and then 'red' we do not rely on 'immediately felt qualities' but show the infant the

³⁶ [Moreno,1979] "The Pragmatic 'We' Reconsidered", in spite of the title, misses the significance of these remarks which occur on the first page to which Moreno refers (95). The interpretation presented herein shows that his claims about Dewey's view of "we" are individuocentric. They appear to be based only on the *Public and Its Problems* [LW2] but it is difficult to read this correctly without reference to E&N.

³⁷ It is an issue peripheral to this paper but worth noting that Dewey offers no justification that it is 'nature itself' that is disclosed in "immediacies".

Action we require and judge its success by its acquisition of the ability to do the required Action and its acceptances of such Actions when done by itself and by others; we cannot know and do not ask in this interaction what it "perceives" or "feels" "privately".

Thus in a sociocentric paradigm "language" is for coordination of our actions not for description of "the world" or expression of our "individual" thoughts as in individuocentric concepts.

Had Dewey used the sociocentric concept of "meaning" (the MeMIM) as his 'denotative method' [E&N:372] then 'the word and the notion of experience might be discarded; it would be superfluous' [E&N:372] and the first half of E&N could be re-formulated in terms of MIMs and it would be sociocentric.

In explaining Chapters 3-4 Dewey argued that 'the intrinsic nature of events is revealed in experience as the immediately felt qualities of things' [E&N:6]. However he believed he needed to connect 'these qualities' with 'the regularities that form the objects of knowledge' - which is then 'intelligently directed experience' [E&N:6] - but had to resort to the metaphors 'intimate', 'fusion' and 'stretches' [E&N:13] and we can argue this is because 'immediacy of existence is ineffable' [E&N:74] - because the sociocentric and individuocentric paradigms are incommensurable and only a "fudge" can join them. In contrast the elements of a MeMIM (including acceptances, assignments, and attributions) are undeniably naturalistic because they are resolvable into perceptible human actions and hence can be Dewey's 'philosopher's real datum' [E&N:369].

Speculative Remarks

It is illuminating and interesting to speculate on why Dewey - over so many years - did not ever make the shift he claimed to be making in E&N.

In 1920 (in contrast to E&N) Dewey considered the relationship between society and the individual [MW12:187f] in a relatively conventional analysis except that neither was given priority. Then between 1925 and

1929 he published E&N which - it has been argued in this paper - contains two paradigms the second promising a revolutionary concept - a sociocentric unit of analysis - and stating its features but never achieving it.

After 1930 "meaning" as a 'genuine community of action' and 'the social' as 'the inclusive category' all but disappeared from Dewey's work: in a major work (his 'Logic') in 1938 the sociocentric concept of "meaning" is re-stated [LW12:52] but its influence on that book is peripheral and in *Experience and Education* (1938) [LW13] he relied wholly on his individuocentric theory of experience as the title indicates and 'social' is used entirely conventionally.

It is not too much to say therefore that 'the social' as 'the inclusive category' was an episode in Dewey's *opus*. Part of the explanation may be the removal of the personal influence of G. H. Mead - who died in 1931 - and for whom "the social" was central. Dewey said of Mead: 'I dislike to think what my own thinking might have been were it not for the seminal ideas which I derived from him. For his ideas were genuinely original; they started one thinking in directions where it had never occurred to one that it was worth even to look' [LW6:24]. The implication is that Dewey may not have been able to clarify his vision of 'the social' because it was not entirely his own? Perhaps with Mead and Dewey the whole was greater than the sum of the parts?

A complementary part of the explanation may be that Dewey was engaged in (what might by analogy with Kuhn's concept of 'revolutionary science') be described as 'revolutionary philosophy' but did not undergo the necessary 'conversion experience' (gestalt switch); instead he switched back and forth between the concepts of the two incommensurable paradigms - an experience he described: 'When an old essence or meaning is in process of dissolution and new one has not taken shape ... the intervening existence is too fluid and formless for publication, even to one's self' [E&N:171]. A shift of paradigm arguably requires a "trigger" which may be a chance occurrence such as a falling apple (as has been suggested for Newton's insights). We can only

speculate that the luck of such a trigger did not occur or more likely Dewey's mind was formed in the old paradigm in which he had worked for too long but the new was adumbrated by Mead and did not arise in Dewey's mind.

The difficulty that Dewey faced in making the paradigm shift may be experienced by imagining that you are living before the Sun-centred Solar System was accepted. You are familiar with diagrams of an Earth-centred "Solar System" and when you stand on your front verandah you can see the diagram confirmed with the Sun rising in the East and going around the Earth. After the Sun-centred system was accepted you became familiar with the new diagram but when you stand on your front verandah you still see the Sun go around the Earth each day and the new diagram does not correspond with what you see nor your intuition and it takes some "mental gymnastics" to correlate what you observe with the diagram that you now accept to be the correct representation. The same applies with the MIM: we are used to thinking of a "meaning" as something that sentences "have", that we can "transmit" when communicating, and can have in our minds - switching to thinking of a "meaning" as an interaction between two Participants and applying this concept consistently take some effort and it is easy to switch back into our intuitions; without the diagram of a MIM or similar device Dewey faced an almost impossible task.

Challenge

If the case presented in this paper is rejected then it poses the implicit challenge to Dewey scholars and others writing on Pragmatism of explaining Dewey's life-long perplexities over E&N, his other relevant writings in the 1920s on 'the social' especially the paper 'Social as a Category' / 'The Inclusive Philosophic Idea', and his claims for Chapter 5 of E&N in the 1929 Preface.

Apart from the life-long reconsiderations - in 1930 immediately after the 1929 edition of E&N - in reflecting on the state of philosophy - Dewey proposed re-doing

(reconstructing) philosophy yet again using the ideas of the second, sociocentric, part of E&N: he asserted 'the importance of distinctive social categories, especially communication and participation. It is my conviction that a great deal of our philosophizing needs to be done over again from this point of view, and there will ultimately result an integrated synthesis in a philosophy' [LW5:159]. This is a remarkable statement from a philosopher who had just revised his opus magnum, E&N, in the light of criticism and his own reflections.

In fact Dewey had posed this challenge in 1928: 'The question of whether we should begin with the simple or the complex appears to me the most important problem in philosophical method at the present time, cutting under, for example, the traditional distinctions of real and ideal' [LW3:42]. His answer included a challenge: 'social phenomena do as a matter of fact manifest *something* distinctive, and ...that something affords the key to a naturalistic account of phenomena baffling philosophic interpretation when it is left out of account' thus 'the burden of proof as to the value of "social" as a metaphysical category lies upon those who habitually treat its worth as trivial. For what do *they* mean by social phenomena?' [LW3:47].

Dewey's answer at that time is given in the Motto ('the social ... furnishes philosophically the inclusive category') of the present paper which has conceived 'the social' as an 'inclusive category' - a unit of analysis: the Minimum Interaction for Meaningfulness.

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