

Rebooting Democracy: A Deweyan's Perspective on Digital Democracy

Ms. Hajira,

I BCA – A,

Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth College for Women,

Chennai.

Introduction

Deweyan's insights are of modern thoughts deeply rooted in influencing philosophy, education, and social theory. At the core, Dewey was a pragmatist and believed that ideas and knowledge are not static and will not be a static truth, but they are tools for solving real-world problems. Let us move on to Dewey's perspective on democracy, pragmatism, social theory, and life.

John Dewey

John Dewey was an influential philosopher, pragmatist, and educational reformer. He was known for his intellectual thinking. He's widely considered one of the most prominent American intellectuals of the twentieth century. His work laid the foundation for pragmatism, functional psychology, and progressive educational movements. Dewey's core idea is rooted in pragmatism.

Educational Philosophy

Dewey's educational philosophy included the learning methodology of experimenting with things and working on yourself to improve your skills and also lifelong learning with a continuous process of growth. His educational philosophy included the following:

- Experiential learning - learning by doing things and working on yourself.
- Social and interactive - learn to communicate, collaborate, and understand each and everyone's decision.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that originated in the United States and emphasizes the practical consequences and usefulness of ideas, policies, and beliefs as the criteria for their meaning and truth. It suggests that the value of an idea lies in the ability to solve a problem with that ideology.

Dewey's pragmatism

John Dewey's pragmatism, which he also called instrumentalism, is the philosophy that ideas and concepts are tools that we use to solve problems. Unlike traditional philosophies that seek a single, universal truth, Dewey's pragmatism holds that an idea's truth is determined by its practical effectiveness and its ability to help us navigate and improve our world. It emphasizes action, experimentation, and experience as the primary sources of knowledge.

“When we reflect upon an experience instead of just having it, we inevitably distinguish between our own attitude and the objects toward which we sustain the attitude” (Dewey John, Page No 173)

Core Principles of Pragmatism

The ability of Pragmatism is known only by knowing its value, which lies in the ability to solve a problem and achieve results in the real world. The core Principles of pragmatism, which were the basic foundation of Deweyan's perspective, are as follows:

- Truth is not fixed - Pragmatism views the truth as something dynamic and evolving.
- Ideas are tools - Ideas are the instruments for action and are the important thing to solve a problem based on its truth.
- Emphasis on action and experience - Pragmatists believe that knowledge is not gained through passive observation but through active engagement, experimentation, and learning by doing.
- Focus on consequences - To understand an idea, you must look at its real-world consequences.

Dewey's Point on Democracy

John Dewey's perspective on democracy was that it is more than just a political system. It is a way of life. He believed that democracy is a moral and social ideal that must be actively lived and practiced by citizens in their communities, schools, and workplaces. For Dewey, a healthy democracy is not sustained by political structures alone, but by the habits of communication, collaboration, and shared inquiry among its people.

Key Components of Dewey's Democratic Vision

- Social ethics - For Dewey, the democracy of society is an ethical and social well-being with belief and truth, with mutual respect and an open mind with people.
- Education - Education is considered the top-most prominent thing for Dewey and his conspiracy of educating by values and knowledge.
- True Democracy - Dewey argued that a true democracy is defined by an informed public that is

aware of its shared problems and has the tools to address them collectively.

Digital Democracy

In this modern world, everything has become digital. Digital Democracy is one of those, and we have digitalized democracy by connecting with people and communicating about the problems or causes of the problems and seeking help in solving our problems. It enhances a wide range of activities in the government through digital media and also transforms the democratic process, and emphasizes the method of interacting with a lot of people to know their perspective and to make decisions on the will of all the people in the country.

Key Aspects of Digital Democracy

Digital Democracy involves a lot of key benefits to people and the government to form a democratic union, and it allows people to express their own thoughts and ideas. The main key aspects of digital democracy are as follows:

- Digital Activist and Social Movements
- Open talk and Transparency
- Deliberation and Forum
- Increase Participation
- Empower People to Convey Their Ideas

Challenges

Even though the development in the field of democracy is considered to be a good, sufficient, and helpful thing, it also contains some challenges and difficulties in digital democracy. The challenges that occur in digital democracy are as follows:

- The Digital Divide - Access to technology is not universal, which can exacerbate existing social inequalities and exclude certain populations from the democratic process.
- Misinformation - The rapid spread of fake news with the creation of social media content makes it more violent and untrue.
- Surveillance and Privacy Concerns - The same technologies that enable democratic participation can also be used by governments and corporations for surveillance, threatening civil liberties and creating a “surveillance state.”

Dewey's Democracy & Digital Democracy

The three turns which separate democracy of Dewey's times and democracy of today – the global, the ecological, and the digital turn – and relate them to changing notions of citizenship. We analyze the complex interplay between the turns and show that they cannot be understood and analyzed in isolation. While the identified turns have indeed significantly changed the circumstances in which Dewey produced his understanding of democracy, we conclude that his work still carries a lot of value and calls for its reinvention in and for the age of digital reason.

“Faith in democracy is all one with Faith in experience and education” (Dewey, John, Page No 299)

My Perspective

My perspective on rebooting democracy, drawing from John Dewey's philosophy, is that we must shift our focus from a purely representative system to a participatory, educational, and communicative one. Dewey saw democracy not as a static form of government but as a “way of life,” a continuous process of collective problem-solving and shared inquiry. Rebuilding it today requires leveraging technology to facilitate this process while consciously mitigating the digital pitfalls that threaten it.

From my perspective, a Deweyan reboot of democracy is not about simply adding technology to old systems. It's about a fundamental reorientation toward a society that is constantly learning, adapting, and solving its problems together. It's a call to make democracy a daily practice, a living thing shaped by the active, informed intelligence of its citizens.

Reference

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