JOHN DEWEY’S IDEAS ON AUTHORITY AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR CONTEMPORARY KOREAN SCHOOLS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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This dissertation attempts to understand the crisis of traditional authority in Korea and what significance John Dewey’s view of authority would have in the redevelopment of Korean society, generally, and Korean education, more specifically.

The ideas of Western democracy and individualism have become increasingly popular and influential in Korean society, especially since the late 1980s. More specifically, going through significant historical events such as the 1987 democratic movement and the 1997 economic crisis, the traditional Korean understanding of authority has been challenged. This is especially obvious with respect to the moral authority of teachers in Korean schools. The Western ideals of democracy and individualism have challenged the traditional Korean understanding of moral values that are transmitted via schools and teachers. As a result, both educators and non-educators have begun to favor individual choice regarding moral and cultural values, thus decoupling educational and moral training. In such circumstances, Korean schools and society are moving toward utilitarian motives of education that emphasize non-moral values, such as grades and class rank, values that in themselves have no educational content. While these motives may be effective in achieving career success, they lack a necessary aspect of moral and civic learning. This unhealthy circumstance destroys the proper learning environment in schools. Dewey’s educational philosophies center on the
learning environment necessary for moral education as well as non-moral learning. They represent and attempt to understand education and teacher authority in the light of Western democracy and individualism.

This study adopts a twofold approach. First, empirical analysis will show that a crisis of moral authority exists in contemporary Korea. Second, Dewey’s major works on authority and their connection to education will be philosophically examined, and the importance of Dewey’s philosophies to Korean education will be discussed.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my father Jong Hwa Kim, my mother Young Sook Lee, my mother in law Gui Jo Choi, and my father in law the late Chung Jwa Bak
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must say that I have not done this work alone. There are those to whom I have to express sincere appreciation.

I am thankful to Professor Philip Smith who has helped so much from the beginning of this work to the end as my dissertation advisor. Indeed, he inspired me to delve more deeply into John Dewey’s life and work. Also, I am thankful to my committee members, Professor Robert Lawson, Professor Bryan Warnick, and Professor Sebnem Cilesiz, who have taught me not only how to make my dissertation better but also encouraged and motivated me throughout my studies.

More importantly, I am thankful to my wife, Ho Jung Bak, who has been so patient, cheerful, and supportive. In addition, I thank my children, Dong Hun, Dong Min, Dong Pil, and Ye Ji, who have given me joy and hope during a difficult and stressful season. I thank my parents, Jong Hwa Kim and Young Sook Lee, who have done so much for my life, particularly for my education. Finally, I thank God who has helped and guided me in my work.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Dewey and Korean Education

The arrival of Dewey’s educational philosophy in Korea was sudden and unexpected. Following the liberation from Japan in 1945, Korea was divided at the 38th Parallel; the United States entered the South and the Soviet Union took over in the North by mutual agreement. This division of Korea by two great outside powers and the tension between them not only led to the establishment in 1948 of political governments sympathetic to their own ideologies, but imposed two different education systems—South Korea adapting the philosophies of American education and North Korea adapting that of the Soviet Union. In the South, during the time of U.S. military governance (1945-1948) a form of democratic education was initiated. More specifically, in the midst of both Korean interest in American democracy and the need to redesign new education, Dewey’s educational thought was introduced through influential figures in government and higher education.¹

As an example of the adaption of Dewey’s ideas, Chun-Suk Oh (1901-1987), Korea’s most notable Deweyan philosopher and educator, studied not only with Dewey and his protégé William Heard Kilpatrick (1871-1965), but with William Chandler Bagley (1874-1946), a critic of Dewey.  

2 After earning a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Columbia University in 1931, Chun-Suk Oh returned to Korea and began to teach pedagogy at the Bo-Sung College.  

3 Under Japanese rule, his effort to spread Dewey’s philosophy of education that stresses the importance of freedom and democracy was significantly limited. However, becoming the Secretary of the Department of Education during the American military administration (1945-48), Oh, along with other Korean educators inspired by Dewey’s works, attempted to implement Dewey’s educational philosophy in the milieu of Korean culture. For instance, over the three years of American military government, Chun-Suk Oh delivered numerous lectures on Dewey and his democratic approach to education to eventually thirty thousand teachers in both elementary and secondary schools. In 1946 he also published a book of his own, *The Establishment of Democratic Education*, which is a first invaluable book in Korean regarding Dewey’s philosophy of education.  

4 This book played a pivotal role in introducing democratic educational thought in general, and more specifically Dewey’s

2 The followings are the returned Korean students who studied philosophy or pedagogy while Dewey was at Columbia University from 1904 to 1930: Hong-Je Kim, Lee-Ok Jang, Pil-Le Kim, Sin-Dug Hwang, Chun-Suk Oh, Un-Sook Seo, Jae-Myung No, Hwal-Lan Kim, Maria Kim, Sung-Soon Yun, Suk-Young Jang, Suk-E Kim. Among these people, Hwal-Lan Kim and Un-Sook Seo taught at Lee-Hwa Women College and Chun-Suk Oh taught at Boo-Sung College. Others tried to share Dewey’s ideas in the religious circle and the press.

3 Bo-Sung College was the first private college in modern Korea. It was originally established in 1905 and became Korea University in 1946.

4 Han-Yong Im, 1977, 존 듀이의 생애와 사상 (*John Dewey’s Life and Ideas*), Seoul: BaeYoungSa, p. 20.
ideas to Korean teachers and educators. Moreover, he translated Dewey’s influential work on the philosophy of education, *Democracy and Education*, from English to Korean—the first half of the book by himself in 1948 and later finishing the whole book with Han-Yong Im in 1953.

With respect to Dewey and Korean education, another important aspect occurred in 1952 when the Korean War (1950-1953) was still taking place. It was the establishment of the “Korean Society for the Study of Education” by 47 influential Korean educators at Seoul National University. The first conference was held in March, 1953, and its title was “John Dewey’s Life and Philosophy.” In this memorable session, Han-Yong Im (1914-1986), who had performed an important role in bringing about the existence of this organization as interim president, delivered a lecture regarding Dewey. Im studied with William Kilpatrick at Columbia University from 1946 to 1952 through the help of James E. Fisher, who was then a professor of Yon-Se University in Korea and the educational advisor in the American military administration. Furthermore, educators, including Chun-Suk Oh and Han-Yong Im, started to hold an annual John Dewey memorial lecture in the honor of Dewey and his works since June 1954.

Therefore, it was the unique condition of the U.S. military administration that allowed those who studied with Dewey or his admirers in America and who could

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5 In 2007, the English name of the society was changed to “Korean Educational Research Association.”

6 James E. Fisher studied at Columbia in 1920s and obtained his Ph.D. in the study of Dewey. As a missionary, he came to Korea and taught pedagogy and psychology at Yon-Hee College for 17 years. Professor Fisher was forced to return to the U.S. at the end of Japanese control, but, after the independence, he came back to Korea again as an educational advisor in the American military administration. According to Han Young Im (1977), Fisher introduced Dewey’s philosophy of education in his book, *Democracy and Mission Education in Korea* (1925) (see John Dewey’s Life and Ideas, Seoul: BaeYoungSa, p. 335).

7 Dewey died in June 2nd, 1952 at the age of 92.
communicate in both English and Korean language to hold important positions at government or universities in Korea. This unusual historical circumstance was the most crucial factor in bringing Dewey’s educational philosophy in Korea. From its genesis through the 1950s, Dewey scholarship in Korea was mostly centered on introducing Dewey and his general ideas to Korean educators and teachers. What the Korean professor expatriates attempted was to relate Dewey’s thought on democratic education to Korea. During this period, the journal titled “New Education” came into existence. First published in 1948, the time when it was still under the control of the American military administration, this publication had played an important role for spreading Dewey’s philosophy of education nationwide. As a result, Dewey’s educational thought was not only heard and read broadly by Korean educators and teachers, but a “Dewey Boom” occurred in Korean education, especially elementary schools, with the emphasis on child-centered education.

The Dewey boom came to an end in the 1960s when Korean elementary education was radically expanded, post-Korean war ideology was infused with education, and academic advancement through entrance examination was initiated. In the 1970s, along with the nationalism prevailing in the Korean society, there was also a strong attitude regarding the dependence of Korean political and social sciences on western knowledge. Especially, in 1972, Chung-Hee Park, who was then the president of South

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Korea, declared in a national conference for educators the need for the Korean way of education and democracy. In addition, educators, whether Deweyans or not, began to realize that Dewey’s thought influenced the new education movement with little critical examination or analysis.  

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Deweyan educators emphasized the merits of Dewey’s influence on Korean democratic education, whereas detractors gave harsher critiques, claiming that the new education movement since 1945 had failed due primarily to Deweyan educational ideals. The critics of Dewey argued that under the educational philosophy of Dewey, students were led away from intellectual development and students began to lose the Korean sense of virtue, ignore Korean tradition, and became egocentric. Chun-Suk Oh welcomed these criticisms as a sign of healthy democratic society, and was assuring others that “they are the result of our misunderstanding, misreading, and ignorance concerning the true ideas of Dewey… In Korean education, there are few who truly know Dewey and his thought.”

In reaction to this criticism, there were efforts of Deweyan scholars in higher education to use this challenge as an opportunity to study Dewey and his philosophy of education to in more depth. For instance, the John Dewey Club was started in May 1968 by some educators aiming for a deeper understanding of Dewey’s works. In its monthly

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11 Ibid.

12 See Han-Young Im, 1968, *듀우이 교육사상의 연구* (*Examination on Dewey’s Philosophy of Education*), Seoul: Minjungseokwan, p. 6.
meeting, Korean Dewey scholars attempted to read Dewey’s original works such as *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), *Experience and Nature* (1925), and *Freedom and Culture* (1939) and presented their understanding of Dewey in the purpose of encouraging further discussion and debate.\(^\text{13}\) In the same year, the society brought Sidney Hook (1902-1989),\(^\text{14}\) head of the department of philosophy at New York University, to Korea. During this meeting, professor Hook gave a lecture titled “The Philosophy of Dewey and the Freedom of Intellectual Knowledge.” Moreover, it was during this period that another two important educators, Bong-Mok Park (1968) and Jae-Man Kim (1974), joined Dewey scholarship in Korea. While the former earned his master’s degree at Columbia University and his Ph.D. at New York University, the latter received his Ph.D. from Hiroshima University at Japan. They both played a major role in the establishment of The Society for Korean Philosophy of Education in 1977, which has been serving, since then, as an important forum for both the field of educational philosophy and the study of Dewey.

In short, encountering increasing criticism caused by the rise of nationalism under the dictatorial rule of Chung-Hee Park administration (1961-1979), Deweyan scholarship in Korea was also by and large stagnant throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In such circumstances, there were efforts, among Deweyan educators, to overcome these circumstances by investigating Dewey’s ideas and its effect on Korean education in a

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\(^\text{13}\) Ibid., p. 337-338.

\(^\text{14}\) Sidney Hook was a student of Dewey and earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1927. He was a prominent philosopher, especially regarding pragmatism.
more critical way. Additionally, it was during this time that educators not only became interested in Dewey’s conception of “pragmatism” and “experience” but also attempted to compare Dewey with other philosophers such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Herman H. Horne, Karl Jaspers, and Confucius.

It should be noted that, surprisingly, despite pervasive criticism of Dewey, the majority of educators in Korea then considered Dewey to be the most important educational philosopher affecting Korean education since 1945. According to the

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documentation of Bong-Mok Park, in 1976, 79% of teachers, among 436 teachers of both elementary and secondary schools, responded that future education in Korea should follow a Deweyan model of education. They believed this influence would continue. Notwithstanding this fact, Dewey’s influence on Korean educational practice remained marginal. Perhaps this was due to the Korean teachers’ limited understanding of Deweyan ideologies, and also the result of selective applications of his thought to Korean schools through emphasizing instructional methods over philosophical purposes.  

Another obstacle came from the strong influence of traditional Confucian thought in Korea. For example, Confucianism teaches that individual needs and ideas should be made subservient to the needs and aspirations of the group, or nation as a whole.

In the last three decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in Dewey’s philosophy and its significance for modern Korean schools and education, especially along with changes in Korean society such as the increasing popularity of democracy, individual rights, and education equality since the 1987 civilian uprising. At the same time, both the sharp increase in the number of colleges and graduate schools and the beginning of Korea’s universities in producing scholars with doctorates in the 1980s has resulted in a significant increase regarding the study of Dewey. Especially, at this time,

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20 Some argue that these problems are responsible for those educators in Korea who studied Dewey’s ideas in the United States but did not bring them correctly into Korea. See Bong-Mok Park, 1987, ‘듀이 사상이 해방후 한국교육발전에 미친 공과에 대한 비판적 연구’ (Critical Examination on the Influence on John Dewey’s educational philosophy on Korean Education Since 1945), Philosophy of Education, 5, p. 45-69.

the establishment of graduate schools of education and their expansion in many higher educational institutions caused teachers to further their education. This also led to more scholarship focused on Dewey and his works.23

Moreover, since the early 1990s, there has been support for the “open education” movement, which grew steadily during the Presidential Administration of Young-Sam Kim (1993-1998), whose administration began after the termination of more than 30 years of military government. In the midst of this new movement, there was Don-Hee Lee (1937- present), a prominent Deweyan educational philosopher who influenced educators to learn more about “open education.” For example, when Lee became both a member of education reform committee sponsored by the Young-Sam Kim administration in 1994 and then the President of the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)24 in 1995, he assisted school teachers in their study of this movement. Furthermore, Don-Hee Lee became the Minister of Education during the administration of Dae-Jung Kim (1998-2003), South Korea’s President following Young-Sam Kim, from 2000 to 2001. Under Lee’s leadership, the current (seventh) educational curriculum, unlike the curricula of the past, strongly emphasizes the importance of individual students’ talent, aptitude, and creativity in primary schools.25 Before he took these


23 Graduate School of Education was first started in 1963 at Seoul National University, followed by other National Universities. But, the numbers of students remained small throughout the 1960 and 1970s.

24 KEDI works for the South Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. It conducts research in the field of educational goals and methods, creating policy solutions.

25 The seventh curriculum was introduced in 1997, was initially applied to primary 1st and 2nd grade students in 2000, and was gradually expanded to the 12th grade students in 2004.
important government positions, he worked as a professor in philosophy of education at Seoul National University, and was later the Dean of the College of Education. He studied at Wayne State University, obtaining his Ph.D. in philosophy of education and wrote his Dissertation on Dewey and his ideas. This influential Deweyan educator is currently serving as Vice-Chairman of the “Presidential Education Advisory Committee” that helps formulate long-term polices on education, science, and technology.26

Previously (2003-2008) he had been the Principal of the Korean Nation Leadership Academy, arguably the country’s most well-known private high school, where open education is practiced.

With respect to Dewey scholarship, there has also been significant progress, over the past three decades, in its specialization and diversification as well as its increase in quantity.27 In the 1980s, particularly along with the inception of doctorate programs and the extension of graduate school of education in Korea’s universities, the studies of Dewey’s ideas in Korea became varied and systematic. The general themes of Dewey studies, during this period, includes “moral education,” “educational aim,” “educational value,” “knowledge,” and “subject teaching.”28 The Korean research streams of Dewey’s educational philosophy have become more brisk since the 1990s.29 This is not only

26 In 2008, the new government in South Korea combined the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Science and Technology and named it the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology.


28 For the detailed publication information, see Myung-Hak Lee, 2001, Trends in the Studies of Dewey’s Educational Thought in Korea, Master’s Thesis, Sung Kyun Kwan University, p. 72-73.
because scholars engaged in Dewey’s philosophy of education have been increasing in number, but also the works of Richard Rorty (1931-2007), an important philosopher of the latter half of the twentieth century, who influenced Korean philosophers of education as well as American counterparts to interpret Dewey in new ways of thinking.\(^{30}\) As a result, scholars in Korea after the 1990s have made diverse attempts to study Deweyan thought including aesthetic features, neo-pragmatism, transaction, qualitative thinking and ecological perspective. Furthermore, along with Koreans’ increasing interest in lifelong education, Dewey’s conception of experience and growth has been subject to reinterpretations.\(^{31}\)

**Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first is to show that there is a crisis of authority in contemporary Korea. The second is to show that Dewey’s ideas of authority are especially applicable to contemporary South Korean education. While renewed attention given to Dewey by South Korean educators has produced much in the way of a generalized understanding of his work, little has been said specifically about the value of his thought as it pertains to authority within specific cultural constraint in Korea. This study will attempt to rectify this situation.


\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 53.

Given where South Korea seems to be headed educationally and culturally today, the results of this research would be useful for dealing with problems faced by the South Korean Ministry of Education and other agencies who decide educational policy in South Korea. Moreover, the study would be helpful for educators, not only in understanding the problems of moral education, given the crisis of traditional authority in the South Korea, but, also, in assisting students to be moral and ethical human beings. Beyond these benefits, I believe there is value in considering how Dewey’s ideas hold when applied to countries outside of the United States, such as South Korea.

**Content and Methods of the Dissertation**

In chapter two, I first address the crisis in contemporary Korean society. In so doing, I discuss, in part with empirical data, significant cultural changes Korea is currently experiencing. This analysis consists of two major parts: the June democratic uprising in 1987 and the rise of civil society, and the 1997 economic crisis and the increase of individualism (e.g., lay-offs and the introduction of meritocracy in financial and corporate institutions, income disparity and family disintegration). Then, I argue that this changing culture during the recent decades presents educational problems in contemporary Korea.

In Chapter three, I philosophically examine Dewey’s views on authority. This philosophical analysis will be focused on his major books including *Authority and Social Change* (1936), *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), *The Public and Its Problem* (1927), *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), and *Individualism Old and New* (1930). During the process of critically reviewing his arguments, I explore how Dewey reconciled the
conflict between authority and freedom as well as analyze how he understood the problem of authority itself. Dewey argues that the problem of authority arises because of the assumption that authority is incompatible with freedom. His position is that this assumption is unwarranted and that we need to understand how these two concepts arise together within experience. I discuss how Dewey’s solution to the problem of authority rejected nineteenth-century classical (laissez-faire) liberalism and led him to reconstruct a liberal democratic theory.

In Chapter four, I discuss what significance Dewey’s view of authority might have on education, generally, and schools, more specifically. In particular, I examine how Dewey’s notions of “authority” manifest themselves in his conception of education in his important educational books such as Democracy and Education (1916), Experience and Education (1938), The School and Society (1900), and The Child and The Curriculum (1902).

In Chapter five, I explore, by using Dewey’s ideas of authority, what Korean education should do about the crisis of authority. In this process of presenting the Deweyan account of the solution, I intend to analyze three important educational problems in contemporary Korea such as a lack of moral education, the extremes of education fever, and a clash between the new education system based on liberal democratic values and traditional education based on Confucian values. I then offer my views on what Korean educators stand to learn from Dewey (e.g., the idea of integration between authority and freedom, elevating intelligence to the status of authority, and democracy as a means and ends of education), not only to assist them with current
education problems, but also by providing deeper insight into how his philosophies will assist the redevelopment of Korean life.
CHAPTER 2
CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

There is a Crisis in South Korea

Since the late 1980s, South Korea has been undergoing a transition toward a liberal democracy from severe authoritarian government. In fact, the blessings of democratic politics in South Korea have come at a price such as the June 1987 democratic movement. In the second half of the twentieth century, South Korea experienced a number of significant historical events that led its society and people to face changes and crisis. It began with the Korean War (1950-1953), which made Korea remain into two political entities: North Korea and South Korea. For Koreans, as much as the liberation from Japan in 1945 was joyful, the war between North and South and the presence of two separate governments since 1948 was painful. Following the war, president Syng-Man Rhee (1945-1960), who had a strong anticommunist ideology and was thus propped up by the United States\(^\text{32}\), could maintain his power throughout the 1950s. However, the Rhee’s increasingly authoritarian and coercive rule\(^\text{33}\), the

\(^{32}\) Rhee spent 30 years in the United States during Japanese rule, along with having Western educational experiences such as Masters Degree at Harvard and Ph.D. from Princeton University.

performance failure of post-war economic reconstruction\textsuperscript{34}, and more decisively, the 1960 presidential election fraud\textsuperscript{35} caused the April Student Revolution in the same year that eventually led to the fall of the Rhee regime and the establishment of parliamentary democracy by Prime Minister Chang Myon (1960-1961). Chang Myon’s nascent democratic government shortly ended when Chung-Hee Park, a military general, took over power via the May 16\textsuperscript{th} Coup d’état in 1961.\textsuperscript{36} Under the Park’s dictatorship, democracy in South Korea suffered much for the next two decades. The military elite administration oppressed civilians and their political freedom, demanding unity in order to achieve economic growth as well as to defend the country from the threats by North Korea, The climax of Park’s military regime was the imposition of the Yushin (revitalizing reform) Constitution in 1972, which enabled the president to hold office for life and outlawed all political activities that may prevent such a circumstance. The Yushin system of Jung-Hee Park came to an end when he was assassinated by one of his closest associates, the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) on October 26\textsuperscript{th} 1979.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{34} For detailed information, particularly in the contrast to North Korea, see Pong Lee, 1972, An Estimate of North Korea’s National Income, \textit{Asian Survey,} 12(6), pp. 518-526; The Bank of Korea, 1962, \textit{Economic Statistics Yearbook}, Seoul, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{35} See David W. Reeves (1963), \textit{The Republic of Korea}, London: Oxford University Press, p. 49.


While the country was encountering political and social turmoil right after Park’s assassination, a group of military officers under General Doo-Whan Chun (1980-1988) leadership seized control both of the army through the December 12th Coup in 1979 and of the country through the May 17th Coup in 1980. The newly established military regime ruthlessly suppressed the May 18th popular uprising in the city of Gwangju, which called for an immediate end to their illegitimate rule, and massacred a huge number of citizens by using the armed forces. After the bloody repression of the Gwangju uprising, Chun’s military was able to take total political power with little resistance, suffocating the development of democracy. In the mid-1980s, however, there was a growing movement that resisted Chun’s authoritarian regime, not only by opposing politicians but also civil society groups such as college students, labor and farmers’ unions, and religious groups. Notwithstanding there were some basic ideological and strategic differences among these various opposition forces, they shared an important common objective to end military dictatorship. In particular, these democratization forces became further united and formed the National Coalition for a Democratic Constitution (NCDC) as the Chun administration suspended their proposal, a constitutional amendment for direct presidential election system, in an abrupt announcement on April 13th in 1987.


39 In the Gwangju uprising that lasted for 10 days until May 27, 154 people were killed, 3310 were injured, and 74 were missing. With those involved being arrested and detained, the total number of victims for the uprising reaches to 5,063 people. See June Democratic Uprising Memorial Foundation and Korea Democracy Foundation, 2007, vol. 1, p. 114.

Eventually, on June 10th 1987, under the leadership of the NCDC, the historic civic protest that brought about a critical momentum with regard to the development of South Korean democracy began soon after a disclosure to the general populace by Father Seung-Hun Kim of the Catholic Priests Association for Justice that the Chun regime and their authorities tried to conceal the truth about the torture death of student activist Jong-Chul Park.\textsuperscript{41} Despite police repression, the demonstration spread rapidly throughout the country with significant public support and participation until late June, demanding a new democratic constitution with popular election of the president and the resignation of the Chun government.\textsuperscript{42} Confronted such a tremendous internal opposition movement and also along with international situations\textsuperscript{43} such as US’s support for South Korea’s democratization and the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the Chun’s military regime moved toward making democratic concessions, instead of taking further strong reactions in order to ensure their unitary control. More specifically, the Chun administration came to accept the June 29 Declaration made by Roh Tae-Woo, then the presidential candidate of the ruling party, who promised key democratic reforms that include a constitutional amendment for a popular presidential election, a peaceful transfer of power after the 1988 fair and open presidential election, the release of political prisoners, protection of human


\textsuperscript{42} During the uprising that lasted for 20 days until June 29\textsuperscript{th}, millions of citizens actively participated at this democratic movement, shouting “Abolish the Evil Constitution!” and “Down with Dictatorship!”

rights, freedom of the press, and local autonomy and self-governance. Since the June 1987 national uprising, South Korea has developed into a stable and successful democratic state and its society has been going through irreversible changes.

The June Democratic Uprising in 1987 and the Rise of Civil Society

One of the main beneficiaries of the 1987 political liberalization in South Korea has been the emergence of civil society and its continued development. Until the late 1980s, especially under nearly three decades of military regime, civil society was thoroughly controlled by the state. In order to exist and survive as legitimate entities, civil or social organizations had to submit themselves to the military authoritarian regime. Despite such difficult circumstances, advocacy and opposition groups, which promoted justice, democracy, and human rights, were still present even if they had to be waged in the illegal arena. As illegal bodies, these civil-democratization groups and their activities became severely repressed, thus risking the lives of those who participated in.

Following the success of the powerful popular movement in the June 1987, however, South Korea witnessed a dramatic expansion of civil society, not only in its political space but, more importantly, in its role.

After the June 29th declaration of democratization, political leaders moved to amend the constitution that eventually resulted in the promulgation of the new democratic

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constitution with direct presidential election system on October 29th. It should be noted that notwithstanding democratization movement forces’ anticipation to win the upcoming popular election of the president, which was held in December 16th, they lost the election due to the sharp regional split of two prominent opposition leaders, Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung. According to the result, Roh Tae-Woo, a key player in Chun’s coup and authoritarian rule, won the election with only 36.6 percent of the popular vote, while Kim Young-Sam received 28.1 percent and Kim Dae-Jung 27.0 percent.46 The emergence of the Roh Tae-Woo administration, which was the eventual conclusion of the 1987 June popular uprising, seemed to dim the prospect of further democratic reform and the development of civil society in South Korea.47 In fact, these concerns perceived by those who had a passion for the birth of civilian government were not completely incorrect. Although the Roh Tae-Woo government was legitimately elected, they continued to repress militant student and labor movements, rather than engaging in genuine discussion of their interests and demands. Nonetheless, after the June democratic transition, the political environment of South Korea was not the same as previous dictatorial regimes. Under the amended constitution, not only was the exercise of the state’s arbitrary power substantially weakened, but political parties and civil society groups now began to enjoy their lawful freedom of the existence and movement they lacked during the former

46 For more detailed information of the 1987 presidential election, see Sung-Joo Han, 1988, South Korea in 1987: The Politics of Democratization, Asian Survey, 28(1), p. 52-56.

47 Most scholars consider Rho’s administration as continuity of the military rule even though it was established by the popular vote. See San-Jin Han, 2001, Modernization and the Rise of Civil Society: The Role of the “Middling Grassroots” for Democratization in Korea, Human Studies, 24, p. 113; Seung-Sook Moon, 2002, Carving Out Space: Civil Society and the Women’s Movement in South Korea, The Journal of Asian Studies, 61(2), p. 474.
authoritarian governments of Park Jung-Hee and Chun Doo-Hwan. In such a circumstance, the political system became more open, freer and was built by strong popular support. Voluntary civil organizations came to be more autonomous and thus actively promoting political awareness and participation to general public for the protection of their own rights and interests.

With the rise of democratic atmosphere in South Korean society, one notable change that occurred was the dramatic expansion of the nation’s non-governmental organizations (NGOs). According to the 1997 Directory of Korean NGOs, 56 percent of them were founded in 1987 and thereafter, which shows an intimate relationship between democratization and the development of NGOs in South Korea. As a matter of fact, while democratic transition since the late 1980s had a great impact on the proliferation of NGOs, the latter was also helping to consolidate South Korean democracy in a meaningful way. For instance, the surge of NGOs, under Roh Tae-Woo’s pseudo-democratic regime (1988-1992), enabled middle class citizens that include white-collar workers, professionals, religious leaders, and intellectuals to create and increase their political clout on democratization reform. As a result, the old social movement groups such as blue-collar workers, peasants, and student activists, who played a crucial role in the retreat of the Chun’s authoritarian regime and the democratic transition of 1987, were gradually weakened in their influence and replaced by the educated and empowered middle class citizenry. The transition from the former to the latter has had a significant effect on the ongoing process of democratization in South Korea. Civil

society organizations, through the emergence of the middle class citizen as the crux of new democratic movement, have become more structured and stable in their activities, more focused on gradual institutional reforms, and more reliable on peaceful, legal, and non-violent strategies in achieving their goals. In consequence, these new civil society groups not only helped strengthen and deepen socio-political stability for the newly democratized state but also contributed to preventing military intervention in politics.

Another major development in South Korean civil society occurred when the Kim Young-Sam’s first civilian government since the 1961 military coup was installed in February 1993. As a matter of fact, the emergence of the Kim Young-Sam administration made the civil society groups to be skeptical of their sincerity about further democracy reform, due to the way Kim had reached the presidency. In 1990, Kim Young-Sam, a longtime oppositionist, joined a new ruling DLP (Democratic Liberal Party) through an unexpected merger of three-parties, President Roh Tae-Woo’s DJP (Democratic Justice Party), Kim Jong-Pil’s NDRP (New Democratic Republican Party) and his RDP (Reunification Democratic Party). This three-party merger resulted in Kim Dae-Jung’s PPD (Party for Peace and Democracy) as the only opposition political force. Thanks to the extreme regionalism, on December 18, 1992, Kim Young-Sam, as the candidate of the ruling party, won the presidential election with 42 percent of the popular vote, while


50 Jong-Seok Woo, 2007, Security Threats and the Military’s Domestic Political Role: A Comparative Study of South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Indonesia, Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas, p. 182-183.

Despite considerable suspicions from civil society groups, Kim Young-Sam, during his presidency (1993-1998), actively attempted to move toward democratic consolidation. Particularly, in the earlier years of the regime, President Kim’s reform efforts were somewhat remarkable and, thus, surprised both various movement participants and common citizens. For instance, shortly after his inauguration in 1993, President Kim Young-Sam publicly disclosed his personal assets in the slogan of the “Creation of the New Korea,” and all major government officials and politicians followed suit. The disclosure led to the rigorous evaluation of the Board and Inspection, and the investigation turned out that several of his initial cabinet members were forced to resign as the public was aware of the connection between the accumulation of their wealth and their improprieties during the previous military rules. The interrogation of the Board ended with the arrest and dismissal of more than 3,000 public officials for their engagement in illegal and immoral conduct.\footnote{Sun-Hyuk Kim, 1997, State and Civil Society in South Korea’s Democratic Consolidation: Is the Battle Really over? \textit{Asian Survey}, 37(12), p. 1140-1141.} Subsequent to this event, president Kim implemented not only mandatory public disclose requirements for government officials...
but also the real-name financial transaction system in order to erode the intimate ties between business and politics.\(^5^3\)

While Kim’s administration was progressing in their fight against the corruption, civil society groups were also continuing their movement for various socio-political reforms. As a prominent example of these, in 1994, the Korea Council of Citizens’ Movements (KCCM), which originally consisted of thirty-eight social movement groups, was formed in order to build communication and cooperation between different civil society groups for effective societal development in South Korea. The interests of the KCCM, representing a variety of movement groups such as the Citizen’s Coalition for Economic Justice, Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, Lawyers for a Democratic Society and the Korean Women’s Associations United, were over almost all areas of social and political life. These participating groups have had specific goals in the context of ethical and legal boundaries and soon have come to exercise a great influence on Korean political affairs. For instance, under the nationwide network of the KCCM, reform-minded lawyers sought to create an independent prosecution and watch power abuse in the judiciary while women’s groups advocated for the equality of rights between men and women under the law.\(^5^4\) Another important civil society movement has been the establishment of People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) in 1994. The


PSPD was founded not only to monitor the abuse of power in the government and national assembly but to promote the participation of the people in national politics. They also worked to create communication and understanding between NGOs and the mass movements. Placing emphasis on participatory democracy, they have been involved in bringing justice and human rights to various areas in Korean society such as economics, social welfare, labor, and education. As a result of these collective efforts, civil society in South Korea has become more vibrant, and the power of society has been substantially augmented.

Moreover, witnessing the genuineness of Kim Young-Sam’s government on democratization efforts, civil society groups tried not only to distance themselves from the old way of violent street demonstrations but, more importantly, to work together with the state to normalize the state-civil society relationship. With such changes in their relationship with the state, civil society groups expanded the scope of their influence on the government to bring about further democratic consolidation. Particularly, they called for the prosecution of those who participated in the past military coups and brutal suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations and movements. With both the pressure of civil society groups and strong approval of the general public, President Kim ordered the trial for two former presidents, Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo. Found guilty of not only treason and massacre but also the billions of the ill-gotten money during their rule, Chun and Roh were imprisoned in 1996. The imprisonment of two former general-turned-presidents represented not only the highest point of civil society under the Kim Young-Sam government but the liquidation of the authoritarian past. By making a clear-
cut break from the authoritarian past, South Korea and its people came to embrace democracy as the only political game in town.55

In the next liberal governments led by Kim Dae-Jung and Rho Mu-Hyun, the development of civil society in South Korea was escalated as democracy system was further consolidated. The establishment of Kim Dae-Jung’s government in 1998 was a historical event in South Korean democracy because it was the first peaceable regime change by a democratic opposition party.56 In addition, Kim Dae-Jung was the first president from the Jeolla region, located in the southwest of Korea that had been relatively neglected and underdeveloped, due in part to discriminatory policies of the past presidents. During his presidency (1998-2003), Kim Dae-Jung, a long-time resolute and indefatigable proponent of democracy, achieved remarkable progress on the inter-Korean relations and human rights improvement.57 President Kim’s administration called for the peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas, instead of pushing for unification, and thus engaged in communication, exchange, and cooperation with North Korea. To the surprise of many observers, Kim Dae-Jung’s engagement strategy toward the North, the so called “sunshine policy,” brought about the June 2000 summit between the leaders of North and South Korea.58 Under Kim’s leadership, human rights in South Korea have


56 As mentioned before, despite the fact that Kim Young-Sam was previously a prominent opposition leader, he ran, and won, in the 1992 presidential elections, as the candidate of the ruling party, after merging his party with Roh Tae-Woo’s party in 1990.

57 For his promotion of democracy, peace, and human rights in Korea, Kim Dae-Jung was recognized worldwide with the Novel Peace Prize that was awarded in December 2000.
also been improved to a significant degree as exemplified in the foundation of the National Human Rights Commission, particularly in terms of promoting freedom of expression and gender equality. In order to make Korea a fairer and more just society, Kim Dae-Jung’s government energetically attempted to remove some of the detrimental aspects prevailing in South Korean society such as anticommunism and regionalism.

When the democratic movement of the progressive regime has been continuously strong and steady, the Korean civil society has flourished and its role has become more important. Particularly, since the enactment of the Non-Profit Organization Supporting Law in 1998, there has been a swift increase in the establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). According to the 2006 Comprehensive Survey of South Korean Non-Government Organizations, during the Kim Dae-Jung government, the number of NGOs jumped from 1,235 in 1999 to 3,937 in 2002. Taking advantage of its positive nurturing relationship with the state, civil society has actively engaged in a critical examination of government policies on various socio-political and economic issues. Based on their careful assessment of current national policies, civil society groups have worked to formulate and offer viable policy alternatives to the state, aiming to bring about a cultural transformation and rebirth of South Korea. Therefore, it was during the administration of Kim Dae-Jung that, along with the tremendous growth of civil organizations and their constructive engagement with the state, the principle of rationality


began to appear at the center of government leadership rather than traditional private networks such as blood, regional, and school ties.

During the subsequent Roh Moo-Hyun government (2003-2008), civil society continued to grow and play a vitally important role in South Korea’s democratic consolidation. The emergence of the Roh Moo-Hyun administration was quite notable in Korean politics, since it signaled the arrival of a new generation of leadership. President Roh, a human rights lawyer and advocate for student activists before entering politics, appointed the key members of his cabinet from a younger generation of intellectuals and political activists. Most of these new leaders were former student activists and dissidents who attended university during the 1980s democratic movement and turned to politics after the transition of democratization. Unlike the older generation, the younger generation was by and large perceived by the public “as having fresh ideas and as being less tainted by corruption.”60 Under the slogans of “participation government” and “power to the people,” the liberal government of Rho Moo-Hyun had embarked on carrying out democratic reforms that would have been unimaginable during the previous presidencies. In particular, his ongoing effort to take a further exit from the authoritarian past was quite radical. For instance, Roh, unlike previous presidents, not only met with a variety of social groups throughout his term in the emphasis on inclusivity, consensus, and negotiation, but also he often tried to make a speech to help improve the communication between the government and citizens. The live interactive conversation with young prosecutors immediately after his inauguration, which was broadcast

nationwide, was especially perceived by the public as an antiauthoritarian and
communicating president. In addition, the cabinet of Roh Moo Hyun worked on inside
government reform efforts, particularly releasing several departments and agencies, such
as National Intelligence Service, Prosecutors’ Office, and Police Department, that had
been considered to be the political instruments of presidential interests in past
administrations. Despite the harsh criticism of traditional mainstream elites and
politicians that the depoliticization of these organizations would bring about the absence
of authority in both the president and Korean government, Roh believed that his reform
would prevent the presidential power abuse and to make those organizations pursue their
proper roles by being public servants that may lead to a fully-fledged liberal democracy.
In this respect, political leadership in South Korea has become more open and democratic
under the Roh’s government.

While President Roh and his administration have tried to encourage more
inclusive, diverse, and open participation in political processes, there has been a veritable
explosion of civil society group activity. By and large, during the Roh Moo-Hyun’s
“participation government,” there appears to be two noteworthy characteristics in Korean
civil society movement. The first is the visible entrance of NGO leaders into government
service. The idea of recruiting NGO actors was not new and it was practiced in two
previous civilian administrations of Kim Young-Sam and Kim Dae-Jung. However, the
recruitment effort of the Roh administration is relatively notable for its breadth, depth,
and intensity. In particular, Roh Moo-Hyun government, along with the establishment of
a new position of Senior Secretary to the President for civil society in the Blue House,
has attempted not only to create “the favorable institutional environment for NGOs as
well as the cooperative relationship between the government and the NGO” but to recruit civil society leaders into government agencies.\textsuperscript{61} As a result, a number of civil society group actors have been appointed in the leadership of presidential office and other various national and regional government organizations and committees.

The second is the emergence of netizens (a blending of the words internet and citizen), perhaps more different and distinct from past administrations. In fact, the election of Roh Moo-Hyun in 2002 itself, thanks to Kim Dae-Jung government’s initiative and genuine effort on the technological development and the use of information technology,\textsuperscript{62} was the evident result of emerging power of netizens. More specifically, while the advanced information technology has allowed candidates to speak directly to citizens during the 2002 presidential election campaign, it has also promoted the creation of online community and its active participation. Nosamo, which literally means “gathering of people who love Roh Moo-Hyun,” is a prominent example of these. Nosamo, as a political group that communicate with one another largely over the internet, supported Roh throughout the presidential election as well as in the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) primaries, executing a wide range of his campaign activities. They made a special effort to create the participation of young voters, who are regular internet users, and encouraged young people to appreciate and accept their new responsibilities, especially by voting for the reform-minded Roh Moo-Hyun. Along with


\textsuperscript{62} For the description of the technological development and contributing factors to it during the Kim Dae-Jung administration, see Kyoung-Lim Yun, Hee-Jin Lee, and So-Hye Lim, September 2002, \textit{The Growth of Broadband Internet Connections in South Korea: Contributing Factors}, Stanford University Asia/Pacific Research Center.
the increasing influence of internet-based advocacy groups such as Nosamo, another important trend occurred around the 2002 presidential election campaign was that more people have begun to use online news service rather than major conservative newspapers in order to obtain political information. In such circumstances, on the election day, as the internet news showed that Roh Moo-Hyun of MDP was lagging behind Lee Hol-Chang of the Grand National Party, a former prominent supreme judge who fought against Kim Dae-Jung in the 1997 presidential election, Nosamo and other progressive online groups have urged young voters to cast their ballots for the candidate Roh by utilizing various electronic means such as emails and a mobile phone. The result of this last-minute online push that happened to increase the substantial rate of the young generation vote was a dramatic victory of the liberal underdog Roh Moo-Hyun, defeating Lee Hol-Chang, the more established and leading conservative political figure, by the margin of only 2.32 percent. Therefore, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that a new generation of young Koreans with internet exerted a surprising influence on the 2002 presidential election and made Roh Moo-Hyun president.

63 The number of Internet users increased from 366,000 in 1995 to 26,270,000 in December 2002. See Korea Insight, January 2003, 3; the best example of online news service was Ohmynews, which was founded in 2000. Under the motto “Every Citizen is a Reporter,” the featured articles in Ohmynews are mostly contributed by progressive and reform minded citizens. This online news website especially came into a national prominence during the 2002 South Korean presidential election due to its influence on the election of Roh Moo-Hyun. A few months after the election, Roh granted his first interview to Ohmynews. For the further examination on the role of Ohmynews in the election, see Daniel J. Kang and Laurel E. Dyson, Internet Politics in South Korea: the Case of Rohsamo and Ohmynews, 18th Australasian Conference on Information Systems, December 2007, Toowoomba.

64 Roh Moo-Hyun, then Millennium Democratic Party presidential candidate obtained 48.91% of total vote, while the Grand National Party candidate Lee Hol-Chang had 46.59% of the vote.

65 For further discussion on the role of internet and younger generation in the 2002 presidential election, see Heekyung Hellen Kim, Jae-Yun Moon, & Shin-Kyu Yang, 2004, Broadband Penetration and participatory Politics: South Korea Case, Proceedings of the 37th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences;
Undoubtedly, the victory of netizens in the 2002 presidential election has brought South Korea into a new stage of political development. Witnessing netizens’ power, politicians have begun to pay more attention to the electronic space by creating their homepages with decorative characters and thought-provoking ideas and making user-generated content. This internet politics has not only allowed politicians to speak directly to the citizens, but, more importantly, let the latter be more involved in political activities such as expressing their point of views in various aspects of public policy and attempting to debate with others. This new striking development in Korean politics has been continually expanded as the reformism government of Roh Moo-Hyun stressed the importance of both engaging citizens and further advancement of new information technology.\(^6^6\) The most conspicuous example with respect to the influence of online participatory citizens during the Roh’s term is probably the opposition to Roh’s impeachment in 2004. When the news that the National Assembly voted to impeach Roh Moo-Hyun for illegal electioneering and incompetence was revealed, public response was largely negative to the event, with a swiftly increasing sympathy for the president. Just a few hours after the vote, a general consensus that the impeachment move was politically motivated by opposition parties was formed by online communities and spread widely and rapidly to the public.\(^6^7\) This anti-impeachment public attitude soon led to

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\(^6^6\) As of 2005, 70 percent of all households are subscribing to broadband Internet that has made South Korea the most wired country in the world.

\(^6^7\) In November 2003, Roh, along with his supporters, left the Millennium Democratic Party in November of 2003 and formed the Uri Party, which is the third largest party with 47 seats out of 299 seats in the National Assembly. In such a situation, the Grand National Party, which possessed 144 seats, saw a chance
mass candlelight vigil demonstrations throughout the country, especially under the organizing leadership of Nosamo members who continually remained in the support of President Roh Moo-Hyun since the election. Certainly, citizens’ strong movement raised against the Assembly’s impeachment attempt has been influential on the decision of the court to restore Roh as president.

During the entire period of the Roh Moo-Hyun administration, online citizens have continually played active and sometimes vital roles in the process of policy-making by formulating public opinions. They, as an independent political force, have transformed the nature of South Korean civil society movement with greatly increased and swift collective action, which is demonstrated in a series of candlelight such as antiwar and anti-FTA demonstrations. In this regard, the internet media has brought citizens, the heart of democracy, into a new center of civil society in South Korea. Particularly it has empowered a new generation of youth, the so-called participatory (or democratic) generation, to act for meaningful social change. In short, it is during Rho Moo-Hyun government that active citizens with internet connections, combined with a viable state, appear to bring about vibrant democracy.

Notwithstanding the impressive progress of democracy, in part due to the rise of civil society over the previous two decades, South Korea is now experiencing an important challenge, which is polarization in its society and increased conflict. More precisely, contemporary South Korean society is sharply divided and fragmented than to impeach President Roh in a coalition with the Millennium Democratic Party 62 members in the Assembly who were angry with his behavior. Therefore, the impeachment led by Both GNP and MDP was seen to the public as a dangerous game that attempts to destroy an opponent, motivated by contentious and boss politics. For the further description on the impeachment of Roh Moo-Hyun, see Young-Jae Lee, spring 2005, Law, Politics, and Impeachment: The Impeachment of Roh Moo-Hyun from a Comparative Constitutional Perspective, *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 53(2), p. 403-432.
ever before according to socio-political ideology and interest.\textsuperscript{68} In particular, an intimate relationship between state and civil society during the past 10 years of progressive political leadership has created a strong adverse reaction among people with conservative ideas. A number of social conservative organizations have been formed especially in the backlash against the radical reform policy of Roh Moo-Hyun government.\textsuperscript{69} In this respect, whereas the nature of civil society in the past has been progressive in an opposition to military authoritarian rule, the recent one has been conservative in a reaction to the progressive.\textsuperscript{70} The upsurge of these conservative groups, by mobilizing anti-communist and pro-businesses sentiment among the older generation, in fact has caused Lee Myung-Bak, a conservative GNP candidate who was a former CEO of Hyundai company, to take over the presidency in 2008. Although the emergence of Lee’s administration may symbolize a consolidation of a mature South Korean democracy, this event has marked a sharp political division, “either conservative or progressive,” in both domestic and foreign policies in contemporary South Korea.\textsuperscript{71}

After his inauguration, President Lee Myung-Bak (2008-present) is making a clear break from the policies of Presidents Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun by adopting more


\textsuperscript{69} One important group of these was the New Right Union that advocated the advancement of liberalism, the rule of law, and globalization in the slogan of “the end the leftist power.”

\textsuperscript{70} Michael Richardson, 2007, Civil Society and State in South Korea, \textit{the SAIS U.S.-Korea Yearbook}, p. 165-176.

\textsuperscript{71} While conservatives tend to speak more in favor of a market-led approach, progressives support the rights of laborers and higher taxes for the riches. Perhaps, in a uniquely South Korean condition, the former advocate pro-U.S. and anti-North Korean policies, the latter tend to take more independent attitude toward the U.S. and be more sympathetic to the North.
pragmatic, competitive business-oriented approach to the governance.\textsuperscript{72} The political
difference and disagreement among current political parties is increasingly turning
toward extreme conflicts and divergence rather than striving for cooperation and
communication; South Korean civil society, which is deeply engaged in the political
sphere, is likewise. This political polarization in contemporary South Korea is further
aggravated by the fact that such split has been largely connected to an acute generational
gap between young and old.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{The 1997 Economic Crisis and the Increase of Individualism}

In addition to the democratization of 1987, another important event that
profoundly changed a modern Korean society and its people’s life was the 1997 financial
crisis, especially with respect to the problem of authority. While the 1987
democratization that resulted in the constitutional reform with a popular vote in
presidential elections was an important step toward dismantling authoritarianism, the
financial crisis of 1997 has almost forced South Korean society to shift away from its
past authoritarian way of life. Under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) trusteeship
and supervision, as the South Korean government and other various important
organizations, including private companies, financial institutions, and the labor sector, are
required to carry out drastic structural reforms in order to overcome the economic crisis,
there have also been significant changes in the everyday lives of South Koreans.

\textsuperscript{72} Sung-Ho Kim, 2008, Korea’s Conservative Strike Back: An Uncertain Revolution in Seoul, \textit{Journal of

\textsuperscript{73} See Sook-Jong Lee, 2005, Democratization and Polarization in Korean Society, \textit{Asian Perspective}, 29(3),
p. 99-125.
Until the Asian economic crisis that started in July in Thailand reached the
country in November 1997, South Korea was regarded as one of the East Asia’s
economic miracles. Following the total destruction of the nation during the Korean
War in 1950s, economic development certainly became a key priority for South Korea,
then one of the poorest nations in the world (per capita GDP of $100 in 1960). In such a
condition, the miraculous economic success in South Korea had come, ironically, due in
large measure to an authoritarian government tightly controlling the economy mixed with
the traditional Confucian principles which prevailed in society such as conformity,
discipline, industriousness, and hard work. Park Jung-Hee (1961-1979), after his
seizure of power in 1961, particularly focused on a chaebol (business conglomerate)-
oriented modernization that eventually led to quick economic results. Park and two
subsequent ex-general presidents, Chun Doo-Hwan (1980-1988) and Roh Tae-Woo
(1988-1993), alike often justified their authoritarian rule over South Korean society with
its capacity to produce rapid growth in economy. For 30 years, along with the ultimate
control over the business, South Korea’s military regimes were geared towards promoting
heavy industrialization, maximizing manufacturing exports, and protecting domestic
industries.


75 Regarding the entrenchment of authoritarianism in the state-led process of modernization during the
military regime, see Sook-Jong Lee, 1991, Political Liberalization and Economic Development in South
Korea, Korea Journal of Population and Development, 20(1), p. 77-100; Yong-Hee Han, 1986-87, Social
Control and Industrialization in Korea: On the Corporatist Control of Labor, Korea Social Science Journal,
13, p. 95-123; Norman Jacobs, 1985, The Korean Road to Modernization and Development, Urbana:
University of Illinois Press.

76 For detailed discussion on the Park Jung-Hee regime’s modernization strategy, See Hun-Joo Park, 2003,
When the Kim Young-Sam civilian government came to existence in 1993, he, as previously pointed out, energetically attempted to fight against corruption. President Kim’s anti-corruption campaign was not only to cut the longstanding ties between government and big business but to reform the “chaebol,” the business conglomerate that dominated the economy with authoritarian management since the 1960s. In addition, under the slogan of globalization, the Kim Young-Sam administration opened South Korea’s financial and capital market to the world economy and joined the WTO (World Trade Organization) in 1995 and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1996. By the mid-1990s, South Korea, along with Kim Young-Sam government’s drive towards economic liberalization, continued to garner international attention with a highly educated and skilled workforce and to be recognized as an important force—the world’s 5th largest manufacturer of automobiles and the largest producer of DRAM microchips—in the global economy.77

South Korea’s remarkable economic success was, however, not to survive the Asian financial crisis of 1997. When the Asian economic crisis affected South Korea through an acute foreign exchange shortage and stock market collapse in late 1997, it soon became apparent that the newly liberalized economy of the Kim Young-Sam government could not cope successfully with rapid market transitions and harsh winds of international competition.78 On November 24th, to get out of the sudden and severe

financial difficulties, the Kim Young-Sam administration asked for IMF assistance that eventually brought about $58 billion financial support from IMF in December, which was then the largest bailout package in history. In exchange for economic assistance, the Korean government had to follow the IMF’s structural reform agenda on the basis of a four-year stand-by arrangement, focusing on an aggressive implementation of liberal economic policies and increasing globalization of markets and products. In the midst of change, the Kim Dae-Jung government was established and the new government had little alternative but to carry out the IMF-mandated economic restructuring in order for the Korean economy to become more globally competitive. Over the course of these events, although South Korea has gradually recovered from the 1997 financial crisis through better-than-expected performance of the Kim Dae-Jung government on the structural economic reforms, its society has undergone substantial alterations not just in the economic sphere but in the moral and cultural spheres. More precisely, the 1997 financial crisis and the subsequent economic liberalization have led to a rise of individualism as the neo-liberal economic values that include the supremacy of free competition, material wealth, and survival of the fittest have increasingly permeated all major institutions and personal life of Korean society.79 On the other hand, there has

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been a profound erosion of traditional Confucian values in contemporary Korea. It is to this changing value structure that we now will turn to.

**Historical Background of Confucianism in Korea**

Confucian thought has been greatly influential throughout East Asia, in countries such as China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Confucianism is not a religion, but rather it is a system of relationships with a code of behavior that seeks to develop an ideal society. It stresses the importance of both personal morality and the proper behavior of government. It seeks to define how persons should live together in a productive and wholesome society. According to Confucius, there are five basic social relationships existing in human life: 1) father (kindness)/son (filial piety), 2) elder brother (gentility)/younger brother (humility), 3) husband (righteous behavior)/wife (obedience), 4) elder (consideration)/junior (deference), and 5) ruler (benevolence)/subject (loyalty). In each relationship, while the weaker or younger person submits to the stronger or older person, the stronger person is responsible for protecting the weaker one. Additionally, it can be observed that Confucius did not perceive the individual as an isolated entity, but

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rather as one surrounded by human relationships. In essence, Confucianism claims that there is no independent individual, but that each person is defined by his or her relationships with other people. The reciprocal give-and-take required by living in human society is necessary for the development of each individual; therefore correct adherence to this system leads to the attainment of true manhood. Such gentlemen were the purpose of Confucius’ teachings.

Confucianism, which espouses the value of hierarchy, collectivism and social harmony, has been a dominant ideology in Korea for many centuries, shaping every aspect of Korean lives. The history of Confucian tradition in Korea begins early in three ancient kingdoms (57 BC-AD 668). Because of the promotion of Confucian culture over native Korean culture during this period, Korean elites had a passion for Confucian classics. Although the Unified Silla (AD 668-935) and the Koryo (AD 918-1392) dynasties accepted Buddhism as their national religion, Confucian study had been present in both kingdoms as a major academic discipline. The reason was that while Buddhism was a religion in which Koreans sought both protection from outside threats and enlightenment in the present life, Confucianism was the source of basic principles for national politics.

Eventually, the great age of Confucianism arrived when the Choseon dynasty (1392-1910), the final dynasty to govern Korea, accepted it as its official philosophy. The ideal of the Choseon dynasty was to govern by Confucian virtue which is based upon

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83 The Three Kingdoms were Koguryo (37 BC – AD 668), in the north; Pakche (18 BC – AD 660), in the southwest; and Silla (57 BC – AD 935), in the southeast.

harmony with subjects and spreads virtue to the common people by example instead of imposing it with laws and rules. However, in reality, what it did was to create aristocratic bureaucrats who could lead the people but ended up only trying to keep their statuses and privileges. In particular, after the emergence of landowning elite called the Yangban, what remained during the Choseon dynasty was the Confucian relationship of ruler (superior) and subject (subordinate or inferior). While the Yangban were fervently anti-Buddhist and contributed to its decline, they also firmly adhered to the Confucian code for organizing society and using government to maintain order. Accordingly, the Yangban focused on sending their children, mostly sons, to Confucian schools so that they were able to follow Confucian beliefs and values and obtain higher government positions. In particular, Choseon required a rigorous National Civil Service Examination, Kwa-keo, in order to become a government official. Generally this exam, which was centered on numerous Chinese classics, was held only every third year, so


86 Chosen society was classified into three classes: Yangban (the ruling class), Pyungmin (the common people), and Sangnom or Cheonmin (the lower people or the mean people). For a detailed study of the Chosen Yangban, see James B. Palais, 1996, Confucian Statecraft and Korean Institutions, University of Washington Press.

87 One prominent school was Seongkyunkwan (National Confucian Academy), which was established in 1397 by King Taejo (1392-1398). This institution had only two hundred students so mainly its attendants were the offspring of aristocratic families who prepared to take the government examination, particularly Dae-kwa or Mun-kwa (Triennial Higher Examinations or Erudite Examinations). This elite higher institution taught Saseo (the Four Confucian Books) and O-Kyoung (the Five Chinese Classics), and its instructors spent their time to help students memorize and write. In spite of the tiresome study, Seongkyunkwan was a haven of Korean Confucianism and a dream of future civilian bureaucrats. Accordingly, the education in the Choseon dynasty, unlike the Confucian educational ideal, was reduced to being a tool for preparing students for the national examination, failing to help them in pursuing knowledge to achieve true manhood.
young men spent years studying in the Confucian academies to prepare for it. Although the common people were allowed to take the National examination and to become governing officers, they could rarely pass the exam due to not only the lack of availability to Confucian academies but also the extreme competitiveness of the exam. In addition, there was no public educational opportunity for women and/or Cheonmin (the “mean people”). Therefore, with the role of Confucian elite institutions and National examination, the Chosen Kingdom became a more and stricter authoritarian bureaucratic society; the Confucian value system became deeply rooted in the cultural soil of the Kingdom.88

The Confucian culture in Korea underwent some changes during both in the late 19th century and the period of Japanese occupation such as the termination of Kwa-keo examinations and the abolishment of legal class discrimination through the coercive influences of modernized Western societies and Japan.89 Moreover, following the World War II and U.S. military administration, South Korea, as an independent but divided modern state, began to adopt western democracy and capitalism that resulted in the assimilation of western values into Korean society. However, as a military regime from the early 1960s emerged in the mainstream of Korean politics, authoritarian Confucianism of Korea was quickly prevailed upon not only in their political rule but in their effort to modernize the economy and society.90 Under the objective of industrial


modernization led by ex-general presidents, it became the very principle that justified their harsh control over the human and material resources. At the same time, Confucian philosophy, which also stresses loyalty to collectivity, had made it easier for people in Korea to be more receptive and submissive to the authoritarian military power and governance with little question and strong devotion. In this regard, it was during the period of military government (1960s to the early 1990s) that the hierarchal relations of authority and subordination came to be a fundamental feature of a “modern” Korean life. Additionally, with the extensive emphasis on collectivism based on loyalty and filial piety, it was conceived that the power of the state was to be more cardinal than the rights of the individual; likewise, family and kinship ties and decisions took precedence over individual competences and preferences. Accordingly, in the mid-1990s, as stated by Koh Byung-Ik (1924-2004) who was then a leading Korean historian, “Korea is the most Confucian country in all of East Asia, more so even than Taiwan and mainland China.”

The Fracturing of Tradition under the Onslaught of Individualism

In October 1997, approximately one month before the Korean economic crisis, the prevailing opinions of the public, including the International Monetary Fund mission

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team, were that the fundamentals of the Korean economy were healthy.\textsuperscript{92} Even a few days before President Kim’s bailout request, his economic advisors had firmly asserted that Korea’s economic conditions, unlike other affected Asian countries such as Thailand and Indonesia, were too robust to fail.\textsuperscript{93} Therefore, as the Asian economic crisis reached Korea, especially with previously unseen widespread layoffs, it shocked the ordinary Koreans as well as the Kim Young Sam government.\textsuperscript{94} South Korea, known as one of the strongest of the “Asian Tigers” because of exponential economic growth and the success of the past 35 years, suddenly sank into a serious economic distress. While the crisis came as a surprise to many Koreans, it has had a much greater impact on Korean society as well as the economy. Going through the experience of the 1997 financial crisis and subsequent neoliberal reform, Korea has become a very different country than it was before the crisis. Korea has been undergoing profound cultural transformation of traditional Confucian values towards individualism of western values.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{92} During their visit in October, the IMF staff pointed out that Korea’s economy is fundamentally healthy despite a recent string of corporate bankruptcies. Further, it was projected that the economy of Korea would grow at a robust rate of 6.5 \% in 1998. See Korean Herald, October 16, 1997.


Impact of the Crisis on Financial and Corporate Institutions: Lay-Offs and the Introduction of Meritocracy

During the IMF era (1998-2001), among others, there have been two most conspicuous changes in the Korean workplace, which have greatly affected not only the conditions of the workplace itself but Korean society and lifestyle. First is an implementation of mass lay-off, especially in the financial and corporate institutions that have proved the necessity of restructuring by showing their inability to produce a more flexible labor market. Traditionally, Korean people regarded their workplace as an extension of home and family life in which Confucian ideas of reciprocal relationships and responsibilities were deeply engrained in it. That is, while employees are expected to work hard for the organizational goals and success and to be loyal to their employers, the latter was responsible for ensuring job security to the former as an action of paternal care. Therefore, both a company laying-off its workers and a worker leaving for his company has been “regarded as a betrayal of a fundamental obligation between employer and employee.”

This guaranteed employment system was sustained and further strengthened as the economy of Korea rapidly expanded for over the past three decades.

Lifetime employment, a major customary practice of Korean workplace culture, however, could not survive the economic collapse of 1997. This was particularly true in financial and corporate firms, where soon after the crisis entered into a serious bankruptcy and were asked to implement workforce reduction such as involuntary

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honorary retirement and lay-offs. For example, under the IMF-mandated restructuring plan, 14 banks and 631 financial institutions, which was equivalent to more than 30 percent of all such institutions in Korea, closed their businesses. Further, those institutions that survived were also forced to cut a significant number of their workers in a way of stabilizing their financial condition. For instance, within a year after the crisis began, Cho Hung Bank and Korea Exchange Bank were compelled to slash their number of workers, 3,649 out of 9,000 and 2,197 out of 7,420, respectively.

The corporate sector, another important area contributing to the crisis largely due to its high level of foreign debt, went through severe reform, including outright layoffs, in order to improve their efficiency and competiveness. The magnitude of the 1997 economic crisis in Korea was such that more than half of the top thirty conglomerates, or chaebol, which dominated the economy of Korea as its principle engine of growth and success since the early 1960s, became bankrupt. Moreover, the IMF-mandated structural reform forced the top five largest chaebols (Hyundai, Samsung, Daewoo, LG, and SK) to agree with the Korean government that they would focus on their core businesses in order to help to reduce overcapacity. Despite these recovery efforts, the IMF plan not only

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100 For example, while the average debt/equity ratio of the 30 largest conglomerates was 348 percent, it jumped to 519 percent on the eve of the 1997 crisis. Some conglomerates had more than 1,500 percent of dept/equity ratios, which eventually led them to become insolvent. See Andrew Eungi Kim, 2004, The Social Perils of the Korean Financial Crisis, *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 34*(2), p. 221-237.

101 For detailed information on the restructuring efforts of the top five conglomerates as well as small and medium sized ones, see Steven Radelet and Jeffrey D. Sachs, April 1999, *The Second Year of the Asian*
failed to rescue Daewoo, once the second largest chaebol in Korea, from financial crisis but also produced about 10 percent of mass layoff events at the top five chaebols groups. In the meantime, a Tripartite Commission, comprised of representatives from labor, business, and the government, legalized the implementation of layoffs, agreeing that a more flexible labor law is indispensable to overcome the economic crisis as well as to meet the IMF requirements for the rescue package. It is natural that the legalization of layoffs in 1998 allowed Korean management to more freely dismiss workers. Under the new layoff law, there was soon a strong trend increase in the Job unemployment rates. It dramatically increased from 2.1 percent in October 1997 to 8.6 percent in February 1999.

Second, another major change to the Korean workplace since the outbreak of the economic crisis in November 1997 has been the introduction of performance-based pay system. Before the IMF era, Korea’s pay system was strongly based on seniority. Following the financial crisis of 1997, however, the seniority pay system, like employment practices, has undergone significant changes as Korean management aggressively introduced the annual salary system, with increases linked to

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According to a survey from the Ministry of Labor, 32.3 percent of companies employing more than 100 workers adopted the annual salary system in 2002, whereas only 1.6 percent of such firms had such a system before the economic crisis. This trend was particularly strong in the troubled financial sector, where 53.5 percent of the institutions implemented the annual salary system. The number of adopting merit-based annual pay systems has continually increased in the Korean workplace. As of 2007, it was observed that 52.5 percent of the companies with more than 100 employees were practicing the new western-influenced salary systems, instead of the traditional age-graded seniority pay.

In short, in the wave of both financial crisis and the IMF-imposed economic restructuring, Korea’s longstanding practices of lifetime employment and seniority-based pay have been destabilized by the introduction of layoffs and meritocracy. In such a workplace in which a growing number of workers are to become flexible labor and a few are rewarded heavily for performance-based work, it is obvious that the traditional Confucian values such as harmony and cooperation is being replaced by the western neoliberal values such as efficiency and competition.

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108 Some industries have moved more forward with the performance-based pay system than others such as telecommunications (94%), food and accommodation (69%), and business support services (67%). With respect to job classification, 91% of managerial jobs were paid under performance-based pay, followed by 72% of clerical jobs. In addition, companies in public sectors (80%) were more likely to have such a salary system than companies in private sectors (47%). See Ministry of Labor, 2007, *Survey on the Pay System in 2007*, Korea.
The Social Impact of the Korean Economic Crisis: Income Disparity and Family Disintegration

The 1997 economic crisis has also had a profound impact on Korea’s social sphere. One of the most significant social impacts of the Korean crisis has been the polarizing trend of income inequality. Before the crisis of 1997, Korea was a relatively egalitarian society, especially as individual opportunities for economic prosperity were extremely limited and controlled under the thirty years of military rule. In 1994, it was observed that 70.7 percent of Koreans believed that they were part of the middle class. However, as the financial crisis affected widespread layoffs, closures of small businesses, and income decline, the number dramatically decreased to 45.1 percent in 1999.

In response to such a public outcry, the dominant public discourse during the IMF era was about “the disappearing middle class,” especially echoed by all the major Korea’s broadcast media. Although it was then disputable that the Korean middle class was really in the process of collapse, there was a general consensus that the income gap between rich and poor grew wider. In other words, the effect of the 1997 economic crisis on Korean population has been uneven. More precisely, whereas a large number of Koreans, including the vast majority of middle-class families, were suffering from the outright economic devastation; those who had more resources were able to increase their

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110 Joongang Daily, Jan. 2, 2006. This survey was jointly conducted by the Hyundai Economic Institute and the Joongang Daily News.

111 For more detailed discussions, see Doo-Seung Hong, 2005, The Middle Classes in Korea, Seoul: Seoul National University Press; Pal-Moo Yoo, Won-Dong Kim, and Kyong-Sook Park, 2005, The Collapse of the Middle Class and Class polarization, Seoul: Sohwa.
fortunes.\textsuperscript{112} According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office, the ratio of household income of the top 20 percent of the households to the income of the bottom 20 percent of the households soared from 4.49 percent in 1997 to 6.75 percent in 2000.\textsuperscript{113}

The problem of widening income inequality in Korea became more serious as the number of people living under the poverty line increased significantly. For example, as of 1999, the proportion of Korean households under the poverty line was 7.3 percent, jumping from 2.8 percent before the crisis.\textsuperscript{114}

In September 2001, Korea paid back the IMF loan three years ahead of schedule. The income inequality, however, has remained as a general trend in Korea. The IMF-imposed economic agenda, as previously discussed, has brought about significant changes in the Korean workplace such as the rise of the merit payment system and the decline of lifetime employment. Korea’s once family-like workplace has been replaced by layoffs, job insecurity, and greater competition among workers. Faced with this flexible and competitive labor environment, employees have become increasingly more self-centered, focusing on their own careers and welfares rather than providing blind loyalty to a company and employer.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{112} It was observed that 74 percent of non-poor families experienced real income declines due to the financial crisis. See Hagen Koo, 2007, The Changing Faces of Inequality in South Korea in the Age of Globalization, \textit{Korean Studies}, 31(7), p. 1-18.


\textsuperscript{114} For more detailed information on poverty in Korea after the crisis, see Jae-Eun Suk and Tae-Wan Kim, December 2002, \textit{Trends in Poverty and Income Distribution}, 74, p. 127-134; see also Dong-Chun Kim, 2000, \textit{Poverty in Korea Following the IMF Bailout}, Seoul: Nanam.

attempt to keep and recruit the most talented workers by the means of offering a more prestige and higher wage, the superior workers take advantage of this opportunity to generate greater material wealth while others experience forced layoffs and retirement or become temporary labor workers. As a result, Korea’s rich-poor income gap has grown wider than in most other industrialized nations.\textsuperscript{116} Clearly, the widening economic inequality between the haves and have-nots is an incontestable indication of cultural transition from a comparably strong egalitarian society to an individual-centered and profit-oriented society.

Another notable change in Korean society since the crisis of 1997 has been the disintegration of Korean family structure. Traditionally, the Korean culture has highly emphasized the importance of family life and its integrity. In particular, originated in the Confucian values, even until the crisis hit, a majority of Korean families had fathers as the sole breadwinner, resulting in a tremendous dependence on them for social activities as well as economic resources. Correspondingly, traditional role expectations for mothers were to show excellent performance in domestic labors that include producing a son for the succession of the family and being almost exclusively responsible for child care.\textsuperscript{117} In this society of rigid gender roles, it is obvious that the socio-economic responsibility of fathers provided them with a great deal of authority over their wife and

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{116} The Esteban & Ray index of income inequality placed the U.S. at .0833, Korea at .0665, Britain at .0653, and Japan at .0507. See Hyo-Sik Lee, 2006, \textit{South Korea’s Income Gap Wider than in Developed Countries}, Korea Times; see also Hyo-Sik Lee, 2008, \textit{Korea’s Income Gap 3rd Largest in OECD}, Korea Times.

children. In such a condition, divorce was widely considered to be socially unacceptable and shameful, especially for women, and thus affecting its practice to be difficult and remain infrequent.\textsuperscript{118}

The traditional cultural values of family, however, have been severely attacked by the economic crisis and subsequent IMF’s mandated neoliberal reform. As previously discussed, the substantial increase in unemployment and poverty during the IMF regime was very harsh on the average Korean family. In particular, it caused, to a great extent, the undermining of moral and economic leadership (or authority) of father/husband, the very core of Korean family structure. Due to Koreans’ much emphasis on fathers’ moral responsibility as economic providers, it occurred during the IMF era that many laid-off fathers left their home early “in their usual dark business suits, riding subways back and forth aimlessly, or going to nearby mountains to kill time because they could not face telling their families they had been laid off.”\textsuperscript{119} The economic hardship caused by the widespread layoffs has, after all, forced many Korean wives to find employment out of the home. Even after the end of the IMF era, as Korea has continually faced with the growing job insecurity and general economic uncertainty, families have become increasingly dependent on the earnings of wives in the labor market. With their

\textsuperscript{118} In fact, until the beginning of the 20th century, Korea had given the right of divorce only to the husband’s family. The husband could expel his wife with the following reasons, the so-called Seven Deadly Sins: failure to perform filial duties to parents-in-law, failure to produce a son, infidelity, jealousy, chronic disease, garrulity, and a habit of theft. Among these, disobedience toward her parents-in-law and not bearing a son were to be taken seriously. For more descriptive information, see K. S. Bae, 1973, \textit{Women and the Law in Korea}, Seoul: Korean League of Women Voters.

contribution to family income, Korean wives have become involved more actively in household decision while the authority of the husband and father has been attenuated.\textsuperscript{120}

Perhaps one of the most crucial evidences of Korean family dissolution since the crisis was the rapidly rising incidence of divorce. For example, divorce rate in Korea went up from 1.2 per 1,000 populations to 3.0 in 2002, being behind the United States’ rate of 4.2 but higher than in most developed countries including the United Kingdom (2.9), Sweden (2.4), Germany (2.3), France (2.0), and Japan (2.0).\textsuperscript{121} Several surveys conducted during or soon after the crisis further confirmed Korea’s changing attitude toward marriage and divorce, especially among the younger generation of women. According to a 2001 survey, approximately 65 percent of the respondents said that divorce is acceptable while more than 70 percent of respondents expressed that marriage is not an absolute necessity but a personal choice.\textsuperscript{122} Another study performed in 2002 reported that about 47 percent of single women responded that it is acceptable to remain to be single for life compared to about 24 percent of single men who expressed the same.\textsuperscript{123} Another notable example of the social impact of the Korean crisis regarding the disintegration of Korean family system, being particularly a close association with the new changes of marriage and divorce patterns in public, has been the consistent decline


\textsuperscript{122} Yang Jong-Hoe, 2008, Changing Values Cause Ideological Confusion, in Kim Kyong-Dong and The Korea Herald (Eds.) \textit{Social Change in Korea}, p. 94.

According to the Korea National Statistics Office, the total fertility rate in Korea declined to 1.54 in 1997, 1.42 in 1999, 1.17 in 2002, 1.16 in 2004, and 1.08 in 2005, making the nation to be in the lowest in the world. The postponement of marriage among the young women for higher educational attainment and stronger career commitment, especially since the crisis, has been a major contributing factor of this trend. The daunting fertility decline and divorce upsurge are compelling indicators that Korea is moving rapidly toward an individualistic society with the emphasis on individual freedom and well-being over the family solidity.

**Changing Culture Presents Educational Problems**

The ideas of Western democracy and individualism, as we have just discussed, have become increasingly popular and influential in Korean society, especially since the late 1980s. In other words, going through significant historical events such as the 1987 civilian uprising and the 1997 financial crisis, the traditional Korean understanding of authority has been challenged. This is especially obvious with respect to the moral authority of teachers in Korean schools. The Western ideals of democracy and individualism have challenged the traditional Korean understanding of moral values that are transmitted via schools and teachers. Rather, both educators and non-educators have

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begun to favor individual choice regarding moral and cultural values, thus decoupling educational and moral training. In such circumstances, Korean schools and society are moving toward utilitarian motives of education that emphasizes non-moral values, such as grades and class rank, values that in themselves have no educational content. While these motives may be effective in achieving career success, they lack a necessary aspect of moral and civic learning. Not only is education of students under this scheme merely technical at best, but at worst students are competing merely on the basis of examination scores and grades. This unhealthy circumstance destroys the proper learning environment in schools.

These and other educational problems in contemporary Korea will be discussed in more detail as I examine the significance Dewey’s view of authority might have on Korean education in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 3

DEWEY’S IDEAS ON AUTHORITY

John Dewey, America’s most liberal democratic philosopher of the 20th Century, was keenly aware of the problem of the relationship between authority and freedom. In his address on 4 September 1936 at the Harvard Tercentenary Conference of Arts and Sciences, Dewey maintained that it is “the most difficult task human beings ever set their hearts and minds to attempt”.

In fact, being a person with a deep passion for “freed intelligence,” his career can be seen to a great extent as an attempt to reconcile authority and freedom as well as to understand the problem of authority itself. More precisely, his intellectual search was to find a new kind of authority that gives individuals direction and support without being hostile to their freedom and social change. A close look at Dewey’s ideas on authority reveals not only the tension that prevailed in the history of western culture between authority and freedom, but, more importantly, the possibility for the balance or harmony of these two important principles within human experience.

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Dualism and the Problem of Authority

Dualism is an idea that Dewey had consciously sought to overcome throughout his intellectual life. Thomas Alexander writes:

Dualism may be taken to refer to a variety of philosophical positions or world-views, but can also refer to a habit of thought in which a preliminary distinction is taken to designate two fundamentally exclusive categories. The result is that the spectrum of all phenomena must be understood in terms of either one or the other opposite, and so an initial clarifying contrast becomes a fixed over-simplification. In the West, philosophy has labored since its inception from a tendency to set forth important distinctions as grounded in separate types of being.\(^\text{128}\)

Dewey believed that in western culture so much intellectual vigor has been given to the dualistic habits of thought, especially “the supposititious problem of relations” such as the subjective and the objective, the individual and the society, and freedom and authority.\(^\text{129}\) The consequence, according to him, has been not only the misunderstanding of human condition in thought but the frustration of human endeavor in action. Opposing the dualism that had previously characterized Western philosophy, Dewey turned his intellectual attention to show how the two concepts arise together in common experience.

The dualistic philosophy of freedom and authority, for Dewey, was a product of particular historical events; more precisely, the revolt against authority. At first, the historic revolt, perhaps originating as early as the Renaissance and the Reformation, was directed against the institutions of the church and the state itself. Later on, the assault spread “to science and art, to standards and ideals of economic and domestic life” since


the control exercised by them “had entered into all phases and aspects of life, in belief and conduct alike.”

Then, like any other practical movement, this revolt needed its defense on intellectual grounds. In the process of justification, a systematic idea that seemed, for many, to be like the summary of a profound social and political philosophy, was developed. Regarding this new-fangled system of thought, Dewey writes:

According to the formula, the one great intellectual problem is the demarcation of two separate spheres, one of authority and one of freedom; the other half of the formula is to maintain this theoretical demarcation as a sharp division in practice. The formula has a corollary. The inherent tendency of the sphere of authority is to encroach on the sphere of freedom, thus enstating oppression, tyranny, and, in the language of today, regimentation. Hence the right of way must belong to the idea and actuality of individual freedom; authority is its enemy, and every manifestation of social authority and control is therefore to be zealously watched, and almost always to be vigorously opposed. However, since the sphere of liberty has its boundaries, when “liberty” begins to degenerate into “license” the operation of authority is properly to be called upon to restore the balance.

In its dual character, Dewey asserts that this formula “celebrates, with one hand, the decay of the institutions which had exercised sway over men's minds and conduct; and, with the other hand, it signalizes the rise of the new social and intellectual forces.”

In this thought, the established organizations or institutions were to reject and oppress innovative forces aiming to create new beliefs and new modes of human association in order to preserve their obsolete traditions. While the former was regarded as the one which deprived individuals of their freedom, the latter became the only one which liberated individual freedom. It is therefore understood that authority is inherently both

130 Dewey, Authority and Social Change, p. 130.

131 Ibid., p. 130-131.

132 Ibid., p. 131-132.
external to individuals and hostile to freedom and social changes. Unfortunately, the final result of the historic conflict between the old and the new, according to Dewey, was the classical (laissez-faire) philosophy of liberalism that challenged any form of authority.

Notwithstanding its deep relevance in the historic events of western culture in recent centuries, Dewey claims that this dualistic principle that presented authority and freedom as two mutually exclusive “spheres”, the former implying tyranny and regimentation and the latter signifying individual freedom, is an absurd guide to understanding and action. For it evades the real problem. Instead of providing a means to cope with this historic struggle, he pointed out that it merely presents “a solution what is none other than a theoretical transcript of the nature of the conflict itself.” 133 After all, the widespread adoption of this false and misleading dualism, he believes, brought about the present state of confusion, intellectually and practically, with respect to the subject of authority. While considering the sharp separation between freedom and authority as bizarre, Dewey argued that the genuine problem is the interpenetration of these two principles:

Authority stands for stability of social organization by means of which direction and support are given to individuals; while individual freedom stands for the forces by which change is intentionally brought about. The issue that requires constant attention is the intimate and organic union of two things: of authority and freedom, of stability and change. 134

Dewey therefore believed that there is an intimate connection between the principle of freedom and the principle of authority. In a healthy society, he thought that individuals were in need of authority as much as they were in need of

133 Ibid., p. 132.
134 Ibid., p. 131.
freedom. In this regard, the real problem is not to separate but to find out the proper relationship between them so that better understanding and action can be brought about in experience. Hence, it became obvious for Dewey to rethink the problem of authority and freedom in a way that both have to be integrated with each other. Moreover, in this process of reconceptualizing authority as desirable and cooperative, it is not illogical that he challenged the earlier liberal thought.

**Dewey as a Philosopher of Authority**

**A Critique of Liberalism**

Dewey was deeply concerned with liberal values such as individual freedom, creativity, and initiative. Long before his death in 1952, Dewey was regarded as “the prophet and philosopher of freedom.” At the same time, it is well known that he was sharply critical of the classic philosophy of liberalism identified with laissez-faire individualism. In his books, *Individualism Old and New* (1930) and *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), Dewey not only discusses the history of liberal ideas in general but also suggests the need to redefine liberalism in the technologically advanced society of the twentieth century. He argued for a new liberalism in order to overcome the contemporary crisis in liberalism. Dewey was in fact clearly aware of the significance of classical, laissez-faire liberal thought in the history of western culture. For example, he thought that earlier liberalism caused “the ideas of liberty, of individuality and of freed

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intelligence” to enter human mind as enduring values.\textsuperscript{136} Dewey agreed with the fact that civil liberties modern people hold, such as freedom of speech, press, and worship are, to a great extent, due to the courageous effort of liberals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the liberal school, Dewey recognized individuals could identify with the agents of freedom and equal opportunity. Nonetheless, he believed that classical laissez-faire liberalism was essentially not just an outmoded but a fallacious doctrine.\textsuperscript{137}

One of Dewey’s foremost criticisms about the individualistic movement of early liberals was their view of liberty as a natural right. Through this principle, according to him, the liberals identified freedom with the absence of authoritative or organizational action by conceiving it as an interference with natural liberty. In Dewey’s judgment, the rejection of external authority mixed with capitalism was the formulation of the nineteenth century laissez-faire individualism, not in economic life only but in every other aspects of social and political life. In this laissez-faire liberal ideology, not only was the concept of liberty opposed to that of authority but the former appeared superior to the latter.

When the conception of innate liberty transformed into that of individuality and intelligence, Dewey thought the problem became much deeper. First, regarding the principle of individuality, he maintained:

\textsuperscript{136} Dewey thought that these enduring values are needed so much more than the early liberals’ time. And he argued that it is “the business of liberalism to state these values in ways, intellectual and practical, that are relevant to present needs and forces” See John Dewey, 2000, \textit{Liberalism and Social Action}, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, p. 40, 54 (Originally a product of a series of lectures given at the University of Virginia and published in 1935).

\textsuperscript{137} Dewey, \textit{Liberalism and Social Action}, p. 37-60.
The underlying philosophy and psychology of earlier liberalism led to a conception of individuality as something ready-made, already possessed, and needing only the removal of certain legal restrictions to come into full play. It was not conceived as a moving thing, something that is attained only by continuous growth. Because of this failure, the dependence in fact of individuals upon social conditions was made little of.\textsuperscript{138}

Therefore, in Dewey’s opinion, laissez-faire liberals ignored the influence and impact of social environment upon individuals’ lives and glorified the liberty of individuals. They failed to see that individuality was an achievement rather than a brute fact.\textsuperscript{139} For Dewey, achieving individuality was not a fixed event but a continual process, especially by engaging and interacting with the social world in which the each individual lives. Thus, he thought it was a mistake to conceive the individual as an isolated entity that exists apart from society. Rather, individuals, from the moment of birth, are active social beings who require and experience a constant interrelation with their surrounding conditions, especially human surroundings. Dewey insisted that:

While there are native organic and biological structures that remain fairly constant, the actual “laws” of human nature are laws of individuals in association, not of beings in a mythical condition apart from association. In other words, liberalism that takes its profession of the importance of individuality with sincerity must deeply concerned about the structure of human association. For the latter operates to affect negatively and positively, the development of individuals.\textsuperscript{140}

Second, when the doctrine of classical laissez-faire liberty was applied to the conception of intelligence, the consequence, according to Dewey, was also significant. In this liberal creed, he argued that intelligence was considered as “something that arose

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid., p. 46-47.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Dewey, \textit{Liberalism and Social Action}, p. 48.
\end{enumerate}
from the association of isolated elements, sensations and feelings, left no room for far-reaching experiments in construction of a new social order.\textsuperscript{141} The mind was therefore conceived as an individual possession, thus being hostile to intentional, collective social planning and action. Reason was considered as an inherent endowment of the individual, not something to be cultivated and enlarged. As a result, in Dewey’s judgment, the theory of this classical laissez-faire mind was potent in exposure of abuses but weak for constructive purposes. He argued that although the liberal conception of intelligence “advanced beyond dependence upon the past,” it did not reach and develop “an adequate conception of intelligence integrated with social movements and a factor in giving them direction.”\textsuperscript{142}

Another important aspect of Dewey’s criticism with respect to classical laissez-faire liberalism was its failure to secure individual freedom by promoting a new form of external and oppressive authority. Striving for a maximum of economic individualistic action with a minimum of social control, Dewey argued that early liberals set the desires of individuals seeking personal gain as the supreme authority in social life. Accordingly, the liberal philosophy “in the very act of asserting that it stood completely and loyally for the principle of individual freedom, was really engaged in justifying the activities of a new form of concentrated power—the economic, which new form, to state the matter moderately, has consistently and persistently denied effective freedom to the economically underpowered and underprivileged.”\textsuperscript{143} The old-fashioned philosophy that

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\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p. 49-53.
\end{flushright}
called for the era of liberty for all, in fact, resulted in an era of power possessed by the few not being responsible to the rest of the community. It helped emancipate individuals who were ready to take advantage of the changed social conditions but failed to liberate the majority of individuals. In this regard, for Dewey, the classic liberal school was, instead of being too individualistic, not individualistic enough. Although it was liberalism that originated the movement of individualism and fought courageously against despotic government and oppressive laws, it was ironically liberalism that itself became an oppressive institution. After its attainment of power, it resisted any social change by putting its doctrines as immutable truths that led to justify the status quo. Dewey further argued that laissez-faire individualism created a moral and social vacuum, thereby paving the way for the rise of dictatorships. The result, he believed, was “the present scene of confusion, conflict, and uncertainty” and a worldwide situation of “general instability, insecurity, and increasing conflict—both between nations and within them.”

Moreover, according to Dewey, classical laissez-faire liberalism provided intellectual justification for individuals’ competitive activities to seek power and wealth, which ultimately brought about the lost individual. More precisely, economically competitive individualism reduced human beings to mere individuals who perform

143 Dewey, Authority and Social Change, p. 136.


145 Dewey, Liberalism and Social Action, p. 41.

146 Dewey, Authority and Social Change, p. 139.
“alienated labor” solely for the purpose of private material gain. In a system that goes by the name of capitalism, he maintains that laissez-faire individualism:

conceives of initiative, vigor, independence exclusively in terms of their least significant manifestation. They are limited to exercise in the economic area. The meaning of their exercise in connection with the cultural resources of civilization, in such matters as companionship, science and art, is all but ignored. It is at this last point in particular that the crisis of liberalism and the need for a reconsideration of it in terms of the genuine liberation of individuals are most evident.

Therefore, it was clear, for Dewey, that reducing individuals to pecuniary units distorted organic human drive, causing them to respond only to economic development problems. The artistic creativity of human beings evolved only to make money. Likewise, instead of enriching human culture, the very human ends of industry and science were used to generate financial profit. By celebrating unquestioned commitment to economic activities, earlier liberalism, Dewey asserts, failed to meet the conversion of economic activities to the development of higher capacities of individuals.

Notwithstanding critical examinations Dewey made regarding classical laissez-faire liberalism, it is mistaken to think that he wanted to annihilate it. As a matter of fact, as Ryan, a theorist of liberalism, writes, his purpose was to “properly and decently offer his liberal views as something larger and more enduring than a local political doctrine.” In short, Dewey wanted to advance liberalism. He saw that laissez-faire


149 Ibid., p. 40.

philosophy lacked the conception of historic relativity and was inadequate to guide the
dilemmas that a modern society faces. In his judgment:

The earlier liberals lacked historic sense and interest. For a while this lack
had an immediate pragmatic value. It gave liberals a powerful weapon in
their fight with reactionaries. For it enabled them to undercut the appeal
to origin, precedent and past history by which the opponents of social
change gave sacrosanct quality to existing inequalities and abuses. But
disregard of history took its revenge. It blinded the eyes of liberals to the
fact that their own special interpretations of liberty, individuality, and
intelligence were themselves historically conditioned, and were relevant
only in their own time.\textsuperscript{151}

For Dewey, a society is not static; rather, it is continually and rapidly changing. As the
society modifies and matures, so must liberalism. Therefore, according to him, the
business of liberalism is to construct enduring liberal values—liberty, individuality, and
the critical use of intelligence—in ways that are relevant to the needs and forces of
contemporary society.\textsuperscript{152} From this perspective, it becomes evident that while criticizing
the old laissez-faire liberalism for not providing an adequate conception of authority that
is compatible with a democratic society, Dewey’s task was to look for a new type of
authority.

\textit{Reconstruction of Authority}

Dewey argues that man is constantly in need of authority. This need, he writes,
“is a need for principles that are both stable enough and flexible enough to give direction
to the process of living in its vicissitudes and uncertainties.”\textsuperscript{153} John Diggins

\textsuperscript{151} Dewey, \textit{Liberalism and Social Action}, p. 40-41.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., p. 54, 93.
characterized Dewey as follows: “although regarded by liberals as the philosopher of freedom, Dewey was no less a philosopher of authority, and he aspired as much as any conservative moralist to make authority a viable concept in the modern world.”\textsuperscript{154} In an article entitled “Authority and Social Change”, his most explicit discussion regarding the nature of authority, Dewey claims:

We need an authority that, unlike the older forms in which it operated, is capable of directing and utilizing change and we need a kind of individual freedom unlike that which the unrestrained economic liberty of individual has produced and justified; we need, that is, a kind of individual freedom that is general and shared and that has the backing and guidance of socially organized intelligent control.\textsuperscript{155}

It is therefore apparent that the new system of authority he had in mind did not oppose change, rather encouraged it. In addition, it would sustain the principle of freedom for all individuals, not just for the economically powerful.

This new form of authority, in Dewey’s judgment, would not be found by looking at the path of history. In his words:

Neither the past nor the present afford…any ground for expecting that the adjustment of authority and freedom, stability and change, will be achieved by following old paths. The idea that any solution at all can ever be attained may seem to some romantic and utopian. But the most fantastically unrealistic of all notions, is the widely prevalent belief that we can attain enduring stable authority by employing and, where necessary, by re-exhuming the institutional means tried in the past.\textsuperscript{156}


\textsuperscript{155} Dewey, Authority and Social Change, p. 137.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 140.
Dewey made it clear that a return to an external form of authority would not succeed to solve the problem between authority and freedom. The method of external authority would be, he thought, ultimately susceptible to attack as other external forms had been in the past. The source of authority that has not yet been tried on any large scale in human relationships and may bring the actual possibility of successful application, Dewey suggests, is “the utilization of organized intelligence, the manifold benefits and values of which we have substantial and reliable evidence in the narrower field of science.” Specifically, Dewey asserted, the operation of organized intelligence displayed in science represented a remarkable union of freedom and authority. On the one hand, he said, science has progressed by releasing, not suppressing, the variable and creative dimensions of human beings. Its advances have been initiated by individuals who freed themselves from the bonds of tradition and custom whenever they have found the latter hampering their own powers of reflection and observation. On the other hand, despite the development of science as dependent on the freedom of individual inquirers, Dewey writes:

the authority of science issues from and is based upon collective authority, cooperatively organized. Even when, temporarily, the ideas put forth by individuals have sharply diverged from received beliefs, the method used has been a public and open method which succeeded and could succeed only as it tended to produce agreement, unity of belief among all who labored in the same field. Every scientific inquirer, even when he deviates most widely from current ideas, depends upon methods and conclusions that are a common possession and not of private ownership, even though all of the methods and conclusions may at some time have been initially the product of private invention. The contribution the scientific inquirer makes is collectively tested and developed and, in the measure that it is

157 Ibid., p. 141.
158 Ibid.
cooperatively confirmed, becomes a part of the common fund of the intellectual commonwealth.\textsuperscript{159}

Therefore, in the field of science, its advance and progress has occurred when the individual freedom and collective authority are effectively working together. In other words, scientific inquiry explains how authority and freedom can support each other to advance human society and its knowledge.\textsuperscript{160} It becomes obvious that this operation of organized intelligence in natural sciences was a model for Dewey for the kind of freedom and authority necessary in social affairs. It was his genuine desire that the method of collective and cooperative intelligence, working with the release of individual powers and capabilities, might be ultimately extended to the larger field of human relations, though he was uncertain that the extension would produce the desired result. Nevertheless, Dewey asserted that “the problem of the relations of authority and freedom, of stability and change, if it can be solved, will be solved in this way.”\textsuperscript{161}

In summary, Dewey placed authority in the method of organized intelligence as exemplified in the area of science. By elevating scientific intelligence to the status of authority, he viewed authority to be intellectual, not dogmatic as earlier centuries sought.\textsuperscript{162} The critical and effective intelligence of scientific attitude, according to him, would “liberate us from the heavy burden imposed by dogmas and external standards”


\textsuperscript{161} Dewey, Authority and social change, p. 144.

because of its free and experimental characteristics. In fact, Dewey distinguished scientific attitude, the method of intelligent thinking and action, from scientific technique, the source of special technologies such as the telephone and the computer. If public mind, he cautioned, was too much caught in using the techniques of science, scientific inquiry and spirit would decline.

The model of authority that Dewey proposed, moreover, was collective, progressive, and democratic. The authority gained by organized intelligence, as exemplified by the use of scientific inquiry, was based on shared ideas and understanding. The authority itself was in favor of reform and development that was dependant on the free and equal participation of all individuals. Accordingly, the problem of authority, Dewey believed, could be resolved only in the framework of a democratic society. And he asserted that the effort of achieving this humanly desirable and humanly necessary task was worth pursuing:

The failure of other methods and the desperateness of the present situation will be a spur to some to do their best to make the extension actual. They know that to hold in advance of trial that success is impossible is a way of condemning humanity to that futile and destructive oscillation between authoritative power and unregulated individual freedom to which we may justly attribute most of sorrows and defeats of the past. They are aware of the slow process of history and of the unmeasured stretch of time that lies

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ahead of mankind… No matter how slight the immediate effect of their efforts, they are themselves, in their trials, exemplifying one of the first principles of the method of scientific intelligence. For they are projecting into events a comprehensive idea by experimental methods that correct and mature the method and the idea in the very process of trial. The very desperateness of the situation is for such as these but a spur to sustained, courageous effort.  

**The Public as Authority**

Dewey equated authority with organized intelligence in his reconstruction of authority. Organized intelligence, for him, was public intelligence.  

In his book, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), Dewey identified authority with the public. The public, he argued, contained “not merely a variety of associate ties which hold persons together in diverse ways, but an organization of all elements by an integrated principle.”  

From this perspective, like the principle of freedom, it becomes evident that he conceived the public not as a fixed antecedent reality, but as a result to be achieved. Therefore, for Dewey, creating an articulate public that may use its organized knowledge and intelligence effectively and sufficiently in a democratic society was of great significance.

Dewey was not so naïve to believe that the democratically genuine public would be straightforwardly completed and realized. He was in fact fully aware of the challenge ahead. It is well known that, regarding the condition of the public in his time, Dewey thought the public in American society was uncertain, confused, and eclipsed, since it

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166 Dewey, Authority and Social Change, p. 145.


“cannot even use the organs through which it is supposed to mediate political action and polity.”\textsuperscript{169} Furthermore, he claimed that the public behaved often like a mass misleading governmental action in a harmful way. Nevertheless, Dewey said the real problem in the United State is not that:

there is no public, no large body of persons having a common interest in the consequences of social transactions. There is too much public, a public too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition. And there are too many publics, for conjoint actions which have indirect, serious and enduring consequences are multitudinous beyond comparison, and each one of them crosses the others and generates its own group of persons especially affected with little to hold these different publics together in an integrated whole.\textsuperscript{170}

According to Dewey, these problems of the public in a modern world were more complicated than any previous age largely due to the influence of industrial and technological innovation. Specifically, he argued that the eclipse of the public in America has resulted from the invasion of “the machine age in developing the Great Society” into “the small communities of former times without generating a Great Community.”\textsuperscript{171} The industrial revolution created the Great Society, a novel environment in which people were enmeshed in vast and impersonal webs of interdependent relationships. The creation of the Great Society ushered a new era of human relationships. However, the public, with its inability to understand the consequences that were made by historical and technological changes, and to organize a new public appropriate for a new society, has been bewildered and disintegrated. In his words:

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., p. 121.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., p. 137.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p. 126-127.
Indirect, expensive, enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior call a public into existence having a common interest in controlling these consequences. But the machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and complicated the scope of the indirect consequences, have formed such immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather than a community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify and distinguish itself. And the discovery is obviously an antecedent condition of any effective organization on its part. Such is our thesis regarding the eclipse which the public idea and interest have undergone.\textsuperscript{172}

Therefore, it was important to Dewey to find a way to integrate those diffused publics and their interests into a larger meaningful whole. His was an inquiry regarding how the inchoate and amorphous public can become an organized and articulate public that effectively performs political action relevant to the need and opportunities of a technological age. In short, it was “the search for the conditions under which the Great Society may become the Great Community.”\textsuperscript{173} When these conditions were realized into existence, they, Dewey argues, would make their own forms. In this regard, the problem of the public was primarily and essentially an intellectual problem.

The public, according to Dewey, would remain in eclipse, until a great society converted to a great community. What then are the means that can allow the transformation from the former to the latter in the new era of human relationship created by technological industry? In Dewey’s judgment, it was only communication that could accomplish the great community. Consequently, the need of the public was a need for improvement in communication. Raymond Boisvert states:

There is one term which, for Dewey, aligns the various factors he would bring to bear on democratic life. That term is “communication.” This is a

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 126.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., p. 147.
word which bears much (some might say too much) weight in Dewey’s analyses. In order to grasp its meaning, we have to understand it principally in its etymological sense. “Communication” suggests the process of becoming unified. The whole cluster of activities involved in encouraging solidarity are encompassed in the Deweyan usage. It does not refer to any single mode or manner of social intercourse. What it does indicate is a multifaceted harmonizing process.\(^{174}\)

With an emphasis on communication, Dewey further attempted to articulate the conditions in which authority in the hand of the public could be translated into effective practice within a modern society. The first condition was the freedom of social inquiry. As previously discussed, for Dewey, freedom was not just the lack of authoritative control. According to him, the condition of free inquiry was not the same thing as the absence of censorship:

The belief that thought and its communication are now free simply because legal restrictions which once obtained have been done away with is absurd… No man and no mind was ever emancipated merely by being left alone. Removal of formal limitations is but a negative condition; positive freedom is not a state but an act which involves methods and instrumentalities for control of conditions.\(^{175}\)

Thus, Dewey argued that while people enjoyed the political liberties, they also lacked the collective knowledge on public issues and problems. In this respect, a vibrant public could not be cultivated in the condition of old dualism in which the principle of freedom is negated by opposing the principle of authority. Accordingly, free inquiry, for Dewey, was not passive but active. In fact, he pointed out that the development of social or scientific knowledge was a prerequisite for free inquiry. Knowledge thus became “a


function of association and communication.”¹⁷⁶ Thereafter, free social inquiry furnished people with information and knowledge as they actively engaged in it. In particular, it would not only help them become aware of contemporary public issues and problems that affect their lives, but, more importantly, it would help them find shared values and interests that could guide their conduct. The common understandings and values of the public, for Dewey, were not eternal or fixed dogmas, rather they were to be improved and progressive. This free inquiry, he argued, should be continuous ‘in the sense of being connected as well as persistent,’” so that it could “provide the material of enduring opinion about public matters.”¹⁷⁷

The second condition is the dissemination of the results of social inquiry effectively as well as fully. It is obvious that free social inquiry as the first positive condition of a living democratic public cannot be effective without the operation of this second condition. Dissemination, Dewey thought, was not the same thing as scattering at large. Instead, it was, like seeds sown, distributed to take root and have a chance of growth. More precisely, Dewey claimed it was to communicate the results of social inquiry and thus to form the public and its opinions and beliefs. He writes:

There can be no public without full publicity in respect to all consequences which concern it. Whatever obstructs and restricts publicity, limits and distorts public opinion and checks and distorts thinking on social affairs. Without freedom of expression, not even methods of social inquiry can be developed. For tools can be evolved and perfected only in operation; in application to observing, reporting and organizing actual subject-matter; and this application cannot occur save through free and systematic communication.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 158.
¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 178.
Dewey argued further for the importance of presentation in disseminating the results of social inquiry. Presentation, according to him, was vitally important because it was the means by which the results of social investigation could be read and absorbed by ordinary people. In this regard, Dewey acknowledged the importance of experts and their role in creating an articulate public. A technical intellectual presentation, Dewey maintained, would “appeal only to those technically high-brow; it would not be news to the masses.”\(^1\)\(^7\)\(^9\) In contrast, a subtle and vivid presentation would assist ordinary people in arousing their feeling, interest, and response as well as in receiving and understanding information and knowledge. Effective presentation, he suggests, is essential to produce adequate opinion of public matters, creating a public that shares common things in a meaningful way. Therefore, for Dewey, presentation became a question of art and became solvable by its effectiveness to communicate:

Men’s conscious life of opinion and judgment often proceeds on a superficial and trivial plane. But their lives reach a deeper level. The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. This process is art. Poetry, the drama, the novel, are proofs that the problem of presentation is not insoluble. Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation.\(^1\)\(^8\)\(^0\)

\(^1\)\(^7\)\(^8\) Ibid., p. 167.
\(^1\)\(^7\)\(^9\) Ibid., p. 183.
\(^1\)\(^8\)\(^0\) Ibid., p. 183-184.
In summary, Dewey argues that the public will emerge from its eclipse when free social inquiry is wedded to the full disseminations of its results through the art of effective presentation or communication. In these conditions, according to him, the technological innovation of the Great Society would be a means of human life, not a dictatorship. And democracy will “come into its own, for democracy is a name for a life of free and enriching communion.” In other words, without such communication, the Great Society, he argues, will not become a Great Community. Dewey admits, however, that the freedom of social inquiry and the distribution of its conclusions, were not sufficient but only necessary conditions to create an organized, articulate public. In fact, he claims, they were instruments not only to initiate the conversation between members of a democratic community but also to result in the genuine participation in the dialogue with the purpose of legitimizing the ideas and opinions shared in the community:

Systematic and continuous inquiry into all the conditions which affect association and their dissemination in print is a precondition of the creation of a true public. But it and its results are but tools after all. Their final actuality is accomplished in face-to-face relationships by means of direct give and take. Logic in its fulfillment recurs to the primitive sense of the word: dialogue. Ideas which are not communicated, shared, and reborn in expression are but soliloquy, and soliloquy is but broken and imperfect thought.

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181 Ibid., p. 184.
182 Ibid., p. 157.
183 Ibid., p. 218.
Therefore, for Dewey, democratic communities rested their claims to authority on communication and exchange of ideas. Individuals are born organic beings associated with others, but, in Dewey’s opinion, they are not born members of the community. By learning how to communicate and participate in continuous dialogue, Dewey asserted that they are becoming individually distinctive members of the community who act for the actual benefits of the community as well as understand its common beliefs and interests. In particular, the establishment of this kind of democratic community or public, according to him, could not be realized without the restoration of local communal life. Democracy, for Dewey, must “begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community.” Only through the flexible, stable, and responsive communications of the local community, Dewey believed, the problem of securing diffused and seminal intelligence could be solved by giving the public intelligence to become a reality and thus allowing the citizens of a society to remain as the “public” rather than the “mass.” As Dewey put it:

Vision is a spectator; hearing is a participator. Publication is partial and the public which results is partially informed and formed until the meanings it purveys pass from mouth to mouth. There is no limit to the liberal expansion and confirmation of limited persona intellectual endowment which may proceed from the flow of social intelligence when that circulates by word of mouth from one to another in the communication of the local community… We lie, as Emerson said, in the lap of an immense intelligence. But that intelligence is dormant and its

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186 Ibid., p. 213.
communications are broken, inarticulate and faint until it possesses the local community as its medium.\footnote{Ibid., p. 219.}

**In Defense of Dewey**

John Patrick Diggins (1935-2009), an intellectual historian, states that “during much of the first half of the twentieth century Dewey and Lippmann vied with one another to be the voice of modern American liberalism.”\footnote{John Patrick Diggins, 1995, *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*, The University of Chicago Press, p. 339.} In the 1920s, Water Lippmann, a political journalist, published two important books, *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public*, defending his disbelief in the ideals of the democratic system after observing the manipulation of public opinion during World War I. In *Public Opinion* (1922), Lippmann argues that the elite class must rise to govern the general public that is bewildered due to its lack of ability to face the new challenges of modern life. The changed environment, according to him, is “altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance,”\footnote{Water Lippmann, 1965, *Public Opinion*, The Free Press, p. 11.} and this results in the public’s inability to perceive and interpret the world with any real degree of depth or accuracy. In this circumstance, what people see regarding the real world, Lippmann asserts, is further limited by:

- the artificial censorship,
- the limitations of social contact,
- the comparatively meager time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs,
- the distortion arising because events have to be compressed into very short messages,
- the difficulty of making a small vocabulary express a complicated world,
- and finally the fear of facing those facts which would seem to threaten the established routine of man’s lives.\footnote{Ibid., p. 18.}

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\footnote{Ibid., p. 18.}
Despite the altered and complex condition of the world, Lippmann maintained that we often “pick out what our culture has already defined for us” and “tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.”

Therefore, according to him, in most public opinions, “real space, real time, real numbers, real connections, real weights are lost. The perspective and the background and the dimensions of action are clipped and frozen in the stereotypes.” Lippmann believed that this problem of stereotypes was an unavoidable feature of human experience and that only few people possessed a mind for detecting stereotypes and fewer still are willing to modify them by using their intelligence.

For this reason, Lippmann thought the notion that the public was competent to direct public affairs was a false ideal. Hence, the herd of citizens, in his opinion, should be governed by the elite or specialized class whose personal interests could reach beyond the locality and also whose competence and training made them capable of understanding and coping with the complexity of modern world.

Moreover, for Lippmann, expert opinion in the altered social environment is “not to be directed to the ordinary citizen but to governing elites.” The purpose of the intelligence bureau, he writes, is “not to burden every citizen with expert opinions on all questions, but to push that burden away from him towards the responsible

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191 Ibid., p. 55.
192 Ibid., p. 100.
193 Ibid., p. 60, 85-100.
administrator…. The demand for the assistance of expert reporters in the shape of accounts, statisticians, secretariats, and the like, comes not from the public, but from men doing public business, who can no longer do it by rule of thumb.”  

From this perspective, it is clear that in Lippmann’s society, the men of action were the elite class, which was composed of experts, specialists and bureaucrats. Only these few individuals, with their special capabilities, would produce knowledge that could assist human society and its people with reasonable assurance. Accordingly, in this rapidly changing modern technological society, Lippmann argued that the idea of the "omnicompetent citizen" in the past is obsolete and unattainable and that the general public should be excluded from the inquiry with respect to public policy “on the grounds of its incompetence.”

According to Lippmann, what the public can and should do is to depend on those experts and their knowledge and action for its welfare and betterment.

In *The Phantom Public* (1925), though similar to his earlier work, Lippmann moves further toward disillusionment with popular government. He argues that the idea of a democratic public is “a mere phantom.” More specifically, he dismisses the notions not only that the public can direct the course of events but that the very function of government is to implement the will of the people. The government of popular will, Lippmann said, is “either a failure or tyranny” because it is “not able to master the

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problem intellectually, nor to deal with it except by wholesale impact.” Hence, in
Lippmann’s opinion, the theory of democracy that has identified the functioning of
government with the will of ordinary citizens is no more than fiction.\footnote{Ibid., p. 70-71.}
In the real world, Lippmann observed, democracies are “haunted by this dilemma: they are frustrated
unless in the laying down of rules there is a large measure of assent; yet, they seem
unable to find solutions to their greatest problems except through centralized governing
by means of extensive rules which necessarily ignore the principle of assent. The
problems that vex democracy seem to be unmanageable by democratic methods.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 189-190.}

In furthering his argument for elitism, Lippmann distinguishes between agents
(insiders) and bystanders (outsiders). According to him, the agents are the particular
individuals who analyze problems, propose solutions, and take executive actions. In
contrast, the bystanders are the rest of the people who stand as merely spectators only to
intervene on the issues of procedure. In Lippmann’s words:

Where men are performing their work they must learn to understand the
process and the substance of these obligations if they are to do it at all.
But in governing the work of other men by votes or by the expression of
opinion they can only reward or punish a result, accept or reject
alternatives presented to them. They can say yes or no to something
which has been done, yes or no to a proposal, but they cannot create,
administer and actually perform the act they have in mind.\footnote{Ibid., p. 51-52.}

Therefore, for Lippmann, when there are problems to be discussed and policy decisions
need to be made, the burden of doing those things does not lie with the bystanders but on
the agents who are directly concerned. The latter, he asserts, are the only ones who know
what the trouble and issue really is. It is clear that the bystanders, for Lippmann, are the public. The public, he said, is “merely those persons who are interested in an affair and can affect it only by supporting or opposing the actors.” In this regard, it becomes obvious that what the public does in Lippmann’s theory of society is to influence governing insiders only by vote. In particular, according to him, this role of the public can be significant because “certain junctures problems arise.” Such a moment of crisis is the very time for the public, as a majority, to express its opinion to the individuals who actually govern. However, Lippmann claims, even during this critical moment of society, popular actions should be led by those capable individuals who can identify and assess the danger for them. As Lippmann put it:

Public opinion is a reserve of force brought into action during a crisis in public affairs. Though it is itself an irrational force… the power of public opinion might be placed at the disposal of those who stood for workable law as against brute assertion… It does not reason, investigate, invent, persuade, bargain or settle. But, by holding the aggressive party in check, it may liberate intelligence. Public opinion in its highest ideal will defend those who are prepared to act on their reason against the interrupting force of those who merely assert their will. The action of public opinion at its opinion at its best would not, let it be noted, be a continual crusade on behalf of reason. When power, however absolute and unaccountable, reigns without provoking a crisis, public opinion does not challenge it. Somebody must challenge arbitrary power first. The public can only come to his assistance.

In contrast, the insiders, Lippmann argues, “initiate, they administer, they settle. It would subject them to the least possible interference from ignorant and meddlesome
outsiders (i.e. the public)”\footnote{Ibid., p. 198-199.} In fact, unlike his earlier book, Lippmann showed here his declining faith in the effective action of administrative insiders with regard to solving the problems of complex modern society. The class of experts, he recognized, not only may act on their opinions and interests on public issues, but, they are, in most respects, outsiders as well to any particular problem: “The actors in one affair are the spectators of another, and men are continually passing back and forth between the field where they are executives and the field where they are members of a public. The distinction between the two is not an absolute one: there is a twilight zone where it is hard to say whether a man is acting executively on his opinions or merely acting to influence the opinion of someone else who is acting executively.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 110.} In the conclusion of his book, Lippmann boldly declares the idea of a democratic public is a mistaken abstraction embedded in “a false philosophy” that tends to “stereotype against the lessons of experience.”\footnote{Ibid.}, p. 77, 200. All in all, Lippmann suggests, from these two books, that placing authority in the public (or popular will) is foolish and dangerous not only because of the public’s lack of interest and knowledge regarding public issues, but also because of its limited capacity to think, understand, and judge them intelligently.

In 1927, Dewey published \textit{The Public and Its Problems} in response to Lippmann’s books, \textit{Public opinion} and \textit{The Phantom Public}. Dewey was troubled by Lippmann’s harsh critique regarding the theory of democracy together, to be sure, with his view of elitism. But, he was a philosopher who thoughtfully examined the popular
journalist’s analysis and criticism of modern civilization and of human life. Dewey praised Lippmann’s *Public Opinion*, regarding it as “perhaps the most effective indictment of democracy as currently conceived ever penned.” In particular, he was appreciative of Lippmann’s diagnosis with respect to the complex condition of modern society and for his bringing about the eclipse of the public. More precisely, Dewey was sympathetic to Lippmann’s judgment that the complexity of the modern world influenced ordinary citizens to be challenged in recognizing and grasping all aspects of its social and political problems and issues. Nevertheless, Dewey rejected Lippmann’s lack of faith in a democratic public and his elitism as a solution to the problem of modernity.

Dewey, unlike Lippmann, showed much hope for democracy and the role of the public in making robust democratic politics possible. Dewey’s hope in democracy was deeply connected with his faith in the potential of human nature. He defined democracy as “a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature. Belief in the Common Man is a familiar article in the democratic creed. That belief is without basis and significance save as it means faith in the potentialities of human nature as that nature is exhibited in every human being irrespective of race, color, sex, birth and family, of material and cultural wealth.” As previously discussed in his critique of classical

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liberalism, human nature, for Dewey, was not fixed and complete but flexible and movable, especially through interaction with surrounding environments. In fact, Dewey did not just believe in the changing characteristic of human nature in general. Instead, it was his profound faith in democracy that when the proper conditions were furnished, every human being could indeed develop and reach the potential for intelligent judgment and action.\textsuperscript{212}

From this perspective, for Dewey, in contrast to Lippmann, the idea that people govern is not an unworkable misconception embedded by democratic theories. A democratic public, he argues, can be real, though it is indeed a very difficult task to achieve. Interestingly, with the agreeable analysis that the public is in eclipse, the journalist goes further down a skeptical road by claiming that it is a mere phantom, while the philosopher chooses a more optimistic way turning not only to look harder at present conditions but to find out ways in which the public may be revived. In this regard, Dewey, as Ryan observed, “was a critical and radical writer, but… he was always more eager to tell his readers of the good that might be born than of the evil it would be born from.”\textsuperscript{213} Humans, according to Dewey, are not just mainly interested in pursuing their self-interest. More importantly, they are not ignorant or meddlesome as proposed in Lippmann’s writings. In contrast, Dewey thought the public could be effectively “engaged in an ongoing discourse about both general ideals and contemporary

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., p. 342.

\textsuperscript{213} Alan Ryan, \textit{John Dewey and The High Tide of American Liberalism}, p. 317.
concerns.”214 In fact, the public can play an important role, combining educated intelligence together with active and genuine participation, to solve the complex problems of a modern technological society. In Dewey’s point of view, it is not the expert classes, but the public and its cooperative intelligence that resolve the problem of authority.

It is true that experts are necessary components for inquiry into public nature in Dewey’s society. However, their role is limited as well. Inquiry, Dewey said, is “a work which devolves upon experts. But their expertness is not shown in framing and executing policies, but discovering and making known the facts…”215 In other words, they are only technical experts who inquire into certain problems and issues and present what they find. Hence, the role of experts, according to Dewey, is certainly not to prescribe what is needed to be done from the result of their inquiry. As Bernstein pointed out, Dewey was “deeply skeptical about the role of so-called experts in democratic communities- as if there is a group of individuals by virtue of their “scientific” expertise better able to make the type of judgments and decisions required in our everyday lives.” 216 For Dewey, when it came to common interests and concerns, what was required for the public in a democratic society was not to have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed technical investigations, but to have the ability to judge the bearing of the knowledge

214 Raymond D. Boisvert, John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time, p. 93.


supplied by the experts.\textsuperscript{217} In this regard, it is the concerned public who evaluates and confirms the data supplied by experts. In this sense, the public or democratic community must be inquiring as well. And it becomes the place experts depend on for further pronouncement and decision making. The public, in Dewey’s opinion, does not exist to be trained by the experts but rather to judge them, whether their findings and information can be adopted and implied for the betterment of society. Therefore, unlike Lippmann, Dewey maintained that it is the role of the democratic public to arrive at solutions to societal problems created by a modern world.

All in all, by viewing democracy as a way of life, Dewey suggests that every individual could be educated about contemporary issues and become an intelligent member of his or her community. The world, for Dewey, suffered more from leaders and authorities than ordinary people.\textsuperscript{218} In 1939, at the age of 80, Dewey reminded Americans that what they needed in contemporary society was to take human resources more seriously:

The present state of the world is more than a reminder that we have now to put forth every energy of our own to prove worthy of our heritage. It is a challenge to do for the critical and complex conditions of today what the men of an earlier day did for simpler conditions… At the present time, the frontier is moral, not physical. The period of free lands that seemed boundless in extent has vanished. Unused resources are now human rather than material.\textsuperscript{219}

From his own experience as well as his philosophical understanding, Dewey was fully aware of the difficulty of shared or associated living in a democratic society and of


\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., p. 208.

\textsuperscript{219} Dewey, Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us, p. 340-341.
creating an effective public. But, what he was genuinely sensitive about throughout his career was that each individual has not only the right to equal opportunity for development but to lead his or her own life to experience and grow from it. Therefore, the aim of Dewey’s philosophy was, to a great extent, to articulate the conditions appropriate for the continuous enrichment of one’s experience and genuine growth.

Democracy is the only way of making this happen. He claims that:

Democracy is belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness. Every other form of moral and social faith rests upon the idea that experience must be subjected at some point or other to some form of external control; to some “authority” alleged to exist outside the processed of experience. Democracy is the faith that the process of experience more important than any special result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process. 220

Therefore, according to Dewey, democracy is the sole dependable authority as a means and ends to enlarging our experience. The task of democracy, Dewey asserts, is thus “forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute.” 221 This democratic ideal may not be perfectly realized and attained. Nevertheless, Dewey remains “a worthy ideal and a preferred substitute for its alternative, a society forged by force.” 222 In addition, to look at such an ideal would not only examine what actual conditions exist at the present time but also discourage complacent attitudes. Most of all, what Dewey sought in his theory of authority and its relation to democracy was to encourage the citizen to become part of an active and

220 Ibid., p. 343.

221 Ibid.

222 Boisvert, John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time, p. 90.
intelligent public, not a passive and ignorant mass. Perhaps that is, in his view, the way not only to make the world safer but, more importantly, to make it better.
CHAPTER 4

AUTHORITY IN DEWEY’S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

John Dewey (1859-1952) was a philosopher whose ideas had a profound influence on education in the first half of the twentieth century, especially in the United States. In 1939 when Dewey was entering the ninth decade of his life, Sidney Hook (1902-1991), admiringly asserted that the philosophies of John Dewey:

have marched into the classrooms of public and private schools, even into the offices of administrators, and profoundly transformed the formal educational environment of millions of students and teachers. No matter what the nature of future educational theory will be, it is extremely unlikely that educational practice will ever return to the state it was in before John Dewey’s influence made itself felt on the schools of the nation.  

More recently, John P. Diggins (1935-2009), a prominent American intellectual historian, stated regarding the impact of Dewey’s ideas on American schools as follows: “In no area of American life did John Dewey enjoy more influence than in education. For almost the entire first half of the twentieth century his ideas prevailed in many public and private schools, virtually transforming older, formal systems of instruction and reshaping

the outlook of students and teachers alike.”\textsuperscript{224} Despite his remarkable influence on American education and its practice in the early decades of the twentieth century, Dewey, on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday dinner, made it clear that his interest in education as well as other fields (ex. Politics, social problems, arts, and religion) was “specifically an outgrowth and manifestation of my primary interest in philosophy.”\textsuperscript{225} Therefore, as Philip Smith observed, Dewey’s interest in education was not primarily for its own sake. Rather, it was due to “the potential of education to contribute to philosophical understanding.”\textsuperscript{226} In his influential work on public education, *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey states that education is “the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested.”\textsuperscript{227} Without question, Dewey’s interest in education and his effort for its practical improvement were considerable. Nevertheless, Dewey was indeed a philosopher who desired foremost to gain a deeper understanding of education. Smith gives this defining characteristic of Dewey the following description: “Dewey was more of an intellectualist than most people realize. He valued practicability and intelligent action to be sure. But he valued the life of the

\textsuperscript{224} John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority*, p. 305.


mind even more. He prized understanding as the highest good and saw practical action as a necessary means towards that end.”

Therefore, it would seem that, for Dewey, education was an instrumental place to defend and deepen his conception of philosophy in a serious and systematic way. Accordingly, Dewey’s notions of authority and its relation to democracy clearly show themselves in his philosophy of education. The approach to authority which Dewey sketched out in his social and political philosophy is consistent with that present in his writings on education. More precisely, Dewey, as a philosopher, sought to reconceptualize the authority in education in its intimate connection with freedom in education. The issue was, thus, to think of the possibility of creating an educational authority, such as the authority gained by organized intelligence which was exemplified in the narrow field of science. This authority should not only sustain the freedom of individual students and of their intelligence, but also encourage and direct its progress and change through the shared understanding, experience, and communication by all in schools and their classrooms. For this reconstruction, as much as in his philosophical writings, Dewey encountered the problem of dualism generally, and the issue of authority (social control) and freedom (individuality) particularly, which penetrated deep into contemporary educational theory and practice.

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Dualism and the Problem of Education

As we have seen before, Dewey was much concerned with the mischief wrought by dualism and thus attempted to overcome it in his philosophical writings. A careful reader of Dewey cannot but be impressed by his recurrent fight against the idea of dualistic thinking, such as man and nature, body and mind, and objective and subjective. It is obvious that Dewey understood that dualistic thinking has a certain logic in some aspects and is useful for limited and specified purposes. More specifically, the abstract distinctions in language by means of two contrasting concepts could be a necessary concept for one’s rational and categorizing mind. However, what Dewey worried was that such two concepts are often regarded as independent and mutually exclusive realities. In this way, the dualistic thinking, in Dewey’s view, would neglect the connections and relationships of two principles, which are more important, encouraging and solidifying aspects. And it becomes a source of not only intellectual confusion but also misguided conduct. Hence, overcoming the dualism, as a way of enriching and enlarging human understanding and experience, came to be an issue that is central to Dewey’s philosophy.

It is true that Dewey’s war on dualism reached into almost every aspect of human concerns such as government, art, morals and religion. However, nothing can be compared to his contribution to education. Similar to philosophy, education, Dewey thought, had been plagued by dualisms in its thought and conduct. From his earlier writings such as The School and Society (1900) and The Child and the Curriculum (1902) to the later writings such as Democracy and Education (1916) and Experience and

Education (1938), Dewey has been consistently appealing to the public as well as educators to abandon the dualistic mode of education. In The School and Society, Dewey discusses the relationship of the school with both the larger life of the community and the life of the children. More specifically, he argues that when our society experiences a radical and thorough change, it is essential for the school to adapt in its methods and materials that is proper and effective in present social conditions. While speaking about the result of the industrial revolution upon the social life of his time and its progress, Dewey asserts that “if our education is to have any meaning for life, it must pass through an equally complete transformation.”231 From this perspective, it is obvious that the school, in Dewey’s view, is not a place for the children to just learn fixed lessons, especially by the way of being passive and receptive, and only prepare for their individual futures. Rather, it should be “a genuine form of community life” that encourages the children not only to be alert and active but, more importantly, to be cooperative and associable. Dewey thus wanted to connect the school with social life so that “the experience gained by the child in a familiar, commonplace way is carried over and made use of there, and what the child learns in the school is carried back and applied in everyday life, making the school an organic whole, instead of a composite of isolated parts.”232 When the school becomes separated and unrelated from life, Dewey declares that it is “waste in education.” It is waste of money and of things. Most of all, it is waste


232 Ibid., p. 55.
of “human life, the life of the children while they are at school, and afterward because of inadequate and perverted preparation.” By considering the school as part of the larger whole of society, Dewey points out that there are necessary readjustments for the school to break down its isolation and secure the organic relationship with social life. In this relatively earlier work on education, Dewey shows his great faith in school and its connectional significance for the welfare of the society. He maintains that we must:

make each one of our schools an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guarantee of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.  

Two years later, in *The Child and the Curriculum*, Dewey specifically discusses two opposing educational sects in his day, which he labeled “old” and “new.” The former, according to Dewey, stresses the importance of the subject matter of the curriculum at the expense of child’s individual peculiarities and experiences. Hence, their emphasis is put upon step-by-step instruction in the accumulated wisdom of civilization. For them, it is the subject matter that furnishes the end of instruction and determines the methods of education. Discipline becomes their slogan and what the child is expected is simply to receive and to accept. In contrast, the latter asserts that the personality and character of the child are more important than the subject matter of the curriculum. For this group, the goal of education is not the acquisition of knowledge and

233 Ibid., p. 40.

234 Ibid., p. 20.
skills but rather self-realization. Accordingly, it is the child and his or her interest that determines the quality and quantity of learning. Freedom, initiative, and spontaneity are the catchwords of the school.

This fundamental opposition of child and curriculum set by these two modes of doctrine, in Dewey’s view, is another pernicious dualism in education. This problem, according to him, could be solved if we realize that the child and the curriculum are not two different things but simply two limits of a single process. Dewey suggests that we have to:

get rid of the prejudicial notion that there is some gap in kind (as distinct from degree) between the child’s experience and the various forms of subject-matter that make up the course of study… Abandon the notion of subject matter as something fixed and ready-made in itself, outside the child’s experience; cease thinking of the child’s experience as also something hard and fast; see it as something fluent, embryonic, vital;… Just as two points define a straight line, so the present standpoint of the child and the facts and truths of studies define instruction. It is continuous reconstruction, moving from the child’s present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies.235

From this perspective, it is clear that what Dewey wants is to relate the subject matter of the curriculum to the child’s interests and activities, thus fostering their free interaction and flexible adjustment. More precisely, he stresses the importance of the curriculum not only to become a part of the child’s present experience but to be a factor for directing the proper growth of the child in his or her continuing education.236 Therefore, for Dewey, this little but popular pamphlet is thus again “another plea for the abolition of sharp

235 Ibid., p. 109.

236 Ibid., p. 104, 117, 119, 123.
separations in methods of teaching where there ought to be none in the process of learning.”

In 1916, Dewey published *Democracy and Education*, his most comprehensive book on education. In this influential work on public education, Dewey discusses various dualisms and their problems for education, especially in the following chapters: *Education as Conservative and Progressive, Interest and Discipline, Experience and Thinking, Intellectual and Practical Studies, Physical and Social Studies*, and *The Individual and the World*. Particularly, in *The Individual and the World*, Dewey explores how the dualistic philosophy of freedom and authority came into being and its effect on education. According to him, consistent with the earlier discussion in Chapter 3, it was the dualism of mind versus the world conceived by laissez-faire individualism, a belief that the individual human mind is total and complete in isolation from the world, that led to misconception of the relationship between freedom (or individuality) and authority (or social control). The educational result of this dualistic conception of freedom and authority, in Dewey’s view, was that the supporters and the opponents of freedom in school alike identified freedom with the absence of the direction of social control or unconstrained physical movement. In order to avoid and overcome this false dichotomy or unwarranted assumption, Dewey suggests that it is important to consider that freedom “designates a mental attitude rather than external unconstraint of movements, but that the quality of mind cannot develop without a fair leeway of

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239 Ibid., p. 301.
movements in exploration, experimentation, application, etc.” In other words, for Dewey, freedom of students’ physical movement in school and their intellectual freedom are not opposed.

In *Experience and Education* (1938), which was published quite late in his career and considered to be his most concise statement on education, Dewey referenced tensions between competing values by stating that:

>Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of *Either-Ors*, between which it recognized no intermediate possibilities. When forced to recognize that the extremes cannot be acted upon, it is still inclined to hold that they are all right in theory but that when it comes to practical matters circumstances compel us to compromise. Educational philosophy is no exception. The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; that it is based upon natural endowments and that education is a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure.

As Alan Ryan pointed out, *Experience and Education* was Dewey’s attempt to recapitulate more precisely the contrast between “old” and “new” education in *The Child and the Curriculum*, which Dewey had written thirty-six years earlier. Instead of “old” and “new,” the term he used in his later work was “traditional” and “progressive.” In this 1938 book, with a lucid analysis on the defects of these two opposed educational sects, Dewey clearly stated that the fundamental issue in the field of education is not “of

240 Ibid., p. 305.

241 I will discuss Dewey’s conception of freedom in more depth in the later section of “Education as freedom and growth in intelligence.”


progressive against traditional education but a question of what anything whatever must be to be worthy of the name *education.*”\(^{244}\) Further, Dewey, taking a view of the organic connection between education and experience, urged the development of a sound philosophy of experience and proposed an “anti-dualistic concept of experience” constituted by what he called the principle of continuity and the principle of interaction.\(^{245}\) After his attempt to establish the two principles of continuity and interaction as criteria of the value of experience, Dewey turned to actual, concrete educational questions for their application. In doing so, he especially, in fact quite exclusively, expounded not only the meanings of freedom and social control (authority) but also their relationship within the context of the educative experience or growth. In other words, Dewey largely applied his notion of authority in the positive relationship with freedom to the educational realm which I will now address in the rest of this chapter.\(^{246}\)

**The Reconstruction of Authority in Education**

Regarding the life of the child as the “all-controlling aim” of the school, Dewey once famously wrote that “the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the center about which they are organized.”\(^{247}\) It is therefore not

\(^{244}\) John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, p. 115.


\(^{246}\) Notwithstanding I focus on Dewey’s book, *Experience and Education*, in analyzing his notion of authority in education, other works written by Dewey or about him will be also used as needed to support my discussion.
surprising that Dewey was not content with the image and exercises of authority in traditional schools, which promoted the automatic obedience of the child to teacher control, ignoring the child’s individuality. However, it is also not true that he did completely reject the principle of authority in the educational arena. Consistent with his philosophical writings on authority discussed in Chapter 3, Dewey called for the need to find a new source of educational authority, which is more effective than the old one especially encouraging more genuine interaction between teachers and students that will enhance the experience of children and their continuing growth. In his own words:

> When external authority is rejected, the problem becomes that of finding the factors of control that are inherent within experience. When external authority is rejected, it does not follow that all authority should be rejected, but rather that there is need to search for a more effective source of authority. Because the older education imposed the knowledge, methods, and the rules of conduct of the mature person upon the young, it does not follow, except upon the basis of the extreme Either-Or philosophy, that the knowledge and skill of the mature person has no directive value for the experience of the immature. On the contrary, basing education upon personal experience may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school, and consequently more, rather than less, guidance by others.\(^{248}\)

What, then, is the more effective source of authority that Dewey has in mind regarding education? Similar to authority in his philosophical writings, Dewey put collective intelligence of a classroom or school community as a whole in the place of a new educational authority. In *Experience and Education*, he makes this clear by discussing how social control (authority) should be exercised in the classroom. Dewey argues that “it is not the will or desire of any one person which establishes order but the


moving spirit of the whole group. The control is social, but individuals are parts of a community, not outside of it.”

Therefore, according to Dewey, effective educational authority is to be exercised in a social context, in which individuals, including the teacher, are involved to contribute and participate in its common activities and understandings. In this way, Dewey insists that the principle of social control does not necessarily restrict the principle of personal freedom. Moreover, under such a condition that the uncoerced consensus of social control prevails, he maintains that individuals in the classroom community, especially children, do not feel that they are submitting to external imposition even if they are called to order.

Dewey is, however, fully aware that there are occasions upon which teachers have to intervene and exercise their personal authority over students. When such a situation occurs, the exercise of teachers’ authority, he claims, should be done for the good of the whole.

The teacher reduces to a minimum the occasions in which he or she has to exercise authority in a personal way. When it is necessary, in the second place, to speak and act firmly, it is done in behalf of the interest of the group, not as an exhibition of personal power. This makes the difference between action which is arbitrary and that which is just and fair.

In this respect, for Dewey, it is the right and responsibility of the teacher to use his or her personal authority over children in necessary or inevitable situations. He also believed that the use of teacher control according to the principles of justice and equality does not necessarily lead to harmful results for the individual children involved as well as for the

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249 Ibid., p. 58.
250 Ibid., p. 59. 
classroom community as a whole.\textsuperscript{251} Therefore, the concept of teacher authority indeed does not disappear in Dewey’s educational thought. Rather, it becomes “more subtle, less oppressive, and, he assumed, more effective.”\textsuperscript{252}

Dewey further discusses in \textit{Experience and Education} that teachers face the problem of classroom control not because of difficult, unruly children but because of the lack of their advance planning. Teachers’ sufficient planning in advance, he argues, “will create situations that of themselves tend to exercise control over what this, that, and the other pupil does and how he does it.”\textsuperscript{253} Hence, Dewey, unlike some proponents of progressive education, insists that advance planning by teachers to direct instructions and classroom activities is not only necessary, but, more importantly, it is not inherently hostile to the freedom of students. In his words:

\begin{quote}
I do not know what the greater maturity of the teacher and the teacher’s greater knowledge of the world, of subject-matters and of individuals, is for unless the teacher can arrange conditions that are conducive to community activity and to organization which exercises control over individual impulses by the mere fact that all are engaged in communal projects. Because the kind of advanced planning heretofore engaged in has been so routine as to leave little room for the free play of individual thinking or contribution due to distinctive individual experience, it does not follow that all planning must be rejected. On the contrary, there is incumbent upon the educator the duty of instituting a much more intelligent, and consequently more difficult, kind of planning.\textsuperscript{254}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{252} Keith Cassidy, 1980, John Dewey and the Problem of Authority, \textit{Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{253} Dewey, \textit{Experience and Education}, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{254} Dewey, \textit{Experience and Education}, p. 64-65.
Dewey therefore calls upon teachers to cultivate the habit of a more thoughtful planning in advance and bring it into their classroom, which requires being much harder than the class preparation of traditional schools. With respect to such planning, teachers, he maintains, must do it with both flexibility and direction. More precisely, for Dewey, the planning of the teacher must be flexible enough to make room for his or her students’ personal initiative and creativity. At the same time, the planning, however, must be firm and able to provide direction for the continuous development of students. In this way, the teacher, through the medium of more intelligent lesson planning, plays a vital role in terms of enhancing educational authority by incorporating “individual efforts with collective control.”

Therefore, it seems that Dewey wanted teachers to act as leaders of the community rather than dictatorial outsiders. The teacher, he states, as the most mature and experienced member of the school community, “has a peculiar responsibility for the conduct of the interactions and intercommunications which are the very life of the group as a community.” Further, for Dewey, as much as the freedom of students is important in the school community, the freedom of the teacher as the member and leader of the group must be respected as well. The teacher, he said, should not be afraid to make suggestions to the students regarding what they should do in the classroom and its activities. Regarding the importance of teachers’ experience and their active involvement in giving suggestions Dewey writes:

255 Mordechai Gordon, John Dewey on Authority: A Radical Voice within the Liberal Tradition, p. 254-255.

256 Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 66.
I have heard of cases in which children are surrounded with objects and materials and then left entirely themselves, the teacher being loath to suggest even what might be done with the materials lest freedom be infringed upon. Why, then, even supply materials, since they are a source of some suggestion or other? But, what is more important is that the suggestion upon which pupils act must in any case come from somewhere. It is impossible to understand why a suggestion from one who has a larger experience and a wider horizon should not be at least valid as a suggestion arising from some more or less accidental source.257

Hence, as Putnam and Putnam indicate, Dewey’s education clearly does “not let children run wild.”258 In his mind, the real development of children does not occur in a spontaneous and uncontrolled way. On the contrary, it is the business of the teacher, Dewey argues, to arrange external conditions that may affect educational experience of children without imposing a mere control. Such conditions should help children to activate their individual interest and intelligence and also enable them to make their own special contribution to the democratic educational community.259

Although it appears that the teacher in Dewey’s educational theory does not have a “clear-cut authority,” he or she is in fact the one who has real power in directing educational environment that will lead to the positive growth of children.260 Indeed, he or she has a difficult and daunting task to guide children not only to have a more educative experience but to become a more effective democratic member of the community for the present as well as for the future. As the representative of both democratic society in

257 Ibid., p. 84-85.


259 Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 301.

general and democratic education in particular, the teacher in Dewey’s school is “as important as ever” and “continues to represent an authority, yet his authority is no longer explicit: it now is hidden and disguised.”261 The educational philosophy of Dewey is thus teacher-centered as equally as it is child-centered.262

**Education as Freedom and Growth in Intelligence**

Throughout his intellectual career, Dewey consistently insisted that the most important freedom is freedom of intelligence. Therefore, Dewey’s effort to resolve the problem of authority by elevating intelligence to the status of authority as discussed in the Chapter 3 is not strange at all. Then, what is “intelligence” for Dewey? In *Experience and Nature* (1925), he states that intelligence is “critical method applied to goods of belief, appreciation and conduct, so as to construct freer and more secure goods, turning assent and assertion into free communication of sharable meanings, turning feeling into ordered and liberal sense, turning reaction into response.” Intelligence, he continues, is thus “the reasonable object of our deepest faith and loyalty, the stay and support of all reasonable hopes.”263 At another time, he defines intelligence in this way while discussing its significance in the process of experience:

A being which can use given and finished facts as signs of things to come; which can take given things as evidences of absent things, can, in that

261 Ibid.


degree, forecast the future; it can form reasonable expectations. It is capable of achieving ideas; it is possessed of intelligence. For use of the given or finished to anticipate the consequence of processes going on is precisely what it meant by “ideas,” by “intelligence.”

From this perspective, it is clear that Dewey’s conception of intelligence is not merely about using mind in the acquisition of factual information and of certain technical skills in human life. Rather it is the power to think of the available information and acquired knowledge with deliberate reflection, and the ability to relate it to current issues in experience. Furthermore, it is the extent of one’s capacity to use both knowledge and practice as means for directing future change.

The conception of intelligence, for Dewey, is thus dissimilar to the conception of reason, especially perceived by the philosophers of the enlightenment. The latter was generally understood as the means to find the truth with certainty. And it was glorified in the abstract and valued as personal satisfaction and possession. In contrast, the former, in Dewey’s view, was regarded as “the way of knowing in a world without certainty.” It is not a quantity of something one owns and which is rather continually changing and moving in the process of his or her engaging life-experience. In this sense, the principle of intelligence, for Dewey, is very much related with the principle of judgment. In his words:

Intelligence was associated with judgment; that is, with selection and arrangement of means to effect consequences and with choice of what we

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take as our ends. A man is intelligent not in virtue of having reason which grasps first and indemonstrable truths about fixed principles, in order to reason deductively from them to the particulars which they govern, but in virtue of his capacity to estimate the possibilities of a situation and to act in accordance with his estimate. In the large sense of the term, intelligence is as practical as reason is theoretical.  

Therefore, for Dewey, intelligence is the indispensable guide of intellectual, moral, and social life. It is the vehicle of experimental creation that can lead to concrete fact, not merely pecuniary value. And it is practical judgment that is not just belonged to a narrow and technical social group but to all men. In this respect, in Dewey’s point of view, intelligence becomes the inestimable wealth of a society in which one lives and participates. Conceiving intelligence as a social asset, for Dewey, every average individual would benefit by using it, thus making him or her to rise “to undreamed heights of social and political intelligence.” It was his deepest hope that the method of cooperative intelligence would replace the method of brute conflict between classes that was repeatedly seen in human history. This practical and engaged intelligence, Dewey asserts, is “the only source and sole guarantee of a desirable and happy future” for humankind in general and the individual in particular.


Hence, the freedom of intelligence is the pivotal feature of Dewey’s philosophy; it is clearly of great significance in his educational thought. It is the business of the school, Dewey argued, to stand up and take the lead in “freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness-the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its own work.”270 With respect to the school of his day, Dewey welcomed the growing freedom of movement or outward action. However, what is fundamentally important and needed at school, he defiantly declared, is to recognize more fully the principle of freedom of intelligence and to enlarge, not restrict, the intelligence of the mind in both the child and the teacher.271 Identifying freedom only with freedom of movement or external side of activity is in Dewey’s view mistaken. The freedom of movement and action, he claims, is only chaos “without freed capacity of thought behind it.”272

In *Experience and Education* (1938), Dewey further elaborates on the importance of the freedom of intelligence and its relationship with the freedom of movement in education. He argues that the freedom of intelligence, which is “freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while,” is the only freedom of enduring importance and is the key to moral and intellectual development.273 However, Dewey also makes clear that the internal side of activity such as freedom of thought, desire, and purpose, cannot be separated and even genuinely


271 Ibid., p. 193, 199.

272 Ibid., p. 193.

operated without the freedom of outer movement. To limit the freedom of movement, for Dewey, is therefore identical with the restriction of intellectual and moral freedom and growth. In the field of education, he maintains that the freedom of movement is especially important because it will not only help children maintain sound physical and mental health but, more importantly, allow them to disclose their real personal natures.\footnote{Ibid., p. 69-73.}

In this way, the teacher can become familiar and acquainted with those who need to be educated and obtain genuine knowledge and understanding about them. Without such relationship and insight, according to Dewey, there is no guarantee that teacher can direct his or her students toward their actual development of mind and character. Therefore, in Dewey’s view, the freedom of movement is a means to serving children’s freedom of intelligence to execute, exercise, and grow. In his own words:

> Freedom of outward action is a means to freedom of judgment and of power to carry deliberately chosen ends into execution. The amount of external freedom which is needed varies from individual to individual. It naturally tends to decrease with increasing maturity, though its complete absence prevents even a mature individual from having the contacts which will provide him with new materials upon which his intelligence may exercise itself. The amount and the quality of this kind of activity as a means of growth is a problem that must engage the thought of the educator at every stage of development.\footnote{Ibid., p. 72.}

> With his conviction that freedom must not be viewed as an end in itself, Dewey asserts that too much freedom or uncontrolled freedom is a negative.\footnote{Ibid., p. 73.} Hence, his idea of freedom is closely tied to self-discipline, resulting in the fact that that there is no inherent contradiction between freedom and discipline. Needless to say, for Dewey, who

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\footnote{Ibid., p. 69-73.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 72.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 73.}
rejected dualism, both freedom and discipline are essential. The ideal aim of education, he maintains, is “creation of power of self-control.” It is therefore the business of the teacher in Dewey’s educational philosophy to use his or her guidance and interruption as a means to help children to develop a “disciplined mind.” In this way, the direction of the teacher to the exercise of the children’s intelligence, or, in other words, “a discipline stemming from the task in hand,” is an aid to their freedom, not an external constraint upon it.

For Dewey, while the idea of discipline is certainly not “the harsh and restrictive view of discipline prevailing in the schools of his boyhood,” it rather represents the actual ability to carry out a course of action with purpose and organization. More specifically, it is the intelligent mind that possessed “a freedom which is power: power to frame purposes, to judge wisely, to evaluate desires by the consequences which will result from acting upon them; power to select and order means to carry chosen ends into operation.” Without such intelligent discipline, Dewey believed that children cannot transform their native endowment into effective power and influence. Only a disciplined mind, in his view, can achieve independent intellectual initiative and control in a

277 Ibid., p. 75.


279 Ryan, John Dewey and The High Tide of American Liberalism, p. 283; Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 84.


281 Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 74.
Therefore, the formation and development of the intelligently disciplined mind, Dewey argues, is the way to become free. In other words, either the execution of impulse and desires or the removal of external control, without the guidance of intelligence, is only the illusion of freedom.

Dewey’s view of freedom is thus closely linked with the possibility of growth. More precisely, for Dewey, freedom and growth go hand in hand when intelligence is at work. As we develop and expand our intelligent use of deliberation, judgment, and choice, we increase in freedom, which also affects our capacity for growth. Dewey writes that:

Potentiality of freedom is a native gift or part of our constitution in that we have capacity for growth and for being actively concerned in the process and the direction it takes. Actual or positive freedom is not a native gift or endowment but is acquired. In the degree in which we become aware of possibilities of development and actively concerned to keep the avenues of growth open, in the degree in which we fight against induration and fixity, and thereby realize the possibilities of recreation of our selves, we are actually free.

In short, according to Dewey, freedom of intelligence signifies the capacity for ceaseless growth. Our freedom is an emergent reality when we become different by growing. In this reason, for Dewey, growth does not reside in any specific or particular achievement, and it rather means “the continual flowering and actualizing of

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282 Dewey, How We Think, p. 63.

283 Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 75-76.


possibilities.”

It, as Sidney Hook has put it, is “a product and a process, an end and means.” Therefore, it is not surprising at all that growth, like freedom itself, is at the heart of Dewey’s educational philosophy. The end of educational process, in his mind, is children’s continuous growth, intellectually and morally, through the reconstruction of their experience, especially by exercising their intelligence to cope with difficult problems and challenges that arise in natural and social surroundings. The meaning and purpose of schools, along with other important social institutions such as government, business, art, religion, Dewey asserts, is “to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And this is all one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility.”

286 Boisvert, John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time, p. 59.


288 Dewey, Experience and Education, p. 96-97.

CHAPTER 5
WHAT KOREAN EDUCATION SHOULD DO ABOUT CRISIS OF AUTHORITY

This study has attempted so far to present both an empirical analysis on the existence of a profound “authority crisis” in contemporary Korea and a philosophical examination of Dewey’s major works on authority and their connection to education. In this final chapter, three important educational problems in contemporary Korea will first be analyzed, especially in the relation to recent cultural shifts in Korea, and last the significance of Dewey’s philosophies for the redevelopment of Korean education today will be discussed.

Educational Problems in Korea

Lack of Moral Education

While Confucian thought, as mentioned in Chapter 2, has greatly shaped Korean culture and society, it has also been the main foundation of the philosophy of Korean education. Particularly, the Korean people have long respected Confucian tradition because of its strong emphasis on education as a means to achieve moral perfection. The importance of a moral life was in fact not just the creation of Confucian tradition in Korea. Korean people in ancient times before the adoption of Confucianism thought that heaven was the foundation of human conscience and thus believed that they had a moral
duty to heaven. Additionally, they thought that living a moral life was a way to please heaven and to avoid its punishment.\textsuperscript{290} The fear of heaven in turn led Koreans anciently to strive to live as more ethical human beings. Accordingly, when Confucian culture arrived in Korea during the three Kingdoms period (57 BC – AD 668), it was well-received and firmly embedded into Korean society.

According to Confucius, the development of moral character is the highest pursuit in human life. He thought that continuous learning on moral principles and the practice of virtue led to a superior person. Therefore, it is not mistaken to say that Confucian education is ultimately about moral education.\textsuperscript{291} When a man becomes wiser, Confucius believed that the man should turn his efforts to the betterment of others. In other words, the duty of a wise man is to teach others, especially youth, to become like them (the superior man), not by force or power but by upright example to build up a more ideal society. The cultivation of one’s moral character through education has thus become a focal point of traditional Korean life that leads to good consequences for others as well as for the individual self.

The pinnacle of moral education, needless to say, occurred in the Choseon dynasty (1392-1910 AD), a time of great prosperity in Confucian thought. Under the Choseon dynasty, moral education existed as the most important subject matter in Confucian institutions, whether they were higher educational systems or primary

\textsuperscript{290} Korea Ethics Studies Education, 1993, \textit{Korean Ethos}, Seoul: KESA.

In this period, moral education emphasized the importance of learning family and societal rituals as well as cultivating moral virtues. Even the knowledge of these rituals was tested on the national civil service examinations. Additionally, Choseon Confucian “scholar-bureaucrats” regarded morals as a discipline of higher knowledge, and it remained throughout the dynasty. For instance, the study of genealogy as one of the moral subjects (in connection with honoring ancestors), was highly valued by the ruling Yangban class. Notwithstanding the contribution of the development of moral studies to both the establishment of the Confucian family system and the existence of genealogical books, moral education during the Choseon dynasty was also used by the elite class to maintain social order and to demand the obedience of subordinate classes to their authority.

The importance of moral education and teachers’ moral authority based on Confucianism remained the central feature of modern Korean education even until the recent past military governments. For example, the educational curriculum instituted in 1973 required moral education as a separate subject matter in both elementary and secondary schools focused on the establishment of Korean-style democracy and virtues leading to modernization. Regardless of the different subject titles, all courses were focused on shaping the morality of students. In other words, Korean society not only


granted teachers the same authority as parents, but more significantly, attributed to them even greater responsibility for children’s moral and intellectual development. In such a circumstance in which the teacher is regarded as a moral exemplar and is given remarkable authority by parents to build up their children’s moral character, as Clark Sorensen observed, “the teacher’s word is law… The teacher’s proper role is to impart truth. It is a rare student that would question a teacher’s authority, whatever his or her private doubts.” Hence, teaching has been perceived as a highly respected profession in Korean society.

With the influence of Western democracy and the increasing individualism since the late 1980s, moral education and teacher authority has undergone a profound change, as previously mentioned in Chapter 2. More specifically, in the face of changing society in which the authoritarianism of the past is no longer sustainable, Koreans have increasingly accepted modern Western liberal values, resulting in a dramatic decline in obedience to, and respect for, authority, including teachers in the classroom. The trend is particularly visible among young people in Korea. According to a recent international survey, it is observed that Korean youths, among 17 Asia-Pacific countries, are most reluctant to accept the moral values of Confucian tradition and the least Confucian in

295 The titles of these subjects for elementary schools are “Right Life” (1st grade to 2nd grade) and “Morals” (From 3rd grade to 6th grade). In middle school the title of this subject is “Morals”, while the title for these subjects in high school are “Morals (10th grade)” and “Ethics (11th grade to 12th grade).” In high schools, while morals are separate, required subjects, ethics are separate and elective course. Regarding ethics courses, there are three sub-topics: modern life and ethics, ideas and ethics, and traditional ethics.


297 Ibid., p. 27.
terms of respect for adults or authority figures. Another survey conducted by the Korean Federation of Teacher Associations indicates that teachers themselves also perceive the speedy demise of the traditional Confucian value system in their work. The survey results show that many Korean teachers are currently experiencing increasing amounts of stress not only because of the overburden of classroom teaching and sundry administrative duties but, more highly, because of social criticism against them. Moreover, according to the survey, about 6 out of 10 teachers have expressed that their job satisfaction and morale has significantly declined during the recent years. 66.4 percent of respondents cited the loss of teacher authority on students and parents as the most significant impact on their satisfaction and morale.

There is no doubt that the problem of moral education in Korean schools today is closely associated with the decline of teachers’ moral authority, which has led to rapid erosion of the traditional Korean belief that moral values are transmitted through the voice of teachers. However, a more genuine problem of moral education in contemporary Korea is that, despite its success of rejecting the old authority and authoritarianism, it has failed to find a new authority for moral guidance. As a result, the confusion and uncertainty about moral education persists, and there has been an absence of authority in Korean schools. In this environment, Korean schools are rapidly moving toward only serving utilitarian or economic purposes rather than moral aspects of education.


The Extremes of Education Fever

Education in South Korea, until democratization in the late 1980s, was rigidly controlled by the government. For example, since the 1960s, the Korean government focused heavily on the expansion of primary, secondary, and higher education with a view of education as promoting economic development. Further, there was a tremendous governmental effort to create a more level field of educational opportunity. In 1968, the Ministry of Education controlled the enrollment processes of both public and private secondary schools and established a system that randomly assigned students to their schools in an attempt to prevent wealthier students from attending the best schools. Then, in 1974 in-school extra classes were banned and in 1980 the hiring of private tutors or the participation in after-school academies was prohibited to discourage students to get extra help outside of school. During periods of government restriction on education inequality, opportunities for economically advantaged young Koreans to study abroad were also extremely limited. Therefore, Koreans’ high zeal for education, deeply rooted by the Confucian culture that emphasizes the virtue of learning, was to remain somewhat dormant even though it was still present as an important factor in rapid Korean economic growth.

Nevertheless, with the emergence of democratic government in 1993, South Koreans have had greater educational freedoms as well as economic and political

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freedoms. In such a new circumstance, as addressed previously, the 1997 financial crisis has brought about increasing middle class insecurity, which has also led to intense competition among Koreans. The competition in a contemporary Korean society has been especially severe in the context of education. Since the crisis, distinction through degrees and diplomas from more prestigious universities as vehicles for class mobility and stability has become more important than ever before. Hence, there has been an education frenzy, shared by all classes, involving utilizing resources to gain access to some of the nation’s most elite universities and to obtain the skills that are perceived to be of greatest value in the global economy.

This frenzy among Korean parents to secure elite education for their children has resulted in not only high enrollment and advancement rates in primary, secondary, and college levels, but, more notably, the rapid explosion of the private educational market. For example, in 2003, the advancement rates from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school were 99.9 percent and 99.7 percent, respectively. More recently, as of 2008, the percentage of high school graduates who advance to universities

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302 In fact, the democratization movement during the 1980s and 1990s was the result of the improvement of education, a by-product of the military government’s efforts.


or colleges reached 83.8 percent, which is among the highest in the world.\textsuperscript{306} Despite this impressive factual information, Korean schools have been largely mistrusted by the general public because of their inability to cope with “too competitive, too exam-oriented with a single preoccupation to prepare students for college entrance exam.”\textsuperscript{307} As a result, Korean parents have turned to off-school private education opportunities such as private tutoring and cram schools in order to increase their children’s chance to enter one of the elite universities. In particular, as private education is considered to be useful in terms of scoring higher on the college entrance exam, it has become an indispensable part of a Korean student’s educational experience.\textsuperscript{308} Students and parents are thus more and more involved in private education, seeking out the best cram schools or private tutors in order to win the competitive educational race. As a result, there has been an explosion in the private market for educational advancement and advantage.

There is no doubt that wealthy families have taken the lead in private education and have intensified competition for entrance to the nation’s most prestigious academic institutions.\textsuperscript{309} However, in the particular context of Korea, where education has long been a cultural aspiration and often regarded as the most important class marker, all


\textsuperscript{308} Almost 90 percent of parents and students believe that off-school educational opportunities such as cram schools and private tutoring are beneficial in the preparation of college entrance exam. See Mee-Sook Kim, 2006, Educational Research at KEDI and Its Relations to Policy and Practice in Korea, The NIER Regional Meeting of Educational Policy Research and Development Institutes, Tokyo.

social classes have participated in the private market of educational competition. This fierce competition starts from a very early age, even with kindergarten-aged children, resulting in enormous financial burdens for most families. Korean families currently spend a higher percentage of their household income on children’s private education than any other OECD country. For example, as of 2003, the private tutoring expenditure in Korea amounted to 12.4 billion US dollars, which was equivalent to about 56 percent of the national budget on schooling.

Under the overheated examination race and private after-school activities, Korean parents have also gone though greater psychological distress. Particularly after the economic crisis of 1997, in order not to be left behind in the race to earn prestigious degrees, which will lead to better job and income prospects as well as elite social status, every parent in Korea increasingly “watches over others’ shoulders and wonders whether others are doing something better and smarter in preparing their kids for college entrance exams.” Perhaps not surprisingly, the most affected victims of Korea’s unbridled education fever are the children themselves. According to comparative studies, under the so-called “Exam Hell,” children in a contemporary Korea spend more time in studying

310 Notwithstanding class status becoming less important, such distinctions are still present in the Korean society and its people. However, unlike other periods of Korean history, the status in contemporary Korea is not inherited but is achieved through economic and/or educational success through hard work. In fact, economic success alone, without educational achievement, is often not enough to obtain elite status.


than any other country’s counterparts. While Korean young students spend the majority of their time on preparing for the fact-oriented and rote-learning centered college examination, postponing all other pursuits until after the exam, it is not at all surprising that their levels of stress and unhappiness with school life are considerably high. Korean students’ high levels of stress and unhappiness combine to delay their moral development and maturation. Unfortunately, these delays have led to depression, illness, and even sometimes suicide. Moreover, in an environment of the society-wide education craze in which Korean young people are compelled to memorize factual information only associated with college entrance exam, they have little time to freely explore their intellectual creativity and interests and enhance their physical and social development.


316 According to the each respective survey conducted by the Korea Teachers & Educational Workers Union and the Korea Youth Counseling Institute, almost half of the students reported contemplating suicide. The National Statistical Office estimates that as many as 1000 Koreans between the ages of 10 and 19 have committed suicide between 2000 and 2003, whereas the National Assembly by the Ministry of Education found that 462 middle and secondary school students committed suicide in the last 5 years. See James Card, 2005, Life and Death Exams in South Korea, Asia Times, November 30th; See also Meery Lee & Reed Larson, 2000, The Korean Examination Hell: Long Hours of Studying, Distress and Depression, Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29, p. 249-271.

A Clash Between Old and New Education

Another important educational problem in Korea’s changing culture is the clash of values between new education based on liberal democratic principles and the existing Confucian tradition of education. As stated before, after the democratization movement since the late 1980s, there has been a rapid emergence of democratic values in the public. In this context, with the establishment of Kim Young-Sam’s civilian government in 1993 Korea took significant steps toward consolidating its democracy. Korean educators began to realize the necessity of teaching democratic values as well as traditional values. Therefore, Korean educators proposed that students should learn democratic principles systematically starting at an early age.\(^\text{318}\) In the meantime, the economic crisis of 1997 has also become a strong force necessitating education reform in Korea. While the government brings the neo-liberalism economy model to Korean society, there has been a need for policy changes in education based on the direction of the society.\(^\text{319}\)

As a result, the Seventh National School Curriculum was introduced in 1998 and has been implemented gradually since 2000.\(^\text{320}\) This new school curriculum, featuring democratic and neo-liberal economic values, has substantially emphasized the need of giving students and schools more autonomy regarding their choice on curriculum, an emphasis absent from the curricula of the past.\(^\text{321}\) Furthermore, it portrays the desired


image of an educated person as a person who seeks individuality as the basis for the growth of the whole personality; a person who exhibits a capacity for creativity; a person who pioneers a career path within the wide spectrum culture; a person who creates new value on the basis of understanding the national culture; and a person who contributes to the development of the community on the basis of democratic civil consciousness.322

Contemporary education in Korea therefore aims to not only maintain traditional Korean values, but also seeks to cultivate western liberal democratic attitudes. In other words, it is a reflection of both adjusting with the rapid change of global society and trying to build a national identity and traditional pride.

Notwithstanding efforts to create consensus through a synthesis between traditional values and liberal-democratic values in Korean education, these value sets often conflict with each other in practice. As a matter of fact, since the implementation of the Seventh School Curriculum in 2000, there has been, like the two Korean political camps, a sharp division between conservative educators and non-educators who value the Confucian tradition of pride in education and liberal educators and non-educators who want to further schools’ democratic reform in a more progressive direction. Therefore, in Korea, where education is a national obsession, the fierce debate between these two educational camps, namely traditional conservatives and liberal progressives, easily finds its way into mainstream media. The former maintains that the Seventh School Curriculum, a student-centered curriculum, is designed according to the neo-liberal

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economic model and has devastated Korea’s long-standing tradition that promotes respect for education as the way to moral perfection as well as the authority of teachers. Additionally, they argue that the recent sweeping decline in traditional modes of teacher authority and the subsequent problems of student discipline will eventually lead to crisis in, or even collapse of, Korean schools.323

In contrast, many progressive educators are very much interested in providing students with a more democratic way of life. In fact, they believe that contemporary Korean education, in practice, is still far away from the aims and goals of the new curriculum, and that students have rarely had opportunities to build their individual talents, aptitude, and creativity, especially under the national obsession with college entrance exams and the persistence of shadow education. Hence, the progressive camp publicly demands the need for fundamental changes in Korean education system, arguing that it is still centered on teachers, schools, and discipline rather than the characteristics of democratic education such as emphasis on children, individualism, and freedom.

One of the most prominent progressive organizations is the Korean Teachers and Education Workers’ Union (KTU), the first nationwide teachers’ union since the 1961 military coup. The KTU was founded in 1989 with a vision of ChamKyoYook, which literally means true education. The principles of ChamKyoYook include the following: “we educate for a democracy, we teach gender equality, we promote human rights, we implement the school curriculum creatively, we respect and develop student autonomy,

and we confront the absurdities of our education system.” However, the KTU, because of its strong progressive nature, was soon made illegal and harshly suppressed by Roh Tae-Woo’s military regime and even the conservative civilian government under Kim Young-Sam. In 1999, the KTU was eventually legalized by the progressive administration of Kim Dae-Jung; it has played a leading role in the nation’s educational reform since then, advancing democracy and human rights education.

More recently, with the establishment of Lee Myong-Bak’s conservative administration in 2007, the KTU is again facing direct and unremitting confrontation regarding issues of educational policy and practice. As the conflict between the current Lee’s government and the KTU intensifies, and as both sides of the debate seem unwilling to find a harmonious combination of traditional and progressive educational values, the chasm of disagreement among Korean people and interest groups is also deepening and widening. The intensifying conflict and direct confrontation regarding values in education has thus become one of the most serious social problems in Korea.


The Significance of Dewey for Contemporary Korean Education

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), an English mathematician and philosopher, once observed that John Dewey (1859-1952) was “the typical effective American thinker” and “the chief intellectual force providing that environment with coherent purpose.” When the University of Paris awarded Dewey an honorary degree in 1931, the citation described him as “the most profound and complete expression of American genius.” Few in contemporary America would dispute on Dewey and his massive contribution to America’s intellectual life. For example, Henry Steele Commager, an influential intellectual historian, declared that Dewey was “the guide, the mentor, and the conscience of the American people: it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that for a generation no major issue was clarified until Dewey had spoken.”

Morris Cohen, one of Dewey’s strongest critics, provides another example of Dewey’s brilliance by confidently asserting that “John Dewey is unquestionably the pre-eminent figure in American philosophy; no one has done more to keep alive the fundamental ideals of liberal civilization; and if there could be such an office as that of national philosopher, no one else could be properly mentioned for it.”

I have no quarrel with these assessments regarding Dewey’s influence on American life. I, however, contend that we must not fall into the trap of believing that


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Dewey’s philosophies belong and apply only to America. More precisely, as James Wheeler pointed out in 1954, we should “not allow their truth to cause us to forget that Dewey’s views are of vital import and provide a coherent purpose to any environment where men are not afraid of freedom, where inquiry is treasured, and where diversity is recognized as one of the great hopes and not the despair of man.”331 In short, the philosophical and educational thoughts of John Dewey are of great relevance and importance in a modern society. His contributions gain even greater importance when we think more seriously about the necessity of education and its proper place in a rapidly changing democracy.332

For this reason John Dewey’s thoughts on education are especially applicable to contemporary Korea, a land in which there has been an upsurge in democratic aspirations in both society and education during the recent decades. The question for current Korean education is similar to the question Dewey raised in the early twentieth century about American education.333 The question is how to understand education and teacher authority in light of modern democracy and individualism.


333 A detailed comparison between America in Dewey’s time and contemporary Korea is outside the scope of the present dissertation. However, it should be mentioned that Korea, as we have seen in Chapter two, is currently experiencing significant social, economic, political changes as did Dewey’s time (See Zu-Han Lee, 2000, A Study on Educational Programs to Realize Social Democracy in Dewey’s Philosophy, The Korean Journal of Philosophy of Education, 23, p. 73). Most of all, the problem of authority in Korea, which is raised by these dramatic cultural changes, is similar to, if not exactly the same, the problem the United States faced back then.
In the remaining text, I discuss what specific application Dewey’s ideas on authority might have in Korean education today. First, it is the idea of integration, not conflict, between authority and freedom, which is at the heart of his philosophy. As previously noted, in Korea the traditional aim of education was to provide the means to become a superior, cultured man, or what has become known as the Confucian gentleman. Such men were to take their place as teachers through living ethical principles; therefore, teachers, and their authority were highly respected by the traditional society in Korea and thus so did their authorities. However, as we have discussed, this is not the case in Korea today. With the influence of western liberal democracy and individualism in Korea, while the decrease of teacher authority is obvious, students and their parents do not hesitate to challenge existing authority in schools. In such circumstances, Koreans increasingly tend to see teacher authority and student freedom as opposing forces, and thus insist upon one at the expense of the other. This dualistic approach, as Dewey observed, is frivolous because it will not only provide an incorrect analysis of the problem of authority and freedom but will also present no solution to the problem.

In other words, Dewey’s call for a non-dualistic understanding offers Korean education important insights in confronting the challenges of authority crisis and moral education. First, those who approach the problem of authority from a non-dualistic standpoint will observe that the principle of authority is not necessarily a threat to the principle of freedom. Because the opposition of these two principles is unreasonable and unnecessary, it is important then to understand how authority relates to freedom. In Deweyan schools, students need authority or discipline as much as they need freedom, and these two principles are thus partners, not antagonists. Second, Dewey’s non-
dualistic systems of thought will not allow us to rush to judgment or to conclude that Korean morality, especially among the young generations, is “lost” in the isolation of widespread Western individualism, and that there is thus an urgent need for the restoration of the traditional authoritarian teacher in the classroom. Third, Dewey’s non-dualistic view of freedom and authority would enable Korean education to avoid falling into the trap of complete or absolute rejection of any form of authority by so readily indentifying freedom with the absence of authority. By so doing, it subsequently suggests the need of Korean education to search and develop a new educational authority that can provide individuals with vital directions and effective freedom in a rapidly changing and complex society. Fourth, with respect to moral education, Dewey’s non-dualism implies that the intent is not to impose or indoctrinate some ready-made standards and traditions on students, but rather to help them make responsible and intelligent decisions. Moral education for Dewey, therefore, extends over all aspects of human conduct and experience, resulting in the notion that all free and deliberate choices are in the domain of moral judgment and significance. In short, Dewey’s idea of integration forces Korean schools to consider new, heretofore unseen, alternatives; it further compels school and policy makers to be more rigorously involved in solving the problems of authority crisis and moral education, instead of residing in the easy but perilous refuge of the dichotomy that crudely oversimplifies the issues.

The Second of Dewey’s ideas that is relevant for Korean education is Dewey’s elevation of intelligence to the status of authority. For Dewey, intelligence is the ability to frame worthwhile aims and organize a means to carefully execute and realize them. This means that intelligence is not something to be quantified but is rather a process. The
business of a teacher, he argues, is to help students to develop such intelligence and continually grow in that power. In contrast, as we have seen, the business of a teacher in contemporary Korean education is to prepare students only for college entrance exams. Students, especially in secondary schools, learn only the content that might relate to the examination; schools, to a great extent, ignore some subjects, such as history, geography, music, and physical education because they simply do not have much weight on the entrance examination. In such an excessive test-driven education fervor, Korean students spend most of their time on rote learning.

From a Deweyan perspective, it is obvious that Korean education deprives its students of the opportunity to assist the practice and growth of their intelligence. With the focus of Korean education on improving test scores, its students’ outstanding performance in international competition standardized tests is not at all surprising. However, if we take Dewey’s view of intelligence seriously, as much as Korean students’ excellent performance on standardized testing can be the distinguishing feature of Korean educational success, it can be also the mark of the failure of Korean education. This is because Korean education is, in the midst of a test-driven education system, failing to help children develop their capacity to think clearly and to judge critically by not furnishing a proper learning environment for both moral development and non-moral learning in schools. Additionally, Dewey’s view of intelligence allows Korean schools to reconsider the meaning of “intelligent being” at a practical level. More specifically, Dewey’s concept of intelligence as the quality of process, rather than a fixed quantity, would suggest that the test scores cannot accurately represent the academic or intellectual abilities of Korean students. In other words, students who have obtained higher scores on
school subject tests or college entrance examinations that feature only a few overemphasized subjects do not qualify as intelligent beings. The application of this view on Korean education would be to pay attention to many different aspects of intelligence and, subsequently, give a balanced emphasis on cultivating those varied qualities that include artistic, original skills and organizational, discerning abilities in the assessment of college entrance exams as well as in the school curriculum and practice. All in all, Dewey reminds Korean educators that while the freedom of intelligence is the only freedom of enduring importance, the continued development of intelligent reflection, judgment, and action is the way to become genuinely free.

The Third of Dewey’s relevant ideas is the collective and democratic model of authority. It is based on shared ideas and understanding, and its development is dependent on free and continuous participation by all individuals. Accordingly, it is a democratic authority that rests its claims on communication. Dewey’s democratic conception of authority is especially noteworthy for the contemporary Korean education system. Since the 1987 civilian uprising, on the one hand, Korea has made significant strides toward building a democratic society. On the other hand, however, in the process of dismantling authoritarianism, Korean society has encountered a rapid decline of social cohesion and widening conflict among interest groups. Particularly, through the economic crisis of 1997 and the subsequent neoliberal reform, Korean democracy has become a competition for material wealth and survival in the harsh competitive environment. As a result, Koreans increasingly experience a loss of community and undergo profound segmentation and specialization of modern life. Liberal economic ideas have entered deeply into educational settings in Korea. In the name of efficiency, a
top-down approach prevails in Korean education. The decision-making process is highly centralized, and schools are filled with hyper-rational, policy-driven goals. While the implementation of policy takes precedence over the education of children, schools themselves are competing with each other for their own survival in order to increase the numbers of students who enter more prestigious universities just as much as children in the classrooms try to get ahead of their classmates. In such a circumstance, schools function as a place to learn the same things in the same way at the same time and that discriminates against children on the pretense of standardization. Those students who are left behind the completion are often falling into, or are at the greatest risk for, delinquency.

From Dewey’s stance, the solution to these problems in contemporary Korea is not to return to the restoration of arbitrary authority. Rather it lies in the establishment of an authentic democratic authority based on shared common interest, communication, and experience. With regards to education, the solution is to create a more democratic learning community in which all individuals, not just the teacher, can participate in the exercise of educational process and power. More specifically, it is the cooperative and intelligent classroom community that stands as authority by engaging a give and take discussion and formulating classroom procedures and polices. In such a democratic setting, it is clear that education is more than going faster toward determined goals, and is not like modern capitalistic corporations that teem with cost-benefit analyses. It is, moreover, not just for a few privileged students who take advantage of unhealthy competition and achieve at the expense of others. Instead, education is concerned with the growth and development of every life. While diversity among children and variation
in their development is respected, every teacher is honored as a leading contributing member to the richness of the school community.

Therefore, Dewey’s vision of democratic schools offers Korean education a balance between individual initiative and communal cooperation. It urges students to explore their interests and strengths, and to share them with others through the intelligent leadership of the teacher. For example, in a Deweyan school, instead of solely piling up facts or information in the children’s head in a quiet classroom, the teacher would give students, both individually and collectively, time to investigate social and environmental issues that are of interest to them and present their findings to their classmates in accessible means, modes, and formats of communication of their choice. With the multiplicity of experiences that students bring into the classroom, collaboration and communication could be challenging and often intimidating. However, as Dewey understood, the challenge of these cooperative activities would open up the possibility of bringing enrichment to one’s own experience as well as offering the other students. The effort to communicate with others would help students to get out of their own comfort zone and perspectives. It would encourage students not only think for themselves to find ways to connect, and share their ideas, with others, but, perhaps more importantly, learn to think from, and show respect for, other people’s perspectives. Thus, as teachers allow and encourage collaborative learning and communication in their classroom, they are indeed helping children to live in a democracy and develop a more democratic society.

It was Dewey’s conviction that the real problem of a modern educational institution is not about the inherent weakness of human nature or democracy, but it is
about its failure to promote democracy. His call for a democratic reconstruction of education based on the principle of experience is in fact an attempt to make education a unified process and to build its integrity. If Dewey were speaking to Korean educators today, he would say that:

In society and in the schools there is a whole series of conflicts between older and newer ideals, beliefs, practices. The confusion and incoherency are due to this conflict. The creation of a unifying aim in education in its relation to society does not mean that educators need a blueprint of what society should be, and then teach according to it. They do need a sense of direction of movement. It is possible to exaggerate greatly the direct influence of schools upon the formation of social and institutional life. It is not possible to exaggerate their responsibility with reference to the effect of what they do upon the formation of the attitudes, intellectual and moral, of the youth who are to determine the direction future society will take. The unity that was the product of the almost unquestioned acceptance of old aims and procedures has been lost through the invasion of studies, methods, courses, and types of schools that correspond to social forces that have grown in intensity and significance. To carry on we need a clearer vision of the new forces and the courageous will to make them victorious all along the line. Without the vision we shall continue to be confused. Without the courageous will we shall be dismayed at the powerful interests that are eager to defeat the educational process in order to make the schools the subservient instrument of their own special purposes, and shall, whether knowing it or not, retreat from the struggle without having put up a fight for the integrity of education.

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335 John Dewey, November 1985, The Integrity of Education, The Education Digest, 51(3), p. 11 (This address was delivered before the Michigan Schoolmasters’ Club, April, 1936, at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and originally published in The Education Digest, 2 (3), November, 1936).
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