

The Role of Youth in Realizing the Efficient Local Government

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Abstract:

John Dewey (1859-1952), one of the greatest political philosophers of the twentieth century. His ideas on the nature of the philosophy, education, society, and politics has been the source of great debate. Democracy, for John Dewey, is emphatically not just a form of government; it is an ethical way of life. And yet, historically, it is in a state of fragility, due to the ascendancy of liberal individualism and market holism, which are practically unable to meet the social needs of the day and threaten to eclipse the public that is essential for democracy to survive. Exposing the politics of liberal individualism, and the huge inequalities it generates, Dewey suggests replacing its social forms with those of the scientific community of inquiry and its ethos of experimentation and co-operation. Dewey thus separates the pathologies of modernity (the social forms associated with individualism and capitalism) from its qualities (the scientific progress achieved through intelligent interaction and mutual learning), by recommending in the public sphere the same innovation responsible for such huge technological advances. But in doing so, Dewey, and, less excusably, his contemporary admirers, neglect the politics of democratic experimentalism, failing to explain its manner of concrete resistance (or, in hindsight, its capitulation) to the pathologies of modern capitalism, and to consider, in a more general sense, the significance of political power and political action. This neglect, it is suggested here, undermines the contemporary revival of Deweyan pragmatism as a public philosophy committed to democracy as an ethical way of life.

Keywords: John Dewey, political thought, pragmatism, participatory democracy, democratic society