

Dewey and Kuyper:
A Common Grace in the Public Sphere

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ABSTRACT

Calvinism and Pragmatism may not seem to present similar religious significance for politics. However, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and John Dewey (1859-1952), share a similar appreciation for the scope and depth of religiosity in public life. Although Kuyper was a Christian and Dewey did not consider himself a theist, each understands religious experience as informing every sphere of existence. According to their thought, a distinction exists between *a* religion and *the* religious. Both men may be termed “political poets,” because they used language as an expression of their esthetic imaginations to create concepts and objects within society as expressions of their religious values.

Kuyper’s work in the Netherlands is a useful case study for Dewey’s valuation of art. Kuyper published scholarly works in political philosophy and theology, founded the first widely distributed national newspaper, wrote for this publication over fifty years, founded what would be the largest university in the country, and eventually became Prime Minister of the Netherlands. Throughout his life, he used rhetoric to create change in his society.

Dewey and Kuyper integrated academic work with public activity and sought to obtain consistency of being in experiences. If religiosity potentially encompasses every part of humanity’s common life, then individuals and groups should be aware of their own positions and participate in honest dialogue with others. “Neutrality,” “objectivity,” and “uniformity” often have problematic implications according to Dewey and Kuyper. Their thought in this area is salient to a discussion of education culture in the United States. The Common School and High-Stakes Testing models are useful for grounding Kuyper’s and Dewey’s philosophy in current educational and schooling experiences.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Christian apologist C.S. Lewis once wrote about a certain schoolboy who “thinks he is ‘doing’ his ‘English prep’ and has no notion that ethics, theology, and politics are all at stake. It is not an idea [that the educators] are putting into his mind, but an assumption.”¹ Is the waterfall in the story really “sublime,” or does the boy only have “sublime” feelings? Two men spent their lives attempting to clarify such implicit assumptions. As a pragmatist and signer of the Humanist Manifesto, John Dewey (1859-1952) would not appear to have a complementary dialogue concerning religiosity with the Dutch Calvinist politician and pastor Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). However, even though the two espoused different religious orientations, they had a common appreciation for the pervasive scope and depth of the religious life.

In this thesis I will discuss Kuyper’s and Dewey’s views concerning an “intervening religiosity” and apply their thought to the context of public education in the United States. Primarily, my goal is to use Kuyper and Dewey to create a more useful dialogue between the public and private spheres concerning religious experience. In order to meet this end, I will argue that all of life is necessarily religiously informed. If religiosity potentially encompasses every part of humanity’s common life, then individuals and groups should be aware of their own positions and participate in honest dialogue with others. “Neutrality,” “objectivity,” and “uniformity” often have problematic implications according to Dewey and Kuyper.

There is no evidence that either man considered the other’s work. In their extant English writings, neither references the other. It also appears that no secondary source has yet compared Kuyper and Dewey. After searching the journal and book literature, I

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 5.

discovered no matches linking them. Furthermore, I have not found journal articles or books that compare Deweyan pragmatism or progressivism with Kuyperian political philosophy in the Netherlands more broadly. For “Kuyperians” Dewey often serves as a straw figure target. Many “Deweyans” treat Calvinism in a similar fashion. In placing Dewey’s Democratic Religious Humanism next to Kuyper’s public theology, however, numerous parallels emerge. Commonalities include shared perspectives on the scope and role of the religious as well as its meaning for public involvement on earth.

Each man left the mark of his ethos throughout the public and private realms. Dewey was the most socially engaged philosopher of the era. Kuyper founded the largest university in his country and the first nationwide newspaper, and he became Prime Minister of the Netherlands. Dewey was widely considered “America’s philosopher” because of his decades’ long status as the nation’s most public intellectual. However, he was roundly criticized and then marginalized within academic discourse toward the end of his life and in the years following. Nevertheless, he has had a resurgence of interest associated with him in the past three decades. Kuyper, internationally renowned at the beginning of the twentieth century, has fallen out of scholarly consideration and is read widely only within certain religious sects. It is important to bring these two into dialogue, especially in light of the increase in Dewey’s popularity/notoriety and Kuyper’s continuing obscurity. Surprising possibilities appear when one considers the religious commonalities existing between such seemingly mutually exclusive perspectives on religion.

On the surface, it may seem random to choose such a currently obscure figure as Kuyper to compare with Dewey. Indeed, there are higher profile figures in the twentieth

century such as Reinhold Niebuhr who participated in debates with Dewey concerning the application of religiosity to public life. However, Dewey's interaction with other Christian thinkers and/or activists did not turn on the religious issues that a conversation between him and Kuyper might. Dewey and Kuyper have similar appreciations for the intervening function of religiosity. Many of Dewey's conflicts with Christian political actors stemmed from their practice of secluding religion from other areas of life. He saw it as problematic to focus on "getting to heaven," or "sin" to the exclusion of working toward the growth of one's community. Kuyper had similar reservations. Exploring what their religious commonalities entail for the relationship between the public and private spheres may open new possibilities for growth among communities of any faith.

Through being educated in a Christian community and by reading numerous Christian political scientists and theologians, I also have realized that many hold to "Kuyperian" principles without being familiar with Kuyper. Or, they have significant commonalities with Deweyan Pragmatism while, because of tertiary impressions, demonize him. Placing Dewey and Kuyper in dialogue hopefully will clarify many points of commonality between a broad Christian community and those who utilize Deweyan Pragmatism. Moreover, I want to challenge those within any community to consider Dewey's and Kuyper's conception of permeating religiosity in the public sphere. More than just the two men, I desire to provide grounds for a collaborative relationship between *communities* that have a history of academic and social contention. Many times dissension is based on ignorance of another's perspectives.

In this thesis I try to rely on primary sources wherever possible. Because of the limited amount of material available by Kuyper in English, use of secondary sources is

necessary in order to add texture to his life and writings. Also, two major secondary works on Dewey will provide contextual insight. However, the main objective is to compare their primary works and to provide a fresh approach that helps close the gap in scholarly literature between Calvinism and Pragmatism. This will lead to applying what is common in Kuyper's and Dewey's religious perspectives to the relationship between the private and public spheres in United States elementary and secondary education.

In what follows, Chapter Two will use Dewey's and Kuyper's thought to explain the relationship between, and the implications of, the terms "religious" and "religion." Both men made it clear that religious activity permeates beyond the bounds of an institutional religion or set of doctrines. Although Dewey did not adhere to an idea of the supernatural as Kuyper did, they both shared a view of human community that appreciated the possibility of people from many faiths working together toward common goods. Specifically, I will discuss how they appreciated an expansive religiosity. Following this, I will describe the fruits that such a religiosity creates. These include "freeing inquiry" and "freeing morality." For each man, pretenses of uniformity or neutrality contribute to bondage of the will and inhibit vision within and for communal life.

Chapter Three moves from the breadth to the depth of religiosity. I will relate the ways that Dewey and Kuyper appreciate an intervening religiosity. For them, it penetrates every person and sphere of experience. Activities or modes of being, such as poetry, are expressions of an intervening religiosity. Creation occurs within, without, and among people through the exercising of religious imaginations and what Dewey labels "functions." Change and adaptation are central components of this process. Kuyper's

political career in the Netherlands is descriptively useful for showing how a wide and deep religiosity is applied in concrete activity within a community. Throughout, I will argue that Dewey and Kuyper are “political poets.”

In Chapter Four I apply the religious concepts of the preceding chapters to a prominent education culture in the United States. I discuss the origins of the educational worldview in the U.S. and describe central values, assumptions, and purposes associated with the growth of public education. The Common School and High-Stakes Testing models are two of the most prominent models of education throughout the history of the country.

I hope that applying Dewey’s and Kuyper’s worldviews to a prominent discourse in contemporary society will be beneficial for several reasons. Debates rage over the role of religion in public education. However, there should be more emphasis on the religious influence that the stated ends of schooling have on the means involved in reaching them. Appreciating the relationship between means and ends was a primary concern for Dewey, and his holistic approach resonates with Kuyper’s idea of the unification of being. Responsibility extends to every member of a participatory democracy. It is important for all those involved to articulate their values and exercise what Dewey calls “functions,” even when they may be going in the face of current cultural trends. The works of Dewey and Kuyper represent how historical activity may continue to create within present society.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SCOPE OF RELIGIOSITY

Dewey and Kuyper embrace the unification of the ideal and actual through applying religiosity across the entire realm of human existence. In this chapter, I will show the ways that Kuyper and Dewey argue for its expansive scope. I will demonstrate how various Deweyan and Kuyperian religious concepts aid in distinguishing “religion” from “the religious” and also show how this distinction opens a way for collaboration between the two men. In so doing, their visions will be useful in arguing for the expansive scope of religiosity throughout life but most notably in *public life*. They are after all more than two “dead men.” Their historical works are valuable because it is possible to give them a living application. The areas that Dewey and Kuyper relate most to each other under the heading of expansive religiosity are in freeing inquiry and freeing morality. Community is enriched by these liberties. I will describe these commonalities in more detail after I discuss how Dewey and Kuyper have a similar perspective concerning a wide religiosity in general.

Religiosity’s Expansive Scope

Kuyper spent most of his life’s work spurning the “partial character” of religiosity. He comments that it is “impossible for a Calvinist to confine religion to a single group, or to some circles among men. Religion concerns the whole of our human race.”² Like Dewey, Kuyper embraces a worldview that is intentional, active, and integrated. Knowing oneself and concepts of being also figure prominently in his conception of religiosity. Although Kuyper integrates Christian theology in his discourse on religiosity, he endeavors to make the matter accessible to those from any faith. He never uses the term “religiosity” and seems not to attribute any distinctive meaning to the

² Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace, 2001), 33.

term “religious” as Dewey does. However, it is clear to see from Kuyper’s work that he embraces an extra-religion perspective that seeks to integrate a religiosity throughout all life.

Kuyper’s notion of a common grace allows for a religious/religion distinction to be made in addressing his thought. Kuyper understands the Christian as receiving a special grace but acknowledges that God’s common grace is poured out on all of creation.³ This common grace allows “the light of the Eternal...to radiate over the whole world.” Total religion makes for total life. For a Calvinist, like Kuyper, the world belongs to God, and therefore it is humanity’s task to “know God in all his works,” not “limiting himself to theology and contemplation.” In this view, religiosity must not be kept in isolation, must not be for the sake of self to tame mystical fears, but must exist for the sake of God, seeking the good of the world.⁴ Later, I will show that implications of this idea weigh heavily on Kuyper’s application of the religious to politics.

Dewey writes that “[t]he chief danger...in our practical religious life, is the tendency for the religious life to become a sphere by itself, apart from the interests of life and humanity. The healthy religious life knows no separation of the religious from the secular...”⁵ This use of the word “chief” clearly demonstrates the preeminent and wide-ranging position he ascribes to religiosity. It is a priority that he sustains, albeit in different ways, throughout his long career. In framing his etymological understanding of religiosity, Dewey writes:

[T]here is a difference between religion, *a* religion, and the religious; between anything that may be denoted by a noun substantive and the quality of experience

³ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 33.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Steven C. Rockefeller, *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (New York: Columbia, 1991), 163.

that is designated by an adjective. It is not easy to find a definition of religion in the substantive sense that wins general acceptance. However, in the *Oxford Dictionary* I find the following: “Recognition on the part of man of some unseen higher power as having control of his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship.”⁶

Epistemological and ontological considerations are necessary to follow Dewey’s perspective in this area. His description of the processes of “self-realization,” “growth,” “habit,” “personality” and “function” shed particular insight into understanding how he contextualizes a permeating religiosity. It also provides a way to contextualize his distinction between religion/religiosity.

Even while rejecting the supernatural, Dewey resonates with Kuyper in claiming a potential universal application of the religious. Like Kuyper, Dewey rejects “man in isolation.” His concern with supernatural religion is that it “regards the drama of sin and redemption enacted within the isolated and lonely soul of man as the one thing of ultimate importance.”⁷ However, he does accept the word “God” in the sense of actualizing the ideal.⁸ Similarly, Kuyper rejects a dualism between nature and grace or science and faith.⁹ Along with Kuyper, Dewey recognizes the religious as permeating all domains of life. For Dewey, the religious does not originate from a religion but the inverse: “...whatever introduces genuine perspective is religious, not that religion is something that introduces it.”¹⁰ Experience through an intervening imagination and the

⁶ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (1934), *Later Works*, Jo Ann Boydston, ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 9: 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 79.

¹⁰ Dewey, *Common*, 17.

change of will characterize the religious.¹¹ This process entails “adjustment.”¹²

Knowledge may be understood as an extension of the religious; it is developed through “intellectual habit, method and criterion.”¹³ The intent of this epistemological accumulation is to effect growth and self-realization within community.

Like Dewey, Kuyper understands the wide scope of religiosity interwoven in the fabric of human relationships. He writes that “God deposited an infinite number of nuclei for high human development in our nature and that these nuclei cannot develop except through the social bond between people.”¹⁴ Just as religiosity may not be separated from public life, religiosity exists within and among personalities. Nature interacts with multifaceted personalities in a growth toward the unification of the actual and ideal. This relationship is significant in grasping the pervasive scope of religiosity. Every individual has a personality but there also may be one or many collective personalities. Certainly for Kuyper, the Church body acted as a unified whole, each member participating according to their function. Therefore, “personality” is significantly more than a description for a single individual. Instead of the cosmos being a glass jar filled with marbles, Kuyper would understand it as being one marble with varied hues and textures. People and nature are connected together within a common condition that does not include dualisms. As

Vincent Bacote comments:

If the Christian life is confined to the soul, Kuyper argued, then the rest of life is separated from any kind of grace, and ordinary life becomes unholy. To the contrary, Kuyper asserted that Christ, who created the world, is connected to

¹¹ Dewey, *Common*, 11-18.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴ Abraham Kuyper, “Common Grace,” in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 178.

nature by virtue of the Creator/creation relationship and to grace by virtue of his role as redeemer and ultimately re-creator of the world. In making this connection, Kuyper aimed to demonstrate that the biophysical order is not set against grace in a mutually exclusive fashion. If grace and nature are not radically separate, then it is possible to speak of common grace.¹⁵

Because nature and grace are reconciled, human activity proceeds cooperatively, with *confidence* in growth and productivity. Kuyper wrote the political platform for his party; in it he argued:

We regard as incontrovertible the assertion that the laws governing life reveal themselves spontaneously in life. In the very process of painting and sketching and performing and sculpting our artists discovered the laws for the artistic enterprise. And it enters no one's mind to consult the Bible or ecclesiastical authorities when it comes to learning what the purpose of art is...The same is true of the laws which govern our thinking, the laws which govern commerce, and the laws which govern industry. We learn to know the laws of thought by thinking. By doing business we discover the art of commerce. Industry blazes its own path. The same is true for political life. To deny this truth is to fall short of respect for the Creator.¹⁶

Here, Kuyper echoes Dewey's advocacy of "intellectual habit, method and criterion" in the face of *a priori* dogma. For Dewey and Kuyper, the wide scope of religiosity entails responsible and communicative inquiry that is adaptable. Although Kuyper's phrasing is different, he certainly would promote a Deweyan sense of "growth" and "self-realization" in this context.

Continuing to demonstrate the unfettered religious quality, Kuyper frames the scope of religiosity in the first of his *Lectures on Calvinism*, claiming Calvinism as an

¹⁵ Vincent Bacote, *The Spirit In Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 99.

¹⁶ Abraham Kuyper, "The Antirevolutionary Program," in *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society*, ed. James Skillen and Rockne M. McCarthy (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 242.

“all embracing life system.”¹⁷ His perspective on Calvinism is enlightening because it shows how he applies a distinction between a religion and religiosity. In defining what he means by “Calvinism,” Kuyper first approaches the question negatively. He rejects applying Calvinism in a sectarian, confessional, or denominational way. Instead, he chooses Calvinism as a “scientific” name, “either in a historical, philosophical or political sense.”¹⁸ Kuyper understands Calvinism as a label, or form of identity, but also sees it transcending sect, reaching into all areas of life. Furthermore, he claims Calvinism as being a pure expression of Protestantism that has developed past the oppressive confines of a Lutheran church-state such as Germany.¹⁹ Thus it is a living doctrine that seeks to reflect absolute divine Truths. Even though there is an “absolute” for Kuyper, he recognizes that humanity is in a process that continually uncovers more of God’s character.

Since he agrees with Kuyper’s experimental perspective, Dewey views the properly applied religious life as necessitating activity. His faith is one “in the possibilities of continued and rigorous inquiry.” The religious quality transcends fear, which would lead to superstition, and instead pursues an activity “in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction...”²⁰ Dewey, with Kuyper recognizing common grace, places the religious experience on a universal level that transcends sect and doctrine: Hence, the distinction between religion/religiosity. For both, it is the common endeavor of humanity not to shrink back from inquiry. According to Dewey, “The mind of man is being habituated to a new

¹⁷ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰ Dewey, *Common*, 19.

method and ideal.” The road to truth runs through “patient, cooperative inquiry operating by means of observation, experiment, record and controlled reflection.”²¹

--Freeing Inquiry

Dewey’s approach to truth relates well to Kuyper’s understanding of liberty in science. Both value the freedom of science to speculate and err without fear of censorship from the Church or State. For each, the realm of personal conscience leads to internal and external change. According to Kuyper, institutional meddling in the affairs of science contradicts a view of a permeating religiosity. If the religious potentially encompasses all of life, it must move through organic communities, not simply being the voice of a particular institution. Kuyper demands liberty for science from the encroachment of both Church and State.²² This is different than arguing for freeing science from religious influences.

In his discussion of scientific inquiry, Kuyper asserts that “[l]iberty is for genuine science what the air we breathe is for us.” Referencing the oppression of science in the past, Kuyper laments the “dichotomy of body and soul” that manifested itself in the Church and State.²³ In such an environment, dominated by “ecclesiastical jurisdiction” and the “judgment of the civil Court,” “[f]ree inquiry was not known.”²⁴ Therefore, true science finds its home within religious and political life but resides in its own sphere that is distinct from the Church and State. Science is distinct from religion but permeated with religiosity.

²¹ Ibid., 23.

²² Kuyper, *Lectures*, 76-77.

²³ Ibid., 76.

²⁴ Ibid., 77.

Kuyper relates how Church and State suppressed bold inquiry, describing the tired, dead-end perspective that claimed “everything knowable and worthy of being known was known already.”²⁵ Conversely, Kuyper asserts that “[f]ree investigation leads to conclusions.”²⁶ Because all of life is religiously informed, whatever one chooses to do or be must be applied across the entire realm of human existence. Whatever characterizes a “scientific man” must appear “not only in the faculty of theology, but in all faculties; in [one’s] entire world and life-view; in the full reflection of the whole world-picture from the mirror of...human consciousness.”²⁷ This relates back to Kuyper’s lecture on religion. The question is posited: can religion remain “partial in its operations or has it to embrace the whole of our personal being and existence?” Refuting its abstraction, he answers: “It may not remain partial, as running alongside of life, but must lay hold upon our whole existence.”²⁸ Thus, for Kuyper religiosity encompasses all domains of human life and through our choices intervenes directly.

Likewise, in addressing religious experience, Dewey maintains that the religious quality is not “marked off” from parts of life. Rather, a genuinely human approach to the aesthetic, scientific, moral, and political contains a religious quality.²⁹ It is the intervening imagination, leading to choices, selecting values and functions in experience that forms the value of the religious for Dewey.³⁰ He comments that “[f]aith in the continued disclosing of truth through directed cooperative human endeavor is more religious in quality than is any faith in a completed revelation.”³¹ This statement would seem to place

²⁵ Ibid., 77.

²⁶ Ibid., 79.

²⁷ Ibid., 81.

²⁸ Ibid., 27.

²⁹ Dewey, *Common*, 9.

³⁰ Ibid., 8, 13-14, 18.

³¹ Ibid., 18.

a wedge firmly between him and Kuyper. As has been described, however, Kuyper places no limitation on scientific inquiry.

In a sense both men believe in continued revelation, at least as far as natural inquiry is concerned. For Kuyper, inquiry is the continued uncovering of what has been established by God in Creation. Community across religions is possible and profitable because of a sustaining common grace. This is how to relate the term, “religiosity” to Kuyper. Dewey strives to emancipate the religious from religion to accomplish the same end: freedom from restricted inquiry. To use Dewey’s language, Kuyper would deny a “monopoly of ideals” to Calvinism, or to Christianity for that matter.³² Together, Dewey and Kuyper would seek to unify language into a method of inquiry for all of life.

--Freeing Morality

There is at least one more unlikely area of comparison between the two concerning a wide religiosity. Dewey’s theory of valuation and Kuyper’s conception of holiness directly relate to religiosity in the public sphere. They both place the importance of morality in the context of its *freeing* quality. Although they have different reasons for holding that good morals are freeing, the practical applications are similar. From this, the main way in which Kuyper and Dewey may be compared concerning morality relates to their conviction that it is not possible to be “value-neutral.” Their disposition toward recognizing a diversity of values and that some are more “good” than others influences their celebration of morality’s freeing function. Hence they were led to favor pluralism, not uniformity³³ in public life. This will factor in heavily later in the thesis. For now, it

³² Ibid., 20.

³³ Here, the word “uniformity” is understood to imply a deductive approach that begins with the premise that, in general, values are equal and reasoning from this starting point. This is opposed to a view that

will be enough to look at how they apply a wide religiosity to their value-systems. I will first show how each view the freeing quality of morality and then describe the implications this has for opposing “value-neutrality.”

--Dewey and Freeing Morality

Unification of subject and object become especially important for how Dewey connects morality and freedom. He writes: “Every action which is not in the line of performance of functions must necessarily result in self-enslavement.”³⁴ Therefore, good morals are a source of freedom. Individuality results for the self as a result of the exercising of function,³⁵ and “only the good man, the man who is truly realizing his individuality, is free, in the positive sense of that word.”³⁶ Therefore, it can be seen how there is a clear moral responsibility according to Dewey. He argues that the practice of morality is a freeing activity because it moves along with the “correct” functions of humanity.

The ethics of self-realization are key to coming to terms with his notion of “function.” Self-realization entails an active relationship between particular environments and individual capacities, advancing the well-being of the individual.³⁷ For Robert Westbrook, Dewey’s notion of function was

not a term necessarily describing how a particular person fit or functioned in a given society but a normative concept prescribing how a person *should* fit in that society so as to maximize the development of his capacities...for Dewey, the relationship between individual capacities and environments was one of *mutual*

aims for uniformity as a good thing but works up to this by facilitating actual diversity and limiting observed depravity.

³⁴ John Dewey, *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics* (1891), *Early Works* 3:304, 313.

³⁵ Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1991), 43.

³⁶ Dewey, *Outlines*, 344.

³⁷ Westbrook, *American*, 43.

adjustment, not a matter of the one-sided accommodation and powers to a fixed environment. “True adjustment” did not mean “bare conformity to circumstances, nor bare external reproduction of them.” It could often mean asserting oneself against one’s surroundings.³⁸

The “unity of the self” arises from Dewey’s theory of moral valuation as it expresses the expansive scope of religiosity. He writes:

The unity of the self would stand in no opposition to the particularity of the special desire; on the contrary, the unity of the self and the manifold of definite desires would be the synthetic and analytic aspects of one and the same reality, neither having any advantage metaphysical or ethical over the other.³⁹

In Dewey’s quest against dualisms, a unification of a theory of valuation, metaphysics, and epistemology is crucial. Because the wide religiosity finds itself within and among people’s relationships, there may be no dualisms between personalities and environments. Individual yearnings are not kept separate: “The moral self, Dewey argued, did not distinguish itself *from* its special desires but rather defined itself *in* them.”⁴⁰ In other words, a person is what he or she does.

At first glance it seems like a very long stretch, but Dewey relates religiosity to the human condition without the supernatural in a similar way as Kuyper does with it. Unseen forces, through experiences, affect changes of will. Consider the passive context that Dewey places the self in relation to religiosity: “Conviction in the moral sense signifies being conquered, vanquished, in our active nature by an ideal end; it signifies acknowledgement of its rightful claim over our desires and purposes. Such

³⁸ Ibid., 43.

³⁹ John Dewey, “Green’s Theory,” (1893) *Early Works*, 4:50-53.

⁴⁰ Westbrook, *American*, 65.

acknowledgment is practical, not primarily intellectual.”⁴¹ This quote in isolation could very well have been taken out of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. When one is *conquered* by an ideal for the purpose of meaningful growth, it creates a freedom from atavism and blind degradation. The self is unified intrinsically and with the world through practical activity. The “old man,” to use Pauline language, is progressively subdued as desires, purposes, functions, and imagination are habituated toward the good.

To paraphrase a Reformed catechism: “What is the chief end of Man for Dewey?” The answer may remain consistent with the catechism with the exception of one word: “To glorify God and enjoy *it* forever.” The evidence for this consistency is supported as Dewey writes that “there are forces in nature and society that generate and support the ideals. They are further unified by the action that gives them coherence and solidity. It is this *active* relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name ‘God’.” Although “God” here is not an absolute or supernatural and Dewey is not adamant that the word necessarily be used, it points to the reverence that he has for a unified whole.⁴² It also suggests that Dewey did not ever quite rid himself of the possibility for the mystical and spiritual within every part of existence.

One of the main ways in which a wide religiosity makes itself salient in the arena of ethics is its approach to the issue of relativity or value-neutrality. Although Dewey was a pragmatist (or an “experimental naturalist,” as he seemed to prefer), he in no way advocated moral relativism, at least not as it is widely understood today. He certainly believed that it is not useful for people to set down, once and for all, normative codes of conduct that are true for all times and circumstances. However, his understanding of the

⁴¹ Dewey, *Common*, 15.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 34.

human common life forbade him from accepting Jeremy Bentham's and John Stuart Mill's conception that the good is to be found in the greatest pleasure. According to Rockefeller,

Dewey's naturalistic principle of growth, the dynamics of personal development finds its source of vital energy in desire and interest, but the self is dependent upon society for its development. It realizes its identity in and through the give and take of cooperative endeavor. The way to grow, counsels Dewey, is to cultivate shared interests and to contribute to the common good, which includes friendship, citizenship, science, art, education, and manufacture of goods....personal growth in Dewey's view is intimately related to moral growth.⁴³

Several things become apparent from this. First, it is once again evident how a wide-ranging religiosity is at play here. Growth, self-realization, identity, and community are all directly linked to morality. This, for Dewey, is religiosity in action as it covers all behaviors among people. All of these qualities exist throughout every area of life: Hence, all of life has religious potential. Or, more actively, all of life is *necessarily* religiously informed. Most importantly, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Collective imagination persisted in having a spiritual significance for Dewey and may be related to Kuyper's conception of the Holy Spirit's work effected through common grace. For Dewey, when one member of a community harms another it is degrading to all of the others. Why care if you harm everyone else according to this standard? He would reply that in harming others you do damage to yourself as you are irremovably linked to your fellow humans. It is for these reasons among others that Dewey refers to himself as a "religious humanist," and not a "secular humanist."

⁴³ Rockefeller, *John Dewey*, 430.

--*Kuyper and Freeing Morality*

Kuyper likewise frames his conception of morality in terms of the possibility it offers for freedom. Rather than a “theory of valuation,” he approaches the issue of morality in a theological manner. As has been indicated, however, he does not deny that a person from any faith may practice moral conduct. As a Calvinist, he understood righteousness as being in line with the character of God, revealed in scripture and in creation. Natural principles point toward the holiness of God. Therefore, when a person practices righteousness it leads toward a community with God, while immorality, or “sin” as Kuyper would call it, leads to the darkening of the eyes and the utmost selfishness. It is destructive for the individual and for the rest of humanity.

In his *Lectures*, Kuyper consistently describes religion in its pervasive function over the entire realm of life. His treatment of morality is no different. In the area of ethics, Kuyper answers questions relating to the subjects and objects of morality, and in his emphases on “Why?” the freeing aspect of good morals comes through. However, before addressing the freeing quality of morality, he reminds the audience once again of the expansive scope of religiosity. Kuyper comments that “...there are ordinances of God for our bodies, for the blood that courses through our arteries and veins, and for our lungs as the organs of respiration. And even so are there ordinances of God for the whole of human life in the domain of morals.”⁴⁴ This links back to his commonality with Dewey in that both appropriate the realm of religiously informed, curious inquiry into the most intricate parts of existence. But it also demonstrates how Kuyper appreciates the non-dualistic relationship between nature and grace, or body and soul. This anti-Cartesian emphasis is another commonality with Dewey.

⁴⁴ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 43.

As Kuyper goes on, he ties morality with personal and collective duty. In a sense, good morals free one to do their duty. It is apparent how his religiosity permeates his ethics as they are applied to all parts of life. He writes that it

remained the special trait of Calvinism that it placed the believer before the face of God, not only in His church but also in his personal, family, social, and political life. The majesty of God and the authority of God press upon the Calvinist in the whole of his human existence. He is a pilgrim, not in the sense that he is marching through a world with which he has no concern, but in the sense that at every step of the long way he must remember his responsibility to that God so full of majesty, who awaits him at his journey's end.⁴⁵

It is especially striking here that Kuyper's religious perspective is so similar and yet completely divergent from Dewey's. In *A Common Faith*, Dewey uses similar journey-related metaphors, as when he writes that "whether or no we are, save in some metaphorical sense, all brothers, we are at least all in the same boat traversing the same turbulent ocean. The potential religious significance of this fact is infinite."⁴⁶ However, it is the *purpose* of the voyage that they disagree on. They often may agree on *how* to row the boat but they mostly disagree on *why* they are rowing or the reason for continuing. Nevertheless, the expansive scope of religiosity continues to resonate between the two.

In Chapter Three I will argue that Dewey and Kuyper were political *poets*. They both engaged in creative functions in society through the language arts. Even though decidedly different in form and personality, they both influenced and enforced growth with the power of their words. The following quote from Kuyper is an excellent example

⁴⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁶ Dewey, *Common*, 56.

of how his rhetoric supports his worldview, specifically his religiously-informed morality:

...in every disturbance of the normal life the believer has to strive as speedily as possible to restore his spiritual respiration, according to the moral commands of his God, because only after this restoration can the inward life again thrive freely in his soul, and renewed energetic action become possible. Therefore every distinction between general moral ordinances, and more special Christian commandments is unknown to him.⁴⁷

According to Kuyper, true morality is necessarily religiously informed, monolithic in its applicability to all of life; it functions as respiration for the soul. Rather than being a dry, confining set of “Thou shalt nots,” Kuyper views the good moral life as unfettering the being for active and joyful engagement in every sphere. Good morals and obedience to God are a gift of grace, not an action undertaken to earn grace. A bifurcated morality and religiosity are not an option for Kuyper. The alternatives as far as he is concerned are between self-deception and the intentional pursuit of a unified but yet adaptable worldview.

Far from being a mere list of rules, God-given truths are a compass that leads toward true happiness. Human community is a potential means of grace that enforces a fellowship under God’s righteousness. As John Bolt comments, “[Kuyper’s] version of Calvinism not only promoted but also prompted Christian public engagement in all areas of life. In certain arenas, this engagement was to take place in the midst of society in general. Either way, he called Christians to recognize and accept their responsibility to

⁴⁷ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 43.

discover God's ordinances and to develop the potentialities of Creation."⁴⁸ These processes and perspectives are what Kuyper would term the pursuit of holiness.

The above quotes from Kuyper reinforce his conviction of the inter-relatedness of morality with every area of existence as they flow from the religious affections. This position is similar to Dewey's, and both would argue strongly for a moral *awareness*. In whatever sphere of life one is involved, the morals one embraces, or not, should be a directive influence upon *action*. This cannot happen if one is unaware of their moral frameworks and how they necessarily guide life as an extension of their religiosity.

A prominent moral awareness is linked to the concept of possessing a distinct moral *position*. Kuyper and Dewey are adverse to any claim of "value-neutrality." In addition to being a means for self-enslavement, ethical ambiguity inhibits conversations both at the individual and the public levels. But more than merely creating confusion, it opens the door for manipulation of and tyranny over those who do not practice ethical introspection. Kuyper used the full force of his rhetorical skills in combating the forces at work in his own country that he discerned exercising political influence toward such degrading ends. His mission often was two-fold, exhorting his readers to be self-equipped to be morally responsible citizens and taking the arguments of his opponents head-on to expose the positions that they were unwilling to claim for themselves. The following is a typical expression of Kuyper's polemics in action, drawing on visual imagery as well as parable in combat pretended neutrality:

If multiformity is the undeniable mark of fresh and vigorous life, our age seeks to realize its curse in its quest for uniformity. Its attempts to blend all shades into the blank darkness of the grave are becoming ever more obvious. Ever more shrilly it

⁴⁸ Bolt, *Free*, 82.

cries out that our modern society, everything, however distinctive in nature, must be shaped by one model, cut to a single pattern, or poured into one fixed mold. It is like the ancient outlaw [Procrustes] who, myth tells us, compelled every traveler he could catch to lie on an iron bed, cutting off their legs by as many inches as they were too long and stretching those who were too short until each completely and precisely fit its dimensions....By filing away all that is uneven and buffing up the natural ore it aims at the mirrorlike smoothness in which no semblance of uniqueness can ever be found again. Indeed, it hacks away at the green wood of the tree trunk of life until neither sprig or twig can ever sprout from the skeletal trunk again.⁴⁹

Secular humanism, as mentioned earlier, was a common foe of both Kuyper and Dewey. The above quote is in the context of Kuyper's polemics against secular humanism as it emerged from the revolutionary worldview in eighteenth century France. He viewed "Modernism" in his own country as infecting society with the same obtuse anthropomorphisms that perpetuated chaos in France. The next chapter will describe Kuyper's perspectives as they revealed themselves within specific political debates such as the contest over free education in the Netherlands. Here, I will relate how he contextualizes the "curse" of uniformity more broadly as an extension of his expansive religiosity.

Modernism of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was characterized by a spirit of accommodation for incipient speculation and theory. Lip-service was given to diversity and progress as being equally pertinent to the furtherance of humanity. The elements of a "modernist" worldview were not tied to one particular sect. They could be found in various denominations or firmly in the grip of atheism.

⁴⁹ Kuyper, "Uniformity, the Curse of Modern Life," in *Centennial*, ed., Bratt, 25.

However, their point of origin was that they lifted up human reason and achievement as the hope for the future. E.H. Kossman relates the story of the Spinoza statue, which is “perhaps more revealing than all liberal theories, laws and economic achievements.”

Spinoza was honored as the “glad messenger of adult humanity,”...as the man who had raised true wisdom above religion and its conflicts, who had completed the Reformation, and whose spirit called upon the Dutch people of the nineteenth century to ennoble society by moving beyond all religious disunity and social prejudices...The liberal statues of this period, which adorn countless towns and villages in the Netherlands...were to carry to the illiterate masses the joyful tidings not only of a glorious future but also of a national past during which centuries ago the emancipation of mind and people had already begun.⁵⁰

For the people in this environment, symbolism existed as an abstraction from wisdom and thought. Religion did not permeate; it merely supervened through the adoration of idols. Kuyper probably viewed this as being sad and pathetically ironic, given that these monuments were idols of reason. The people remained largely ignorant but increased in their revolutionary militancy as they followed their “enlightened” leaders.

The French Revolution’s notion of “liberty, equality and fraternity” is a worldview founded on bondage of the will, according to Kuyper. He views “false unity” producing a process leading “through uniformity to unification, by centralization toward Caesarism.” The end result is tragic: “...the victory of that false unity will be celebrated on the ruins of what land and folk, race and nation, had that was peculiarly their own.”⁵¹ Diversity is a luscious fruit from the tree of honesty. For Kuyper, moral ambiguity and

⁵⁰ E.H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 207.

⁵¹ Kuyper, “Uniformity,” 24.

militant collectivism cannot value the uniqueness of character and perspective that he sees as so intrinsic to the good society.

Safeguards for freedom exist because of national differences: “the peoples’ diversity of character, the ineradicable uniqueness of their ethnicity...time and again broke up imperial unity at almost the moment it was created.”⁵² In opposition to false-uniformity, Kuyper once more waxes poetic as he proclaims: “Uniformity in God’s creation! No, rather infinite diversity, an inexhaustible profusion of variations that strikes and fascinates you in every domain of nature, in the ever-varying shape of a snowflake as well as in the endlessly differentiated form of flower and leaf.”⁵³

Kuyper and Dewey agree in denouncing dualisms between activities and morality. Kuyper does not understand the dogmatics of religion as a separate entity, with the “moral life with its ethics as a second entity alongside of religion...” Rather, identifying with Calvin, Kuyper states that “[l]ove and adoration are...themselves the motives of every spiritual activity, and thus the fear of God is imparted to the whole of life as a reality—into the family, and into society, into science and art, into personal life, and into the political career.”⁵⁴ Dewey did not embrace the “fear of God,” but he certainly proclaimed a respect for the Good. This entailed an extension of personal love and adoration to the common endeavor of humanity, where one’s own morality either freed or enslaved the individual within the larger body. A fitting conclusion to this chapter is Dewey’s closing of *A Common Faith*:

The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours

⁵² Kuyper, “Uniformity,” 24.

⁵³ Ibid., 34.

⁵⁴ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 44.

is the responsibility of conversing, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Dewey, *Common*, 57.

CHAPTER THREE: INTERVENING RELIGIOSITY AND POLITICAL POETRY

The cooperative endeavor that Dewey described can rely on many tools for the beneficial growth of communities. The means of growth, such as aesthetic functions, are intimately connected with both themselves and the end-in-view that they work to construct. People have common means, ends, and tools as they labor together toward perceived goods. However, the tools that they select along with the manner that they use them involve distinct religious perspectives.

This chapter has two main components. First, I will describe Dewey's and Kuyper's conception of an intervening religiosity. The main thrust will be to provide a context for their conceptions of the intervening quality of religiosity in preparation for describing how it may be applied to political life. Differences in their motivations for an intervening religiosity help set the background for the following sections. I will analyze their positions separately and then compare them, integrating their philosophy of creation.⁵⁶ Next, I will attempt to show how the permeating application of poetry to thought and action is a central commonality between Dewey and Kuyper, possessing an embryonic quality for creativity in society. Therefore it will be necessary to convey how each embraces poetry, along with the means by which they understand it driving religiosity into the depths of common life, enforcing creation therein. Discussing Kuyper's career in the Netherlands will contribute to this end, helping to clarify both his and Dewey's philosophy. I will conclude by arguing that they integrated and applied the means and ends of poetry in such a way as to make "political poet" a fitting label for each.

⁵⁶ Here, "creation" refers to human achievement, not a direct supernatural act.

Intervening Religiosity: Dewey

Dewey frames an intervening religiosity around the subject of identity.

“Adjustment” is an important concept for him in this respect. It is instrumental in processes of growth, integrated with religious experience. Westbrook writes that:

Dewey was careful to emphasize that undergoing or “adjustment” was not a passive stance but an active intervention in the environment. “The most patient patient, is more than a receptor. He is also an agent—a reactor, one trying experiments, one concerned with undergoing in a way which may influence what is still to happen.”⁵⁷

Through adjustment in experience, religious affections are appropriated, values created, actions undertaken and creation results. According to Dewey,

Experience was not a purely mental phenomenon, but an interaction between organic beings and their environment and hence “a matter of functions and habits, of active adjustments and readjustments, of coordinations and activities, rather than of states of consciousness.”⁵⁸

Concerning personal adjustment, Dewey recognizes a “change *of* will” rather than a “change *in* will.” Religiosity intervenes directly, permeating every part of our being; imaginative extension is its expression. Compared to a supervening religiosity, an intervening perspective would take personal interaction with external factors as implying an integrated self. The mental state is not set aside from other activities. The unified self may be realized when imagination mixes with action. Dewey writes that “the difference between imagination that only supervenes and imagination that intervenes is the difference between one that completely interpenetrates all the elements of our being and

⁵⁷ Westbrook, *American*, 127.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

one that is interwoven with only special and partial factors.”⁵⁹ Change is central to this concept. There is human change in relation to the world and when this change takes place, Dewey understands a religious attitude functioning.⁶⁰

Supervening religiosity is linked with bifurcation and dualisms between the various spheres of existence:

Except as it intervenes, “all observation is observation of brute fact, all discipline is mere repression, until these facts are digested and this discipline embodied in humane impulses become the starting-point for a creative moment of the imagination, the firm basis for ideal constructions in society, religion, and art.”⁶¹

Supervening religiosity is not conscious of how imagination impacts every area of life. It views sacred feeling as being isolated from “secular” activity. According to this line of reasoning, communication may happen in a “neutral” manner, unaffected by one’s religiosity. Furthermore, “secular” dialogue does not have to *convey* one’s religiosity in one degree or another. Dewey, on the other hand, maintains that one’s religious convictions are necessarily interwoven throughout all personal and public interactions. He would argue for the open acknowledgement of a permeating religiosity, not pretenses of uniformity or neutrality.

Real societal growth may result from this honest confrontation of diversity. Dewey views creation as a consequence of the intervening religiosity. He writes that “The idea of a whole, whether of the whole personal being or of the world, is an imaginative, not a literal, idea. The limited world of our observation and reflection becomes the Universe only through imaginative extension.” Actual facts and ideal

⁵⁹ Dewey, *Common*, 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

possible ends are united through imagination. Thus, imagination is used to strive for the realization of the whole world or the whole person, through a process that necessitates adjustment.⁶² In many ways, this resembles what a Christian would call “living by faith.” Its end may be “God” in that for Dewey, this process pursues the end of uniting the ideal with the actual. He writes that “all endeavor for the better is moved by faith in what is possible, not by adherence to the actual.”⁶³ Thus, creation may be seen as a means to this end. However, it is not kept in view through verbose doctrinarism, but through a unified and developing language of action. For Dewey, creation results from an active intelligence that is communal and integrated. He reminds the reader that the “essentially unreligious attitude is that which attributes achievement and purpose to man in isolation from the world of physical nature and his fellows.”⁶⁴

Process is a central concept for Dewey. Through intelligence, people may observe how growth occurs in and among them, thereby learning how to enhance it. Habit, according to Dewey, is a primary force in the process of enhancing human nature. “He gives the term ‘habit’ a broader meaning than is usual: ‘The essence of habit is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response.’ Habits are acquired in the sense that they are built up by prior activity. They are also ‘projective, dynamic in quality’ and guide behavior.”⁶⁵ The capacity for intelligent thought precedes habit but grows and is enhanced by it.

Intelligence and habit, as they enforce growth, lead towards forming the good self. According to Dewey, the most fundamental human problem is unifying the ideal and

⁶² Ibid., 14.

⁶³ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁴ Dewey, *Common*, 18.

⁶⁵ Rockefeller, *John Dewey*, 337.

actual. When one engages in this process, a religious *experience* occurs and necessitates the involvement of one's entire being. The implementation of intelligence and habit should be directed toward discovering the interrelationship between instrumental goods and final goods.⁶⁶ The meeting of these two elements is an extension of Dewey's broader goal of unifying means and ends in search of the good. Rockefeller comments that the "ends are only realized by means, and means to ends always involve use of some form of force, that is, power or energy."⁶⁷ As the previous chapter mentioned, Dewey would argue that one is what one does. According to his "ethics of growth," choice is a binding element: "Choice is something more than spontaneous selection. It involves deliberation, that is, the weighing of opposing values and alternate courses of action. Choice is knowing selection."⁶⁸ It is also a key element in the development of the self:

Dewey insists that the self is essentially identical with its active interests, purposes, and choices. There is no self apart from these activities. The core of the self is formed and defined by the concrete things about which it cares and by the choices which it makes in pursuit of these things. He writes that "*interest* defines the self" and "the self reveals its nature in what it chooses." Dewey uses the term "habit" to comprehend these fundamental activities which constitute the self. The active interests and preferences of the self are conceived by Dewey to be certain formed dispositions or habits.⁶⁹

Intelligence, habit and choices, as they move with imaginative extension, make possible the individual and collective adjustment that causes the change necessary to continue the process of growth. Personality develops and creation becomes possible.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 253.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 294.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 430.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 424.

The “natural transaction” is a term that Dewey uses to describe this growing process. It may be viewed as a catalyzing force or occurrence for the intervening religiosity. An experience is necessarily involved in the social context of the natural transaction and is a product of the intervening religiosity. The self is irrevocably linked with one’s surroundings: receiving and giving. Westbrook comments that “Qualities were felt, but they were not merely feelings; they were objective features of natural events. ‘Things are beautiful and ugly, lovely and hateful, dull and illuminated, attractive and repulsive. Stir and thrill in us is as much theirs as is length, breadth, and thickness.’”⁷⁰ When there is an actual realization of an end-in-view or ideal, a “consummatory experience” occurs. Rockefeller writes that for Dewey, “such consummatory experiences are what make life worthwhile.”⁷¹ Dewey places the intervening religiosity at the heart of his philosophy: “According to Dewey, the deepest consummations enjoyed in experience involve realizations of the beauty and harmony of existence that include a religious quality, and his theory of the continuity of the ideal and the actual provides a foundation for his naturalistic theory of the religious experience.”⁷²

Humility and reverence are necessary within this religious consummation because very little may be said to be possessed entirely by the self. “[Q]ualities of experience required an experiencer but they did not belong exclusively to that experiencer. They belonged to the experience, to a natural transaction.”⁷³ Dewey came to use the term “experience” and “culture” interchangeably. Later, it will become significant to examine the political implications of this. For now, it is enough to note that Dewey’s “natural

⁷⁰ Westbrook, *American*, 76.

⁷¹ Rockefeller, *John Dewey*, 395.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 397.

⁷³ Westbrook, *American*, 76.

transaction” severely limits any depiction of him as a secular humanist. The self is linked in a community where the profits from the transactions belong to all.

Intervening Religiosity: Kuyper

Kuyper’s idea of religiosity also intervenes directly into the essence of life and also is conflated with identity. Hence, it is not simply limited to the ethical, as Kant would have it, or to the “retreats of sentiment,” as Kuyper understands its application by the mystics of his own time. In the lecture on Science, Kuyper claims that by common grace God “interfered in the life of the individual, in the life of mankind as a whole, and in the life of nature itself.” Like Dewey, Kuyper recognizes the importance of the mind, or intellect, in being an expression of the religious. Kuyper likens the intellect to a “religious organ” that should apply itself to the full range of human endeavor.⁷⁴ Thus, the religious function does not supervene. He proclaims that “the ideal remains unchangeable, that every creature must be immersed in the stream of religion...A religion confined to feeling or will is therefore unthinkable to the Calvinist.” It is not “confined to the closet, the cell, or the church.”⁷⁵ The religious organ must encompass all of our being and guide our action in all spheres of life. There is thus a relation to Dewey’s extension of the imagination and a common appreciation of an intervening religiosity. The two differ on the source of identity.

Kuyper’s conception of identity forms the basis for understanding why he made so much of the antithesis between a “modernist” worldview and his own. What was at the root of the schism? One theme in particular hovers over his work: the polarity between

⁷⁴ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 31.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

the abnormal and the normal worldviews. This is a grounds for the divergence between Kuyper's and Dewey's conceptions of religiosity.

Fundamentally, Kuyper saw different origins in epistemology between those who viewed history as progressing "normally," through human innovation, and Christians who saw history and knowledge as being supernaturally imposed upon. This is a crucial element behind his understanding of an intervening religiosity. Because of the Fall, human sin, and hence the need for a savior, Kuyper asserts that Christians are called to see the world not as normal but as being owned by a sovereign God that created, redeemed and is thoroughly involved in moving it. If the world were allowed to progress normally, all of humanity would have been destroyed because of God's demand for justice. But because of Christ's atonement, blessings are poured out upon believers, non-believers, and Creation in general.

Concerning religious identity, Kuyper poses the question, "Must religion be normal or abnormal?"⁷⁶ He proceeds to describe a modernist, enlightenment mindset that views "religion" as functioning in much the same way as evolution.

According to this view, the first traces of religion are found in animals. They are seen in the dog who adores his master, and as the homo sapiens develops out of the chimpanzees, so religion only enters upon a higher stage. Since that time religion has passed through all the notes of the gamut. At present it is engaged in loosening itself from the bands of Church and dogma, to pass on to what is again considered a higher stage, namely, the unconscious feeling for the Unknown Infinite.⁷⁷

Kuyper contrasts the Biblical principles that he embraces with having one's identity severed from the supernatural in a purely evolutionary manner. He asserts that

⁷⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

first man was made perfect, and then because of sin, he languished in a “lamentable degeneration.”⁷⁸ This rebellion against God, in a Calvinist worldview, is the “source of all human misery.”⁷⁹ Only in the soteriological sense does Calvinism realize the “restoration of the true religion...”⁸⁰ Kuyper does not deny that humans have made outward progress over the centuries, but he claims that the “moral condition of the human...remained the same throughout.”⁸¹ His normative approach to a depraved human nature, follows.

Mercy, however, intervened through the wrath poured out on Christ, and ensured that universal blessing would be received in all realms as a gift of God’s grace. This is the foundation for Kuyper’s understanding of how religiosity intervenes into all of life. Kuyper expounds the worldview that emerges from his conception of propitiation and common grace. For him, Christians possess an abnormal identity, in a normative sense, and should strive to apply it throughout all areas of life. However, Kuyper resonates with Dewey because he would claim that what one supports and sustains, both externally and internally, should inform one’s identity. Motivation should be driven by the same affections, according to Kuyper. Therefore, like Dewey, Kuyper values *process* in the creation of loyalties that form one’s identity.

Kuyper also promotes a call to public stewardship, given that all of life has been blessed and upheld by God. Flight and solitude are not necessary, but rather Christians are to be a part of the creation that God has blessed. However, a key component of an abnormal identity entails un-shrouding the lines between such religious philosophies as

⁷⁸ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

modernism and Christianity. This relates to Kuyper's polemics against pretenses of neutrality and uniformity.

An invisible, interventionist God provides the motivation for Kuyper's participation in continuing the work of creation. As has been described, Kuyper recognizes God's sustaining influence through a common grace. This grace distributes itself on people and on the world. For Kuyper, "the work of redemption [through Christ] is not limited to the salvation of individual sinners, but extends itself to the redemption of the world..." Because Calvinism recognizes an interventionist supernatural God, it "puts an end once and for all to contempt for the world, neglect of temporal and under-valuation of cosmical things."⁸² In Calvinism, Kuyper comments that studying nature is the deciphering of divine thoughts.⁸³

[A]ttention may not be withdrawn from the life of nature and creation; the study of the body regained its place of honor beside the study of the soul; and the social organization of mankind on earth was again looked upon as being as well worthy an object of human science as the congregation of the perfect saints in heaven.⁸⁴

The result of this worldview for Kuyper is that people should assume continued supernatural intervention and use this as a source of confidence in the possibility of cooperative growth and the necessity of human action. These possibilities reveal the "light-side" of the antithetical elements in his worldview and his pessimism about human nature.

⁸² Ibid., 72.

⁸³ Ibid., 73.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Intervening Religiosity: Comparing Dewey's and Kuyper's Perspectives

Kuyper and Dewey have significant differences concerning religious identity. Dewey believes in the possibility for human nature to release itself from the historical encumbrances represented by the supernatural dogma of original sin. Therefore, he uses different arguments than Kuyper in describing how people may learn ways to control human nature. For Dewey, human nature is a descriptive term without the normative quality that Kuyper attributes to it. Moral, intellectual, and aesthetic growth toward the good is possible through cooperative dialogue among humans and their communication with the forces of nature. Identity forms in a social context as moved through an intervening religiosity, characterized by attaining ideal ends in the face of obstacles. According to Dewey, the process entailed in the natural transaction between instrumental and final goods provides hope for humanity to attain the Good.

Kuyper, on the other hand, views identity with an abnormal eye. Human progress through science and intelligence means little if the soul remains separated from the supernatural God. If one rejects the love of their creator, any numbers of trains, telephones and AIDs vaccines would be of ultimate insignificance. For him, an intervening religiosity means that a Christian has to place their primary loyalty to the God that has permeated their entire being with grace. However, Kuyper understands true joy flowing from involvement in all human undertakings and struggles. These efforts serve as a way to demonstrate God's love to the world. Therefore, his method of applying the intervening religiosity remains similar to Dewey's. They would be willing participants in the cooperative human endeavor where the extension of the entirety of being is the goal.

Political Poetry: Kuyper and Dewey as Political Poets

Intervening religiosity produces continuity and consistency between human and natural experiences. Ignoring intervening religiosity has, historically speaking, resulted in serious consequences. As public philosophers, Dewey and Kuyper understood that the thought nurtured within religious and academic institutions must not be restricted to these confines. According to Westbrook, Dewey recognized that “philosophy could not be a special science, and certainly not Science itself, but instead had a significant role to play as a powerful form of cultural criticism grounded in moral imagination and disciplined by the knowledge provided by the special sciences.”⁸⁵ Therefore, the more abstract observations concerning intervening religiosity and imagination have actual connections to events in common life. Kuyper and Dewey both saw the danger of secluding thought from action, being from doing. The glue that each used to connect the ideal and the actual involved the esthetic experience, namely poetry.

In surveying Dewey’s and Kuyper’s work and the literature associated with them, it is apparent that they had a very similar appreciation for the role of the esthetic within society. Consider the similarity between the two that is revealed in the following quotes. First, Kuyper scholar John Bolt:

Was reason not sufficient to mobilize the revolutionary vanguard and provide the vision for change? Paris and Tiananmen suggest to us that political imagination perhaps precedes effective political strategy and that a political vision, communicated through symbol, myth, and even ritual, may be necessary to provide the passion for political ideas and the energy required for political success. This leads us to wonder whether art in general (visual or literary) plays a

⁸⁵ Westbrook, *American*, 140.

significant political role in a nation by imaginatively providing a social vision for its citizens. Is art politically useful or—stronger—even necessary?⁸⁶

Also,

[P]oet [is] the functional mantle for Abraham Kuyper's many-sided career....Kuyper was fully aware that, to use Shelley's phrase, "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."⁸⁷

And Dewey in *Art as Experience*:

Shelley said, "The imagination is the great instrument of the moral good, and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause."...the power of imaginative projection is so great that he calls poets "the founders of civil society."
...Shelley's statement goes to the heart of the matter. Imagination is the chief instrument of the good.⁸⁸

The concept of poetry has distinctive meaning in Dewey's and Kuyper's lives and work. Themes included within religiosity--imagination, creation, truth, and knowledge--inform an understanding of their poetic vision. It is critical to place art and poetry in a partnership when exploring Kuyper's and Dewey's ideas here. Dewey engages the concepts of poetry and art throughout his work. For him they are integral to the imaginative extension. Kuyper also devotes considerable attention to the permeating function that the arts and poetry have within society. As the quotes above suggest, he also places imagination as central to creation in public life.

However, it is most useful when trying to illuminate their respective views to frame Kuyper as an *example* of Dewey's esthetics, using Kuyper's comments and life

⁸⁶ John Bolt, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper's American Public Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2001). 16

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁸⁸ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (1934), *Later Works*, Jo Ann Boydston, ed. (Carbondale: Southern University Press, 1987), 10: 350.

work to demonstrate his consistency with or divergence from Dewey. The volume of material by each on the subject is only partly responsible for this approach. In his writings, Dewey went into greater depth than what is available from Kuyper in English. Yet, Kuyper's poetical practice in his political endeavors also is a case study of Dewey's philosophy. This is where the comparison between the two in the realm of esthetics finds its primary significance for this study.

Poetry operates under the umbrella of art but also has special connotations in its own right. Unless indicated otherwise, when I use "art," poetry may be included within it. I will begin by describing Dewey's and Kuyper's appreciation and contextualization of art and show how it emerges from the two men's conception of an intervening religiosity, providing their political visions with a poetical quality. Once again I will treat them independently and then compare them. Next, I will describe how communication exercises a poetic function in society and furthers the work of creation for Kuyper and Dewey.

--Political Poetry: Dewey and Art

As Dewey emerged from his absorption in Hegelian idealism, progressing toward empirical naturalism by the early twentieth century, he began to rethink the role of the religious and the significance of the ideal. Throughout his long career, however, he reserved a place for the mystical and spiritual in his philosophy. Dewey's treatment of the esthetic consummation in *Experience and Nature* and *Art as Experience* explicitly demonstrate how he uses poetry and art as functions of an intervening religiosity. For Dewey, love, imagination, and the spiritual experience may be as "real" as any academic observation.

Rockefeller notes that Dewey viewed “the religious consciousness [as having] its origins in the social consciousness of a people.” Therefore it “evolves as an expression of the intellectual, moral and aesthetic values that lie at the heart of a people’s life together”⁸⁹ This thesis is primarily concerned with using Kuyper’s and Dewey’s lives and work to reconcile religion between public and private life. Art, for Dewey, is a central element in this endeavor:

He defines art as any “mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession.” He further asserts that “science is properly a handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue.” In other words, art is intelligent practice that is “inherently and immediately enjoyable.” In this fashion, Dewey seeks to reconcile art and science, the aesthetic and the practical.⁹⁰

In other words, just as all of life is religiously informed, the esthetic is a binding force throughout all spheres of human existence: an expression of permeating religiosity.

According to Dewey, understanding the meaning of an experience is germane for grasping the relevance of art for life. In the continuing endeavor to actualize the ideal, a primary end is found in reaching the consummatory experience. Dialogue between subject and object, communication between the self and environment, are necessary for this process. Art moves throughout all kinds of experiences, aiding imagination and promoting creative activity. Dewey writes that “we have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment.”⁹¹

However, experiences are ongoing, leading from one situation to the next. Because ends are constantly evolving as the means of moving toward them are adjusted

⁸⁹ Rockefeller, *John Dewey*, 262.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 397.

⁹¹ Dewey, *Art*, 42, emphasis in original.

according to circumstances, experiences do not stop but conflate with the ones that follow. Experiences may be grand or miniscule but they contain the same essence. Whether “eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation...or taking part in a political campaign, [an experience] is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation....Such an experience is a whole...It is *an* experience.”⁹²

Westbrook’s description of Dewey’s conception of the esthetic experience is useful, showing that creation is integrated with art. He writes that Dewey in *Art as Experience* sought

to shift the focus of the philosophy of art from the “art product” as an object standing apart from the experience of artists and their audiences to the (literal) “work” of art— “what the product does with and in experience.”... Too often “art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement.”⁹³

Thus art is a working process that may not be simply relegated to one particular area of existence. Dewey remains consistent with his notion of an intervening religiosity and the full extension of one’s being throughout any endeavor. Consequently, “[i]t is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another.” Furthermore, “[t]he most elaborate philosophic or scientific inquiry and the most ambitious industrial or political enterprise has, when its different ingredients constitute an integral experience, esthetic quality.”⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Westbrook, *American*, 390.

⁹⁴ Dewey, *Art*, 61.

Bound with the consummatory experience is the notion of *what* or *who* grows from the esthetic interaction. When one extends their imagination in a creative activity a natural transaction occurs. Both the giver and the recipient grow. “The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged.”⁹⁵ People may gain from the esthetic by being aware of its permeating quality. Just as Kuyper would argue that all of life has been sanctified and all occupations may be valuable undertakings as part of enhancing creation, so Dewey held that “art, is *itself* a prolonged interaction of something issuing from the self with objective conditions, a process in which both of them acquire a form and order they did not at first possess.”⁹⁶

In keeping with the rest of Dewey’s writing on religiosity, it is important to remember that just because one is artfully engaged does not mean the person is pursuing the good. Dewey does not accept value-neutrality. Everyone, according to Dewey, has a religion, and they extend their religiosity throughout all of life. For him, ethics is a central part of this worldview. Therefore atavism and man in isolation run counter to the good religiosity. Art operates within community: “Imaginative vision is the power that unifies all the constituents of the matter of a work of art, making a whole out of them in all their variety.”⁹⁷

--Political Poetry: Kuyper and Art

Kuyper expressed deep interest in permeating esthetic experience throughout his writings and lectures. John Bolt’s work, *A Free Church, A Holy Nation: Abraham Kuyper’s Public Theology*, is especially useful in its analysis of Kuyper’s esthetics,

⁹⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 278.

mainly because its approach reveals surprising similarities between Dewey and Kuyper. As Bolt argues that Kuyper is a “political poet,” he uses Kuyper’s employment of imagination as extended from his religion to frame his esthetic identity. For Bolt, religiosity, imagination, art, poetry, and politics are thoroughly reciprocal and integrated in Kuyper’s worldview. Specifically, poetry produces change and *creation* within society.

Furthermore, Kuyper’s apparent similarity with Dewey turns out to be more than a happenstance of like etymology or semantics. Each similarly appreciates the substance of the terms. Like Dewey, Kuyper avoids extremes. Both strict rationalism and escape to utopia are excluded from his esthetic experience. Bolt asks:

What...is the Christian imagination? One attempt to define it links it directly to the notion of promise. “The Christian imagination is essentially an imagination of promise, an openness to the present because of the possibilities that it unfolds, a refusal to seek escape from the ravages of time through any subterfuge—either through nostalgia for the past or by flight into the timeless world of aesthetic or ‘religious’ experience. The Christian imagination is grounded in history, aware of the irreversibility of time, anxious for the fulfillment of its dreams.” ...Imagination that seeks escape into fantasy, that seeks to evade the realism taught by history, is not a Christian imagination but—likely—a gnostic one. It is this emphasis on historical awareness that helps resist the temptation nostalgically to imagine past golden ages or, in revolutionary fashion, to imagine creating future utopias.⁹⁸

Kuyper, like Dewey, values history for its lessons and the possibilities they create for future growth. History has a purpose, and it is more than being a vehicle for mawkish feelings. It informs one’s identity, nurtures the imagination, and gives the perspective necessary for intelligent action in the present.

⁹⁸ Bolt, *Free*, 75.

The descriptive phrase “Christian imagination” is especially revealing about the manner in which Kuyper’s *religiosity* may be distinguished from his *religion*. Religion is found within the Church (the body of believers), grounded in eternal principles derived from scripture, and entails a special manner of worship. Religiosity is an extension of the spirit nurtured by the religion and permeates all of life. Kuyper’s imagination extends from his Christian worldview by means that are available to all humanity. Poetry, art, and politics are part of the collective endeavor of creation. God’s common grace allows Kuyper to gain insight from anyone involved in pursuing this end, furthering growth and shaping influence. But what he receives from the environment around him is necessarily filtered through his religion.

Along with Dewey, Kuyper would argue for the pursuit of the attainable ideal. This is as relevant for the esthetic sphere as it is for any other. Because art is often appreciated through feeling, it is especially important to emphasize the necessity of valuing art within the context of reality. Bolt references a distinction that has been made between the “moral” and “idyllic” imagination. “[T]he moral imagination works within the limits of reality and the idyllic imagination does not. The moral imagination holds up an ideal that is attainable, although only through hard work.”⁹⁹ Conversely, “the idyllic imagination holds up an ideal that can never be attained in reality, but can easily be attained in fantasy or feeling.”⁹⁹ This distinction is a root of Kuyper’s antipathy to a “modernist” worldview.

Like Dewey, Kuyper tries to avoid ontological extremes in the realm of epistemology. He wants to reserve a place for the religiously informed mystical imagination but also balances the emotions therein with a respect and desire for

⁹⁹ Ibid., 76.

reasonable scientific inquiry. This desire for balance comes through particularly strongly in his speech, "Our Instinctive Life." Kuyper bookends his discussion of the relationship between human instincts and reason with two complementary warnings:

The man of reflection alone, the man of book learning, tends increasingly to view his cognitive activity as the only means of achieving knowledge and skill until the rich, broad field of instinctive life virtually ceases to exist for him.¹⁰⁰

And,

We have consistently stressed that a higher and more certain development of our conscious life calls for reflection, and that a political-social-religious group that neglects to arm itself with learning runs the risk of degenerating into a merely emotional undertaking.¹⁰¹

Hegemonic exploitation certainly was a bad thing as far as Kuyper was concerned. In his historical works, he wrote against tyranny extensively. However, for him, a harmful characteristic flowing from modernity was the tendency to daydream in a way that severed ties with reality. Often "good" ends were desired but the substantive means were neglected. It may seem nice to dream about "a new order in which humanity is liberated from all the oppressive social institutions that stand in the way of personal freedom." However, as Bolt notes, "the path from imagination, to scapegoating the villains who stand in the way of my liberation, to eliminating them in revolutionary violence is a short one, as we saw in the twentieth century."¹⁰² To put this in Deweyan terms, when means and ends are separated, this contributes to unintended consequences and therefore the possible neglect of the good. A revolution may overthrow the French

¹⁰⁰ Kuyper, "Our Instinctive Life," in *Centennial*, ed., Bratt, 261.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

¹⁰² Bolt, "Free," 76. An example of a work advocating such revolutionary means is Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

monarchy or remove its presence from Algeria but subjecting the means involved to passionate emotion grounded in some fanciful ideal of future utopia opens the way for continued chaos.¹⁰³

Since impulsive revolutionary violence is inconsistent with Kuyper's religiously informed imagination, it stands to reason that it also would violate his esthetic values. Since religiosity, art, and imagination are irrevocably linked with community, it comes as no surprise that Kuyper centers the beauty of art in its pervasive organic expressions, flowing from human cooperation. He writes that "art is no fringe...attached to the garment, and no amusement that is added to life, but a most serious power in our present existence, and therefore its principal variations must maintain, in their artistic expression, a close relation with the principal variations of our entire life."¹⁰⁴ Vincent Bacote's summation is helpful:

Rather than contending for a particularly Christian conception of art, Kuyper asserted that "Calvinism, on the contrary, has taught us that all liberal arts are gifts that God imparts promiscuously to believers and unbelievers, yea, that, as history shows, these gifts have flourished even in a larger measure outside the holy circle." Art is truly "commonly" produced...[H]e...wished to assert and promote the view that the world of art (painting, music, and poetry) should develop to its fullest in its expression of all of life. This development could be achieved by Christians or non-Christians. The important point was that the realm of art, whether related to the church or not, should enjoy the support of Christians.¹⁰⁵

Whereas a modernist worldview may tend to place "man in isolation," severed from good community by a compartmentalized life and bondage of being, Kuyper and Dewey argue

¹⁰³ Dewey and Kuyper passionately advocated "reformation" over "revolution."

¹⁰⁴ Kuyper, *Lectures*, 150.

¹⁰⁵ Bacote, *Spirit*, 83.

for the realization of social well being through the interaction of the many life forces within oneself and the interaction of the many people who pursue their personal unification.

Life for Kuyper is characterized by organic relationships, both internally and externally. Art proceeds from them. It is bound with human community in a symbiotic relationship. Therefore, art may not be appreciated in isolation from human imagination, on either an individual or a collective basis. Human imagination may not be completely appreciated without an intervening religiosity. Creation is an ongoing process that necessitates fullness of being and the application of many beings in concert. Kuyper writes that,

As human beings we have been created in organic connection with other people. We belong together. And although it enhances our personality to retreat into privacy to meditate, to enrich our minds, or to pray, the person who overdoes this and fails to alternate solitude with companionship is bound to be impoverished. Ten people working together can exert more than ten times the power of a lone individual. The power of cooperation is exponential; it gives each individual more courage and daring. Hidden forces surface when people join forces. Being together animates people, elevates the mind, arouses enthusiasm. It can also spur the desire to do evil, if people are so minded.¹⁰⁶

Thus, cooperation is one of the most potent forces that humans possess. However, as Kuyper's last sentence indicates, even this may not operate in isolation. He would certainly view the construction of the Tower of Babel and the actions of the French Revolution as being cooperative efforts. The act of working together also entails the need for examination of the religious and ethical presuppositions involved.

¹⁰⁶ Kuyper, "Instinctive," 265.

Both Dewey and Kuyper desire to minimize egotism. For Kuyper, progress results from human cooperation because God creates the means, ends, and tools involved through common grace. This is not how Dewey understands growth. However, the normative discrepancy is mediated by their descriptive similarities. Apart from the supernatural, they have like conceptions of who possesses ability. Dewey would concur as Kuyper writes that

No one has ever by personal initiative or by dint of extreme effort magically leaped to the level achieved by our present generation. Human knowledge and skill is the common possession of all people collectively, a possession gradually won by the effort of succeeding generations and guided in its development by an invisible power. The result is what we call *progress* in every area of human endeavor...¹⁰⁷

Hedging utopianism, neither would see progress as being inevitable but both would view it as possible. People have the talents, imagination, and facility to achieve short-term goods that accumulate over time to meet long-term ends.

--Political Poetry: Comparing Dewey and Kuyper on Art

Both Kuyper and Dewey place art at the heart of common life. Also, they both extend it past intentional “artistic” endeavors. The same imaginative process involved in creating a sculpture expresses itself in building a polity. Furthermore, each is similarly *appreciated*. The process of valuing art is as rigorous and demands as much talent as the creative act itself. Those who are not aware of the necessity of extending their entire being while partaking in esthetic activity in some way compromise themselves as well as the community of which they are a part.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 258.

As a Christian, Kuyper would believe that people imitate God's act of Creation when they exercise their own esthetic imaginations. Therefore, according to Kuyper, people are obligated to search for the divine character as they create their own art. Dewey obviously does not understand things in such a way. His approach does not include the supernatural. With his empirical naturalism, or pragmatism, art is never "evil," only more or less useful. Community is hindered and progress toward the good blocked through atavistic or misapplied art. Poor art is not "sinful," only dysfunctional in its effect. For Dewey, education within a democracy may correct these tendencies. For Kuyper, education certainly improves quality but in itself does nothing to correct the affections of the heart that belong solely to God.

Political Poetry: Dewey, Kuyper, and the Creative Power of Poetry

Intervening religiosity is distinct from supervening religiosity because it penetrates one's entire being. It also, by extension, consumes nature. As people use their imagination derived from their religiously informed identity, they create things. "They" means more than a sum of individuals. A *body* of people creates. Communication is a primary means involved toward this end, unifying individuals with one another. Kuyper and Dewey find one of their most significant points of agreement around the power of the written and spoken word.

Sometimes I will conflate Deweyan and Kuyperian language in the rest of this chapter. For example, "means" and "ends" will be operative terms in describing Kuyper's poetic worldview. However, allowing for this is consistent with the themes under discussion. If Kuyper and Dewey are in a dialogue, as I am attempting to place them, then a beneficial product of this exchange is communicative growth. Through speaking

with each another, their imaginations are clarified and new creative thoughts may emerge.

--Political Poetry: Dewey and Creative Language

Poetry may be an instrument of the good. For Dewey, poetry stimulates the imaginative extension. It is a catalyzing force in actualizing the ideal. It also is necessarily polemical. Poetry, like other forms of religiosity, is not neutral in its activity. It is used toward specific ends and creates the means along the way. Dewey writes that "...while poetry is not a criticism of life in intent, it is in effect, and so is all art. For art fixes those standards of enjoyment and appreciation with which other things are compared; it selects the objects of future desires; it stimulates effort."¹⁰⁸ Kuyper believed that the world was created with a word. Dewey also appreciated language according to its creative potential. A "word," for Dewey, is tied to meaning and the meaning has causal influence. "For the sound, gesture, or written mark which is involved in language is a particular existence. But as such it is not a *word*, and it does not become a word by declaring a mental existence; it becomes a word by gaining meaning; and it gains meaning when its use establishes a genuine community of action."¹⁰⁹

Unification of subject and object is a primary function of language in a very specific way. Neither the expression nor the response operates in isolation. Mutual adjustment and growth occur for all parties involved, including the environment. Dewey describes a communicative process:

...neither the sounds uttered by A, his gesture of pointing, nor the sight of the thing pointed to, is the occasion and stimulus of B's act; the stimulus is B's anticipatory share in the consummation of a transaction in which both participate.

¹⁰⁸ Dewey, *Experience*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

The heart of language is not “expression” of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is a communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership.¹¹⁰

Therefore, the *art* of language is potent, is not merely a collection of syllables but necessitates meaning, and operates through relationship.

Political life relies upon the connectivity enforced by words. Countries are transformed through the binding effect of imaginative language. The United States and Nazi Germany are examples. The arts, for Dewey, are tools that unify beings with one another. Just as one may produce tears, laughter, or conviction through a painting, contributing to a change of will, rhetoric within a polity moves people through its varied colors, textures, and passions. New means are discovered and unrealized ends sought after.

Dewey would attribute the same “realness” to words as he would to the one who utters them. They are a force employed to release other forces: “... a verb, a word for an action, receives its meaning through active participation in this action. A word is used when it can produce an action, and not to describe one, still less to translate thoughts.” In reference to this quote, Dewey surmises that he knows of “no statement about language that brings out with the same clearness and appreciation of the force of the fact that language is primarily a mode of action used for the sake of influencing the conduct of others in connection with the speaker.”¹¹¹

When people participate in action with one another through the power of words, a communicative experience occurs. Syllables floating through the air congeal into the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 141.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 160.

bricks that shelter human existence. Public discourse, or “that preliminary discourse termed thinking,” is adjusted and re-adapted to meet the necessities of the conversation. Furthermore, “[e]vents turn into objects, things with a meaning. They may be referred to when they do not exist, and thus be operative among things distant in space and time, through vicarious presence in a new medium.”¹¹² In this way poetry *calls objects and concepts into existence*.

Dewey further expounds upon the creative function of words by giving them an animistic quality. He asks,

...why should not words act also directly upon things to release their latent powers? Since we “call” things by their names, why should they not answer? And if they assist us as our friends do when appealed to, is not this proof they are animated by friendly intent; or if they frustrate us, proof that they are filled with the same traits which inspire our enemies? “Animism” is thus the consequence of a direct transfer of properties of a social situation to an immediate relationship of natural things to a person. Its legitimate and constant form is poetry, in which things and events are given voice and directly communicate with us.¹¹³

These relationships probably appealed to Dewey because they are examples of the active imagination. The religious spirit of people mixes with the environment in such a way as to create a mystical union.

In this context, one is reminded of John Locke’s understanding of property. When a person mixes their labor with an object, they create something that belongs to them. It becomes part of their identity. This relates to the communal power of language as much as it does to planting a cornfield. Dewey writes that there “is a natural bridge that joins

¹¹² Ibid., 132.

¹¹³ Ibid., 142.

the gap between existence and essence; namely communication, language, discourse.”

Totality of being is fulfilled in the unification of subject and object. For Dewey, this is of paramount importance in the realm of communication. Poetry saturates all spheres of life. Harm follows bifurcation: “Failure to acknowledge the presence and operation of natural interaction in the form of communication creates the gulf between existence and essence, and that gulf is factitious and gratuitous.”¹¹⁴

The ethical self also is cultivated with the poetic imagination. People nurture one another with both subtle and verbose words. They infuse each other with power derived from their common life. The same systems of values expounded systematically within the confines of academia grow and move between people with vibrancy in their usual intercourse.

“Poetical values are, after all, values in a human life. You cannot mark them off from other values, as though the nature of man were built in bulkheads.” I do not think that what Keats has said in one of his letters can be surpassed as to the way in which poetry acts. He asks what would be the result if every man spun from his imaginative experience “an airy Citadel” like the web the spider spins, “filling the air with a beautiful circuiting.” For, he says, “man should not dispute or assent, but whisper results to his neighbor, and thus, by every germ of spirit sucking the sap from mould ethereal, every human being might become great, and Humanity instead of being a wide heath of Furze and Briars with here and there a remote Pine or Oak, would become a grand democracy of Forest Trees!”¹¹⁵

Beauty exists through diversity. People express their deepest convictions that are neither neutral nor all inclusive. However, in community people prune one another as they are fed by their environments in experiences.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 133.

¹¹⁵ Dewey, *Art*, 349.

--*Political Poetry: Kuyper and Creative Language*

A large part of Kuyper's work seems to have been an actualization of Dewey's ideal of the imagination. Throughout his writings and speeches, Kuyper applied the power of words to accomplish tangible ends in society. His rhetoric operated poetically, extending from his religion. Kuyper actively participated in bridging the gap between knowledge and application. In his view, God came down and mixed himself with the endeavors of people. Because God infused his word with humanity, people could freely extend their religiosity toward furthering creation in common life.¹¹⁶ A prominent part of this growth relied upon the power of the spiritual imagination as expressed by words.

John Bolt appropriates Kuyper's legacy in this sense:

...[A]s journalist, churchman, political leader of the Antirevolutionary Party, and public speaker extraordinaire—he effectively captured the political *imagination* of the Dutch *Geeformeerde volk* with powerful rhetoric, well-chosen biblical images, and national mythology, and in this way moved them to political action. That is the essence of the claim made...that it is helpful to think of Kuyper as a “poet”:
Kuyper as a man of *rhetoric* and *mythos* more than Kuyper as a man of *logos* and *wetenschap*. It is in the realm of poetic, in other words, that we can discern a certain unity to Kuyper's multifaceted career.¹¹⁷

Kuyper's imagination drew on the historical spirit of his nation, channeling its energy into the concerns of the present, thereby establishing continuity with the past and future.

According to Kuyper, “the poet conjures up a unity in the midst of brokenness, profusely spreads rays of sunshine to warm the chills of our fear. We become reconciled with our hard and harsh reality by having it placed in the framework of a higher, eternally

¹¹⁶ Insofar as it concerns Kuyper, this outlook minimizes the significance of Dewey's critique of an “otherworldly” religion that separates humanity from the concerns of the “here and now.”

¹¹⁷ Bolt, *Free*, 43. emphases in original.

beautiful necessity.” The esthetic soothes reality by igniting emotion, imagination, language, rhythm, and rhyme. For Kuyper, the songs of poets move through the rest of national life. He writes that ““there was...poetry in our navy captains, in the priests of our art, extending to our merchant marine and to the skill of our merchants.”” Bolt points out that Kuyper plays on a Dutch word for art, *kunst*, which “can mean art in the more formal sense as well as ability, talent, or skill.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, the poetic word becomes one with the actions of working people.

Language, as it is passed among people through imagination, effects a calling into existence. Concepts that were not real become present and then take on material form. The product (end) echoes the imaginative origin and the process of its fulfillment (means). Bolt comments that,

What imagination does...is to take whatever is not temporally or spatially present to a person and make it present through images. Imagination is thus tied to the metaphorical use of language whereby we creatively transfer words from one context to another or, in Nelson Goodman’s delightful metaphor, “teach an old word new tricks.”¹¹⁹

The space between *Webster’s* dictionary and the presidency is filled with imagination, communication, and work. All of these means, along with the end, are religiously informed. According to Bolt, “talking is one of the most important forms of *political* action...[H]istorical transformation is accomplished by effective, performative speech. Capturing public imagination through persuasive rhetoric is essential for mobilizing movements that bring about significant and lasting change.”¹²⁰ Just as a hammer or

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 74.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 20.

shovel is neutral, existing simply as a tool, so too is rhetoric. The operator and recipient must imagine the means and ends.

The importance of the non-bifurcated life becomes especially apparent in light of the influence of poetry, the “sword of the imagination.”¹²¹ Bolt describes “performatives” as words “such as legal acts of a legislature, that actually accomplish an act by their mere utterance.”¹²² Hitler’s and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s rhetorical impact shows the wide range of values that can exist within word-creations. Kuyper appreciated this. His polemics demand the full extension of one’s being throughout all exertions.

If one is internally chaotic, their rhetoric will likely *create* chaos. The despot’s rhetoric manipulates by way of deception. The honest speaker may manipulate their audience in a technical sense but does so to promote genuine expression based on the communicative transaction and the new growth that may result from this occurrence. Therefore, *motivation* rather than *manipulation* may be more descriptively useful for the latter.

Like Dewey, Kuyper admires poetry because it operates on its own terms, neither forsaking reason nor subordinating itself to it. According to Kuyper, ““Only God *is*, and *his* word, *his* will created all that exists in an organic whole.””¹²³ Following from this “organic whole,” Kuyper would understand chaos as having no part with reason, imagination, or feeling. One of Kuyper’s mentors claimed that “Poetry expresses the unity of the soul better than any other form of language; it is a divine gift, lit by a divine

¹²¹ Bolt, *Free*, 78. This phrase is borrowed from Wilfred M. McClay as he references the power of historical consciousness. However, the description seems to apply equally well to the potency of words.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

spark that reveals a higher and better world.”¹²⁴ The “higher and better world” certainly would point towards the perfection of Divine holiness (and Heaven) for Kuyper. However, he is persistent in his claim that humanity has the ability to progress towards this ideal in the here and now.

Although Kuyper aligned himself with normative doctrines derived from the Christian scriptures, he was like Dewey in that he left room for continued inquiry. He appreciated the unknown and ambiguous by allowing for loose ends in his “system” of thought. For Kuyper, this was certainly preferable to creating an artificial box that contained ready-made answers for all the problems of life. Bolt writes that

...Kuyper, notwithstanding his own commitment to principles and ideas, was sensitive to the problem of ideological rationalism, the attempt to squeeze all reality into the straitjacket of an a priori idea. In fact, he judges this ideological thinking to be the fundamental problem of modernism; history is suppressed for the sake of a dominating idea.¹²⁵

Some have criticized Kuyper for never “resolving” his doctrine of common grace with that of the antithesis.¹²⁶ One can tell the position of the commentator by whether they use the word “tension” or “contradiction” in describing the relationship between the doctrines. However, whatever one concludes about the reasonableness of this relationship, it is clearly an instance where Kuyper does not engage in systematics in order to nail down an absolute answer. God’s blessings were apparent in humanity as a whole. Some people did not profess love for God—they could even be termed “enemies.” Nevertheless, each camp obtained “good” results. How do all of these things fit together?

¹²⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹²⁶ That is, if God’s grace is poured out freely on all creation and allows believers and nonbelievers to act in concert, then how can Kuyper maintain such a definite schism between an “abnormal” and “normal” worldview? Bad trees can never produce good fruit, so the argument goes.

He did not exactly say. As Jesus did in the parable of the wheat and tares, Kuyper left questions.

Another reason for loose ends in Kuyper's thought may be attributed to the nature of his life. Rather than remaining secluded in academic study, he managed a newspaper and was politically active. His "doctrines" often took shape as he worked in the context of the moment. It is in this area that his force can be appreciated. Kuyper's activity *within* society and the creativity that resulted from the power of his words is the reason for the label "political poet." In the following section, I will describe parts of Kuyper's career that demonstrate how he applied his rhetorical skills to creative functions in his society.

Political Poetry: Kuyper's Work in the Netherlands

This section will be a link between the theory of the former sections and the forthcoming discussion of public schooling in the United States. By providing background on Kuyper's work in the Netherlands, I hope to shed more light on both his and Dewey's religiosity. Specifically, I seek to give more practical grounding to the concepts of intervening religiosity, the esthetic imagination, and political rhetoric. Describing the transformation that Kuyper helped to enforce in the Netherlands also is a case study of Dewey's philosophy of the artistic experience.

Kuyper arrived on the Dutch political scene during the 1870s and found that the educational system was undergoing considerable transformation.¹²⁷ Before 1870, the climate in the Netherlands was pre-industrial and static, having a parliamentary monarch but with only the upper middle class participating.¹²⁸ Beginning in the 1870s, however, liberal cultural policy toward education as well as numerous trade unions and socialist

¹²⁷ Hermann Von der Dunk, "Conservatism in the Netherlands," *Journal of Contemporary History* 13.4 (October 1978): 749.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 749.

movements began to take shape.¹²⁹ In the beginning of the nineteenth century, state-sponsored Christian education was relatively unchallenged. However, liberal views became increasingly in line with the notion that nominally Christian state education would be a useful tool to secure a “future society of enlightened liberal-minded citizens [that could resolve] social questions.”¹³⁰ Proposed programs by liberals within the government aimed to use the Christian banner to culturally unite the country for the purpose of what Kuyper would deem decidedly anti-Christian agendas.

Political tangling over educational policy illustrates the clash between Abraham Kuyper’s worldview and that of modernism. When the liberals began, in the 1870s to attempt to promote their agenda without the Christian element that had been present, they collided with Kuyper, his colleague Groen van Prinsterer, and the confessionalists. Kuyper’s program attempted to realize free private education in the Netherlands. They did not prefer ideological neutrality, which they saw as absurd, but sought to develop education derived from their own religious worldview.¹³¹ Kuyper understood that government schools should not be “Christian” institutions in a formal sense, but desired other options to be available to the public and religious “honesty” to be present in the public schools.

If liberals were allowed to gain political prominence, Kuyper’s rural constituents, whom he affectionately referred to as “little fellows,” would be the ones who would most realize the exclusionary consequences. The threat was not so much that the liberals opposed Churches having their own schools, but their insistence on “us[ing] public funds solely for the support of schools which were in fact acceptable, whatever their ‘neutral’

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 750.

¹³¹ Ibid.

title, only to the non-Christian section of the population.”¹³² Confessional schools would no longer be able to support themselves on the funding from parents and churches, and eventually the children would be forced to go to state schools.¹³³ Thus, the rural and the lower middle class would not have the option of educating their children according to their own religious convictions.¹³⁴

Kuyper, who in the words of Fogarty was “the greatest leader whom Dutch Protestantism, in modern times has produced,”¹³⁵ began working extensively with his new partner, the leader of the developing antirevolutionary movement, Groen van Prinsterer.¹³⁶ The Dutch Ethical School opposed Prinsterer and Kuyper at the 1869 meeting of the Dutch Society for Christian Education.¹³⁷ Kuyper delivered the meeting’s speech and Prinsterer presided as the president of the association. Advocating Christian education that was independent of the State, they critiqued the state’s claim of neutrality, pointing out that state education rested on certain presuppositions. Ultimately, Kuyper and Prinsterer won the debate and their opponents resigned from the association.¹³⁸

In the speech, “An Appeal to the Conscience of the People,” Kuyper tied in his passion for Christian education to helping the poor:

I can even instruct [my children] myself if I cannot find a fitting school. The rich man is not forced either...but the common man, the poor man—he is the one I want to speak up for...He is either forced to leave his child uneducated or to have

¹³² Michael P. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953*, (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1957), 171.

¹³³ Von der Dunk, “Conservatism,” 750.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Fogarty, *Christian*, 172.

¹³⁶ L. Praamsma, *Let Christ Be King* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia Press, Ltd., 1985), 55.

¹³⁷ Peter Heslam, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 36.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

him instructed in a way in which, in his opinion, the one thing that is needful is lacking.¹³⁹

During the 1870s Kuyper set to work channeling his maturing Calvinist worldview into the political realm. Challenging the principles on which liberalism stood, he set about formulating a concrete political program that confronted his opponents' agendas. His means for accomplishing his public goals included the daily newspaper *De Staandaard* (1872), along with the weekly religious newspaper, *De Heraut* (1871). Because of Kuyper's "journalistic capabilities, deployed in these two papers...there began to develop...a broad basis of support for antirevolutionary principles, laying the groundwork for political organization on a mass scale."¹⁴⁰ Prinsterer already had conferred the journalistic leadership of the party upon Kuyper in 1871, and he would hold this title until his death 50 years later.¹⁴¹

Kuyper was aggressive in his writing, and through his abrupt, no-nonsense style he gained the wide support of people who were not accustomed to being politically active. A large part of his support came from disenfranchised citizens in rural areas.¹⁴² When he went to the House of Commons to serve in the Second Chamber of Parliament during 1874, *De Staandaard* was in the process of securing a political base. He would later use this support to create what would be "the first modern, organized political party in the Netherlands..."¹⁴³

Before this work could solidify, however, the organizations loosely grouped under an anti-revolutionary name would have to unify, and this would happen largely around

¹³⁹ Praamsma, *Christ*, 55.

¹⁴⁰ Heslam, *Creating*, 37.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 45.

the “School Question.”¹⁴⁴ Kuyper gave his first speech in Parliament on this issue. In Heslam’s words:

...he argued that education should be entirely autonomous, managed by a system of independent provincial and national education boards, rather than government agencies. Although the state had the right to legislate on general standards of education, it also had the duty to ensure the right of all parents to send their children to schools of their own choice.¹⁴⁵

After an extended period of sickness due to overwork, Kuyper returned to his desk in 1877. His long-time friend, mentor and colleague, Groen van Prinsterer had been dead almost a year, and Kuyper found himself as the heir apparent to the anti-revolutionary cause. However, he chose to use his energies outside of Parliament, through *De Staandard* and *De Heraut*. Although many were disappointed to see Kuyper leave the political scene, his move back to journalism and organization would result in the party’s benefit.¹⁴⁶

In 1878, Kappeyne van de Coppello, the leader of the liberal party, introduced an education bill aimed at ensuring that “special” (that is, private) schools would have to support themselves.¹⁴⁷ Both Houses passed the bill despite anti-revolutionary and Catholic opposition. Kuyper meanwhile prepared to make one of the most decisive moves of his career. In an impressive exhibition of both tactics and organization, he set about through *De Staandard* to communicate to the population what was at stake for their children’s education.¹⁴⁸ Next, he organized a nationwide petition against the bill, which

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Bratt, *Centennial*, 12.

would need King Willem III's signature before it became law.¹⁴⁹ Kuyper collected names of both franchised and disenfranchised citizens. Ultimately, 305,000 signatures were collected in three months, out of a voting population of only 160,000.¹⁵⁰

Although the King eventually signed the bill, Kuyper would use the names on the list to channel support into what eventually would become the modern Antirevolutionary Party.¹⁵¹ Bratt summarizes the events, which show the significance of the petition movement:

...Kuyper knit the petitioners into a permanent organization dedicated to building a separate system of Christian elementary schools; used the same lists to create an association for Reformed higher education; and in the same year, 1879, brought the names and causes together in the Antirevolutionary Party (ARP). ...[The Party] knit local and regional clubs into a national federation coordinated by a central committee, chaired by Kuyper and committed to a common platform...All this took but two years and gave his movement a lasting foundation.¹⁵²

In 1879, Kuyper finished writing the authoritative manifesto of the ARP. Party members used this document as a guide for many years to come.¹⁵³ Thus Kuyper secured a national organization that was external to him, and would carry the work he had begun far into the 20th century. Eventually, in 1917, his lifelong dream of having Christian education equal in status and funding with secular education would be fully realized.¹⁵⁴

Kuyper's reach toward aiding the poor and weak of society did not end with political organization. In 1880, Kuyper finally achieved his dream of establishing a Calvinist-informed higher education center to counter the state institutions that in his

¹⁴⁹ Heslam, *Creating*, 44.

¹⁵⁰ Bratt, *Centennial*, 12.

¹⁵¹ Heslam, *Creating*, 45.

¹⁵² Bratt, *Centennial*, 12.

¹⁵³ Heslam, *Creating*, 46.

¹⁵⁴ Bratt, *Centennial*, 12.

view perpetuated modernist and liberal theology.¹⁵⁵ Due to an education bill that “reaffirmed the principles of the freedom of education, stipulated by the constitution of 1848,” the Free University of Amsterdam came into existence.¹⁵⁶ Although students who graduated from the institution would not be accredited by the state unless they passed state examinations, it still registers as one of Kuyper’s greatest achievements.¹⁵⁷ His dedication to the institution after its founding also is worthy of mention. For the next twenty years, until he became Prime Minister, Kuyper taught theology at the Free University.

In Kuyper’s environment, there was a prevalent bias against acknowledging a kind of *religious* diversity. The programs and rhetoric put forth by adherents of Dutch modernist philosophy were grounded in anthropomorphisms and commitment to compartmentalized worldviews. Kuyper made it a central component of his life’s work to speak forcefully against these life-philosophies. He believed that they did not promote pluralism but perpetuated uniformity. Through methods such as attempting to monopolize the educational system, they sought to establish their own religion as the universal belief. This desire was not unlike Kuyper’s, the difference being that Kuyper acknowledged that a distinction existed between a Christian worldview and others. He preferred for his Christian ideals to gain prominence through the subjective conscience of those involved: organically.

Kuyper’s public life was active and long, straddling at least two political eras in the Netherlands. His government moved along with society into a political culture that drew on new means of communication such as the newspaper to create change. Kuyper

¹⁵⁵ Heslam, *Creating*, 47.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

believed that for a platform to be widely influential in a democracy, leaders should have continuous dialogue with the members of the community. Through his journalistic activities, Kuyper strove to make the people aware of the current political climate, remind them of how new events related to their worldviews, and compare his interpretation of political and social happenings with the perspectives of competing worldviews.

Most of the Deweyan concepts that I have discussed so far apply to the context of Kuyper's career. Choice, understood as the *selection* of intellectual, moral, and esthetic values within experience, certainly may be appreciated when studying Kuyper's activity. Also prominent as one surveys Kuyper's work is the Deweyan priority of unifying subject and object in diverse experiences. Kuyper's appreciation for a wide and deep religiosity was unified with the political means he employed to reach valued ends. Also, for him, philosophy and practice were intermingled with personality. Scholarship was a means to enrich community by enhancing and helping to solve problems in daily experiences. Although espousing loyalty to eternal, supernatural principles, Kuyper demonstrated dexterity in being able to experiment and change with the evolving social and political realities around him.

Political Poetry: Using Kuyper and Dewey Creatively

Several similarities exist between public education in the Netherlands of the nineteenth century and the United States of then and now. The governments struggled to implement a system of schooling that would serve national interests and those being educated. For each country, there were many pluralities to be considered when making educational legislation. Religious and social diversity ensured that one system of schooling could become problematic to implement. In both contexts, the countries were

moving from assumed “Christian” governments to consider more secular, generic identities.

The United States and the Netherlands of the early twentieth century desired to use education to mold loyal, non-contentious citizens who would embrace a certain national identity. Instead of educating for a religious purpose, both countries came to use an amalgamation of religiosity for nationalistic purposes. The beginning of the twenty-first century sees the United States dealing with similar issues: What should be done with those who conscientiously object to the material that is taught in public schools? How should such schools teach in order to accommodate the values of a diverse society? At times one may sense the specter of Plato’s “noble lie” hovering. But where there are so many ends that “must” be obtained, in the view of the State, is “fence-sitting” avoidable? Often presumed neutrality is indeed the most practical course in order to avoid anticipated cultural turmoil.

When engaged in political action, a primary limitation is found in having to work within the circumstances one is given. Neither Kuyper nor Dewey condoned having a religion as the voice of a government institution. They had reservations with both “Christian” government schools and the religiously “neutral” schools that evolved from them. In their action and writings, they had to work within the political realities of the moment.

CHAPTER 4: DEWEY, KUYPER, AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Rhetoric has the power to change. Circumstances, personalities, tools, and values are shaped by the power of the written and spoken word. Dewey and Kuyper would argue that change is necessary in religious imaginations. Numerous people in the public and private spheres of the United States cite education as a means to curb destructive passions. Many also claim to implement religiously “neutral” or “objective” schooling practices to bring about a “good” society or prosperous economy. Yet, does rhetoric, through education, shape the religious mindset and value system of coming generations? If so, does this constitute a mixture of religiosity and education? In this chapter I will try to show some of the ways that rhetoric has and is participating in creation throughout public schooling in the United States. Significantly, rhetorical influence arises from what many may view as unexpected sources.

Actualizing the religious ideals of Kuyper’s and Dewey’s imaginations as they are manifested within public life may help to realize substantial collective benefits. It is possible to constructively pursue many areas of research by using their dialogue. For the purposes of my thesis, however, the significant opening for putting their ideas to work in practical analyses results from their complementary visions of democracy and education in relation to religiosity. In particular, I will address questions such as the following. Does rhetoric, through education and public schooling,¹⁵⁸ shape the religious mindset and value system of young people? If so, does this constitute a mixture of religiosity and education? Using Dewey and Kuyper, I will argue that it does. In this chapter I also will

¹⁵⁸ Dewey and Kuyper would not acknowledge a dualism between the “education” one receives in school and the learning that takes place throughout all spheres of life. The values that inform one sphere of experience, such as in a religion, also have causal import for how one grows in another area such as at school and vice versa.

use their religious philosophies to examine the implications of the integration of *religiosity* and education that already is a reality in United States *public* schooling.

Proponents and antagonists of Dewey's work acknowledge him as being "America's Philosopher" during the first half of the twentieth century. His philosophy was active. Dewey continually involved himself with salient debates regarding education in the academic and public spheres. Likewise, Kuyper participated in almost all of the political debates over education in the Netherlands during the last two decades of the nineteenth and first two decades of the twentieth century. That there would be continuity between Dewey's views and today's educational discussions should come as no surprise. However, Kuyper's thought also is quite applicable to American public life, specifically as it relates to the maturation of public dialogue concerning the relationship between church and state in education.

First, it is necessary to provide a background concerning the ideological origins of the public school in American society. This will include central purposes considered in its formation as well as the individuals who were integral in contributing to current structural and theoretical realities. Next, I will overview two of the most prominent philosophies of education in the United States, the Common School and the High-Stakes Testing models. Finally, I will use Kuyper's and Dewey's philosophy to critique the two models of education by contextualizing their worldviews with the religious philosophy and core values of the two models. Throughout, I will give special emphasis to High-Stakes Testing because of its prominent influence in current educational culture. I will attempt to apply Dewey's and Kuyper's thought to the Common School model only insofar as it sheds light on contemporary education culture.

The Evolution of Education Culture in the United States

Many claim education as a foundation for democracy in the United States. Views differ as to whether this is descriptively useful or normatively accurate. There also is disagreement as to whether public schooling should be a vehicle primarily for instilling democratic values or for creating a globally competitive workforce. Nevertheless, throughout its history schooling has served as a catalyst for the communication and articulation of societal norms and values. Pluralities in the United States have changed over the past several centuries. However, education is similar to other forums in that consensus often arises out of conflict. While “public school” may take on any number of definitions or implications, in the United States its meaning grew to be an archetype of a wide ranging discourse. A national motto proclaims “out of many, one.” Opinions differ about whether public schooling successfully operationalizes this ideal. The utility of the words “public” and “democracy” changes along with the groups involved.

The methods and philosophies of schooling in American society may be best appreciated in terms of their means-ends relationships. Historically speaking, the Common School and High-Stakes Testing models have pursued specific goals, seeking various goods. However, each model has extra-student ambitions that nevertheless are of primary causal import for children’s overall education. Often, there is a deductive approach to schooling that may implement education for the purposes of citizenship, distributing uniform national ideals throughout society; of morality, reducing crime rates; or of quantifiable test results, enriching the workforce and thereby growing a pool of capital for the economy. These goals entail strong religious assumptions about the nature and purpose of education.

It is useful to employ Kuyper's and Dewey's religious views in order to reveal what I argue is *permeating religiosity* existing within *public* schooling in the United States. Religiosity and public education are necessarily intertwined. If this is a concern for society in the United States, then there should be an intentional public dialogue in order to build realistic consensus. Hiding the reality of pervasive state-sponsored religious influence in education behind a wall of "neutrality" does nothing to promote growth and reconciliation between the public and private spheres. The above claims do not resemble an argument relating to the presence, or promoting the authority, of *a* church or *a* religion within the sphere of public education. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the relationship between religion and public schooling, except as doing so illustrates the influence of religiosity.

High profile controversies often obscure what may be more important issues. For example, state, federal, and various private visions to educate primarily for the purpose of enriching the job market could be seen as having more important religious influence on school children than allowing prayer in school. The former is subtle but has extremely powerful religious influence. The latter also may be powerful but the religious element is easily recognizable. Regardless, children are learning how to appreciate religiosity through doing. Existential and ontological formation takes place. Religiosity may be underlying or overt, practical or didactic, institutional or organic, but from Dewey and Kuyper one learns that dualisms between knowledge and action promote confusion and atrophy in the individual and collective bodies.

The challenge for those involved in a participatory democracy is in allowing for an organic accumulation toward the ideal through communicative transactions that lead

to adjustment and growth. A prosperous economy, virtuous morals, and responsible citizenship may all be noble ends. However, there are often many opinions about what these finished products should look like. Students are arranged accordingly. “Meeting benchmarks” is a buzz-phrase within government-sponsored programs aimed at educational improvement in schools. Important skills are designated and assessed. “Success” often is viewed as a quantifiable and attainable end, measured by any number and kinds of tests. It would seem that those who authorize the tests are confident in their ability to avoid religiously driven selection bias in creating curricula and assessment.

However efficient and effective these qualification programs may be, the troubling question persists: How often do students learn--or even consider--*why* the skills they accumulate are important? If one assumes that public schooling does a stellar job of providing students the “skills” they need to achieve “success” in college and employment, how valuable is this isolated achievement to the students’ cumulative education? Inevitably, any response to these inquiries is religiously informed. Maybe this is the reason that many in the public sphere shy away from addressing them.

Often “neutrality” and “fairness” become ends in themselves. It may be unavoidable, but resignation to this inevitability is a disservice to the holistic growth of many citizens. In any case, communication and confrontation continue to shape society. Educators and administrators frequently grow apart philosophically as well physically. Often intentionality about linking short-term means with long-term ends degenerates into a pragmatism that neither Dewey nor Kuyper would endorse.

Formative Schooling Models in the United States

As with most “models,” the High-Stakes and Common School models of education are best appreciated as descriptive frameworks that exhibit fluid and often complicated social and political dynamics. Given this, their characteristics and influences often overlap. However, the two models are not necessarily comparable in kind. The Common School is better appreciated as a historical description of a broad educational culture. High-Stakes Testing is more related to the means and ends of current public schooling. Nevertheless, the latter has serious cultural implications. Therefore, I include both even though I will not engage in a poignant discussion of how Dewey’s or Kuyper’s perspectives relate to the Common School. Hopefully moving from the general to the specific will convey a sense of how education evolved in the United States. Similar epistemological and religious assumptions operate within both models.

First, I will describe directive influences on the growth of the Common School. Then, using Dewey’s and Kuyper’s religious worldviews, I will overview and critique the High-Stakes Testing model.¹⁵⁹ Current educational culture grew out of the environment of the Common School; yet there are worldviews and religious assumptions unique to each model. Societies constantly evolve.

--The Common School Model

The Common School reform movement had numerous influences that determined how key figures formed their criteria for educational success. The model still exerts considerable influence on today’s educational culture. Important influences on the

¹⁵⁹ Joel Spring and Larry Cuban are two prominent United States education scholars who are useful sources on the origin, influences, core values, and practice of both the common school and high-stakes models. From my research, it appears that Spring first applied the terms “common school” and “high-stakes testing” as labels for educational models, although both terms have been salient since the start of each movement. Joel Spring, *American Education: 13th ed.* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

Common School model included new dimensions of the democratic governing process as well as the hybridization of latent French Enlightenment thought and American Protestantism. These influences would result in government-led education that strove to ensure the pervasion of moral values in order to form compliant citizens who would maintain a peaceful society.

A tyranny of the illiterate masses was a prevalent fear of the founding fathers as they formed the new national government in the U.S. In the hierarchical, mostly disenfranchised society at the end of the eighteenth century, both Federalists and Republicans shared this concern. In *The Federalist Papers*, Madison was wary of the influence of the “superior force of an interested and over-bearing majority.”¹⁶⁰ At the beginning of the republic, many measures were in place to protect against the masses.

However, society experienced changes that substantially altered the dynamic of citizenship within the republic. Lawrence Cremin cites three influences in particular: (1) the extension of the franchise, (2) the rise of popular interest in the functions of government, and (3) the concept of universal eligibility for public office.¹⁶¹ These occurred in the context of an increasingly diverse society. Immigration and denominational fragmentation provided the impetus for school reformers such as Horace Mann to seek common education in order to unite the nation around one set of moral ideals.¹⁶² They shared the fears of the landed gentry from the previous century, desiring to “control the democratic impulse and forestall any threat it might pose to private

¹⁶⁰ James Madison, “Federalist 10,” in *The Federalist*, ed. Jr. Pole (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co. Inc. 2005), 48.

¹⁶¹ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The American Common School: A Historic Conception* (New York, NY: Bureau of Publications: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951), 4.

¹⁶² Carl F. Kaestle (1984) “Moral Education and Common Schools in America: A Historian’s View,” *Journal of Moral Education*, 13.2, 101-111, 9 November, 2007.

property and social order.”¹⁶³ Charles Glenn argues that although the common school movement occurred during the era of Jacksonian democracy, it was “the liberal elite [that] developed a program for a certain type of popular education as a reaction against the perceived threat of emerging class interests and of the ‘irrationality’ of revivalistic religion.”¹⁶⁴

Indeed, men such as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington had long argued for education as a means to curb the wayward passions of ignorance. Washington wrote that “virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government.”¹⁶⁵ The reformers’ motive for education bore several similarities to Enlightenment philosophy stemming from the French Revolution. A main carryover was the notion of the perfectibility of the self through the paternal influence of the state. This idea would appear in the Common School’s focus on moral education with nationalistic overtones. The prevailing Protestant Christian worldview in the United States formed a confluence with this thought, making “a common religious core of belief.”¹⁶⁶

Although Mann and the Common School reformers would not directly refer to Enlightenment influences, the consistency of thought is unmistakable.¹⁶⁷ Rousseau wrote that “it is education which must give to souls a national compulsion... The child must see the fatherland when he first opens his eyes, and must see nothing else until he closes them in death.” Samuel Smith, editor for the official paper of the Jefferson administration, composed a prize-winning essay for the American Philosophical Society.

¹⁶³ Robert Westbrook, “Public Schooling and American Democracy,” in *Democracy, Education, and the Schools*, ed. Roger Soder (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 129.

¹⁶⁴ Charles Leslie Glenn, *The Myth of the Common School* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 88.

¹⁶⁵ Westbrook, “Public,” 128.

¹⁶⁶ Kaestle, “Moral,” 102.

¹⁶⁷ Floyd P. Jorgenson, (1952), “The American Faith in Education,” *History of Education Journal*, 4.1, 11-17, 15 April, 2008, 12.

In it, he wrote that a duty of the state was to “superintend and even to coerce the education of children.” Moreover, the state system of education should be “a control, independent of and superior to parental authority...”¹⁶⁸

Mann, after taking a position in Massachusetts controlling drunkenness and insanity with adults, decided to turn his attention to education. His desire was to go to the source of the problem, understanding that “men are cast-iron, but children are wax.”¹⁶⁹ In his role as president of the Massachusetts Senate, he became an agent of that elite and drew on constitutional legitimacy to ensure that “every child...shall be enlightened” and that the government “in its paternal character...is bound, even to those who can make no requital.”¹⁷⁰ Mann commented that if all children “could be brought within the reformatory and elevating influences of good schools, the dark host of private vices and public crimes, which now embitter domestic peace and stain the civilization of the age, might, in ninety-nine cases in every hundred, be banished from the world.”¹⁷¹

The common school was a model of education that was both a picture and a determinant of the society from which it developed. As with most other mass movements, many factors influenced its growth and character. However, its concern for managing diversity by instilling common moral values transcended specific sectarian influences of the period. It provided a framework into which the evolving priorities of coming generations could be placed, consolidated, and distributed.

The transformational power of rhetoric is displayed throughout educational processes. Schooling in the United States was founded upon the concept of a democratic

¹⁶⁸ Glenn, *Myth*, 91.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷¹ Kaestle, “Moral,” 103.

imagination that could be perpetuated across generations by means of communicative transactions. There have been numerous occurrences of friction between various ideologies and religions. The governments of the United States have had to frame their own relationships with the pluralities--minorities and majorities--within society.

--The High-Stakes Testing Model

The second schooling model that is prominent in United States history is the High-Stakes Testing model (HST). Consistent with Dewey's and Kuyper's method of analysis, HST should not be analyzed according to a set framework or identity. Rather the model should be appreciated as a descriptively useful method of understanding the way growing social and political influences have created trends in educational culture that express common philosophies of schooling and assume similar religious values. Here, I will describe the key characteristics of HST, then describe its historical origins and main influences. Finally, I survey the core values and prominent theoretical assumptions as they are revealed in scholarly literature and recent publications that seem to be a part of the HST culture.

----Identifying the High-Stakes Testing Model

As with the Common School model, HST has cultural ramifications. However, it more pointedly addresses a philosophy of schooling. Its characteristics are found outside the realm of pedagogy, in numerous public institutions and private corporate cultures.

According to Joel Spring,

A "high-stakes test" refers to an achievement examination that determines a person's future academic career and job opportunities. These are not tests of innate qualities as are intelligence tests, but tests of what a person has learned. High-stakes testing begins in elementary school, where the results determine

promotion from one grade to another. High-stakes tests then determine promotion from one grade to another. High-stakes tests then determine graduation from high school; admission to undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools; and professional licenses and employment credentials....¹⁷²

A main end of HST is to develop objective standards by which individuals may be sorted and/or qualified for a position or function. According to a HST perspective, scientific measurement ensures that social engineering is carried out with precision. Equality of opportunity for the workforce and the economic prosperity of the United States have been two driving values of the model. Also, the strength of the culture surrounding HST rests heavily on ingrained assumptions, unchallenged “truths” and what many view as “common sense” educational realities. According to Larry Cuban, “Two beliefs held by business, political, and educational leaders, that schooling could solve national problems and that it was the key to individual financial success, had become conflated into one powerful ideology that fueled business-inspired school reforms.”¹⁷³

Far from being an objective or neutral sorting method, HST clearly is an *ideology* that has bold philosophical and religious values and ends. Of course, there is not a doctrine of HST, at least not as such, but its strength as a force in society is found in its implicitness: “What originated in the mid-nineteenth century as a theoretical claim by promoters of public schools—that schooling has individual and collective economic benefits—had become by the late twentieth century an accepted ‘truth,’ on the basis of

¹⁷² Spring, *American*, 43.

¹⁷³ Larry Cuban, *The Blackboard and the Bottom Line; Why Schools Can't Be Businesses* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17.

which reform coalitions were mobilized, new goals established, and new programs put into schools.”¹⁷⁴

---Origins of and Main Influences on the High-Stakes Testing Model

The Common School model’s focus on reducing friction among the diverse elements of society and creating common visions of what it meant to be a United States citizen eventually transformed into a less abstract notion of the purpose of education. As a greater proportion of young people took part in public schooling at the beginning of the twentieth century, leading figures saw an advantage in channeling resources into vocational training to meet the demands of industrialization. The growth of popular democracy within society also was apparent in schooling. Rather than teaching citizenship to a small elite who would eventually carry on a guardian-like role, the primary purpose of public education “shifted from training the young to be responsible citizens to training the young to be workers first and citizens second.”¹⁷⁵

Around 1930, the priority of training students for the labor market began to take a firm hold on a concerned public. The causal link between schooling and national economic prosperity was a simple argument to make and to grasp. Growing uncertainty brought on by the Depression contributed to many leaders clinging dogmatically to the vision of mass vocational education. Legislators often dismissed data challenging the effectiveness of vocational curricula, responding to constituencies’ demands for more funds to be directed to vocational education.¹⁷⁶ The increasingly unexamined positive relationship between the means, vocational education, and the end, productive workforce development, became an assumption throughout society in the United States:

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 49.

Occasionally challenged in subsequent decades, these assumptions about the relationships between education, the economy, and a stable society, and between business and schools, were generally unquestioned beliefs that shaped the thinking of business leaders, public officials, journalists, educators, and parents for the remainder of the twentieth century.¹⁷⁷

Education scholar Joel Spring notes the pervasiveness of quantified examinations at virtually every benchmark in modern life, exclaiming: “It is now a test-happy world!”¹⁷⁸ As Cuban discusses the quantification of success, he posits that an “effectiveness standard” emerged in the early twentieth century. According to him, the standard is a sort of blueprint for success in the classroom that will lead to success in the workplace. With the effectiveness standard, initial goals are set for a program and success is claimed if the original goals have been achieved. Such a mentality seems to be a ready-made fit for systematic testing that can yield supposedly “objective” results. Connecting the effectiveness standard to United States culture in general, Cuban writes:

In a society where corporate bottom lines, football wins and losses, box office receipts for films, and vote counts matter, quantifiable measures of outcomes are often equated with success. This effectiveness standard has been widely accepted. More attention has been paid to quantifiable results than to questions of what caused those results and what strategies worked.¹⁷⁹

During the later half of the twentieth century, the effectiveness standard moved steadily toward more economic models of schooling that emphasized quantitative measures.

Researchers, public officials, and business leaders became focused on similar economic goals, namely that of improving the quality of the workforce in the United

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 50.

¹⁷⁸ Spring, *Education*, 43.

¹⁷⁹ Cuban, *Blackboard*, 31.

States: "...[P]olicymakers subjectively set desired goals and choose measures to determine success—measures such as test scores, dropout rates, and rates of college attendance. These measures are assumed to bear a strong connection to students' later performance in the workplace." Thus, a deep commitment to "results" was a shared priority among these groups. They began to believe that "objective" results could be attained using subjective testing criteria. It is unlikely, however, that the method was framed this way.¹⁸⁰

Although the main trend in the education culture was moving toward the partnership of vocation and schooling, some questioned the values ingrained in the new schooling practices. Identified as "pedagogical progressives," they drew on Dewey's ideas and tried to focus education reform around the content that teachers taught and the way students learned. They believed that a range of social concerns could be met by "modernizing curricula, moving away from age-graded schools, and establishing teaching practices aimed at developing the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical dimensions of each child to meet the demands of the increasingly complex world outside the schoolhouse door." Unlike the prevailing mentality of education, they rarely sought out corporate leaders for models or advice.¹⁸¹

However, the "administrative progressives" eventually surpassed the pedagogical progressives in influence. Drawing extensively from successful business practices, administrative progressives used the results of scientific studies to support their desire to organize and administer schools on business models. Their connections ran deep in the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 46.

business community, and their resources allowed them to gain an enormous influence on the governance, organization, staffing and curricula of public schools.¹⁸²

The culture of business-inspired school reform persists to the present. Leaders in the information age typically use arguments similar to those of their predecessors during industrialization. Usually, whenever the economy experiences a down turn, as it did during the 1970s and is doing at present, low worker productivity¹⁸³ or employees' skill deficits are blamed. More "rigorous" education is promoted, sometimes as the only way for the United States not to lose its place among the world's elite:

Business and civic leaders from both political parties assumed that a college-preparatory curriculum, constant testing, and a coercive accountability would encourage youth to acquire cognitive skills marketable in a knowledge-based economy and would strengthen public trust in schools. Skilled and knowledgeable graduates would increase workplace productivity, reduce unemployment, boost standards of living, and make companies competitive in world markets.¹⁸⁴

Thus, business-inspired school reform operates in an often non-partisan way and has deep roots in the consciousness of much of society concerning the purposes of schooling, and of education more broadly.

---Practices, Core Values, and Assumptions of the High-Stakes Testing Culture

United States government institutions have had varying degrees of control over schooling over time. Historically, education policy has been located at the local level. Until recent reforms such as No Child Left Behind, state governments generally participated in a more limited capacity. Local school boards decided matters such as

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Today, those arguing for more "worker productivity" have shifted to the goal of creating greater skill levels in the workforce compared to other countries.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 66.

curriculum, teaching and assessment, with state education departments ensuring that schools met minimal requirements such as graduation, the length of the school day and year, physical facilities, and teacher preparation.¹⁸⁵

As David Hursh notes, this system of local accountability has been in the process of fading for several decades, in large part because of economic downturns and the usual causal attributions that go along with them:

...after the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, education decision-making began to shift from the local to the state level. Corporate and governmental officials blamed education for the economic problems of the 1980s and began to call for more uniform education policies, ultimately focusing on raising standards, implementing standardized tests, and holding students and teachers accountable.¹⁸⁶

The trend toward more centralized control over the intricate components of schooling seems to go hand in hand with business models that education leaders increasingly rely upon. Corporate practices such as “Total Quality Management” demand thorough accountability for almost every decision. Focus is on input-output ratios. Measurement is of supreme importance. As business and education policy shapers claim similar agendas and share resource pools, their visions of “efficiency” have become intertwined.

Cuban presents a five-point outline that is useful in summarizing the core assumptions of a prominent school reform coalition. These values also may be generalized to the larger HST culture:

¹⁸⁵ Hursh, (October, 2005), “The growth of high-stakes testing in the USA: accountability, markets and the decline in educational equality,” *British Educational Research Journal*, 31.5, 605-622, 606.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 606.

- i. Strong economic growth, high productivity, long-term prosperity including a higher standard of living, and increased competitiveness in global markets depend upon a highly skilled workforce.
- ii. Public schools are responsible for equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in an information-based workplace.
- iii. All public schools are doing a poor job of preparing high school graduates for college and the workplace, with urban schools doing the worst job of all.
- iv. Schools are just like businesses. The principles that have made businesses successful can be applied to schools to produce structural changes that will improve academic achievement as measured by standardized tests, end the skills mismatch between jobs and entry-level workers, and increase public confidence in schools.
- v. Higher test scores in school mean better performance later on in college and the workplace.¹⁸⁷

Likewise, Hursh points out the core values, along with the potent relationship that business and political leaders use to direct education policy:

In the USA, corporate and political leaders have promoted testing, accountability, markets, and choice by arguing that such reforms are necessary to ensure that all students and the nation succeed. Embedded in most proposals are three intertwined discourses: the need to increase educational and economic productivity in an increasingly globalized economy, to decrease educational inequality, and to improve assessment objectivity.¹⁸⁸

However, he provides an example of how the principle of “objectivity” within the administrative structure of schooling may itself become problematic as the necessity of meeting benchmarks looms. In an exhibition of ingenuity, creative maneuvering, and

¹⁸⁷ Cuban, *Blackboard*, 27.

¹⁸⁸ Hursh, “High-Stakes,” 609-610.

what some may call deception, Rodney Paige, acting as the superintendent of the Houston Independent School District (HISD), found a solution to the rampant high school drop-out rate that afflicted his district:

When HISD's high percentage of drop-outs contributed to the state threatening to remove its accreditation, Paige directed high school principals to change the explanation assigned to students for leaving school so that fewer would count as drop-outs. The number of drop-outs plummeted and HISD won a prestigious award as an outstanding urban school district. Moreover, upon becoming president, George W. Bush chose Paige as his Secretary of Education.¹⁸⁹

As is often the case in the corporate culture of the United States, creative problem solving in the realm of public education sometimes crosses over into what many may view as fraud. At least in the above case, however, such freethinking led to "results" and was rewarded.

As one surveys different personalities within the HST culture, such as those included in the preceding and upcoming examples, similar values often produce practices that critics could view as creating double standards. Consider the notion of "trust" in what follows in relation to the earlier example of Secretary Paige:

[New York State] Chancellor Hayden and Commissioner Mills argued that the curriculum standards were objectively determined and that standardized tests provide a valid and reliable means of assessing student learning. Such objective methods are required, they argue, because teachers and administrators cannot be trusted to assess objectively and accurately student learning. Therefore, teacher generated assessment protocols and instruments are dismissed, within this discourse, as subjective and unreliable.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 607.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 610.

It is unfair to hold these public figures accountable for Paige's questionable conduct that was in a completely separate context. Yet, if one compares these two cases in the context of the overall HST culture, then actually achieving "objectivity" appears an extremely difficult end given the means that are employed. Teachers and lower level practitioners and administrators are not allowed to be flexible and creative as they participate in the education of their students because they will inevitably be subjective. On the other hand, truly "objective" "results" may be trusted when they are gathered as students are equipped, processed, and discharged according to the set model.

Supposedly, the set models can be safely adhered to because high-level officials and planners created an "objective" system. Promoters of HST attempt to sell their models based on depersonalized and neutral tests and sorting methods that they view as resolving the problems of individual self-interests and bias at the school and classroom levels. As in the corporate culture, control and predictability are core values in United States public education.

Cross-regional comparisons such as the ones above are valid because of the increasingly centralized control that moves education reform. Frequently, it is difficult to discern the line between private and public leadership. According to Cuban, by the end of the twentieth century "political leaders from both parties, influential CEOs, and opinion leaders in other sectors of society forged a basic agreement about the core problem and a preferred solution."¹⁹¹ During the Clinton years, a top U.S. Department of Education official commented that linking school reform to national economic productivity was "an

¹⁹¹ Cuban, *Blackboard*, 78.

easy sell” because during this period of time, “staff in each Republican or Democratic administration told business leaders that ‘our agenda is your agenda.’”¹⁹²

Now, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the relationship between business and government in the realm of education reform seems to have intensified. When Cuban wrote his book, *The Blackboard and the Bottom Line*, in the early part of this decade, he posited that the rhetoric linking schooling to economic development had subsided at the time he was writing due to recent corporate scandal and federal deficits that reduced confidence in the problem-solving ability of business. However, he predicted that the temporary lull in the partnership between business and public education leaders would resume with vigor. He asks:

Why am I so confident in the continuing involvement of business leaders in school reform? For one thing, after more than a quarter-century of aggressive participation by business leaders in contemporary school policymaking, even at a time of corporate implosions, many practitioners and most policymakers accept business influence without question. The application of business-crafted solutions to public schools (better managers, getting the incentives right, choice, market competition, accountability) has become so thoroughly embedded in policymakers’ thinking about improving schools, particularly in urban districts, that these policies are taken for granted and often seen as “common sense” rather than as having been borrowed from the corporate closet.¹⁹³

Recent publications seem to point toward the validity of Cuban’s foresight.

In 2007, the National Governors Association (NGA) and The Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW), an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, published the collaborative report, “Innovation America: A Public-Private Partnership.” This

¹⁹² Ibid., 55.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 13.

document, along with others appearing around the same time such as ACT’s 2007 report, “Rigor At Risk,” and the continuing growth of the “State Scholars Initiative,” represent the educational worldview of the most prominent public and private education leaders in the United States.¹⁹⁴

“Innovation America”¹⁹⁵ sheds particular insight into current shared values and ambitions between public and private personalities in the area of education reform. Many HST values are found within the report, as leaders from both the public and private spheres articulate their shared priorities and goals. The report also demonstrates the extent to which these leaders worked together to shape the future of education in the United States.

Achieving “success” in the realms of education and the global economy is among the most explicit ends this article describes. “Innovation”¹⁹⁶ is the central means cited as the most likely way to achieve success. Although “success” is not explicitly defined, its meaning may be discerned from the context. In his introductory remarks, Tom Donahue, the President and CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, describes his vision:

¹⁹⁴ Although these publications are a couple of years old, they still are among the most up-to-date materials cited by the representative on-line websites.

¹⁹⁵ “About Innovation America and This Report: NGA’s Innovation America initiative focused on strengthening our nation’s competitive position in the global economy by improving our capacity to innovate. The goal was to give governors the tools they need to improve math and science education, better align post-secondary education systems with state economic strategies, and foster state policies that aid the growth of innovative industries. To guide the Innovation America initiative, NGA assembled a bipartisan task force of governors, corporate CEOs, and university presidents. Working with NGA’s Center for Best Practices, this task force, chaired by Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, provided valuable advice on innovation strategies in general and assisted in the development of the initiative’s reports and forums. Through a variety of forums and publications, NGA collected and shared best practice information to ensure that every state—and the nation—is equipped to excel in the global economy. This report is a joint effort to spotlight how the private sector—under the leadership of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—can also help governors and states in their efforts to spur innovation.” Erika Fitzpatrick, “Innovation America,” National Governors Association, Institute for a Competitive Workforce, <www.nga.org/center/innovation> 2007, ii.

¹⁹⁶ The report defines “innovation” as: “1. The introduction of something new; 2. A new idea, method or device.” “Innovation America,” 1.

Innovation and education, now more than ever, are inextricably linked. Educating people with the skills required by the knowledge-based economy and leveraging the influence of business to shape state and federal policies are vital to America's success. Business leaders and state policy makers must come together to significantly expand the number of the country's science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) graduates who can compete in the global economy. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is committed to working with other business organizations and with the nation's governors to double the number of STEM graduates by the year 2015. Governors and business leaders must also work to ensure that public policies support entrepreneurship and facilitate business growth and competition in this progressively more intertwined world marketplace. Individuals, communities, states, and the country will benefit from innovation that is anchored in mutually beneficial—and increasingly necessary—public-private partnerships.¹⁹⁷

According to the report's conception of success, "The best way to make strategic educational investments is to link education and economic goals."¹⁹⁸ Applying this view to practical considerations, the report gives the following questions priority:

What state policies can lead to world-class educational systems? How do states create a high-skilled labor force and good jobs? How do governors promote growth in their local and regional economies? How can business leaders improve the process of preparing the future workforce? In short, how can states and private industry work together to improve the United States' overall competitiveness in today's interconnected, information-centric world?¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ "Innovation America," v.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

The simple answer given to these questions by the report is only one word:

“innovation.”²⁰⁰

The more complex answer, along with the questions themselves, reveal many of the core values of the HST culture. In describing the role of the private sector for practicing innovation, the report cites the “billions of dollars spent on workforce training,” and uses the example of this expenditure to urge business leaders to provide feedback to education authorities. Open communication, according to the report, helps to ensure that public schooling can implement the sort of training in schools that will help the “human capital” require less investment once in the workplace. The report states the solution in absolute terms, claiming that “[t]he *only way* to close existing workforce gaps and prepare for future needs is to align curriculums and certifications with the needs of business, placing particular emphasis on growing industry sectors and career clusters.”²⁰¹ As the report appeals to the base of its support in implementing its vision of “innovation,” the potency of the coalitions drawn upon becomes apparent:

Governors and CEOs both can stand on a bully pulpit to communicate and persuade citizens and legislators of the importance of innovation and advocate for a comprehensive innovation agenda. Governors can work in tandem with the private sector and the federal government to explore practices that address key national priorities and bring education and other stakeholders to the policymaking table. As leading advocates, governors and CEOs often are the main agents of change and the driving force for innovation in the states and in the national arena.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 3. emphasis added.

²⁰² Ibid., 5.

One of the main reasons that “Innovation America” is so striking is because of whom it represents. A prominent interest group representing the causes of “big business” in the United States did not issue the report. Rather, it is a platform for significant public education reform that was delivered by both public and private officials. It represented the governors of all fifty states and the leading lobby for smaller business in the United States. In 2007, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce also delivered a “report card” for schooling in every state. The report card used the values and standards of “Innovation America.” The closing language in the Chamber’s publication that introduced the report card set the stakes authoritatively:

For many years, the Chamber weighed in on national education policy while leaving the principal responsibility for K–12 educational improvements to the states and localities. Not anymore. This is a matter of critical national urgency. What’s at stake is the continued success and competitiveness of the American economy— and the continued viability and credibility of the American dream.²⁰³

In Virginia, this report was prominent in Governor Tim Kaine’s education initiative. It was similarly given the utmost respect and attention by many other states and by many other public officials.

Identifying Religiosity in Contemporary United States Public Education

All of life is necessarily religiously informed. This has been a central argument of my thesis, and next I will apply it to the HST culture. Awareness of personal and collective worldviews was a central value for Kuyper and Dewey. Their political activity and writings bear this out. Throughout, I have explained how Kuyper and Dewey argued for religious awareness in and between the public and private spheres. Now, rather than

²⁰³ United States Chamber of Commerce, “The State of American Business,” <www.uschamber.com> 2007, 19.

primarily using them to assess one or more religious worldviews, I will focus on showing how they would argue for the *clarification* of worldviews to enrich overall community and to illuminate dialogue.

Accordingly, in this section I will not directly argue against the practices or worldview of HST. I have noted and will continue to mention concerns relating to specific means and ends of HST, but my main goal is to present the case for the necessity of holding those accountable within and without the HST culture for the value-systems it promotes. Taking this approach allows similar accountability perspectives to be generalized to other worldviews within and between the public and private spheres. In this way, I hope to give Kuyper's and Dewey's work a broad, deep, and ongoing relevance.

Dewey and Kuyper would agree that it is good to discuss whether economic development or good citizenship should be the primary goals of schooling. I have serious reservations concerning the means and ends of HST. From my research, I am confident that Dewey and Kuyper would share many of them. Indeed, a secondary objective of this thesis was to bring some of these problematic elements to light and to contribute to the literature of educational philosophy. However, the most profitable way to employ the two men's thought is to use it to show that HST *is* a worldview that has religious expression. This approach will help meet another main objective of the thesis, which is to reconcile religiosity with the *pubic* sphere.

Discussing the identity and value system of HST provided a framework of analysis to convey how HST relates to Dewey's and Kuyper's religious worldview. Ends such as those within HST are better suited for public dialogue when one understands what a

beneficial means-ends relationship entails. Explicating this process in the context of an intervening religiosity is the primary concern of my thesis. First, I will review Kuyper's and Dewey's understanding of intervening religiosity in the context of the unified self, as a prelude to examining the religiosity in HST culture.

--Kuyper, Dewey and Consistency of Being in Experience

According to Dewey, religious experience and intervening imagination entail processes of personal growth in the context of community. Knowledge leads to adjustment, contributing to a change of will, leading to self-realization. Kuyper and Dewey would argue that constructive religious values entail reverence, humility, and the subjection of the self to the collective body. Humanity is interconnected. Processes are dysfunctional if they are not also cohesive. Ends, representing particular goods, are not realized or properly adjusted if an element of the means leading toward them is misappropriated, or more damaging, ignored. As I discussed in Chapter Two, individual and collective personalities are involved.

Within society, diverse religious worldviews shape equally distinct personalities. The reverse is also true. Because of this, pluralism (and not uniformity) is the usual condition in the various spheres of life. Following Kuyper's and Dewey's thought, those participating in cooperative endeavors are defined by their desires and activities. Therefore, the means one uses to reach an end is incorporated within his or her identity. Thus, function and identity are intertwined.

The moral self is defined by desires. Religiosity is encapsulated by the supreme Good or desire that a person mixes their being with. Ultimately, religious identity is inseparable from any other identity that one may possess. When one extends their loyalty

toward the perceived object of Good, this object creates within the self, just as the self draws on the object of its loyalty to create without. People move toward freedom when they live, grow, and adjust toward objects of Good by exercising their capacities.

Of course, there are many ideas of what it means to be truly “free.” Dewey and Kuyper differed on what freedom required. Kuyper maintained the necessity of supernatural reconciliation for absolute freedom. Dewey did not. However, they both would have agreed that one realizes freedom through the exercising of functions in the context of an intervening religiosity.

Within community, people develop individual capacities and grow functional abilities. The power of persuasion shapes those involved in various collective endeavors. Experience, intelligence, imagination, knowledge, and rhetoric are key elements of means-ends processes of communal growth toward any number of perceived goods. There is permeating religiosity throughout means-ends processes, because objects of loyalty guide behavior whether one chooses only a part of the process or attempts to incorporate various components. The “why” and “what” inform the “how,” and “when.” The latter two also influence the former. They all shape each other based on one’s worldview(s). Is law a binding element for one in society because of the consequences of enforcement, natural law, supernaturally-given legitimacy, or because one has a crush on his/her eighth grade D.A.R.E. officer? May all or some of these factors direct action?

Cultural dialogue shapes one’s religious perspective. Whatever activity one is undertaking, he or she works in the context of one or more cultures. For Dewey, there are no dualisms between culture and experience. He came to use the two terms interchangeably later in his career. Kuyper’s notion of an “abnormal” vs. a “normal”

identity would place certain parameters between culture and experience because of supernatural guidance apart from human experience. However, for him one should strive to mix their complete identity with every experience as they thoroughly engage culture. It also should be kept in mind that Dewey reserved a place for mystical, even spiritual experiences in his religious worldview. The whole of humanity is greater than the sum of its parts. Dewey would probably say that creation happens in spite of and because of us. Thus, Kuyper's and Dewey's notions of experience and culture similarly appreciate the full being in action.

If culture and experience are linked with personality and growth, then every activity in the public and private sphere is saturated by religiosity. Therefore, religious awareness is necessary in all realms of existence. If one chooses to bifurcate an experience, for example drawing on the spiritual or emotional to the exclusion of intellectual or moral guidance, then he or she should be able to give an account for this decision. If one form of training is preferred to another in a workplace or school, then the overall vision or object of loyalty of that culture should be placed in the context of the means undertaken to achieve it. People and groups should try to clarify their worldviews in their communities. If possible, they should be compared with the worldviews of others. Doing so would help to add clarity to one's own position and place it in the context of mutual dialogue where mutually creative growth and development may occur.

--Discerning Religious Identity Within the High-Stakes Testing Culture

The current High Stakes Testing culture represents a community engaged in the sort of political poetry that preceding sections described. HST emphasizes developing relationships between public and private sectors, along with the rhetorical persuasion

necessary to drive communicative action. The representatives of HST harness these means to seek to drastically reform education in the United States for what is considered beneficial growth toward a good.

According to Deweyan and Kuyperian principles, the HST movement is potent because those involved mix their vision with language that creates change, even “innovation.” It is not possible to put a cap on the number or range of people likely affected by the HST culture. School children, schooling professionals, private administrators, and politicians are certainly impacted. Furthermore, cultural dialogue takes place and HST culture moves from the realm of education to other spheres such as family, religion, art, business, labor, and science. The communal dialogue is circular. HST may have originated in the for-profit sector, but poetic influence returns to this sphere and causes unique adaptation once it is passed along through other areas of society. As children grow older, the visions of HST come to fruition and a community of workers and households begin to share similar value-systems and common worldviews associated with those of the education culture. Certainly, those in the HST culture represent many worldviews, religions, cultures and communities. However, they participate in dialogue centered on common purposes relating to educating children in the United States. They share experiences.

Dewey’s view of the esthetic experience maintained that it requires as much skill to appreciate a work of art as it does to create one. HST employs rhetoric, imagination, and practice to create a method of education aimed at achieving definite ends. Its goals include securing a prosperous economy that is able to compete in an increasingly complex international market, training children to become competent workers, and

developing systems of evaluation to measure progress toward the valued ends. The rhetoric is geared to the overall artistic endeavor. The multifaceted personalities used to secure “success” often are referred to as “human capital.” When these tools create new things, “innovation” happens. Those within society have a responsibility to “view” and critique these esthetic creations.

Consistent with Deweyan and Kuyperian principles, the communicative actions that shape education are not separate from the society and culture that the dialogue proceeds from. Therefore, when one challenges the worldview of HST, it is only fair to include the larger society. HST claims to create “objective” tests that are able to measure what is necessary to achieve “success.” Elected officials passed numerous pieces of legislation such as “Goals 2000” and “No Child Left Behind” that contributed to the growing use of standards-based education. The HST culture also uses rhetoric to describe the appropriate process of education. The slogan of Virginia’s “Commonwealth Scholars” program, for example, is: “A scholar today....A success tomorrow!”²⁰⁴

Function, activity, and identity are interrelated for Kuyper and Dewey. Moral and religious selves are defined by their activities. These take shape in community. Within the government documents from the local, state, and federal levels, many means are discussed and debated but the ends in view have remained static for some time. According to Deweyan thought, this indicates that the means moving toward the desired ends have not warranted the sufficient adjustment that would make it necessary to evolve the ends-in-view. However, it could also point towards insufficient attention being given to the ends-in-view.

²⁰⁴ “State Scholars Initiative,” <www.wiche.edu/statescholars/about/> 2007.

Are the values, means, and ends of High Stakes Testing representative of U.S. society at large? If so, then one could hope the various governmental institutions involved would issue statements clarifying the value-systems *they represent in the context of competing worldviews*. HST culture may promote “objectivity” according to its own religiosity, but it is unlikely that all other groups in society subscribe to this view. Certainly, there is heated debate over HST throughout the academic literature. These discussions are beneficial, but moving more of these dialogues to the popular level may increase their usefulness. Otherwise, the subject-object relationship between thought and action becomes bifurcated. A schism develops between doing and thinking. Kuyper used extravagant rhetoric during his political career but he backed it up by honestly communicating the perspective of his worldview. Daily newspaper articles and academic publications contained his perspectives. Dewey was similarly engaged for 70 years.

However, if the HST culture is not representative of society in general, then more communication is necessary to discern the different worldviews. Perhaps some would desire other elements of society to be as influential in schools as that of “business.” Are there life-long “scholars” who also view themselves as “successful”? What would the various labor unions in the United States contribute? Maybe there are those who would argue for the adjustment of the relationships within schools and among schools. Currently, the content of many curricula are geared toward securing the stated ends of HST. Are there citizens who wish to challenge the religious influence involved with this practice? There are many high-profile debates such as whether to include Creationism in science texts. It seems that there should be more discussion concerning *why*, or for what end, schools are teaching evolution or intelligent design.

Earlier, I discussed Dewey's and Kuyper's perspective relating to "freeing inquiry" and "freeing morality." Darkness of the mind grows and deception becomes more likely when means and ends are separated. If the moral or intellectual life does not mix with one's labor, then underlying assumptions tend to guide experiences rather than informed and intentional engagement with the environment. Does vocational training necessarily mean a more prosperous economy? There is not a correct answer to this because each word in the previous sentence may have various meanings or implications. As a previous section discussed, however, U.S. citizens often answered questions such as this in the affirmative throughout the past seventy years. Implicit assumptions seem to consistently direct practices within the HST culture.

In Dewey's and Kuyper's view, it is regrettable if public and private leaders subject themselves to bondage of the will by disregarding the religious element in experience. However, it seems to be more tragic for the collective personality of society if children are trained to ignore the interrelatedness of their existence. Education is necessarily involved in determining how one frames the relationship between the self and the world. The choices involved in life continue to create within the people making them. Being able to choose and grow toward the Good in *all* spheres of life should be a primary end of one's holistic education.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Other thinkers around Kuyper's time, such as Edmund Burke and Lord Acton, are credited far more than Kuyper for the cogency of their arguments critiquing a "modernist worldview." Kuyper was a polemicist and painted with a broad brush. At times his arguments did not possess the precision and nuance necessary to gain the most legitimacy. However, Kuyper's main achievement was more than picking apart the tenets of modernism. He used his poetic imagination to demonstrate the necessity of striving for consistency of being, whatever the character of one's worldview.

Likewise, Dewey's contributions to philosophy moved past the explication of special subjects such as Cartesian epistemology. Comprehensive inquiries distinguished his work. Studying the relationship of means and ends in the context of communal growth and adaptation allowed Dewey to move toward his valuation of the "whole self." As Kuyper and Dewey ask what the role of religious philosophy is, they also inquire about the roles of the teacher, administrator, and student. They moved from the general to the particular and vice versa. Obviously, they did not always succeed in holding to their own standards but the goal of the unified life was consistently in the forefront of their imaginations.

For them, wide and deep religiosity transcends sect and dogma. Dewey and Kuyper discussed how their own conceptions of the Good were attainable in every sphere of existence. Their poetic imaginations led them to place education at the root of communal life. The aesthetic self makes and is made by its environments and experiences. Those practicing the responsibility of training others are also involved in creating personalities.

Separating learning a skill from the reason for learning it can create blindness among students.

Experience, intelligence, experimentation, process, habit, growth, adjustment, and self-realization long have been considered salient to American Pragmatism. Each of these terms has special meaning as far as Dewey is concerned. That he employed his language in such a particular way is consistent with the arguments of my thesis. For Dewey, there has never been a uniform application of words among people. Individual and collective personalities speak with distinction according to their values. The same words are arranged and applied differently according to the ends in view. Language cannot be neutral as it meets circumstances in experiences. It creates new ideas, situations, and material that have particular purposes. Language flows from and into one's identity. It acts as a medium to bind people to elements in nature and (for Dewey and Kuyper) to the God that is *among* us.

However, it is significant that Kuyper's practices can be understood on many of Dewey's own terms without the need for "translation" into the language of Kuyper's religion. Kuyper's intellect moved through and with his practices, creating change within and outside himself and the communities with whom he grew. When one adapts some of the two men's communicative methods in order to understand them in the light of the other's thought processes, the way is opened for the construction of new possibilities. As a result, distinct minds may meet and grow together as they are mutually pruned in and by experiences. Atavistic scholarship, or communication more broadly, contributes to the degradation and enslavement of those involved. If those on any side of a perspective seek to exploit another by using manipulative semantics, then retardation of the collective

body is likely. Blight permeates and color dissolves. Imagination becomes putrid and cancerous. Organic growth is arrested, and unnatural things emerge.

Events in the past ten years concerning violence linked to religious extremism raise many questions for the nature and function of the poetic imagination and religious dialogue. If the consistent application of religiosity within one's being results in violence, and the rhetoric promoting the destructive ends is delivered sincerely, then on what grounds may this imagination be criticized? One may, in an Aristotelian manner, say that observation has shown that violent means are not useful for obtaining constructive ends. Who determines that constructive ends are valuable? The question that often persists is: How may people from different religious orientations come together to develop good moral conduct? For example, how may Dewey and Kuyper come together to address the perplexity that some people desire destructive ends—they sacrifice their own lives for the obliteration of another. Often, destructive actions seem to reap few “harmful” consequences for an individual. It is indeed rare, but what about the despot who appears to die “fat and happy?”

In Chapter Two I discussed the common benefits that Dewey and Kuyper realized from embracing an expansive religiosity. The themes in those sections are relevant for meeting the challenges that the above questions pose. First, however, it is useful to remember that Kuyper and Dewey possessed and worked with their own religiously informed imaginations. Each man *believed* in the endeavor to obtain the good. Both had intellectual habits, methods, and criteria that they used to paint the various goods that were significant to them.

By definition, good is better than bad. However, all people do not have the same conception of the good. Dewey and Kuyper were aware of this reality. It led them to favor pluralistic cooperation in society. Nevertheless, both struggled to create more precise pictures of what the good may entail for individual and collective personalities in diverse experiences. Each valued his own convictions; therefore Kuyper and Dewey asserted them among their communities. Often they were forced to uphold their values in the face of a prevailing culture.

For Dewey, a central component of an expansive religiosity involved the ethics of self-realization within community. Various goods may be discovered or created as one incorporates their functions toward the realization of a good personality. Individual capacities are shaped and grown through *mutual* adjustment and the *sharing* of qualities within experiences. Just because Dewey did not place a normative barrier on moral inquiry, however, did not mean that he appropriated all conduct as “good.”

Realizing a participatory Democracy was a supreme good for Dewey. He valued this end because of the opportunities it opened for the holistic growth of those involved. In Dewey’s view, “going it alone,” or intentionally exploiting another member of the democratic organism, harmed the other members and their innumerable efforts. Therefore, harming a part of the body was *wrong* as far as he was concerned. It made no difference if the perpetrators considered themselves “happy,” at the end of their lives. Dewey would probably say that this variety of happiness is blind. Community, in Dewey’s view, is enriched by the education of values that bestow vision and curtail wayward passions that have the potential of sapping vitality from the tree of life.

As I pointed out in Chapter Two, Dewey and Kuyper do not agree on an absolute reason for practicing the good. Their collaboration stops short of a common religious, ontological, or metaphysical foundation for drawing conclusions about right and wrong. Kuyper cites union with a supernatural being as the motivation for propagating God's spirit throughout the world to enrich community. Dewey, as a religious humanist, relies on his membership in human society for the motivation to pursue the collective good. Nevertheless, many of the reasons that Dewey gives for the practice of good moral conduct resonate with Kuyper's worldview.

In addition to their appreciation for the scope and depth of religiosity, Kuyper and Dewey come together on the fact that there are observable goods among human society. According to both, values are not all equally beneficial. Kuyper made it a priority throughout his life to discuss his own religiously informed worldview with members from other communities inside a participatory democracy. Like Dewey, he valued political processes that were informative, and that incorporated the whole self with the web of the larger community. Pretenses of uniformity and neutrality bothered Kuyper. However, he desired to work with honest participants toward shared ends.

Even Kuyper's conception of "sin" may not be so far removed from Dewey as it first appears. The action of committing a sin such as murder is only one component of the violation, for Kuyper. He would understand hatred as stemming from the desires of the heart. One cannot merely fix outward symptoms and expect a cure. Kuyper did promote religious education so that hearts may be given to God. However, he did not desire to hoard what he saw as the benefits of grace within the walls of his church. Ultimately, Kuyper wanted to reconcile the inward affections of an individual with their outward

practices in pursuit of the good. In his view this necessitated the participation of a *whole* community.

Each man saw humanity's common life as one of the most significant means of growth (or grace) available. If people do not learn how to grow together then each must drift alone, even if they still live together. Both Kuyper and Dewey would see the latter condition as particularly dangerous. Happiness, as an isolated end, was not a supreme value for either man. They used the power of their words to create and share what they did value. Kuyper and Dewey desired to educate in order that individuals may look outside of themselves. This goal revolved around a concept that was at the heart of both of their worldviews: love.

In Chapter Three, I discussed Dewey's conception of the "natural transaction." This activity takes place within consummatory experiences and entails the sharing of qualities in and between communities. Following the conception of a "broad" religiosity described in Chapter Two, all of humanity and nature is involved in an interconnected web of existence that incorporates entire beings. Very little, Dewey argued, may be possessed entirely by the self. According to Dewey's esthetics described later in Chapter Three, experience, language, and emotion through intelligence in operation contribute to the modification of the self and changes of the will.

Qualities in experiences are shared among various personalities. These qualities transcend the tangible. What does language carry with it through these interactions? For Dewey, it is surely laden with hidden forces. He would probably say that love is the most significant. Dewey placed humility and reverence at the heart of the pursuit of the Good, where the self engages in participatory action with others. I drew on Dewey's claim that

one is what one does. In the various transactions one participates in throughout life, mixing labor with love among people would seem to be of utmost significance for Dewey. Through such poetry, love may be collectively owned and shared.

In Chapter Three I overviewed Kuyper's work in the Netherlands. It is apparent that he intended to unify his language with action, and one could argue that his political undertakings do complement his religious writings to a large extent. Kuyper's care in securing rights for the disenfranchised "little fellows," the foundation of the Free University, his teaching at that institution, and his eventual service as prime minister, played out as he wrote extensively for two publications.

Like Dewey, Kuyper attempted to give his love to others through the potency of his words. Along with Dewey, he was aware of the uniqueness of language in various circumstances or persons. Chapter Two discussed Kuyper's perspective on modernism in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. He probably viewed "liberty," "equality," and "fraternity" in a favorable light as far as the normative definitions went. However, he had problems with how they were used by "modernists" to blur boundaries and create a false uniformity. Intentionality about the means and ends of language was of supreme importance for Kuyper and Dewey. For both, identity was incorporated with the tools one used and the objects they shaped. This informed the context of Chapter Four where I discussed the creative power of language in the context of educational culture and practice in the United States.

Dewey pursued the actualization of the ideal through practical imagination. Kuyper's political poetry relied on the intervening work of the Holy Spirit. He believed that God endowed the Earth with a permeating love that moved through every creature.

In Kuyper's view, the supernatural creative and redeeming works happened in a historical context. Following this, he desired to continue working *in* history as he strove to imitate God by bestowing grace throughout all realms of life. It was not oxymoronical, according to his worldview, for God's *holiness* to reveal itself by mixing and giving within a needing community.

Kuyper and Dewey have a strong grounding to speak together. Their representative communities have the potential to share experiences and grow. Both men possessed a distinguished character that transcended time and circumstance. They have many of the same appreciations for the role of the religious life. Also, they would probably advocate similar processes to build relationships among the various spheres of society. However, their *willingness* to meet with and discuss other worldviews is itself a rare enough quality to have in common. In this thesis I attempted to respect Dewey's and Kuyper's collaborative spirit by providing them with the opportunity to share with one another.

Together, they are significant because their activity paralleled their descriptions of the valuable life-process. For each man, religiosity was expansive and deep. It was not confined within the walls of an institution, or supervening among the heavens. Thus, diversity in their work was a priority. Rather than shying away from difficult questions, both would encourage pluralistic cooperation in every sphere so that more useful questions may be asked and past answers revised.

In this spirit, opportunities abound for expanding the concepts this thesis discussed. Secondary sources on Dewey present numerous possibilities for connecting his religious imagination to various experiences and worldviews. Thomas Alexander and James Garrison have published books on Dewey's valuation of art. Dewey's esthetic experience

may provide valuable points of solidarity among persons of diverse faiths. Intriguing possibilities for further research exist here.

The secondary literature on Kuyper is limited. Further study of him could be valuable in facilitating a dialogue that fosters collaboration rather than polarization between the public and private spheres concerning religion. His study of the relationship between various organic spheres is also pertinent to present political discourse. Organizations such as the Center for Public Justice regularly hold seminars on Kuyper's political philosophy. It also may be useful to explore the work of modern day "Kuyperians" such as James Skillen and George Marsden, with a Deweyan eye. It would also be interesting to see how they perceive John Dewey.

Attainment of the Good is not inevitable in this world for Kuyper or Dewey, but they describe communicative means that help people imagine what growth towards it looks like. Each man exhibited characteristics of their own time and culture. However, both described a method of existence that transcended their circumstances. Dewey and Kuyper valued the study of history for what it offers for the here and now. For them, community exists across generations. Artistic expressions from the past create within contemporary experiences.

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