INTRODUCTION

The great triumvirate of American Pragmatism consists of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952). Among the three Dewey was the youngest and at a time much influenced by Peirce when the latter was an instructor in Philosophy at Hopkins where Dewey studied. But this is not to convey the impression that Dewey started his philosophy as a disciple of Peirce and James and spent the rest of his day weaving a synthesis of their teaching on pragmatism. Dewey's philosophic career began under the influence of Hegelian idealism and neo-Kantianism. His early interests appeared in epistemology, psychology and logic concerning the nature of thinking and judgement.

In Dewey's writings we find two aspects, technical and logical, which fall under the head of instrumentalis - a theory of the general forms of conception and reasoning. To Dewey, the separation of science and ethics into distinct kinds of experience and intellectual attitudes is the greatest mistake and most serious intellectual error. So Dewey reformulates the relation between science and human values. And we find his famous work "Reconstru-
ction in Philosophy", where he bridges the separation and establishes continuity between morality and science.

From a technical point of view, Dewey's distinctive contribution to philosophy is in his conception of inquiry, his aesthetics, his metaphysics and his theory of value. They are all of one piece. Under the influence of economic expansion, science and technology, Dewey displaced theology as the dominant intellectual outlook. The period in the nineteenth century saw the rise of Darwinism. Darwinism influenced the metaphysics of Dewey and his method, that is, his theory of inquiry.

Dewey's theory of inquiry is central in his philosophy.

Inquiry is the controlled or direct transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the original situation into a unified whole.¹

¹. Logic : The theory of inquiry - P. 104-105.
Dewey's theory of inquiry presupposes his metaphysics of experience and nature, religion and morality. According to classical empiricism experience is the way to apprehend realities underlying experienced appearances. But Dewey has a radically new conception of experience. For him "Experience" is a collective name for all the transactions going on between the organism and its environment. "Experience" appears to be synonymous with "Situation". Experience is the occasion for inquiry, supplies the raw materials of inquiry and the evidence for judgement. Experience is in nature and of nature.

Inquiry has a vital role to play in religion. Dewey is of opinion that there is no place for religious beliefs. He maintains that belief uncontrolled by inquiry is a disposition to act blindly, and that as such it is at the root of man's individual and social ill. In place of the divisive forces in modern society effecting and preserving intellectual and social class differences in the dry husks of orthodoxy, inquiry as thus interpreted by Dewey is a radical agent of unification and social cohesion.

So also inquiry plays an important role even in

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case of morality. For Dewey inquiry is not only essential to the moral reconstruction of experience but it is a paradigm of moral activity.

The reductive analysis which plays a vital role in the British empiricism in the nineteenth century is unacceptable to Dewey who refutes it by his famous method "instrumentalism".

Dewey's contribution to pragmatism can best be understood in his historical context. The history begins with the statement of C.S. Peirce in 1878. "Consider what effect, that might conceivably have practical bearings. We conceive the object of our conception to have." Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object and James' theory of objective reference to the future has been revived by John Dewey.

Dewey is the most prominent spokesman of the new naturalistic philosophy. He rejects theological animism, the subsistentialism of ideas and mysticism. He accepts realism and rejects in all forms of idealism and positivism. For him the world consists of historical, natural...
events. His philosophy is an emergent naturalism with a place for the emergent facts of life and mind. Dewey's entire philosophy may be designated "naturalism", and all his other doctrines may be regarded as synthetically contained in it. His instrumentalism is the only naturalistic theory of truth, Dewey thinks that mind and matter are both functions of natural events and that our perspectives are emergent natural events, which have a continuous flow. His naturalism possesses a massiveness which is perhaps found in no other recent naturalistic philosopher.

Among the general public Dewey's fame rests perhaps on his overwhelming and decisive influence on American education. The theory of education in American teacher training institutions has been what the professors of education think is Dewey's theory.

For a time Dewey's political philosophy developed as a line of thought independent of his technical interest. It was inevitable that political thought should gradually fuse the mind of a man who believed that the influences of social scene on philosophy should be not merely the unavoidable unconscious one but that of
furnishing a testing ground for the correctness of philosophic theory.

Special aspect of Dewey's philosophy is that Dewey discovered the concept of organic theory and developed a sense of inter-dependence and inter-relatedness of all things. Whatever issue Dewey considered was viewed from the perspective of the organic from which standpoint he thought that the old problem could be solved and new one's could emerge. But a philosopher's reactions to contemporary thinker helps us most profitably to understand him and this is why in the opening chapter we shall consider this aspect of Dewey's thought.