

# THE PUBLIC AND ITS PROBLEMS

An Essay in Political Inquiry

**John Dewey**

Edited and with an Introduction by Melvin L. Rogers

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*oneness of states, full unity*

authority more broadly understood. In *Drift and Mastery* of 1914, Walter Lippmann, then editor of the *New Republic* and adviser to President Woodrow Wilson, nicely captured the psychological anxieties of the age: "What nonsense it is, then, to talk of liberty as if it were a happy-go-lucky breaking of chains. It is with emancipation that real tasks begin, and liberty is a searching challenge, for it takes away the guardianship of the master and the comfort of the priest. The iconoclasts didn't free us. They threw us into the water, and now we have to swim."<sup>52</sup>

Second, while World War I elevated America's status as an international force, it did so alongside an already waning belief in progress that had otherwise defined the Progressive Era. American intellectuals did not abandon the belief in progress as such, but that belief was severely chastened by the devastation of the war. It made clear that retrogression was as likely as the progress that many thought was inevitable. But the war also revealed how easily the people, who otherwise were considered the source of sovereignty, were duped by propaganda.

Third, new studies in human psychology and politics at the beginning of the twentieth century merely confirmed the ease with which the people were manipulated. In doing so, these studies undermined the very premise on which democracy rested—that ordinary individuals were capable of collectively governing themselves if given the opportunity. What Maine had argued polemically in the 1880s, a new breed of scholar would maintain, but now with the support of empirical facts. French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904) and British sociologist and political scientist Graham Wallas (1858–1932) effectively elucidated the irrationality of the democratic public and its tendency to be short-sighted and biased.<sup>53</sup> By the beginning of the 1930s,

from  
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introduction

Harold Laswell (1902–1978), a leading American political scientist, could declare, "The findings of personality research show that the individual is a poor judge of his own interest."<sup>54</sup> Amid the constant evidence that public opinion was irrational, that the people were easily duped, and that partisan politics exacerbated these problems, many believed that if democracy continued it would have to be grounded in something other than the shifting and conflicting desires of ordinary people.

Democracy required a dose of realism to chasten its loftier vision. The emergence of democratic realism constituted a fundamental shift away from the idea of a liberative public that was central to the Progressive Era. Searching for a new basis of authority, grappling with the possibility of retrogression and the irrationality of the public, many turned to a vision of democracy based on scientific expertise and administrative efficiency. "The world over," explained the Australian sociologist Elton Mayo (1880–1949) in 1933, "we are greatly in need of an administrative elite."<sup>55</sup> Situated between Tarde and Wallas on the one hand, and Lasswell and Mayo on the other, Lippmann popularized the arguments of the former and prefigured the reflections of the latter. Lippmann further supported the irrationality of the democratic public in his two works *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925), while simultaneously offering an attenuated vision of democracy. What Americans seemed to be without in 1914—namely, masters and guardians—Lippmann would now address in these two somber works. Understanding the meaning of Dewey's argument as found in *The Public and Its Problems* requires that we first understand Lippmann's position.

In *Public Opinion*, Lippmann advances a criticism that is in keeping with much of the psychological literature of

the time. His argument comes in two steps. The first relates to what he calls stereotypes and the second is about the manipulation to which the symbolic content of those stereotypes is potentially subject. Stereotypes are value-laden conjectures about the world that arranges our experiences. They are part of a wider social network in which individuals exist and do not depend for their functioning on perpetual cognitive awareness. As he says, "The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. . . . And those preconceptions . . . govern deeply the whole process of perception."<sup>56</sup> This is particularly so in industrial societies because people are asked to reflect on issues of which they can have no firsthand experience.

Given the importance he accords stereotypes, not merely for individual identity, but also for political behavior, Lippmann worries about the extent to which they can be manipulated in the context of public life. Having served on the Committee on Public Information to enlist public support for America's involvement in World War I, Lippmann witnessed firsthand how susceptible the public was to manipulation. And for him, stereotypes not only work to "censor out much that needs to be taken into account" about complex political phenomena but also are uniquely susceptible to control, given their already existentially charged content.<sup>57</sup> "The stereotypes," Lippmann explains, "are loaded with preference, suffused with affection or dislike, attached to fears, lusts, strong wishes, pride, hope."<sup>58</sup> Most individuals, he says earlier, employ stereotypes with a level of "gullibility" that prevents them from seeing the partiality of their position, and this blunts their responsiveness to new and, at times, contrary

information. Individuals who seek to win political power use symbols that are tied to the passions that infuse stereotypes; they play on our passions and on the fear of insecurity and uncertainty involved. Political entrepreneurs do not, in Lippmann's analysis, take their point of departure from the opinion of the public—in fact, they give to the public its opinion. It is in this sense that public opinion, not being formed by the public, is merely a phantom.

But more significantly, Lippmann argues, citizens are inherently resistant to information that would call into question their deeply held beliefs. This is precisely why de-liberation among the citizenry cannot lift citizens above their private or narrow interest: "There is nothing so obdurate to education or to criticism as the stereotype. It stamps itself upon the evidence in the very act of securing the evidence."<sup>59</sup> For this reason, Lippmann concludes in the more somber *Phantom Public*, "the public must be put in its place . . . so that each of us may live free of the trampling and the roar of a bewildered herd."<sup>60</sup>

These considerations frame Lippmann's alternative—elitist—vision of democracy. If we are to retain democracy, it must now mean, he argues, that the "public does not select the candidate, write the platform, outline the policy any more than it builds the automobile or acts the play. It aligns itself for or against somebody who has offered himself."<sup>61</sup> But this position goes further. As he explains, lamenting the exaggerated role attached to the citizen in democratic theory:

My sympathies are with [the citizen], for I believe that he has been saddled with an impossible task and that he is asked to practice an unattainable ideal. I find it so myself for, although public business is my

main interest and I give most of my time to watching it, I cannot find time to do what is expected of me in the theory of democracy; that is, to know what is going on and to have an opinion worth expressing on every question which confronts a self-governing community.<sup>62</sup>

For him, to do what is expected means not merely paying attention to political issues but also having the requisite knowledge to understand those issues—something ordinary citizens lack and will typically be resistant to acquiring. But strikingly, Lippmann also argues that political decisions by elected representatives are in need of prior supplementation and clarification. It is worth turning to two passages from *Public Opinion*: one from chapter 16 relating to Lippmann's views on Congress, and the second from chapter 1 relating to representative government proper:

A congress of representatives is essentially a group of blind men in a vast, unknown world. . . . Since the real effects of most laws are subtle and hidden, they cannot be understood by filtering local experiences through local states of mind. They can be known only by controlled reporting and objective analysis. And just as the head of a large factory cannot know how efficient it is by talking to the foreman, but must examine cost sheets and data that only an accountant can dig out for him, so the lawmaker does not arrive at a true picture of the state of the union by putting together a mosaic of local pictures.<sup>63</sup>

[As such] representative government, either in what is ordinarily called politics, or in industry, cannot be worked successfully, no matter what the basis of election, unless there is an independent, expert

organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions. I attempt, therefore, to argue that the serious acceptance of the principle that personal representation must be supplemented by representation of the unseen facts would alone permit a satisfactory decentralization, and allow us to escape from the intolerable and unworkable fiction that each of us must acquire a competent opinion about all public affairs.<sup>64</sup>

For Lippmann, insofar as representatives seek to track various perspectives among their constituents to create a better picture of political reality, they will be misguided. Given the way he understands stereotypes and their hold on us, partial perspectives will either cancel each other out if they diverge or reinforce each other. In either case, the net result is an incomplete picture that corrupts decision making. The alternative that Lippmann recommends is one in which the unseen facts are “managed only by a specialized class” of social scientific experts who are distinct from the “men of action.”<sup>65</sup> Presumably, locating decision making outside the purview of experts obstructs the extent to which they may employ their knowledge for ends that reach beyond public oversight. Their role, he explains, is to examine and report on the unseen political phenomena that are blocked from view by our stereotypes. They direct their results to political officials, rather than to the public, and take their point of direction from these same individuals.

Yet Lippmann's language in the first passage suggests much more than mere reporting, indicative of his example of the factory owner and his relationship to the foreman and the accountant. The accountant provides not only facts, but also an interpretation of the current financial

condition of the company, its short- and long-term problems given current operations. If we reason from this example to his understanding of the role of experts in politics, it is not an exaggeration to say that for Lippmann experts give shape to the problems that are only dimly perceived by both citizens and political officials. The intellectual authority he attaches to experts thus slides into a kind of political power that shapes the landscape in which political officials and the citizenry function from the outset. To be sure, he frees citizens from an oppressive fiction, but is it at the expense of much that we find morally appealing about democracy?

Dewey does not deny the brilliance or force of Lippmann's critique in his review of *Public Opinion*: "The figures of the scene are so composed and so stand out, the manner of presentation is so objective and projective, that one finishes the book almost without realizing that it is perhaps the most effective indictment of democracy as currently conceived ever penned."<sup>66</sup> He agrees with Lippmann's discussion of stereotypes and the poverty of the public's knowledge in decision making. And he, too, is unconvinced by a view of democracy that envisions citizens as omniscient. Yet he takes issue with both the emphasis Lippmann places on educating "officials and directors" over and against the public and his corollary belief that experts do not need to be informed by or receive input from the public.<sup>67</sup> The problem here, for Dewey, is not simply the role envisioned by Lippmann for experts, but rather, and consistent with the view expressed almost forty years earlier, the problem of power implied by their role in democracy. As he says more forcefully in *The Public and Its Problems*: "No government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as

to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interests of the few" (225). Lippmann's criticism was so perfectly directed that it seemingly left little room for reflection regarding a solution—a view which, in Dewey's estimation, led to Lippmann's elitism.

### *The Public and Its Problems*

In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey is sensitive to the worry Lippmann advances, and even to the need for a division of intellectual labor between experts and the larger public that worry implies. This position, however, is located in a larger framework regarding the relationship between experts and citizens that keeps in view the problem of power and that sees citizens not merely as authorizing power, but as genuinely authoritative in decision making. The desire to keep in view the issue of power partly helps explain his defense of democracy and the distinct and important descriptions of the role of the *public* and the *state* that he elucidates in the first three chapters of the book.

For Dewey, the vast complexities of the modern age have radically transformed the meaning of democracy and the role of the ordinary citizen. For him, the various innovations in communication and transportation, the global scale of warfare, and the ever-changing dynamics of a market economy make reliance on experts simply unavoidable. "The Eclipse of the Public," chapter 4 of *The Public and Its Problems*, is fundamentally about the ways in which citizens' inherited habits for sustaining democracy are no longer consonant with the vast changes of the modern world. "We have," explains Dewey, "inherited, in short, local town-meeting practices and ideas. But we live and act and have our being in a continental national state"

(147). The incompatibility of citizens' political and social habits and the circumstances in which they find themselves produces what Dewey, following Wallas, refers to as the "Great Society"—a collection of individuals tied together through bureaucratic structures and impersonal forces.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the view of the omniscient citizen can only appear as an illusion. Dewey concedes this point to Lippmann. But in the context of democratic decision making, what is important, he argues, is that we understand that how and why we rely on experts is itself a public judgment that makes social inquiry genuinely cooperative.

*The Public and Its Problems*, then, is concerned to answer two distinct but related questions. First, what is the proper relationship between citizens and experts in the context of modern complexity, which nonetheless retains the self-governing dimension that we associate with democracy? Second, what is the proper method for helping the public emerge from its eclipse in the face of modern complexity so that it can fill the charge of self-governance?

The answer to the first question helps us understand how Dewey views the relationship between citizens and experts (chapter 6) and underscores the radical character of the democratic public (chapters 1-3). The answer to the second question emerges in Dewey's discussion of what he believes are the preconditions for the public to assume its role under modern conditions. These themes emerge in chapters 4 and 5. For the remainder of the introduction I shall concentrate on the first of these issues, leaving it to the reader to assess Dewey's engagement with the second.

The first issue emerges when he describes the relationship between experts and the citizenry, revisiting some of the themes expressed in his review of Lippmann's work. In

fact, the passage to which we will now refer sends us back to some of his reflections in 1888:

The final obstacle in the way of any aristocratic rule is that in the absence of an articulate voice on the part of the masses, the best do not and cannot remain the best, the wise ceases to be wise. It is impossible for highbrows to secure a monopoly of such knowledge as must be used for the regulation of common affairs. . . .

. . . The man who wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied. (223-24)

This passage is located in chapter 6, where Dewey discusses the problem of method in democratic decision making. One of the central claims he advances in that chapter is that the hypotheses we form for responding to political problems are only as good as the methods we employ—that is, the extent to which the methods make us receptive to data from various parts of the environment. But problems themselves, as he argues, frame and guide our inquiry; they imply the existence of a complex horizon of value and meaning that is now fractured and in need of creative valuation to restore continuity. Dewey's point is not simply that without the input of the wearer of shoes the shoemaker will respond in a way that would not address the existing pinch. Rather, without input from the individual experiencing the pinch, the expert shoemaker will not have the subject matter to initiate or guide his inquiry.

Dewey is offering a rich account of democracy and the status of citizens and experts therein. First, the experiential aspect of the example—feeling the pinch—localizes

problems in the life of communities and individuals. Political problems, as Dewey emphasizes, are often related to the flourishing of life, and the persistence of those problems makes flourishing difficult or impossible. Second, the importance he accords inquiry is meant to free individuals and promote their development (what Dewey often called “growth”). Here Dewey encourages a more critical stance toward the status of community than was the case in his early 1888 essay. Third, this liberation requires an intimate and critical engagement with the problems that afflict individuals and the ways in which the potential resolution of those problems fits with the liberation of others—an engagement from which the input of individuals and communities cannot be expunged and that is essential to guide inquiry.

In contrast to Lippmann, Dewey views the role of experts as ancillary to that of citizens, in essence undercutting the turn to experts that we see in Lippmann. As he says of experts, “Their expertness is not shown in framing and executing policies, but in discovering and making known the facts upon which the former depend” (225). Dewey is making two critical points. The first is that expertise, properly understood, is always tethered to a more “technical” field of investigation. As he understands it, experts come to gain intellectual authority and therefore become bearers of knowledge because of the audience they engage. Citizens are thus authorities just to the extent that it is their problems that create the framework in which expertise functions. The complexity and texture of those problems, Dewey argues, come into view through a deliberative exchange among citizens that draws out existing and emerging concerns and worries. All of this guides them as they determine what they, as a political community, will make of the information provided. But it also means that there

will rarely be complete agreement on who the experts are, and this will cut against any argument for blindly deferring to some perceived “expert” authority.

The second point of the sentence indicates that if something like “expertise” of political affairs exists, it will have to emerge from the public. In other words, how citizens understand information partly depends on the goals toward which they are moving as a political community, and this can emerge only through deliberation. Central to this process are questions not merely about how we understand the problem from the outset (e.g., Who are the subjects of this problem? What may be the long-term results if the problem is allowed to persist?), but about the implication of various proposals suggested to alleviate the problem (e.g., What are the value or economic trade-offs in choosing this or that proposal?). For Dewey, answering these questions—that is, arriving at knowledge—implies a kind of collective artistry to social inquiry that draws on the specific experiences of individuals, expert knowledge, facts about the problem in question, and potential risks of action. Hence, he explains that to the extent policy experts “become a specialized class they are shut off from knowledge of the needs which they are supposed to serve” (223). Since citizens are uniquely situated to offer knowledge of their own experiences, Dewey argues, their role in the design and implementation of policies is unavoidable in addressing the problem (224–25).

There is a practical upshot to Dewey’s argument. For example, where decision making is based less on the continuous input from public hearings, town hall meetings, advisory councils, and other deliberative bodies, there is greater reason to be concerned about the ends to which those decisions aim and the background interests from

which they proceed. Moreover, there is reason to be equally suspicious of bureaucratic processes that are resistant to expanding decision-making power by taking a bottom-up approach.<sup>69</sup> Of course there may be good reason not to take such an approach, as for example when we think about the obstacles that limited resources and time pose for political decision making. Here Lippmann's point about the obstacles to broad-based inclusion is inescapable. But Dewey's argument implies that the burden of proof must rest with those who seek less inclusive rather than more inclusive arrangements.<sup>70</sup> To the extent that experts guide political power without taking direction from the public in the form of deliberation, the entire decision-making process loses legitimacy and gains in suspicion.

#### *Dewey's Vision of Radical Democracy*

The considerations above, which directly engage Lippmann, are part of how Dewey understands the historical emergence of democracy as a way of broadening the use of political power. Indeed, he defends this view in *The Public and Its Problems*. Throughout the work, but especially in chapter 3, "The Democratic State," Dewey consistently emphasizes the fortuitous emergence of political democracy. He resists the idea that democracy was fated to happen. By political democracy he means "a mode of government, a specified practice in selecting officials and regulating their conduct as officials" through universal suffrage, that emphasizes the publicity of decision making (121). Despite its contingent emergence, Dewey argues that democracy's development nonetheless represents an "effort in the first place to counteract the forces that have so largely determined the possession of rule by accidental

and irrelevant factors, and in the second place an effort to counteract the tendency to employ political power to serve private instead of public ends" (121).

In keeping with his discussion in *The Public and Its Problems* and *Liberalism and Social Action*, he sees democracy emerging in an attempt to block political power from being exercised arbitrarily: "I would not minimize the advance scored in substitution of methods of discussion and conference for the method of arbitrary rule."<sup>71</sup> The use of power is arbitrary, for him, when it cannot be substantively informed by those over whom it will be exercised. In such instances, Dewey argues, freedom itself is threatened. Legitimate political power is not merely restrictive—that is, it does not merely constrain freedom—but more significantly, it makes freedom possible by giving citizens control over the forces that govern and enable their lives.

To be sure, Dewey argues that the early rise of modern democracy emanated from a concern over governmental intrusions on freedom. But this worry, he maintains, was mistakenly interpreted as a "natural antagonism between ruler and ruled," subject and government, when in fact the true target was abuse of political power.<sup>72</sup> "Freedom," he writes, "presented itself as an end in itself, though it signified in fact liberation from oppression and tradition. . . . The revolt against old and limiting associations was converted, intellectually, into the doctrine of independence of any and all associations" (124). Dewey seeks to refocus practical and intellectual energies on the correct target. The result is that authority, insofar as it is bound up with institutional structures that track the concerns of citizens, is not necessarily inimical to freedom. Political power in *The Public and Its Problems* thus refers to both the role individuals play in "forming and directing the activities"

of the community to which they belong and also the possibility that is open to them for "participating according to need in the values" that their community sustains (175).

Dewey's defense of democracy is important for refining the meaning of political participation, signaled by the last bit of quoted text. Democracy, as he describes it, defines members not simply by virtue of their actual participation in determining social possibilities, but also by the potential participation that remains open to them if need so arises. For him, to the extent that power functions to determine social possibilities, those possibilities cannot be of such a nature that they preclude the future contestability and development of how power functions. Hence the following remark: "The strongest point to be made in behalf of even such rudimentary political forms as democracy has already attained, popular voting, majority rule and so on, is that to some extent they involve a consultation and discussion which uncover social needs and troubles" (223). To be attentive to such needs and troubles means that "policies and proposals for social action [should] be treated as working hypotheses, not as programs to be rigidly adhered to and executed" (220). As he had argued much earlier, to say that we hold in reserve the power to contest indicates that the legitimacy of decision making hinges on the extent to which citizens do not feel permanently bound by those decisions in the face of new and different political changes.

The view of democracy that Dewey defends and that informs *The Public and Its Problems* is fundamentally linked to how he understands the function of the *public* and its relationship to *the state*. He envisions the public as the permanent space of contingency in the sense that there can be no a priori delimitation, except as it emerges

from individuals and groups that coalesce in the service of problem solving. He envisions publics as standing in a supportive relationship to the state and its representative and administrative institutions. But insofar as the state is resistant to transformation because it is defined by a set of fixed interests, publics then function in a more oppositional role that builds their power external to the state. Democracy, then, entails a kind of openness in which its substantive meaning—that is, what concerns it addresses and what ends it pursues—is always in the process of being determined.

Dewey's understanding of the public is described in chapter 1, "Search for the Public." "The public," he says, "consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for" (69). Dewey's language of "indirect" is deceptive because he appears to also mean harmful or unwanted consequences, indirect or not. Notwithstanding, the emergence of the public is prompted by a set of transactions within society whose impact on a group of individuals is of such a nature that it requires focused action that cannot otherwise be provided by them. This need not imply that the association of individuals that comes to constitute the public was in existence prior to the problem; it will often be the case that the consequences of transactions now perceived as problematic determine the members that comprise the public.

We need to be clear at this point. For Dewey, society is an arrangement of individuals who simultaneously belong to distinct and overlapping associations, what we often refer to as *civil society*. Dewey thus belongs to the tradition of pluralism that includes thinkers such as Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933), Arthur Bentley (1870–1957), Ernest Barker

(1874-1960), and Harold Laski (1893-1950), in which individuals are viewed as emerging from the nexus of multiple and sometimes conflicting social groupings, among which is the state itself (110-11). In civil society, information and pressures are communicated across those associations. In such pluralistic conditions, problems and conflicts are bound to emerge; some of these may very well come from the functioning of governmental regulation or activities of the market economy. The result of such problems is that groups within civil society are politicized and so become a public. To say they become politicized only means that indirect consequences have affected individuals to such an extent that a distinct apparatus is needed to address their concerns. The associated groups that emerge may already be in existence, albeit in a nonpolitical mode (e.g., religious organizations, professional associations, or cultural organizations), in civil society. Or it may be the case that the public comprises multiple associations that were already in existence, having no discernible relationship to each other until the problem emerged. The problem helps focus what is shared and provides the point of departure for collective problem solving, even as its members debate and argue over how best to address the problem.

A concern should emerge at this point regarding Dewey's account of the public. On the one hand, he speaks of "the public." Yet he seems quite clear in chapter 2, "Discovery of the State," that multiple groups and associations of individuals advance claims requiring systematic care. This is why he cautions those theorists in the previous chapter who make use of the definite article, saying that "the concept of the state, like most concepts which are introduced by 'The,' is both too rigid and too tied up with controversies to be of ready use" (63). The use of *the* when

used in conjunction with *public* suggests a homogenous domain in which the whole of society is directed through a deliberative mechanism, while the absence of the definite article points to a space that is internally plural, in which deliberation is context specific. How does Dewey address this ambiguity?

Dewey's answer seems to be that *the public* denotes a space of pluralism in which the indirect consequences of various and distinct groups require systematic care. In other words, it is a space not quite reducible to civil society, but not yet identifiable with governmental institutions, a space in which claims regarding the need for systematic care are acknowledged by citizens and around which they consolidate their political identity. Citizens seek to translate their power of voice as a specific public into state power. State power becomes the administrative component that can effect change. So *the public* refers to a space internally differentiated between specific publics.

In explaining the meaning of *systematic care*, Dewey invokes the image of the state precisely to institutionalize political claims built up from *the public* that consolidate into a public. He writes that "the state is the organization of the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by its members" (82). So the translation of political claims and grievances into state power requires officers and administrators who are charged as trustees of a public, holding fiduciary power: "Officials are those who look out for and take care of the interests thus affected" (69). For Dewey, this means that publics, whether on the local or national level, not only supervise how power functions, but in many respects determine and influence the ends to which it will be put: "A public articulated and operating through representative officers is

the state; there is no state without a government, but also there is none without the public" (109). Hence, the state, although important for Dewey, is nonetheless a "secondary form of association" (112). In other words, although the activity of political institutions—that is, the formation of laws, statutes, and binding regulations, or the establishment of administrative agencies, for example—will often be the result of those officials and representatives, this only comes about for Dewey because the direction and purpose of these institutions are determined elsewhere. Although functioning at the fringes of the state, the public is nonetheless configured as the site from which opinion- and will-formation originate and that is institutionalized via the state.<sup>73</sup>

Dewey's account of the relationship between publics and the state specifically rejects the notion of a unified deliberative public that makes claims in the name of "the people" and that is beyond contestation. He thus rejects metaphysical descriptions that locate the emergence of the state in god, reason, will, nature, mind, or contractual relationships. Here, once more, we return to themes of 1888. The public refers to a space of unity and difference that functions only if we see it as indeterminate, thus allowing the state to emerge as an instrument or tool of problematic activity on the part of human beings. This much Dewey explains when he says that scholars have looked for the state in the wrong place:

They have sought for the key to the nature of the state in the field of agencies, in that of doers of deeds, or in some will of purpose back of deeds. They have sought to explain the state in terms of authorship. Ultimately all deliberate choices proceed from somebody in

particular; acts are performed by somebody, and all arrangements and plans are made by somebody in the most concrete sense of somebody. Some John Doe and Richard Roe figure in every transaction. . . .

. . . The quality presented is not authorship but authority, the authority of recognized consequences to control the behavior which generates and averts extensive and enduring results of weal and woe. (70-71)

His point is that connecting the state *as* state to particular authors who comprise *a* public or fixed foundations undercuts the extent to which *the* public can function as a sensory network for emerging problems that can then be managed by state institutions. Focusing on authorship for understanding the state ironically fixes the latter and imputes to the public a substantive unified identity that, as Dewey argues, is out of step with a pluralistic society.

For Dewey there can be no permanent closure of the public itself with a fixed political identity from which the state can be inferred, even though there will be specific delimitations of particular publics. The delimitations of particular publics imply that state institutions and the substantive decisions that follow from those institutions (at both national and local levels of governance) will very well come into existence in response to the specific claims of *a* public, as for instance, those arguing for health-care reform, more equitable distribution of monies for public education, or better safeguards on businesses whose waste by-products are contaminating a local reservoir. The former point, that which relates to the public as such, means that insofar as the claims of a particular public are instantiated in the state, they cannot exclude the possibility of addressing developing needs that require systematic care.

To be sure, all developing needs may not be legitimate in this regard. But Dewey believes that we will first assess the legitimacy of those needs by carefully paying attention to how those needs might potentially implicate us in relationships of domination. Additionally, Dewey believes the public is a space that enables the democratic state to see widely and feel deeply in order to make an informed judgment. For him, a democratic public and by that fact a democratic state is radically inclusive in theory, even though such inclusiveness means the emergence of distinct and exclusive publics.

In many ways Dewey's discussion of the public has as its goal an inclusive state apparatus.

There is no sharp and clear line which draws itself, pointing out beyond peradventure, like the line left by a receding high tide, just where a public comes into existence which has interests so significant that they must be looked after and administered by special agencies, or governmental officers. Hence there is often room for dispute. The line of demarcation between actions left to private initiative and management and those regulated by the state has to be discovered experimentally. (107)

Experimentally determining the nature and scope of the state means we are attempting to envision supplemental institutional and legal appendages that need to be added to address the concerns of a particular public. But we are also implicitly, Dewey believes, testing the extent to which pre-existing institutions are amenable to transformation. Insofar as such institutions are not, Dewey envisions the public as standing in a more oppositional rather than supportive and guiding relationship to the state. In this instance,

the claims of specific publics may ultimately point to the entrenched resistance and limitation of state institutions. As he explains of political development, "Progress is not steady and continuous. Retrogression is as periodic as advance" (80). In this context, the public potentially stands in an uneasy relationship to the state, especially in its attempts to democratize the functioning of the state. Dewey captures this point in his concern about the extent to which state institutions ossify around a set of interests and so become unresponsive to new and emerging publics, thus generating a revolutionary impulse.

These changes [relating to associated relationships] are extrinsic to political forms which, once established, persist of their own momentum. The new public which is generated remains long inchoate, unorganized, because it cannot use inherited political agencies. The latter, if elaborate and well institutionalized, obstruct the organization of the new public. They prevent that development of new forms of the state which might grow up rapidly were social life more fluid, less precipitated into set political and legal molds. To form itself, the public has to break existing political forms. This is hard to do because these forms are themselves the regular means of instituting change. The public which generated political forms is passing away, but the power and lust of possession remains in the hands of the officers and agencies which the dying public instituted. This is why the change of the form of states is so often effected only by revolution. (80-81, emphasis added)

We should not understate the importance of this passage in *The Public and Its Problems* precisely because it points to

the radical character of Dewey's outlook. His claim is not simply that emerging publics cannot use existing state institutions because they are insufficient to address developing needs. Rather, existing institutions may be inimical to those new needs. Here, we may think, for example, of the legally instantiated power of white males in the American context—power that formed in direct resistance to the demands of women and black Americans seeking more equitable distribution of resources and equal access to political power. We can diversify our examples to include other rebellious groups: labor unions on behalf of workers, environmental organizations, and farmers, just to name a few. These movements exist on a scale that slides from reform movements aimed at transformation of legal or institutional norms (e.g., trade unions and green organizations) to radical associations looking to redescribe the value system upon which institutional structures are based (e.g., the civil rights movement and women's rights movement). But in all situations, Dewey argues, the claims of the public cannot flow directly into the administrative power of the state. Instead, publics must seek to build power externally, the result of which functions as a counterweight to publics that are entrenched via the state and wield arbitrary power. This, for Dewey, is the essence of democracy's radical character.

### Conclusion

In the final analysis, the questions that any reader must put to *The Public and Its Problems* are the following: How might we recapture, sustain, and employ democracy's radical character in the face of its eclipse? How can the public reemerge given the technological, economic, bureaucratic,

and psychological obstacles that stand in its way? These questions were not merely relevant in the 1920s, but seem equally, if not more, relevant in today's political climate. And while Dewey often struggles for an answer, he is insistent that the solution is bound up with restoring a sense of communal life that can move us from the impersonal Great Society into the personal and meaningful Great Community. "Unless," he writes, "local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself" (231). What would communal life look like given the national and, increasingly, international stage on which political problems play themselves out? This is the primary question whose answer seems terribly and perhaps tragically elusive.

## The Eclipse of the Public

Optimism about democracy is to-day under a cloud. We are familiar with denunciation and criticism which, however, often reveal their emotional source in their peevish and indiscriminating tone. Many of them suffer from the same error into which earlier laudations fell. They assume that democracy is the product of an idea, of a single and consistent intent. Carlyle was no admirer of democracy, but in a lucid moment he said: "Invent the printing press and democracy is inevitable."<sup>1</sup> Add to this: Invent the railway, the telegraph, mass manufacture and concentration of population in urban centers, and some form of democratic government is, humanly speaking, inevitable. Political democracy as it exists today calls for adverse criticism in abundance. But the criticism is only an exhibition of querulousness and spleen or of a superiority complex, unless it takes cognizance of the conditions out of which popular government has issued. All intelligent political criticism is comparative. It deals not with all-or-none situations, but with practical alternatives; an absolutistic indiscriminate attitude, whether in praise or blame, testifies to the heat of feeling rather than the light of thought.

American democratic polity was developed out of genuine community life, that is, association in local and small centres where industry was mainly agricultural and where production was carried on mainly with hand tools. It took form when English political habits and legal institutions worked under pioneer conditions. The forms of association were stable, even though their units were mobile and migratory. Pioneer conditions put a high premium upon personal work, skill, ingenuity, initiative and adaptability, and upon neighborly sociability. The township or some not much larger area was the political unit, the town meeting the political medium, and roads, schools, the peace of the community, were the political objectives. The state was a sum of such units, and the national state a federation—unless perchance a confederation—of states. The imagination of the founders did not travel far beyond what could be accomplished and understood as a congeries of self-governing communities. The machinery provided for the selection of the chief executive of the federal union is illustrative evidence. The electoral college assumed that citizens would choose men locally known for their high standing; and that these men when chosen would gather together for consultation to name some one known to them for his probity and public spirit and knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The rapidity with which the scheme fell into disuse is evidence of the transitoriness of the state of affairs that was predicated. But at the outset there was no dream of the time when the very names of the presidential electors would be unknown to the mass of the voters, when they would plump for a "ticket" arranged in a more or less private caucus, and when the electoral college would be an impersonal registering machine such that it would be treachery to employ the personal judgment which was originally contemplated as the essence of the affair.

The local conditions under which our institutions took shape is well indicated by our system, apparently so systemless, of public education. Any one who has tried to explain it to a European will understand what is meant. One is asked, say, what method of administration is followed, what is the course of study, and what the authorized methods of teaching. The American member to the dialogue replies that in this state, or more likely county, or town, or even some section of a town called a district, matters stand thus and thus; somewhere else, so and so. The participant from this side is perhaps thought by the foreigner to be engaged in concealing his ignorance; and it would certainly take a veritable cyclopedic knowledge to state the matter in its entirety. The impossibility of making any moderately generalized reply renders it almost indispensable to resort to a historical account in order to be intelligible. A little colony, the members of which are probably mostly known to one another in advance, settle in what is almost, or quite, a wilderness. From belief in its benefits and by tradition, chiefly religious, they wish their children to know at least how to read, write and figure. Families can only rarely provide a tutor; the neighbors over a certain area, in New England an area smaller even than the township, combine in a "school district." They get a schoolhouse built, perhaps by their own labor, and hire a teacher by means of a committee, and the teacher is paid from the taxes. Custom determines the limited course of study, and tradition the methods of the teacher, modified by whatever personal insight and skill he may bring to bear. The wilderness is gradually subdued; a network of highways, then of railways, unite the previously scattered communities. Large cities grow up; studies grow more numerous and methods more carefully scrutinized. The larger unit, the state, but not the federal state, provides

schools for training teachers and their qualifications are more carefully looked into and tested. But subject to certain quite general conditions imposed by the state-legislature, but not the national state, local maintenance and control remain the rule. The community pattern is more complicated, but is not destroyed. The instance seems richly instructive as to the state of affairs under which our borrowed, English, political institutions were reshaped and forwarded.

We have inherited, in short, local town-meeting practices and ideas. But we live and act and have our being in a continental national state. We are held together by non-political bonds, and the political forms are stretched and legal institutions patched in an *ad hoc* and improvised manner to do the work they have to do. Political structures fix the channels in which non-political, industrialized currents flow. Railways, travel and transportation, commerce, the mails, telegraph and telephone, newspapers, create enough similarity of ideas and sentiments to keep the thing going as a whole, for they create interaction and interdependence. The unprecedented thing is that states, as distinguished from military empires, can exist over such a wide area. The notion of maintaining a unified state, even nominally self-governing, over a country as extended as the United States and consisting of a large and racially diversified population would once have seemed the wildest of fancies. It was assumed that such a state could be found only in territories hardly larger than a city-state and with a homogeneous population. It seemed almost self-evident to Plato<sup>3</sup>—as to Rousseau later<sup>4</sup>—that a genuine state could hardly be larger than the number of persons capable of personal acquaintance with one another. Our modern state-unity is due to the consequences of technology employed so as to facilitate the rapid and easy circulation of opinions

and information, and so as to generate constant and intricate interaction far beyond the limits of face-to-face communities. Political and legal forms have only piecemeal and haltingly, with great lag, accommodated themselves to the industrial transformation. The elimination of distance, at the base of which are physical agencies, has called into being the new form of political association.

The wonder of the performance is greater because of the odds against which it has been achieved. The stream of immigrants which has poured in is so large and heterogeneous that under conditions which formerly obtained it would have disrupted any semblance of unity as surely as the migratory invasion of alien hordes once upset the social equilibrium of the European continent. No deliberately adopted measures could have accomplished what has actually happened. Mechanical forces have operated, and it is no cause for surprise if the effect is more mechanical than vital. The reception of new elements of population in large number from heterogeneous peoples, often hostile to one another at home, and the welding them into an outward show of unity is an extraordinary feat. In many respects, the consolidation has occurred so rapidly and ruthlessly that much of value has been lost which different peoples might have contributed. The creation of political unity has also promoted social and intellectual uniformity, a standardization favorable to mediocrity. Opinion has been regimented as well as outward behavior. The temper and flavor of the pioneer have evaporated with extraordinary rapidity; their precipitate, as is often noted, is apparent only in the wild-west romance and the movie. What Bagehot called the cake of custom formed with increasing acceleration, and the cake is too often flat and soggy.<sup>5</sup> Mass production is not confined to the factory.

The resulting political integration has confounded the expectations of earlier critics of popular government as much as it must surprise its early backers if they are gazing from on high upon the present scene. The critics predicted disintegration, instability. They foresaw the new society falling apart, dissolving into mutually repellent animated grains of sand. They, too, took seriously the theory of "Individualism" as the basis of democratic government. A stratification of society into immemorial classes within which each person performed his stated duties according to his fixed position seemed to them the only warrant of stability. They had no faith that human beings released from the pressure of this system could hold together in any unity. Hence they prophesied a flux of governmental régimes, as individuals formed factions, seized power, and then lost it as some newly improvised faction proved stronger. Had the facts conformed to the theory of Individualism, they would doubtless have been right. But, like the authors of the theory, they ignored the technological forces making for consolidation.

In spite of attained integration, or rather perhaps because of its nature, the Public seems to be lost; it is certainly bewildered.\* The government, officials and their activities are plainly with us. Legislatures make laws with luxurious abandon; subordinate officials engage in a losing struggle to enforce some of them; judges on the bench deal as best they

\*See Walter Lippmann's *The Phantom Public* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925). To this as well as to his *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922), I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness, not only as to this particular point, but for ideas involved in my entire discussion, even when it reaches conclusions diverging from his.

[For Dewey's direct assessment of these works, the reader should consult two reviews: "Review of *Public Opinion*" (1922), *MW* 13:337-45; "Practical Democracy, Review of *The Phantom Public*" (1925), *LW* 2:213-20.]

can with the steadily mounting pile of disputes that come before them. But where is the public which these officials are supposed to represent? How much more is it than geographical names and official titles? The United States, the state of Ohio or New York, the county of this and the city of that? Is the public much more than what a cynical diplomat once called Italy: a geographical expression? Just as philosophers once imputed a substance to qualities and traits in order that the latter might have something in which to inhere and thereby gain a conceptual solidity and consistency which they lacked on their face, so perhaps our political "common-sense" philosophy imputes a public only to support and substantiate the behavior of officials. How can the latter be public officers, we despairingly ask, unless there is a public? If a public exists, it is surely as uncertain about its own whereabouts as philosophers since Hume have been about the residence and make-up of the self. The number of voters who take advantage of their majestic right is steadily decreasing in proportion to those who might use it. The ratio of actual to eligible voters is now about one-half. In spite of somewhat frantic appeal and organized effort, the endeavor to bring voters to a sense of their privileges and duties has so far been noted for failure. A few preach the impotence of all politics; the many nonchalantly practice abstinence and indulge in indirect action. Skepticism regarding the efficacy of voting is openly expressed, not only in the theories of intellectuals, but in the words of lowbrow masses: "What difference does it make whether I vote or not? Things go on just the same anyway. My vote never changed anything." Those somewhat more reflective add: "It is nothing but a fight between the ins and the outs. The only difference made by an election is as to who get the jobs, draw the salaries and shake down the plum tree."

Those still more inclined to generalization assert that the whole apparatus of political activities is a kind of protective coloration to conceal the fact that big business rules the governmental roost in any case. Business is the order of the day, and the attempt to stop or deflect its course is as futile as Mrs. Partington essaying to sweep back the tides with a broom.<sup>6</sup> Most of those who hold these opinions would profess to be shocked if the doctrine of economic determinism were argumentatively expounded to them, but they act upon a virtual belief in it. Nor is acceptance of the doctrine limited to radical socialists. It is implicit in the attitude of men of big business and financial interests, who revile the former as destructive "Bolshevists." For it is their firm belief that "prosperity"—a word which has taken on religious color—is the great need of the country, that they are its authors and guardians, and hence by right the determiners of the polity. Their denunciations of the "materialism" of socialists [are] based simply upon the fact that the latter want a different distribution of material force and well-being than that which satisfies those now in control.

The unfitness of whatever public exists, with respect to the government which is nominally its organ, is made manifest in the extra-legal agencies which have grown up. Intermediary groups are closest to the political conduct of affairs. It is interesting to compare the English literature of the eighteenth century regarding factions with the status actually occupied by parties. Factionalism was decried by all thinkers as the chief enemy to political stability. Their voice of condemnation is reëchoed in the writing of early nineteenth-century American writers on politics. Extensive and consolidated factions under the name of parties are now not only a matter of course, but popular imagination can conceive of no other way by which officials may be

selected and governmental affairs carried on. The centralizing movement has reached a point where even a third party can lead only a spasmodic and precarious existence. Instead of individuals who in the privacy of their consciousness make choices which are carried into effect by personal volition, there are citizens who have the blessed opportunity to vote for a ticket of men mostly unknown to them, and which is made up for them by an undercover machine in a caucus whose operations constitute a kind of political predestination. There are those who speak as if ability to choose between two tickets were a high exercise of individual freedom. But it is hardly the kind of liberty contemplated by the authors of the individualistic doctrine. "Nature abhors a vacuum." When the public is as uncertain and obscure as it is to-day, and hence as remote from government, bosses with their political machines fill the void between government and the public. Who pulls the strings which move the bosses and generates power to run the machines is a matter of surmise rather than of record, save for an occasional overt scandal.

Quite aside, however, from the allegation that "Big Business" plays the tune and pulls the strings to which bosses dance, it is true that parties are not creators of policies to any large extent at the present time. For parties yield in piece-meal accommodation to social currents, irrespective of professed principles. As these lines are written a weekly periodical remarks: "Since the end of the Civil War practically all the more important measures which have been embodied in federal legislation have been reached without a national election which turned upon the issue and which divided the two major parties." Reform of civil service, regulation of railways, popular election of senators, national income tax, suffrage for women, and prohibition

are supported to substantiate the statement. Hence its other remark appears justified: "American party politics seem at times to be a device for preventing issues which may excite popular feeling and involve bitter controversies from being put up to the American people."

A negatively corroborating fact is seen in the fate of the Child Labor amendment.<sup>7</sup> The need of giving to Congress power to regulate child labor, denied it by decisions of the Supreme Court, had been asserted in the platforms of all political parties; the idea was endorsed by the last three of the presidents belonging to the party in power. Yet so far, the proposed amendment to the Constitution has not begun to secure the needed support. Political parties may rule, but they do not govern. The public is so confused and eclipsed that it cannot even use the organs through which it is supposed to mediate political action and polity.

The same lesson is taught by the breakdown of the theory of the responsibility of elected representatives to the electorate, to say nothing of their alleged liability to be called before the bar of the private judgment of individuals. It is at least suggestive that the terms of the theory are best met in legislation of the "pork-barrel" type. There a representative may be called to account for failure to meet local desire, or be rewarded for pertinacity and success in fulfilling its wishes. But only rarely is the theory borne out in important matters, although occasionally it works. But the instances are so infrequent that any skilled political observer could enumerate them by name. The reason for the lack of personal liability to the electorate is evident. The latter is composed of rather amorphous groups. Their political ideas and beliefs are mostly in abeyance between elections. Even in times of political excitement, artificially accelerated, their opinions are moved collectively by the current of the

group rather than by independent personal judgment. As a rule, what decides the fate of a person who comes up for election is neither his political excellence nor his political defects. The current runs for or against the party in power and the individual candidate sinks or swims as runs the current. At times there is a general consensus of sentiment, a definite trend in favor of "progressive legislation" or a desire for a "return to normalcy." But even then only exceptional candidates get by on any basis of personal responsibility to the electorate. The "tidal wave" swamps some; the "landslide" carries others into office. At other times, habit, party funds, the skill of managers of the machine, the portrait of a candidate with his firm jaw, his lovely wife and children, and a multitude of other irrelevancies, determine the issue.

These scattered comments are not made in the belief that they convey any novel truth. Such things are familiar; they are the common-places of the political scene. They could be extended indefinitely by any careful observer of the scene. The significant thing is that familiarity has bred indifference if not contempt. Indifference is the evidence of current apathy, and apathy is testimony to the fact that the public is so bewildered that it cannot find itself. The remarks are not made with a view to drawing a conclusion. They are offered with a view to outlining a problem: What is the public? If there is a public, what are the obstacles in the way of its recognizing and articulating itself? Is the public a myth? Or does it come into being only in periods of marked social transition when crucial alternative issues stand out, such as that between throwing one's lot in with the conservation of established institutions or with forwarding new tendencies? In a reaction against dynastic rule which has come to be felt as despotically oppressive? In a transfer of social power from agrarian classes to industrial?

Is not the problem at the present time that of securing experts to manage administrative matters, other than the framing of policies? It may be urged that the present confusion and apathy are due to the fact that the real energy of society is now directed in all non-political matters by trained specialists who manage things, while politics are carried on with a machinery and ideas formed in the past to deal with quite another sort of situation. There is no particular public concerned in finding expert school instructors, competent doctors, or business managers. Nothing called a public intervenes to instruct physicians in the practice of the healing art or merchants in the art of salesmanship. The conduct of these callings and others characteristic of our time are decided by science and pseudo-science. The important governmental affairs at present, it may be argued, are also technically complicated matters to be conducted properly by experts. And if at present people are not educated to the recognition of the importance of finding experts and of entrusting administration to them, it may plausibly be asserted that the prime obstruction lies in the superstitious belief that there is a public concerned to determine the formation and execution of general social policies. Perhaps the apathy of the electorate is due to the irrelevant artificiality of the issues with which it is attempted to work up factitious excitement. Perhaps this artificiality is in turn mainly due to the survival of political beliefs and machinery from a period when science and technology were so immature as not to permit of a definite technique for handling definite social situations and meeting specific social needs. The attempt to decide by law that the legends of a primitive Hebrew people regarding the genesis of man are more authoritative than the results of scientific inquiry might be cited as a typical example of the

sort of thing which is bound to happen when the accepted doctrine is that a public organized for political purposes, rather than experts guided by specialized inquiry, is the final umpire and arbiter of issues.

The questions of most concern at present may be said to be matters like sanitation, public health, healthful and adequate housing, transportation, planning of cities, regulation and distribution of immigrants, selection and management of personnel, right methods of instruction and preparation of competent teachers, scientific adjustment of taxation, efficient management of funds, and so on. These are technical matters, as much so as the construction of an efficient engine for purposes of traction or locomotion. Like it they are to be settled by inquiry into facts; and as the inquiry can be carried on only by those especially equipped, so the results of inquiry can be utilized only by trained technicians. What has counting heads, decision by majority and the whole apparatus of traditional government to do with such things? Given such considerations, and the public and its organization for political ends is not only a ghost, but a ghost which walks and talks, and obscures, confuses and misleads governmental action in a disastrous way.

Personally I am far from thinking that such considerations, pertinent as they are to administrative activities, cover the entire political field. They ignore forces which have to be composed and resolved before technical and specialized action can come into play. But they aid in giving definiteness and point to a fundamental question: What, after all, is the public under present conditions? What are the reasons for its eclipse? What hinders it from finding and identifying itself? By what means shall its inchoate and amorphous estate be organized into effective political

action relevant to present social needs and opportunities? What has happened to the Public in the century and a half since the theory of political democracy was urged with such assurance and hope?

Previous discussion has brought to light some conditions out of which the public is generated. It has also set forth some of the causes through which a "new age of human relationships" has been brought into being. These two arguments form the premises which, when they are related to each other, will provide our answer to the questions just raised. Indirect, extensive, enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior call a public into existence having a common interest in controlling these consequences. But the machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and complicated the scope of the indirect consequences, [has] formed such immense and consolidated unions in action on an impersonal rather than a community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify and distinguish itself. And this discovery is obviously an antecedent condition of any effective organization on its part. Such is our thesis regarding the eclipse which the public idea and interest have undergone. There are too many publics and too much of public concern for our existing resources to cope with. The problem of a democratically organized public is primarily and essentially an intellectual problem, in a degree to which the political affairs of prior ages offer no parallel.

Our concern at this time is to state how it is that the machine age in developing the Great Society has invaded and partially disintegrated the small communities of former times without generating a Great Community. The facts are familiar enough; our especial affair is to point out their connections with the difficulties under which the organization

of a democratic public is laboring. For the very familiarity with the phenomena conceals their significance and blinds us to their relation to immediate political problems.

The scope of the Great War furnishes an urgent as well as convenient starting point for the discussion. The extent of that war is unparalleled because the conditions involved in it are so new. The dynastic conflicts of the seventeenth century are called by the same name: we have only one word, "war." The sameness of the word too easily conceals from us the difference in significance. We think of all wars as much the same thing, only the last one was horrible beyond others. Colonies were drawn in: self-governing ones entered voluntarily; possessions were levied upon for troops; alliances were formed with remote countries in spite of diversities of race and culture, as in the cases of Great Britain and Japan, Germany and Turkey. Literally every continent upon the globe was involved. Indirect effects were as broad as they were direct. Not merely soldiers, but finance, industry and opinion were mobilized and consolidated. Neutrality was a precarious affair. There was a critical epoch in the history of the world when the Roman Empire assembled in itself the lands and peoples of the Mediterranean basin. The World War stands out as an indubitable proof that what then happened for a region has now happened for the world, only there is now no comprehensive political organization to include the various divided yet interdependent countries. Any one who even partially visualizes the scene has a convincing reminder of the meaning of the Great Society: that it exists, and that it is not integrated.

Extensive, enduring, intricate and serious indirect consequences of the conjoint activity of a comparatively few persons traverse the globe. The similes of the stone cast into the pool, ninepins in a row, the spark which kindles a

vast conflagration, are pale in comparison with the reality. The spread of the war seemed like the movement of an uncontrolled natural catastrophe. The consolidation of peoples in enclosed, nominally independent, national states has its counterpart in the fact that their acts affect groups and individuals in other states all over the world. The connections and ties which transferred energies set in motion in one spot to all parts of the earth were not tangible and visible; they do not stand out as do politically bounded states. But the war is there to show that they are as real, and to prove that they are not organized and regulated. It suggests that existing political and legal forms and arrangements are incompetent to deal with the situation. For the latter is the joint product of the existing constitution of the political state and the working of non-political forces not adjusted to political forms. We cannot expect the causes of a disease to combine effectually to cure the disease they create. The need is that the non-political forces organize themselves to transform existing political structures: that the divided and troubled publics integrate.

In general, the non-political forces are the expressions of a technological age injected into an inherited political scheme which operates to deflect and distort their normal operation. The industrial and commercial relations that created the situation of which the war is a manifestation are as evident in small things as great. They were exhibited, not only in the struggle for raw materials, for distant markets, and in staggering national debts, but in local and unimportant phenomena. Travelers finding themselves away from home could not get their letters of credit cashed even in countries not then at war. Stockmarkets closed on one hand, and profiteers piled up their millions on the other. One instance may be cited from domestic affairs. The plight

of the farmer since the war has created a domestic political issue. A great demand was generated for food and other agricultural products; prices rose. In addition to this economic stimulus, farmers were objects of constant political exhortation to increase their crops. Inflation and temporary prosperity followed. The end of active warfare came. Impoverished countries could not buy and pay for food up to even a pre-war level. Taxes were enormously increased. Currencies were depreciated; the world's gold supply centered here. The stimulus of war and of national extravagance piled up the inventories of factories and merchants. Wages and the prices of agricultural implements increased. When deflation came it found a restricted market, increased costs of production, and farmers burdened with mortgages lightly assumed during the period of frenzied expansion.

This instance is not cited because it is peculiarly important in comparison with other consequences which have happened, especially in Europe. It is relatively insignificant by contrast with them, and in contrast with the arousal of nationalistic sentiments which has everywhere taken place since the war in so-called backward countries. But it shows the ramifying consequences of our intricate and interdependent economic relations, and it shows how little prevision and regulation exist. The farming population could hardly have acted with knowledge of the consequences of the fundamental relations in which they were implicated. They could make a momentary and improvised response to them, but they could not manage their affairs in controlled adaptation to the course of events. They present themselves as hapless subjects of overwhelming operations with which they were hardly acquainted and over which they had no more control than over the vicissitudes of climate.

The illustration cannot be objected to on the ground that it rests upon the abnormal situation of war. The war itself was a normal manifestation of the underlying unintegrated state of society. The local face-to-face community has been invaded by forces so vast, so remote in initiation, so far-reaching in scope and so complexly indirect in operation, that they are, from the standpoint of the members of local social units, unknown. Man, as has been often remarked, has difficulty in getting on either with or without his fellows, even in neighborhoods. He is not more successful in getting on with them when they act at a great distance in ways invisible to him. An inchoate public is capable of organization only when indirect consequences are perceived, and when it is possible to project agencies which order their occurrence. At present, many consequences are felt rather than perceived; they are suffered, but they cannot be said to be known, for they are not, by those who experience them, referred to their origins. It goes, then, without saying that agencies are not established which canalize the streams of social action and thereby regulate them. Hence publics are amorphous and unarticulated.

There was a time when a man might entertain a few general political principles and apply them with some confidence. A citizen believed in states' rights or in a centralized federal government; in free trade or protection. It did not involve much mental strain to imagine that by throwing in his lot with one party or another he could so express his views that his belief would count in government. For the average voter to-day the tariff question is a complicated medley of infinite detail, schedules of rates specific and *ad valorem*<sup>8</sup> on countless things, many of which he does not recognize by name, and with respect to which he can form no judgment. Probably not one voter in a thousand even

reads the scores of pages in which the rates of toll are enumerated and he would not be much wiser if he did. The average man gives it up as a bad job. At election time, appeal to some time-worn slogan may galvanize him into a temporary notion that he has convictions on an important subject, but except for manufacturers and dealers who have some interest at stake in this or that schedule, belief lacks the qualities which attach to beliefs about matters of personal concern. Industry is too complex and intricate.

Again the voter may by personal predilection or inherited belief incline towards magnifying the scope of local governments and inveigh against the evils of centralization. But he is vehemently sure of social evils attending the liquor traffic. He finds that the prohibitory law of his locality, township, county or state, is largely nullified by the importation of liquor from outside, made easy by modern means of transportation. So he becomes an advocate of a national amendment giving the central government power to regulate the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks. This brings in its train a necessary extension of federal officials and powers. Thus today, the south, the traditional home of the states' rights doctrine, is the chief supporter of national prohibition and Volstead Act.<sup>9</sup> It would not be possible to say how many voters have thought of the relation between their professed general principle and their special position on the liquor question: probably not many. On the other hand, life-long Hamiltonians, proclaimers of the dangers of particularistic local autonomy, are opposed to prohibition. Hence they play a tune *ad hoc* on the Jeffersonian flute. Gibes at inconsistency are, however, as irrelevant as they are easy. The social situation has been so changed by the factors of an industrial age that traditional general principles have little

practical meaning. They persist as emotional cries rather than as reasoned ideas.

The same criss-crossing occurs with reference to regulation of railways. The opponent of a strong federal government finds, being a farmer or shipper, that rates are too high; he also finds that railways pay little attention to state boundaries, that lines once local are parts of vast systems and that state legislation and administration are ineffectual for his purpose. He calls for national regulation. Some partisan of the powers of the central government, on the other hand, being an investor in stocks and bonds, finds that his income is likely to be unfavorably affected by federal action and he promptly protests against the vexatious tendency to appeal to national aid, which has now become in his eyes a foolish paternalism. The developments of industry and commerce have so complicated affairs that a clear-cut, generally applicable, standard of judgment becomes practically impossible. The forest cannot be seen for the trees nor the trees for the forest.

A striking example of the shift of the actual tenor of doctrines—that is, of their consequences in application—is presented in the history of the doctrine of Individualism, interpreted to signify a minimum of governmental “interference” with industry and trade. At the outset, it was held by “progressives,” by those who were protesting against the inherited régime of rules of law and administration. Vested interests, on the contrary, were mainly in favor of the old status. To-day the industrial-property régime being established, the doctrine is the intellectual bulwark of the standpatter and reactionary. He it is that now wants to let alone, and who utters the war-cry of liberty for private industry, thrift, contract, and their pecuniary fruit. In the United States the name “liberal,” as a party designation, is

still employed to designate a progressive in political matters. In most other countries, the "liberal" party is that which represents established and vested commercial and financial interests in protest against governmental regulation. The irony of history is nowhere more evident than in the reversal of the practical meaning of the term "liberalism" in spite of a literal continuity of theory.

Political apathy, which is a natural product of the discrepancies between actual practices and traditional machinery, ensues from inability to identify one's self with definite issues. These are hard to find and locate in the vast complexities of current life. When traditional war-cries have lost their import in practical policies which are consonant with them, they are readily dismissed as bunk. Only habit and tradition, rather than reasoned conviction, together with a vague faith in doing one's civic duty, send to the polls a considerable percentage of the fifty per cent who still vote. And of them it is a common remark that a large number vote against something or somebody rather than for anything or anybody, except when powerful agencies create a scare. The old principles do not fit contemporary life as it is lived, however well they may have expressed the vital interests of the times in which they arose. Thousands feel their hollowness even if they cannot make their feeling articulate. The confusion which has resulted from the size and ramifications of social activities has rendered men skeptical of the efficiency of political action. Who is sufficient unto these things? Men feel that they are caught in the sweep of forces too vast to understand or master. Thought is brought to a standstill and action paralyzed. Even the specialist finds it difficult to trace the chain of "cause and effect"; and even he operates only after the event, looking backward, while meantime social activities have moved on to effect a new state of affairs.

Similar considerations account for depreciation of the machinery of democratic political action in contrast with a rising appreciation of the need of expert administrators. For example, one of the by-products of the war was the investment of the government at Muscle Shoals<sup>10</sup> for the manufacture of nitrogen, a chemical product of great importance to the farmer, as well as to armies in the field. The disposition and utilization of the plant have become matters of political dispute. The questions involved, questions of science, agriculture, industry and finance, are highly technical. How many voters are competent to measure all the factors involved in arriving at a decision? And if they were competent after studying it, how many have the time to devote to it? It is true that this matter does not come before the electorate directly, but the technical difficulty of the problem is reflected in the confused paralysis of the legislators whose business it is to deal with it. The confused situation is further complicated by the invention of other and cheaper methods of producing nitrates. Again, the rapid development of hydro-electric and super-power is a matter of public concern. In the long run, few questions exceed it in importance. Aside from business corporations which have a direct interest in it and some engineers, how many citizens have the data or the ability to secure and estimate the facts involved in its settlement? One further illustration: Two things which intimately concern a local public are street-railway transportation and the marketing of food products. But the history of municipal politics shows in most cases a flare-up of intense interest followed by a period of indifference. Results come home to the masses of the people. But the very size, heterogeneity and mobility of urban populations, the vast capital required, the technical character of the engineering problems involved, soon

tire the attention of the average voter. I think the three instances are fairly typical. The ramification of the issues before the public is so wide and intricate, the technical matters involved are so specialized, the details are so many and so shifting, that the public cannot for any length of time identify and hold itself. It is not that there is no public, no large body of persons having a common interest in the consequences of social transactions. There is too much public, a public too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition. And there are too many publics, for conjoint actions which have indirect, serious and enduring consequences are multitudinous beyond comparison, and each one of them crosses the others and generates its own group of persons especially affected with little to hold these different publics together in an integrated whole.

The picture is not complete without taking into account the many competitors with effective political interest. Political concerns have, of course, always had strong rivals. Persons have always been, for the most part, taken up with their more immediate work and play. The power of "bread and the circus" to divert attention from public matters is an old story. But now the industrial conditions which have enlarged, complicated and multiplied public interests have also multiplied and intensified formidable rivals to them. In countries where political life has been most successfully conducted in the past, there was a class specially set aside, as it were, who made political affairs their special business. Aristotle could not conceive a body of citizens competent to carry on politics consisting of others than those who had leisure, that is, of those who were relieved from all other preoccupations, especially that of making a livelihood.<sup>11</sup> Political life, till recent times, bore out his belief. Those who took an active part in politics

were "gentlemen," persons who had had property and money long enough, and enough of it, so that its further pursuit was vulgar and beneath their station. To-day, so great and powerful is the sweep of the industrial current, the person of leisure is usually an idle person. Persons have their own business to attend to, and "business" has its own precise and specialized meaning. Politics thus tends to become just another "business": the especial concern of bosses and the managers of the machine.

The increase in the number, variety and cheapness of amusements represents a powerful diversion from political concern. The members of an inchoate public have too many ways of enjoyment, as well as of work, to give much thought to organization into an effective public. Man is a consuming and sportive animal as well as a political one. What is significant is that access to means of amusement has been rendered easy and cheap beyond anything known in the past. The present era of "prosperity" may not be enduring. But the movie, radio, cheap reading matter and motor car with all they stand for have come to stay. That they did not originate in deliberate desire to divert attention from political interests does not lessen their effectiveness in that direction. The political elements in the constitution of the human being, those having to do with citizenship, are crowded to one side. In most circles it is hard work to sustain conversation on a political theme; and once initiated, it is quickly dismissed with a yawn. Let there be introduced the topic of the mechanism and accomplishment of various makes of motor cars or the respective merits of actresses, and the dialogue goes on at a lively pace. The thing to be remembered is that this cheapened and multiplied access to amusement is the product of the machine age, intensified by the business tradition

which causes provision of means for an enjoyable passing of time to be one of the most profitable of occupations.

One phase of the workings of a technological age, with its unprecedented command of natural energies, while it is implied in what has been said, needs explicit attention. The older publics, in being local communities, largely homogeneous with one another, were also, as the phrase goes, static. They changed, of course, but barring war, catastrophe and great migrations, the modifications were gradual. They proceeded slowly and were largely unperceived by those undergoing them. The newer forces have created mobile and fluctuating associational forms. The common complaints of the disintegration of family life may be placed in evidence. The movement from rural to urban assemblies is also the result and proof of this mobility. Nothing stays long put, not even the associations by which business and industry are carried on. The mania for motion and speed is a symptom of the restless instability of social life, and it operates to intensify the causes from which it springs. Steel replaces wood and masonry for buildings; ferro-concrete modifies steel, and some invention may work a further revolution. Muscle Shoals was acquired to produce nitrogen, and new methods have already made antiquated the supposed need of great accumulation of water power. Any selected illustration suffers because of the heterogeneous mass of cases to select from. How can a public be organized, we may ask, when literally it does not stay in place? Only deep issues or those which can be made to appear such can find a common denominator among all the shifting and unstable relationships. Attachment is a very different function of life from affection. Affections will continue as long as the heart beats. But attachment requires something more than organic causes. The very

things which stimulate and intensify affections may undermine attachments. For these are bred in tranquil stability; they are nourished in constant relationships. Acceleration of mobility disturbs them at their root. And without abiding attachments associations are too shifting and shaken to permit a public readily to locate and identify itself.

The new era of human relationships in which we live is one marked by mass production for remote markets, by cable and telephone, by cheap printing, by railway and steam navigation. Only geographically did Columbus discover a new world. The actual new world has been generated in the last hundred years. Steam and electricity have done more to alter the conditions under which men associate together than all the agencies which affected human relationships before our time. There are those who lay the blame for all the evils of our lives on steam, electricity, and machinery. It is always convenient to have a devil as well as a savior to bear the responsibilities of humanity. In reality, the trouble springs rather from the ideas and absence of ideas in connection with which technological factors operate. Mental and moral beliefs and ideals change more slowly than outward conditions. If the ideals associated with the higher life of our cultural past have been impaired, the fault is primarily with them. Ideals and standards formed without regard to the means by which they are to be achieved and incarnated in flesh are bound to be thin and wavering. Since the aims, desires and purposes created by a machine age do not connect with tradition, there are two sets of rival ideals, and those which have actual instrumentalities at their disposal have the advantage. Because the two are rivals and because the older ones retain their glamour and sentimental prestige in literature and religion, the newer ones are perforce harsh and narrow.

For the older symbols of ideal life still engage thought and command loyalty. Conditions have changed, but every aspect of life, from religion and education to property and trade, shows that nothing approaching a transformation has taken place in ideas and ideals. Symbols control sentiment and thought, and the new age has no symbols consonant with its activities.<sup>12</sup> Intellectual instrumentalities for the formation of an organized public are more inadequate than its overt means. The ties which hold men together in action are numerous, tough and subtle. But they are invisible and intangible. We have the physical tools of communication as never before. The thoughts and aspirations congruous with them are not communicated, and hence are not common. Without such communication the public will remain shadowy and formless, seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance. Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community. Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible.

## Search for the Great Community

We have had occasion to refer in passing to the distinction between democracy as a social idea and political democracy as a system of government. The two are, of course, connected. The idea remains barren and empty save as it is incarnated in human relationships. Yet in discussion they must be distinguished. The idea of democracy is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best. To be realized it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion. And even as far as political arrangements are concerned, governmental institutions are but a mechanism for securing to an idea channels of effective operation. It will hardly do to say that criticisms of the political machinery leave the believer in the idea untouched. For, as far as they are justified—and no candid believer can deny that many of them are only too well grounded—they arouse him to bestir himself in order that the idea may find more adequate machinery through which to work. What the faithful insist upon, however, is that the idea and its external organs and structures are not to be identified. We object to the

common supposition of the foes of existing democratic government that the accusations against it touch the social and moral aspirations and ideas which underlie the political forms. The old saying that the cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy is not apt if it means that the evils may be remedied by introducing more machinery of the same kind as that which already exists, or by refining and perfecting that machinery. But the phrase may also indicate the need of returning to the idea itself, of clarifying and deepening our apprehension of it, and of employing our sense of its meaning to criticize and remake its political manifestations.

Confining ourselves, for the moment, to political democracy, we must, in any case, renew our protest against the assumption that the idea has itself produced the governmental practices which obtain in democratic states: General suffrage, elected representatives, majority rule, and so on. The idea has influenced the concrete political movement, but it has not caused it. The transition from family and dynastic government supported by the loyalties of tradition to popular government was the outcome primarily of technological discoveries and inventions working a change in the customs by which men had been bound together. It was not due to the doctrines of doctrinaires. The forms to which we are accustomed in democratic governments represent the cumulative effect of a multitude of events, unpremeditated as far as political effects were concerned and having unpredictable consequences. There is no sanctity in universal suffrage, frequent elections, majority rule, congressional and cabinet government. These things are devices evolved in the direction in which the current was moving, each wave of which involved at the time of its impulsion a minimum of departure from antecedent

custom and law. The devices served a purpose; but the purpose was rather that of meeting existing needs which had become too intense to be ignored, than that of forwarding the democratic idea. In spite of all defects, they served their own purpose well.

Looking back, with the aid which *ex post facto* experience can give, it would be hard for the wisest to devise schemes which, under the circumstances, would have met the needs better. In this retrospective glance, it is possible, however, to see how the doctrinal formulations which accompanied them were inadequate, one-sided and positively erroneous. In fact they were hardly more than political war-cries adopted to help in carrying on some immediate agitation or in justifying some particular practical polity struggling for recognition, even though they were asserted to be absolute truths of human nature or of morals. The doctrines served a particular local pragmatic need. But often their very adaptation to immediate circumstances unfitted them, pragmatically, to meet more enduring and more extensive needs. They lived to cumber the political ground, obstructing progress, all the more so because they were uttered and held not as hypotheses with which to direct social experimentation but as final truths, dogmas. No wonder they call urgently for revision and displacement.

Nevertheless the current has set steadily in one direction: toward democratic forms. That government exists to serve its community, and that this purpose cannot be achieved unless the community itself shares in selecting its governors and determining their policies, are a deposit of fact left, as far as we can see, permanently in the wake of doctrines and forms, however transitory the latter. They are not the whole of the democratic idea, but they express it in its political phase. Belief in this political aspect is not a

mystic faith as if in some overruling providence that cares for children, drunkards, and others unable to help themselves. It marks a well-attested conclusion from historic facts. We have every reason to think that whatever changes may take place in existing democratic machinery, they will be of a sort to make the interest of the public a more sure guide and criterion of governmental activity, and to enable the public to form and manifest its purposes still more authoritatively. In this sense the cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy. The prime difficulty, as we have seen, is that of discovering the means by which a scattered, mobile and manifold public may so recognize itself as to define and express its interests. This discovery is necessarily precedent to any fundamental change in the machinery. We are not concerned therefore to set forth counsels as to advisable improvements in the political forms of democracy. Many have been suggested. It is no derogation of their relative worth to say that consideration of these changes is not at present an affair of primary importance. The problem lies deeper; it is in the first instance an intellectual problem: the search for conditions under which the Great Society may become the Great Community. When these conditions are brought into being they will make their own forms. Until they have come about, it is somewhat futile to consider what political machinery will suit them.

In a search for the conditions under which the inchoate public now extant may function democratically, we may proceed from a statement of the nature of the democratic idea in its generic social sense.\* From the standpoint of the

\* The most adequate discussion of this ideal with which I am acquainted is Thomas Vernor Smith's *The Democratic Way of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926).

individual, it consists in having a responsible share according to capacity in forming and directing the activities of the groups to which one belongs and in participating according to need in the values which the groups sustain. From the standpoint of the groups, it demands liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are common.<sup>1</sup> Since every individual is a member of many groups, this specification cannot be fulfilled except when different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups. A member of a robber band may express his powers in a way consonant with belonging to that group and be directed by the interest common to its members. But he does so only at the cost of repression of those of his potentialities which can be realized only through membership in other groups. The robber band cannot interact flexibly with other groups; it can act only by isolating itself. It must prevent the operation of all interests save those which circumscribe it in its separateness. But a good citizen finds his conduct as a member of a political group enriching and enriched by his participation in family life, industry, scientific and artistic associations. There is a free give-and-take: fullness of integrated personality is therefore possible of achievement, since the pulls and responses of different groups reinforce one another and their values accord.

Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself. It is an ideal in the only intelligible sense of an ideal: namely, the tendency and movement of some thing which exists carried to its final limit, viewed as completed, perfected. Since things do not attain such fulfillment but are in actuality distracted and interfered with, democracy in this sense is not a fact and never will be.

But neither in this sense is there or has there ever been anything which is a community in its full measure, a community unalloyed by alien elements. The idea or ideal of a community presents, however, actual phases of associated life as they are freed from restrictive and disturbing elements, and are contemplated as having attained their limit of development. Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community. The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy.

Only when we start from a community as a fact, grasp the fact in thought so as to clarify and enhance its constituent elements, can we reach an idea of democracy which is not utopian. The conceptions and shibboleths which are traditionally associated with the idea of democracy take on a veridical and directive meaning only when they are construed as marks and traits of an association which realizes the defining characteristics of a community. Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions. Their separate assertion leads to mushy sentimentalism or else to extravagant and fanatical violence which in the end defeats its own aims. Equality then becomes a creed of mechanical identity which is false to facts and impossible of realization. Effort to attain it is divisive of the vital bonds which hold men together; as far as it puts forth issue, the outcome is a mediocrity in which good is common only in the sense of being average and vulgar. Liberty is then thought of as independence of social ties, and ends in dissolution and anarchy. It is more

difficult to sever the idea of brotherhood from that of a community, and hence it is either practically ignored in the movements which identify democracy with Individualism, or else it is a sentimentally appended tag. In its just connection with communal experience, fraternity is another name for the consciously appreciated goods which accrue from an association in which all share, and which give direction to the conduct of each. Liberty is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which take place only in rich and manifold association with others: the power to be an individualized self making a distinctive contribution and enjoying in its own way the fruits of association. Equality denotes the unhampered share which each individual member of the community has in the consequences of associated action. It is equitable because it is measured only by need and capacity to utilize, not by extraneous factors which deprive one in order that another may take and have. A baby in the family is equal with others, not because of some antecedent and structural quality which is the same as that of others, but in so far as his needs for care and development are attended to without being sacrificed to the superior strength, possessions and matured abilities of others. Equality does not signify that kind of mathematical or physical equivalence in virtue of which any one element may be substituted for another. It denotes effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities. It is not a natural possession but is a fruit of the community when its action is directed by its character as a community.

Associated or joint activity is a condition of the creation of a community. But association itself is physical and organic, while communal life is moral, that is emotionally,

intellectually, consciously sustained. Human beings combine in behavior as directly and unconsciously as do atoms, stellar masses and cells; as directly and unknowingly as they divide and repel. They do so in virtue of their own structure, as man and woman unite, as the baby seeks the breast and the breast is there to supply its need. They do so from external circumstances, pressure from without, as atoms combine or separate in presence of an electric charge, or as sheep huddle together from the cold. Associated activity needs no explanation; things are made that way. But no amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes a community. For beings who observe and think, and whose ideas are absorbed by impulses and become sentiments and interests, "we" is as inevitable as "I." But "we" and "our" exist only when the consequences of combined action are perceived and become an object of desire and effort, just as "I" and "mine" appear on the scene only when a distinctive share in mutual action is consciously asserted or claimed. Human associations may be ever so organic in origin and firm in operation, but they develop into societies in a human sense only as their consequences, being known, are esteemed and sought for. Even if "society" were as much an organism as some writers have held, it would not on that account be society. Interactions and transactions occur *de facto* and the results of interdependence follow. But participation in activities and sharing in results are additive concerns. They demand *communication* as a prerequisite.

Combined activity happens among human beings; but when nothing else happens it passes as inevitably into some other mode of interconnected activity as does the interplay of iron and the oxygen of water. What takes place is wholly describable in terms of energy, or, as we say in

the case of human interactions, of force. Only when there exist *signs* or *symbols* of activities and of their outcome can the flux be viewed as from without, be arrested for consideration and esteem, and be regulated. Lightning strikes and rives a tree or rock, and the resulting fragments take up and continue the process of interaction, and so on and on. But when phases of the process are represented by signs, a new medium is interposed. As symbols are related to one another, the important relations of a course of events are recorded and are preserved as meanings. Recollection and foresight are possible; the new medium facilitates calculation, planning, and a new kind of action which intervenes in what happens to direct its course in the interest of what is foreseen and desired.

Symbols in turn depend upon and promote communication.<sup>2</sup> The results of conjoint experience are considered and transmitted. Events cannot be passed from one to another, but meanings may be shared by means of signs. Wants and impulses are then attached to common meanings. They are thereby transformed into desires and purposes, which, since they implicate a common or mutually understood meaning, present new ties, converting a conjoint activity into a community of interest and endeavor. Thus there is generated what, metaphorically, may be termed a general will and social consciousness: desire and choice on the part of individuals in behalf of activities that, by means of symbols, are communicable and shared by all concerned. A community thus presents an order of energies transmuted into one of meanings which are appreciated and mutually referred by each to every other on the part of those engaged in combined action. "Force" is not eliminated but is transformed in use and direction by ideas and sentiments made possible by means of symbols.

The work of conversion of the physical and organic phase of associated behavior into a community of action saturated and regulated by mutual interest in shared meanings, consequences which are translated into ideas and desired objects by means of symbols, does not occur all at once nor completely. At any given time, it sets a problem rather than marks a settled achievement. We are born organic beings associated with others, but we are not born members of a community. The young have to be brought within the traditions, outlook and interests which characterize a community by means of education: by unremitting instruction and by learning in connection with the phenomena of overt association. Everything which is distinctively human is learned, not native, even though it could not be learned without native structures which mark man off from other animals. To learn in a human way and to human effect is not just to acquire added skill through refinement of original capacities.

To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community; one who understands and appreciates its beliefs, desires and methods, and who contributes to a further conversion of organic powers into human resources and values. But this translation is never finished. The old Adam, the unregenerate element in human nature, persists. It shows itself wherever the method obtains of attaining results by use of force instead of by the method of communication and enlightenment. It manifests itself more subtly, pervasively, and effectually when knowledge and the instrumentalities of skill which are the product of communal life are employed in the service of wants and impulses which have not themselves been modified by reference to a shared interest. To

the doctrine of "natural" economy which held that commercial exchange would bring about this interdependence that harmony would automatically result, Rousseau gave an adequate answer in advance. He pointed out that interdependence provides just the situation which makes it possible and worth while for the stronger and abler to exploit others for their own ends, to keep others in a state of subjection where they can be utilized as animated tools. The remedy he suggested, a return to a condition of independence based on isolation, was hardly seriously meant.<sup>3</sup> But its despatchness is evidence of the urgency of the problem. Its negative character was equivalent to surrender of any hope of solution. By contrast it indicates the nature of the only possible solution: the perfecting of the means and ways of communication of meanings so that genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action.

This is the meaning of the statement that the problem is a moral one dependent upon intelligence and education. We have in our prior account sufficiently emphasized the role of technological and industrial factors in creating the Great Society. What was said may even have seemed to imply acceptance of the deterministic version of an economic interpretation of history and institutions. It is silly and futile to ignore and deny economic facts. They do not cease to operate because we refuse to note them, or because we smear them over with sentimental idealizations. As we have also noted, they generate as their result overt and external conditions of action and these are known with various degrees of adequacy. What actually happens in consequence of industrial forces is dependent upon the presence or absence of perception and communication of consequences, upon foresight and its effect upon desire

and endeavor. Economic agencies produce one result when they are left to work themselves out on the merely physical level, or on that level modified only as the knowledge, skill and technique which the community has accumulated are transmitted to its members unequally and by chance. They have a different outcome in the degree in which knowledge of consequences is equitably distributed, and action is animated by an informed and lively sense of a shared interest. The doctrine of economic interpretation as usually stated ignores the transformation which meanings may effect; it passes over the new medium which communication may interpose between industry and its eventual consequences. It is obsessed by the illusion which vitiated the "natural economy": an illusion due to failure to note the difference made in action by perception and publication of its consequences, actual and possible. It thinks in terms of antecedents, not of the eventual; of origins, not fruits.

We have returned, through this apparent excursion, to the question in which our earlier discussion culminated: What are the conditions under which it is possible for the Great Society to approach more closely and vitally the status of a Great Community, and thus take form in genuinely democratic societies and state? What are the conditions under which we may reasonably picture the Public emerging from its eclipse?

The study will be an intellectual or hypothetical one. There will be no attempt to state how the required conditions might come into existence, nor to prophesy that they will occur. The object of the analysis will be to show that *unless* ascertained specifications are realized, the Community cannot be organized as a democratically effective Public. It is not claimed that the conditions which will be noted will suffice, but only that at least they are

indispensable. In other words, we shall endeavor to frame a hypothesis regarding the democratic state to stand in contrast with the earlier doctrine which has been nullified by the course of events.

Two essential constituents in that older theory, as will be recalled, were the notions that each individual is of himself equipped with the intelligence needed, under the operation of self-interest, to engage in political affairs; and that general suffrage, frequent elections of officials and majority rule are sufficient to ensure the responsibility of elected rulers to the desires and interests of the public. As we shall see, the second conception is logically bound up with the first and stands or falls with it. At the basis of the scheme lies what Lippmann has well called the idea of the "omnipotent" individual: competent to frame policies, to judge their results; competent to know in all situations demanding political action what is for his own good, and competent to enforce his idea of good and the will to effect it against contrary forces.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent history has proved that the assumption involved illusion. Had it not been for the misleading influence of a false psychology, the illusion might have been detected in advance. But current philosophy held that ideas and knowledge were functions of a mind or consciousness which originated in individuals by means of isolated contact with objects. But in fact, knowledge is a function of association and communication; it depends upon tradition, upon tools and methods socially transmitted, developed and sanctioned. Faculties of effectual observation, reflection and desire are habits acquired under the influence of the culture and institutions of society, not ready-made inherent powers. The fact that man acts from crudely intelligized emotion and from habit rather than from rational consideration, is now

so familiar that it is not easy to appreciate that the other idea was taken seriously as the basis of economic and political philosophy. The measure of truth which it contains was derived from observation of a relatively small group of shrewd business men who regulated their enterprises by calculation and accounting, and of citizens of small and stable local communities who were so intimately acquainted with the persons and affairs of their locality that they could pass competent judgment upon the bearing of proposed measures upon their own concerns.

Habit is the mainspring of human action, and habits are formed for the most part under the influence of the customs of a group. The organic structure of man entails the formation of habit, for, whether we wish it or not, whether we are aware of it or not, every act effects a modification of attitude and directs future behavior. The dependence of habit-forming upon those habits of a group which constitute customs and institutions is a natural consequence of the helplessness of infancy. The social consequences of habit have been stated once for all by James: "Habit is the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative influence. It alone is what keeps us within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there

is no other for which we are fitted and it is too late to begin again. It keeps different social strata from mixing."<sup>5</sup>

The influence of habit is decisive because all distinctively human action has to be learned, and the very heart, blood and sinews of learning is creation of habitudes.<sup>6</sup> Habits bind us to orderly and established ways of action because they generate ease, skill and interest in things to which we have grown used and because they instigate fear to walk in different ways, and because they leave us incapacitated for the trial of them. Habit does not preclude the use of thought, but it determines the channels within which it operates. Thinking is secreted in the interstices of habits. The sailor, miner, fisherman and farmer think, but their thoughts fall within the framework of accustomed occupations and relationships. We dream beyond the limits of use and wont, but only rarely does reverie become a source of acts which break bounds; so rarely that we name those in whom it happens demonic geniuses and marvel at the spectacle. Thinking itself becomes habitual along certain lines; a specialized occupation. Scientific men, philosophers, literary persons, are not men and women who have so broken the bonds of habits that pure reason and emotion undefiled by use and wont speak through them. They are persons of a specialized infrequent habit. Hence the idea that men are moved by an intelligent and calculated regard for their own good is pure mythology. Even if the principle of self-love actuated behavior, it would still be true that the *objects* in which men find their love manifested, the objects which they take as constituting their peculiar interests, are set by habits reflecting social customs.

These facts explain why the social doctrinaires of the new industrial movement had so little prescience of what was to follow in consequence of it. These facts explain

why the more things changed, the more they were the same; they account, that is, for the fact that instead of the sweeping revolution which was expected to result from democratic political machinery, there was in the main but a transfer of vested power from one class to another. A few men, whether or not they were good judges of their own true interest and good, were competent judges of the conduct of business for pecuniary profit, and of how the new governmental machinery could be made to serve their ends. It would have taken a new race of human beings to escape, in the use made of political forms, from the influence of deeply engrained habits, of old institutions and customary social status, with their inwrought limitations of expectation, desire and demand. And such a race, unless of disembodied angelic constitution, would simply have taken up the task where human beings assumed it upon emergence from the condition of anthropoid apes. In spite of sudden and catastrophic revolutions, the essential continuity of history is doubly guaranteed. Not only are personal desire and belief functions of habit and custom, but the objective conditions which provide the resources and tools of action, together with its limitations, obstructions and traps, are precipitates of the past, perpetuating, willy-nilly, its hold and power. The creation of a *tabula rasa*<sup>7</sup> in order to permit the creation of a new order is so impossible as to set at naught both the hope of buoyant revolutionaries and the timidity of scared conservatives.

Nevertheless, changes take place and are cumulative in character. Observation of them in the light of their recognized consequences arouses reflection, discovery, invention, experimentation. When a certain state of accumulated knowledge, of techniques and instrumentalities is attained, the process of change is so accelerated, that, as to-day, it

appears externally to be the dominant trait. But there is a marked lag in any corresponding change of ideas and desires. Habits of opinion are the toughest of all habits; when they have become second nature, and are supposedly thrown out of the door, they creep in again as stealthily and surely as does first nature. And as they are modified, the alteration first shows itself negatively, in the disintegration of old beliefs, to be replaced by floating, volatile and accidentally snatched up opinions. Of course there has been an enormous increase in the amount of knowledge possessed by mankind, but it does not equal, probably, the increase in the amount of errors and half-truths which have got into circulation. In social and human matters, especially, the development of a critical sense and methods of discriminating judgment has not kept pace with the growth of careless reports and of motives for positive misrepresentation.

What is more important, however, is that so much of knowledge is not knowledge in the ordinary sense of the word, but is "science." The quotation marks are not used disrespectfully, but to suggest the technical character of scientific material. The layman takes certain conclusions which get into circulation to be science. But the scientific inquirer knows that they constitute science only in connection with the methods by which they are reached. Even when true, they are not science in virtue of their correctness, but by reason of the apparatus which is employed in reaching them. This apparatus is so highly specialized that it requires more labor to acquire ability to use and understand it than to get skill in any other instrumentalities possessed by man. Science, in other words, is a highly specialized language, more difficult to learn than any natural language. It is an artificial language, not in the sense of

being factitious, but in that of being a work of intricate art, devoted to a particular purpose and not capable of being acquired nor understood in the way in which the mother tongue is learned. It is, indeed, conceivable that sometime methods of instruction will be devised which will enable laymen to read and hear scientific material with comprehension, even when they do not themselves use the apparatus which is science. The latter may then become for large numbers what students of language call a passive, if not an active, vocabulary. But that time is in the future.

For most men, save the scientific workers, science is a mystery in the hands of initiates, who have become adepts in virtue of following ritualistic ceremonies from which the profane herd is excluded. They are fortunate who get as far as a sympathetic appreciation of the methods which give pattern to the complicated apparatus: methods of analytic, experimental observation, mathematical formulation and deduction, constant and elaborate check and test. For most persons, the reality of the apparatus is found only in its embodiments in practical affairs, in mechanical devices and in techniques which touch life as it is lived. For them, electricity is *known* by means of the telephones, bells and lights they use, by the generators and magnetos in the automobiles they drive, by the trolley cars in which they ride. The physiology and biology they are acquainted with is that they have learned in taking precautions against germs and from the physicians they depend upon for health. The science of what might be supposed to be closest to them, of human nature, was for them an esoteric mystery until it was applied in advertising, salesmanship and personnel selection and management, and until, through psychiatry, it spilled over into life and popular consciousness, through its bearings upon "nerves," the morbidities and common

forms of crankiness which make it difficult for persons to get along with one another and with themselves. Even now, popular psychology is a mass of cant, of slush and of superstition worthy of the most flourishing days of the medicine man.

Meanwhile the technological application of the complex apparatus which is science has revolutionized the conditions under which associated life goes on. This may be known as a fact which is stated in a proposition and assented to. But it is not known in the sense that men understand it. They do not know it as they know some machine which they operate, or as they know electric light and steam locomotives. They do not understand *how* the change has gone on nor *how* it affects their conduct. Not understanding its "how," they cannot use and control its manifestations. They undergo the consequences, they are affected by them. They cannot manage them, though some are fortunate enough—what is commonly called good fortune—to be able to exploit some phase of the process for their own personal profit. But even the most shrewd and successful man does not in any analytic and systematic way—in a way worthy to compare with the knowledge which he has won in lesser affairs by means of the stress of experience—know the system within which he operates. Skill and ability work within a framework which we have not created and do not comprehend. Some occupy strategic positions which give them advance information of forces that affect the market; and by training they have acquired a special technique which enables them to use the vast impersonal tide to turn their own wheels. They can dam the current here and release it there. The current itself is as much beyond them as was ever the river by the side of which some ingenious mechanic, employing a knowledge

which was transmitted to him, erected his saw-mill to make boards of trees which he had not grown. That within limits those successful in affairs have knowledge and skill is not to be doubted. But such knowledge goes relatively but little further than that of the competent skilled operator who manages a machine. It suffices to employ the conditions which are before him. Skill enables him to turn the flux of events this way or that in his own neighborhood. It gives him no control of the flux.

Why should the public and its officers, even if the latter are termed statesmen, be wiser and more effective? The prime condition of a democratically organized public is a kind of knowledge and insight which does not yet exist. In its absence, it would be the height of absurdity to try to tell what it would be like if it existed. But some of the conditions which must be fulfilled if it is to exist can be indicated. We can borrow that much from the spirit and method of science even if we are ignorant of it as a specialized apparatus. An obvious requirement is freedom of social inquiry and of distribution of its conclusions. The notion that men may be free in their thought even when they are not in its expression and dissemination has been sedulously propagated. It had its origin in the idea of a mind complete in itself, apart from action and from objects. Such a consciousness presents in fact the spectacle of mind deprived of its normal functioning, because it is baffled by the actualities in connection with which alone it is truly mind, and is driven back into secluded and impotent reverie.

There can be no public without full publicity in respect to all consequences which concern it. Whatever obstructs and restricts publicity, limits and distorts public opinion and checks and distorts thinking on social affairs. Without freedom of expression, not even methods of social inquiry

can be developed. For tools can be evolved and perfected only in operation; in application to observing, reporting and organizing actual subject-matter; and this application cannot occur save through free and systematic communication. The early history of physical knowledge, of Greek conceptions of natural phenomena, proves how inept the conceptions of the best endowed minds when those ideas are elaborated apart from the closest contact with the events which they purport to state and explain. The ruling ideas and methods of the human sciences are in much the same condition to-day. They are also evolved on the basis of past gross observations, remote from constant use in regulation of the material of new observations.

The belief that thought and its communication are now free simply because legal restrictions which once obtained have been done away with is absurd. Its currency perpetuates the infantile state of social knowledge. For it blurs recognition of our central need to possess conceptions which are used as tools of directed inquiry and which are tested, rectified and caused to grow in actual use. No man and no mind were ever emancipated merely by being left alone. Removal of formal limitations is but a negative condition; positive freedom is not a state but an act which involves methods and instrumentalities for control of conditions. Experience shows that sometimes the sense of external oppression, as by censorship, acts as a challenge and arouses intellectual energy and excites courage. But a belief in intellectual freedom where it does not exist contributes only to complacency in virtual enslavement, to sloppiness, superficiality, and recourse to sensations as a substitute for ideas: marked traits of our present estate with respect to social knowledge. On the one hand, thinking deprived of its normal course takes refuge in academic specialism,

comparable in its way to what is called scholasticism. On the other hand, the physical agencies of publicity which exist in such abundance are utilized in ways which constitute a large part of the present meaning of publicity: advertising, propaganda, invasion of private life, the "featuring" of passing incidents in a way which violates all the moving logic of continuity, and which leaves us with those isolated intrusions and shocks which are the essence of "sensations."

It would be a mistake to identify the conditions which limit free communication and circulation of facts and ideas, and which thereby arrest and pervert social thought or inquiry, merely with overt forces which are obstructive. It is true that those who have ability to manipulate social relations for their own advantage have to be reckoned with. They have an uncanny instinct for detecting whatever intellectual tendencies even remotely threaten to encroach upon their control. They have developed an extraordinary facility in enlisting upon their side the inertia, prejudices and emotional partisanship of the masses by use of a technique which impedes free inquiry and expression. We seem to be approaching a state of government by hired promoters of opinion called publicity agents. But the more serious enemy is deeply concealed in hidden entrenchments.

Emotional habituations and intellectual habitudes on the part of the mass of men create the conditions of which the exploiters of sentiment and opinion only take advantage. Men have got used to an experimental method in physical and technical matters. They are still afraid of it in human concerns. The fear is the more efficacious because like all deep-lying fears it is covered up and disguised by all kinds of rationalizations. One of its commonest forms is a truly religious idealization of, and reverence for, established

institutions; for example in our own politics, the Constitution, the Supreme Court, private property, free contract and so on. The words "sacred" and "sanctity" come readily to our lips when such things come under discussion. They testify to the religious aureole which protects the institutions. If "holy" means that which is not to be approached nor touched, save with ceremonial precautions and by specially anointed officials, then such things are holy in contemporary political life. As supernatural matters have progressively been left high and dry upon a secluded beach, the actuality of religious taboos has more and more gathered about secular institutions, especially those connected with the nationalistic state.\* Psychiatrists have discovered that one of the commonest causes of mental disturbance is an underlying fear of which the subject is not aware, but which leads to withdrawal from reality and to unwillingness to think things through. There is a social pathology which works powerfully against effective inquiry into social institutions and conditions. It manifests itself in a thousand ways; in querulousness, in impotent drifting, in uneasy snatching at distractions, in idealization of the long established, in a facile optimism assumed as a cloak, in riotous glorification of things "as they are," in intimidation of all dissenters—ways which depress and dissipate thought all the more effectually because they operate with subtle and unconscious pervasiveness.

The backwardness of social knowledge is marked in its division into independent and insulated branches of learning. Anthropology, history, sociology, morals, economics,

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\* The religious character of nationalism has been forcibly brought out by Carlton Hayes in his *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), especially chap. 4.

political science, go their own ways without constant and systematized fruitful interaction. Only in appearance is there a similar division in physical knowledge. There is continuous cross-fertilization between astronomy, physics, chemistry and the biological sciences. Discoveries and improved methods are so recorded and organized that constant exchange and intercommunication take place. The isolation of the humane subjects from one another is connected with their aloofness from physical knowledge. The mind still draws a sharp separation between the world in which man lives and the life of man in and by that world, a cleft reflected in the separation of man himself into a body and a mind, which, it is currently supposed, can be known and dealt with apart. That for the past three centuries energy should have gone chiefly into physical inquiry, beginning with the things most remote from man such as heavenly bodies, was to have been expected. The history of the physical sciences reveals a certain order in which they developed. Mathematical tools had to be employed before a new astronomy could be constructed. Physics advanced when ideas worked out in connection with the solar system were used to describe happenings on the earth. Chemistry waited on the advance of physics; the science of living things required the material and methods of physics and chemistry in order to make headway. Human psychology ceased to be chiefly speculative opinion only when biological and physiological conclusions were available. All this is natural and seemingly inevitable. Things which had the most outlying and indirect connection with human interests had to be mastered in some degree before inquiries could competently converge upon man himself.

Nevertheless the course of development has left us of this age in a plight. When we say that a subject of science is

technically specialized or that it is highly "abstract" what we practically mean is that it is not conceived in terms of its bearing upon human life. All *merely* physical knowledge is technical, couched in a technical vocabulary communicable only to the few. Even physical knowledge which does affect human conduct, which does modify what we do and undergo, is also technical and remote in the degree in which its bearings are not understood and used. The sunlight, rain, air and soil have always entered in visible ways into human experience; atoms and molecules cells, and most other things with which the sciences are occupied affect us, but not visibly. Because they enter life and modify experience in imperceptible ways, and their consequences are not realized, speech about them is technical; communication is by means of peculiar symbols. One would think, then, that a fundamental and ever-operating aim would be to translate knowledge of the subject-matter of physical conditions into terms which are generally understood, into signs denoting human consequences of services and disservices rendered. For ultimately all consequences which enter human life depend upon physical conditions; they can be understood and mastered only as the latter are taken into account. One would think, then, that any state of affairs which tends to render the things of the environment unknown and incommunicable by human beings in terms of their own activities and sufferings would be deplored as a disaster; that it would be felt to be intolerable, and to be put up with only as far as it is, at any given time, inevitable.

But the facts are to the contrary. Matter and the material are words which in the minds of many convey a note of disparagement. They are taken to be foes of whatever is of ideal value in life, instead of as conditions of

its manifestation and sustained being. In consequence of this division, they do become in fact enemies, for whatever is consistently kept apart from human values depresses thought and renders values sparse and precarious in fact. There are even some who regard the materialism and dominance of commercialism of modern life as fruits of undue devotion to physical science, not seeing that the split between man and nature, artificially made by a tradition which originated before there was understanding of the physical conditions that are the medium of human activities, is the benumbing factor. The most influential form of the divorce is separation between pure and applied science. Since "application" signifies recognized bearing upon human experience and well-being, honor of what is "pure" and contempt for what is "applied" has for its outcome a science which is remote and technical, communicable only to specialists, and a conduct of human affairs which is haphazard, biased, unfair in distribution of values. What is applied and employed as the alternative to knowledge in regulation of society is ignorance, prejudice, class-interest and accident. Science is converted into knowledge in its honorable and emphatic sense *only* in application. Otherwise it is truncated, blind, distorted. When it is then applied, it is in ways which explain the unfavorable sense so often attached to "application" and the "utilitarian": namely, use for pecuniary ends to the profit of a few.

At present, the application of physical science is to human concerns rather than *in* them. That is, it is external, made in the interests of its consequences for a possessing and acquisitive class. Application *in* life would signify that science was absorbed and distributed; that it was the instrumentality of that common understanding and thorough communication which is the precondition of the existence

of a genuine and effective public. The use of science to regulate industry and trade has gone on steadily. The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was the precursor of the industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth. In consequence, man has suffered the impact of an enormously enlarged control of physical energies without any corresponding ability to control himself and his own affairs. Knowledge divided against itself, a science to whose incompleteness is added an artificial split, has played its part in generating enslavement of men, women and children in factories in which they are animated machines to tend inanimate machines. It has maintained sordid slums, flurried and discontented careers, grinding poverty and luxurious wealth, brutal exploitation of nature and man in times of peace and high explosives and noxious gases in times of war. Man, a child in understanding of himself, has placed in his hands physical tools of incalculable power. He plays with them like a child, and whether they work harm or good is largely a matter of accident. The instrumentality becomes a master and works fatally as if possessed of a will of its own—not because it has a will but because man has not.

The glorification of "pure" science under such conditions is a rationalization of an escape; it marks a construction of an asylum of refuge, a shirking of responsibility. The true purity of knowledge exists not when it is uncontaminated by contact with use and service. It is wholly a moral matter, an affair of honesty, impartiality and generous breadth of intent in search and communication. The adulteration of knowledge is due not to its use, but to vested bias and prejudice, to one-sidedness of outlook, to vanity, to conceit of possession and authority, to contempt or disregard of human concern in its use. Humanity is not, as was once thought, the end for which all things

were formed; it is but a slight and feeble thing, perhaps an episodic one, in the vast stretch of the universe. But for man, man is the centre of interest and the measure of importance. The magnifying of the physical realm at the cost of man is but an abdication and a flight. To make physical science a rival of human interests is bad enough, for it forms a diversion of energy which can ill be afforded. But the evil does not stop there. The ultimate harm is that the understanding by man of his own affairs and his ability to direct them are sapped at their root when knowledge of nature is disconnected from its human function.

It has been implied throughout that knowledge is communication as well as understanding. I well remember the saying of a man, uneducated from the standpoint of the schools, in speaking of certain matters: "Sometime they will be found out and not only found out, but they will be known." The schools may suppose that a thing is known when it is found out. My old friend was aware that a thing is fully known only when it is published, shared, socially accessible. Record and communication are indispensable to knowledge. Knowledge cooped up in a private consciousness is a myth, and knowledge of social phenomena is peculiarly dependent upon dissemination, for only by distribution can such knowledge be either obtained or tested. A fact of community life which is not spread abroad so as to be a common possession is a contradiction in terms. Dissemination is something other than scattering at large. Seeds are sown, not by virtue of being thrown out at random, but by being so distributed as to take root and have a chance of growth. Communication of the results of social inquiry is the same thing as the formation of public opinion. This marks one of the first ideas framed in the growth of political democracy as it will be one of the

last to be fulfilled. For public opinion is judgment which is formed and entertained by those who constitute the public and is about public affairs. Each of the two phases imposes for its realization conditions hard to meet.

Opinions and beliefs concerning the public presuppose effective and organized inquiry. Unless there are methods for detecting the energies which are at work and tracing them through an intricate network of interactions to their consequences, what passes as public opinion will be "opinion" in its derogatory sense rather than truly public, no matter how widespread the opinion is. The number who share error as to fact and who partake of a false belief measures power for harm. Opinion casually formed and formed under the direction of those who have something at stake in having a lie believed can be *public* opinion only in name. Calling it by this name, acceptance of the name as a kind of warrant magnifies its capacity to lead action astray. The more who share it, the more injurious its influence. Public opinion, even if it happens to be correct, is intermittent when it is not the product of methods of investigation and reporting constantly at work. It appears only in crises. Hence its "rightness" concerns only an immediate emergency. Its lack of continuity makes it wrong from the standpoint of the course of events. It is as if a physician were able to deal for the moment with an emergency in disease but could not adapt his treatment of it to the underlying conditions which brought it about. He may then "cure" the disease—that is, cause its present alarming symptoms to subside—but he does not modify its causes; his treatment may even affect them for the worse. Only continuous inquiry, continuous in the sense of being connected as well as persistent, can provide the material of enduring opinion about public matters.

There is a sense in which "opinion" rather than knowledge, even under the most favorable circumstances, is the proper term to use—namely, in the sense of judgment, estimate. For in its strict sense, knowledge can refer only to what *has* happened and been done. What is still *to be* done involves a forecast of a future still contingent, and cannot escape the liability to error in judgment involved in all anticipation of probabilities. There may well be honest divergence as to policies to be pursued, even when plans spring from knowledge of the same facts. But genuinely public policy cannot be generated unless it is informed by knowledge, and this knowledge does not exist except when there is systematic, thorough, and well-equipped search and record.

Moreover, inquiry must be as nearly contemporaneous as possible; otherwise it is only of antiquarian interest. Knowledge of history is evidently necessary for connectedness of knowledge. But history which is not brought down close to the actual scene of events leaves a gap and exercises influence upon the formation of judgments about the public interest only by guess-work about intervening events. Here, only too conspicuously, is a limitation of the existing social sciences. Their material comes too late, too far after the event, to enter effectively into the formation of public opinion about the immediate public concern and what is to be done about it.

A glance at the situation shows that the physical and external means of collecting information in regard to what is happening in the world have far outrun the intellectual phase of inquiry and organization of its results. Telegraph, telephone, and now the radio, cheap and quick mails, the printing press, capable of swift reduplication of material at low cost, have attained a remarkable development. But when we ask what sort of material is recorded and how

it is organized, when we ask about the intellectual form in which the material is presented, the tale to be told is very different. "News" signifies something which has just happened, and which is new just because it deviates from the old and regular. But its *meaning* depends upon relation to what it imports, to what its social consequences are. This import cannot be determined unless the new is placed in relation to the old, to what has happened and been integrated into the course of events. Without coordination and consecutiveness, events are not events, but mere occurrences, intrusions; an event implies that out of which a happening proceeds. Hence even if we discount the influence of private interests in procuring suppression, secrecy and misrepresentation, we have here an explanation of the triviality and "sensational" quality of so much of what passes as news. The catastrophic, namely, crime, accident, family rows, personal clashes and conflicts, are the most obvious forms of breaches of continuity; they supply the element of shock which is the strictest meaning of sensation; they are the *new par excellence*, even though only the date of the newspaper could inform us whether they happened last year or this, so completely are they isolated from their connectedness.

So accustomed are we to this method of collecting, recording and presenting social changes, that it may well sound ridiculous to say that a genuine social science would manifest its reality in the daily press, while learned books and articles supply and polish tools of inquiry. But the inquiry which alone can furnish knowledge as a precondition of public judgments must be contemporary and quotidian. Even if social sciences as a specialized apparatus of inquiry were more advanced than they are, they would be comparatively impotent in the office of directing opinion

on matters of concern to the public as long as they are remote from application in the daily and unremitting assembly and interpretation of "news." On the other hand, the tools of social inquiry will be clumsy as long as they are forged in places and under conditions remote from contemporary events.

What has been said about the formation of ideas and judgments concerning the public apply as well to the distribution of the knowledge which makes it an effective possession of the members of the public. Any separation between the two sides of the problem is artificial. The discussion of propaganda and propagandism would alone, however, demand a volume, and could be written only by one much more experienced than the present writer. Propaganda can accordingly only be mentioned, with the remark that the present situation is one unprecedented in history. The political forms of democracy and quasi-democratic habits of thought on social matters have compelled a certain amount of public discussion and at least the simulation of general consultation in arriving at political decisions. Representative government must at least seem to be founded on public interests as they are revealed to public belief. The days are past when government can be carried on without any pretense of ascertaining the wishes of the governed. In theory, their assent must be secured. Under the older forms, there was no need to muddy the sources of opinion on political matters. No current of energy flowed from them. To-day the judgments popularly formed on political matters are so important, in spite of all factors to the contrary, that there is an enormous premium upon all methods which affect their formation.

The smoothest road to control of political conduct is by control of opinion. As long as interests of pecuniary

profit are powerful, and a public has not located and identified itself, those who have this interest will have an unresisted motive for tampering with the springs of political action in all that affects them. Just as in the conduct of industry and exchange generally the technological factor is obscured, deflected and defeated by "business," so specifically in the management of publicity. The gathering and sale of subject-matter having a public import is part of the existing pecuniary system. Just as industry conducted by engineers on a factual technological basis would be a very different thing from what it actually is, so the assembling and reporting of news would be a very different thing if the genuine interests of reporters were permitted to work freely.

One aspect of the matter concerns particularly the side of dissemination. It is often said, and with a great appearance of truth, that the freeing and perfecting of inquiry would not have any especial effect. For, it is argued, the mass of the reading public is not interested in learning and assimilating the results of accurate investigation. Unless these are read, they cannot seriously affect the thought and action of members of the public; they remain in secluded library alcoves, and are studied and understood only by a few intellectuals. The objection is well taken save as the potency of art is taken into account. A technical high-brow presentation would appeal only to those technically high-brow; it would not be news to the masses. Presentation is fundamentally important, and presentation is a question of art. A newspaper which was only a daily edition of a quarterly journal of sociology or political science would undoubtedly possess a limited circulation and a narrow influence. Even at that, however, the mere existence and accessibility of such material would have some regulative

effect. But we can look much further than that. The material would have such an enormous and widespread human bearing that its bare existence would be an irresistible invitation to a presentation of it which would have a direct popular appeal. The freeing of the artist in literary presentation, in other words, is as much a precondition of the desirable creation of adequate opinion on public matters as is the freeing of social inquiry. Men's conscious life of opinion and judgment often proceeds on a superficial and trivial plane. But their lives reach a deeper level. The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare and remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. This process is art. Poetry, the drama, the novel, are proofs that the problem of presentation is not insoluble. Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation.<sup>8</sup>

We have but touched lightly and in passing upon the conditions which must be fulfilled if the Great Society is to become a Great Community; a society in which the ever-expanding and intricately ramifying consequences of associated activities shall be known in the full sense of that word, so that an organized, articulate Public comes into being. The highest and most difficult kind of inquiry and a subtle, delicate, vivid and responsive art of communication must take possession of the physical machinery of transmission and circulation and breathe life into it. When the machine age has thus perfected its machinery it will be a means of life and not its despotic master. Democracy

will come into its own, for democracy is a name for a life of free and enriching communion. It had its seer in Walt Whitman.<sup>9</sup> It will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication.