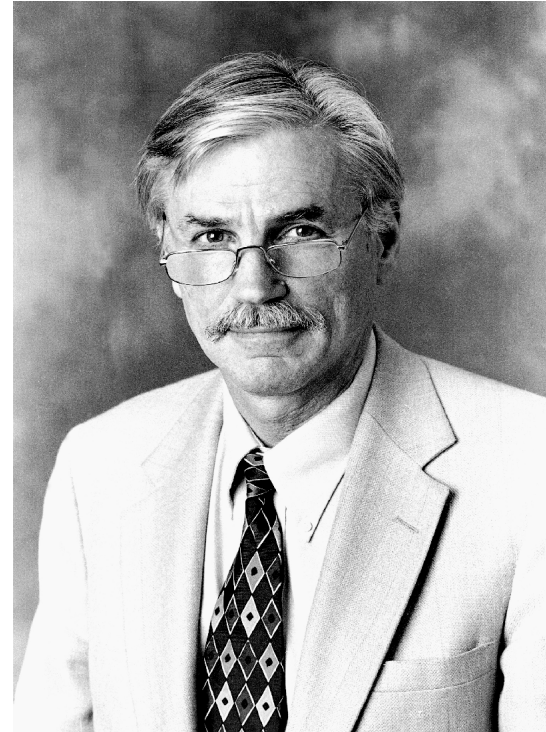


John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology



Larry A. Hickman
Indiana University Press

Chapter 2: Knowing As A Technological Artifact



- ◆ **Thesis:**
Knowledge is an artifact of technological inquiry
- ◆ **Method:**
Thematic extractions from Dewey's body of work

The Nature of Knowledge

- ◆ **The outcome of successful inquiry**
- ◆ **Does not require certainty**
- ◆ **Is situational and mutable**
- ◆ **Is not the "mirror of reality"**
- ◆ **Is more than "seeing new things" – gives us "new ways of seeing"**
- ◆ **Our traditional notion of knowledge becomes a "warranted assertion"**

The Nature of Inquiry

- ♦ Active experience to resolve a tension
- ♦ More critical than knowledge
- ♦ Involves a controlled transformation
- ♦ Emphasis on experiment/intervention rather than description (contrast with aesthetics)

The Nature of Technology

- Acts as a tool for inquiry
- Liaison between doubt & resolution / tension and outcome
- Can be either the by-product of inquiry or the object of inquiry
- Not necessarily an object (includes language, institutions, etc.)

The Nature of Technology

(contd.)

- Tools have no essence, but only functions with regard to situations
- Use is primary, origin is secondary
- *Meaning* is determined by usage
- Includes the organic, but not religion and aesthetics

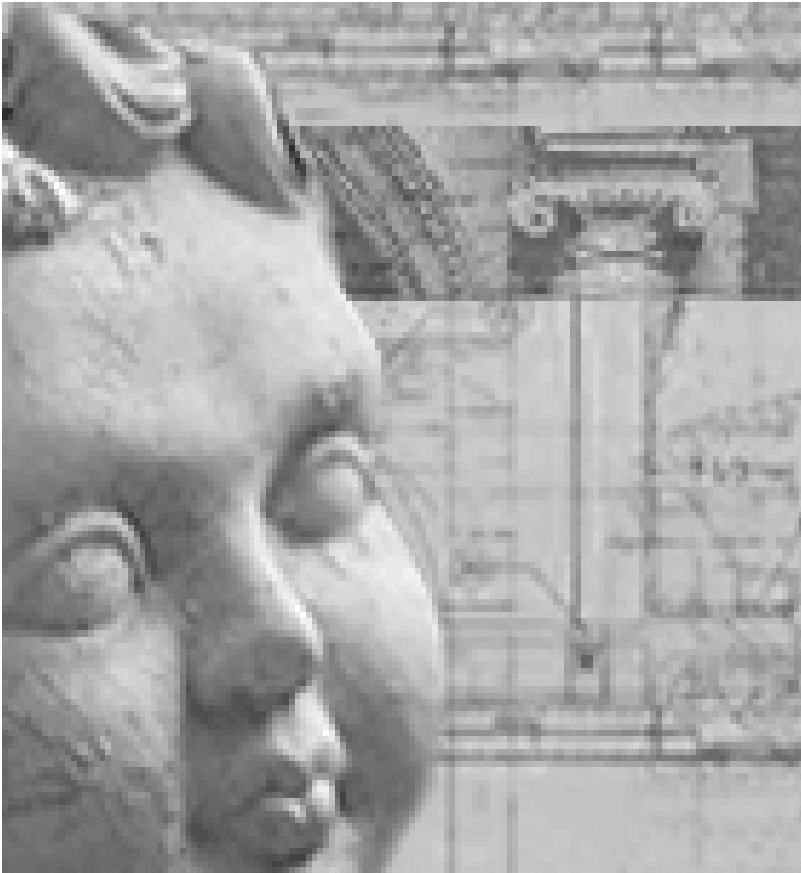
The Nature of Science

- Science is a sub-set of technology
- Should be technological – i.e., instrumental problem-solving of experimentally testable questions
- "Truth" is based on outcome (reality is constituted, not discovered)
- Things exist prior to perception, but not in the same way

The Nature of Meaning

- Meaning is instrumental, not intrinsic (in both language and objects)
- Meaning is contextual, not correspondent
- Experimentation "constitutes meanings"
- Meanings/uses multiply

Chapter 4: From Techne to Technology: Dewey's Reading of the History of Technology



- ◆ **Thesis: History of artifacts elucidates meanings**
- ◆ **Method: Chronological Overview**

Primitive Stage

- ◆ Few problems, therefore little inquiry and few tools
- ◆ Goals are short-term
- ◆ Technology not bound to particular objects
- ◆ No systematic science (depends upon consistent instrumentation)

Homeric Greek Stage

- ◆ Pessimistic; sees man as fated and destiny as beyond control
- ◆ Little inquiry, therefore little technology and little science
- ◆ Aesthetic development only

Sophisticated Greek Stage

- ◆ Assertion of control enriches both the means and ends of inquiry
- ◆ Separation of the artisan and academic
- ◆ Academics both utilize and belittle artifacts; fail to identify the transformative role of technology
- ◆ Because of the separation from the world, fail to meet Dewey's definition of science

After the Greeks

- ◆ Reason and science became a serious competitor to religion and divination
- ◆ Value of experiment was lost until the Renaissance
- ◆ Technology was seen as performing rote tasks on pre-existing knowledge

Modern Science

- ◆ Increased attention paid to instrumentation and experiment
- ◆ Knowledge recognized as an artifact of inquiry
- ◆ Process of solving problems experimentally gives rise to new puzzles and furthers knowledge
- ◆ The future?: Aesthetics and social science become instrumental, as well