From Absolutes to Aesthetics:
John Dewey and The Art of Experience

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For my wife Jennifer.
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Abstract

In this thesis I sought to capture something of the integrity of John Dewey's larger vision. While recognizing this to be a difficult challenge, I needed to clear some of the debris of an overly narrow reading of Dewey's works by students of education. The tendency of reducing Dewey's larger philosophical vision down to neat theoretical snapshots in order to prop up their particular social scientific research, was in my estimation slowly damaging the larger integrity of Dewey's vast body of work. It was, in short, killing off the desire to read big works, because doing so was not necessary to satisfying the specialized interests of social scientific research. In this thesis then I made a plea for returning the Humanities to the center of higher education. It is there that students learn how to read and to think—skills required to take on someone of Dewey's stature. I set out in this thesis to do just that. I took Dewey's notion of experience as the main thread connecting all of his philosophy, and focused on two large areas of inquiry, science and its relation to philosophy, and aesthetic experience. By exploring in depth Dewey's understanding of human experience as it pertains to day-to-day living, my call was for a heightened mode of artful conduct within our living contexts. By calling on the necessity of appreciating the more qualitative dimensions of lived experience, I was hoping that students engaged in the Social Sciences might begin to bolster their research interests with more breadth and depth of reading and critical insight. I expressed this as being important to the survival and intelligent flourishing of democratic conduct.
Preface

The "discipline" of Education has, since the time I began my studies in that field, disturbed me a great deal. There is an art that dominates Education studies in general. It is the art of learning how to say a great deal about very little. Art, afterall, is not always artful. The Social Sciences that heavily direct the field of education stress the importance of "focusing" and "specializing." I came to John Dewey via this reductionist route. If my curiosity had not been piqued by his name popping up in virtually every journal article I read on any number of educational topics, I might have missed the enormity of his contribution not only to education, but also to philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, and political science. That his name is rarely spoken in most of these other disciplines testifies to the fact that at least educators have recognized and continue to recognize Dewey's general educational importance. However, I wonder how long it will be before the social scientific drive, entrenched as it is in the field of education, toward narrow specialization, boils all the nutrients out of Dewey's vast body of work? It has become grossly apparent to me that students in education are not expected to read in any great depth the works that make up the theoretical background of their particular research interests. They are just expected to be able to list them in order to give their research its foundational structure. In this, we get no more than a unidimensional cardboard cut-out of any given theorist who is thereby used to prop up the "scientific" legitimacy of whatever it is being investigated by the researcher.

This did not sit well with me, for in my own educational background in the Humanities I was taught to do the exact opposite. You read the original works in all their complexity and then attempt to critically determine in what ways they are relevant to specific human and social problems. I have not swayed a bit from this being the most generally intelligent approach to big
and important ideas. Dewey was referred to so often in such a variety of journal articles that I set myself to reading him in the original. I soon realized just how little of the depth of his thinking on such a wide range of topics was captured by those who used him to prop up their own research. This myopia was utterly disturbing to me. Reading these journal articles, one would have thought that Dewey, perhaps the most prolific thinker of this century, wrote only a couple of books, *Democracy and Education* and *Experience and Education*. This thesis was born out of my own felt need to offer something by way of a corrective to this prevalent myopic reduction of Dewey’s work. This, of course, was not my only reason for writing on John Dewey.

The more I read of his work, the more deeply what he had to say resonated with my own educational (in the broadest sense of this word) concerns. I thus set myself on a path of reclaiming something of the comprehensive integrity of Dewey’s work. The nature of so many contemporary social problems necessitated the potential value of doing so. Dewey still is enormously relevant for speaking to the nature and potential reconstruction of contemporary social problems. Unfortunately, the Social Sciences which have come to dominate educational research are slowly killing off the very thinker that held out such great hopes for the intelligent advancement of the Social Sciences. Students, who are accepted primarily from the social sciences, health studies, and the new technology streams, have neither the time nor the desire to read any of the “big” works on which so much of their research is based. This is an unfortunate trend that is part of the drive to specialize, and the consequences seem to be the abandonment of in-depth reading and critical thinking.

I opted out of the typical social scientific research in order to engage one of these big thinkers in a more ambitious way. For this I must apologize, in as much as I need to apologize, to my readers, for this thesis will not be a neat snap-shot of Dewey’s work. I intend to engage the
complexity of what is there and do so in such a way that I might be as comprehensive as possible without losing myself in a myriad of detail. Dewey’s complex understanding of experience will be the thread that runs throughout this thesis. I cannot promise my readers that this will be an easy read, but my sincere hope is that it will be an accessible one. I want it to be accessible to those who might not otherwise be well-read in Dewey’s works, but I also make the assumption that my readers are well-read generally. I make the assumption that they are accustomed to reading difficult works. The standards of my own investigation, therefore, are quite high.

While my standards are quite high, I stick quite closely to what Dewey wrote. I cannot, therefore, make any claims to forging new and original ground regarding his work. I do map out my own grid of interpretation, but the vast majority of my references are to Dewey’s original work. Where I do make some of my own inferences, they are still tightly connected to what Dewey wrote. The reader should not expect to find here neat recipes for pedagogic practice, theory translated into the workaday world of education. While fully recognizing the shortcomings of this, I need to make clear that this is not my intention in this thesis. I (and I propose others) need to take time with a big thinker like Dewey who wrote so much. Rushing to put him or anybody else into practice on only flimsy readings is reckless. My intention here is to begin to take my own small steps to coming to terms with a big thinker. Putting Dewey into intelligent practice can come only in the wake of a patient exploration of some of the important facets of his work. In this I ask for my readers patience, offering only my sincerest hope that out of my work they discover something of interest. If they are at all moved to read Dewey in more depth then I will have succeeded.
Introduction

In one of John Dewey's rare autobiographical accounts, written in his seventy-first year (1930), we find intimated what, for any serious reader of his work, must be a central challenge. Confessing to a certain degree of envy, he praises the ability of those intellects capable of writing their own biography "in a unified pattern, woven out of a few distinctly discernible strands of interest and influence." He then contrasts his own account in a somewhat reluctant (and typically humble) tone, but notice the important qualification of his envy:

I seem to be unstable, chameleon-like, yielding one after another to many diverse and even incompatible influences; struggling to assimilate something from each and yet striving to carry it forward in a way that is logically consistent with what has been learned from its predecessors. Upon the whole, the forces that have influenced me have come from persons and from situations more than from books—not that I have not, I hope, learned a great deal from philosophical writings, but that what I have learned from them has been technical in comparison with what I have been forced to think upon and about because of some experience in which I found myself entangled. It is for this reason that I cannot say with candor that I envy completely, or envy beyond a certain point, those to whom I have referred. I like to think, though it may be a defence reaction, that with all the inconveniences of the road I have been forced to travel, it has the compensatory advantage of not inducing an immunity of thought to experiences—which perhaps, after all, should not be treated even by a philosopher as the germ of a disease to which he needs to develop resistance. 1

The implicit warning given by Dewey here is that those who choose to read and engage his works should not expect to find a "unified pattern" woven from "distinctly discernible strands of
interest and influence." The reluctance in Dewey’s tone that this might be a weakness in his work is, in my estimation, surpassed only by a humble confidence that this is in some deeper way reflective of a life more strenuously lived. One senses that too neat an autobiography may reflect too neat a life, and what he mildly terms a “defence reaction” carries with it no less a weight than of “not inducing an immunity of thought to experiences.” In this phrase we find one of the major virtues essential to the building of democratic character and culture.

To put it quite simply, Dewey’s philosophy represents a grounded and nuanced engagement of life experience; it does not seek to escape it or somehow, through philosophical slight of hand, get beyond it. This, he would say, is impossible and potentially dangerous, and as he goes to some pain to make clear throughout his work, it has also been the major preoccupation of the past 2500 years of Western thought. Yet, Dewey’s radical approach is also a balanced one. He does not believe that this history of philosophical thinking is one grand mistake. It is based, rather, on the ongoing adjustment and search for order by a given culture in relation to its particular environment. Dewey’s philosophical project is thus made up of strong historical analyses. As he says, “the life of all thought is to effect a junction at some point of the new and the old, of deep-sunk customs and unconscious dispositions, that are brought to the light of attention by some conflict with newly emerging directions of activity. Philosophies which emerge at distinctive periods define larger patterns of continuity which are woven in effecting the enduring junctions of a stubborn past and an insistent future.”

As temporal beings situated in an ever-changing environment, our searching and adjusting can be haphazard and reckless or it can be intelligent and artful, and philosophy can lend itself equally to both. Dewey’s philosophy is intelligent and artful to the degree that it seeks not to evade the dynamic lessons of day-to-day experiences. Indeed, the fact of experience
provides the very condition wherein the potential for intelligent and artful conduct is possible.

Our experience within nature (embodied in the relational and inferential capacity of human experience to penetrate the depths of nature) suggests intelligent and artful conduct as possibility. Ever cognizant of the junctions of old and new and the implications (and complications) they suggest for human conduct, Dewey forge his philosophy in a manner that speaks profoundly about and for human experience.

Dewey the philosopher was also Dewey the teacher, and his mode of conduct in his professional teaching life bore an uncanny resemblance to that of his professional writing life. His students, it seems, had difficulty understanding and following his diffusive thinking as did many of his more scholarly colleagues and critics. However, this might testify more to life’s complexity as it weighs on the thinking, responsive mind than any inherent “technical” complexity within Dewey’s philosophy as a whole, though this is not to say that Dewey’s philosophy lacks technical rigor.

The best account of Dewey the teacher is given by Irwin Edman, a student of Dewey at Columbia in 1915. I borrow here from Robert Westbrook’s rendering of this account as it captures a good deal of what I am attempting to convey about Dewey the philosopher. As Westbrook points out, by conventional standards, Dewey was for the most part a miserable teacher. However, measuring anything about Dewey by conventional standards is most apt to miss something deeper and interconnected about the philosopher’s thought. Edman, an astute student, came to understand something of this after having been rather disappointed upon first entering Dewey’s class. Edman was intensely eager to take a course from Dewey, having read most of what Dewey had published up to that point. In the wake of his first lecture with Dewey, Edman says he was left with “a shock of dullness and confusion:”
He had none of the usual tricks or gifts of the effective lecturer. He sat at his desk, fumbling with a few crumpled yellow sheets and looking abstractly out of the window. He spoke very slowly in a Vermont drawl. He looked both very kindly and very abstracted. He hardly seemed aware of the presence of the class. He took little pains to underline a phrase, or emphasize a point, or, so at first it seemed to me, to make any.... He seemed to be saying whatever came into his head next, and at one o’clock on an autumn afternoon to at least one undergraduate what came next did not always have a very clear connexion with what had just come before. The end of the hour finally came and he simply stopped; it seemed to me he might have stopped anywhere.

Given that this was only Edman’s first lecture with the great philosopher, and taking into account that his hopes were (justifiably) quite high, one cannot help but detect the resemblance between this account by a student and Dewey’s autobiographical account, above. The awkward relation between presentation and perception is at first, and perhaps unfortunately, understandable. Of course, Dewey would have failed miserably as a teacher (indeed, as a philosopher) if there had not been something more profound taking shape here. Edman, who chose to stick with Dewey’s class, soon came to discover that it was not Dewey’s mind that was wandering, but rather his own. Reading his class notes, he found that “what had seemed so casual, so rambling, so unexciting, was of an extraordinary coherence, texture, and brilliance. I had been listening not to the semi-theatrical repetition of a discourse many times made—a fairly accurate description of many academic lectures—I had been listening to a man actually thinking in the presence of a class.” As Edman goes on to say: “To attend a lecture of John Dewey was to participate in the actual business of thought. Those pauses were delays in creative thinking, when the next step
was really being considered, and for the glib dramatics of the teacher-actor was substituted the enterprise, careful and candid, of the genuine thinker."

The search, therefore, for any unity that might inhere in Dewey’s great body of writing must be a patient one and capable of negotiating what is a rather precarious and labyrinthine style, a style which itself is reflective of an engaged thinker rather than a detached spectator or polished performer. If Dewey’s writing in this regard is chameleon-like, then it is also strangely life-like, for he feels compelled to yield to many diverse influences, often incompatible, struggling as he says above, “to assimilate something from each and yet striving to carry it forward in a way that is logically consistent with what has been learned from its predecessors.” This captures something of the temporal quality of Dewey’s scholarly conduct, but it also makes for a rather unsystematic and ad hoc style of writing. This represents the reader’s greatest challenge. The reader will not be transported beyond to some neat, ordered reality unconnected from the workaday world of experience. The reader will be asked instead to follow along as Dewey engages life on its own terms, struggling to locate some reasonable measure of stability (only because we are intelligently capable of doing so) in an otherwise precarious environment.

Dewey seeks to perceive what is still workable from past tradition in order to inform an active present that can then intelligently be used to conceive of a better future. The experiential complexity of our temporal reality is not easily amenable to being carved up into a neat and wholly discrete past, present, and future. Rather, past, present, and future are vitally interfused within the experiencing subject, as experience (involving an inquiring subject because of that subject’s temporal status) penetrates the depths of nature rather than being a discrete aspect of it, a surface attachment to it, or a thing above and surrounding it. This is the complexity that has been the hardest pill for philosophers to swallow. Too often there has been a deep need, a
longing to escape the fact that our transactions with our environment are irreducibly temporal, and if our experiences are irreducibly temporal, so time is irreducibly experiential, and as such, irreducibly social.

The social, as John Stuhr points out, is Dewey's "inclusive philosophic idea, and...there is no existence ontologically independent of the sociotemporal." This puts a rather different spin on the idea of timeless or eternal laws or truths. Whatever philosophers (and society) get out of constructing and attempting to abide by such abstract notions is one thing, but it is patently false to dictate this as a perdurable feature and fact of our existence. To the degree that such abstraction erases temporal quality, it may speak to some impulsive emotional yearning for absolute stability, a yearning spawned by fear of being swallowed up in a hostile world, but it does not provide an empirically valid reflection of how we actually experience our world.

In this paper, then, I hope to attend to the complexity of Dewey's overall vision. The democratic ideal at the heart of Dewey's vision is one of radical and humane engagement with life experience. Our existence in this world, if bravely and candidly scrutinized, does not suggest any great relief being found by escaping to some realm of transcendental absolutes, but it also does not suggest, because of this, a mere stagnating relativism, or worse yet, what has become in much postmodern theorizing, a thoroughgoing anti-rationalism. These modes of adjustment have certainly found their place, the former being the stronghold of the Enlightenment and the latter the stranglehold of Postmodernism. Neither, as I hope to show in this paper, has exhibited the kind of faith necessary to uphold the more ennobling ideal of democracy. If, indeed, democracy still does represent a noble ideal, then it needs something more grounded in an understanding of human experience than can be offered by Enlightenment's transcendent longings or Postmodernism's self-induced paralysis.
Democracy is indeed Dewey’s inclusive ideal simply because, as he sees it, our experience within our world comports well with it. Dewey’s intensive historical analysis of philosophy, science, aesthetics, and morality, along with his constant efforts to reconstruct these areas of human inquiry in such a way that inquiry might constantly be improved, speaks to democracy as a vigilant, forward looking and humane way of living in the world. The amount of courage and hard work involved in such a project should not be under-emphasized. Paying honest attention to experience is, to say the least, an intimidating proposal. Experience is precarious; it provides no definitive answers to life's pressing problems, and even under the best of conditions it is apt to trip us up and leave us floundering. However, experience does nonetheless suggest our critical and intelligent engagement with it, and to deny this is to deny our greater potential for positive growth and betterment. To ignore this fact or attempt to abstract (absolutely) beyond it Dewey would see as neglect.

Experience, as Dewey delineates it throughout his work, will be at the heart of this thesis. I have chosen, as a matter of expediency, to focus on two areas of Dewey's philosophy: science and art. His philosophy of experience will bind what is a rather novel interpretation of the relationship between science and art. In Chapter One I will take up the spirit of inquiry that animates his thinking on experience by exploring the connection, or more appropriately the loss of connection, between philosophy and science, and the implications this has had, and continues to have, for human inquiry. I will focus primarily on the epistemological quest for certainty via a cursory historical analysis, and then show in what ways this quest has all but severed philosophy from a meaningful and rich engagement with the results of scientific inquiry. The implications of science loosed from the moral guidance of a critically informed philosophy will be explored.
In the second chapter I will explore the idea of experience as artful conduct. Here, the fuller implications of aesthetic experience will be explored as manifesting human experience in its integrity. Art, rather than being the polar opposite of science, is instead analyzed as a phase of experience where the inquiring human subject manifests experience’s potential in time. The rhythmic, qualitative dimensions of human experience, not so easily captured or understood in the more quantitative measurements of science, are brought to bear on experience’s fuller potential. Yet, science and art represent integral facets of experience in its whole. Each is devalued if it comes at the expense of the other. Unfortunately, Dewey’s thinking on art and aesthetics has too often been ignored as being no more than a trivial part of his larger body of work. To this extent the fuller implications of his understanding of human experience have eluded a great number of his readers. My goal therefore in this chapter will be to complement my first chapter and correct as best I can this prevalent myopic reading of Dewey’s work.

In concluding this thesis I will defend its educational merit. This will involve me encapsulating what I have done throughout the body of the thesis as being educationally sound, and perhaps more educationally comprehensive than what passes for much education research these days.

Responding to the Great Depression, Dewey observed: “We do not know what we really want and we make no great effort to find out. We allow our purposes and desires to be foisted upon us from without. We are bored by doing what we want to do, because the want has no deep roots in our judgment of values.” What Dewey called for then, and what I think we still need today, are critic-philosophers of great modesty and courage. In the face of today’s “unconscious civilization,” what is needed is a grounded philosophy that, in spite of much contemporary political inertia, still has within it a sensible degree of normative and probative force, and I will
argue that in this regard Dewey's philosophy is intelligently progressive and extremely useful. The embers of a democratic faith still burn, but hard pressed we are as they come perilously closer to being snuffed out.
Chapter 1:

Philosophy and the Spirit of Science

Things are in the saddle,
And ride mankind.

There are two laws discrete,
Not reconciled,—
Law for man, and law for thing;
The last builds town and fleet,
But it runs wild,
And doth the man unking.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Dewey’s philosophy of science has a great deal to say about what has become the almost unbridgeable gap between science and philosophy. Unfortunately, much of this has been ignored throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Unpacking Dewey’s understanding of science as it weighs on his overall philosophy is no easy task. I will begin by analyzing some of the more salient features of Dewey’s scientific inheritance, especially as it bears on the pervasive human quest for epistemological certainty and the consequences of this quest for how human beings come to experience their world. I will maintain the distinction (as Dewey himself did) between philosophy (the pursuit of wisdom) and science (the pursuit of knowledge), not to infer a necessary dichotomy of the two, but rather to clarify in what ways the two might more intelligently relate; that is, in what ways they may more effectively inform one another around the continuing struggle to make sense of and improve our world.

The bond between science and philosophy is thus a moral bond in the sense that the results of scientific inquiry need the guiding wisdom of philosophy as regards the uses to which scientific knowledge might be put. This is not to say that philosophy can define for us what our values should or should not be. It cannot tell us this, but it can reasonably guide our inquiry
around how we go about judging what may be more or less of value to us within our living contexts. Historically, philosophy has been a movement away from these living contexts, searching rather for a more secure realm of moral transcendence. It has thereby left mortals scrambling to find something which might guide them in their workaday lives, that actually speaks to their lives as they are lived. Nothing has been forthcoming. Given that philosophy has been rendered, indeed has rendered itself all but mute in this regard, testifies to the fact that whatever wisdom philosophy has achieved, it is not a wisdom that speaks very effectively to the common person in his or her day-to-day struggles, and it goes without saying that such wisdom might be deemed not very wise at all. It is not wise because the results of science, implicated as they are in so much of human experience, have thus been unleashed from the burden of philosophical moral valuation, with the complicity of philosophy itself, and the uses to which scientific results are put has become at best haphazard. In the absence of some guiding philosophy, the methods of science are themselves propped up as the prime adjudicator of value. It is this confusion that Dewey’s philosophy attempts to correct, thereby providing a saner philosophy of science that can help guide people in their common lives. The experimental spirit of science, when it lacks the moral guidance of a philosophy that seeks not to escape the more qualitative dimensions of experience, is rendered arbitrary. The moral spirit of philosophy, when it is divorced from the hypothetical results of experimental science, is rendered irrelevant. To begin unpacking how and why this confusion has come down to us we must begin, so to speak, in Greek wonder, for it is with the Greeks’ wonder in the face of their world that the quest for certainty began, and so too did some of the confusion.

In highlighting Dewey’s historical survey of science and philosophy, I cannot hope to be exhaustive. It would take me well outside the scope of this paper. However, by focusing on the
quest for certainty as it inheres throughout the history of science and philosophy, highlighting some key points of its development and perpetuation, I will be in a position to suggest why the gap has grown so desperately wide between contemporary science and philosophy. In this I will have a sufficient historical account from which to posit, along with Dewey, a more fruitful reconstruction of that important relationship.

The Greeks

At the outset I need to make clear I am not investigating in a comprehensive way the full complexity of Greek thought as it came down through history. I will focus almost exclusively on Plato and Aristotle and at times will use them almost synonymously in reference to general Greek thought. I am conscious of the reductionism of doing this, but it is justified only to the degree that Dewey tended to do the same, and I am after all interested only in conveying Dewey's take on the Greek inheritance. It is important to note that Dewey was primarily concerned with conveying the general nature of the philosophical problems, especially the problems inherent within the quest for epistemological certainty, as they were passed down from Greek culture. Dewey was not interested in conveying the full implications of Greek philosophy in general, but rather in highlighting some of the problematic philosophical issues that arose out of Greek philosophy and continued to have a prevalent influence in future scientific and philosophical thought. He was interested primarily in providing support for his own philosophical reconstruction. He therefore tends to refer to "the Greeks" when in fact he is referring to Plato and/or Aristotle. The sense is that Dewey used Plato and Aristotle as generally representative of Greek philosophy only because their respective philosophies manifested, not only the more general philosophical issues prevalent within that culture, but also the specific issues that Dewey needed to take up in his own philosophical project. The content that Dewey
draws from Plato and Aristotle is I think appropriate and would stand up to historical scrutiny, but it is that content that is most important. We might forgive Dewey, then, for his tendency to take the specific Greek content relevant to his own philosophical project and equate it with “the Greeks” in general.

Fundamental to an understanding of how Greek philosophy set in motion the tendency of dichotomous thinking, as it has come down through history, is their postulation of a hierarchical model of being. This model distinguished between inferior and superior realms of human experience, the lower workaday realm representing the material, contingent, and temporal qualities of practical life and the higher eternal realm representing the imperishable, perfect, and timeless qualities of true reality. Having inherited the mythical dimensions of truth from earlier religious thinking, the Greeks sought to supplant these mythical conceptions by giving them a rational philosophical conception. In this Plato and Aristotle undermined the mythic forms of earlier Greek religious belief, but not its substance: “The belief that the divine encompasses the world was detached from its mythical context and made the basis of philosophy.” In denying the mythic status of earlier thought/belief, Plato and Aristotle provided the ideals of science via a life of reason, but they did no disservice to the dichotomy between “a higher realm of fixed reality of which alone true science [was] possible and of an inferior world of changing things with which experience and practical matters [were] concerned.”

Thus Greek philosophy became a science of Being and the resulting metaphysics was such that the cosmically real was equated with the finished and perfect, made up of pure transcendent forms, while the less real was made up of the contingent material of everyday human experience. For Dewey, what was most interesting was how the two realms were related, for the inferior realm justified and made possible the existence of the superior realm. This posed
some serious difficulties for both Plato and Aristotle who had to maneuver their metaphysical systems in such a way as to justify the life of reason at the recognized expense of an entire underclass of artisans and servile workers whose very work made the idea of eternal forms (along with a leisured class of philosophers for whom such forms were not alien) possible. For eternal forms, to put it rather simply, needed inspiration, and this inspiration was the contingent flux of everyday life which, paradoxically, was deemed less real (inferior) by virtue of its manifest relation to the realm of true Being. Those who worked in the material world, who laboured in the practical (industrial and political) arts, engaged their activities in such a way that eternal form was manifested as the rational end of their labour, but it was an end rendered alien to them by virtue of their work being the stuff of material change. Only the class of rational thinkers (philosophers) could perceive and enjoy the perfect fruits of their leisured contemplation.

It was truly disturbing to Plato that the artisan class could not perceive the pure forms of their labor. Their ignorance was deemed the commonplace of anything having to do with the world of ongoing change. This was enough to justify the regulation of the habits and practices of those who worked, by an enlightened elite who were, by nature, above entanglement in change and practice. Aristotle in turn escaped this dilemma “by putting nature above art, and endowing nature with skilled purpose that for the most part achieves ends or completions. Thus the role of the human artisan whether in industry or politics became relatively negligible, and the miscarriages of human art a matter of relative insignificance.” By endowing nature with skilled purpose Aristotle transferred the role of artist to that of nature itself, which worked its canvas from within instead of from without.
Like other artists, nature first possesses the forms which it afterwards embodies. When arts follow fixed models, whether in making shoes, houses or dramas, and when the element of individual invention in design is condemned as caprice, forms and ends are necessarily external to the individual worker. They preceded any particular realization. Design and plan are anonymous and universal, and carry with them no suggestion of a designing, purposive mind.²

Essentially, Aristotle rendered the activities of human artisans mindless in order that he might constitute mind as the end of nature and establish philosophers as the only class capable of the "immediate possession and celebration [that] constitutes consciousness."³ The Greek elite needed most those for whom they had the lowest opinion, namely artists, for they provided for and operated within the very conditions that made rational science possible and necessary. Artists mimicked the world of flux, but philosophers had access to what was behind the imitation, to reality in its purity.

As Dewey points out, the Greeks confused on principle, the aesthetic and the rational and "they bequeathed the confusion as an intellectual tradition to their successors."⁴ I will explore the implications of this confusion in my next chapter on Dewey's aesthetics, but it seems fair to say that Greek rationalism represented a species of fear based on the overwhelming need to escape the contingencies and inherent precariousness of daily life. The qualitative dimensions of lived experience flourished as the sine qua non of Greek art, but it was a language Greek philosophers could only attribute to mind as a realization of nature in perfected form. This was Greek science, but it was a science in which its conception of experience afforded "no model for a conception of experimental inquiry and of reflection efficacious in action."⁵
By positing a transcendent plane of absolute reality the Greeks introduced the idea of the ends of nature as intrinsically good, whole, and self-sufficient. While this superior reality was deemed an absolute end in and of itself, it depended on means, subservient in nature, for its realization. By positing a gaping distinction between means and ends the Greeks were able to successfully separate the inferior and superior realms. Inquiry itself became an inferior species of the good entangled as it was in the material flux of the workaday world. However, knowledge accumulated through inquiry—inquiry to be understood as embodying the work of the arts—was in the final instance the stuff of rational mind attaining the level of the really real. As already mentioned, this is what the Greeks called the science of Being and it had its justification in the qualitative dimensions of aesthetic production. It could not, of course, be understood as science in the modern experimental/hypothetical sense because Plato and Aristotle’s systems had no room for the possibility that ongoing experimentation could be capable of providing objects of knowledge. Experimentation or the creative arts were mere means to the realization of absolute ends, and therefore were deemed inherently defective and dependent. Those things which embody the inferior realm of mere means, as Dewey says,

can never be known in themselves but only in their subordination to objects that are final, while [transcendent ends] can be known in and through themselves by enclosed reason. Thus the identification of knowledge with esthetic contemplation and the exclusion from science of trial, work, manipulation and administration of things, comes full circle.9

With the Greeks, therefore, the distinction between inferior and superior realms establishes a hierarchy of Being. Sensitive as the Greeks were to the immediate qualitative dimensions of human experience, a sensitivity furnished by their recognition in the arts of "esthetic objects with
traits of order and proportion, form and finality,” they most naturally built their hierarchical system of Being upon this qualitative sensibility.10

Dewey, it should be said, was quite sympathetic to the Greek philosophers (especially Aristotle). While he faulted them for their demeaning (in its most literal sense) of the workaday world of human striving and flux, he nonetheless recognized that this need to establish some reality safe from the hazards and vicissitudes of the world was natural enough, especially given that there had yet to be developed effective scientific tools for controlling, to some stable degree, an otherwise precarious world. What precluded the Greeks from a more rigorous experimental approach was not that they had “more respect for the function of perception through the senses than has modern science, but that, judged from present practice, they had altogether too much respect for the material of direct, unanalyzed sense-perception.”¹¹ Epistemologically, the Greeks knew that there were defects in this approach, but they felt that they could correct any defects through purely logical and rational means. By eliminating the contingent qualities of ordinary perception they could reach perfected and immutable forms (ends) and then deem these forms true reality by virtue of their manifest relation to the particular characteristics available to ordinary perception.

In this sense, because the Greeks had not developed what we understand today as being more rigorous scientific procedures, its physics were more or less in harmony with its metaphysics, because its metaphysics were teleological and qualitative. By the seventeenth century, however, the “doctrine that objects as ends are the proper objects of science, because they are the ultimate forms of real being, met its doom.”¹² With the advent of the seventeenth century an unprecedented level of growth was ushered in as science began to establish more instrumentally effective methods whereby human beings could begin for the first time to exercise
some intelligent control over the changes of their world. With this experimental turn, science could be used to figure out how and why the world worked the way it did, and it no longer needed the asylum of an a priori perfect reality.

**The New Science**

This more effective instrumentalism represented for Dewey a watershed development in the human ability to potentially understand and exercise a more reasonable degree of control over the ongoing changes that animated the world. The work of Sir Francis Bacon was especially revolutionary in its implications for human inquiry and progress. Bacon was the first to react strongly against the Aristotelian dogmatism passed down through medieval scholasticism. His reaction was one that fundamentally attacked the correspondence theory of truth as it was inherited from antiquity. The Greek notion of a priori truth, which could be attained by the best philosophical minds, was flawed because it aimed at the conquest of mind rather than of nature. What was passed along from the Greeks and what remained relatively unchanged until the seventeenth century was the notion that all inquiry had to correspond to the Aristotelian method, which was based on a faulty spectatorial logic by which true knowledge was equated with the contemplation, persuasion, and demonstration, of pre-existent truth.

Bacon was interested in something far more ambitious. He had little use for received truth as the best test of true knowledge. He proposed an experimental approach in which the guiding logic was that of discovery rather than demonstration. Old truth was useful in so far as it lead to the detection of new truth. He was interested more than anything else in finding out how best to go about intelligently finding new truths rather than relying on the antiquated prescriptions of already had truths. This was a radical conception because the key to success lay not in testing theories as corresponding to the respected authority of Aristotle, but in testing them
against the benchmark of common experience through the use of rigorous and repeatable experimentation. Bacon refuted the idea that growth of knowledge, implicated as it is in the world of becoming and change, in learning new things about the world, was somehow inferior to the possession of knowledge pre-existent and infinitely stable. Science, as Dewey says in reference to Bacon, was an “invasion of the unknown, rather than repetition in logical form of the already known.”

Bacon’s chief insight, and it is fundamentally important, was “his advocacy of a critical use of experience and experimentation to test theories.” Michael Luntley’s analysis of Bacon’s place in history is particularly useful here for it captures rather nicely, and in more systematic detail than Dewey offered, the radical spirit of Bacon’s work. Bacon recognized that theoretical claims about the world were unwarranted if they assumed that a simple induction on experience automatically generated true theoretical knowledge. Positing theories about the world was not a simple mechanical process and strong theories needed to be “subjected to certain heuristic rules.” As Luntley goes on to say:

This means that Bacon accepted that theoretical claims ‘go beyond’ observational claims; a theoretical claim refers to features of the world that are not experienceable by untutored sense experience.

Bacon’s call for new rules of intelligent hypotheses and rigorous experimentation and testing thus drew on a distinction between perception/observation and conception/theory. It was based on the necessity of being able to sort between good and bad theories and, importantly, these rules had to be rooted in the world of common experience. Luntley rightly terms Bacon’s method “critical empiricism,” a term he deems most relevant because empiricism “signals the break with the dogmatic rationalism of Bacon’s contemporaries who... relied solely on a test of
compatibility with the Aristotelian inheritance."^{17} The use of the word "critical" on the other hand signals "that the appeal to experience and experimentation is not an appeal to experience as an unchallenged conduit for knowledge."^{18} The advancement of knowledge therefore was about making intelligent theoretical guesses and then rigorously testing those guesses through experimentation. The metaphysics involved here held in the idea that reality was independent of our experience and judgement, and claims about this reality could not be reduced to our experiential reports. The epistemological import of Bacon's thinking was that our claims about reality had to be supported by evidence. Science thus had a powerful new method and it was well on its way to deciphering more rigorously how the world worked. It was no longer a purely contemplative affair, but instead was operative, practical, and experimental. It engaged the world of change by inducing further changes in order to gather better knowledge for inferring more accurately how the world worked. That which showed signs of apparent fixity and stability blocked the path to knowledge, and needed to be broken down and put under a variety of circumstances in order to get at the true character and behaviour of that which was under investigation.

Modern science thus made a tremendous advance when it recognized the limitations within Greek science of a heavy-handed aestheticism. The new science was a forward looking rather than an upward looking mode of investigation and as such needed to strip nature of its qualities in order to understand the hidden workings within nature that made such immediate things possible. In essence the new science sought to get behind or underneath the immediate objects of qualitative experience in order to conceptualize the non-immediate workings of nature on which the immediate, self-sufficing objects of perception depended. The new science saw as a roadblock to inquiry the Greek emphasis on immediate qualities as indicative of transcendent
and timeless perfection. Inquiry was about determining how and why the objects of immediate qualitative experience were the way they were and this involved peeling away their qualities in order to determine the processes operating underneath, processes unavailable to ordinary sense perception. Knowing in this sense became less contemplative (contemplation being more properly associated with aesthetic enjoyment and appreciation) and more practical. Knowledge, if it could be had, inhered in the world of change and becoming—the very world the Greeks had deemed inferior—and what the new science was quickly discovering was that nature operated on fundamentally mathematical and mechanical principles. Science thus began down a new path of abstraction wherein nature gained in significance and power by virtue of what it could teach via its own processes. "It is a transaction," says Dewey, "in which nature is teacher, and in which the teacher comes to knowledge and truth only through the learning of the inquiring student."¹⁹

Human experience of the world now reached down into nature. Via the new instrumentalism, change was harnessed and shown to have signifying power. It was no longer a matter of change being arbitrary and corrupt, but rather a matter of change itself exhibiting the capacity to indicate and imply new and better things.

This new experimental method was, as Dewey says, "imperious and impatient"²⁰ in its attack against the old Aristotelian methodology, but this in itself was not a matter for great concern. Dewey’s overall optimism about this advance of a more effective instrumentalism is tempered by a sober recognition that in spite of the increased possibilities this advance procured, there were still some lingering problems. The major problem, as Dewey saw it, was the inheritance of a bad metaphysics that continued to equate what was known cognitively with what was purely real. What did concern Dewey was the persistence of the classic epistemology wherein knowledge was understood as the immediate possession of real being. Even with the
new experimental method, knowledge was still equated with insight into and grasp of real being, and other modes of experience were, by this measure, deemed inferior and imperfect.

Furthermore, the new science came to understand itself within the logic of mathematico-mechanical operations. Science came to speak in a purely physicalist language. For Dewey, this presented a serious problem:

If the proper object of science is a mathematico-mechanical world (as the achievements of science have proved to be the case) and if the object of science defines the true and perfect reality (as the perpetuation of the classic tradition asserted), then how can the objects of love, appreciation—whether sensory or ideal—and devotion be included within true reality?\(^{21}\)

In a very real sense the “proper object of science” is not the mathematico-mechanical world (and Dewey realized this). Rightly understood, the mathematico-mechanical world is but one object of scientific inquiry. The word science is, as Luntley makes clear, taken from the Latin word scientia and this is best translated simply as “knowledge.”\(^ {22}\) So, the proper object of science is the attainment of knowledge, and this need not be restricted to a physicalist language alone. In short, critical empiricism is a method for arriving at judgements of how things work the way they do in the world, and it does this “irrespective of how those judgements might be framed in the language of physics, chemistry, human cognition, morality, religious faith, or whatever.”\(^ {23}\) The implications of this for achieving knowledge, and especially the assumption that knowledge is automatically equated with absolute reality, are enormous. The fact that science did come to see itself as inhering ultimately within the logic of physical processes, and equated these processes as the only indubitable reality, resulted in a faulty reductionism that ended up having serious consequences for scientific investigation. The consequences were particularly serious for
philosophy which still desperately tried to speak to human values that suddenly were outside the purview of reality.

The major obstacle that the new science saw itself overcoming was severing the philosophical link that inhere between the superior and inferior realms in Greek science. The new science now had no need for conceptualizing a transcendent realm of absolute being; it now engaged the ‘inferior’ world of change in order to locate its own brand of (epistemological) certainty. Unfortunately, by equating what was known with what was absolutely real, the new science committed the same philosophical error as the Greeks, only inversely. The new science in effect replaced a transcendent realm of pure forms with a physical realm of indubitable knowledge and ended up in turn designating the world of common sense just as inferior as it had been for the Greeks. Knowing was thus itself “transformed...into a morally irresponsible estheticism.”^24 The key to understanding Dewey’s take on the scientific revolution lies in paying close attention to his balanced reasoning as to why this need not be the inevitable mode and outcome of scientific advance.

As Dewey understood it, the need of science to strip nature of its qualities in order to get at its underlying (mathematico-mechanical) relationships did not in itself pose any great problems. This is exactly what made the new science so revolutionary. Its empiricism was wholly progressive in nature and it introduced a new way of regulating human experience by delivering it from the limitations of ordinary sense perception which as the sole (classical) mode of attaining knowledge was complicit in the perpetuation of stale custom and dogmatic habit. Alternatively, the new science was a forward-looking mode of experimental investigation that necessarily had to breach immediate quality in order to progress, that is, locate those relations that lent what was immediate its effective quality. In this sense immediate qualities sustained
underlying relations that could be known. It was these underlying relations that could be known (in their mathematico-mechanical capacities) that science mistakenly understood as the only true reality apart from which any other mode of experiencing the world must be judged inferior. This is one plausible interpretation of what science was about, but is there another? Dewey argues that indeed there is another interpretation that makes a great deal more sense. Analyzing Dewey’s alternative conception will take us to the heart of the widening disparity between science and philosophy, as well as offer some clues as to how that disparity might be bridged.

Let us begin by determining in a more complex way to what degree science in fact made a genuine error in the substantiation of its own epistemological understanding. This will hopefully lead us to a conceptualization of science understood more properly as scientism. Following Dewey’s lead I will begin a reconstructive effort designed to steal science proper out of the clutches of a false scientism, thereby realigning epistemology’s potential within a more fruitful philosophical conceptualization of embodied human experience.
**Epistemology’s Error**

In a way the history of the relationship between science and philosophy is an intimate one, but the underlying dysfunction as it developed was based on a profound misunderstanding of what each was about. This misunderstanding was in turn exacerbated by the fact that both science and philosophy misunderstood what experience in general was about. Nowhere was this more apparent than in science and philosophy’s acceptance of the ubiquity of cognition. Only those experiences that could be known were deemed absolutely real and certain. In this sense it is not the operations of science per se that were the problem, but rather science’s entanglement within a lingering metaphysics that could not and would not abandon the idea of absolute certainty. It was fundamentally a philosophical problem.

This philosophical problem involved a fundamental confusion between primary and secondary qualities within experience. Borrowing William James’ terminology, Dewey refers to experience as being “a double-barrelled word.”\(^\text{25}\) That is, “it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality.”\(^\text{26}\) This is at the heart of Dewey’s refined empiricism, and it is integral to a proper understanding of his work. We find here the critical empiricism of the seventeenth century taken a step deeper, implicating the more complex dimensions of experience. While experience (primary) is double-barrelled in its recognition of unanalyzed, total experience, object and subject are single-barrelled (secondary) because “they refer to products discriminated by reflection out of primary experience.”\(^\text{27}\) Only when this is recognized can there be a truly empirical method, for a properly aligned empiricism alone “takes this integrated unity as the starting point for philosophic thought.”\(^\text{28}\)
Non-empirical methods, on the other hand, are reckless with primary experience, when and if they recognize primary experience at all. Non-empirical methods start off with the results of reflection (secondary experience), discriminations made, and then posit them as if they were primary and already given. This is the philosophic error committed in science. The weakness of its empiricism is not in its mode of discovery, nor that which is discovered, but rather in taking its discoveries as a priori givens and as such, primarily real. Given that science, as mentioned above, is properly understood as scientia, this weakness becomes fundamentally an epistemological weakness and can be found in any number of areas of inquiry. It is what Dewey refers to generally as the "conversion of eventual functions into antecedent existence: a conversion that may be said to be the philosophic fallacy: whether it be performed in behalf of mathematical subsistences, esthetic essences, the purely physical order of nature, or God."\(^{29}\)

It is this general philosophical problem that has lent a degree of arbitrariness to the particular investigations of the natural (physical) sciences. It is not that the progress made within the physical sciences has been slowed down by this problem. A cursory look at the history of its discoveries makes this obvious enough. What it does mean is that those discoveries have been left dangling, so to speak. They have not become fully implicated within the all-important territory of human valuation and meaning. This is where philosophy should have its place (at least to a degree). Unfortunately philosophers have been so busy attempting to secure an otherworldly realm for all those human qualities that do not fit neatly into a physicalist conception of the world, that they have failed to understand that they might have something of great relevance to say on behalf of human interest and value about the appreciation and the potential uses of science's discoveries. It is in this sense that the discoveries of science are left dangling, left that is, in a technical stage of advance, with no more than a coincidental
connection to human values and the ends that might more efficaciously expand human meaning and general well-being. In short, science has failed to achieve art. Under such estranged conditions where science's strength of discovery is not matched by philosophy's strength of moral guidance and insight, we are as liable to locate cures to hideous diseases as we are to blow each other off the face of the planet. Whichever it might be, it is important to note that it is not a methodological problem. It is a human problem as to what uses the methods of science are put. Under these estranged conditions it is not a far step, given this lack of philosophical guidance, for scientists to start believing that indeed they are, through their physical investigations, tapping into the primary and only true reality of the world. As a result, both philosophy and science end up adopting a myopic approach to the human condition and the world in which that condition finds its place.

Caught up in pronouncing the objects of its inquiries as primarily given and thus certainly real, science unfortunately undermines its own empiricism, unwittingly trading in for a non-empirical approach. This is when science proper turns into a more imperious scientism. I have already highlighted what was positive and progressive about science's mode of investigation. It may be good at this point to clarify this a bit further. It is important to note that inquiry as a mode of enlightened hypotheses, rigorous experimentation, and thorough testing was, for Dewey, the method of intelligence. Reflection and discrimination were vital to the idea of progress. As Dewey says in regard to this more robust empiricism:

To a truly naturalistic empiricism, the moot problem of the relation of subject and object is the problem of what consequences follow in and for primary experience from the distinction of the physical and the psychological or mental from each other. The answer is not far to seek. To distinguish in reflection the physical and to hold it in temporary
detachment is to be set upon the road that conducts to tools and technologies, to
construction of mechanisms, to the arts that ensue in the wake of the sciences. That these
constructions make possible a better regulation of the affairs of primary experience is
evident. Engineering and medicine, all the utilities that make for expansion of life, are the
answer. There is better administration of old familiar things, and there is invention of new
objects and satisfactions. Along with this added ability in regulation goes enriched
meaning and value in things, clarification, increased depth and continuity—a result even
more precious than is the added power of control.\(^\text{30}\)

Here we might recognize conduct of the intelligent variety (Dewey’s naturalistic empiricism) and
this brand of conduct implicates human beings within a more expansive web of value and
meaning. For the physical sciences, nature is \textit{what} is experienced and experience is \textit{how} the
objects of nature are made available through human mediation.

The physical sciences, in specific, were responsible for “the enlarging possession by
mankind of more efficacious instrumentalities for dealing with the conditions of life and
action.”\(^\text{31}\) The philosophic fallacy, as it set in to physical science’s understanding of itself, might
best be delineated by the distinction between its intelligent methodology and its imperious
clinging to reason’s quest for certainty. Science’s neglect of the connection of its objects with the
affairs of primary lived experience thereby resulted in a dichotomous picture of the world, a
picture of objects “indifferent to human interests because it is wholly apart from experience.”\(^\text{32}\)
Intelligence, on the other hand, represents a way of knowing in a world that provides no
certainty. It is, as Dewey says,

associated with judgment; that is, with selection and arrangement of means to effect
consequences and with choice of what we take as our ends. A man is intelligent not in
virtue of having reason which grasps first and indemonstrable truths about fixed principles in order to reason deductively from them to the particulars which they govern, but in virtue of his capacity to estimate the possibilities of a situation and to act in accordance with this estimate. In the large sense of the term, intelligence is as practical as reason is theoretical.33

The necessity, therefore, of trading a loss of theoretical certainty for a gain in practical judgment gives "intelligence a foothold and a function within nature which 'reason' never possessed."34

Reason, as it came to be understood in most philosophical thinking, was always a mere spectator outside of nature and therefore could never, by definition, participate in nature's changes.

If science engaged the world of change by stripping nature of its qualities, and if this stripping of qualities is what lent a potential increase of value and control to human experience, then science undermined its power only in so far as it conflated experience in its integrity with knowing. We begin to see Dewey's alternative philosophical conception taking shape when he says in *The Quest For Certainty*:

If and as far as the qualitative world was taken to be an object of knowledge, and not of experience in some other form than knowing, and as far as knowing was held to be the standard or sole valid mode of experiencing, the substitution of Newtonian for Greek science (the latter being but a rationalized arrangement of the qualitatively enjoyed world of direct experience) signified that the properties that render the world one of delight, admiration, and esteem have been done away with. There is, however, another interpretation possible. A philosophy which holds that we experience things as they really are apart from knowing, and that knowledge is a mode of experiencing things which
facilitates control of objects for purposes of non-cognitive experiences, will come to another conclusion.\textsuperscript{35}

Science, properly conceived, is not (or should not be) about denying the relevance of primary qualities within nature. Scientific investigation simply sets aside concern with immediate qualities in order to get at their underlying relations. Immediate quality is in this sense an effect of underlying relations. Knowing these relations could afford science a greater degree of control over effects as well as expand their variety in positive and purposive ways. These underlying relations, therefore, are "hardly a competitor to the thing itself."\textsuperscript{36} To discover the underlying objective relations that lead to certain qualitative effects is not logically to banish those effects from existence. It is simply determining how and why a given effect at a given time has \textit{that} particular quality. Science's knowledge is thus instrumental, and this instrumental knowledge cannot replace that which is non-cognitively had, that which is immediately perceived and enjoyed or suffered, with something wholly derivative.

We can get at this complexity if we understand with Dewey that the process of knowing is a matter of predication, that is, a propositional mode having subject-predicate form. Knowing thus "marks an attempt to make a qualitative whole which is directly and nonreflectively experienced into an object of thought for the sake of its own development."\textsuperscript{37} Using the proposition "that thing is sweet," Dewey explains:

A certain quality is experienced. When it is inquired into or thought (judged), it differentiates into "that thing" on the one hand, and "sweet" on the other. Both "that thing" and "sweet" are analytic of the quality, but are additive, synthetic, ampliative, with respect to each other. The copula "is" marks just the effect of this distinction upon the correlative terms. They mark something like a division of labor, and the copula marks the
function or work done by the structures that exhibit the division of labor. To say that
"that thing is sweet" means "that thing" will sweeten some other object, say coffee, or a
batter of milk and eggs. The intent of sweetening something formed the ground for
converting a dumb quality into an articulate object of thought.

The logical force of the copula is always that of an active verb. It is merely a
linguistic peculiarity, not a logical fact, that we say "that is red" instead of "that reddens,"
either in the sense of growing, becoming, red, or in the sense of making something else
red. Even linguistically our "is" is a weakened form of an active verb signifying "stays"
or "stands."

The quality of a thing is thus a result of the relations it sustains. Human experience of the world
adds a level of complication to the implicit potentialities within nature. The difficulties that
attend the problem of predication, therefore, are the result of a long epistemological tradition that
supposes that terms and their connections have meaning apart from their implications within
lived experience. The only alternative to this supposition, says Dewey, "is the recognition that
the object of thought, designated propositionally, is a quality that is first directly and
unreflectively experienced or had....it forms that to which all objects of thought refer...it is the
big, buzzing, blooming confusion of which James wrote."

Reason's reign, unfortunately, has a long and complicated history. It has, since the
seventeenth century, embroiled philosophy in an epistemological swamp. Philosophers
feverishly fret and struggle, and in this they seemed to have found a form of solace. They cannot
accept or even conceive of a life-rope, because in their great, feverish struggle they fail to
recognize their precipitation into muddy obscurity. It is reason's dictates that leads a philosopher
like John Locke, writing at the end of the seventeenth century, to consider the mathematico-
mechanical world discovered by science as being primary (real) and the world of everyday sense as being secondary (appearance). If we take Dewey's more rigorous empiricism seriously, the dichotomy between subjective appearance on the one hand and objective reality on the other becomes completely untenable.

**Experience in Nature**

The reconnection of philosophy to lived experience is thus of paramount importance and can only be achieved if we give up the epistemological conception that "being" and "being known" are one and the same thing. When we do this we begin to see how traditional dichotomies, that have effectively separated experience from nature, melt away. Recognizing that experience involves a relationship in which experiencing subject and experienced object inhere in one another, we come to realize that experience is situated in nature and not apart from it. Knowledge comes by way of the connection between subject and object, not by way of their separation. It is neither solely a private (purely individual) subjective affair nor is it solely an external (purely mathematical) objective affair, if that affair be construed as a mind transparently and passively receiving the objects of the world in an unmediated way. Thinking (inquiry) as a mode of initiating and embodying our experience within the world, that is, as a mode of mediating nature's intimations and penetrating nature's depths, is thus construed as a way of making what is dumb or only implicit within nature (its quality) manifest through mediated articulation. The world changes by virtue of our experience within it, and our experience necessarily implicates us as reflective beings who are capable by virtue of our reflective habits of expanding experience's potential thereby enriching meaning within our world. Thinking, as Dewey states,
is not a distortion or perversion which confers upon its subject-matter traits which do not belong to it. It marks a change by which physical events exhibiting properties of mechanical energy, connected by relations of push and pull, hitting, rebounding, splitting and consolidating, realize characters, meanings and relations of meanings hitherto not possessed by them.\(^{40}\)

This speaks to the temporal nature of our experience within the world. Notice that Dewey refers to “physical events” rather than “substances.” This denotes nature and our experience within it as a time-bound affair of interconnected events; nature itself being what Dewey calls “an affair of affairs.”\(^{41}\) As temporal beings we have good grounds for rejecting reason’s (out of) time-honoured claim that the thinking subject and nature’s objects are necessarily understood within the epistemological dichotomy of appearance and reality.

To be engaged in thinking is “to participate,” as Kaufman-Osborn makes clear, “in the activity through which some things, issues, and affairs become apparent within experience, while others recede.”\(^{42}\) Kaufman-Osborn makes the point quite nicely so I will continue to use his words in this regard.

The term “appearance,” consequently, does not refer, as it did in classic and medieval philosophy, to a realm of being infected with the defect of non-Being. Nor does it refer, as it does in modern epistemology, to the ontological gulf between things as they really are and things as they seem to be, where “seeming” designates what exists only in virtue of the subject’s distortion of the single kind of Being that remains when the ancients’ graded cosmos is denied its sense. Neither of these two understandings can acknowledge that things appear and disappear only because temporality, altering the relations among nature’s interwoven affairs, presses experience past what would otherwise be
contemplation's blank stare. The term "appearance," accordingly, denotes the fact that at any given moment in time some matters are showing and hence conspicuous, while others are latent and hence withdrawn. Its antonym is not reality but disappearance.\(^{43}\) So construed, our experience is an embodied, time-bound transaction within nature. When reason severs experience from nature, as Dewey makes clear, "experience itself becomes reduced to the mere process of experiencing, and experiencing is therefore treated as if it were also complete in itself. We get the absurdity of an experiencing which experiences only itself, states and processes of consciousness, instead of the things of nature."\(^{44}\) Here we have the baggage of a faulty metaphysics that makes theory alone the guardian of meaning and values in timeless abstraction.

The trick is to take experience's goals (ideals), its ends and outcomes, and turn them into absolute and timeless antecedent existences, thus providing experience its causal justification. In short, there is a denial of the temporal quality of reality. As Dewey says, "such a theory is bound to regard things which are causally explanatory as superior to results and outcomes; for the temporal dependence of the latter cannot be disguised, while 'causes' can be plausibly converted into independent beings, or laws, or other non-temporal forms."\(^{45}\) Human values, represented as timeless absolute ends, are thus dialectically whisked away to a realm safe from the temporal flux of the lived world.

In one sense the dichotomy between appearance and reality represents the ongoing expression of fear so implicit within philosophy's history. The evolution of this fear precipitates the evolution of increasingly intellectually sophisticated ways of coping with this fear. The problem has been that this increase of sophistication has not really been about coping, but rather has been about devising various ways of escaping the precariousness and uncertainty of the world. The Greek quest for certainty was based on emotional and mystical formulations. Later
philosophers took this and added a more rigorous logical formulation grounded in the quest for purer objects of knowledge. The next step was to equate these purer objects with a purer reality and reject all else as appearance. As Dewey says, "'reality' becomes what we wish existence to be, after we have analyzed its defects and decided upon what would remove them; 'reality' is what existence would be if our reasonably justified preferences were so completely established in nature as to exhaust and define its entire being and thereby render search and struggle unnecessary."^{46}

Because reality is equated with the objects of knowledge, anything that is not amenable to being known at any given time is cast off to the realm of appearance. It is important not to understate the stark intellectualism and real paradox involved in this understanding. Intellectualism, broadly speaking, is the theory that all experiencing is a mode of knowing. The inherent reductionism of this is that any object of knowledge must at any given time be distinct and its traits explicit. Anything vague or unrevealed is written off as appearance. The paradox of classifying something as appearance when in reality it is simply un-apparent or un-revealed is obvious enough. Knowledge defined as ubiquitous and eternal, itself becomes inexplicable. This is the error of what Dewey calls "selective emphasis."^{47} It should be noted that selective emphasis is itself a normal and healthy part of our existence in the world. It implicates us as moral choice makers and it is "the heart-beat of mental life."^{48} It becomes problematic, however, when it is at the expense of those "traits that excite desire, command action and produce passion."^{49} These are the traits that are considered vague and obscure, and they just happen to be fundamental to our social existence. It is these traits that are banished to the realm of (subjective) appearance. Fundamental to the temporal nature of our experience in the world is the recognition
that everything does not exhibit the definite traits of objects of knowledge. Dewey makes a strong point when he says:

It is important for philosophic theory to be aware that the distinct and evident are prized and why they are. But it is equally important to note that the dark and twilight abound. For in any object of primary experience there are always potentialities which are not explicit; any object that is overt is charged with possible consequences that are hidden; the most overt act has factors which are not explicit....In the face of such empirical facts, the assumption that nature in itself is all of the same kind, all distinct, explicit and evident, having no hidden possibilities, no novelties or obscurities, is possible only on the basis of a philosophy which at some point draws an arbitrary line between nature and experience.  

The notion of "possible consequences" shows up the traditional philosophical conception of appearance and reality as representing not only an unwarranted reductionism but, more dangerously, a denial of our socio-temporal status. For we are not just temporal creatures, but social creatures as well, and the fact that all consequences of any given knowledge, or action based on any given knowledge, cannot be known at once, implicates us in a web of social/moral possibilities. A philosophy that ignores or otherwise seeks to escape this fact does a fundamental disservice to those it seeks to guide, effectively severing itself from those lives as they are commonly lived. As my thesis develops, this social aspect of Dewey's work will be made more explicit, but for now I wish to end this chapter with a brief and bare-bones analysis of what directions philosophy might take in order to bear more effectively on our experience in the world and on the results of our (scientific) inquiry into that world.

In the essay "The Need For A Recovery Of Philosophy" Dewey has this to say:
It is a commonplace that the chief divisions of modern philosophy, idealism in its different kinds, realisms of various brands, so-called common-sense dualism, agnosticism, relativism, phenomenalism, have grown up around the epistemological problem of the general relation of subject and object. Problems not openly epistemological, such as whether the relation of changes in consciousness to physical changes is one of interaction, parallelism, or automatism have the same origin. What becomes of philosophy, consisting largely as it does of different answers to these questions, in case the assumptions which generate the questions have no empirical standing? Is it not time that philosophers turned from the attempt to determine the comparative merits of various replies to the questions to a consideration of the claims of the questions?^{51}

Dewey was not interested in the various epistemological arguments posited by different philosophical camps. His concern was not which camp had the stronger claims, whether they be the claims of realists or antirealists, sensationalists or transcendentalists, rationalists or empiricists, etc. In other words, as Stuhr properly points out, "he was struck not by the fact that epistemologists have disagreed about solutions to central problems in epistemology; instead he found it much more striking that they have agreed with one another about the central problems themselves."^{52} Dewey's consideration of the primary problem of epistemology's problems leads him to supply a new set of questions that may more effectively situate philosophy within a more fruitful relation to human life as it is actually lived. He suggests the following as a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered us: Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings
with them more fruitful? Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before, and in depriving them of having in “reality” even the significance they had previously seemed to have? Does it yield the enrichment and increase of power of ordinary things which the results of physical science afford when applied in every-day affairs? Or does it become a mystery that these ordinary things should be what they are; and are philosophic concepts left to dwell in separation in some technical realm of their own?\footnote{53}

We have progressed thus far from philosophy conceived in Greek wonder to philosophy, conceived in the modern sense, as the search for true wisdom. Wisdom in turn is conceived as inhering in only that which can be declared certain. However, as I have been hinting, it is fear that is the underlying narrative of so much of philosophy’s history. Philosophers of various bents may have claimed to be working in the service of Wisdom, or the Truth, or the Real, or the Good, but the merit of any of these goals is founded on at least a subconscious need to escape fear. This fear verges on the neurotic when it is clothed in the garb of things more noble and transcendent. This hypostatic tendency ends in vast segments of human experience being cordoned off as in one way or another expressing the uncertainty that breeds fear. The philosophic fallacy holds strong, as noble ends are propped up as antecedent, causal, and immutable and thereby removed from the temporal flux out of which they receive their energy. In this sense the offspring of uncertainty is fear and fear in turn breeds a bastardized nobility that builds its castles in the air and bars itself from ever speaking the language of its birth. This bastardized nobility is what we now properly term philosophy. The fact that philosophy has fallen out of favour with its subjects speaks to the imminent demise of its relevance to ongoing human life. Following Dewey’s understanding, this need not be the case. We may yet recover a
more grounded conception of philosophy’s human[e] potential. For what philosophy has, unwittingly or not, deemed fearful, cannot in reality be deemed absolutely fearful. In the real world, fear is liable to be punctuated by joy, suffering is liable to be punctuated by peace and harmony. In short, the real world is an ongoing combination of the precarious and the stable, and it is this world that we must relate to and cope within.

Of course, coping in this world is not an easy task. Embracing the uncertain rhythms of life and the world, and attempting to cope and understand within these conditions is at times perilous and always a tremendous draw on human energy. Science and the many philosophies that have attempted to capture something of science’s certainty, have, in many fundamental ways, ended up starving human experience. The second chapter of this project will argue that what has been missing is a degree of artfulness. The argument will be that human experience is more complicated than anything that can be nailed down and considered absolutely certain. We are not Gods, but we are creators. The history of science and philosophy is representative of this all-too human drive, and is full of marvelous achievements. The problem is that too often scientists and philosophers have failed to recognize that their own creativity speaks to the depths of human complexity. By questing after absolutes, the true complexity of human experience has been leveled. Art brings back into the fold the more qualitative dimensions of human experience, and therein a modicum of the humility that is necessary to wisdom. With it we see that human experience must always outstrip its secret longing—that to know is to be certain. Knowledge is an achievement to be sure, but it comes out of a profound reservoir of complex feelings, passions, and desires. There are qualitative dimensions to human experience that at one and the same time make human knowledge possible and elude being known in any absolute sense. This is not some cruel joke, but rather human experience in its complexity. Conducting ourselves
artfully is a serious part of our calling in the world. Humility might be its most important requirement. In the next chapter I hope to provide support for this claim.
Chapter 2:

Artful Conduct and Aesthetic Experience

But it was not a choice
Between excluding things. It was not a choice
Between, but of. He chose to include the things
That in each other are included, the whole,
The complicate, the amassing harmony.

—Wallace Stevens

Dewey’s writings on art and aesthetics have, since the time of their publication, received scant attention in comparison to the coverage given other important areas of his philosophy. In recent years, however, there has been a gradual recognition that Dewey’s writings on art and aesthetics, written later in his career, exhibit a deeper and more comprehensive synthesizing of the major themes that had been developing throughout his entire philosophy. Failure to come to terms with Dewey’s writing on art and aesthetics is, in many ways, a failure to come to fuller terms with the deeper implications of his entire philosophy. It is my contention, therefore, that Dewey’s writings on art and aesthetics provide the most thoroughgoing and mature rendering of the major themes that preoccupied his entire philosophical project. Experience is the major theme running throughout Dewey’s work, and it remains my focus here. The many aspects of his philosophical project are difficult to grasp unless his reconstruction of experience is understood. My previous chapter followed Dewey’s understanding of experience as it pertains to science and I attempted there to give a brief historical perspective leading to what are some radical implications for human experience in general. In this chapter I wish to explore perhaps the most radical aspect of Dewey’s philosophy in which experience is understood as art. What I lead up to in my first chapter becomes explicit here as science itself becomes understood by Dewey as an art. Attempting to overcome the gulf between theory and practice begun in Greek philosophy and
continued throughout much of the history of Western philosophy, Dewey comes to this bold conclusion in chapter nine of *Experience and Nature*.

But if modern tendencies are justified in putting art and creation first, then the implications of this position should be avowed and carried through. It would then be seen that science is an art, that art is practice, and that the only distinction worth drawing is not between practice and theory, but between those modes of practice that are not intelligent, not inherently and immediately enjoyable, and those which are full of enjoyed meanings. When this perception dawns, it will be a commonplace that art—the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession—is the complete culmination of nature, and that “science” is properly a handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue. Thus would disappear the separations that trouble present thinking: division of everything into nature and experience, of experience into practice and theory, art and science, of art into useful and fine, menial and free.³

This chapter will pick up then on the path charted in chapter one and explore in more detail the radical implications of experience as art.

**Art and The Commons**

It is in Dewey’s writings on art and aesthetics that the full implications of his understanding of human experience find consummate expression. What is central to our understanding is the recognition that his writings on art and aesthetics are a natural development, rather than a separate aspect, of his whole philosophy. This has been missed by many of Dewey’s proponents and detractors.⁴ Critics have been thrown off by the subject matter. How could the man who wrote so extensively on psychology and scientific method, on morality and education, now be writing on art and aesthetics? There was a strong sense that this was, for
Dewey, little more than a soft diversion. This came, in part, from the widely held view that inquiry in the arts and inquiry in the sciences had absolutely nothing in common, and, in part, from a shallow misreading of what Dewey actually wrote. There was the somewhat natural tendency to look for something that Dewey never intended to be there. How could someone writing on art and aesthetics barely touch particular works of art by submitting them to a more extensive reading or critique? Granted, it would have been interesting to see how Dewey might have dealt with particular works of art—Dewey the critic—but this was not his primary concern. He was not first and foremost an art critic, nor was he particularly interested in what his own brand of criticism might look like in the light of his more general pragmatic theory of aesthetic experience. That is to say he was not part of the conventional art "schools" of criticism of his time. His was a new and particularly radical view of art that fell within the larger conglomerate of issues with which his philosophy dealt. In this, it should not be underestimated the enormous implications for criticism of his work.

Dewey's call is for nothing less than a new way of looking at and understanding the place and value of art and aesthetic experience in our lives. Why is art important to us, is the question he wants to ask, and in what ways is art related to and exemplary (or not) of a more productive and attentive stance to our own everyday experience? What Dewey's detractors missed was the radical import of his thinking on art and aesthetic experience as being organically connected to the most primary elements of life experience. When the radical import of the organic relation of art and aesthetic experience to everyday experience is understood, then we may begin to more naturally align our conduct toward discovering and enhancing the potentialities of everyday life; toward improving, more coherently, our quality of life.
Dewey seeks to bring art back into the fold of the sociocultural and the sociotemporal, making aesthetic experience less elite and escapist and more applicable to everyday life experiences. The origin and destiny of aesthetic experience and artistic works is, for Dewey, the commons. The task, for Dewey, “is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.”5 It is not Dewey’s intention that everybody will, upon following this road, rise to the level of fine artist (he has room for the unique qualities, insights, and even the genius of certain artists and their work). He is saying, however, that the creative process and expressive potential so vividly expressed in fine works of art—the complex movement from some vision (end-in-view) through that vision’s manipulation in production toward an aesthetic outcome (consummation)—is a process exemplary of how we intelligently experience and shape our world. The key word here is “intelligently,” and if we follow Dewey’s understanding of intelligence we realize that the intelligence exemplary in works of fine art is in fact rare in daily life.

The fact that most of our daily experiences are a matter of dull or mundane routine speaks not to some natural incapacity of the human being to realize greater degrees of experience’s artful meaning and value, but rather to the entrenched social forces and cultural practices that have pressed down experience’s embodied potential. What is indigenous to experience, its art, gets buried under the layers of society’s faulty logic and narrow practices. In the previous chapter I touched on some of the historical forces that lend to this faulty logic. Here I am interested only in following Dewey as he clears much of the debris that tends to suffocate experience. In doing this, the creative drive that fuels our search for meaning and value in our lives—what Thomas Alexander has called the “human eros”—might be intelligently restored,
bringing back to life a vigorousness more fitting the profounder implications of our experience in the world.  

We all have an ongoing aesthetic hunger. This hunger is not easily diminished by faulty personal and social bearings. Understanding that experience's embodied movement in time constitutes us as the shapers of our world, and that our world is a canvas of unlimited possibility, we may begin to appreciate more fully the aesthetic possibilities of an ameliorative stance to the day-to-day problems we face. For when that which is considered cultivated or refined is also remote and disconnected from common life, then "esthetic hunger is likely to seek the cheap and the vulgar." When this occurs experience is cheapened and degraded, and the problems of our world are left to whim and chance or, conversely, fanaticism and tyranny.

Any coherent reading, then, of Dewey's work, outside of his work on art and aesthetics, will reward a reading of his work on art and aesthetics with a strong sense that what he says is wholly compatible with and expressive of his broad philosophical project. It is, therefore, no mere coincidence that his most mature work deals with art and aesthetics. It is there that Dewey found the subject matter most amenable to the deepest implications of his own democratic vision. Art as Experience is the strongest title he gave to any work. Art, when aesthetically charged, is representative of "experience in its integrity." As Dewey says:

Had not the term "pure" been so often abused in philosophic literature, had it not been so often employed to suggest that there is something alloyed, impure, in the very nature of experience and to denote something beyond experience, we might say that esthetic experience is pure experience. For it is experience freed from the forces that impede and confuse its development as experience; freed, that is, from factors that subordinate an
experience as it is directly had to something beyond itself. To esthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is.\(^9\)

Dewey’s point is a particularly modernist one—artful conduct as leading to aesthetic experience is representative *primarily* of the kind of beings we are potentially in the world as well as the kind of world we are beings in. The organic relation between humans and their environment is a co-relational affair, and one in which both become equally productive in manifesting the ongoing struggle to endow our world with meaning and value. This begins at an immediate or felt level, and art, at its best, demonstrates this pervasive organicism when it culminates to a level of aesthetic experience, aesthetic experience representing the fullness of experience. It represents a culmination or a consummatory phase in which the organism finds a new posture toward the world. Only with the organism’s full attunement to experience can the anaesthetic become aesthetic.

At this point it is necessary to begin mining the more complex aspects of Dewey’s understanding of experience as art. I have, up to this point, given only a superficial rendering of Dewey’s analysis. My wish has been only to offer a sense of the terrain I will map out in more detail. I turn first to an analysis of Dewey’s use of the terms “pervasive quality” and “situation.” Understanding these terms as Dewey applies them is fundamental to arriving at a less myopic and more complex understanding of what Dewey means by aesthetic experience.

**Qualitative Situations**

In a time when the need for improving our quality of life has become predominantly equated with the materialist and consumerist drive to acquire more money and more possessions, we are left confounded by the vague sense that, far from achieving any real quality of life, we are drifting ever more dangerously into collective numbness and meaninglessness. Yet, we do sense
that something is wrong, but it seems we are losing, if already we have not lost, the ability to
make any important connections between what we sense and what we do. Amidst the
“undergoing” and “doing” in our day-to-day lives our thinking seems to have become severed
from the more qualitative dimensions of our experience, what Kaufman-Osborn calls the
“pragmata” of our lifeworld, and thus what we undergo and do tends to be aimless,
disconnected, and arbitrary. Rather than any real relation of undergoing and doing from some felt
and embodied connection to primary experience, we are tugged and pulled by bloodless
abstractions which step in with false promises of meaning and fulfillment. The potential of life’s
art is denigrated; the consummating power of experience, checked. It is, therefore, with a certain
sense of urgency that we return to what Dewey had to say about the pervasive quality of
experience. Here we may locate some ground for a vital reappropriation of our deeper and more
genuine connection to life-experience, recovering, in time, a sense of life’s aesthetic potential
through more artful conduct.

Central to Dewey’s theory of art and aesthetic experience is his thinking on pervasive
quality. Without an understanding of pervasive quality as the fundamental feature of any
experience, consummatory experience or an experience, as Dewey alternately calls it, is not
properly intelligible. My previous chapter explored quality in its relation to epistemology, but
more detailed exploration is warranted for my purposes here. Pervasive quality is a very difficult
concept to tease out, because its ineffable features are not easily amenable to description. For any
description or attempt at definition is already a step removed from the essential “isness” of
qualitative experience. One might wonder, then, if we can say anything at all about the pervasive
quality of any given experience. Well, in a sense, we cannot. We cannot, that is, say anything of
its immediacy, for its immediacy is something had or felt, wholly pre-reflective and thus pre-
discursive. It is that quality of immediate experience which is irreducible and indescribable. Yet, if this were the be-all-and-end-all of experience, we would find ourselves in no vital connection to our environment, receiving no more than a meaningless barrage of sensory impressions. We can and inevitably must say something out of the pervasive quality that flows in and through experience, but what we say is a reflection of how we have defined, discriminated, and situated ourselves in relation to any particular experience. What we say is a necessary abstraction from immediacy, it is the nature of human language and action that it must be so. Language mediates our experience, but the way in which we situate ourselves can be productive of a deeper connection to life-experience or it can remain merely surface and thus stunted. As I highlighted in the previous chapter, we must be careful not to conflate what we come to know about an experience with the experience in its immediacy. When we do this we diminish that experience, the qualitative dimensions of which fundamentally shape and give logical force to our knowledge as an achievement.

It is this problem which has plagued much of modern philosophy, and its most prominent manifestation is to be found in modern science. There has been the tendency to ignore or reduce to soft irrelevancy the qualitative dimensions of experience. In this, philosophers and scientists have insisted on a fundamental split between subject and object, wherein the subjective mind somehow has access to a correspondent knowledge of a wholly independent realm of epistemic objects. They have equated, in other words, knowledge of the experience with the experience itself, and have thus confused having an experience with knowing it. With Dewey's more inclusive understanding of experience, he writes:

Many modern thinkers, influenced by the notion that knowledge is the only mode of experience that grasps things, assuming the ubiquity of cognition, and noting that
immediacy or qualitative existence has no place in authentic science, have asserted that qualities are always and only states of consciousness. It is a reasonable belief that there would be no such thing as “consciousness” if events did not have a phase of brute and unconditioned “isness,” of being just what they irreducibly are....And also without immediate qualities those relations with which science deals would have no footing in existence, and thought would have nothing beyond itself to chew upon or dig into. Without a basis in qualitative events, the characteristic subject-matter of knowledge would be algebraic ghosts, relations that do not relate.11

Dewey reminds us that while he was critical of the elitism inherent in the Greek confusion between rational and aesthetic categories (theory/contemplation as inherently superior to practice/art), he nonetheless appreciated that the Greeks had a high degree of attunement to the aesthetic character of experience. The Greeks were more “naïve” but it was this very naïvete that gave Greek thinkers a more inclusive and aesthetic appreciation of their world. The Greeks were certainly right in their appreciation of the direct aesthetic enjoyment of immediate qualities, their sense of the importance of expressive consummations. They were mistaken in their assumption that these immediate qualities represented a transcendent reality and that enjoyment of these qualities was a form of knowing. Lacking the tools of experimental science, the Greeks did not move from ordinary observation to scientific knowledge via induced changes upon the material of sense perception. Instead the Greeks worked directly from immediate sense perception conferring upon the immediate objects of perception the logical features on which it was assumed they depended. These features were, appropriately, aesthetic in character—features of harmony, symmetry, and proportion. As Dewey says, “the Greeks employed thinking not as a means of changing given objects of observation so as to get at the conditions and effects of their
occurrence, but to impose upon them certain static properties not found in them in their changeable occurrence.\textsuperscript{12} To know something was intimately bound up with the immediate appreciation and enjoyment of its perfected form. The casual movement of horses in daily life, for example, found their perfected form in the Parthenon frieze whereby their logical features were given absolute and perfected expression. For the Greeks, mind too was a realization, an extension of and participation in natural existence. As Dewey puts it, “they were [thus] saved from the epistemological problem of how things and mind, defined antithetically, can have anything to do with each other.”\textsuperscript{13} The world of immediate aesthetic objects, that is, the world of “immediately enjoyed and suffered things” is a world that speaks for itself, and the Greeks could hear its voice.\textsuperscript{14}

Immediate experience, then, is a quality that inheres neither exclusively in external objects nor exclusively in the contemplating mind of isolated subjects. It is rather the experience as “felt” or “had” by way of our transaction with the environment. Saying that there is an immediate quality within experience is not to undermine the possibility or relevance of any kind of mediation. At this point I only wish to emphasize that the pervasive quality of any given experience, as it is felt or had, represents the initial phase of absorption between the organism and its environment. This is the primary phase of experience. The context of the initial or primary phase is non-cognitive and it is controlling. This ineffable and controlling quality of the context is anticipated in the introduction to \textit{Essays in Experimental Logic}. There Dewey tells us that the non-cognitive quality of the context is “the vast, vague continuum … this taken-for-granted whole.” As he goes on to add, “The word ‘experience’ is … a notation of an inexpressible as that which decides the ultimate status of all which is expressed; inexpressible not because it is so remote and transcendent, but because it is so immediately engrossing and
matter of course." The organism is caught up in the immediate "doing-and-undergoing" within "an active and dynamic field of integrated participation."

This active and dynamic field of participation is what Dewey calls a "situation" or its "context." The immediate existence of quality is entirely pre-reflective, but importantly it "is the background, the point of departure, the regulative principle of all thinking." It is the pervasive quality that defines and unifies each situation as that unique situation. As Dewey writes:

An experience has a unity that gives it its name, that meal, that storm, that rupture of friendship. The existence of this unity is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. This unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make within it. In discourse about an experience, we must make use of these adjectives of interpretation.

Each unique situation is made up of both primary and secondary qualities, but the primary fused quality that makes the situation that particular situation is what originally binds the organism to its surrounding environment. The organism has not yet reflected upon the situation, but is in the position to do so, as the primary situation is the necessary and controlling guide to reflection also referred to as the secondary phase of experience.

We begin to sense, then, the rhythm within experience as any given experience moves through its successive, but wholly interdependent phases. Dewey here envisions a more organic reintegration of the primary and secondary phases of experience, in which he attacks the absolutist epistemology of traditional philosophic inquiry that has unfortunately turned the primary and secondary dimensions of experience into an irreconcilable dualism. It is these epistemological absolutes that have little room for the ineffable rhythm and quality of day-to-day
life, which, we must remember, represents the primary source for drawing epistemological conclusions to begin with. When the primary dimensions of experience are denied or ignored, lived experience becomes stunted, not quite whole. We wittingly or unwittingly fail to take experience in its complex fullness when our knowledge and action, reflective outcomes from the pool of pre-reflective primary experience, fails to get referred back to that primary ground for testing. Conclusions or ends that fail to return to the primary qualitative ground of experience for testing, remain the conclusions of a non-empirical mode of analysis. The potentially more empirical outcomes of organic secondary reflection are thus cut short in the name of indubitable truth, and the sterile dualism between primary and secondary experience is re-enforced. The possibility of grounded intelligent action is checked by the over-arching desire for absolute epistemological certainty. Those who hunger after indubitable epistemic certainty neglect the recognition that "the situation controls the terms of thought; for they are its distinctions, and applicability to it is the ultimate test of their validity."¹⁹ The primary qualitative situation, Dewey goes so far as to say, is the very condition of our sanity:

The undefined pervasive quality of an experience is that which binds together all the defined elements, the objects of which we are focally aware, making them whole. The best evidence that such is the case is our constant sense of things as belonging or not belonging, of relevancy, a sense which is immediate. It cannot be a product of reflection, even though it requires reflection to find out whether some particular consideration is pertinent to what we are doing or thinking. For unless the sense were immediate, we should have no guide to our reflection. The sense of an extensive and underlying whole is the context of every experience and it is the essence of sanity.²⁰
Potentially artful conduct, therefore, inheres in the organic and dynamic movement of experience as it passes through various phases toward consummation, toward something that can properly be called a fully embodied experience. What carries us through these various phases might properly be called the materials of our experience. These inner materials represent the human mode of engagement and movement in the world, and they shape the depth of our experience.

The Materials of Artful Conduct: Habit, Sense, and Imagination

Every situation inheres in a degree of precognitive meaningfulness, and this meaningfulness is, as Kaufman-Osborn puts it, the result of “accustomed patterns of culturally transmitted interpretive response, of habits that emerge out of the noncognitive intercourse between agents and the world in which they are heirs.” In order to further explore Dewey’s explication of “situation” and “pervasive quality” I now turn to the important contribution to his natural empiricism of the terms “habit,” “sense,” and “imagination.”

Every artist uses materials. We typically think of them as brush, paint and canvas, or as instruments to be played upon, or as marble to be sculpted, but when experience itself is conceived as art then we come to realize that there are inner materials as well, materials behind the materials if you will. For the transaction between organism and environment that issues experience forward in more or less refined ways depends on drawing from the materials of habit, sense, and imagination. This, of course, is not intended as an exhaustive list of the materials of experience, but they are some of the centrally important ones. The importance of Dewey’s understanding of these terms is significant as we attempt to explicate a sense of the rhythmic (and potentially artful) flow of experience. In this, we may come closer to grasping something of the consummatory power of aesthetic experience, for if our movement in the world (conduct) can
inhere through higher degrees of artfulness, then the aesthetic achievements that come on the heels of art give heightened meaning and value to that movement.

Often, we hear the claim that we are creatures of habit. But how often do we stop to think about what this means? To be fair, stopping and thinking about habits is, under many situations, entirely counter-productive. Habits, under most stable conditions, embody the pervasive quality that infuses situations, and as such are part of the taken-for-granted whole that we feel as this or that particular situation. Habits exercise a certain mechanical power in our lives precisely because, under a great many conditions, we do not have to think about them. “If each act has to be consciously searched for at the moment and intentionally performed, execution is painful and the product is clumsy and halting.”

In other words, our habits are not self-consciously realized nor are they intellectually scrutinized. Rather, habits form the background of a situation, providing the taken-for-granted field of meanings, “serving not as external means of identification, but rather as atmospheric media whose entrance into the constitution of every situation provides the ill-defined yet meaningful field upon which specific phenomena are brought before focal consciousness.” In his essay “Context and Thought” Dewey draws the analogy of a picture or a painting in which the “spatial background covers all the contemporary setting within which a course of thinking emerges.”

That which is looked into, consciously scrutinized, has, like a picture, a foreground, middle distance, and a background – and as in some paintings the latter shades off into unlimited space....This contextual setting is vague, but it is no mere fringe. It has a solidity and stability not found in the focal material of thinking. The latter denotes the
part of the road upon which the spotlight is thrown. The spatial context is the ground through which the road runs and for the sake of which the road exists. The habits that constitute the background, colour and saturate the foreground, providing the subconscious intelligibility of what is presently in conscious focus. It is part of the non-cognitive pervasive quality of the situation. Now, under conventional untroubled conditions these habits carry us smoothly along. We feel a sense of situatedness without necessarily “knowing” it, for habit, when untroubled, “is too thoroughly implicated in its medium to survey or analyze it.” Habits thus supply a spatio-temporal locational power that act as precognitive guides to everyday experience. Kaufman-Osborn puts the point nicely when he states that,

in addition to furnishing a ground for the recognizability of conventional phenomena within everyday life, habits are dynamic potentialities that are vitally present even when not immediately engaged. As patterned dispositions to action whose incorporation of the past navigates each moment into the future and so insures that conduct’s unfolding in time is something other than a meaningless juxtaposition of isolated reactions to discrete situations, habits’ constellation constitutes our effective desires and furnishes us with our practical capacities. As such, the term “habit” does the work more often done by that of “will.”

The smooth flow of habits, under stable conditions, is powerful because it is through them that we come to in-habit our world. They are the effective background and mechanism of stable bearing and meaning in our lives. Yet, if life experience was perpetually stable, then all situations would be untroubled, and habit would be equated with a state of eternal perfection.

Under such impossible conditions, habit as perfection would be continuous with a state of either absolute inertia or perfect automatism and we would have reached the pinnacle of our
growth. Its logical expression in human terms would be sleep or death, for being awake would be inconceivable, as there would no longer be any necessity to think. The very idea of experience and its aesthetic possibilities would thus also be inconceivable because of the absolute absence of tension. For it is only through tension that experience is propelled forward, that life moves. It goes without saying that the idea of absolutely stable habits is not what human life is about. But if habits provide no absolute base for stability, neither do they arbitrarily participate in mere flux and change. If this were the case they would fail to be a cumulative rendering of our ongoing adjustments to the world. They would never work toward and provide even the most fleeting of closures, for all action needs rest.

Although a great many of our habits have staying power, that is, their projective meaningfulness proves adequate to many of the untroubled situations of day-to-day living, nonetheless habits cannot prove indefinitely stable. Those habits that do achieve durable staying power, nonetheless, have a very practical import. They offer sufficient inertia so that, if we are willing to take advantage, we can engage in higher order thinking. For we need to recognize that we are prone to habits of thinking, and these habits can be routine or they can be artful. It is important to emphasize that the habit-laden meaningfulness of any present untroubled situation is itself a result. It is the cumulative effect of some past occasion of thinking, some past tensional situation that has managed to locate a present stable bearing. Habit, if it be intelligently formed, is representative of a deep adjustment of the organism to its environment. This adjustment, if it is intelligently fashioned and adopted, might properly be deemed aesthetic. To look, for example, at the fluid grace of a master violinist, is to recognize that mechanical habit has become fused with thought and feeling. A masterful technician does not perform as a matter of mere routine or mere automatism. If she did she would exhibit the habits of a mechanical performer, and
mechanism would dictate the performance. If habits are intelligently formed, they are alive and flexible within the organism’s ongoing adjusting to the world. Habit is art when it embodies thought and feeling as its mode of adjustment. The opposite of habit thus conceived is not thought, but deadening routine.

It is only at those moments of instability, when our habitual world threatens to come apart, that we are incited to grow and develop, when we must think, take stock, and become conscious of our dynamic relation to the environment. It is at this point of tension that life incites us to potentially artful conduct, when we might become the crafters of some new aesthetic adjustment and stability. Things “make sense” when our habits prove stable (although this may be a surface sense rather than a more penetrating sense). However, as Kaufman-Osborn puts it, “when habits’ projective meanings prove inadequate to a given situation, when the familiar fund of habitual meanings previously woven into the world no longer suffice as means, then the immediacy of immediate experience suffers a rupture and becomes tensional.” 27

At this moment of tension, there is a newly released impulse, insisting on some re-direction and re-qualification of old habit. Indeed this is when habit, previously not explicitly conscious, is exposed as subject to temporal movement. We can refer to something as an old habit only because our movement in time has manifested a disruption or tensional break that necessitates a new adjustment. This is a radical aspect of Dewey’s work. Impulses are a part of our “unlearned activity,” and as such are important to conduct. “Impulses are the pivots upon which the re-organization of activities turn, they are agencies of deviation, for giving new directions to old habits and changing their quality.” 28 Impulses come to block overt action, and it is at this point that things fail to inhere in sufficient sense. Getting to a new point where a situation makes sense, represents the crucial phase in the organism’s transaction with its
environment, wherein the process of making sense can potentially become aesthetically charged, making conscious experience itself more artful. This making sense is intelligence at work.

"Sense" is a very important and rich term for Dewey. As he says, "'sense' covers a wide range of contents: the sensory, the sensational, the sensitive, the sensible, and the sentimental, along with the sensuous....but sense, as meaning so directly embodied in experience as to be its own illuminated meaning, is the only signification that expresses the function of sense organs when they are carried to full realization." Sense, therefore, is integral to that experiential phase when the organism, having fallen out with its environment because of some tensional rupture in the situation, begins to consciously focus on the relations that make up that situation. The organism, through tension, has come to a stage of reflection on and within the situation. It is important to note that this reflective phase of experience has its own quality, but it is different in kind from the original pervasive quality that binds the organism to the primary objects of its environment. This original quality is vague and indefinite, whereas sense via reflection has a recognized reference, "it is the qualitative characteristic of something, not just a submerged unidentified quality or tone." What sense now picks out is the relation between the primary and secondary qualities of objects within the environment as the situation becomes consciously focused within the thinking subject.

Reiner Schurmann makes an interesting point when he notes that "the English 'sense' and the French sens – 'sense' of a river, or of traffic – stems, not from Latin [sensus], but from an Indo-European verb [sinno] that means to travel, to follow a path." Dewey certainly understands "sense" in its active/dynamic capacity where sense, as a focal point of consciousness, not only illuminates a situated moment, but also opens the body to the world in exploratory and receptive intensity. As Dewey explains: "Perception is an act of the going-out of
energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy."\textsuperscript{32} If we recall the analogy of a painting in "Context and Thought" we remember that a situational field has a foreground, a middle distance, and a background. It is the foreground in which we locate that part of the road that is illuminated by the shining light of sense. Yet, we remember also that the pervasive qualitative context is that through which the road runs and "for the sake of which the road exists." Sense, therefore, signifies the organism’s embodied movement in the light of a troubled situation, wherein the body itself becomes a lived meaning, moving in a spatial and temporal drama where body and mind become unified in heightened sensitivity to the possibilities of where the road might lead. In other words, making sense is deliberation, and deliberation, if it results in anything that has aesthetic value, must abide the guiding headlight of imagination.

Deliberation is integral to artful conduct. When an otherwise stable situation becomes tensional, when new impulses are released, old habits are immediately brought to conscious attention, new paths of action explored. This exploration is what deliberation is about. It is, as Dewey says, “a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action.”\textsuperscript{33} Activity in this sense does not cease in order that reflection may take the fore. Rather, “activity is turned from execution into intra-organic channels, resulting in dramatic rehearsal.”\textsuperscript{34} Aspects of impulse and habit are put in various combinations, experimental trials so to speak, in order to determine what an action would be like if it were entered upon. Thinking at this point is wholly hypothetical. It is the safety mechanism of deliberation that thought “runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable.”\textsuperscript{35}
The interpenetration of subject and object release potential avenues of overt activity via the imagination. For even imaginative rehearsal achieves its content and meaning only when its activity involves a process of trying out various avenues of potentially fruitful conduct: "In imagination as in fact we know a road only by what we see as we travel on it."\(^{36}\) The subject, rehearsing the possibilities of some future overt conduct, partakes of experience's objects in imagination. Objects object to the movement, thus necessitating activity's new direction, or they do not, thus providing activity's point of rest. There is, in essence, no difference between this process as it takes place in the imagination and as it might take place in overt activity. It is equally dynamic and organic. The only thing that makes imaginative rehearsal more sensible is that the consequences of going down any chosen road are not overtly real, although they implicate any real choice that might be made as a result. When a choice is *really* made it is "not the emergence of preference out of indifference. It is the emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences."\(^{37}\) Choice comes at the moment when imagination envisions the objective consequence of an action and deems that consequence fruitful and just. Overt action is released. All deliberation therefore is a search for the best action, its "office is to facilitate stimulation."\(^{38}\) If a choice be a reasonable choice, then the human subject travels a road of intelligent conduct, and experience is given new direction, new depth, and new meaning.

This cognitive dynamic highlights the creative capacity of the human imagination. The quality of meaning and value in our lives is funded by our ability to imagine possibility. The radical import of Dewey's aesthetic thinking is that imagined possibilities or ideals represent the capacity to mediate and improve upon observed actualities. It is not a separate faculty that works autonomously independent of experience's embodied temporal movement. The quality of working imagination is a universal quality of wholeness and unity, but that quality gets its life-
energy from the local act, the observed and limited here and now. The temporal drama enacted in imagination is a virtual expansion and refinement that utilizes what is in order to manifest what might be. The observed here and now becomes stunted to the degree that the organism fails to recognize the universal quality of extension that impels the imagination’s ongoing relation to a vital present, which is itself a manifestation of past experience. Imagination becomes pure fancy when it becomes disconnected from the energizing capacity of the here and now, forging for itself castles in the air. Rigidified custom and habit is broken up by the imagination as it extends the range of the here and now. Imagination projects ideal possibilities and therefore reflects the creative and expanding capacity of human intelligence. It is in this sense that imagination provides the infusing stuff of aesthetic experience. “This fact, in connection with a false idea of the nature of imagination, has obscured the larger fact that all conscious experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality….But the experience enacted is human and conscious only as that which is given here and now is extended by meanings and values drawn from what is absent in fact and present only imaginatively.”39

The object of thought stimulates a unification and harmonization of competing tendencies in which each competing tendency is reduced to a component in a reformed action exhibiting a transformed quality. Human conduct thus draws from a profound reservoir of preparatory competence. The competence of conduct’s unfolding in time is a matter of embodied deliberation leading to intelligent and humane outcomes. Deliberation projects possible consequences and as such is responsible for clearing the path that leads to envisioned ideals being progressively refined and, in time, being made more real. For Dewey it is a human wonder:

Nothing is more extraordinary than the delicacy, promptness and ingenuity with which deliberation is capable of making eliminations and recombinations in projecting the
course of a possible activity. To every shade of imagined circumstance there is a vibrating response; and to every complex situation a sensitiveness as to its integrity, a feeling of whether it does justice to all facts, or overrides some to the advantage of others. Decision is reasonable when deliberation is so conducted. There may be error in the result, but it comes from lack of data not from ineptitude in handling them.  

Reasonable conduct thus comes by way of a vital harmonization of competing desires (impulses, habits), and the age-old dualism between reason and desire collapses.

Traditional philosophical thinking has pitted desire against reason, when in the light of artful conduct the fact is they are tightly interrelated. Reason is, as Dewey maintains, "a quality of an effective relationship among desires rather than a thing opposed to desire." Reason, rather than being an antecedent, bloodless abstraction, actually gains its vital energy through passion. Deliberation's science, its experimental mode, is at the same time deliberation's art, as reason becomes fully implicated in the passionate phase of activity. Rationality is what remains when we make a reasonable choice, and choice is reasonable when it results in reasonable conduct.  

Rationality is the effect of complex processes that involve the thinking, feeling human subject. It is not, as traditionally understood, the antecedent base of all thought and feeling. This understanding by Dewey of reason via human deliberation (imagination) is radical. Reason is the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions, such as sympathy, curiosity, exploration, experimentation, frankness, pursuit—to follow things through—circumspection, to look about at the context, etc., etc. The elaborate systems of science are born not of reason but of impulses at first slight and flickering; impulses to handle, move about, to hunt, to uncover, to mix things separated and divide things combined, to talk and to listen. Method is their effectual organization into continuous dispositions of
inquiry, development and testing. It occurs after these acts and because of their consequences. Reason, the rational attitude, is the resulting disposition, not a ready-made antecedent which can be invoked at will and set into movement. The man who would intelligently cultivate intelligence will widen, not narrow, his life of strong impulses while aiming at their happy coincidence in operation.  

In short, this cultivation of intelligence is art. Art’s outcome, the result of conduct’s manifestation through cultivated intelligence, is reason, and reason itself becomes the dynamic realization of experience’s consummatory potential. Life’s art is achieved through our embodied transaction with our environment in which both organism and environment coalesce in crafting experience’s deeper possibilities. Artful conduct is the manifestation of experience in its integrity, and its outcome is properly called aesthetic.  

The dynamic relation then between past meaning (habit) and future expectation (imagination) is what gives direction to the present, gives it its sense. To the degree that the organism’s senses are alive to this transactive movement in time, the experience becomes one of “heightened vitality.” Dewey says:  

There is much in the life of the savage that is sodden. But, when the savage is most alive, he is most observant of the world about him and most taut with energy. As he watches what stirs about him, he, too, is stirred. His observation is both action in preparation and foresight of the future. He is active through his whole being when he looks and listens as when he stalks his quarry or stealthily retreats from a foe. His senses are sentinels of immediate thought and outposts of action, and not, as they so often are with us, mere pathways along which material is gathered to be stored away for a delayed and remote possibility.
It is at these moments of "heightened vitality" that experience is consciously manifest, and to the degree that a consciously manifested experience becomes aesthetically charged represents the degree to which the richer depths of meaning and value are sensed within and through the experience. At this point an experience becomes truly consummatory. Temporal quality pervades every situation and sense lights its way. Heightened sensitivity is sensitivity to the relational meanings consciously becoming manifest within a moving situation, wherein the original pervasive felt quality becomes enriched by and infuses the consciousness of temporal movement.

As Stuhr points out, "the quality is active and regulative—that is, intrinsically inclusive of its future transformation or negation." As a situation is transformed from a state of disequilibrium into one of equilibrium, where the organism intelligently develops a new posture to the world, it is the original state of disequilibrium (a problematic or tensional situation) that is both the quality condition and the quality control of the situation's movement toward consummatory closure. It is through tension and resistance, then, that we come to sense life's quality and rhythm, that we get a "feel" for life. As Dewey says: "Friction is as necessary to generate esthetic energy as it is to supply the energy that drives machinery." This heightened sense of qualitative meaning and relation is what Dewey calls "intuition."

"Intuition" is that meeting of the old and new in which the readjustment involved in every form of consciousness is effected suddenly by means of a quick and unexpected harmony which in its bright abruptness is like a flash of revelation; although in fact it is prepared for by long and slow incubation. Oftentimes the union of old and new, of foreground and background, is accomplished only by effort, prolonged perhaps to the point of pain. In any case, the background of organized meanings can alone convert the
new situation from the obscure into the clear and luminous. When old and new jump together, like sparks when the poles are adjusted, there is intuition.\(^4^6\)

Rather than mere intellectual relations, life's qualitative dimensions give consummatory moments their poignancy, and make possible the aesthetic within experience. As Dewey states:

That which distinguishes an experience as esthetic is conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close.\(^4^7\)

**Art Works**

We are thus in a position to consider the question of why the arts are so important to us, how they embody something of deep relevance to our experience in the world. In determining why art is important to life, it is no understatement to consider with Dewey that art, to a great degree, *is* life. Our temporal and embodied transactions with and within our environment may not under a great many social and cultural conditions manifest art's potential, but this is not an inevitable and inherent condition of our living in the world. Social and cultural conditions press externally on individual experience, and to the degree that these external pressures emanate from some vital connection to the conditions of their own development, represents the potential baseness or fineness of what experience might become.

What I have attempted to show in the preceding sections is that art is "prefigured in the very processes of living."\(^4^8\) Art signifies our capacity to grow and develop, and growth and development is what occurs in any medium of tension and recovery. Life is certainly the grand medium human beings grow and develop in and art is our most immediate expression (through a variety of its own media) of those processes. The human organism is born and its subsequent
growth and development is the accumulating result of its transactions with its surroundings. As with the individual, so too are social and cultural developments the accumulating result of transactions between organism and environment. In capturing something of the “psychology” of artful conduct—the potentially artful movement of habit, sense, and imagination—I have attempted to convey the complexity of our embodied status within our environment and within time. I have attempted to capture something of the depth implicit in this statement by Dewey:

“Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is.”\textsuperscript{49} Art works much like the human organism works in its daily doings and undergoings. Whether art’s working manifests what can justifiably be called a work of art, that is, something exhibiting aesthetic, consummatory, and expressive refinement, depends on the degree to which art’s working arises from an enhancement of experience as it is lived in connection with its surroundings. In this sense if art is not working it is merely a product, static and dumb.

As I have been hinting, we need to look at the word “works” in the heading of this section not as a noun, but rather as a verb. For art is a working movement, and its culmination in an aesthetically charged work does not bring art’s working to a close. If the final work is something having depth and substance, then it will continue to work within the community. The substance of a work of art is to be found in what it communicates within a community. If an art work exhibits fineness of form, then we have determined something of how the work communicates within a community. Completion of a work by the artist is like a new birth within the community as that work is dependent on ongoing communal engagement for its survival. It becomes expressive, and its continued expressiveness is the sign of its continued constructive possibility, its continued working.
Like the human being that is born into the world, its sense of self is intertwined with the discovery of its world. What Piaget has termed "the construction of reality" comes with the discovery of language as self and world become recreated symbolically. As experience accrues in time, the human organism becomes, in a sense, the historian of its own past, interpreting its evolutionary status at any given moment in conjunction with a determination of what changes are possible for its future. This dynamic interpretation and re-interpretation comes by way of new happenings that cast new light on the past. Choices and decisions of action result from this temporal movement. Art is simply a refined expression or language exhibiting experience's aesthetic capacity, manifesting our temporal movement as being capable of greater depths of meaning. This profounder wellspring of meaning implicates the human individual in a world of ongoing potential development in which it partakes of its material surroundings and in doing so extends its expressive nature in socially significant and meaningful ways. As Dewey says:

The material out of which a work of art is composed belongs to the common world rather than to the self, and yet there is self-expression in art because the self assimilates that material in a distinctive way to reissue it into the public world in a form that builds a new object. The artwork fails to communicate something new, or for that matter, anything at all, when it is consigned to a collector's vault where, at most, it can be only potentially expressive.

Although art museums are considered "public" venues, Dewey tends to view them more as public mausoleums. The modern history of the development of museums is, for Dewey, too thoroughly implicated in the capitalist creation of "nouveaux riches" who tend to denigrate art's potential by exhibiting it not as a refined expression of common experience out of which it is born, but rather as a refined symbol of their cultural and economic status. "Generally speaking,
the typical collector is the typical capitalist. Art thus gets severed from its place in the life of the community and takes on all the accoutrements of acquisitiveness and “high” status. They become “specimens of fine art and nothing else.”

It was not that Dewey had an utter distaste for museums. He was, after all, gainfully employed for a time at a museum at the Barnes Foundation. What did worry Dewey about the museum conception of culture was that it tended to create and re-enforce “a chasm between ordinary and aesthetic experience.” As Alexander points out, there are two standing and interrelated temptations (not inevitabilities) when we participate in the museum’s conception of fineness:

First we are tempted to isolate our museum experiences from other experiences in life at large. Thus, we fail to see how the works we encounter in museums (or their equivalents for other artforms, such as concert halls or classrooms) have actually grown from those common conditions in life which we share with the artists who made those works. Having done this, we may make a second mistake. In believing that aesthetic experience belongs to a segregated realm, we fail to see how the artists’ success in making expressively meaningful, intrinsically fulfilling objects from the raw material of life can be applied across the whole spectrum of human existence. The great moral to be learned from the arts for Dewey is that when ideals cease to be confined to a realm separated from our daily, practical experience, they can become powerful forces in teaching us to make the materials of our lives filled with meaning.

In attempting to steal art back to the commons we may more properly conceive of the ways art is potentially expressive and how this expressiveness is vitally connected to common life experience. The expressiveness of a piece of art is a wholly complex matter that determines to a
great degree that work's potential standing as aesthetically consummatory as well as communicative of further meaningful experience.

Of all modes of human inquiry art most exemplifies the human capacity to elevate life's expressive potential. Our temporal embodiment within nature signifies life's rhythmic movement. The very idea, therefore, of order, balance, and harmony can make sense only as life's rhythm is engaged and expressed. The more intelligent this engagement and expression, the more life's artful potential is realized. The aesthetic in experience is the result of experience's differentiation out of an otherwise undifferentiated stream of impressions. The aesthetic marks an experience as an experience only because "the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment." Life's rhythm thus gains consummatory potential as its expressive capacity is realized through the organism's "dynamic organization" of the materials at its disposal. The resultant consummatory experience, by virtue of this dynamic reorganization, represents the achievement of form. Form is essentially "the art of making clear what is involved in the organization of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing life-experience." 

We need to step back a bit in order to clarify just what is meant by life's rhythm. I have briefly highlighted what might result from the intelligent recognition and engagement of life's rhythm, but the result of a rhythmic movement also must have a beginning. That our movement in the world is rhythmic signifies no more than, as temporal agents, we invariably fall out of step and regain our footing. What makes this more than a mechanical process lies in our ability to constantly refine our experience as we fall and recover. It is vital that we realize that any recovery is not simply a mere recovery. In other words when we fall out of step because of some tensional rupture in our experience, our eventual recovery is not merely a return to what we had prior to that tensional break. In my previous section I have attempted to capture something of the
organic complexity of this movement. If recovery were simply a return to a previous state then there would be no growth. The resultant experience, if it manifests in growth, “is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed.” As Dewey goes on to say:

If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If the activity is not enhanced by the temporary alienation, it merely subsists. Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives.

The quality of our growth within life’s rhythmic movement is thus a matter of intelligent conduct. Our “undergoing” within this rhythm signals us as vulnerable to suffering. We are open to the precariousness that attends and is an integrated part of any rhythmic development. Our “doing” signals our ability to channel what we undergo into a newly refined integration. Life’s rhythm is thus complimented by the degree of order we are able to establish with and within our environment. Order itself is developmental. Life’s art becomes realized through its varied developmental phases:

- Emotion is the conscious sign of a break, actual or impending. The discord is the occasion that induces reflection. Desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony.

This is part of our conscious intelligibility of the ebb and flow that accounts for life’s rhythm. However, achieving the aesthetic out of this rhythmic movement is something more than just an intellectual achievement. It is the embodied realization of harmony. The “material of reflection is incorporated into the objects as their meaning.” The aesthetic thus results from a movement from disturbance to harmony, and that moment of harmonization is “that of intensest life.”
The expressive potential, therefore, of a work of art is realized through this rhythmic development, and for this realization to achieve deepened aesthetic value and meaning it must inhere in a higher degree of conscious refinement and control. This refinement and control is saved from the haphazard only as it is an intensified transaction between organism and the encompassing materials of experience. As Dewey says: “The expressiveness of the object is the report and celebration of the complete fusion of what we undergo and what our activity of attentive perception brings into what we receive by means of the senses.”²⁶⁴ Expressive art is exemplary of an intensification and amplification of this transactive dynamic, and it brings subject and object into refined relation. For Dewey:

The moments when the creature is both most alive and most composed and concentrated are those of fullest intercourse with the environment, in which sensuous material and relations are most completely merged. Art would not amplify experience if it withdrew the self into the self nor would the experience that results from such retirement be expressive.²⁶⁵

The expressiveness of a work of art is thus exemplary of life’s artful potential as levels of aesthetic consummation become realizable by virtue of the spatio-temporal dynamics that give life its rhythm. However, we must keep in mind that artworks as well as life’s potential consummations are not mere static achievements. They provide the fuel for enhanced communication. The social importance of art comes to the fore.

In Experience and Nature Dewey explicitly makes the point when he says “that a genuinely esthetic object is not exclusively consummatory but is causally productive as well. A consummatory object that is not also instrumental turns in time to the dust and ashes of boredom.”²⁶⁶ Staving off this all too common ennui is art’s power. I went to some effort in my
earlier section on qualitative situations to highlight and clarify the vital and intrinsic value of immediate experience. The power of any aesthetic consummation can be fully achieved only as it recognizes the part played by the ineffable, the immediate. But life’s art, the fullness of its consummations, is also a fullness born out of and into new possibilities. Our temporal status has us constantly “on the go”, so to speak. Being on the go, of course, can be frenetic and arbitrary; but this occurs only when “doing” becomes disconnected from “undergoing.” The implications for communication are enormous. When “doing” is elevated for its own sake, we tend towards a chaotic and frenetic pace. A cursory look at contemporary society shows this all too clearly. However, when “undergoing” is taken up for its own sake, separated from any resultant activity, it tends towards mere contemplation and imaginative fancy with no real embodiment in action. Dewey reminds us that “[a]n experience has pattern and structure, because it is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship....This relationship is what gives meaning; to grasp it is the objective of all intelligence.”

It is this relationship that leads also to the fine art of communication. To get at communication’s finer potential we need a better understanding of Dewey’s instrumentalism, for it is through his instrumental understanding of art that the relation of consummation and productivity gains its communicative potential. Bringing the instrumental into a discussion of art and aesthetics may seem odd if not downright disturbing to those of a strong aesthetic bent. We are accustomed to thinking about the instrumental in the strong scientific sense, with its use of hard tools for the achievement of narrow ends. My previous chapter, I hope, dispels some of this long-standing take on instrumentalism. Dewey reminds us that “the sciences were born of the arts.” If art rested only in what immediately is, and failed to pay attention to what is made possible out of what is immediately enjoyed or suffered, art would never have become an
“intellectual” achievement. For the instrumental in art is its character of intellectual meaning, and as such, involves art “in transforming purely immediate qualities of local things into generic relationships.” Art as “the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity” is singly important to our understanding of science, itself an intellectual achievement of fine art.

In this sense, the relation of the consummatory and the instrumental is the heartbeat of communication.

When communication occurs between two or more parties, there is always a change to all involved. Even the artist’s soliloquy or the average person thinking to herself is the consequence of previous communication with others. We would be quite unable to talk with and to ourselves if we had not previously talked with and to somebody else. Any act of communication is thus a changing of the situation and the people involved. Every communicative exchange involves consequences, be they large or small, bad or good. “The part of wisdom,” says Dewey, “is not to deny the causal fact because of the intrinsic value of the immediate experience. It is to make the immediately satisfactory object the object which will also be most fertile.” The communicative effect of art is just what it is, an effect. It is not necessarily a moral/instrumental intention on the part of the artist. The way art communicates is the effect it has on those who partake of it. The art object is thus invariably caught up in its consequences for further reflection, communication’s art. Ask any artist to explain what their work is about, and more often than not they will be hard pressed to come up with an answer. They will often say, “you tell me what it’s about!” The artist cannot usually explain what the work is about because this is not what the artist was about when creating the work. Art becomes communicative or fully expressive only when it is taken up within the community. What the artist did or did not intend is a secondary matter. When the
implications of this are taken up within the community at large, we begin to get a sense of art's vital role in expressing what Dewey calls "the collective individuality" of any given culture. The level and style of the arts of literature, poetry, ceremony, amusement, and recreation which obtain in a community, furnishing the staple objects of enjoyment in that community, do more than all else to determine the current direction of ideas and endeavors in the community. They supply the meanings in terms of which life is judged, esteemed, and criticized. For an outside spectator, they supply material for a critical evaluation of the life led by that community.

Because art is at once consummatory and instrumental, its power of communication resides not only in conveying the mores of a community or culture, but also in impelling them imaginatively forward in new directions, toward new relationships. Art subtly shapes our experience of the world by communicating new possibilities. If it simply conveyed what is customary and familiar, there would be little tendency to reflect. The general result would be stasis and the entrenchment of dogmatic habit. This is all too prevalent throughout history where rituals often become entrenched dogma. Rituals themselves can be springboards to deeper experience or death marches toward experiences cut off and sapped of meaning. Communities and cultures that exist under dogmatic conditions tend to shun communication with any community or culture that do not exhibit the same customs and habits. Again, a cursory look at the contemporary world shows it to be rife with the consequences of such narrow-mindedness.

The power of works of art is that they "are means by which we enter, through imagination and the emotions they evoke, into other forms of relationship and participation than our own."

Another way of putting forward the notion that art is at once consummatory and instrumental is to frame it in terms of being discrete and continuous. The discrete embodies the
"collective individuality" of a community or culture, while the continuous embodies that collective individuality as capable of entering into new modes of participation without at once losing its own collective individuality. When this occurs there is genuine communication, and art is the language most amenable to heightened communication. The language of art captures something more than can be captured in familiar speech (oral and written). It should be stated that familiar speech is still extremely important to any society. It is the one constant feature of all social life, but too often our contacts are merely external, not fused by consciousness of the field in which they take place. Relations as they typically exist between nations, between producers and consumers, between managers and labourers, seldom rise to the level of full communication. Relations tend to be so external and partial "that we undergo their consequences without integrating them into an experience." The language of art, unlike common speech, is not affected by the accidents of history that have divided human communication into so many discrete modes of speech. "The differences between English, French and German speech create barriers that are submerged when art speaks."75

Importantly, the language of art is an acquired language, and to the degree that the arts of any community or culture fail to flourish, to the degree that they are denigrated by any variety of external forces, marks the failure of effective communication. Life’s art is manifested when, through consciousness of a larger field of meanings and values, we are able to imaginatively enter into new experiences. Art sustains conscious activity, "and thereby exhibits, so that he who runs may read, the fact that consciousness is not a separate realm of being, but is the manifest quality of existence when nature is most free and most active."77 The lack of this fuller communication as it now exists between nations is steadily becoming an inner cultural phenomena as well. The cultural politics so prevalent in today’s societies, more than anything
else, speaks to the erosion of full communication. It is not that cultural sub-divisions are inherently bad, but if these divisions are not informed by fuller communication, that is, by a consciousness of the larger field of meanings and values flowing within the culture at large, then there is manifested a corrosive isolationist tendency. Under such conditions there is a marked disposition toward impulsive brutality as a way of dealing with experience’s emptiness brought on by the inability to artfully communicate. These are deadening divisions, but add conscious and conscientious communication, and deadening divisions might be transformed into productive distinctions. Life’s art becomes more fully realized under these conditions. Dewey extends art’s full potential when he states that:

Instruction in the arts of life is something other than conveying information about them.
It is a matter of communication and participation in values of life by means of the imagination, and works of art are the most intimate and energetic means of aiding individuals to share in the arts of living. Civilization is uncivil because human beings are divided into non-communicating sects, races, nations, classes and cliques.\textsuperscript{78}

We see the structure of another stale division begin to crumble—that between the individual and the social. Dewey clears the path for a more pragmatic exploration of our political experiences. This becomes even more pressing in our contemporary global society where it is not just a matter of “non-communicating sects, races, nations, classes and cliques,” but rather the proliferation of insidious, non-critical forms of communication that are successfully uniting masses of people with superficial consummations. Dewey’s notion of artful experience, I think, shoulders well the burden of our most profound personal and social experiences. An exploration of this, while tempting, is beyond the scope of this project. Suffice it to say that a reading of Dewey’s political and social works is quite in keeping with the philosophical underpinnings that
I have explored thus far. Artful conduct is not easy in today's world, but with Dewey's complex and detailed reworking of the philosophical tradition, I think we have something that we have not had in a long, long while—a working philosophy. Dewey offers us something to go on, and what he offers might perhaps be an important key to our survival. Do we have the courage and energy necessary to heed his call? Can we acquire more artful modes of conduct and communication? As we head into the new millennium, only time will tell. With that said, we should never underestimate the amount of effort and energy that must accompany making Dewey's vision a social reality.
Conclusion

It is exceedingly difficult to write a conclusion to a thesis that is very much an introduction—an introduction, that is, to some of the big ideas of a great thinker. Of Dewey’s enormous volume of work, I have only scratched the surface. And yet I think I have managed to offer some depth in those areas of his work I have chosen to focus upon. Without a doubt, rounding this thesis out with an exploration of Dewey’s social/political/moral writings would prove fruitful to a coherent larger picture of Dewey’s philosophy and would satisfy yearnings for concrete examples of Dewey’s philosophy put towards some kind of real action. The present political and economic environment makes this a particularly pressing exercise. However, I must leave this to a later day and be content presently with what I hope I have provided, namely a decent piece of graduate level work. I return by way of concluding therefore, to my opening preface.

In my preface I invoked some rather harsh criticism of the current state of social-scientific research in educational studies. While my criticism stands regarding the narrow tendency of much educational research, I need to refine my criticism a bit. While some social-scientific research is promising, such as the work being done presently using quantitative and qualitative research methods together, there are still some marked problems in general. To put it bluntly (and forgive the generalization), students lack the desire to read anything in any great depth, and as a consequence, they lack the resources to critically engage anything in any great depth. The potential cost involves nothing less than the survival of democracy. The paradox is that this is not necessarily a matter of laziness on the part of students. My experience with students in graduate education courses tells me that, in fact, most are not lazy when the time is right for them not to be lazy. There are, after all, times to be lazy even in your studies, but look
into the eyes of a student engaged in working out an interesting idea and see there an artist at work. The mind engaged, in other words, defies laziness. I see students expending vast amounts of energy. I see them thrilled to be learning. This is not the problem. My problem is that I see them spending vast amounts of energy on very little. I see them thrilled to be learning not much of consequence.

Students, especially students in the education field—perhaps because the education field is so important to society in general—exhibit all the trappings of larger social fashions. Students are caught up in a frenetic pace that is very much fashionable within the larger social framework. More often than not stress is their reward, perhaps their lasting career. In the end, I do not think it is the students’ fault. The university itself has adopted the structures of corporatism, where students are “customers” and teachers are “front-line service providers.” Reading in depth and thinking in depth are not required in the big-business university. These antiquated liberal ideals are less and less the mandate of the university as it (of all institutions) falls prey to the frenetic fiscal pressures of the new non-thinking classes. How hard can I be on students whose own educational experiences and expectations are being diminished, dumbed down, and redefined on a daily basis? It is difficult to see smart and eager young minds going into business programs because they have been sold on the religious merits of an MBA. It is difficult to see these merits becoming the cornerstone of a good higher education. Let big business train its own and incur the costs of doing so. Transferring the burdens (fiscal and otherwise) of this so-called education on to public universities is a travesty that only those few students with a solid background in the Humanities complain about. The number of these critical voices is, of course, being reduced as funding from the non-thinking elite is pulled from the arts—the only discipline left capable of mounting a critically informed rebuttal of the going fashionable habits. It may be strong of me to
say, but imagination, the one thing being killed off in the contemporary university, is what develops by way of reading lots of important books. From that develops a strong social imagination that forces you to ask tough questions and see the larger issues that extend well beyond the end of your nose. I am confident Dewey took just this route.

Of course my emphasis on the Humanities comes only from an honest sense that it is there that students are still being taught to think critically. It is still alive in the Sciences as well, but to a lesser degree as more and more of the creative energy integral to good science is bought up by special(ized) interests. Is it purely romantic that I equate critically informed reading with the well-being of democracy? It is if the wide-scale loss of memory that now afflicts so much student writing is seen as the good and inevitable outcome of change. What I wish to point out is something that I think is central to much of Dewey's writing, and it has to do with the temporal status of human experience. More and more students seem to be writing in a highly energized but stagnant present. The important connections between past, present, and future are now rarely made except in lip-service gestures to past thinkers in the context of much social science research. What makes this highly suspicious is that students are rarely expected to read in any great depth the thinkers to whom they make reference. It has become increasingly easy to support one's own research interests by making, what are for the most part, blind references.

What is lost, regardless of the particular outcome of any particular piece of research, is something of one's collective memory. Without memory there is no context, and without context there is no stable bearing. Without these, as I have already pointed out, the imagination dies. Without imagination we become unable to project social ideals that are anything more than haphazard and dangerous. Contemporary social science students, with their highly energized bits of research, end up appealing to an ad hoc academic yearning that fulfills a short-term need, but
can provide little by way of long-term, coherent action. While there is no neat recipe for the survival of democracy, it cannot survive by ad hoc short-term adjustments alone, especially when these adjustments increasingly fall within the structures of a narrowing corporatist logic. The social sciences will always be tremendously important, but at the present time they appear to be rendering themselves all but mute.

I suppose that in the end my position is very much a political one. We read big important works to keep our contexts alive, to keep our memories alive. It is a way of recognizing that past, present, and future are profoundly interwoven, each speaking to the other. Do we hear the voices any more? How much meaning is brought to bear on present work when we do not? Dewey’s message is profoundly political when he writes of the history of science. When he writes on art and aesthetic experience he is in many ways advocating a life lived in context. None of this is understood, nor can a plausible opposition be mounted if he is not read, and he is but one author.

The outline of my real thesis is to be found in my preface and my above concluding remarks. The two chapters on Dewey provide evidence of a few of the important ideas that make the kind of thesis I am proposing worthwhile and important. This thesis should, therefore, appear as something out of the usual for a thesis in Education. I expended a great deal of energy on these few important ideas—energy I deem well spent. Begin by saving the universities from the corrosive logic of the market place. There, science fails to achieve art. Are the people that fill their hallowed halls up to the task? They should be. Save the quality of a good university education, so real democratic conduct has a fighting chance. What I have done in my writing on Dewey is, by today’s educational standards, antiquated, romantic, and irrelevant. Is it? No, it is not. However, my opinion might be in the minority. I can only place my hopes in the eagerness of young minds to learn to react.
If this thesis is not easily accessible to my readers then so be it. I cannot make Dewey easily accessible, nor would I want to try. His greatness would disappear in the process. Of course, Dewey is accessible. You just have to work at it. It takes time and energy, supposedly precious commodities by today’s standards. Live with the difficulty of it. That is where all the excitement of learning comes from. That is when learning is most alive. For those who might come across this thesis, if your curiosity has been piqued, or if there has arisen some difficult questions out of your reading, then I have been successful. I have offered enough to make Dewey appealing or not. But be prepared to work and make the connections for yourself. While I have barely scratched the overall surface of Dewey’s vast body of work, I have nonetheless gone into some depth in a few key areas. He is one great thinker among many who can challenge students to think for themselves, to become engaged and critically informed. Dewey appealed to me because he resonated with my training in the Humanities, for it is in the Humanities that students learn that the quality of an experience is important and that artful judgements are cast on the greatest of our discoveries. Scientific discoveries are great works of art when their qualities are recognized though not necessarily understood. Students discover their own artfulness only by confronting, with modesty and courage, the “big, buzzing, blooming confusion” that is each of their lives. Experience in its complexity bears no specific name. It lives in its own difficulty. But therein it lives, and what a difficult gift for the student who discovers that this is so. Sanity gets ironed out of tension. I discovered it through my undergraduate work in the Arts, and clarified that quality through my investigations of Dewey’s work at the graduate level. He took me a bit further down my own educational path of learning how to pick out the sham from the real thing. Dewey makes a tremendous contribution to the history of great ideas. He speaks powerfully to our present state of confusion, most profitably by proposing sane alternatives that are truer to the
reality of human experience as he understands it. It makes sense to me. It is difficult and it calls for great humility in the face of a big, buzzing world. Wide-eyed humility is what is most lacking in today's world. We need to humble ourselves before some smooth talking fanatic comes along to do it for us. I, for one, prefer the democratic to the totalitarian or the dictatorial. A critic/artist of Dewey's caliber is indispensable for finding our way back to democratic hardship, the common weal, and our own intelligent voices. As for the writing of this thesis, I can safely say that it has been an experience.
Notes

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