chapter 8

John Dewey

TIME LINE FOR DEWEY

1859  Is born October 20 in Burlington, Vermont.
1875  Enters the University of Vermont.
1879  Receives Bachelor's degree.
1879–1881  Teaches high school at Oil City, Pennsylvania.
1881  Studies philosophy with H. A. P. Torrey at Johns Hopkins University.
1882  Enters graduate school.
1884  Receives Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins.
1884–1894  Teaches philosophy at the University of Michigan.
1886  Marries Alice Chipman.
1894  Is appointed chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago.
       Starts Lab School at University of Chicago.
1895  Suffers loss of son, Morris, from diphtheria while in Milan. The Deweys later return to Italy and adopt an orphan boy, Sabino.
1897  Publishes "My Pedagogic Creed."
1900  Publishes The School and Society.
1902  Publishes The Child and the Curriculum.
1904  Is appointed professor of philosophy at Columbia University.
Suffers the loss of son, Gordon, from typhoid fever while vacationing in Ireland.

1910 Publishes *How We Think.*
1915 Establishes and is the first president of the American Association of University Professors.
1916 Publishes *Democracy and Education.*
1919-1928 Gives lectures in Japan, China, Turkey, Mexico, and Russia.
1920 Publishes *Reconstruction of Philosophy* based on lectures given at the Imperial University, Japan.
1922 Publishes *Human Nature and Conduct.*
1925 Publishes *Experience and Nature.*
1927 Suffers loss of his wife, Alice.
1930 Is named professor emeritus at Columbia University.
1934 Publishes *Art as Experience* and *A Common Faith.*
1937 Serves as chairman of the commission of inquiry into the charges made against Leon Trotsky (Mexico City).
1938 Publishes *Experience and Education.*
1939 Publishes *Freedom and Culture.*
1946 Marries Roberta Lowitz Grant. They adopt two children.
1949 Publishes *Problems of Men.*
1952 Dies June 1 in New York City.

**INTRODUCTION**

Born in 1859—the same year that Horace Mann died and that saw the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species—Dewey lived through the Civil War, two world wars, the Great Depression, and numerous lesser conflicts, and died as the cold war emerged full blown on the global scene. During his lifetime, the United States was transformed from a largely agrarian, experimental republic into the major industrial and military power in the world. Growing up in Puriham New England, Dewey would gradually abandon his religious foundations, moving, as he explains, from absolutism to experimentalism. Attaining his undergraduate degree from the University of Vermont and eventually his Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University, Dewey retained his religious commitment through his professorship at the University of Michigan in the 1880s and 1890s. As a young man, Dewey embraced the Social Gospel movement in hopes of connecting his commitment to democracy to an absolute metaphysics—Kantian idealism.

His commitment to social justice and democratic principles never waned, but by the early 1900s, Dewey had begun to distance himself from otherworldly metaphysics. Upon moving to Chicago in 1894 to chair the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago, Dewey stopped participating in religious activities. By this time he had transformed his metaphysical idealism into pragmatic naturalism. Finally, feeling comfortable that his commitment to democratic principles could be sustained by grounding them in experience, Dewey spent much of the remainder of his life working out the implications of this philosophical shift for his social, political, and educational ideas.

The years Dewey lived in Chicago were productive ones. Here he continued his commitment to social justice by working with Jane Addams at Hull House, experiencing firsthand the debasing effects that America's transformation into an industrialized and urbanized oligarchy produced. Here, too, Dewey established his famous Lab School, a living, self-correcting community, as a testing ground for his evolving educational ideas. Here, too, he emerged, along with William James and Charles S. Peirce, as a founder of that uniquely American brand of philosophy known as pragmatism.

Leaving Chicago in 1904, Dewey assumed a professorship of philosophy at Columbia University in New York City, a position he held until his retirement in 1929. In addition to teaching, writing, and numerous other academic responsibilities, Dewey struggled to find ways to construct "the Great Community" and to make the world "safe for democracy." Initially supportive of Wilson's war policy—for which his former student, Randolph Bourne, criticized him for failing "to respond to the very mistakes his philosophy was designed to prevent"—Dewey participated in the quixotic Outlaw War movement during the postwar period. During these years and throughout his life, "Dewey was the most important advocate of participatory democracy, that is of the belief that democracy as an ethical ideal calls upon men and women to build communities in which the necessary opportunities and resources are available for every individual to fully realize his or her particular capacities and powers through participation in political, social, and cultural life."

Though officially retired, Dewey remained remarkably active during the last 23 years of his life. He continued his prolific writing, publishing major works on aesthetics, religion, politics, education, logic, and epistemology. He remained active in social causes, including traveling to Mexico to chair the commission of inquiry investigating the charges leveled against Leon Trotsky, maintaining an active lifestyle until his death in 1952. Dewey married in 1946 a woman almost half his age and with her adopted two Belgian war orphans.

As suggested earlier, Dewey was a prolific scholar throughout his life; he published scores of books and pamphlets, hundreds of articles for scholarly and popular journals and magazines, and gave innumerable speeches and lectures—public as well as academic—on topics ranging from Hegelian metaphysics to woman's suffrage. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to suggest that from 1900 to 1940, Dewey published more each year than many small college faculties produced during all of these years. Unfortunately, Dewey did not
always write well. As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes charges: "Dewey writes as
the creator would write, if he were intent on explaining all of his creation
but was hopelessly inarticulate." Dewey's works are often misunderstood, but
more frequently Dewey is not read. As John Novak explains, "John Dewey is
like the Bible—often alluded to (by both his supporters and detractors) but
seldom read..."*

Students who might be interested in Dewey's work, and who clearly could
benefit from it, are often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of it. Those
ambitious enough to dive into one of Dewey's works are likely to find his prose
stiff and lacking in imagination. In addition, while there is an abundance
of literature about Dewey, much of it is treated him either as a saint or a villain.
In this secondary literature, most of it published during this century, Dewey
has been reviled and praised, criticized and attacked for being the father of
progressive education, a communist dupe and a hopeless anachronist, a
pacificist and a warmonger, a secular humanist, and the founder of
all things good (and bad) in American education.

A work like this one can do little to answer all the questions about Dewey
and his influence on education other than to suggest that Dewey was a highly
complex thinker whose thought could never be captured by any reductionist
label. What this work can do—by introducing the reader to carefully selected
excerpts from Dewey's works—is whet the reader's appetite for more
information about this remarkable figure in American educational thought. If this
work is successful, you will be motivated to further investigate both the man
and his thought by reading Dewey's autobiographical essay "From Absolutism
to Experimentalism"; George Dykstra's "The Life and Mind of John Dewey," a
work already quoted in this brief introduction; Robert B. Westbrook's recently
published John Dewey and American Democracy; as well as the many seminal
works Dewey published during his long and distinguished life.

Here we will focus on three works of John Dewey: "My Pedagogic Creed,"
published in 1897; an excerpt from Democracy and Education (1916), which
for most of his career Dewey claimed to be the work in which his philosophy
was best developed; and an excerpt from Experience and Education (1938),
which might be read as a corrective to Dewey's followers in the progressive
education movement.

"My Pedagogic Creed" is, in many ways, Dewey's gift to scholars. Over the
course of a few pages he tells what he believes about education, the school,
subject matter, the nature of method, and the relation of the school to social
progress. Dewey writes of the psychological and sociological sides of educa-
tion, the child's cultural inheritance, discipline and interest, the relationship
of the school to the neighborhood, activity and images in teaching, the con-
nection between immediate experience and traditional school subject matters
disciplines, and finally the school as an instrument of social progress and
the teacher as the "barbering" of a new social order. In the middle of all
that, Dewey defines education as "a continual process of reconstruction of
experience." At heart, the educated person is a sense-maker, that is, one who
can wrest as much meaning as possible from her or his experiences.

It is amazing that Dewey can cover so many topics in such a small space.
Reading "Creed" is like looking at a far-off star through a telescope. The tele-
scope gives one a relatively clear view of the star, but shoves little of the
evening sky. In effect, "Creed" is a statement, written before the fact, of the
conclusions of Dewey's argument. "Creed" tells what Dewey thinks but omits
the "sky" that frames those conclusions.

In order to see that sky, in order to deal with Dewey's arguments for his
educational conclusions, one should look at Dewey's magnum opus, Democracy
and Education. Here, Dewey unpacks what he means by education and relates
education to democracy. In a more typical of Dewey, he suggests that as much
as we educate for democracy, we should democratize for education.

Finally, it is hard to overstate Dewey's influence in American schooling
from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1930s. During that period,
all sorts of progressive educational experiments and programs were espoused
and tried. In New York, people set up schools where children were allowed
to do as they pleased and to devise their own curricula. At the same time,
progressive educators like George S. Counts were urging teachers to indoctrinate children
with proper ideals and values. Everybody, however, claimed John Dewey
as a special influence. This led a somewhat exasperated Dewey to publish, in
1937, Experience and Education. There he tried to make explicit his own brand of
progressivism and to correct the excesses of many of his followers.

In Experience and Education, Dewey reiterates his opposition to either/or
thinking. Specifically, Dewey rejects the either/or (Platonic/Aristotelian) world-
view that dominated the Western world for so long. From this rather tradit-
ional perspective, knowledge is either innate—inside the individual at birth
awaiting the right mnemonic device to bring it to consciousness—or exter-
nal to human beings, awaiting our discovery. In either case, an absolute is
implied, resulting in the imposition of knowledge and values upon each new
generation. Such a worldview may be appropriate for a monarchy or some
other form of autocracy, but it is antithetical to education in a democracy.

Is rejection enough? Is the urge to destroy really—as Bakunin suggests—
a creative urge? Dewey realizes that if the so-called new education is de-
veloped as a negative reaction to traditional beliefs, then its advocates have
fallen into the trap of either/or thinking. All too often what occurred in
Dewey's name and under the rubric of progressivism was nothing more than
mere reaction to the authorities of the past, with little or no attempt to recon-
struct that which had been torn down. While such deconstruction may be
necessary, it is not sufficient. For Dewey, there must be a vision of a better
way, a more appropriate way for improving the individual within the collect-
ive, the human being in society.

In writing Experience and Education, Dewey suggested that many so-called
progressives built their "new education" as a negative reaction to that which
they did not like or with which they did not agree. Rather than just rebelling against the traditional version of either/or thinking, Dewey based his "new education" on experience. In distinguishing good or educative experiences from bad or miseducative experiences, Dewey suggests that good experience is characterized by both interaction and continuity. An educative experience is one in which an active mind interacts with a wide-open world to solve genuine problems that are continuous with, yet different from, previous experiences. Recognizing that we are creatures of habit, Dewey suggests that it is our unique ability to stop, reflect, and then act—that is, to respond intelligently to a problematic situation requiring more than a mere habitual reaction—that distinguishes humans from less intelligent animals. In Experience and Education, Dewey offers the reader a succinct yet clear explanation of what he means by experience and how the key elements of interaction and continuity complement one another in good or educative experiences.

A careful reading of Experience and Education offers insights into Dewey's view of democracy. As already noted, Dewey championed democracy throughout his long life, and democracy for Dewey was more than opposition to authoritarian rule. Dewey was no anarchist. The basis for authority in a democracy is experience. Dewey suggests that in a true democracy, "it is not the will or desire of any one person (a philosopher or scientist) which establishes order but the moving spirit of the whole group." Creating and sustaining such a "moving spirit" is in Dewey's mind what education and philosophy should be about.

The poet Allen Ginsberg urged readers to "be not too quick to understand" his friend, the novelist Jack Kerouac. A similar caution ought to be adopted with John Dewey. A superficial reading of Article I of "Credo" might suggest that Dewey is trying to "adjust" the student to society. An equally superficial reading of Article V might suggest that Dewey is trying to overwhelm the existing society. Dewey, unless contradicted by himself, cannot be doing both. The excerpts from Democracy and Education and Experience and Education are meant to be the first steps in helping the reader to discover what Dewey meant and to formulate for himself or herself what education is.

NOTES
2. Ibid., p. vi.
3. Ibid., p. 536.
4. This quotation as well as much of the information in this brief introduction were derived from John Novak's review (distributed by the John Dewey Society) of John Westbrook's John Dewey and American Democracy.

"My Pedagogic Creed" (1897)

ARTICLE I—WHAT EDUCATION IS

I believe that

—all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions.

Through this unconscious education the individual gradually comes to share in the intellectual and moral resources which humanity has succeeded in getting together. He becomes an inheritor of the funded capital of civilization. The most formal and technical education in the world cannot safely depart from this general process. It can only organize it or differentiate it in some particular direction.

—the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. Through the responses which others make to his own activity he comes to know what these mean in social terms. The value which they have is reflected back into them. For instance, through the response which is made to the child's instinctive babblings the child comes to know what those babblings mean; they are transformed into articulate language, and thus the child is introduced into the consolidated wealth of ideas and emotions which are now summed up in language.

—this educational process has two sides—one psychological and one sociological—and that neither can be subordinated to the other, or neglected, without evil results following. Of these two sides, the psychological is the basis. The child's own instincts and powers furnish the material and give the starting-point for all education. Save as the efforts of the educator connect with some activity which the child is carrying on of his own initiative independent of the educator, education becomes reduced to a pressure from without. It may, indeed, give certain external results, but cannot truly be called educative. Without insight into the psychological structure and activities of the individual, the educative process will, therefore, be haphazard and arbitrary. If it chances to coincide with the child's activity it will get a leverage; if it does not, it will result in friction, or disintegration, or arrest of the child nature.

John Dewey
The Early Works, 1882–1898
5: 1895–1898

Early Essays

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My Pedagogic Creed

Article One. What Education Is
I believe that all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions. Through this unconscious education the individual gradually comes to share in the intellectual and moral resources which humanity has succeeded in getting together. He becomes an inheritor of the funded capital of civilization. The most formal and technical education in the world cannot safely depart from this general process. It can only organize it; or differentiate it in some particular direction.

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[First published in School Journal, LIV (Jan. 1897), 77-80. See A Note on the Texts for publishing history.]
I believe each of these objections is true when urged against one side isolated from the other. In order to know what a power really is we must know what its end, use, or function is; and this we cannot know save as we conceive of the individual as active in social relationships. But, on the other hand, the only possible adjustment which we can give to the child under existing conditions, is that which arises through putting him in complete possession of all his powers. With the advent of democracy and modern industrial conditions, it is impossible to foretell definitely just what civilization will be twenty years from now. Hence it is impossible to prepare the child for any precise set of conditions. To prepare him for the future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities; that his eye and ear and hand may be tools ready to command, that his judgment may be capable of grasping the conditions under which it has to work, and the executive forces be trained to act economically and efficiently. It is impossible to reach this sort of adjustment save as constant regard is had to the individual's own powers, tastes, and interests—say, that is, as education is continually converted into psychological terms.

In sum, I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interests, and habits must be continually interpreted—we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents—into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service.

**Article Two. What the School Is**

I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends.

I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.

I believe that the school must represent present life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground.

I believe that education which does not occur through forms of life, forms that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden.

I believe that the school, as an institution, should simplify existing social life; should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form. Existing life is so complex that the child cannot be brought into contact with it without either confusion or distraction; he is either overwhelmed by multiplicity of activities which are going on, so that he loses his own power of orderly reaction, or he is so stimulated by these various activities that his powers are prematurely called into play and he becomes either unduly specialized or else disintegrated.

I believe that, as such simplified social life, the school life should grow gradually out of the home life; that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home.

I believe that it should exhibit these activities to the child, and reproduce them in such ways that the child will gradually learn the meaning of them, and be capable of playing his own part in relation to them.

I believe that this is a psychological necessity, because it is the only way of securing continuity in the child's growth, the only way of giving a background of past experience to the new ideas given in school.

I believe it is also a social necessity because the home is the form of social life in which the child has been nurtured and in connection with which he has had his moral training. It is the business of the school to deepen and extend his sense of the values bound up in his home life.
I believe that much of present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school as a place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do these things for the sake of something else he is to do; they are mere preparation. As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative.

I believe that moral education centres about this conception of the school as a mode of social life, that the best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought. The present educational systems, so far as they destroy or neglect this unity, render it difficult or impossible to get any genuine, regular moral training.

I believe that the child should be stimulated and controlled in his work through the life of the community.

I believe that under existing conditions far too much of the stimulus and control proceeds from the teacher, because of neglect of the idea of the school as a form of social life.

I believe that the teacher's place and work in the school is to be interpreted from this same basis. The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and to assist him in properly responding to these influences.

I believe that the discipline of the school should proceed from the life of the school as a whole and not directly from the teacher.

I believe that the teacher's business is simply to determine on the basis of larger experience and riper wisdom, how the discipline of life shall come to the child.

I believe that all questions of the grading of the child and his promotion should be determined by reference to the same standard. Examinations are of use only so far as they test the child's fitness for social life and reveal the place in which he can be of the most service and where he can receive the most help.

Article Three. The Subject-Matter of Education

I believe that the social life of the child is the basis of concentration, or correlation, in all his training or growth. The social life gives the unconscious unity and the background of all his efforts and of all his attainments.

I believe that the subject-matter of the school curriculum should mark a gradual differentiation out of the primitive unconscious unity of social life.

I believe that we violate the child's nature and render difficult the best ethical results, by introducing the child too abruptly to a number of special studies, of reading, writing, geography, etc., out of relation to this social life.

I believe, therefore, that the true centre of correlation of the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's own social activities.

I believe that education cannot be unified in the study of science, or so-called nature study, because apart from human activity, nature itself is not a unity; nature in itself is a number of diverse objects in space and time, and to attempt to make it the centre of work by itself, is to introduce a principle of radiation rather than one of concentration.

I believe that literature is the reflex expression and interpretation of social experience; that hence it must follow upon and not precede such experience. It, therefore, cannot be made the basis, although it may be made the summary of unification.

I believe once more that history is of educative value in so far as it presents phases of social life and growth. It must be controlled by reference to social life. When taken simply as history it is thrown into the distant past and becomes dead and inert. Taken as the record of man's social life and progress it becomes full of meaning. I believe, however, that it cannot be so taken excepting as the child is also introduced directly into social life.

I believe accordingly that the primary basis of education is in the child's powers at work along the same general
constructive lines as those which have brought civilization into being.

I believe that the only way to make the child conscious of his social heritage is to enable him to perform those fundamental types of activity which make civilization what it is. I believe, therefore, in the so-called expressive or constructive activities as the centre of correlation.

I believe that this gives the standard for the place of cooking, sewing, manual training, etc., in the school.

I believe that they are not special studies which are to be introduced over and above a lot of others in the way of relaxation or relief, or as additional accomplishments. I believe rather that they represent, as types, fundamental forms of social activity; and that it is possible and desirable that the child's introduction into the more formal subjects of the curriculum be through the medium of these activities.

I believe that the study of science is educational in so far as it brings out the materials and processes which make social life what it is.

I believe that one of the greatest difficulties in the present teaching of science is that the material is presented in purely objective form, or is treated as a new peculiar kind of experience which the child can add to that which he has already had. In reality, science is of value because it gives the ability to interpret and control the experience already had. It should be introduced, not as so much new subject-matter, but as showing the factors already involved in previous experience and as furnishing tools by which that experience can be more easily and effectively regulated.

I believe that at present we lose much of the value of literature and language studies because of our elimination of the social element. Language is almost always treated in the books of pedagogy simply as the expression of thought. It is true that language is a logical instrument, but it is fundamentally and primarily a social instrument. Language is the device for communication; it is the tool through which one individual comes to share the ideas and feelings of others. When treated simply as a way of getting individual information, or as a means of showing off what one has learned, it loses its social motive and end.

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I believe that there is, therefore, no succession of studies in the ideal school curriculum. If education is life, all life has, from the outset, a scientific aspect; an aspect of art and culture and an aspect of communication. It cannot, therefore, be true that the proper studies for one grade are mere reading and writing, and that at a later grade, reading, or literature, or science, may be introduced. The progress is not in the succession of studies but in the development of new attitudes towards, and new interests in, experience.

I believe finally, that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing.

I believe that to set up any end outside of education, as furnishing its goal and standard, is to deprive the educational process of much of its meaning and tends to make us rely upon false and external stimuli in dealing with the child.

Article Four. The Nature of Method

I believe that the question of method is ultimately reducible to the question of the order of development of the child's powers and interests. The law for presenting and treating material is the law implicit within the child's own nature. Because this is so I believe the following statements are of supreme importance as determining the spirit in which education is carried on:

1. I believe that the active side precedes the passive in the development of the child nature; that expression comes before conscious impression; that the muscular development precedes the sensory; that movements come before conscious sensations; I believe that consciousness is essentially motor or impulsive; that conscious states tend to project themselves in action.

I believe that the neglect of this principle is the cause of a large part of the waste of time and strength in school work. The child is thrown into a passive, receptive or absorbing attitude. The conditions are such that he is not permitted to follow the law of his nature; the result is friction and waste.

I believe that ideas (intellectual and rational pro-
for the child, and so to weaken intellectual curiosity and alertness, to suppress initiative, and to deaden interest. To humor the interests is to substitute the transient for the permanent. The interest is always the sign of some power below; the important thing is to discover this power. To humor the interest is to fail to penetrate below the surface and its sure result is to substitute caprice and whim for genuine interest.

4. I believe that the emotions are the reflex of actions.

I believe that to endeavor to stimulate or arouse the emotions apart from their corresponding activities, is to introduce an unhealthy and morbid state of mind.

I believe that if we can only secure right habits of action and thought, with reference to the good, the true, and the beautiful, the emotions will for the most part take care of themselves.

I believe that next to deadness and dullness, formalism and routine, our education is threatened with no greater evil than sentimentalism.

I believe that this sentimentalism is the necessary result of the attempt to divorce feeling from action.

**Article Five. The School and Social Progress**

I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.

I believe that all reforms which rest simply upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile.

I believe that education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction.

I believe that this conception has due regard for both the individualistic and socialistic ideals. It is truly individual because it recognizes the formation of a certain character as the only genuine basis of right living. It is socialistic because it recognizes that this right character is not to be
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formed by merely individual precept, example, or exhortation, but rather by the influence of a certain form of institutional or community life upon the individual, and that the social organism through the school, as its organ, may determine ethical results.

I believe that in the ideal school we have the reconciliation of the individualistic and the institutional ideals.

I believe that the community's duty to education is, therefore, its paramount moral duty. By law and punishment, by social agitation and discussion, society can regulate and form itself in a more or less haphazard and chance way. But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move.

I believe that when society once recognizes the possibilities in this direction, and the obligations which these possibilities impose, it is impossible to conceive of the resources of time, attention, and money which will be put at the disposal of the educator.

I believe it is the business of every one interested in education to insist upon the school as the primary and most effective interest of social progress and reform in order that society may be awakened to realize what the school stands for, and aroused to the necessity of endowing the educator with sufficient equipment properly to perform his task.

I believe that education thus conceived marks the most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience.

I believe that the art of thus giving shape to human powers and adapting them to social service, is the supreme art; one calling into its service the best of artists; that no insight, sympathy, tact, executive power is too great for such service.

I believe that with the growth of psychological science, giving added insight into individual structure and laws of growth; and with growth of social science, adding to our knowledge of the right organization of individuals, all scientific resources can be utilized for the purposes of education.

I believe that when science and art thus join hands the most commanding motive for human action will be reached; the most genuine springs of human conduct aroused and the best service that human nature is capable of guaranteed.

I believe, finally, that the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life.

I believe that every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling; that he is a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth.

I believe that in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God.
social, economic, and political power. For the Spencerian educator, this individual competition leads to social progress. Spencer’s greatest impact was on curriculum formulation and implementation. His educational ideas, which were readily accepted in the United States, influenced the National Education Association committee that published the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* in 1918—a document that stressed education for practical and civic purposes. Modern curriculum designers continue to show Spencer’s influence when they base curriculum on an analysis of necessary human activities.

**DEWEY: LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE**

An examination of leading educational pioneers would be incomplete without some comments on John Dewey (1859–1952), the American philosopher and educator. Dewey’s synthesis of Darwinian evolutionary theory, the philosophy of pragmatism, and the scientific method formed the basis for his work as an educational reformer. Viewing education as a process of social activity, Dewey recognized that the school was intimately related to the society that it served.

Dewey was born in Vermont. After receiving his doctoral degree in philosophy from Johns Hopkins University in 1884, he taught philosophy at several universities. Dewey’s years at the University of Chicago, where he headed the combined departments of philosophy, psychology, and pedagogy, were important for the development of his educational theory. As the director of the University of Chicago’s Laboratory School from 1896 until 1904, he tested his pragmatic educational philosophy by using it as the basis of learning activities.

**Principles of Learning and Instruction.** Dewey’s well-known work *The Child and the Curriculum* provides a guide to the ideas used at the laboratory school. Viewing children as socially active human beings, Dewey believed that learners want to explore their environment and gain control over it. In exploring their world, learners encounter both personal and social problems. It is the problematic encounter that leads children to use their intelligence to solve the difficulty—to use the collected knowledge of the human race in an active and instrumental manner.

In Dewey’s view, the scientific method is the means of solving problems. Through the scientific method, the learner comes to direct and control his or her experience. This is the process by which human beings think reflectively and publicly. It is also the method of intelligent teaching and learning. The contemporary movement toward reflective teaching, discussed in Chapter 1, bears some resemblance to Dewey’s ideas. The following steps are extremely important in Dewey’s educational theory:

1. The learner has a “genuine situation of experience”—involvement in an activity that interests him or her.

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2. Within this experience, the learner has a "genuine problem" that stimulates thinking.

3. The learner possesses the information or does research to acquire the information needed to solve the problem.

4. The learner develops possible and tentative solutions that may solve the problem.

5. The learner tests the solutions by applying them to the problem. In this way, the learner discovers their validity for him- or herself.41

For Dewey, knowledge was not an inert body of information. It was, rather, an instrument to solve problems. The fund of knowledge of the human race — past ideas, discoveries, and inventions — was to be used as the material for dealing with problems. People should test and reconstruct this accumulated wisdom of the cultural heritage as necessary in light of present needs. Since human beings and the environment were constantly changing, knowledge too would continually be repatterned.

**Education and School.** Dewey conceived of education as the social process by which the immature members of the group, especially children, are brought to participate in group life. Through education, immature human beings are introduced to the cultural heritage and learn to use that heritage to deal with their problems. Education's sole purpose is to contribute to the personal and social growth of individuals. According to Dewey, education "is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience."44

Dewey's concept of the school was social and scientific. The school introduced children to society and their heritage based on each child's own interests, needs, and problems. The school as a miniature society was the means of bringing children into social participation. The school was scientific in the sense that it was a social laboratory in which children and youth could test their ideas and values. It was also scientific in a methodological sense: the learner was to acquire the disposition and procedures associated with scientific, or reflective, thinking and acting.44

Dewey outlined three levels of activity that would be used at the school. The first level, for preschool children, involved exercise of the sensory organs and development of physical coordination. The second level involved use of the materials and instruments found in the environment. The school was to be rich in the raw materials that excited children's interests and caused them to build, to experiment, and to create. Children in the third stage discovered new ideas, examined them, and used them. Now learning moved from simple impulse to careful observation, planning, and thinking about the consequences of action.

Dewey advocated democratic education and schooling, which meant that the learner must be free to test all ideas, beliefs, and values.44 Cultural heritage.
Dewey's Learning by Experience

Since John Dewey developed his experimentalist or pragmatic philosophy and applied it to education, his approach has been vigorously debated. Proponents of Dewey's method, many of whom are professors of education, emphasize learning by experience through the use of the scientific method. Opponents of Dewey's method claim that it lowers academic standards and achievement by weakening systematic subject-matter learning and encouraging relativistic values.

Question: Should Dewey's experimentalist method of inquiry be used as the basis of teaching and learning in American schools?

Arguments PRO

1. Dewey's method provides continuity between children's world of direct experience and a school curriculum that arises from and develops that experience. Because of this continuity, students readily become interested and motivated, eager to pursue their interests into areas of broader educational importance.

2. Free from absolutes based on previous concepts of reality, Dewey's method encourages students to question inherited traditions and values. It fosters an experiential attitude that leads to invention, discovery, and innovation and equips people to use knowledge as an instrument to solve the problems of a changing world.

3. Since Dewey's method of inquiry requires the freedom to think and to question, it encourages a democratic orientation to life and society. Dewey's method is therefore well suited to the American culture's stress on representative institutions and open discussion of issues.

4. Dewey's educational goal — human growth for the sake of further growth — promotes an instructional flexibility in which teachers and students are free to respond to personal and social issues. This type of education encourages the capacity for flexible responses to the environment, a capacity sorely needed in today's technological and interdependent world.

Arguments CON

1. By stressing the interests and needs of children and adolescents, Dewey's method fails to emphasize the important role of adults in transmitting the cultural heritage. It also minimizes the fact that learning often requires the child to apply effort before developing interests.

2. Dewey's method falsely assumes that the scientific method can be applied to any problem without a deep knowledge of the problem's context. On the contrary, it is important that students learn subjects systematically, not experimentally. The failure to master subject matter leads to many of the deficiencies of American students, especially in mathematics and science.

3. Dewey's method is highly relativistic and situation-deny ing the existence of universal truths and values. In order to survive and prosper, American democracy needs to reaffirm certain basic and traditional values, not call all values into question.

4. Dewey's argument that the only goal of education is growth for further growth neglects the need for standards that encourage intellectual achievement and economic productivity. Schools, teachers, and learners need substantive goals to guide the educational process: vague notions about human growth are not sufficient.
customs, and institutions are all subject to critical inquiry, investigation, and reconstruction. As a democratic institution, the school should be open to and used by all. He opposed barriers of custom or prejudice that segregate people from each other and believed that people ought to live, share, and work together to solve common problems. He opposed the authoritarian or coercive style of administration and teaching that blocked genuine inquiry; his ideal school was a place where children and teachers together planned the curriculum and activities that they would pursue and where there was enjoyment in teaching and learning.

Influence on Educational Practices Today. John Dewey exercised an enormous influence on American education. He developed and applied the open-ended philosophy of pragmatism to education and helped to open the process of schooling to change and innovation. For him, education was a social activity and the school was a social agency that helped shape human character and behavior. Today, educators who relate schooling to social purposes are following Dewey’s pioneering educational concepts.

Dewey’s ideas became closely associated with the progressive education movement, which emphasized the child’s interests, needs, and personal growth. Dewey has often been misunderstood, however. Although he advocated freedom to learn through inquiry, he did not encourage aimless educational anarchy. Similarly, although he emphasized the testing of ideas by their consequences in the present, he did not reject past knowledge or past experience. Dewey favored relative values, but his educational philosophy was not value free. For him, sharing, cooperation, community, and democracy were significant human values that schools should encourage.

Dewey’s influence can still be seen in American schools that focus on experimentation and on learning from the reflective reconstruction of experience. His concept of learning through problem solving has also been particularly influential in American teacher education. Moreover, Dewey had a strong international influence: he visited and lectured in Japan, China, and the Soviet Union, all of which instituted various educational reforms stimulated by his ideas.47


MONTESSORI: PREPLANNED EXPERIENCES

Maria Montessori (1870–1952), an Italian educator, devised a method of early childhood education that enjoys international popularity. Montessori schools can be found in Europe, the United States, and India. In her own education, Montessori left the conventional schooling that was considered appropriate for girls of the Italian upper-middle class to attend a technical school. She then became the first woman in Italy to earn the degree of doctor of medicine.48

As a physician, Montessori’s work brought her into contact with children who were regarded as mentally handicapped and brain damaged. Her work was
John Dewey and Progressive Education

Any serious examination of American education must contend with the prolific work of John Dewey (1859-1952). He was a major intellectual figure whose educational ideas were only one aspect of his wide-ranging concern with social, cultural, and philosophical issues. It is impossible to adequately summarize, in a few pages, the tremendous depth and breadth of his thought, which evolved during sixty years of changing social conditions and intellectual movements. His criticisms of traditional education and American culture were not always holistic, but they were incisive, and twentieth-century holistic educators have found much inspiration in his writings. In this chapter I will discuss a few of the major themes of Dewey's work and show their relevance to holistic education in American culture.

A central concern of Dewey's work is human experience. One brief statement of his position is found in his important book Democracy and Education (1916):

An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance. (Dewey 1966a, 144)

Experience is real and alive; theory (or belief, ideology) is merely derivative and should not be considered primary. Dewey gave at least three reasons for holding experience as primary. First, experience is "habitual." By this, Dewey meant to include knowledge that is beneath immediate consciousness and prior to rational thought. A person's physical capacities, previous experience, and selective exposure to the world (by growing up in a particular culture, for example — a point Dewey especially emphasized) bring about a certain orientation to the world. Things are already charged with meaning — one sees some of their possible implications and not others — before the person even begins to deliberate on them. Dewey said that the intrinsic qualities of things cannot even be described adequately in words, but must be "had" directly. To summarize his position, I think the essential point is that if theory (or belief) is always grounded in habitual ways of perception and experience, then it does not come from some realm of pure knowledge, logic, or truth, but from the meaningful "situation" inhabited by the person; and to make any sense, it must refer back to this world-as-experienced (e.g., Dewey 1957, 30-33).
Second, experience is unsundered, whole, organic. All living organisms, including persons, are intimately related to their environment. Behavior, habits, desires, needs, and thoughts do not occur in isolation but always involve an interaction (or "transaction") between an organism and its surrounding physical and (in the case of humans) social conditions. Dewey’s idea of experience opposes the reductionistic social science notion that a self-contained "stimulus" in the environment mechanically evokes a "response" in the organism. Objects or events in the environment are stimuli only as they awaken an impulse, need, or aim already attuned to them. In the language of the philosophical school of phenomenology (which parallels Dewey’s approach), experience is "intentional"; it always reflects a meaningful connection between the individual and the world. Experience is essentially an ongoing relationship between inner and outer aspects of nature. Therefore, it is incorrect to arbitrarily separate person and world, individual and society, freedom and discipline, mind and body, natural and supernatural. Dewey criticized theory and belief systems, most of all, for their dualism; that is, their tendency to separate experience into opposing and mutually exclusive categories. For Dewey, experience that is integrated — that which attains the fullest possible meaning — is a primary goal of human activity.

A third characteristic of experience is that it is constantly evolving. Dewey placed great emphasis on the reconstruction of experience: New experience is not merely added onto past experience, but transforms how the past is perceived. Old meanings, although habitual and somewhat resistant to change, are nevertheless subject to enlargement and enrichment by subsequent experience. Life is growth, an ongoing experiment, a continuous process of learning in a world that is only relatively predictable and "stable" and in many ways quite indeterminate and "precarious." Of course, growth under these circumstances involves risk and the willingness to relinquish the authority of tradition. This is the importance of education: it should enable the person — as well as an entire society — to look critically at previously accepted beliefs in the light of new experience. Dewey strongly opposed what he called the "quest for certainty": the substitution of rigid, dogmatic theory for the ongoing discoveries of experience.

Consequently, Dewey has been recognized as the major liberal social philosopher of the twentieth century. In his view, unquestioning allegiance to traditional beliefs and institutions is futile; cultures must change, and the only issue is whether change will be violently induced or intelligently directed. For Dewey, democracy is the best type of social order because it allows for intelligent inquiry and reconstruction. True democracy avoids the extreme concentration of economic and political power and mass indoctrination that characterize totalitarian societies, and it encourages citizens to take an active role in addressing social problems.

What does democracy mean save that the individual is to have a share in determining the conditions and the aims of his own work; and that, upon the whole, through the free and mutual harmonizing of different individuals, the work of the world is better done than when planned, arranged, and directed by a few...? (Dewey 1940, 66)

For Dewey, the contribution of individuals is vitally important for social reconstruction because "only diversity makes change and progress... Every new idea, every conception of things differing from that authorized by current belief, must have its origin in an individual" (Dewey 1966a, 90, 296).

Dewey was an important opponent of the conservative social efficiency movement in education. In an age when Jeffersonian ideals were under attack by the forces of an elitist professionalism, Dewey advocated the education of all persons for full participation in community life. Yet because of his integrated view of the individual-in-society, democracy for Dewey always meant a balance between this intellectual individualism and a strong concern for the common values of the community. This latter concern led him, especially in the years after the First World War, to explore a democratic socialism; during the Depression he led a group of "social reconstructionists" in an aggressive examination of laissez-faire capitalism. Thus, while Dewey valued the individual, he was not an enthusiastic libertarian as many holistic educators have been. On the other hand, while he emphasized the importance of social intelligence and values, he was not by any means a radical leftist. Because of his subtle blending of individualism and community interests in Dewey’s thought, it fails to completely satisfy the partisans of more extreme views — either radical or conservative. From the holistic point of view, where Dewey emphasized individual growth he has provided a welcome critique of traditional educational practices, but where he emphasized social and scientific intelligence his conclusions are somewhat troubling, as I will discuss below.

Dewey’s work is an important contribution to holistic theory, for he gave strong support to holistic educators’ emphasis on the growing person. To Dewey, as to the holistic tradition, the student must not be seen as an empty mind waiting to be filled with an assortment of facts and the wisdom of the ages, but must be respected as a person with characteristic needs, interests, and goals. Dewey agreed with Parker that, to be truly educational, the subject matter must evoke active inquiry and interaction; it must call to the student’s present experience. Education, Dewey said, is not preparation for adulthood but the further integration of experience at the present level of growth. Dewey asserted that there is no finished state of development; the adult personality — like the established culture — is always subject to further growth, unfolding and reconstruction. Education should nurture an intellectual openness, a desire to continue learning in every situation; and one’s present experience or "habit" should be seen as an instrument for new openings, for a still more inclusive integration (Dewey 1966a).

In Dewey’s view, it is intelligence — an inquiring, experimental openness to experience — that most successfully links the person to the larger world. The mission of education is to develop "reflective habits," because intelli-
out such agreement, it is possible that only teachers with certain values would be recruited into teaching and that teachers would become the arbiters of the meaning of nonrepression. Unfortunately, Gutmann does not suggest a political structure that would truly protect the principle of nonrepression from majority rule and the influence of special interests.

But even with these problems in Gutmann's reasoning, her ideals of nonrepression and nondiscrimination are important for a democratic society that requires all citizens to be able to deliberate about political issues. Both John Dewey and Henry Giroux would agree with Gutmann's emphasis on the need for nonrepression. Each suggests classroom methods for developing citizens who will be able to participate critically in democratic deliberations. But, like Gutmann, they do not suggest any viable political structure for assuring that schools adhere to educational methods that produce a critical citizenry. In addition, neither Dewey or Giroux has an answer to the dilemma of schools imposing a form of critical thinking on those people who do not want this type of education. It is the dilemma faced by Gutmann when she proposes maintaining the principle of nonrepression even if some students and parents object.

JOHN DEWEY: EDUCATING DEMOCRATIC CITIZENS

Writing most of his educational works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, John Dewey struggled with some of the same issues discussed in Chapter 1 regarding Adam Smith and Karl Marx. All three were concerned with the negative effects on workers of the modern industrial system. Dewey wanted to resolve these industrial issues within the context of a democratic political system. He believed a democratic society provided the conditions for the type of critical thinking required for the progress of civilization. Like Gutmann, Dewey argues in a somewhat circular fashion. Within Dewey's framework of thought, critical thinking is necessary for the survival of a democratic society and a democratic society is necessary for the exercise of his form of critical thinking.

Dewey advocated increasing the role of schools to deal with the effects of industrialization and urbanization. Dewey wanted the school to become the new social center of urban industrial society. He believed that the specialization of industry and the growth of large urban centers destroyed a sense of community and alienated people from one another. To counter these trends, he wanted the school to serve as a social center that would knit together the urban community by providing space for community gatherings, creating a sense of interdependence, and building a spirit of cooperation.

Dewey's concept of critical thinking is rooted in the concept of the social construction of knowledge, as opposed to the Socratic concept that knowledge is a reflection of some ideal form or created by a divine being. For instance, Socrates would argue that arithmetic is a reflection of some ideal system of numbers and the purpose of studying arithmetic, besides its practical value, is to lead the learner to an understanding of some form of ultimate truth. Dewey, on the other hand, would argue that arithmetic developed because humans needed to solve particular types of problems. In other words, arithmetic, for Dewey, was not derived from some ideal form but was created through social interaction.

For instance, in the Socratic dialogue Mnemosine, Dewey insists that young boys learn the diagonal of the square by being asked a series of questions. The assumption is that truth is in the individual and that to see it only requires turning the eyes in that direction. In the Dewey school, however, learning to count is tied to a concrete social situation. Young children are asked to set the table for a midmorning snack. In order to do this, the children have to count the number of students and then the number of spoons to be placed on the table. In the process, students learn that counting originated out of social necessity and that it serves a socially useful function.

Religious groups might object to Dewey's arguments regarding the social construction of knowledge because it challenges the idea of a god as the source of truth. Throughout the twentieth century, religious groups, particularly fundamentalists, have objected to the idea of moral values being socially constructed. For these groups, moral values are created by a god and remain immutable through time. Dewey, on the other hand, argues that moral values are a product of particular social situations. Moral systems develop because society needs some method of regulating behavior to maintain social order.

The difference between Dewey and religious groups over the origin of moral values highlights a central aspect of his form of critical thinking. For religious groups, moral values established by a god are immutable and humans should not attempt to change them. For Dewey, since moral values serve a particular social function, they should be changed or abandoned when they no longer serve that function. The value of any changes in or additions to moral values should be determined by their ability to achieve a particular objective. For instance, if the concern is to decrease crime rates, then existing moral values should be tested as to their effectiveness in preventing crime. If it is found that existing moral values are not preventing crime and new moral values are required, then the new moral values should be tested regarding their ability to reduce crime.

Therefore, the form of critical thinking Dewey argues is necessary for a democracy involves an understanding of the social construction of knowledge and the ability to test and judge the value of new forms of knowledge. Consequently, history is at the heart of Dewey's instructional methodology. It is through the study of history that students learn how and why knowledge and institutions were created.
Dewey wants history to be integrated into the teaching of all subjects. He objects to teaching young children subject matter, including science, in a form organized by contemporary adults. He wants subject matter to be tied to a particular social problem. For instance, young children might be interested in the topic of milk. A Deweyan instructor might guide the children in investigating the history and evolution of human use of milk, the chemistry of milk, agricultural practices used in producing milk, the value of milk, the treatment used to sterilize milk, and the distribution of milk to consumers. In the process of this study, students would learn history, chemistry, arithmetic, economics, sociology, agriculture, and biology. All of the knowledge learned in these disciplines would be tied to a particular social situation. In addition, students would learn why humans changed their methods of production and distribution of milk as they learned more about biology and health issues.

Another important element in the Dewey philosophy is basing instruction on the interests of the child. Dewey believes that learning is a product of individual interest. In addition, he wants to educate self-motivated people who would actively pursue knowledge and work for beneficial social change in a democratic society. For instance, the above example of the study of milk would originate in an expression of interest by the students in this topic.

Other aspects of Dewey's methods are related to concerns about the effects of urban industrial society. Dewey believes modern industry requires cooperation among workers and cooperation in solving economic and social problems. Consequently, Dewey made a big show of eliminating individual desks from the classroom and replacing them with tables for group work. Unlike Makarenko, who advocated disciplined collectivism (as discussed in Chapter 1), Dewey wants the spirit of cooperation to be developed through group work in the classroom.

Another method Dewey advocates for developing a spirit of cooperation is to encourage students to understand the interdependence of society. Like Adam Smith and Karl Marx, Dewey believes specialization in the factory had negative effects on workers. He argues that factory workers were alienated from their work because they did only one specialized task in the manufacturing process, such as operating a machine that puts heels on shoes. This repetitive and specialized labor did not give the worker the same feeling of accomplishment that could be gained from making the whole product. In addition, factory workers had little understanding of the social usefulness of their labor. In contrast, the old-time shoemaker made the whole shoe and saw customers wear the shoes. The old-time shoemaker gained satisfaction from making the whole product and could witness the social value of his work by seeing others use his products.

According to Dewey, the teaching of interdependence is supposed to heighten understanding of the social usefulness of work. Even if workers only put heels on shoes, they would have a knowledge of the social usefulness of their labor, gained thorough understanding the interdependence of society. Learning about the social construction of knowledge is supposed to convey to students a knowledge of the interdependence of society. This is also to be accomplished through group work in the classroom.

Dewey also believes that in industrialized societies factory workers experience a separation between thought and action. Factory workers operate machines but do not know or think about the theory behind their actions. In this situation, according to Dewey, workers experience a fragmentation of their power, becoming appendages of a factory machine rather than controlling and giving direction to the machine. Dewey writes in Democracy and Education that the separation of liberal education from industrial and professional education is a result "of a division of classes into those who had to labor for a living and those who were relieved from this necessity." Workers, he argues, have no insight into the social aims of their work, and consequently the "results actually achieved are not the ends of their actions, but only of their employers."

Therefore, the citizens in Dewey's ideal democratic society both understand the social usefulness of their work and are able to relate theory to practice. In addition, they understand that knowledge and institutions are products of particular social conditions and needs, and they are willing to change when ideas and institutions become outdated. Citizens in Dewey's democracy cooperate in testing new ideas and institutions to determine their value to the progress of civilization.

From Dewey's perspective, democracy is necessary for the advance of civilization because it allows for this type of critical thinking. If individuals are not willing to adopt their ideas and institutions to new social and environmental conditions, then, according to Dewey's reasoning, humanity faces the possibility of stagnation or extinction.

On the reverse side of the argument, the continued existence of democracy, according to Dewey, depends on citizens being critical thinkers. Without an understanding of social and economic conditions and how to change them, the average citizen faces the possibility of eventual slavery to an economic elite. The continued existence of democracy, Dewey argues, depends on a citizenry that actively participates in the construction and reconstruction of society. Therefore, Dewey's proposed form of education is necessary for the continuation of democracy and the progress of civilization.

In the end, Dewey faces the same problems as Gutmann: How do you ensure a democratically controlled school system, that a particular—in this case Dewey's—method prevails? One could argue that a person educated according to Deweyan methods would support only an educational system that educates other children by the same method. But this does not answer the question of how to organize the political structure of education to ensure that Dewey's methodology is used in all public schools.

There is also the issue of the source of truth. How do we know that Dewey is correct? Dewey seems to think he derived the truth through his reasoning about history and society. Does this mean that Dewey is the source of truth? Or does it mean that philosophers are the source of truth? Dewey would probably respond that truth is relative to a given social situation. If his ideas work, then they should be used. If they are no longer viable, then they should be discarded. In this case, the decision might be made by a democratic majority or by implementing findings of experiments conducted by social scientists.
Another problem is that of imposition. A weakness in Gutmann's arguments is that the educational system she advocates can force people who do not believe schools should promote consideration of alternative definitions of the good life to be educated in institutions that practice nonrepression. In the context of Dewey's thought, it hardly seems democratic to force students to learn a method to which they might object. What about people who believe that a god is the source of truth? Are they to be forced into educational institutions that teach a method of critical thinking that is in opposition to that belief? Implied in Gutmann's and Dewey's arguments is the idea that the school must be authoritarian in demanding a certain type of education in order to maintain a democratic state.

HENRY GIROUX: CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

In the 1980s and 1990s, Henry Giroux expanded on Dewey's concepts of critical thinking and democracy. Like Dewey, Giroux believes that knowledge originates in social interaction. In addition, Giroux goes beyond Dewey in his argument that social relationships must be understood in the context of power. Knowledge and institutions are created to solve social problems, but the type of solution is dependent on who has the most power. For instance, slavery might be considered a product of a desire by Europeans to cultivate agricultural products in North and South America. Of course, this analysis of the social construction of slavery is trivial when compared to the human suffering and inequality that resulted from slavery. The only true way of understanding the social construction of slavery, Giroux would argue, is in the fact that Europeans had the power to enforce a system of slavery. For many Europeans, slavery became a legitimate way of developing North and South America. In addition, Europeans developed theories of racial inferiority to justify the enslavement of Africans and Native Americans. Therefore, within this framework of thought, the historical origins of theories of racial inferiority must be understood as resulting from relations of power.

For Giroux, the primary task of education is to help students understand the social construction of knowledge in the framework of power. The method of achieving this goal is critical pedagogy. The final aim of the process is the empowerment of the student and ultimately the empowerment of all citizens.

Empowerment, in Giroux's words, means "the process whereby students acquire the means to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live." In other words, students are empowered when they gain the knowledge and critical understanding required to improve the social and economic conditions of the world. At the heart of empowerment is the search for methods of eliminating social injustice and decreasing inequalities in power.

Of course, a consideration of power relations is crucial for a democratic state that claims to share power with all people. Inequalities in power occur because of differences in wealth, social status, occupation, gender, and race. In a democratic society, these differences can give some people more power than others in influencing political decisions. Certainly, wealth provides greater access to political candidates and provides greater opportunity for influencing legislation. Anyone looking at a picture of the U.S. Senate might conclude that being a white male improves a person's ability to become a senator.

For Giroux, critical pedagogy gives people the ability to participate in a democratic state and the tools to equalize the distribution of power. Also, a democratic state is necessary for the exercise of critical thinking. Therefore, in reasoning similar to Dewey's, Giroux argues that there is a close interdependence between critical thinking and the democratic state. Simply stated, one cannot exist without the other.

Giroux's concept of democracy extends to all spheres of life. He argues that not only government but schools, corporations, and other institutions should be sites of democratic struggle. Teachers, students, workers, parents—all citizens—should struggle in all institutions that affect their lives to eliminate inequalities in power and human injustice.

In this context, the school, as a site of democratic struggle, should be shaped by attempts to promote justice and eliminate inequality of power. Critical pedagogy is a method that prepares all citizens for participation in the democratic state and prepares students to participate in this democratic struggle within the school and in other public spheres of life. In other words, critical pedagogy is both a method for maintaining a democratic state and the means by which the school becomes a democratic public institution.

As an instructional method, critical pedagogy gives a voice to all participants. In general, the goal is to help people understand why they think the way they do. That is, the method helps people understand how the social construction of knowledge determines what people believe is true and how they interpret their surrounding world. For instance, consider the preceding example of the development of theories of racial inferiority in order to justify slavery. People might grow up believing these theories are true and act according to these beliefs. Without questioning these beliefs, people might operate on unquestioned assumptions that cause inequality between races. Critical pedagogy would let people give voice to their beliefs, whatever their source, and then engage in a dialogue about the origins of these racist theories. A possible result of such critical dialogue would be an understanding that those beliefs originated in a justification by those with power of European acts of slavery.

The importance of providing a voice for all people is illustrated in a classroom situation described by Giroux. The example is meant to illustrate his concern about teachers who ignore student voices that they feel are not politically correct. In his example, a middle-class teacher is horrified at the sexism of male students. The teacher tries to correct this situation by showing feminist films and distributing feminist literature.
BY JOHN DEWEY

ART AS EXPERIENCE

THE QUEST FOR CERTAINTY
INDIVIDUALISM OLD AND NEW
PHILOSOPHY AND CIVILIZATION
ART AS EXPERIENCE

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CHAPTER I

THE LIVE CREATURE

BY ONE of the ironic perversities that often attend the course of affairs, the existence of the works of art upon which formation of an esthetic theory depends has become an obstruction to theory about them. For one reason, these works are products that exist externally and physically. In common conception, the work of art is often identified with the building, book, painting, or statue in its existence apart from human experience. Since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, the result is not favorable to understanding. In addition, the very perfection of some of these products, the prestige they possess because of a long history of unquestioned admiration, creates conventions that get in the way of fresh insight. When an art product once attains classic status, it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life experience.

When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which esthetic theory deals. Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing, and achievement. A primary task is thus imposed upon one who undertakes to write upon the philosophy of the fine arts. This task is to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience. Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They are the earth in one of its most intense operations. It is the business of those who are concerned with the theory of the earth, geographers and geologists, to make this fact
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evident in its various implications. The theorist who would deal philosophically with fine art has a like task to accomplish.

If one is willing to grant this position, even if only by way of temporary experiment, he will see that there follows a conclusion at first sight surprising. In order to understand the meaning of artistic products, we have to forget them for a time, to turn aside from them and have recourse to the ordinary forces and conditions of experience that we do not usually regard as aesthetic. We must arrive at the theory of art by means of a detour. For theory is concerned with understanding, insight, not without exclamations of admiration, and stimulation of that emotional outburst often called appreciation. It is quite possible to enjoy flowers in their colored form and delicate fragrance without knowing anything about plants theoretically. But if one sets out to understand the flowering of plants, he is committed to finding out something about the interactions of soil, air, water and sunlight that condition the growth of plants.

By common consent, the Parthenon is a great work of art. Yet it has esthetic standing only as the work becomes an experience for a human being. And, if one is to go beyond personal enjoyment into the formation of a theory about that large republic of art of which the building is one member, one has to be willing at some point in his reflections to turn from it to the bustling, arguing, acutely sensitive Athenian citizens, with civic sense identified with a civic religion, of whose experience the temple was an expression, and who built it not as a work of art but as a civic commemoration. The turning to them is as human beings who had needs that were a demand for the building and that were carried to fulfillment in it; it is not an examination such as might be carried on by a sociologist in search for material relevant to his purpose. The one who sets out to theorize about the esthetic experience embodied in the Parthenon must realize in thought what the people into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own homes and on our own streets.

In order to understand the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man, arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens; the sights that hold the crowd—the fire-engine rushing by; the machines excavating enormous holes in the earth; the human-fly climbing the steeple-side; the men perched high in air on girders, throwing and catching red-hot bolts. The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd; who notes the delight of the housewife in tending her plants, and the intent interest of her goodman in tending the patch of green in front of the house; the zest of the spectator in poking the wood burning on the hearth and in watching the darting flames and crumbling coals. These people, if questioned as to the reason for their actions, would doubtless return reasonable answers. The man who poked the sticks of burning wood would say he did it to make the fire burn better; but he is none the less fascinated by the colorful drama of change enacted before his eyes and imaginatively partakes in it. He does not remain a cold spectator. What Coleridge said of the reader of poetry is true in its way of all who are happily absorbed in their activities of mind and body: "The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, not by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of the journey itself."

The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged. The difference between such a worker and the inept and careless bungler is as great in the shop as it is in the studio. Often times the product may not appeal to the esthetic sense of those who use the product. The fault, however, is oftentimes not so much with the worker as with the conditions of the market for which his product is designed. Were conditions and opportunities different, things as significant to the eye as those produced by earlier craftsmen would be made.

So extensive and subtly pervasive are the ideas that set Art upon a remote pedestal, that many a person would be repelled rather than pleased if told that he enjoyed his casual recreations. In part at least, because of their esthetic quality. The arts which today have most vitality, for the average person are things he does not take to be arts: for instance, the movie, jazzed music,
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The comic strip, and, too frequently, newspaper accounts of love-

nests, murders, and exploits of bandits. For, when what he knows

as art is relegated to the museum and gallery, the unquenchable

impulse towards experiences enjoyable in themselves finds such

outlet as the daily environment provides. Many a person who

protests against the museum conception of art, still shares the

fallacy from which that conception springs. For the popular

notion comes from a separation of art from the objects and scenes

of ordinary experience that many theorists and critics pride

themselves upon holding and even elaborating. The times when

select and distinguished objects are closely connected with the

products of usual vocations are the times when appreciation of

the former is most rife and most keen. When, because of their

remoteness, the objects acknowledged by the cultivated to be

works of fine art seem anemic to the mass of people, esthetic

hunger is likely to seek the cheap and the vulgar.

The factors that have glorified fine art by setting it upon

a far-off pedestal did not arise within the realm of art nor is

their influence confined to the arts. For many persons an aura

of mingled awe and unreality encompasses the "spiritual" and

the "ideal" while "matter" has become by contrast a term of

depreciation, something to be explained away or apologized for.

The forces at work are those that have removed religion as well

as fine art from the scope of the common or community life. The

forces have historically produced so many of the dislocations

and divisions of modern life and thought that art could not escape

their influence. We do not have to travel to the ends of the earth

nor return many millennia in time to find peoples for whom every-

thing that intensifies the sense of immediate living is an object

of intense admiration. Bodily sacri
cification, waving feathers, gaudy

robes, shining ornaments of gold and silver, of emerald and jade,

formed the contents of esthetic arts, and, presumably, without the

vulgarity of class exhibitionism that attends their analogues today.

Domestic utensils, furnishings of tent and house, rugs, mats, jars,
pots, bows, spears, were wrought with such delighted care that

today we hunt them out and give them places of honor in our

art museums. Yet, in their own time and place, such things were

enhancements of the processes of everyday life. Instead of being

elevated to a niche apart, they belonged to display of prowess, the

manifestation of group and clan membership, worship of gods,

feasting and fasting, fighting, hunting, and all the rhythmic

crises that punctuate the stream of living.

Dancing and pantomime, the sources of the art of the

theater, flourished as part of religious rites and celebrations.

Musical art abounded in the fingering of the stretched string, the

beating of the taut skin, the blowing with reeds. Even in the caves

human habitations were adorned with colored pictures that kept

alive to the senses experiences with the animals that were so

closely bound with the lives of humans. Structures that housed

their gods and the instrumentalities that facilitated commerce

with the higher powers were wrought with especial fineness. But

the arts of the drama, music, painting, and architecture thus

exemplified had no peculiar connection with theaters, galleries,
museums. They were part of the significant life of an organized

community.

The collective life that was manifested in war, worship,

the forum, knew no division between what was characteristic of

these places and operations, and the arts that brought color,
grace, and dignity, into them. Painting and sculpture were organi-
cally one with architecture, as that was one with the social purpose

that buildings served. Music and song were intimate parts of the

rites and ceremonies in which the meaning of group life was

consummated. Drama was a vital reenactment of the legends and

history of group life. Not even in Athens can such arts be torn

loose from this setting in direct experience and yet retain their

significant character. Athletic sports, as well as drama, celebrated

and enforced traditions of race and group, instructing the people,

commemorating glories, and strengthening their civic pride.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the

Athenian Greeks, when they came to reflect upon art, formed

the idea that it is an act of reproduction, or imitation. There are

many objections to this conception. But the vogue of the theory

is testimony to the close connection of the fine arts with daily

life; the idea would not have occurred to any one had art been

remote from the interests of life. For the doctrine did not signify

that art was a literal copying of objects, but that it reflected the

emotions and ideas that are associated with the chief institutions

of social life. Plato felt this connection so strongly that it led him
to his idea of the necessity of censorship of poets, dramatists, and musicians. Perhaps he exaggerated when he said that a change from the Doric to the Lydian mode in music would be the sure precursor of civic degeneration. But no contemporary would have doubted that music was an integral part of the ethos and the institutions of the community. The idea of "art for art's sake" would not have been even understood.

There must then be historic reasons for the rise of the compartmental conception of fine art. Our present museums and galleries to which works of fine art are removed and stored illustrate some of the causes that have operated to segregate art instead of finding it an attendant of temple, forum, and other forms of associated life. An instructive history of modern art could be written in terms of the formation of the distinctively modern institutions of museum and exhibition gallery. I may point to a few outstanding facts. Most European museums are, among other things, memorials of the rise of nationalism and imperialism. Every capital must have its own museum of painting, sculpture, etc., devoted in part to exhibiting the greatness of its artistic past, and, in other part, to exhibiting the loot gathered by its monarchs in conquest of other nations; for instance, the accumulations of the spoils of Napoleon that are in the Louvre. They testify to the connection between the modern segregation of art, and nationalism and militarism. Doubtless this connection has served at times a useful purpose, as in the case of Japan, who, when she was in the process of westernization, saved much of her art treasures by nationalizing the temples that contained them.

The growth of capitalism has been a powerful influence in the development of the museum as the proper home for works of art, and in the promotion of the idea that they are apart from the common life. The nouveaux riches, who are an important by-product of the capitalist system, have felt especially bound to surround themselves with works of fine art which, being rare, are also costly. Generally speaking, the typical collector is the typical capitalist. For evidence of good standing in the realm of higher culture, he amasses paintings, statuary, and artistic bijoux, as his stocks and bonds certify to his standing in the economic world.

Not merely individuals, but communities and nations, put their cultural good taste in evidence by building opera houses, galleries, and museums. These show that a community is not wholly absorbed in material wealth, because it is willing to spend its gains in patronage of art. It erects these buildings and collects their contents as it now builds a cathedral. These things reflect and establish superior cultural status, while their segregation from the common life reflects the fact that they are not part of a native and spontaneous culture. They are a kind of counterpart of a holier-than-thou attitude, exhibited not toward persons as such but toward the interests and occupations that absorb most of the community's time and energy.

Modern industry and commerce have an international scope. The contents of galleries and museums testify to the growth of economic cosmopolitanism. The mobility of trade and of populations, due to the economic system, has weakened or destroyed the connection between works of art and the genius loci of which they were once the natural expression. As works of art have lost their indigenous status, they have acquired a new one—that of being specimens of fine art and nothing else. Moreover, works of art are now produced, like other articles, for sale in the market. Economic patronage by wealthy and powerful individuals has at many times played a part in the encouragement of artistic production. Probably many a savage tribe had its Maecenas. But now even that much of intimate social connection is lost in the impersonality of a world market. Objects that were in the past valid and significant because of their place in the life of a community now function in isolation from the conditions of their origin. By that fact they are also set apart from common experience, and serve as insignia of taste and certificates of special culture.

Because of changes in industrial conditions the artist has been pushed to one side from the main streams of active interest. Industry has been mechanized and an artist cannot work mechanically for mass production. He is less integrated than formerly in the normal flow of social services. A peculiar aesthetic "individualism" results. Artists find it incumbent upon them to betake themselves to their work as an isolated means of "self-expression." In order not to cater to the trend of economic forces, they often feel obliged to exaggerate their separateness to the point of eccentricity. Consequently artistic products take on to a
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...still greater degree the air of something independent and esoteric.

Put the action of all such forces together, and the conditions that create the gulf which exists generally between producer and consumer in modern society operate to create also a chasm between ordinary and aesthetic experience. Finally we have, as the record of this chasm, accepted as if it were normal, the philosophies of art that locate it in a region inhabited by no other creature, and that emphasize beyond all reason the merely contemplative character of the aesthetic. Confusion of values enters in to accentuate the separation. Adventitious matters, like the pleasure of collecting, of exhibiting, of ownership and display, simulate aesthetic values. Criticism is affected. There is much applause for the wondrous of appreciation and the glories of the transcendent beauty of art indulged in without much regard to capacity for esthetic perception in the concrete.

My purpose, however, is not to engage in an economic interpretation of the history of the arts, much less to argue that economic conditions are either invariably or directly relevant to perception and enjoyment, or even to interpretation of individual works of art. It is to indicate that theories which isolate art and its appreciation by placing them in a realm of their own disconnected from other modes of experiencing are not inherent in the subject-matter but arise because of specifiable extraneous conditions. Embedded as they are in institutions and in habits of life, these conditions operate effectively because they work so unconsciously. Then the theorist assumes they are embedded in the nature of things. Nevertheless, the influence of these conditions is not confined to theory. As I have already indicated, it deeply affects the practice of living, driving away esthetic perceptions that are necessary ingredients of happiness, or reducing them to the level of compensating transient pleasurable excitements.

Even to readers who are adversely inclined to what has been said, the implications of the statements that have been made may be useful in defining the nature of the problem: that of recovering the continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living. The understanding of art and of its role in civilization is not furthered by setting out with eulogies of it nor by occupying ourselves exclusively at the outset with great works of art recognized as such. The comprehension which theory

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...essays will be arrived at by a detour; by going back to experience of the common or mill run of things to discover the esthetic quality such experience possesses. Theory can start with and from acknowledged works of art only when the esthetic is already compartmentalized, or only when works of art are set in a niche apart instead of being celebrations, recognized as such, of the things of everyday experience. Even a crude experience, if authentically an experience, is more fit to give a clue to the intrinsic nature of aesthetic experience than is an object already set apart from any other mode of experience. Following this clue we can discover how the work of art develops and accentuates what is characteristically valuable in things of everyday enjoyment. The art product will then be seen to issue from the latter, when the full meaning of ordinary experience is expressed, as dyes come out of coal tar products when they receive special treatment.

Many theories about art already exist. If there is justification for proposing yet another philosophy of the aesthetic, it must be found in a new mode of approach. Combinations and permutations among existing theories can easily be brought forth by those so inclined. But, to my mind, the trouble with existing theories is that they start from a ready-made compartmentalization, or from a conception of art that "spiritualizes" it out of connection with the objects of concrete experience. The alternative, however, to such spiritualization is not a degrading and Philistinish materialization of works of fine art, but a conception that discloses the way in which these works idealize qualities found in common experience. Were works of art placed in a directly human context in popular esteem, they would have a much wider appeal than they can have when pigeon-hole theories of art win general acceptance.

A conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favor the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value. It will also be able to point out those conditions that arrest its normal growth. Writers on esthetic theory often raise the question of whether esthetic philosophy can aid in cultivation of esthetic appreciation. The question is a branch of the general theory of criticism, which, it seems to me, fails to accomplish.
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The full office if it does not indicate what to look for and what to find in concrete esthetic objects. But, in any case, it is safe to say that a philosophy of art is sterilized unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience, and unless it indicates why this function is so inadequately realized, and unless it suggests the conditions under which the office would be successfully performed.

The comparison of the emergence of works of art out of ordinary experiences to the refining of raw materials into valuable products may seem to some unworthy, if not an actual attempt to reduce works of art to the status of articles manufactured for commercial purposes. The point, however, is that no amount of ecstatic eulogy of finished works can or itself assist the understanding or the generation of such works. Flowers can be enjoyed without knowing about the interactions of soil, air, moisture, and seeds of which they are the result. But they cannot be understood without taking just these interactions into account—and theory is a matter of understanding. Theory is concerned with discovering the nature of the production of works of art and of their enjoyment in perception. How is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic? How is it that our everyday enjoyment of scenes and situations develops into the peculiar satisfaction that attends the experience which is emphatically esthetic? These are the questions theory must answer. The answers cannot be found, unless we are willing to find the germs and roots in matters of experience that we do not currently regard as esthetic. Having discovered these active seeds, we may follow the course of their growth into the highest forms of finished and refined art.

It is a commonplace that we cannot direct, save accidentally, the growth and flowering of plants, however lovely and enjoyed, without understanding their causal conditions. It should be just a commonplace that esthetic understanding—as distinct from sheer personal enjoyment—must start with the soil, air, and light out of which things esthetically admirable arise. And these conditions are the conditions and factors that make an ordinary experience complete. The more we recognize this fact, the more we shall find ourselves faced with a problem rather than with a final solution. If artistic and esthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience, how shall we explain how and why it so generally fails to become explicit? Why is it that to multitudes art seems to be an importation into experience from a foreign country and the esthetic to be a synonym for something artificial?

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We cannot answer these questions any more than we can trace the development of art out of everyday experience, unless we have a clear and coherent idea of what is meant when we say "normal experience." Fortunately, the road to arriving at such an idea is open and well marked. The nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life. While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living. Having the same vital needs, man derives the means by which he breathes, moves, looks and listens, the very brain with which he coordinates his senses and his movements, from his animal forbears. The organs with which he maintains himself in being are not of himself alone, but by the grace of struggles and achievements of a long line of animal ancestry.

Fortunately a theory of the place of the esthetic in experience does not have to lose itself in minute details when it starts with experience in its elemental form. Broad outlines suffice. The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely in it but because of it, through interaction with it. No creature lives merely under its skin; its subcutaneous organs are means of connection with what lies beyond its bodily frame, and to which, in order to live, it must adjust itself, by accommodation and defense but also by conquest. At every moment, the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way.

The growl of a dog crouching over his food, his bowl in time of loss and loneliness, the wagging of his tail at the return of his human friend are expressions of the implication of a living in a natural medium which includes man along with the animal he has domesticated. Every need, say hunger for fresh air
or food, is a lack that denotes at least a temporary absence of adequate adjustment with surroundings. But it is also a demand, a reaching out into the environment to make good the lack and to restore adjustment by building at least a temporary equilibrium. Life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers union with it—either through effort or by some happy chance. And, in a growing life, the recovery is never mere return to a prior state, for it is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed. If the gap between organism and environment is too wide, the creature dies. If its 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.

These biological commonplace are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the esthetic in experience. The world is full of things that are indifferent and even hostile to life; the very processes by which life is maintained tend to throw it out of gear with its surroundings. Nevertheless, if life continues and if in continuing it expands, there is an overcoming of factors of opposition and conflict; there is a transformation of them into differentiated aspects of a higher powered and more significant life. The marvel of organic, of vital, adaptation through expansion (instead of by contraction and passive accommodation) actually takes place. Here in germ are balance and harmony attained through rhythm. Equilibrium comes about not mechanically and inertly but out of, and because of, tension.

There is in nature, even below the level of life, something more than mere flux and change. Form is arrived at whenever a stable, even though moving, equilibrium is reached. Changes interlock and sustain one another. Wherever there is this coherence there is endurance. Order is not imposed from without but is made out of the relations of harmonious interactions that energies bear to one another. Because it is active (not anything static because foreign to what goes on), order itself develops. It comes to include within its balanced movement a greater variety of changes.

Order cannot but be admirable in a world constantly threatened with disorder. In a world where living creatures can go on living only by taking advantage of whatever order exists about them, incorporating it into themselves. In a world like ours, every living creature that attains sensibility welcomes order with a response of harmonious feeling whenever it finds a congruous order about it.

For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living. And when the participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict, it bears within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the esthetic.

The rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union not only persists in man but becomes conscious with him; its conditions are material out of which he forms purposes. 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. With the realization, material of reflection is incorporated into objects as their meaning. Since the artist cares in a peculiar way for the phase of experience in which union is achieved, he does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total. In contrast with the person whose purpose is esthetic, the scientific man is interested in problems, in situations wherein tension between the matter of observation and of thought is marked. Of course he cares for their resolution. But he does not rest in it; he passes on to another problem using an attained solution only as a stepping stone from which to set on foot further inquiries.

The difference between the esthetic and the intellectual is thus one of the place where emphasis falls in the constant rhythm that marks the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings. The ultimate matter of both emphases in experience is the same, as is also their general form. The odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific inquirer does nothing else is the result of converting a difference of tempo and emphasis into a difference in kind. The thinker has his esthetic moment when his ideas cease to be mere ideas and become the corporate mean-
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ings of objects. The artist has his problems and thinks as he works. But his thought is more immediately embodied in the object. Because of the comparative remoteness of his end, the scientific worker operates with symbols, words and mathematical signs. The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it.

The live animal does not have to project emotions into the objects experienced. Nature is kind and hateful, bland and morose, irritating and comforting, long before she is mathematically qualified or even a congeries of "secondary" qualities like colors and their shapes. Even such words as long and short, solid and hollow, still carry to all, but those who are intellectually specialized, a moral and emotional connotation. The dictionary will inform any one who consults it that the early use of words like sweet and bitter was not to denote qualities of sense as such but to discriminate things as favorable and hostile. How could it be otherwise? Direct experience comes from nature and man interacting with each other. In this interaction, human energy gathers, is released, dammed up, frustrated and victorious. There are rhythmic beats of want and fulfillment, pulses of doing and being withheld from doing.

All interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms. There is ebb and flow, systole and diastole; ordered change. The latter moves within bounds. To overpass the limits that are set is destruction and death, out of which, however, new rhythms are built up. The proportionate interception of changes establishes an order that is spatially, not merely temporally patterned: like the waves of the sea, the ripples of sand where waves have flowed back and forth, the fleecy and the black-bottomed cloud. Contrast of lack and fullness, of struggle and achievement, of adjustment after consummated irregularity, form the drama in which action, feeling, and meaning are one. The outcome is balance and counterbalance. These are not static nor mechanical. They express power that is intense because measured through overcoming resistance. Environing objects avail and counteravail.

There are two sorts of possible worlds in which esthetic experience would not occur. In a world of mere flux, change
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Most mortals are conscious that a split often occurs between their present living and their past and future. Then the past hangs upon them as a burden; it invades the present with a sense of regret, of opportunities not used, and of consequences we wish undone. It rests upon the present as an oppression, instead of being a storehouse of resources by which to move confidently forward. But the live creature adopts its past; it can make friends with even its stupidities, using them as warnings that increase present wariness. Instead of trying to live upon whatever may have been achieved in the past, it uses past successes to inform the present. Every living experience owes its richness to what Santayana well calls “hushed reverberations.”

To the being fully alive, the future is not ominous but a promise; it surrounds the present as a halo. It consists of possibilities that are felt as a possession of what is now and here. In life that is truly lived, everything overlaps and merges. But all too often we equalize apprehensions of the future. It may bring, and are divided within ourselves. Even when not overanxious, we do not enjoy the present because we subordinate it to that which is absent. Because of the frequency of this abandonment of the present to the past and future, the happy periods of an experience that is now complete because it absorbs into itself memories of the past and anticipations of the future, come to constitute an aesthetic ideal. Only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive. 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.

To grasp the sources of esthetic experience it is, therefore, necessary to have recourse to animal life below the human scale.

*These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird notes, this sky with its fitful brightness, these sunned and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedge, such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the dewy-bladed grass today might be no more than the faint perception of weaned souls, if it were not for the sunshine and grass of far-off years, which still live in us and transform our perception into love.” George Eliot in “The Mill on the Floss.”

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The activities of the fox, the dog, and the thrush may at least stand as reminders and symbols of that unity of experience which we so fractionize when work is labor, and thought withdraws us from the world. The live animal is fully present, all there, in all, of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffs, its abrupt cocking of ears. All senses are equally on the qui vive. As you watch, you see motion merging into sense and sense into motion—constituting that animal grace so hard for man to rival. What the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present. The dog is never pedantic nor academic; for these things arise only when the past is severed in consciousness from the present and is set up as a model to copy or a storehouse upon which to draw. The past absorbed into the present carries on; it presses forward.

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 as 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 mere ignorance that leads then to the supposition that connection of art and esthetic perception with experience signifies a lowering of their significance and dignity. Experience in the degree in which it is experience is heightened vitality. Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events. Instead of signifying surrender to caprice and disorder, it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing. Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience.
Chapter 1 Experience and the Arts

John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934) begins by sidestepping the arts completely, even though *art* stands as the first word in the title. The book opens instead with an extended commentary on experience, its traits and preconditions. There is an important reason for this order of things. For Dewey, ordinary experience is historically prior to its evolved variants. All of the more specialized forms of experiencing, such as those that we encounter in the arts or the sciences or religion, made their appearance secondarily. These more highly evolved forms of interaction derived from experiences in everyday life. They could never have come into being if ordinary experience were not the way it is. In short, Dewey wants to reflect upon what common experience is like before moving on to consider its more specialized and derivative forms.

Dewey's sidestep makes good sense, but it has drawbacks. One is that the qualities being looked for are not immediately evident. Though ordinary experience is commonplace, its attributes are not apparent. Its underlying structure, traits, and preconditions do not stand out for all to see. Dewey put it this way: "It is not experience
which is experienced, but nature—stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways are experience; they are what is experienced." (LW1, 12). To talk about experience requires a kind of stepping back from a consideration of its contents in order to say something about its form.

But we remain locked within experience even when we step back. Thus the view that we are trying to develop conforms to the same structures and circumstances that we are seeking to describe. If we find, for example, that the substance of experience is always contingent upon the situation as a whole, so too must be our declarations about it. What we have to say about experience is, perforce, situated as well. In other words, there is no privileged position outside experience from which to make our observations, no neutral ground on which to stand. This means, among other things, that our pronouncements about the nature of experience must be provisional. They must remain open to revision in the light of subsequent experience.

Another difficulty resides in the widespread belief that we already know what experience is like generically, even though we may seldom speak of it in those terms. As part of mastering a language and learning to communicate with others we each develop a perspective on what it means to be human, one that contains any number of tacit assumptions and beliefs about the nature of experience. Some of these tacitly held beliefs are built directly into our language and become part of our way of thinking without our even realizing it. Others are transmitted more explicitly. Both kinds can be immensely helpful. As part of what we usually call common sense, they save us from having to construct a worldview entirely from scratch. They enable us to communicate with one another. They also, however, turn out to be a liability when we entertain alternative perspectives. Whatever appears commonsensical to us also usually seems incontrovertible. We typically are unwilling to give it up without a struggle.

Dewey was painfully aware of these difficulties and was almost defeated by them. After struggling for years to clarify his conception of the generic components of experience, he came close to throwing in the towel. In what was to have become the introduction to a revised edition of his seminal work, *Experience and Nature*, a project that he did not live to complete, Dewey announced that if he were to rewrite the book, he would change its title, eliminating the word *Experience* and replacing it with *Culture*. As he explained, "I would abandon the term 'experience' because of my growing realization that the historical obstacles which prevented understanding of my use of 'experience' are, for all practical purposes, insurmountable" (LW1, 361). The historical obstacles to which Dewey refers consisted chiefly of inherited ways of looking at things: the way we have of separating subjects from objects, for example, or facts from values, or even past from present and present from future. Dewey readily acknowledges the usefulness and even the necessity of such distinctions. He has no difficulty with our continuing to employ them as instruments of thought. The trouble, as he sees it, lies in assuming that these useful distinctions, which we have come to recognize through reflection, were there to begin with and, therefore, constitute reality pure and simple. The danger, in other words, lies in treating an intellectual invention as the discovery of an unquestionable truth. Dewey found that error to be so pervasive throughout history and particularly throughout the history of philosophy that he branded it the philosophical fallacy (LW1, 34).

Applied to the way we traditionally think of experience, our tendency to commit the philosophical fallacy usually takes the form of placing experience well inside the experiencer, making it something that each of us can report on to others but can never share directly with them. This makes it a very personal and private affair. Over the centuries we have come to treat experience as though it were exclusively a psychological concept, a mental state of some sort, forced on us by obdurate Nature.

Dewey invites us to think of experience differently. He asks us to abandon the convention of looking upon experience as something that happens exclusively within us, that is, as an essentially psychological concept. In its place he would substitute a conception far more inclusive, one that embraces what is being experienced as well as the experiencer. Here is the way he puts it: "Instead of signifying being shut up within one's own private feelings and sensations, . . . [experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events" (LW10, 25). Experience, in other words, is transactional. It is not just what registers on our consciousness as we make our way through the world but includes the objects and events that compose that world. The objects and events are as much a part of experience as we are ourselves. When we are fully immersed in experience, its components so interpenetrate one another that we lose all sense of separation between self, object, and event. It is when situations become problematic—when something goes wrong or when for some other reason we pause to reflect upon the circumstances at hand—that such distinctions become evident. Then we start to isolate this or that element within experience so that we might better deal with the situation as a whole.

Another of Dewey's major points about the nature of experience calls atten-
caring about outcomes, without that sense of engagement, the experience would lack unity and would fail to be an experience in the fullest sense of the term.

Dewey draws yet another helpful distinction in his explication of how emotion works within experience. He distinguishes between primary and secondary emotions. Primary emotions are those that "qualify the experience as a unity" (LW10, 49); secondary emotions are "evolved as variations of the primary underlying one" (LW10, 50). To clarify this difference Dewey asks readers to imagine an interview between someone who is applying for a job and an interviewer who controls the final decision. The primary emotion on the part of the applicant "may be at the beginning hope or despair, and elation or disappointment at the close" (LW10, 49). Minor fluctuations within that transition from hope to disappointment or from despair to elation constitute, for Dewey, the secondary emotions. The sublety and nuances of those variations can be astonishing even within something as mundane as a job interview. "It is even possible," Dewey says, "for each attitude and gesture, each sentence, almost every word, to produce more than a fluctuation in the intensity of the basic emotion; to produce, that is, a change of shade and tint in its quality" (LW10, 50). Although Dewey doesn't say so, we might expect the fine fluctuations in the secondary emotions to vary with the strength and depth of the primary emotion that provides unity to the experience as a whole. Thus, in the job interview the emotional ups and downs of the applicant may be far more varied and subtle than those of the interviewer because, for the former, more hangs in the balance.

An Experience Versus Experience in General

Having identified several of the traits of a normally complete experience, we are in a position to see how those traits might apply to run-of-the-mill experiences, for as Dewey points out, "even a crude experience, if authentically an experience, is more fit to give a clue to the intrinsic nature of esthetic experience than is an object already set apart from any other mode of experience" (LW10, 16, emphasis added). Let us take Dewey up on his suggestion and imagine something as simple as taking an stroll to the mailbox. The question is, Under what circumstances might we want to call such a common event normally complete? As we think about that question we need stay alert to the kinship between such a mundane occurrence and those experiences that center on works of art.

My walk to the mailbox has a narrative structure that provides unity. It forms a brief story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Let us assume that it also terminates successfully, and that its parts unfold harmoniously. I start at home, walk to the box, drop in the letter, and return home. The experience is rounded out.

My walk is readily identified as self-contained. I might easily include it in a report of what I did during the day. "I mailed my application to Harvard," I might tell a friend, or "I finally mailed my income tax." To make the event worth reporting it would have to be in some way, of course. I would hardly bother doing so, otherwise.

By introducing the criterion of being special I have interjected something about the emotional significance of the experience. If the posting of the letter is of special significance, the experience is emotionally charged. The charge may be weak. I may care little about whether the letter gets mailed tonight or tomorrow. I also may think that not much is at stake should it become lost in the mail. I may even have cared so little about the outcome of my journey that I became lost in thought along the way and found myself back home a few minutes later with the letter still in hand. But if the letter did go unmailed, giving to my story an unhappy (or at least comic) ending, I presumably would laugh at myself or curse myself for having forgotten the point of my errand. In other words, the experience would remain tinctured with emotion. I might still look on it as a normally complete experience, even though the ending was more of a surprise than I might have wished.

Whatever the circumstances, the point is that a unifying emotional state, a state of conscious concern over whatever is at issue, is indeed the cement, as Dewey calls it, that holds the experience together, giving it coherence. To look on my walk to the mailbox as an experience does not require remaining aware of what I am doing at each and every moment, but it does require caring at some level about what I am doing. It requires being emotionally set on attaining a particular goal.

Can feelings fail to register? Can I care about something without knowing that I care? Dewey does not directly address those questions. But he does come close to doing so. He acknowledges that "attitudes and meanings derived from prior experience" can exist subconsciously and can be aroused into activity where they "become conscious thoughts and emotions." He also speaks of "a self not consciously known" (LW10, 71). Thus he allows for the possibility of being emotionally responsive to a situation without fully realizing it, which is to say, without bringing those feelings to a level of conscious awareness. This possibility bears importantly on the question of what transforms a disjointed experience into an experience. It suggests that by becoming more closely at-
they cannot. Like fiction, life is full of surprise endings. And happily so. Indeed, it may well be that the most satisfying completions of all are those containing an element of surprise. Even as rudimentary a pleasure as watching a sunset can bring unexpected delights—a blaze of color, the silhouetted flight of birds against the sky—despite our knowing in very general terms how the experience will unfold. Yet if unexpected endings are to contribute to the sense of fulfillment that accompanies a normally complete experience, they too must conform to prior conditions within the experience itself. They must satisfy as much as surprise. If they do not, if we find them to be totally unexpected and inexplicable, we are apt to feel disappointed.

I have already addressed a portion of what it means to call an experience consummatory and self-sufficient. What I have not yet explicitly noted is that such experiences are at least to some degree enjoyable in their own right. This is not to say that we engage in them for their sake alone. It is simply to insist that every such experience is partially an end in itself. It contains its own rewards. It is intrinsically worthwhile.

Among the examples of complete experiences that Dewey mentions, eating a meal and playing a game of chess clearly have consummatory and self-sufficient aspects. Food is almost always enjoyable to its consumer; so too is a game of chess to its participants, even though one may win and the other lose. Each activity offers its own form of consummatory gratification, which contributes to its distinctiveness as an experience.

**Unifying Emotion**

"Experience," Dewey tells us, "is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it." That statement, which readers may find puzzling, comes at the end of a paragraph in which Dewey discusses the place of emotion in experience. What precedes it is the following: "We are given to thinking of emotions as things as simple and compact as are the words by which we name them. Joy, sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity, are treated as if each in itself were a sort of entity that enters full-made upon the scene, an entity that may last a long time or a short time but whose duration, whose growth and career, is irrelevant to its nature. In fact, emotions are qualities, when they are significant, of a complex experience that moves and changes. I say when they are significant, for otherwise they are but the outbreaks and eruptions of a disturbed infant" (LW10, 48).

Dewey claims that our customary way of thinking about emotions divorces them from their context. We think of them as states of pure feeling, and in so doing we may forget the circumstances that gave rise to them and the particularity of what gives them meaning. He reminds us that we never experience joy or fear or any other emotion divorced from its context. We undergo each emotion in connection with particular circumstances. "There is no such thing as the emotion of fear, hate, love... The unique, unduplicated character of experienced events and situations impregnates the emotion that is evoked" (LW10, 73, emphasis added). Moreover, those feelings alter as conditions change. "All emotions," Dewey tells us, "are qualifications of a drama and they change as the drama develops" (LW10, 48).

Though emotions fluctuate in response to changed conditions, they also serve to unify experience. Emotion holds the elements of an experience together. It causes them to cohere. Dewey calls emotion "the moving and cementing force." He adds: "It selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varied parts of an experience" (LW10, 49). The problem here is that he is ascribing agential force to emotion, as though emotion itself were capable of reaching out and selecting this or that element for inclusion or exclusion within an experience. What Dewey means, I believe, is that emotion works like a filter through which perceptions are screened. It allows some features of the environment to stand out and others to fade away, often to the point of disappearing. When gripped by a positive emotion we perceive our world positively. The reverse occurs when our feelings are negative. The underlying emotion that permeates an experience has its ups and downs and may in fact undergo such a transformation that we wind up feeling very different at its close than we did at its start. Those changes, however, form a coherent whole. Their trajectory constitutes the emotional history of the experience.

Dewey wants us to understand that emotional unity is fundamentally aesthetic. It gives experience an aesthetic quality even when the tenor of the experience is not predominately aesthetic. Thus, all normally complete experiences may be said to have an aesthetic quality.

The emotion at work within an experience "belongs of a certainty to the self," as Dewey readily acknowledges. It is psychological in the conventional sense of the word. But it belongs to a self that is engaged in the situation, the self, as Dewey says, "that is concerned in the movement of events toward an issue that is desired or disliked" (LW10, 48). Without that emotional cement of
playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation—these too, Dewey tells us, can on occasion be so rounded out that their close comes as a consummation and not a cessation.

Dewey's inclusion of prosaic examples helps us to see something that we might otherwise have overlooked. The traits that we are trying to identify (those of every normally complete experience) are not present or absent in an all-or-nothing way. They vary in amount. Eating a meal may constitute a complete activity most of the time, but some meals—a banquet, say—are more rounded out than others. Thus there exist degrees of completeness (also called internal integration or demarcation) among those experiences that, overall, we might want to call complete.

What makes this variability important is its demonstration that the connection between art and ordinary affairs is relative rather than absolute. This means that we need not look upon art as qualitatively apart from the rest of life. Instead, we need to see it as a refinement, a clarification, and an intensification of those qualities of everyday experience that we normally call complete.

Uniqueness

Though wanting us to appreciate the commonalities that unite all of experience, Dewey also wants us to understand that every normally complete experience is unique. Each is "a whole" that "carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency" (LW10, 42). "An experience has a unity that gives it its name. 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." It is this unity that enables us to speak of the experience as a whole. Yet, as Dewey points out, "this unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make within it" (LW10, 44).

What kind of a unity can it be that gives an experience its name yet is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual? Let me answer that question with an illustration. Imagine that you attended a birthday party yesterday at a friend's house. Attendance at-a-birthday-party-at-so-and-so's-house becomes, in effect, the name of the experience. It is what you say when asked what you did yesterday. What Dewey wants us to understand, as I read him, is that such a birthday-party experience is characterized by an "individualizing quality," as he calls it—that not only differentiates it from what went before and after, causing it to stand out as a unified event within a field of other happenings, but also makes it utterly unique, unlike any other birthday party that you have ever attended or ever will attend.

When you are asked, "Well, how was it?" or "What was it like?" the "it" that the questioner is asking about is that single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. The questioner is inviting commentary on the whole experience, leaving it open for the person who is doing the reporting to decide what form that commentary might take.

The intriguing aspect of this singular quality is that we cannot talk about it or describe it, at least not directly. The best we can do when reflecting on the experience as a whole is to speak of it in emotional, practical, intellectual, or other terms by making distinctions within it. We can describe the setting, name the people in attendance, list the gifts received. We can prattle on about how we felt about things that occurred at the party. We can describe memorable aspects of all that took place and tell what was said by whom and to whom. We can even register our reaction to the event by vowing never again to attend such a party or by expressing the hope that we will be invited back next year.

What we cannot do is to recapture the vibrant immediacy of the experience. Indeed, we cannot even come close. To say that we are close to describing the whole is to imply that we already know the whole and that it can be used as a standard against which to judge how close we have come with our description. But Dewey's point is precisely that we have no prior knowledge of what comprises the whole (even after having been a part of it), save as we make differentiations reflectively within the experience itself. We therefore cannot say how near or how far we are from such a standard, for its limits cannot be articulated. A description of the experience can only be given reflectively and is not the experience itself. The description does not exist until we bring it into being through language.

Our incapacity to provide an exhaustive description of an experience may appear to be contradicted by the finite number of things we have to say when asked to report on an event. Ultimately we reach a point where we have nothing more to add. Our stock of memories and impressions stands empty. It would be a mistake, however, to treat that inevitable state of affairs as evidence of our having exhausted all there is to say about the experience, much less to read it as our having captured the individualizing quality that made the experience unique. To do so would be to fall into the trap that Dewey warns us against: that of interiorizing experience, of treating it as what goes on within us and nothing more or, even more narrowly, as what remains interiorized—in the form of memories and such—after the experience has ended.

My focus on the fitness and naturalness of a complete experience is not meant to imply that the details of its closure can always be predicted. Often
of new meanings. These meanings, once disclosed, are potentially communicable to everyone. They thereby augment the fund of interpretive possibilities available to all who subsequently come upon the same object or event.

Another way of thinking about these interchanges with art objects that result in enduring changes in both the experiencer and the experienced is to label them educative. They are so, Dewey would say, because of their liberating effect on future experiences. An educative experience, he explains, is one that does “something to prepare a person for later experience of a deeper and more expansive quality” (LW 13, 28). Conversely, “any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience” (LW 13, 11). To say that encounters with art objects, works of literature, and theatrical performances often leave us better able to deal with future events is, however, not to claim that such experiences are the only ones worthy of being called educative. Many other objects and many other forms of encounter also yield educational dividends.

Yet successful encounters with art objects and artistic performances are set apart from other experiences of educational worth. What special something sets them apart? What do the arts give us that other forms of experience do not?

The arts, Dewey tells us, reveal the rewards of bringing an experience to fruition. They reveal what it takes to fashion works whose form and structure are holistic and unified, yielding a reaction on the part of both artist and audience that is at once satisfying and fulfilling. In this way they hint at what life might be like if we sought more often to shape ordinary experience in an artistic manner. They thus offer indirect lessons about fashioning the more mundane aspects of our lives.

The distinction between experiences connected with the arts and those connected with life in general is by no means absolute. This too is a crucial part of Dewey’s message. The arts, he insists, are not the sole source of aesthetic pleasure. They are not the only repository of the holistic and the unified. Nor are they the only place to go when we are looking for a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Any job well done yields rewards akin to those associated with the production or appreciation of art. Instead of being unique in experiential terms, what the arts offer are but refinements of qualities to be found in ordinary experience. “The esthetic,” he proclaims, “is no intruder in experience from without. . . . [Instead] it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience” (LW 10, 52–53).

Dewey’s emphasis on the primacy of ordinary experience, together with his insistence that the arts be looked on as a natural development within experi-

tence, serves to define the task ahead. With the ordinary as our starting place, we must first identify those traits that belong to every normally complete experience. These include not only the defining characteristics of such experiences—whatever it is that prompts us to call them complete—but also associated traits that normally complete experiences share with the rest of our experiencing.

THE GENERIC TRAITS OF AN EXPERIENCE

What are the traits of every normally complete experience that the arts serve to clarify and intensify? Dewey never treats them systematically, but he does say enough about them to enable us to piece together a fairly comprehensive picture of all they might include. The most prominent trait is the quality of completeness or cohesion that serves to name the kind of experience that we are talking about.

Completeness

What makes an experience complete? A partial answer was quoted earlier: “We have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment.” Dewey goes on to say that such an experience “is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation.” Both statements focus attention on what happens at the close of such an experience. Each refers to a state of affairs acknowledged by the participant to be an ending rather than a point where matters inexplicably grind to a halt or where an ongoing activity is broken off. One natural ending is childbirth. Like the pregnancy that culminates in a successful delivery, complete experiences are ones that have been brought to term.

It is not just the ending of an experience that makes it complete. Dewey describes completed transactions as being “integrated within” and as “demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences” (LW 10, 42). The ending of a complete experience relates organically and dynamically to the circumstances preceding it, the way the phenomenon of birth relates to the prior conditions of gestation. Childbearing constitutes an entity whose historical integrity and internal structure cause it to stand apart, enabling it to be identified as an experience.

Pregnancy may be too dramatic to stand for all forms of complete experiences. Among the examples that Dewey mentions are several whose internal structures are not nearly as well integrated and demarcated as are the biological processes and bodily changes connected with motherhood. Eating a meal,
tion to its temporality. Dewey urges us to recognize that experience exists in time and changes over time. It always has a history. "An instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically," Dewey tells us. "An experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world" (LW10, 224, emphasis added).

Changes that occur within experience over time may or may not be intentional. Chance and accident often play as large a part as ideas and intentions do. What this means from the standpoint of the experienter is that things do not always turn out as planned. Some experiences proceed smoothly from beginning to end precisely as intended, but not all do. Indeed, in examining a lifetime of experiences we likely would find that predictable and smoothly unfolding experiences are the exception rather than the rule.

Dewey had a special way of discussing segments of ordinary experience marked by a sense of wholeness and unity and often accompanied by feelings of fulfillment and delight. He spoke of them singly, declaring each one to be an experience, a discrete unit with discernible boundaries distinguishing it from the general flow of events. Here is the way he described such occurrences:

We have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences. A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is an experience. (LW10, 42)

Dewey points out that the arts provide us with exemplary instances of an experience. They do so, moreover, viewed from the standpoint of either the artist or the audience. From the artist's point of view the experience is chiefly one of making or doing something that culminates in an art object or a performance. From the viewpoint of the audience or the reading public the task is one of interpretation, of making sense of the artist's accomplishment. The audience's transaction with the work culminates in a state of appreciative understanding. In either case, the experience, when successful—when it truly is an experience—is characterized at its close (and often periodically during its course) by feelings of satiety and fulfillment. What is fulfilling from either perspective is not simply the object or the performance, although we often speak as though it were. At the close of such an experience we say things like "I really enjoyed that play" or "I find that painting very satisfying." This way of speaking, however, with its clear-cut separation of subject and object, is but an instance of the commonsensical view of experience that Dewey wants us to abandon. Actually, it is the audience's encounter with the object or performance, or the artist's wrestling with the stuff of its making that proves to be the source of their enjoyment or suffering. The true work of art is not the object that sits in a museum nor the performance captured on film or disc. Rather, it is the experience occasioned by the production or the experience of appreciating objects and performances. For the artist, those two forms of experiencing are one.

Does every encounter with an art object or an artistic performance necessarily culminate in an experience? Certainly not. There are countless reasons why such experiences may be fragmentary and unsatisfying for both artist and audience. Perhaps, for example, the artist failed, the art object or performance was poorly executed and lacked unity. Think of the novel that has a weak ending or the play that is poorly acted. The audience could also be at fault. Perhaps its members lacked the background to appreciate what the artist was trying to do or did not try hard enough to fathom the work's meaning or took insufficient time to do so. Consider here the speed with which the average museum-goer moves from one exhibited object to the next. The ruination of experience can also come from the outside. Some readers may recall the famous visitor from Porlock who interrupted Coleridge's composition of "Kubla Khan." Interruptions may also occur mundanely in the form of overhead planes at an outdoor performance, talkativeness on the part of other patrons in the darkened theater, crinkling candy wrappers in the concert hall.

When conditions are just right or very close to it, the resultant transaction between self and surroundings constitutes an experience. What is special about such occurrences is not simply that their parts or phases hang together to form a whole. Nor is it simply that we find them to be momentarily satisfying. What adds to their importance are the enduring changes that they produce. They leave in their wake a changed world. The contents of the world have been increased by one more painting or poem or piece of music, and, more important, both the experiencer, whether artist or art appreciator, and the object experienced have changed. The experiencer changes by undergoing a transformation of the self, gaining a broadened perspective, a shift of attitude, an increase of knowledge, or any of a host of other enduring alterations of a psychological nature. The object of experience changes through the acquisition