

ART AND EDUCATION IN DEWEY: ACCOMPLISHING UNITY, BRINGING NEWNESS TO THE FORE

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to discuss the role of art in Deweyan thought, making a case for the relationship among art, experience, and education. I will do so by drawing on both Deweyan works—primarily *Art as Experience* and chapter nine of *Experience and Nature*—and scholarly literature devoted to the issue. Based on those precedents, I wish to argue that art plays a central function in Deweyan thought. Dewey conceived of art as (a) the very basis on which to deepen, enlarge, and make sense of experience; (b) the place where humans search for meaning and unity find its fulfillment; and (c) the means by which we may enact the primary task of education, namely, bringing newness to the fore by emancipating and enlarging experience.

Keywords: art, accomplishing unity, bringing newness to the fore, education, experience

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to discuss the role of art in Deweyan thought, making a case for the relationship among art, experience, and education. I will do so by drawing on both Deweyan works—primarily *Art as Experience*¹ and chapter nine of *Experience and Nature*²—and scholarly literature devoted to the issue.³ Based on such precedents, I wish to argue that art plays a central function in Deweyan thought. Dewey conceived of art as (a) the basis on which to deepen, enlarge, and make sense of experience; (b) the place where human beings search for meaning and unity finds its fulfillment; and (c) the means by which we may enact the primary task of education, namely, bringing newness to the fore, or in Dewey's words, pursuing "a new birth in the world."⁴

This paper is organized into three sections. In the first section, I argue that Dewey conceived of art as a privileged place where experience may be enlarged and felt, "suffered and enjoyed."⁵ Through art, human beings "turn . . . experience

upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities.⁷⁶ Moreover, art is framed by Dewey not only as a privileged noetic experience but also—and more importantly—as essential for thinking to happen. In the second section, I argue that one of the first aims of Deweyan thought, namely, overcoming the separations embodied in Cartesian epistemology, can be accomplished via art: through art, the divisions between “mental . . . [and] “physical . . . internal and “external,”⁷⁷ “mind and matter,”⁷⁸ show all of their weaknesses; through art and its work, human beings’ search for meaning and unity finds its fulfillment and “[t]he doings and sufferings that form experience . . . come together in one.”⁷⁹ In this respect, it is worth noting that in Dewey’s own words, the aim of the artist is to bring “to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total.”⁸⁰ Such an experience—namely, an aesthetic one—lies, according to Granger, in a “thoroughness of engagement” and “mindfulness”⁸¹ that can put our everyday experiences in a new light. Finally, in the third section, I discuss the educational issue directly by framing education as bringing newness to the fore. Such newness has a clear and direct relationship with art: bearing in mind that for Dewey “critics . . . [are] helpless in the presence of the emergence of experience that has a distinctively new character”⁸²; we find in art the “revelation of possibilities hitherto unrealized.”⁸³ In turn, this “revelation” is essential for education to occur, for only in education we can fully enact newness and the sense of “unattained possibilities”⁸⁴ that make living worthwhile. I begin with the relationship between art and experience.

ART AND EXPERIENCE

Let us examine the following statement:

Hence *an* experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality. It differs from those experiences that are acknowledged to be esthetic, but only in its materials. The material of the fine arts consists of qualities; that of experience having intellectual conclusion are signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own, but standing for things that may in another experience be qualitatively experienced. The difference is enormous. . . . Nevertheless, the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through order and organized movement. This artistic structure may be immediately felt. In so far, it is esthetic. What is even more important is that . . . no intellectual activity is an integral event (is *an* experience), unless it is rounded out with this quality. Without it, thinking is inconclusive. . . . [intellectual activity] must bear an esthetic stamp to be itself complete.⁸⁵

Several things should be highlighted in this statement. Above all, we must note that “*an* experience of thinking” differs from aesthetic experience in neither method nor aims; it differs in its materials. In addition, it is worth noting that Dewey

is quick to point out that such materials have a different nature: in “fine arts” they consist of “qualities,” whereas “in experience having intellectual conclusion” they are “signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own.” To fully understand the difference, it is useful to refer to the question of the “qualitative immediacy” of experience. According to Jackson, this concept “refers to the ineffable quality that accompanies all of experience, the untranslatable thisness and that-ness that prompts us to respond, ‘I just can’t describe it,’ when someone presses us to say precisely how a particular event or object made us feel or what it was like as experienced. That quality of uniqueness, Dewey insists, is always present, whether or not we attend to it.”¹⁶

Dewey himself is adamant in stating that “a qualitative and qualifying situation is present as the *background and the control* of every experience . . . [and] the unique quality of the situation is had immediately.”¹⁷ In light of my goal, I wish to highlight that Dewey conceived of such a “qualitative . . . immediacy”¹⁸ as our founding ground, so to speak, as “the background and the control of every experience.” The question of “having” something before knowing that something is not new to Deweyan thought; as early as 1925, Dewey stated that “things are objects to be treated, used, acted upon and with, enjoyed and endured, even more than things to be known. They are things *had* before they are things cognized.”¹⁹ The question of “having” things and “qualitative situations” before knowing them clearly confirms that knowledge is only indirect, standing for the relationship—or, as Biesta and Burbules point out, for “the point of contact”²⁰—between the human organism and the world.

My point is that through art we can clearly feel such a point of contact because we find in art the fusion of the emotional, intellectual, and moral.²¹ Through the experience generated by the work of art, the self and the world become fully integrated. Thus, bearing in mind that the point of departure for Dewey is always our ongoing relationship with the environment, in aesthetic experience, the self comes to be fully aware of its very ground. Via art, the active and the passive aspects of experience come to be fully felt in their deep integration. Stated otherwise, through the “action” of art we can, in a sense, “touch” the starting point of both the self and the environment. In art, we find “a fullness of participation and sense of purpose that is . . . receptive without being passive. What is undergone is experienced in all of its fecundity.”²² Both the “thoroughness of engagement” and the “mindfulness” that Granger calls attention to are fully present in aesthetic experience.

Now, I wish to highlight that my point is not to create a dualism between the “intellectual” and “aesthetic,” which would be senseless; throughout his work, Dewey pursued the dismantling of any form of dualism. Moreover, in Deweyan understanding, as living beings we continually engage with and at the same time produce culture, environments, and knowledge of all kinds—and art is one of these products. Rather, I am calling attention to the fact that, in Dewey’s own words,

aesthetic experience has an immediacy that intellectual experience is denied, and Dewey himself states that the difference between the two types of experiences “is enormous.” To add evidence, I wish to highlight that the indirectness of knowledge—and, by implication, of intellectual experience—was already emphasized by Dewey in 1917.

In *The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy*, Dewey clearly frames intellectual knowledge as simultaneously detached from experience as a whole and completely dependent on its own “non-cognitive” ground. Here, it is worthwhile to quote Dewey at length:

The thing to be known does not present itself primarily as a matter of knowledge-and-ignorance at all. It occurs as a stimulus to action and as the source of certain undergoings. . . . Such presence in experience has of itself nothing to do with knowledge or consciousness; nothing that is in the sense of depending upon them, though it has everything to do with knowledge and consciousness in the sense that the latter depends upon prior experience of this non-cognitive sort. Man’s experience is what it is because his response to things (even successful response) and the reactions of things to his life, are so radically different from knowledge. The difficulties and tragedies of life, the stimuli to acquiring knowledge, lie in the *radical disparity* of presence-in-experience and presence-in-knowing.²³

Keeping my goal in mind, I wish to highlight two things: (a) “knowledge and consciousness” depend upon “prior experience of . . . non-cognitive sort”; and (b) there is a “radical disparity,” namely, an unbridgeable gap, between “presence-in-experience and presence-in-knowing.” Because disparity is more than difference and such a disparity is “radical,” I believe that Dewey is adamant in leaving no room for a more nuanced interpretation. Knowledge and consciousness do not grasp *the entirety* of experience; rather, they are generated by experience. In other words, knowledge and consciousness do not grasp their own roots—and as evidence, I wish to highlight that the term “radical” recurs in the line above, in which Dewey states that “[man’s] response to things . . . and the reactions of things to his life, are so radically different from knowledge.”

The point I wish to make is that, for Dewey, we are always-already vulnerable and exposed, because “[e]xperience is primarily a process of undergoing a process of standing something; of suffering and passion, of affection, in the literal sense of these words.”²⁴ However, such an undergoing is also the condition for fulfilling the “broadening of the self”²⁵ that is education. This is because, for Dewey, undergoing “is never mere passivity” and experience is always “a matter of simultaneous doings and sufferings.”²⁶ In Dewey’s understanding, the subject is always pushed out into the future, enlarging and emancipating its experience, thereby deepening and intensifying its quality. Dewey highlights the subject’s exposure and vulnerability while also framing this condition as essential for the “broadening of the self”

to occur. Dewey firmly recognized what we may call the essential uncertainty of thinking, along with the danger and the mystery that dwell in our aleatory world: "Man finds himself living in an aleatory world; his existence involves, to put it baldly, a gamble. The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable, uncannily unstable. Its dangers are irregular, inconstant, not to be counted upon as to their times and seasons."²⁷

Such a mystery, such an "ineffable . . . is nothing mystical."²⁸ Quite simply, it relates to living, to the fact that we are always already-embedded-in-the-world. Such a being-embeddedness lies behind the boundaries of reflection and, in turn, is the ungraspable ground of knowledge. This, I believe, is the meaning of the statement, "Things are objects to be treated, used, acted upon and with, enjoyed and endured, even more than things to be known. They are things had before they are things cognized."²⁹ Of course, through action human beings have the ability to intentionally modify their environment, making sense of it. Our experience in its entirety, however, always remains behind the boundaries of reflective thought. Here, then, is the special position of art in Deweyan thought, which is the means by which "to deepen and intensify" such being-embeddedness: "Man lives in a world of surmise, of mystery, of uncertainties. . . . Ultimately there are but two philosophies. One of them accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities—to imagination and art. This is the philosophy of Shakespeare and Keats."³⁰ And, if I am allowed to comment, this is also Dewey's philosophy.

Thus, to grasp, enhance, and enlarge our experience, we must primarily refer to art and aesthetic experience. This is clear in the final pages of *Art as Experience*, in which Dewey, equating art as production and art as consumption, states the following: "What is intimated to my mind is that in both production and the enjoined perception of works of art, knowledge is transformed; it becomes *something more* than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience."³¹ Through art, knowledge undergoes a transformation—and we can even say a fulfillment—in which it "becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience." I believe that such "non-intellectual elements" that are essential to form experience as "*an* experience" involve the "prior experience of . . . non-cognitive sort"³² upon which knowledge is based, with the "context of non-cognitive but experienced subject-matter which gives what is known its import."³³ Then, if I may paraphrase Dewey, knowledge is grounded on "non-intellectual elements" that art and aesthetic experience bring to fulfillment, because art and aesthetic experience can make sense of that "context of non-cognitive but experienced subject-matter which gives what is known its import." We can find one of the most clear and beautiful expressions of this question in *Art as Experience*:

What [a work of art] does is to concentrate and enlarge an immediate experience. The formed matter of esthetic experience directly expresses, in other words, the meanings that are imaginatively evoked. . . . This fact constitutes the uniqueness of esthetic experience, and this experience is in turn a challenge to thought. It is particularly a challenge to that systematic thought called philosophy. For esthetic experience is experience in its integrity. . . . [W]e might say that esthetic experience is pure experience. For it is experience freed from the forces that impede and confuse its development as experience; freed, that is from factors that subordinate an experience as it is directly had to something beyond itself. To esthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is.³⁴

Here, Dewey states that experience engendered by art is unique in being “pure experience.” We should not interpret the term “pure” as meaning refined or purified; I believe it is exactly the other way around: here, pure signifies complete, integral—and, indeed, Dewey states that “[f]or aesthetic experience is experience in its integrity.” Moreover, the “meanings that are imaginatively evoked” find a direct expression in aesthetic experience. I will return to the founding cognitive and educational role of imagination in the third section of this article. Now, with my goal in view, I wish to highlight again that, whereas knowledge is only indirect, the aesthetic is a direct expression of imagination. The aesthetics is a “challenge to that systematic thought called philosophy.” I believe that we do not force Deweyan thought in saying that the “systematic thought called philosophy” stands for theoretical thought at large. In that case, theory must go back to art to understand “what experience is,” because in art we find a direct expression of the meaning of experience, something completely closed off to theoretical production. Art may accomplish such a directness because, as experience, it underlies theory; according to Waks, “the nature of artistic expression” is “pre-discursive.”³⁵ This argument was also developed by Alexander, who states that “in Dewey’s thought . . . art and aesthetic experience as consummatory is really a ‘postcognitive’ rather than a precognitive state. . . . In other words, aesthetic meaning for Dewey is ‘supracognitive’ rather than precognitive.”³⁶ I share Alexander’s belief about the “supracognitive” function in art being, in a sense, the frame of knowledge; however, I do believe that such a “supracognitive” function is accomplished exactly in art and aesthetic being *precognitive*. To make this point, I return to the quote that began this section, in which we clearly find a claim for the primacy of aesthetics over theory: “[T]he experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through order and organized movement. This artistic structure may be immediately felt; in so far, it is esthetic. What is even more important is that . . . no intellectual activity is an integral event (is *an* experience), unless it is rounded out with this quality. Without it, thinking is inconclusive. . . . [Intellectual activity] must bear an aesthetic stamp to be itself complete.”³⁷ Thought, to make sense and

be conclusive, must have “internal integration and fulfillment reached through order and organized movement,” and Dewey boldly states that such an order and integration is not a theoretical matter—instead, it is a matter of art and aesthetics. Without such an artistic quality, thinking is not even “an experience.”

ART AS FULFILLMENT

Thus far, I have attempted to argue that Dewey conceived of art as the means by which to deepen and enlarge experience, and of aesthetics as essential for thinking to happen. In this section, I confront a fundamental Deweyan issue, namely, overcoming the separations embodied in Descartes’s—and Plato’s—theoretical gaze. This challenge to Western “ontological knowledge,”³⁸ and the intertwined commitment to unearth the Western “metaphysics of presence,”³⁹ was pursued by Dewey along with a related task, namely, to recover the union between human beings and the universe, mind and matter, acting and knowing, thus recovering the unity of the subject with her- or himself. As Dewey states, “[o]f the older philosophies, framed before experimental knowing had made any significant progress, it may be said that they made a definite separation between the world in which man thinks and knows and the world in which he lives and acts.”⁴⁰ The problem is that as Dewey clearly noted, this problem was not simply overcome by experimental knowing, which, for a number of reasons, even reinforced such a separation. As Dewey boldly states, “[t]here is something both ridiculous and disconcerting in the way in which men have let themselves be imposed upon, to infer that scientific ways of thinking of objects give the inner reality of things, and that they put a mark of spuriousness upon all other ways of thinking of them, and of perceiving and enjoying them.”⁴¹

Thus, the recovery of the alliance between human beings and nature—in Deweyan terms, “inner harmony” with the environment⁴²—and the accomplishment of the unity of “all . . . ways of thinking” were (for Dewey) the same task. Such a task, consistently in Dewey, embraced every human activity, from inquiry to science, from education to philosophy. However, there was a place where Dewey found that such a task had already been accomplished, so to speak; that place was art and aesthetic experience. To first address this question, I briefly recall its overall expression, which stands on the question “How has the separation of intellect from action affected the theory of knowledge?”⁴³ The risks entailed in such a stance were best expressed by Dewey in *Experience and Nature*: “When real objects are identified, point for point, with knowledge-objects, all affectional and volitional objects are inevitably excluded from the ‘real’ world, and are compelled to find refuge in the privacy of an experiencing subject or mind. . . . The self becomes . . . an unnaturalized and unnaturalizable alien in the world.”⁴⁴

Here, Dewey unearths the very nature of human alienation, which resides in neither the practical field nor the theoretical field alone, because such an alienation affects precisely the very separation between the practical and the theoretical: “When

real objects are identified, point for point, with knowledge-objects,” namely, when experience is reduced to knowledge, we produce a split that is simultaneously a split between subject and nature *and* a split internal to the subject. The consequences are devastating: “The self becomes . . . [an] unnaturalized and unnaturalizable alien in the world.” What makes the consequences of such a stance even more pernicious is that it establishes itself as the measure to which all other stances must be compared, thus governing and constituting what can be seen and known, how it can be seen and known, and most importantly, who is able to see and know. Finally, to definitively close the circle, such a position presents this reduction as both “natural” and unavoidable.

Experience and Nature and *Art as Experience* aside, we see that Dewey’s work at large is crossed by—and, in a sense, grounded on—the need both to unearth and challenge the roots of Cartesian epistemology. In *The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy*, Dewey states that, “[i]f the knower, however defined, is set over against the world to be known, knowing consists in possessing a transcript, more or less accurate but otiose, of real things.”⁴⁵ In *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, he establishes “the natural continuity of inquiry with organic behavior”⁴⁶: through inquiry, which “began presumably as soon as man appeared on earth,”⁴⁷ human beings attempt to guarantee their own always-uncertain equilibrium. In *The Quest for Certainty*, Dewey states that “[t]here is no separate ‘mind’ gifted in and of itself with a faculty of thought; such a conception of thought ends in postulating the mystery of a power outside of nature and yet able to intervene within it,” and “[m]ind is no longer a spectator beholding the world from without and finding its highest satisfaction in the joy of self-sufficing contemplation.”⁴⁸

Given this framework, I can make my point regarding the “special” position of art in Deweyan understanding. To be direct, whereas in his work Dewey endeavors repeatedly to show that inquiry is in “natural continuity” with “organic behavior,”⁴⁹ in art and aesthetic experience he finds such a natural continuity already realized. Of course, this is not to say that Dewey’s task was simpler in art than in inquiry; rather, it is to say that Dewey sees art as “the culminating event of nature as well as the climax of experience,”⁵⁰ art being where we find “most complete incorporation of natural forces and operations in experience.”⁵¹ Here, it is worth quoting Dewey at length:

The doings and sufferings that form experience are, in the degree in which experience is intelligent or charged with meanings, a union of the precarious, novel, irregular with the settled, assured and uniform a union which also defines the artistic and the aesthetic. For wherever there is art, the contingent and ongoing no longer work at cross purposes with the formal and recurrent but commingle in harmony. And the distinguishing feature of conscious experience, of what for short is often called “consciousness,” is that in it the instrumental and the final, meanings that are signs and clews [sic] and meanings that are immediately possessed, suffered and enjoyed, come together in one. And all of these things are preeminently true of art.⁵²

The passage is clear enough in itself. I wish only to linger on the fact that the central issue of the Deweyan theory of knowledge *and* experience, namely, the union between “doings and sufferings,” the fact that “[t]he nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined,”⁵³ is already resolved in art, where all meanings “come together in one.”⁵⁴ In art, the “contingent and ongoing” are already in harmony “with the formal and recurrent.” To the extent to which thinking “occurs with reference to situations which are still going on, and incomplete”⁵⁵ we may even say that art is, in a sense, the most complete form of thinking.

This is true because art has two pivotal features that together posit it as the junction where meanings emerge. On the one hand, “[a]rt is neither merely internal nor merely external; merely mental nor merely physical”⁵⁶; on the other hand, art “is [the] solvent union of the generic, recurrent, ordered, established phase of nature with its phase that is incomplete, going on, and hence still uncertain, contingent, novel, particular; . . . [art is] a union of necessity and freedom, a harmony of the many and one, a reconciliation of sensuous and ideal.”⁵⁷

In the Deweyan account, art also plays a central role in reconciling human beings and science: The failure to recognize that knowledge is a product of art accounts for an otherwise inexplicable fact: that science lies today like an incubus upon such a wide area of beliefs and aspirations. . . . Till the art of achieving adequate and liberal perceptions of the meanings of events is incarnate in education, morals and industry, science will remain a special luxury for a few. . . . The consequence is that science, dealing as it must, with existence, becomes brutal and mechanical.⁵⁸

The critique of scientism and the problem of technology that have been pivotal in twentieth-century philosophy from Heidegger onward are already here. Because of space limitations, I cannot further develop this argument, but the Deweyan path in criticizing such a “brutal and mechanical” form of science, challenging “the illicit reifications of the object of science,”⁵⁹ is perfectly consistent with the development of human intelligence through science. Indeed, Dewey does not claim a “romantic,” pre-scientific vision of experience, which would ignore that science is simultaneously both a higher expression of human creativity and a way in which nature reveals itself. Rather, Dewey argues for a science that is not set as a world apart, thus becoming a source of alienation. As Biesta puts it,

[a]ccording to Dewey the main problem of the identification of what is known with what is real, is that it makes it appear as if all other dimensions of human life—such as the practical, aesthetic, ethical, or the religious dimensions—can only be real if they can be reduced to and validated by what is revealed through our knowledge. . . . Yet for Dewey this was not only a philosophical problem. It rather was a problem that lay at the heart of modern culture and that was central to what Dewey saw as a crisis in modern culture.⁶⁰

Dewey also works to find an escape from such a dehumanized and dehumanizing form of knowledge; Dewey pushes for the recognition that science is as much a creative adventure as it is rational—and, indeed, in the Deweyan conception of intelligence, such a distinction does not make sense. The way discovered by Dewey lies in the recognition that “the history of human experience is a history of the development of arts. The history of science in its distinct emergence from religious, ceremonial, and poetic arts is the record of a differentiation of arts, not a record of separation from art.”⁶¹

Science, then, is reconducted to its natural ground, namely, it is a *part* of human experience. Science’s “original sin”—namely, “to exclude that context of non-cognitive but experienced subject-matter which gives what is known its import”⁶² in constructing a knowledge that is “ubiquitous, all-inclusive and all-monopolizing”⁶³—brought about a form of knowledge that “ceases to have meaning in losing all context.”⁶⁴ Such knowledge, moreover, also happens to be unfounded, in being experience “not a rigid and closed thing; it is vital, and hence growing.”⁶⁵

In other words, science, which objectifies its subject matter, loses both experience and living. To fully understand the beauty of science, we should reconcile it on the ground of human experience, and we may follow such a path via art. In doing so, we also accomplish the unity of the subject with her or his own product and thus, the unity of the subject with her- or himself in that art is “the solvent union of the generic, recurrent, ordered, established phase of nature with its phase that is incomplete, going on, and hence still uncertain, contingent, novel, particular; . . . a union of necessity and freedom, a harmony of the many and one, a reconciliation of sensuous and ideal.”⁶⁶

BRINGING NEWNESS TO THE FORE: EDUCATION AS “[A] NEW BIRTH IN THE WORLD”

Thus far, I have sought to argue that Dewey finds in art and aesthetic experience both the means that “reveals and enhances the meaning of experiences one already has”⁶⁷ and the way to accomplish the unity between the human being and universe, mind and matter, science and experience, thus recovering the unity of the emerging subject that we are.⁶⁸ Now I wish to directly address the educational issue. This question relates to the “nature” of thinking and the subsequent role of imagination.

Despite the emphasis, in a sizeable part of the scholarly literature, on inquiry and reflective thought as processes of progressive and complete clarification of problematic situations, Dewey is nearly adamant in stating that thinking, in both method and in content, is anything but linear. More specifically, thinking accomplishes its own task only through a “jump” into the indeterminate: “The exercise of thought is, in the literal sense of that word, inference; by it one thing carries us over to the idea of, and belief in, another thing. It involves a *jump*, a *leap*, a *going beyond* what is surely

known to something else accepted on its warrant.”⁶⁹ This is true because thinking, in the Deweyan context, accomplishes two related tasks. On the one hand, it is a method of confronting a world that is “a scene of risk.”⁷⁰ Through thinking, a world that is “uncertain, unstable, [and] uncannily unstable”⁷¹ becomes habitable. On the other hand, thinking, by means of imagination, “marks a new birth in the world.”⁷² Such a task is quintessentially educational in that education is an “emancipation and enlargement of experience,”⁷³ namely, the means by which “[e]xperience may welcome and assimilate all that the most exact and penetrating thought discovers.”⁷⁴

To fully understand the twofold task of thinking and the key role played by education, it is worthwhile to recall the role played by uncertainty and imagination in thinking. Above all, we must recognize that Dewey is quick to note that thinking only “help[s] *reach* a conclusion, to project a possible termination on the basis of what is already given.”⁷⁵ The “termination” is always a “possible” one and as we know, the possibility simultaneously entails the possibility of both yes and no. This is not the only question, however: uncertainty affects both the means of thinking—namely, inference—and the matter of thinking—namely, data. As Dewey boldly states, “[s]ince inference goes beyond what is actually present, *it involves a leap, a jump*, the propriety of which cannot be absolutely warranted in advance, no matter what precautions be taken.”⁷⁶ Further,

[t]he data *arouse* suggestions, and only by reference to the specific data can we pass upon the appropriateness of the suggestions. However, the suggestions run beyond what is, as yet, actually *given* in experience. They forecast possible results, things *to do*, not facts (things already done). Inference is always an invasion of the unknown, a leap from the known. In this sense, a thought (what a thing suggests but not as it is presented) is creative—an incursion into the novel. It involves some inventiveness.⁷⁷

Here, Dewey states that uncertainty affects the very basis of thinking, “no matter what precautions be taken.” The primary means of thinking, namely, inference, “is always an invasion of the unknown, a leap from the known.” Furthermore, data—the material of thinking—only “forecast possible results, things *to do*, not facts.” Here, we come to the other side of thinking, which clearly shows that such essential uncertainty is anything but nihilistic. Dewey, indeed, stresses that thinking is “creative—an incursion into the novel.” The uncertainty that affects the very basis of thinking is also simultaneously the source of newness and the grounds on which intelligence enters the world and develops:

The extent of an agent’s capacity for inference, its power to use a given fact as a sign of something not yet given, measures the extent of its ability systematically to enlarge its control of the future. A being which can use given and finished facts as signs of things to come; which can take given things as evidences of absent things, can, in that degree, forecast the future; it can form

reasonable expectations. It is capable of achieving ideas; it is possessed of intelligence. For use of the given or finished to anticipate the consequence, of processes going on is, precisely, what is meant by “ideas,” by “intelligence.”⁷⁸

More generally, without the essential uncertainty of the world *and* thinking, without “the doubtful as such,” we would have neither ideas nor intelligence. As Dewey states, “[m]any definitions of mind and thinking have been given. I know of but one that goes to the heart of the matter: response to the doubtful as such.”⁷⁹ Moreover,

Not the use of thought to accomplish purposes already given either in the mechanism of the body or in that of the existent state of society, but the use of intelligence to liberate and liberalize action, is the pragmatic lesson. Action restricted to given and fixed ends may attain great technical efficiency; but efficiency is the only quality to which it can lay claim. Such action is mechanical (or becomes so), no matter what the scope of the performed end, be it the Will of God or Kultur. However, the doctrine that intelligence develops within the sphere of action for the sake of possibilities not yet given is the opposite of a doctrine of mechanical efficiency.⁸⁰

Here, we must consider the pivotal role of imagination in knowing. For Dewey, imagination has an essential and vital cognitive function; it is simultaneously the means by which “facts” are established as such and the means “that makes any activity more than mechanical.”⁸¹ The argument is pivotal and I therefore quote the entire sentence, after which I provide my comment: “Only a personal response involving imagination can possibly procure realization even of pure ‘facts.’ The imagination is the medium of appreciation in every field. The engagement of the imagination is the only thing that makes any activity more than mechanical.”⁸²

The point that I wish to highlight is that Dewey conceives of imagination as the junction at which meanings are established as such. Only through imagination are we able to project our ends into the future. This is why Dewey defines imagination as “a normal and integral part of human activity, as is muscular movement.”⁸³ Imagination is thus neither fantasy nor a way to escape reality; instead, it is the very means by which to conceive of reality. Imagination has a basic and vital cognitive function. I believe that the latter part of the statement above must also be understood by considering this cognitive function. In saying that “[t]he engagement of the imagination is the only thing that makes any activity more than mechanical,” Dewey does not mean that imagination adds something “subjective” or “creative” to our activity. Instead, Dewey means that only by imagination can we perform activities that are “more than mechanical,” namely, activities that involve judgment and reflection. If we were deprived of imagination, we would be reduced to an animal state without meanings to conceive of.

This capacity to create meaning is also the basis for the discussion of imagination that we find in *Art as Experience*, a discussion that directly connects education and imagination or “imaginative experience.”⁸⁴ Here, Dewey states that “critics

... [are] helpless in the presence of the emergence of experience that has a distinctively new character."⁸⁵ In Deweyan thought, this "new character" of experience is a challenge to habits and judgments already formed and, in turn, the possibility to change—or as Garrison puts it, disrupt—inadequate habits. Indeed, according to Garrison, "[f]or Dewey, imaginative vision was the most penetrating criticism."⁸⁶ In Deweyan thought, the very possibility of challenging and changing the status quo comes via "imagination" or "imaginative experience."

The capacity of art to enlarge and transform experience, of course, did not go unnoticed. We can find such an interpretation in—almost—three critical sources: Garrison, as stated above, Granger, and Waks. In a 1994 article,⁸⁷ Garrison, discussing the function of art, states, "The 'truth' of art, of poetry, is that it can disclose the beauty of meaningful possibilities that are concealed beneath the mask of the actual, the ordinary, the everyday."⁸⁸ He then goes on to state that such a function, pursued by "expansive imagination," is essential for freedom to exist: "A lack of imagination and thereby a sense of possibility is the greatest oppression there is. It is here that any critical and transformational theory of education must take its departure. . . . Without an expansive imagination, one willing to go beyond approved limits, it is impossible to be free."⁸⁹ It is crucial to bear in mind that freedom, according to Dewey, is the basis by which we can conceive communication, democracy, and growth. Without the possibility of expanding freedom, the whole Deweyan work would end in emptiness—and we might even say that his work is a continuous endeavor to understand and expand freedom and its conditions.

The expansion of meanings is also the point of departure of Granger's account: "In learning to conduct more of everyday experience in an artful manner, we increase our ability to liberate and expand the potential meanings of things."⁹⁰ By integrating art into everyday experience, the world comes to be presented "in a new and different perspective."⁹¹ This different perspective is also Waks's point. In his "Agency and Arts: John Dewey's Contribution to Pragmatic Cosmopolitanism," Waks highlights the role of art as the "channel for spontaneous, pre-rationalized initial expressions of the 'whole' person"⁹² and as an essential component in the "opening [of] new vistas and widening perception."⁹³ In Waks's account, art is important both to overcome separations within the subject's experience and to foresee unnoticed perspectives.

Such a possibility is quintessentially pedagogical to the extent that we conceive of education as the means by which we may pursue and welcome newness.⁹⁴ Now, it is worthy to note that Dewey conceives of "imaginative experience" and education along the same lines; an imaginative experience "is what happens when varied materials of sense quality, emotions and meanings come together in a union that marks a new birth in the world."⁹⁵ Moreover, "A sense of possibilities that are unrealized and that might be realized are, when they are put in contrast with actual conditions, the most penetrating 'criticism' of the latter that can be made. It is by a sense of possibilities opening before us that we become aware of constrictions that hem us in and of burdens that oppress."⁹⁶

Such an account goes hand-in-hand with the Deweyan interpretation of education as an “emancipation and enlargement of experience.”⁹⁷ Such an “emancipation and enlargement of experience,” following Garrison’s, Granger’s, and Waks’s converging interpretations, is simultaneously the welcoming of newness or, in Deweyan terms, “a new birth in the world” and the recovery of the unity of the subject’s experience.

Next, let me express a personal opinion about “the mood” that marks Dewey’s words on art and education, on the one hand, and inquiry, reflective thought, and science on the other. The sense of gratitude, admiration, and even reverence found in Dewey’s words on art and education is something we rarely find when reading Dewey on inquiry and science. Of course, this is not to deny the immense value of science and reflective thought—which would be absurd—or to rank such arguments—which would be senseless. Rather, this is to say that “the cord that binds experience and nature,”⁹⁸ and the restoration from a “fearful . . . [and] awful” world,⁹⁹ was found by Dewey in neither science nor inquiry, but in “the most effective mode of communication that exists,”¹⁰⁰ namely, art, and in the “emancipation and enlargement of experience,”¹⁰¹ namely, education. Through art, the subject can grasp “the state in which the sense of what is beyond, the sense of otherness, and the sense of the whole”¹⁰² that is so essential for education to happen; and art and education, in the Deweyan understanding, are clearly related: “[Art’s] scope is as comprehensive as the work of education itself.”¹⁰³ Such a scope can enlarge and emancipate our experience, thereby deepening and intensifying its quality; indeed, arts “are not luxuries of education, but emphatic expressions of that which makes any education worthwhile.”¹⁰⁴

Bearing in mind that education is itself a “new birth in the world,” we may better understand the pivotal Deweyan statement that “the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end” (Dewey, 1930 [1916], p. 59).¹⁰⁵ The centrality of this statement lies in the fact that, generally speaking, in the beginning we have neither life, nor development, nor growth, nor some “good” and worthy aim; in the beginning, we have only education, which “is its own end.” In the Deweyan idiom, education is the only thing worthy of pursuing as such, because only through education do we find the clear sense of “unattained possibilities”¹⁰⁶ that, in turn, make living worthy. In other words, only through education are human beings able “to project emotions into the objects experienced,”¹⁰⁷ and only through art and education can we achieve a “new birth in the world.”¹⁰⁸

NOTES

1. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 1980 [1934]).
2. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929 [1925]), 354–394.
3. My interpretation of art in Deweyan thought is primarily based on the work of Thomas M. Alexander, Jim Garrison, James S. Johnston, Philip W. Jackson, David Granger, and Leonard Waks.

4. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 267.
5. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 359.
6. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 34.
7. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1930 [1916]), 159.
8. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 393.
9. Ibid., 358–359
10. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 15.
11. David Granger, *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and the Art of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 121.
12. Ibid., 304.
13. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 359.
14. Ibid., 182.
15. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38 (emphasis in original).
16. Philip W. Jackson, "If We Took Dewey's Aesthetics Seriously, How Would the Arts Be Taught?" *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 13 (1994/95): 193–202, 194–195.
17. John Dewey, *Logic—The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt, 1938), 70 (emphasis added).
18. Ibid.
19. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 358 (emphasis added).
20. Gert J. J. Biesta and Nicholas C. Burbules, *Pragmatism and Educational Research* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 10.
21. David Granger, *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and the Art of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education*, 120–121.
22. Ibid., 121.
23. John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, eds. John Dewey, Addison W. Moore, Harold Chapman Brown, George H. Mead, Boyd H. Bode, Henry Waldgrave Stuart, James Hayden Tufts, et al. (New York: Henry Holt, 1917), 47–48 (emphasis added).
24. Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 10.
25. John Dewey, *Interest and Effort in Education* (Boston, New York, and Chicago: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 89.
26. Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 10.
27. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 41. For more on this issue, see Thomas A. Rømer, "Nature, Education and Things," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 32 (2013): 641–652.
28. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 86.
29. Ibid., 21.
30. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 34.
31. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 289 (emphasis added).
32. Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 48.
33. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 23.
34. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 273–274.
35. Leonard J. Waks, "Inquiry, Agency and Arts: John Dewey's Contribution to Pragmatic Cosmopolitanism," *Education & Culture* 25, no. 2 (2009): 115–125, 122.
36. Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feelings* (Albany: State of University New York Press), 10.
37. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38 (emphasis in original).

38. John Dewey, "The Metaphysical Assumptions of Materialism," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 16 (1882): 208–213, 210.
39. Jim Garrison, "Dewey, Derrida and the 'Double Bind,'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 35, no. 3 (2003): 349–362, 356.
40. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation between Knowledge and Action* (New York: Minton Balch), 291.
41. *Ibid.*, 135.
42. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 17.
43. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation between Knowledge and Action*, 6.
44. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 24.
45. Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 59.
46. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation between Knowledge and Action*, 36.
47. *Ibid.*, 5.
48. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation between Knowledge and Action*, 227, 291.
49. Dewey, *Logic—The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt), 36.
50. Dewey, *Experience and Nature* 9.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*, 358–359.
53. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 163.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, 173.
56. *Ibid.*, 159.
57. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 358–359.
58. *Ibid.*, 382–383.
59. Sandra B. Rosenthal, "Science, Nature and Philosophic Foundation: Dewey and Heidegger," in *John Dewey and the Continental Philosophy*, ed. P. Farfield (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010: 126–147), 128.
60. Gert J. J. Biesta, "Towards the Knowledge Democracy? Knowledge Production and the Civic Role of the University," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 26 (2007): 467–479, 472.
61. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 388.
62. *Ibid.*, 23.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. Dewey, *How We Think*, 156.
66. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 358–359.
67. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 26.
68. For more on the Deweyan account of subject, see Raymond D. Boisvert, *John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), and Inna Semetsky, "On the Creative Logic of Education, or: Re-Reading Dewey through the Lens of Complexity Science," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 40, no. 1 (2008): 83–95.
69. Dewey, *How We Think*, 26 (emphasis added).
70. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 41.
71. *Ibid.*

72. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 267.
73. Dewey, *How We Think*, 156.
74. Ibid.
75. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 173 (emphasis in original).
76. Dewey, *How We Think*, 75 (emphasis added).
77. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 186 (emphasis in original).
78. Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 21.
79. Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation between Knowledge and Action*, 223.
80. Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," 63.
81. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 276.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid., 277.
84. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 267.
85. Ibid., 304.
86. Jim Garrison, "Foucault, Dewey and Self-Creation," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 30, no. 2 (1998): 111–134, 130.
87. Jim Garrison, "Dewey, Eros and Education," *Education & Culture* 9, no. 2 (1994): 1–5.
88. Ibid., 3.
89. Ibid.
90. Granger, *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and the Art of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education*, 7.
91. Ibid., 104.
92. Waks, "Inquiry, Agency and Arts: John Dewey's Contribution to Pragmatic Cosmopolitanism," 120.
93. Ibid., 121.
94. On this issue, see Jim Garrison, "A Deweyan Theory of Democratic Listening," *Educational Theory* 46, no. 4 (1996): 429–451; Garrison, "Foucault, Dewey and Self-Creation"; Jim Garrison, "A Pragmatist Conception of Creative Listening to Emotional Expressions in Dialogues Across Differences," *Philosophy of Education*, ed. Kenneth R. Howe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Gert J. J. Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2006); and Gert J. J. Biesta, "The Education-Socialisation Conundrum or 'Who Is Afraid of Education?'" *Utbildning & Demokrati* 16, no. 3 (2007): 25–36.
95. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 267.
96. Ibid., 346.
97. Dewey, *How We Think*, 156.
98. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 23.
99. Ibid., 42.
100. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 86. For more on the relationship between art and communication, see Scott R. Stroud, "Dewey on Art as Evocative Communication," *Education & Culture* 23, no. 2 (2007): 6–26.
101. Dewey, *How We Think*, 156.
102. Naoko Saito, *The Gleam of Light: Moral Perfectionism and Education in Dewey and Emerson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 161.
103. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 76.

104. Ibid., 279.
 105. Ibid., 59.
 106. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 182.
 107. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 16.
 108. Ibid., 267.

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