Learning as Inhabitation

A Reinterpretation of Dewey's Concept of Learning through Alexander's Ecological Humanism

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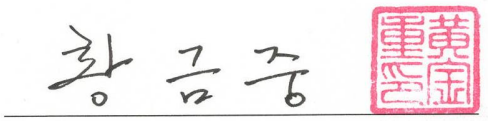

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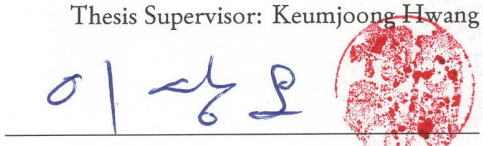

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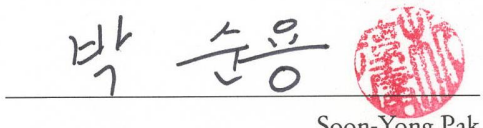

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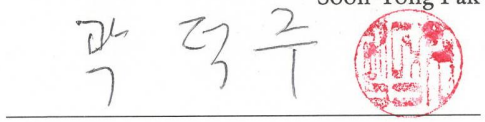

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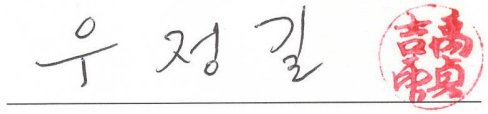

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Dedicated to the living memory of

Betty Lou Meyer
Joe David Meyer
&
도휘자

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of learning through the eco-centric, or nature-prime, philosophies of John Dewey and Thomas Alexander. In particular, it interprets learning from the perspective of nature itself as inhabitation, which locates the process and activity of learning within the transactivity of learning situations themselves. This research is a response to the increasingly urgent need for human beings to re-evaluate our relationship with nature for a more ecologically conscious and responsible inhabitation of our world. Ecological humanism is particularly relevant to this end due to the nature-prime or eco-ontological orientation of its philosophies. The concept of learning as the inhabitation of transactional wholes, or situations, contributes such an ecological humanistic perspective to a niche area of research in the philosophy of education which aims to ecologize or de-anthropocentrize educational theory and practice.

Through a review of the corpora of Dewey and Alexander and other related literature, this paper examines the relevant philosophical and metaphysical issues involved in learning and inhabitation from the point of view of ecological humanism. In particular it aims to 1) examine the main philosophical and metaphysical points of this eco-centric concept of learning, 2) discuss the vital intersections of art and philosophy with learning, as well as the significance of meaning, value, interest, and wisdom in that process of inhabitation, 3) demonstrate the generality and fundamentally autotelic nature of learning as the life process itself, 4) and articulate how learning so conceived as a direct participation in the growth of and communion in a world or ecosystem discloses possibilities for more ecologically fluent ways of living together,

among all existences, and what implications this has for human inhabitation and education in particular.

The main positions of Alexander's ecological humanism are surveyed, followed by an in-depth review of Dewey's reconstruction of metaphysics with special emphasis on his principle of continuity. Natural continuity is then discussed in the metaphysics of experience and learning, demonstrating how learning is the growth of situations through the realization of individual interest. This process is fundamentally aesthetic in nature. Philosophy serves as a method of remaining aesthetically receptive to our world to critically evaluate how we inhabit it. Learning is itself art, or, a process of aesthetic appreciation and production, through which we participate most vitally and directly in a communion with our cultural and natural world.

From this point of view, the commonplace dualisms of contemporary education are critiqued, and the import of a transactional, learning-centric paradigm of education is discussed. Namely, it is argued that learning, understood as inhabitation, is the life process itself, and is fundamentally autotelic in nature. Understood in this way, learning represents our most basic point of contact and expression of the world or ecosystem. It is concluded that not only must learning situations be allowed to determine their own meanings to as great a degree as possible, but also that this is a condition for a democratic and ecologically conscientious education and inhabitation of the Earth.

Keywords: John Dewey, Thomas Alexander, Inhabitation, Aesthetic Experience, Autotelic Learning, Ecological Humanism, Transaction, Learning Situation

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Need for an Eco-centric Re-conception of Learning

Over the first two decades of the twenty-first century, our perceptions of the ecosystem and our place in it have been continually problematized. Numerous ecologically significant discoveries[1] and the mounting pile of evidence concerning human-caused climate change and its effects[2] have drawn attention to the complexity and mystery of the ecosystem as well as its precariousness and vulnerability. The ecological consequences of our ways of life have become explicit concerns of public policy and discourse, yet a more ecologically conscientious inhabitation of the Earth is, evidently, not a universal priority. The "fast fashion" industry, for example, or textile

[1] A few fascinating examples worth mentioning include the discovery that dust from the Sahara Desert in Africa gets carried all the way across the Atlantic Ocean to finally fertilize the nutrient-deprived soil of the Amazon Rainforest (Yu et al. 2015), and the ongoing research into mychorrizal networks (Simard et al. 2012), or the "Wood Wide Web" (Giovannetti et al. 2006), which are networks of mycelium through which plants are able to communicate and exchange water, carbon, and nutrients.

[2] A few notable examples include the groundbreaking study of ice cores in Greenland (Steffensen et al. 2008) which provides strong evidence for the Anthropocene hypothesis (Waters et al. 2016), or, a human-induced geological epoch, and the confirmation of a sixth mass extinction event caused by human effects on the biosphere (Ceballos et al. 2015).

production in general, is responsible for twenty percent of global wastewater, ten percent of carbon emissions—more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined—and an estimated 1.4 million trillion [sic] microplastics in the ocean.[3] Another example is the emerging space tourism industry, where the cost of a brief spaceflight includes, among other pollutants (Noor 2021), the emission of one-hundred times more carbon dioxide per passenger than ordinary jetliners (Marais 2021). In addition to such overt environmental neglect, the economic preoccupation of public policy with sustainable *development* also evidences a deprioritization of fundamental social and economic adaptation for *ecological* sustainability in favor of perpetuating stable economic conditions and material well-being.[4] While this state of affairs hints at a significant intersection of nature and culture—the vital interrelation of "ecological" and "social" problems—it is also an expression of a metaphysics which supposes a fundamental dichotomy between them; ironically inhibiting a greater perception of the ecological disfluencies of our ways of life and the experimental development of actionable perspectives for their adaptation.

Given the urgent need for the human population to take responsibility for our effects on the increasingly precarious state of the ecosystem, we are obligated to reconsider our relationship with nature. The fate of our species and the biosphere in general depends on our earnest reconsideration of the interrelationship or continuity of nature and culture—how we are in the world and how it is in us. It will not suffice

[3] cf. "Fashion's Tiny Hidden Secret" (2019) & "UN Alliance For Sustainable Fashion Addresses Damage of 'Fast Fashion'" (2019)

[4] Sustainability first emerged as a policy concept in 1987, explicitly prioritizing sustainable development, or, development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (World Commision on Environment and Development 1987). Sustainability as the "[preservation] of productive capacity for the indefinite future" (Solow 1992) to sustain human well-being, or, the "objective conditions that make people happy" (Kuhlman and Farrington 2010) in addition to irreplaceable natural resources is not at odds with ecological sustainability necessarily, but is an approach which depends on and works within existing economic conditions. That is, "solutions" to problems of sustainable development will be those which are congenial to the established values, practices, institutions, and social and economic structures upon which well-being currently depends to ensure optimum stability and minimal friction. These conditions, of course, may or may not be compatible with ecological sustainability, and *their* adaptation is not easily broached by development policy and policy-making bodies whose very existence is premised upon them. Kahn (2008) has criticized this ironic trend of implicitly sustaining capitalism in the failed attempts of Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development, offering ecopedagogy as a viable alternative.

to merely adjust the policies and practices of our established ways of life, but rather our ways of life themselves must be adapted. That is, accommodating a more ecologically conscientious way of life on Earth is, generally speaking, a question of the life process itself; of inhabitation, or, the process of adapting and adapting to a world. An ecologically sensitive evaluation of our inhabitation of Earth would require us to perceive our world beyond our ideas of it; to appreciate human existence and the life process from the point of view of nature at large. What does inhabitation mean from such an eco-centric or nature-prime perspective, and what implications would this have for life as we know it?

The philosophy of John Dewey is particularly relevant to such an eco-centric reevaluation of human existence. The cornerstone of Dewey's naturalism is what Thomas Alexander refers to as eco-ontology—the position that nature, not Being, is primary. In this view, nature is what nature does, which is to say that nature includes both the modalities of actuality and potentiality, and that all existence is continuous and qualified by time. We exist not just *in* but *of* nature—as nature. Experience, or culture, in this view is wholly continuous with nature, and therefore human activity is not just an occurrence within the *environment* of nature, but is a vital realization and expression of natural potentialities. To exist, then, is to experiment with ways of being in the world; ways of being a world. The cultural inhabitation of nature, in other words, is fundamentally a process of *growth*—the realization of continuities among life situations.

This paper attempts to make the case that from such an eco-centric point of view, inhabitation is itself learning, or growth. In the nature-prime philosophy of John Dewey, in which the continuity of nature and experience is assumed, *situations*, or rēs, are primary ontic individuals. They are *transactional* wholes spanning stretches of time and space. An eco-centric concept of learning as inhabitation is one that is premised on this fundamental transactionality, understanding learning as the growth of these transactional wholes themselves; of situations, ecosystems, worlds. In other words, it is an interpretation of learning as *this* process of *transaction* among situations; which is to say, learning, in the general and particular sense, is identified as natural continuity itself. The term inhabitation in this context is used to denote the meaning of learning understood as transaction. Namely, it denotes the general life

process of *organization*; of becoming and being an organism, or, the process of living in and living as, or functioning as a whole "thing." The special point this paper aims to make is that the inhabitation or growth of a world is transactional—it is something a world, or situation, does *as a whole*. The matter is not of particular actors subsisting in and in spite of their environment, but that of their existing *primarily* as a whole system which is itself the "subject" of inhabitation; the one who inhabitates, or learns. Learning conceived as this irreducibly transactive process of a whole system denotes the growth of inhabitant-and-habitat as an individual learning situation, not the adaptation of either in isolation.

The interpretation of learning as inhabitation that this paper attempts to articulate is heavily influenced by a "new" school of Dewey scholarship that has developed over the past forty or so years. In the 1980s, Richard Rorty's (1980) seminal work, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, rekindled an interest in Dewey's philosophy. While Rorty's reading of Dewey was "full of fumbles" (Alexander 2020, 9), his treatment of Dewey as the unsung heretical critic of the Western philosophical tradition placed him squarely in the spotlight of postmodern circles. The sudden relevance of Dewey drew attention to his philosophy, and, incidentally, to that of other American philosophers and the politics of designating what constitutes the American philosophical heritage.[5] Simultaneously, a new undercurrent of Dewey scholarship was emerging which problematized the "traditional" and "neo-pragmatist" readings of Dewey. This "new scholarship"[6] characteristically reinterprets John Dewey's philosophy in light of his philosophy of aesthetic experience, which Dewey mostly articulated in his later works. The emergence of this new reading of Dewey coincided with the publication of his massive *Collected Works* during the final quarter of the twentieth century. The availability of his life's works enabled this new scholarship to take root, for it provided a novel bird's-eye-view of his philosophy through which it could be examined in its entirety, and through which the importance of the aesthetic in his philosophy could be clearly observed. The consequences of this reinterpretation have had a last-

[5]For a brief, yet insightful re-telling of the events surrounding this revival of Dewey and the conflicts which ensued, see Alexander (2020).

[6]This "new scholarship" denotes this wave of Dewey scholarship informed by a reading of his philosophy in light of his aesthetics. The term itself is borrowed from Jim Garrison's (1995) *The New Scholarship on Dewey*, which is a collection of papers written by individuals involved in this particular revival.

ing influence on Dewey scholarship generally, but have also been realized laterally in other fields and schools, such as comparative philosophy[7], and have even contributed to the initiation of entirely new fields of study, such as somaesthetics.[8]

Among the "new scholarship on Dewey," Thomas Alexander[9] stands out for his seminal reinterpretation of Dewey's thought in light of his later attempts to systematize his philosophy, illuminating the special point that aesthetic experience is key to understanding his philosophy in general and his theory of experience in particular. Alexander's re-reading of Dewey directly challenges interpretations of his theory which dominated scholarship for decades; namely, the "two Deweys reading," such as that of Rorty's, which depicted Dewey as an "utter relativist" and a "deeply bifurcated person": "a 'good Dewey' who engaged in cultural criticism and a 'bad Dewey' who frequently succumbed to the siren song of 'Hegelian' metaphysics" (Alexander 2013). Alexander's reinterpretation of Dewey provides a consistent reading of his philosophy as a whole, in all its variegated nuance, as it evolved over his lifetime, demonstrating the integrity of Dewey's philosophy, which, contrary to the neo-pragmatist origin story, he himself referred to as cultural naturalism rather than pragmatism or even instrumentalism.[10] The fruit of Alexander's efforts has been a concise view of Dewey's philosophy as a nature-prime humanism in which art becomes the zenith of human existence and the fullest expression of nature. Nature is not ontologically auxiliary to Being, but rather existence is a being *of* nature. Human existence in this view

[7] Since around the turn of the millennium, a significant amount of dialog has occurred regarding the philosophy of John Dewey and prominent—especially classical—East Asian philosophers. The most well-known comparative research on Dewey and the East is that of Roger Ames (2003, 2014, 2015), who often references Dewey as a theoretical framework through which to interpret Confucian and Daoist philosophies in particular. His translations of classic Chinese texts alongside David Hall (Ames, Hall, and Laozi 2004) also refer to Deweyan ideas to synthesize an interpretive, contemporary reading. Other noteworthy points of contact include democracy (Hall and Ames 1999; Tan 2003), and Confucian and Daoist aesthetics (Sartwell 2009; Shusterman 2009; Alexander 2009).

[8] cf. *The Journal of Somaesthetics* & (Shusterman 1992, 2008)

[9] Thomas Alexander is the co-director of The Center for Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he has taught since 1985.

[10] Dewey intentionally avoided using the word pragmatism as a label for his philosophy as a whole, and used instrumentalism to refer to his theory of thinking and knowledge specifically. In a letter to Corliss Lamont he states: "I have come to think of my own position as cultural or humanistic Naturalism. Naturalism, properly interpreted, seems to me a more adequate term than Humanism. Of course I have always limited my use of 'instrumentalism' to my theory of thinking and knowledge; the word 'pragmatism' I have used very little, and then with reserve" (Lamont 1961, 26).

becomes a process of culturally inhabiting nature—of living-in-and-making a world in and of nature—animated by the desire to experience meaning and value, which Alexander refers to as the Human Eros.

Alexander's work over the course of his career may be seen as a development of Dewey's cultural naturalistic theory of experience, drawing on influences from Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Santayana, Justus Buchler, Buddhism, and Native American wisdom traditions. In attempt to avoid or at least mitigate the "failed rhetorical move" on Dewey's part to "change the semantic focus of established words like 'experience,' 'nature,' 'means,' 'end,'" and so forth, Alexander has preferred the name of either "ecological humanism" or "humanistic naturalism" for this theory instead of Dewey's original "cultural naturalism" (Alexander 2013, 5). This choice is also significant for its emphasis on the special point of nature primacy that is foundational to this philosophy. This paper aligns itself with this philosophical heritage and intends to modestly contribute to its ongoing discussion and development an interpretation of Dewey's educational philosophy in terms of an eco-centric concept of learning.

Needless to say, there is no shortage of scholarship on Dewey in the field of education, and work in the vein of this "new scholarship" is no exception. As one might expect, a significant portion of the work in educational philosophy that stems from this so-called aesthetic revival in Dewey scholarship has focused on aesthetic education explicitly,[11] or on themes such as moral education (S. Fesmire 1999; S. A. Fesmire 1995; Kim 2009). The aesthetic re-reading of Dewey has, of course, effected in inquires other than those topically relevant to art or "the arts." The theory that experience is paradigmatically aesthetic has important implications for art—in the most general sense of the term—as communication (Stroud 2008), which in turn has significant consequences for the intersection of education and democracy or social organization generally.[12] Another implication of this aesthetic theory of experience for educational philosophy is the centrality of desire, or eros, in human existence as well as in education.[13] The topic of eros in education has been handled most

[11] cf. Jackson (1995), Grierson (2017), Higgins (2009) & Nakamura (2009)]

[12] cf. Biesta (1995), Tiles (1995), Alexander (1994), McClelland (2005), & (J. Garrison 1996, 2012)

[13] Eros is a central theme of ecological humanism, and is discussed throughout this paper; particularly what Alexander refers to as the Human Eros, or, the innate desire to experience meaning and value.

extensively by Jim Garrison (1994, 1995, 2004; 2010), who has also written prolifically on other Deweyan themes in education. Finally, the aesthetic re-appreciation of Dewey's theories has prompted numerous attempts to reinterpret nearly all phases of education—from curriculum, to teaching, to "studying"—in the context of core ideas such as transaction (박철홍 2008), aesthetic experience (박철홍 2013), quality (윤영순 and 박철홍 2010), or naturalist metaphysics (양은주 1999a; 양은주 1999b).

Research relating to ecological or environmental perspectives in the field of educational philosophy is sparse.[14] According to Humphreys and Blenkinsop (2017), in the limited literature that exists on the philosophy of education and environment there are "large gaps of philosophical thought missing in the trimaran of philosophy, education, and environment," as well as an apparent trend of concern for the "dualism between immanent nature versus culture." This is apparent in the Dewey scholarship on these topics, which tended to focus on the question of "whether there was ecological insight in his work." Colwell (1985), for example, contends that Dewey's emphasis on the social overshadowed his unitary view of nature and its ecological insights, which were consequently ignored or overlooked. In contrast, Morgan (1996) denies any ecological value in Dewey's work, claiming that Dewey had a "disguised cultural agenda" which, for Morgan, contradicts whatever ecological insights his work would otherwise have. Boyles (2012) rejects Morgan's charge of anthropocentrism in Dewey's philosophy, citing well-known debates among Dewey and his contemporary critics on precisely this topic. While both Colwell and Boyles emphasize the crucial point of transactionality in Dewey's naturalism, both are preoccupied with demonstrating the fact that Dewey's philosophy has ecological import rather than communicating and expanding upon its unique educational meaning. Both appear to recast ordinary educational practices and principles in environmental language. For example, Boyles (2012, 161) suggests that "we should see classrooms as reconstructed, organic spaces safe for and productive of transactions between and among students, teachers, and emergent content," while Colwell (1985, 259) seems to identify learning and the aim of education with the transactional production and acqui-

[14] In a literature review of five major educational philosophy journals, including *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, *Educational Theory*, *Studies in Philosophy of Education*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, and *Philosophy of Education Society*, Humphreys and Blenkinsop (2017) found that only fifty articles handled ecological or environmental topics.

sition of knowledge so that the "growth of nature may be facilitated." Humphreys and Blenkinsop (2017) observe that in these discussions what is missing, in addition to the environment itself, is an account of what Dewey actually had to say on the matter.

Another outstanding issue that Humphreys and Blenkinsop (2017) identify in their review of literature in this field is that in spite of all that is said about the environment and ecosystem, as Morgan (1996, 294) claimed a quarter of a century ago, "education is still a strictly social process that takes place apart from and in opposition to non-human thought." As of late, interest in the philosophy of education and environment seems to be gravitating toward ecologically inclusive perspectives which problematize such views which assume a nature-culture dichotomy or arbitrarily isolate education and experience from nature. For example, Laird (2017) explores what is entailed in the process of learning to live in the Anthropocene, drawing special attention to various ecological and epistemological "gaps" which demonstrate how education intersects with various moral, ethical, cultural, technological, and natural problems. Affifi (2020, 2017a) further problematizes the duality and anthropocentrism of the Anthropocene, and expands on Abram's (1996) more-than-human thesis to propose the idea of panbiotic educational interaction, or learning and being learned-from, as basic to the life process and the biosphere generally (Affifi 2017b).

This paper expands on these themes and contributes to the ongoing discussion on ecological philosophies of education through an eco-centric interpretation of learning as the process of inhabitation. The meaning and implications of learning disclosed in this paper, to some extent, represent a learning-centric reinterpretation of John Dewey's educational philosophy. This special emphasis on learning is significant for several reasons. Dewey's writings on educational philosophy naturally discuss learning in various ways, but they do not explicitly designate "learning" as the theoretical or practical core of education. However, insofar as Dewey's philosophy crucially hinges on the principle of continuity, he may be read as *always* talking about learning in some capacity. When the significance of continuity and aesthetic experience in Dewey's thought is grasped, this centrality of learning becomes ever more apparent. Such a focus on learning, understood as natural continuity, effectively locates the educational project in the transactions of the ecosystem at large. That is, this

learning-centric focus emphasizes that, given the fundamental continuity of nature and culture in ecological humanism, the situations of life experience are the primary loci of growth and learning; a perspective which affords an appreciation of the generality of learning not just in human experience but in the biosphere generally. Not only does this disclose the continuity of experience among human and non-human existence, but it provides insight into how these may be vitally involved; how human values, meanings, and aims may be receptive, responsive, and expressive of nature generally. In particular, learning as the inhabitation of situations shows how human beings are most perceptive of and participant in the dynamics of situations, and the world generally, through art and philosophy. Learning becomes the generic process of *organization*—of becoming and functioning as an organism or ecosystem—that qualifies all existence, consequently problematizing and modally reorienting the human inhabitation of the Earth.

The aim of this paper is to disclose the philosophical background, significance, and implications of learning understood as the inhabitation of transactional wholes; or situations. To this end, it will 1) examine the main philosophical and metaphysical points of this eco-centric concept of learning, 2) discuss the vital intersections of art and philosophy with learning, as well as the significance of meaning, value, interest, and wisdom in that process of inhabitation, 3) demonstrate the generality and fundamentally autotelic nature of learning as the life process itself, 4) and articulate how learning so conceived as a direct participation in the growth of and communion in a world or ecosystem discloses possibilities for more ecologically fluent ways of living together, among all existences, and what implications this has for human inhabitation and education in particular.

In chapter two I will briefly survey the primary theses of ecological humanism to serve as an interpretive framework to build upon in subsequent chapters. In chapter three I elaborate on the themes involved here with a discussion of Dewey's reconstruction of metaphysics through a review of criticisms involving the principle of continuity in his theory and Dewey's own responses to them. In chapter four I continue with a discussion of the central ideas involved in Dewey's theory of experience with special attention on their meaning in terms of continuity, or learning and growth. It is argued that situations are primary realities and that learning is, generally speak-

ing, the growth or continuity of situtions. This continuity is established throug the realization of interest or individuality, which discloses the inherently creative and temporal nature of learning, and likewise the inherent connection between learning and art. The transactional nature of growth understood in this way is examined as the process of cultural inhabitation itself.

In chapter five, I will explore the philosophical foundations of inhabitation in experience. This chapter functions to clarify the philosophical orientation of this paper, while also sketching an outline of the core themes involved in the concept of inhabitation. Conscious experience, it is argued, is basically critical insofar as it involves an imaginative appreciation and experimentation with the values which predispose, orient, and develop experience. The generic method of inquiry that is paradigmatic of conscious experience is what Dewey referred to as the denotative-empirical method; a method for disclosing ideas while remaining aesthetically receptive to and critical of the process and situation whereof they are encountered. Inhabitation, or the functional coordination of activity generally, is found to be generically *philosophical* in orientation due to this inherently critical phase of conscious experience, which, it is argued, embodies some degree of wisdom—understood as a sensitivity and responsiveness to situational dynamics—in its process and consummatory product.

In chapter six, I review the key points of Dewey's aesthetic philosophy to clarify how learning is art and disclose some implications of this fact. I argue that learning is generically a process of aesthetic appreciation and production whereby meanings are actively perceived and expressed in experience. This amounts to a kind of "bootstrapping of realities" which itself constitutes a participation in the cultivation of common aesthetics whereby a culture "communicates," or becomes and functions as a community. In chapter 7, I critique some common tropes of education and appropriate them in the context of the transactional metaphysics of ecological humanism. It is concluded that learning and teaching are transactional phases of a learning situation, and that the growth of this situation *as a transactional whole* is the generic product and process of inhabitation. The problematic implications of learning so understood for the concept, practice, and institution of education are discussed; namely, that an inhabitation paradigm of learning entails a degree of social reorganization that can only be meaningfully initialized and realized through grassroots, autotelic learning

cooperatives and learning resource commons.

Chapter 2

A Survey of Ecological Humanism

Ecological humanism, or humanistic naturalism, is the nature-prime philosophy of existence developed by Thomas M. Alexander in an attempt to explore what may be called an "aesthetics of human existence"(2013, 1). It is a development of John Dewey's humanistic empiricism, or, cultural naturalism, extended by interpretations of Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Santayana, Justus Buchler, Buddhism, and the Native American wisdom traditions. The philosophical themes of this position developed gradually over the course of Alexander's career, and are expressed most fully in a series of articles collected in his book, *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*. Many of these themes will be explored in detail throughout subsequent chapters, but I will survey the main positions of ecological humanism to establish a working interpretive framework for the discussions that follow.

2.1 The Human Eros & Vita Humana

According to Alexander, "human beings seek to live with a concrete, embodied experience of meaning and value in the world." This basic desire or need for meaning he calls the Human Eros, which "is a biological claim insofar as if this need is denied, we either die or become filled with a destructive rage." Alexander cites the

Nazi "final solution" as an extreme yet instructive example of how human beings can be destroyed by denying their lives meaning and value (2013, 6). The "problem of meaning" begins, as Alexander sees it, with the inhabitation of a world that "makes sense and sustains values that present us with meaningful choices so that we may lead lives that are experienced as fulfilling" (7).

An important premise of the Human Eros is that, as Dewey argued, "our engagement with the world, our undergone or felt way of 'being in the world,' is primarily qualitative, not cognitive" (Alexander 2013, 7). A central criticism of philosophy and the history of Western thought throughout Dewey's works is that these have been preoccupied with trying to understand everything as problems of knowledge, including experience itself.[1] Prior to the world becoming an object of reflection, it exists as the way we are in it; even unconsciously. The *meaning* of our experience in the world, the particular way we inhabit unique moments and situations in succession, is not something that can be distilled into a discrete datum or proposition *about* them and their perceived conditions. Conscious or reflective experience is but the focal center of the more expansive and largely unconscious polymodal field of interactivity that *is* experience.

This primarily aesthetic nature of experience is of profound philosophical importance, for in "such experiences this dimension is not only brought to consciousness but is acutely felt as the guiding 'sense' of the experience" (Alexander 2013, 8). This topic will be explored in some detail later, but the aesthetic, qualitative field of experience is itself the sense-giving context or condition for all meaning; including knowledge and our concepts about the world. Contrary to the so-called intellectualist view that reduces experience to cognitive states, our ideas and concepts are not substantial representations of the world, but are tools for organizing our perception of the world to facilitate the coordination of activity within (and of) it. There are several consequences of this view worth noting here, especially concerning learning.

First, unlike the mainstreams of Western thought, which have historically fixated "upon the primacy of identity over continuity" (Alexander 2013, 8), the nature-prime

[1] Dewey referred to this as the intellectualist fallacy, or *the philosophical fallacy*. cf. (Dewey 1930) & (Dewey 1929, 21, 29).

perspective of ecological humanism considers all existence to be qualified by time. In Deweyan parlance, temporal quality is basic to existence.[2] To exist, to be present, is to be situated within an open-ended history. This fundamental tension between the relatively determinate past and indeterminate future is the impetus for all transformation or growth in nature. Indeed, this fundamental continuity of existence is the cornerstone of Deweyan naturalism, as we will see in subsequent chapters.

Second, imagination is the agency of navigating these modalities of actuality and potentiality present in every situation. It is through imagination that the present is appropriated in terms of the past and future. It is an interpretation and evaluation of the "old" in experience in light of the "new," and vice versa. For Alexander, imagination "is not a mental faculty, a 'picture-making' power, but is a dynamic structuring of experience that arises from our lived embodiment; initially it gives us patterns of possible actions that are rooted in our own vital human form but gives us these possibilities *as* possibilities, and so open to consideration apart from immediate action" (2013, 9).

Third, the imaginatively appropriated temporality—or, continuity and growth—of human life, is not a chronological succession of events, but an organic structure of existence whose events constitute a lifetime; a Vita Humana. This organic structure of a Vita Humana, is a kind of narrative which "incorporates its parts in terms of a growing, organic whole. A human lifetime is an event in a social and historical place and time" (Alexander 2013, 10). The realization of individual interest and potential, or growth, is the imaginative appropriation of meaning and value in and of a habitat; a qualitatively extended time and a place through and of which one exists. Alexander presents the Human Eros and the idea of the Vita Humana as a "continuum for an aesthetics of human existence … meant to designate the idea of the human life, driven by the need for experiencing meaning and value, as a more fundamental philosophical framework than either epistemology or ethics" (11). In other words, following Dewey, Alexander contends that the "aim of philosophy should be to deal with the meaning of culture and not 'inquiry' and 'truth' (392).[3] Ecological

[2]Temporal quality, in Dewey's view, is not to be conflated with temporal order or series. cf. (Dewey 2008c, 1:91–92)

[3]As Dewey puts it in his essay, *Philosophy and Civilization*, "Meaning is wider in scope as well as more precious in value than is truth and philosophy is occupied with meaning rather than with truth. ..

humanism, then, is a philosophy of culture, and its exploration of the"aesthetics of human existence" is to be understood more as a kind of "philosophical anthropology" than as "Aesthetics" in the customary sense of a "philosophy of art and 'aesthetic experience'" (11).

2.2 Spiritual Ecologies

If human beings have a basic need to realize meaning and value in life, then culture is the generic condition for our inhabitation of the world. Culture in this sense is the Human Eros' transformation of a biophysical environment into a "world," or an "environment of meaning and value" in its inhabitation of the earth. These environments Alexander refers to as "ecologies of the spirit" (2013, 11). Spiritual ecologies are not just "technologies of adaptation," but rather they "are ways of consummating Eros itself" which constitute human "oikoi," or habitats (395).

It is important to note that these habitats do not exist independently of the ways they are inhabited. Their inhabitation is what they *are*. That is, not only is there no universal species or teleological structure of culture, a cultural environment is not merely a static background to human activity. A cultural environment is what it is because of the concrete interactivity that constitutes it. The diversity of cultural environments in different places and times is a consequence of inhabitants' sensitivity and creative response to the dynamics of their cultural-and-natural habitats. The philosophical interest in exploring the meanings of culture involves an effort to appreciate these vital dynamics. In other words, "philosophy should not *initially* approach cultures with the question 'Are these beliefs true?' but instead with 'How are these meanings lived?'" Alexander outlines a few ways such a "philosophical ecology" can approach the meanings of culture; namely, tropology (the study of tropes), symbology (the study of symbols), and mythology (the study of Mythoi) (2013, 395).

Regarding spiritual ecologies of the Human Eros, the most important of these approaches is mythology. Alexander distinguishes the term Mythos from its colloquial

> We do not inquire whether Greek civilization was true or false, but we are immensely concerned to penetrate its meaning. … In philosophy we are dealing with something comparable to the meaning of Athenian civilization or of a drama or a lyric" (Dewey 1998a, 1:80).

English usage as a "false story," or myth. A Mythos is "an important story that helps establish the meaning of the self, a people, and the world" (Alexander 2013, 14). Mythoi are a primary way we gain a sense of a meaningful self and world. The world is narratively given to us, since we are *told* the stories of the world, our family, and ourselves before we tell them (399). From infancy we discover our world and how we inhabit it through mythic narratives, and through them we construct and internalize individual and group identities. The same applies not only to individuals, but to groups, communities, or entire civilizations. A familiar example is the origin story of the United States—the chronicle of liberty-seeking pilgrims seizing their sovereignty in the new world. Alexander gives an interesting example of how philosophers pass on the "story of philosophy," and how this story can be told in different ways to exclude certain philosophers or entire philosophical worlds, such as Hindu philosophy or East Asian philosophy, from the philosophical canon.[4]

Not all Mythoi, however, exist as grand narratives, nor are they necessarily explicit, articulated narratives. During the ten years I have lived here in Korea, on a countless number of occasions I have been asked how or why I came to live here. My various responses to those questions express some sort of Mythos; embodying a sense of meaning about who and how I am in this world. They contain a lifetime of stories, concerns, dreams, fears, desires, etc. which are not explicitly addressed in the response itself, but which nonetheless are elemental to the Mythos it embodies. Even mundane questions like, "How did you choose your major?" or "What kind of music do you like?" illicit responses that, directly or indirectly, express the mythic origins of what we value.

In this way, Mythoi may exist as symbols, on a semiconscious or subconscious level, and may be embodied in rituals, customs, institutions, works of art, etc. (Alexander 2013, 15). In high school, my younger brother, who was the drummer of our funk-rock band, would always wear a shirt that said "FUNK NOT PUNK" when we played a show—shows that were almost always played alongside punk rock bands. His wearing of that shirt was an expression of an entire Mythos involving teenage angst and the exploration of identities, musical taste, lifestyle, political attitudes, etc. The way we played our music is also a good example of an implicit expression of

[4] cf. (Alexander 2013, 15, 399)

Mythos. The majority of our performances were improvised jam sessions, which reflected an aesthetic ideal as much as a general perspective and attitude about life. The open-ended, conversational, participatory, and experimental nature of free improvisation may have represented a negation or escape from the rigid structure and priorities of school (and perhaps social institutions generally), which occupied most of our teenage life and was incidentally where most of our shows were hosted.

As one may expect, the study of Mythoi is intimately intertwined with tropology and symbology. The core ideas, values, and themes embodied in Mythoi that define the cultural self and world are what Alexander refers to as tropes (2013, 400). "Freedom," for example, is a central trope in the Mythos of the United States. Virtue and reason were core tropes of ancient Greek civilization, as *ren*(仁), *yi*(義), *li*(禮), and *zhi*(智) were prime in the Confucian cultural sphere, and tropes such as hyo(孝) are still relevant today. More contemporary, mundane examples might include tropes such as "YOLO"[5], or "Hell Joseon"(헬조선) in Korea.

Tropes themselves are generic and archetypal, and are evoked and expressed through a variety of concrete types Alexander calls tropic symbols. A trope is "rendered determinate by a range of forms that constitute a symbolic syntax," and the tropic symbols which this syntax constitutes are culturally determinate; that is, they are not *necessary* consequences of a trope itself, but, in a sense, interpretations of it. For example, "different cultures may share the trope of 'the Hero,' but the range of determinate forms that trope takes on will vary greatly from culture to culture (e.g., Odysseus, Moses, Rama)." When symbols are concretely embodied they function as living incarnations of cultural meaning (Alexander 2013, 400), or avatars, which are mediated by tropic symbols. Tropic symbols of "Freedom" in the United States Mythos may take many forms, from "stock characters of The Cowboy or The Rugged Individual to Fourth of July celebrations to elections to American foreign policy" (ibid.), whereas an avatar is a concrete, specific embodiment of one of these:

> …John Wayne as Tom Doniphon in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* or Harrison Ford as Han Solo. The hapless war in Vietnam was for us an attempt to embody an avatar of this trope of Freedom through the type

[5]YOLO is an acronym for "you only live once."

> of "defending democracy." We were reenacting the Mythos of our own Revolution oblivious to its being transplanted into a context in which we had become the colonial power. (Alexander 2013, 16)

When tropes are closely related, harmoniously or otherwise, they form what Alexander calls constellations. Freedom in the United States Mythos is closely related to individualism, for example. In Korea, the trope of Hell Joseon arguably forms an unharmonious constellation with other tropes relating to social order and propriety, such as hyo(孝)—"filal piety"—while forming harmonious constellations with other tropes relating to social equality, such as the feminist trope of "escaping the corset" (탈코르셋). Another interesting if unharmonious constellation is that between "escaping the corset" and the trope of maternity and child-rearing as patriotism. Alexander points out that "a great deal of a culture's thought and art deals with exploring these close relationships and their tensions" (2013, 16). So much of our life involves navigating the dynamics of our habitat in such a way, and indeed, this exploration and the cultivation of sensibilities for appreciating the terrain of our culture is the *work* of learning in general. That is, to live in a *world*, an ecology of meaning, is to inquire, imagine, respond to, and experiment with the meanings that make it that world. Participation in a spiritual ecology is modally—but not exclusively—philosophical insofar as a concern for the meanings of that qualitatively extended ecosystem is involved. This interest in our habitat and how we are in it leads to more general questions about nature and the pursuit of a more generalized perspective on how we exist in and of it.

2.3 Eco-ontology

Eco-ontology is an attempt to reconstruct naturalism while rethinking "Western ontology, the philosophy of being, in terms of nature" which has traditionally thought of nature in terms of being (Alexander 2013, 17). While the term naturalism *should* suffice as a name for this philosophy, it is often confused with its "scientistic avatar" (105) which supposes nature to be whatever the most reductionistic "science" says

it is, be it physics, neurology, etc. (17). Following Dewey, eco-ontology considers nature to be what nature *does*:

> Events, rēs, are the manifest varieties of existence of all types, *natura naturata*, but are seen as arising from "Nature" understood as a creative matrix of potentiality, *natura naturans*, for "nature" must include the possible and the potential, not just the existent and actual. In other words, whatever legitimate causal conditions one may discover for a given type of event, a full account of the event in terms of its manifest ontological realization acknowledges that its "being" is most completely found in its "doing." It is what we ask when we say "What happend?" or "What is going on?" And this tells us something about the nature of nature: an event discloses a genuine possibility of existence, born from the womb of nature as it were. (Alexander 2013, 17)

A genuine naturalism, then, cannot realistically begin with exclusionary assumptions which expect nature to *be* a certain way; let alone deduce all of its potentialities from such reductive conditions. Instead, an open consideration of how "Nature" may be invoked for thought is a more adequate starting point for appreciating the generic traits of what nature does. This kind of "invocational thinking," Alexander explains, "begins in a mood of wonder and tries to be 'polyphonic'; that is, to hear the various voices in which Nature may be articulated or housed in human utterance" (2013, 105). Of these, the "ontological voice" is of particular significance for it wonders about being of nature, and is therefore foundational to any philosophy of nature. It is also significant that this invocational wondering about our being of nature entails caring for nature, which is not typically elemental to the skeletal "naturalism" of reductionistic scientism. Indeed, our inhabitation of the world is the very oikos, or home, of philosophy in general:

> Philosophy reflects our human embeddedness in the world. It offers the possibility of responsible inhabitation in pursuit of ecological wisdom. To *in*-habit is to have the habits that make one at home, the wisdom of the environment. Wisdom must inhabit this world, not another. Disembodied philosophy tries to live without environment. It is a disservice to its

> origins and is possible only through a primal act of forgetting. The initiating moment of philosophy is not just separation in reflective thought but also acknowledgment of the sources of existence. Philosophy arises in response to the tensive nature of the world within which human beings find themselves. To undertake thought without acknowledging its origin in need is to repress its own motives and to refuse acknowledgement of its grounding. (Alexander 2013, 101)

An implication of the fact that everything exists *of* nature is that what something "is" becomes a question of continuity; as opposed to substance or identity, as it has traditionally been conceived. In other words, "to be is to be the product of a history." If we suppose that everything exists *of* nature, and that *nature is what nature does*, then the processes through which a thing continues to exist in particular ways are more expressive of what a thing *is* than any attempt to define its discrete essence or substance, which fails to appreciate the very temporality that is a condition for its existing in the first place. Because nature includes both the modalities of actuality and potentiality, what something *is in itself* is basically indeterminate, and so its "whatness" is grasped "in terms of an environmental-historical narrative." Following Dewey, Alexander refers to such narrative accounts as "natural histories"—accounts of "how something comes to be within its situated contexts." Because all existence is environed—an "event" continuous with other "events" in space and time—a "thing" must be understood provisionally, "in terms of the situational interactions that constitute its history and its contemporary potentialities" (Alexander 2013, 96).

An important corollary of nature's fundamental temporality is that existence is transformative—that to be is to grow. This is not a rephrasing of the truism that "everything changes," however. The crucial point here is that those changes—the situated actualization of some potentialities over others—are existence. Transformation is not a property or attribute of existence; not something that happens to it, but something it does. In other words, existence is a creative process. The concrete transformations an existence undergoes constitute the thing itself, and to understand "what" it is entails "seeing the world it comes from and how it functioned within it" (Alexander 2013, 96). This topic will be explored further in a

later chapter about philosophical method, but it is worth noting here that natural histories are selective and perspectival:

> The boundaries of the history are vague, not absolutely finite, and one may extend or limit them in various ways as one tries to understand the narrative at hand. Nevertheless the parts are (or can be) connected together with degrees of meaningfulness. (This is why multiple biographies of the same individual are not only possible but desirable.) … [A] natural history asks for a detailed and intimate inquiry into the evolutionary ecology of the subject, and the "subject" is the creative process of transformations of potentialities into actualities. (Alexander 2013, 97)

The perspectival and transformational nature of existence makes the passage of time a creative development. Events are not merely occurrences, they are *concurrences* (Dewey and Bentley 1949, 66) whose changes condition and are conditioned by the complex dynamics which situate them *as* an event. Their transformation over time, then, is not a linear progression, but a pattern of "evolutionary change" Alexander refers to as *radial* teleology. In the present, an existence is situated by the actualities realized in its past, which functionally predispose it to a certain range of realizable potentialities. These potentialities, Alexander explains, are "indeterminately articulated in radiating webs" (2013, 98), and as some become realized over others, a new range of possibilities emerges in the succeeding situations that constitute its history. The present itself is a transformative reconstruction that realizes some potentialities over others, and through them other potentialities are further excluded or exposed. Alexander likens the radial pattern of this evolutionary teleology to that of a conversation:

> One might compare this sort of radial evolutionary teleology with that of a conversation, whereas Aristotle's view of teleology is more like that of a linear recitation (or *mimēsis*) of a previously written work. At any given moment in a conversation there is a constituting context within which remarks make sense or not; over time the conversation may range considerably, so that a remark at one time would not have been expected some

> time earlier. Yet, if one follows the conversation, it can be understood in terms of its history. (Alexander 2013, 98)

Radial teleology demonstrates the reality of time and how it qualifies all existence, which is also to say that it illustrates how actuality and potentiality are both fundamental modalities of nature. To be is not a matter of factical, discrete presence or identity, but of continuity—of growth. Everything that exists is present as an individuation of a continuity between a relatively determinate, historical past (anankē), and an indeterminate, open-ended future (apeiron). The present is the "struggle" (agōn) or push and pull between these two extremes (Alexander 2013, 99). In other words, existentiality is the continual transformation of the past and future in light of their respective actualities and potentialities; in light of what is and what could be.

Continuity, then, is neither a formal series nor an algorithmic rearrangement, but a creative individuation; the realization of "individuality-within-environment." It is the "tendency of natural process toward the establishment of a consummatory history," and in the context of human beings, this makes time the drama of the Human Eros (Alexander 2013, 99). As we will see, the creative development of time through the realization of individuality, or interest, is key to an ecological interpretation of learning as inhabitation. Alexander offers a terse summary worth citing to introduce this theme:

> While emphasizing the environment and history of events, eco-ontology equally stresses the role of creativity in the present as integral to temporal continuity. Individuality is the synthesis of the situation through action guided by imaginative insight into the potentialities at hand. It requires an understanding of the present as the outcome of a history in which there are tensive elements constituting the phase of undergoing. The insight into potentialities involves interpreting the present in terms of its possible meaning. The idealization of one or more of those possibilities sets an end-in-vew that makes reconstructive or transformative action a way of mediating the open tensiveness toward qualitative closure. The basis for a genuine individualism, then, is all one with deeply informed knowledge of the world and its history as well as creative imagination and moral

> courage. When profoundly realized, this environmental individualism fulfills the Human Eros. (Alexander 2013, 99–100)

The environmental or ecological nature of individuality and its realization as the creative participation in the dynamics of our worlds has profound implications for our concepts of learning. In light of the eco-ontological position sketched here, learning—and by extension, education—conceived and pursued instrumentally, as a means to an end, is grossly insensitive to the existential conditions of the world and the individuals who inhabit it. A system that normalizes the worth of learning as extrinsic to the process of learning and living itself is ultimately self-defeating, because the priorities for which learning is made to labor inherently exclude the concerns and interests of individuals as they are actually situated in their habitats. Our embeddedness in our environment behooves us to care for our world and how we inhabit it, but if the *objects* and *objectives* of inhabitation are collapsed around ideals extrinsic to the process of living itself, then this care will not be realized as a guiding concern of learning situations. No one can live or learn for you, and any concept of learning which falls short of enabling individuals to wonder for themselves about their world and how they are in it will be a disservice to ourselves and our home.

Chapter 3

Dewey's Reconstruction of Metaphysics

Before digging deeper into the naturalist metaphysics of experience that underpin learning as inhabitation, it is worth clarifying the place of metaphysics in Dewey's philosophical universe. In this chapter, we will review Dewey's distinctive positions on metaphysics and his controversial reconstruction of them. Much of the controversy surrounding his metaphysics involves the ambiguity of his principle of continuity, which is, incidentally, itself the general concept of learning as understood in this research. We will examine some historical debates on this topic and Dewey's responses to them in order to clarify the meaning of these ideas in Dewey's philosophy generally, and in the concept of learning in particular.

3.1 Social Interactivity & the Metaphysical Map

Dewey's views on metaphysics evolved dramatically over the course of his career, spanning a diverse range of perspectives; from Hegelian idealism and a concern for uncovering "the real fact," to metaphysics as the science of science,[1] and eventually

[1] See Dewey's 1915 article "The Subject-Matter of Metaphysical Inquiry" in Dewey et al. (1998a).

culminating in the emergentist, cultural naturalism of *Experience and Nature*. Initially distancing himself from metaphysics during his so-called middle instrumentalist period, Dewey came to recognize the need to explicitly re-theorize experience, or in other words, directly engage the metaphysics problematized by a general theory of experience. Dewey's reconstruction of metaphysics was never fully appreciated in his day, and his use of the word did more to confuse his critics than it did to clarify his points for them. Later in life, he occasionally remarked about his regretful use of the term metaphysics, realizing that it was exceedingly naive "to suppose that it was possible to rescue the word from its deeply engrained traditional use," although he still believed "that that which [it was] used to name is genuinely important" (Dewey 1949, 712).

While Dewey was highly critical of *supernatural* metaphysics, his critique was not an outright rejection of metaphysics per se, but rather, a reconstruction of them. Dewey took issue in particular with what Raymond Boisvert (1992, 191) calls "aseptic metaphysics"—metaphysics which "derived from an epoch which privileged 'reason' over 'being,' and simplicity/clarity over complexity/ambiguity," and therefore is preoccupied with "purity, clarity, and disembodied mentality." It was taken for granted that metaphysics *was* this philosophy of asepsis; those metaphysics whose subject-matter is supposed to be external to experience and nature, presupposing a fundamental dichotomy or discontinuity between them. Whereas the prefix meta in this case connotes a substantial transcendence—beyond nature and experience, literally *supernatural*—in Dewey's reconstruction, its meaning is closer to its common usage in present day, as in the words "metadata," "meta-fiction," or "meta-analysis." It refers to an inclusive extension of what the prefix modifies, which in the context of metaphysics suggests a mediation of experience; that is, something *beyond* but *within* nature in the sense of being an abstraction or extension of natural existences *as a natural existence*. In other words, metaphysics for Dewey as the "cognizance of the generic traits of nature" (1929, 51), is "a statement of the generic traits manifested by existence of all kinds without regard to their differentiation into physical and mental" (412). Metaphysics in this view pertains to our *ideas* about the nature of nature, functioning as a kind of map to guide the exploration of our natural and cultural world. Therefore, metaphysics is inevitably practical and culturally significant.

"We *live* by our inherited 'common sense' view of the nature of nature. Metaphysics is of course not unique in this respect. It is simply the most general framework for our discoveries, constructions, and convictions about the world, and by virtue of its generality our metaphysical 'map' plays a role in orienting (and prejudicing) the rest of our thinking." (S. Fesmire 2015, 39). Dewey's reconstruction of metaphysics, and philosophy in general, was concerned with the critique of these intellectual habits; a sort of "intellectual disrobing" to cultivate a "naivete of eye, ear, and thought" (Dewey 1929, 37):

> We cannot permanently divest ourselves of the intellectual habits we take on and wear when we assimilate the culture of our own time and place. But intelligent furthering of culture demands that we take some of them off, that we inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us. (Dewey 1929, 37)

This map-making manner of *doing* metaphysics is not and aims not to be a definitive account of reality, which for Dewey is wholly temporal and dynamic, and therefore has no normative teleological structure or terminus. "Both the subject matter of metaphysics (the world) and our way of making sense of it are incomplete, perpetually in process, so there can be no completed metaphysics. The work of metaphysics cannot even in principle be finished in a generative world that is always in the process of becoming, and in which our own engagement is never free of context and purposes" (S. Fesmire 2015, 39). Contrary to aseptic metaphysics, what is *real* for Dewey is not what is most simple, exclusive, and reductive—and therefore a matter to be settled by definition—but rather what is most complex, inclusive, and dynamic. So long as we acknowledge that there exists no world outside and beyond the one in which we live, then we must accept that our ideas about the nature of that world are conditioned by and contribute to the interactivity which is that world. In other words, ideas are both mediated and mediatory.

Thus, Dewey regarded the question of how to properly orient philosophical inquiry as "the most important problem in philosophic method at the present time" (1998a, 1:309): "Shall philosophy set out from and with the macroscopic or with the microscopic; with the gross and complex or with the minute and elemental?" (Dewey

2008b, 5:174). Dewey observed that philosophy guided by the ideal of asepsis is primarily concerned with the microscopic, or, the most "ultimate simples" (Raymond D. Boisvert 1992, 193):

> It is not too much to say that the heart of the procedure usually termed "rationalism" is found in the notion that entities or objects of a simple and ultimate nature, discovered by thought, are the "reals" in terms of which philosophy must understand and explain all complex and macroscopic phenomena. (Dewey 2008b, 5:175)

In such a view, paradigmatic instances of what may be deemed *real* are whatever is most simple and reductionistic. For rationalism, these are rational objects; for empiricism, they are sense data. In contrast, Dewey's philosophical project is oriented by the macroscopic, which is not to say that it is concerned with locating some all-encompassing, ultimate, unifying principle or substance in nature. Indeed, such an approach is microscopic in orientation—concerned not with nature *as a whole*, in all its complexity, but with simplified, reductive representations of it. Macroscopic for Dewey refers to our "complex, untidy, crowded, muddled surroundings" (Raymond D. Boisvert 1992, 191) as they are encountered, enjoyed, and endured, which he uniquely identifies as social phenomena *en gross* (Dewey 1998a, 1:311).

The social phenomena to which Dewey refers are not to be conflated with "social" as a metaphysical category, though they are importantly related. "The latter is derived from the former by means of an intellectual analysis which determines what is their distinctive character" (Dewey 1998a, 1:311). The social is the metaphysical map, and social phenomena are the frontier. By social phenomena *en gross* Dewey means raw social interactivity, the "largest, most inclusive and most complex of all phenomena with which mind has to deal" (2008b, 5:174); the "exemplification upon the widest and most intricate scale of the generic trait of associated behavior or interaction" (Dewey 1998a, 1:311).

Dewey's selection of the social as the paradigmatic instance of what is real (Raymond D. Boisvert 1992, 193) reveals an important aspect of his metaphysics; namely, the fundamental continuity of nature and experience. To regard the social as paradigmatic of reality is to accept "the phenomena of social interactions, as real in their

own right, and as the fullest manifestation of the nature of things accessible to the human mind" (Dewey 2008b, 5:176):

> Now I am not here dealing with the important and eventually imperative problem of the category of the social, or the determination of the characteristics which constitute the distinguishing nature of the social, but rather with social phenomena *en gross* as comprehending, for philosophical analysis, physical, organic and mental phenomena in a mode of association in which the latter take on new properties and exercise new functions. In other words, I am here implying that social phenomena do as a matter of fact manifest something distinctive, and that that something affords the key to a naturalistic account of phenomena baffling philosophic interpretation when it is left out of account. (Dewey 1998a, 1:311)

In such a cultural naturalism, social interactions are not the isolated willful acts of actors *upon* a completed world, nor are they self-contained within a realm of action isolated from that of the physical world. *They are ways of participating in the process of realizing the potentialities of nature*. "If man is within nature, not a little god outside, and is within as a mode of energy inseparably connected with other modes, interaction is the one unescapable trait of every human concern; thinking, even philosophic thinking, is not exempt" (Dewey 1929, 434). The crucial distinction of such a naturalism is that social interactions are not merely *part of nature*—occurrences within it—but they *are nature*. Social interactions are genuine realizations of some potentialities of nature, for the mind *emerges* as an organ of experience through myriad biological and physical transactions spanning vast stretches of space and time. That social interactions are the fullest manifestation of the nature of things accessible to the human mind is not only due to our fundamentally social constitution—that we are *in* nature *through* culture (Alexander 2013, 11)—but moreover to the fact that social interactions *en gross* are the most complex and inclusive of interactions in nature (as far as the human mind is aware). Whereas this complexity and ambiguity would disqualify social interaction as a paradigmatic instance of reality in an aseptic metaphysics, in Dewey's naturalism, it is precisely this irreducible inclusiveness which affords the fullest account of what is generic in nature.

3.2 The Problematic of Continuity in Dewey's Cultural Naturalism

Dewey's peculiar interpretation of metaphysics became the source of much confusion and criticism about his philosophy. Being reputed for having divorced himself from his idealist roots, Dewey's metaphysical assertions were often misunderstood and criticized for being inconsistent with his empirical theory of inquiry, or instrumentalism, which was perceived to be his *real* philosophy. That Dewey's metaphysics were consistently misinterpreted, challenged, and disregarded, even by his most celebrated student,[2] is understandable. Dewey acknowledged the difficulty of his language, and the failure of his key terms like experience in expressing his ideas. But semantics account for but a portion of the problem of Dewey's metaphysics.

As Alexander (1980, 26) observes, the tension in Dewey's philosophy to which so many critics have responded points to what is genuinely novel about it, and therefore most problematic and difficult to grasp. As Richard Rorty[3] identified, this tension relates to the apparent incoherence between Dewey's denotative empirical method, meant to keep objects of inquiry grounded in primary, qualitative experience, and the notion of metaphysical subject matter as 'generic traits' of existence (ibid.). That is, to his critics it appeared contradictory to claim that experience is primarily qualitative, that qualities are immediate in experience, yet they are continuous with nature such that they disclose its generic traits; or, the nature of nature. This says as much about Dewey's philosophy as it does about the milieu in which he was doing philosophy. Was Dewey "waffling between materialistic naturalism and objective realism" (Alexander 1987a, 64) as his critics suggested, presenting an inconsistent and self-contradictory view, or was he developing a novel theory of experience ahead of his own time? While this is not the place for a comprehensive historical analysis of Dewey's philosophy, it is worth examining some points of contention for the sake of context to better understand what Dewey's metaphysical ideas actually mean. Dewey's own responses

[2] Sidney Hook ultimately concluded that Dewey's metaphysics were a kind of mistake and can be left out. cf. Dewey (2008c). Compare this with (Rorty 1982, 74) who thought Dewey's metaphysics were in "bad faith."

[3] See "Dewey's Metaphysics," in Rorty (1982).

to criticism are particularly instructive in that they draw attention to the perspective his ideas attempt to articulate—the terrain his metaphysical map attempts to chart—and which functions as the meaning-giving context of those very ideas.[4]

Dewey's various efforts to articulate a metaphysics of experience during his middle instrumental phase culminated in his seminal, and perhaps most controversial work, *Experience and Nature*. Alexander summarizes this controversy in terms of three related issues: "The first is the epistemological problem which deals with Dewey's account of experience as both immediate and unknowable and as mediate and providing knowledge. The second is the metaphysical problem, concerning the ultimate commitments of Dewey's position to idealism or naturalism. Finally there is the problem of the generic traits of existence and how the enterprise of Dewey's metaphysics bears on his philosophy in general." The major point of contention uniting these three issues is the notion that "quality is immediate in experience and is of nature" (1987b, 68).

Dewey's non-systematic, wandering prose made it difficult for his peers to tease the meaning of these ideas out of his usage of familiar terminology, which gave the impression that his metaphysical ideas were a hodge podge of incompatible ideas. Were qualities supposed to be properties of objects or the mind? If they are immediate, in the subjectivistic sense, then how could they be regarded as properties of *real* objects in nature? By quality was Dewey referring to the identities of essential beings? But these sorts of questions are more indicative of the difficulty of grasping the point of Dewey's arguments *in terms of* the dominant philosophies of the time than they are of an inconsistency in his ideas. If it appeared that Dewey was mixing up opposing ideas of rationalism and empiricism, realism and idealism, it was because the thrust of his *doing* of philosophy was to preserve the integrity of experience as originally whole. In other words, Dewey's pluralistically conceived ideas were not explicable in terms of the dualistic philosophical camps he inherited, appropriated, and criticized,

[4] I will focus on a few well-known criticisms of *Experience and Nature* and Dewey's responses to them, which are helpful in grasping the context of Dewey's naturalistic metaphysics and their most salient problems. As Alexander (1987a, 1987b) has argued, the thread connecting the various critiques Dewey received was his principle of continuity. In addition to the critiques of Dewey's peers examined in this paper, the matter of continuity can be found recurring in criticism long after his death. See Bernstein (1961) and "Dewey's Metaphysics" in Rorty (1982) for examples.

and through which his ideas became interpreted.

Dewey's writings represent attempts to develop a novel theory of experience to be tested, tried, and developed further, not a finished, self-contained system or creed to be defended. As Alexander (1987b, 83) points out, the ambiguous, problematic terminology which often betrayed Dewey—words like experience, nature, ends, means, metaphysics, etc.—are indeed problems; they "stand for things which are questions to be investigated rather than concepts which we have ready to hand." It is perhaps easier for us to appreciate this fact in present day, removed from Dewey's world now by a century, and informed by subsequent generations of critical scholarship and the availability of his entire life's works. In his own time, however, Dewey's writings were taken at face value, and the interpretation of such controversial terminology was at the mercy of the biases of his interlocutors in the absence of adequate clarification by Dewey himself. The net result was that the truly novel and original, and therefore most controversial aspects of Dewey's thought largely escaped his peers.

Perhaps the most significant factor which contributed to the consistent misinterpretation and under-appreciation of Dewey's philosophy was the lack of an unambiguous account of Dewey's principle of continuity.[5] Although he refers to continuity all throughout his writings, nowhere does Dewey provide a focused and thorough analysis of the concept. Unsurprisingly, his contemporaries more-or-less overlooked continuity as a key concept in his theory in spite of noting the fact that Dewey appeals to it repeatedly. What is surprising, however, is that although Dewey emphasized the principle of continuity consistently in his responses to criticism, decades of critics apparently avoided its serious analysis.[6] The main points of contention in the most notable critiques of Dewey's metaphysics all stem from this deficit of understanding and appreciation of the principle of continuity in his writings.

[5] See Alexander (1987a) and Chapter 3 of Alexander (1987b). Perhaps the best example of continuity in Dewey's writings is the chapter "Having an Experience" in *Art as Experience*, which is not an explication of continuity per se, but expresses the meaning of that principle through a disclosure of the character of aesthetic experience.

[6] To be fair, Dewey had a tendency, as Alexander (1987b) observes, to "respond to critics by doggedly repeating the point in question"(69). Such responses, arguably, only obscured the meaning of the concept in Dewey's philosophy further, for it appeared that he was either using the term uncritically, or it led critics to assume materialist, idealist, or positivist interpretations of the concept.

For example, in a critical review of *Experience and Nature*, published in the same year, Santayana (1925) seems to affirm the trope of the hardcore empiricist Dewey, who is not interested in speculation at all (676) yet goes off on incoherent metaphysical tangents, apparently unable to resist some primal idealist impulse. For Santayana, Dewey's naturalism is a "half-hearted" and "short-winded," "specious kind of naturalism possible also to such idealists as Emerson, Schelling, or any Hegelian of the Left" (680). Santayana accuses Dewey of reducing nature to experience, the background to the foreground: "In nature there is no foreground or background, no here, no now, no moral cathedra, no centre so really central as to reduce all other things to mere margins and mere perspectives" (678). In response, Dewey rejects Santayana's apparent presupposition of a man/nature dichotomy in which only the physical man is real, while everything else that he is—his culture, his experience, his histories, etc.—"is specious and deceptive, since it has centers and perspectives." Such a view Dewey charges as a "broken-backed" naturalism, "reminiscent of supernatural beliefs,"—a kind of "kneeling before the unknowable" (1927, 58):

> To any one who takes seriously the notion of thoroughgoing continuity, the idea of existence in space and time without heres and nows, without perspectival arrangements, is not only incredible, but is a hang-over of an intellectual convention which developed and flourished in physics at a particular stage of history. … The metaphysics, adhered to as far as I can make out by Santayana, which treats natures as a single substance whose parts and changes as such are illusory, is a flight of metaphysics which is beyond me, and which appears to be a survival of a rationalistic spiritualism which he officially repudiates. (Dewey 1927, 58–59)

Here Dewey appeals to the principle of continuity to refute Santayana's dualistic interpretation of his philosophy, citing not pragmatism or philosophy for having casting such dichotomous discontinuity into doubt, but natural science. "One who believes in continuity may argue that, since human experience exhibits such traits as Santayana denies to nature, the latter must contain their prototypes. The new physics finds them necessary to describe the physical world in its own terms" (Dewey 1927, 58). Whereas Santayana apparently sees the foreground "as a screen which conceals the background," "lying between human intuition and experience and the background"

of nature, Dewey recognized the foreground as being *of* nature, continuous with it, conducting thought to the background (Dewey 1927, 60):

> While "consciousness" is foreground in a preeminent sense, experience is much more than consciousness and reaches down into the background as that reaches up into experience. I agree that the ideal "emanates" from the biological; I have been even criticized by other critics as if I held it to be a mere gaseous emanation from the biological. In reality I think that the ideal, sensation, for example, is as real as the biological from which it emanates, and, expressing a higher meed of the interaction of things than does the biological without sensation, is in so far I will not say more real, but a fuller reality. (Dewey 1927, 61)

Here we glean some insight into how the principle of continuity grounds Dewey theory that the social is the most inclusive metaphysical category. The continuity of the foreground and background—of experience and nature—does not make them *identical* or unitary. The foreground is a *transactional*,[7] functional development of the background; the novel realization of some genuine possibilities of nature. It is, therefore, not only continuous with nature as an *emergent phase of it*, but also thereby more inclusive of its complex dynamics.

William Ernest Hocking and Morris Cohen touched on similar themes in their critiques of Dewey's metaphysics at a symposium held by the American Philosophical Association in commemoration of Dewey's eightieth birthday—over a decade after *Experience and Nature* was first published. Dewey chose to frame his response to these critiques explicitly within the context of the continuity of experience and nature; his rationale being that it would enable him to "introduce more unity and organization" into these notoriously problematic concepts of his, while also allowing him to "focus attention upon a problem which is so central in philosophy that it must be met and dealt with by all schools" (1940, 244). This problem is that of the interpretive function of perspective in the *situation* of philosophical inquiry:

[7] Dewey uses the term transaction to refer to special types of interactions which establish continuity among situations, functionally developing them into qualitative wholes as *an experience*.

> The significations attached to words and ideas which recur in practically every system tend to become fixed till it seems as if no choice were left, save to give the terms (and the problems to which they relate) the import sanctioned by some one or other past philosophical point of view. In the degree in which a philosophy involves a shift in their perspectives, both its author and those to whom he addresses himself find themselves in difficulties. The former has to use words that have meanings fixed under conditions of more or less alien points of view and the latter have to engage in some kind of imaginative translation. (Dewey 1940, 245)

Such remarks are rather typical of Dewey's general discussions of inquiry. His emphasis on this theme here is intended to illustrate the challenges inherent to articulating a theory of experience that is wholly continuous with nature; with the cosmos. Such a theory must in some degree rely on the familiar concepts of experience it directly challenges in order to leverage its novel arguments in the first place. Reflecting on some of the impediments met in his attempts to express his cultural naturalism, Dewey explains that the "long tradition of empiricism" in Western philosophy has been generally "particularistic and nominalistic, if not overtly sensationalistic, in its logic and ontology." On the other hand, where empiricism has diverged from these traditional perspectives, it has "been through making human experience the broken but still usable ladder of ascent to an absolute experience," involving a "flight to some form of cosmic idealism"(1940, 245):

> Presentation of a view of experience which puts experience in connection with nature, with the cosmos, but which would nevertheless frame its view of experience on the ground of conclusions reached in the natural sciences, has trouble in finding ways of expressing itself which do not seem to lead into one or the other of these historically sanctioned alternative perspectives. (Dewey 1940, 245)

The thrust of these prefatory remarks on the theme of perspective function to place the burden of proof on those perspectives which uncritically suppose of a discontinuity of nature and experience in spite of how the development of science fundamen-

tally problematizes them—views such as those implied in the criticisms of Cohen and Hocking.

> If we look at human history and especially at the historic development of the natural sciences, we find progress made from a crude experience in which beliefs about nature and natural events were very different from those now scientifically authorized to the latter. At the same time we find the latter now enable us to frame a theory of experience by which we can tell *how* this development out of gross experience into the highly refined conclusions of science has taken place. (Dewey 1940, 246)

As Dewey sees it, contrary to traditional perspectives on the connection of experience and nature, the principle of continuity not only accounts for the possibility of empirical methods of inquiry to develop from and *through* ordinary experience, but it is also generally implied by the findings of natural science. That is, the principle of continuity has functionally emerged as a sense-giving context of inquiry situated—or methodologically located—in experience, such that for empirical inquiry to make sense, to have value *as* inquiry, it must be at least implicitly assumed that experience occurs *in* and *of* nature; that it is wholly continuous with it. The principle of continuity, then, would place the burden of proof on theories of discontinuity which appeal to arbitrary, obsolete categories and concepts alien to experience in order to explain and reconcile its relationship with nature.

Such views are apparent in the arguments of Dewey's critics, who seem to misinterpret the meaning of continuity in his thought. Cohen (1940, 198) asserts that Dewey's cultural naturalism is more accurately titled "anthropocentric naturalism," supposing that "all nature and existence can be described in the categories of human experience" (200). It appears that Cohen is reading continuity *atemporally*—as either identity, or as causality presumed to be ontologically discrete and superior to effect—for he rejects the principle for supposedly evidencing some kind of physical determinism he feels is inconsistent with Dewey's philosophy overall:

> Possibly the latter attitude is even more strongly influenced by the conviction that the categories of social life are so much richer than those of

> physical science that they give us a better contact with "reality". … While experience is personal not all objects are. … Dewey claims that "It is as much a part of the real being of atoms that they give rise in time, under increasing complication of relationships, to qualities of bitter and sweet, pain and beauty, as that they have at a cross section of time extension, mass or weight." Now, it should be observed that the assumption that atoms have given rise to the human sense of beauty is not something that has ever been empirically shown. It is rather a deduction from the principle of physical determinism which realistic rationalists recognize but which Dewey cannot completely accept without raising certain difficulties. (Cohen 1940, 200)

Cohen's criticism assumes a nature-experience dichotomy, for he appears to doubt how social phenomena—the domain of supposedly *personal* experience—could be conceived as a more inclusive reality. This view implies an atemporal concept of reality, which leads to such interpretations of continuity as isolated instances of causation. Therefore, when Dewey illustrates the continuity of atomic matter and qualitative experience as complex, temporal developments, Cohen reads him as saying that atoms directly cause and determine experience of pain, beauty, etc. Dewey (1940, 249) criticizes such views for *hypostatizing* the function of causal conditions as means of control into a direct ontological property having a "reality" superior to that of outcomes or effects. Thus, he requests that his critic reconsider the context of his interpretation of these ideas:

> In order to be understood, what I have said about genesis and function, about antecedents and consequences, has to be placed in the perspective suggested by this emphasis upon the need of formulating a theory of nature and of the connection of man in (not *to*) nature on the basis of temporal continuum. … What is basically involved is that some changes, those for example which terminate in the things of human experience, form a history, or a set of changes marked by development or growth. The dichotomy of the old discussion as to whether antecedents or ends are of primary importance in forming a theory of nature is done away

> with when growth, development, history is taken to be primary. Genesis and ends are of equal importance, but their import is that of terms or boundaries which delimit a history, thereby rendering it capable of description. (Dewey 1940, 249)

In pointing out that continuity means growth, Dewey is emphasizing that reality is basically temporal; that time is a quality inherent to existence. It is not that things exist in isolation of each other prior to contact—suspended in space and time—but that "things" themselves are continuations of foregone events and situations. The "reality" of a "thing" is grasped not in its immutable, essential, and therefore determinate properties, but in its natural history as an event. The continuity of experience and nature, then, does not mean that human experience is determined by physical matter, nor is it an exhaustive account of all actual and potential perspectives in nature. The point here is that experience is a complex, functional development of nature, inclusive of the various physical and biological processes which are its conditions, while containing within itself unique qualities unaccounted for by them.

Hocking (1940, 239) criticized this attempt of Dewey's to remedy "the scandal of bifurcation" between experience and nature, for in his view, it is premised on a "misconception of the difficulty." For Hocking, "the scandal of bifurcation is only genuinely repaired by a type of objective idealism," informed by a "perception of the meaninglessness of physical nature"(241):

> The remedy does not lie … in the direction taken by Dewey and Whitehead, of ascribing to Nature a plenum of qualities commonly regarded as mental. It lies rather in recognizing that this very autonomy of Nature, its impersonality and exactitude, its absence of quality and sense, are requisites for the free life of the mind; and are themselves to be understood as dependent aspects of a total mental life. For observe—an old observation—: unless there is a realm of regular nature, no habits can be built, no cumulative mental mastery of Nature be accomplished. And then an observation not so old: unless there is a realm of being, empty of life and quality, impersonal and desiccated, we could not plow a field nor fell a tree without the sense of destroying life and value. The moral

> freedom to exploit nature is the requisite background for the moral unfreedom to exploit one another. (Hocking 1940, 240)

Hocking regards "reality" as "independent being, upon which other things depend" (1940, 235), which is only adequately approached rationally; "the more thought the more reality" (238). Dewey sees this as expressing "in an almost flagrantly emphatic way the isolation of one mode of experience and its material from other modes and *their* things" (1940, 256). Hocking, however, finds that such divisions are entirely justified, dialectically speaking; "If theory severs the original amalgam of experience and nature into two aspects, the mental and the physical, that *severance must be accepted* as a better version of truth. It divides the original unity, but it is a step toward the real, not away from it" (1940, 238).

If Santayana considered Dewey's a "half-hearted naturalism," we might say that Hocking thought Dewey was cooking up a "half-hearted idealism." Hocking reads Dewey as having implicitly "conceded the central thesis of idealism" on the basis of admitting "that human experience constitutes the world in some way" (Alexander 1987b, 64). For example, in Dewey's theory of inquiry, namely, the notion that immediate experience becomes mediated by thought in problematic situations to resolve them, for Hocking, implies that mediate experience—theory, knowledge, thought—is truer and therefore more real than immediate experience; contrary to Dewey's own conception. In his view, Dewey's position seems to ironically imply yet explicitly reject the dictum, "the more theory, the nearer reality" (Hocking 1940, 235).

In his rebuttal, Dewey draws attention to a critical point in his philosophy pertaining to continuity. He takes issue with the notion that "Nature, as the content of true judgment or the object of perfect thought in its capacity of measure of knowledge, is the independent reality of which experience is the dependent derivative" (1940, 256). In Dewey's view, if experience can be said to derive from or depend upon nature in any way, it is in the sense that it is a functional development of it. Experience in its mediate and immediate phases must be understood within this temporal continuum, which is to say that thought not only conditions but is conditioned by other modes of experience, and is neither primarily concerned with truth or reality nor does it serve as the exclusive means of approaching them:

> The objects of knowledge, when once attained, exercise, as I have already said, the function of *control* over other materials. Hence the latter in so far depend for their status and value upon the object of knowledge. … But this interpretation of dependence is strictly functional. Instead of first isolating the object of knowledge or judgment and then setting it up in its isolation as a measure of the "reality" of other things, it connects the scientific object, genetically and functionally, with other things without casting the invidious shadow of a lesser degree of reality upon the latter. (Dewey 1940, 256)

Knowledge, thought, and theory are *functional* in the sense of being developments of complex situations and histories, working continuations of them, whereby *control* over the materials of experience is afforded in guiding activity. To view mediated experience in isolation from this whole process is to ignore the dynamics which give knowledge, thought, and theory meaning in the first place. Hence, the import of theory in guiding and enriching experience is bound up in the temporal continuity of inquiry. Like everything else in life, for inquiry the prospect of future modification is an added value (Dewey 1940, 257):

> Instead of there being an isolation of the material of knowledge, there is its continual interaction with the things of other forms of experience, and the worth (or "reality") of the former is to be judged on the basis of the control exercised by it over the things of non-cognitive experiences and the increment of enriched meaning supplied to them. (Dewey 1940, 257)

To emphasize the temporal continuity of experience, however, is not to concede, as Hocking suggests, an infinite dialectical progression toward eternal truth:

> What is even more important is that, from the standpoint of the continuous interaction of the things of different modes of experience, the final test of the value of "contents of judgment" not attained is found not in their relation to the content of some final judgment, to be reached at the close of an infinite progression, but in what is done in the living present,

> what is done in giving enriched meaning to other things and in increasing our control over them. (Dewey 1940, 257)

Nearly a decade later, Sholom Kahn reformulated these familiar themes of critique regarding the problem of continuity in Dewey's philosophy. In Dewey's universe, "in which 'experience' bulks large," what is the relationship between experience and existence? (S. J. Kahn 1948, 316). Kahn does not consider the problem to be, as Santayana did, that Dewey reduces the background to the foreground—suggesting that nothing but the immediate is real—but rather that "he does tend to reduce all existence to experience." That is, Kahn is suggesting that Dewey may be committing the romantic fallacy of exaggerating the ego; a thesis for which he supposes a strong argument could be made by "tracing Dewey's considerable indebtedness to the romantic tradition in philosophy, esthetics, and social and educational theory" (317). The driving question of his critique, then, is "does his metaphysics include any existence *beyond* existence?" (321). For Kahn, Dewey's naturalism necessitates an extra-experiential totality:

> The expansion of our realm of experience would not be possible without a larger realm of events *into* which it could expand. The two "realms" need not differ in any essential, since they are both composed of events. … Is not the "sum total of events" a concept necessary for a naturalistic metaphysics and one which Dewey might very well accept? Totality must surely be one of the "generic traits" of "existence." (S. J. Kahn 1948, 318)

We can see an implicit commitment to an aseptic metaphysics in Kahn's remarks, which effectively draw attention to the most problematic and ambiguous aspect of Dewey's metaphysics, yet which evidently fail to grasp the import of a generalized theory of experience. That is, as poignant as Kahn's critique may be, his conclusions do not follow from a perspective which conceives of experience in its own terms; which is to say that continuity is still understood in terms of some atemporal, regulatory principle, such as "totality," and necessarily external to experience.

Dewey was confused—and apparently dispirited—by Kahn's reasoning, due in part to the lack of evidence for and explanation of the rationale behind his conclusions,

but also due to some positions he misattributed to Dewey's theory. Dewey observed that Kahn seemed to assume that he regarded "philosophical" and "metaphysical" as synonyms; that he treated metaphysics "as a name for that part of philosophy that is concerned with the relation of experience to existence," using the word "in the sense it bears in the classic tradition based on Aristotle." In Dewey's words, "nothing could be farther from the facts of the case" (1949, 712). It seemed to Dewey that for this reason Kahn's entire discussion was shrouded in ambiguity; an ambiguity summed up in the central question of his critique: in Dewey's metaphysics is there any existence beyond experience? Dewey's response was in the negative, but qualified by his emphasis that his "*philosophical* view, or theory, of experience does not include any existence beyond *the reach* of experience" (709).

Given this erroneous interpretation of what he means by metaphysics, Dewey saw Kahn's charge of the romantic fallacy—of reducing existence to experience—as "meaningless, because totally irrelevant" (1949, 709). In Dewey's naturalism where there is no division supposed between experience and nature or existence, the question of what is beyond experience is not a matter of categories, or "realms" in Kahn's idiom, but simply *what is experienced and how*. That is to say, the problem is one of perspective, or situation. As Alexander notes, "it depends on the tools of experience at hand, like microscopes or cyclotrons as well as physical organs like eyes and nervous systems, and social organizations and traditions like research institutes or methodologies of experimental inquiry." From the point of view of experience, such a question only makes sense in the context of temporality. "Dewey believed his answer was the only sane one—and the only one which explained why nature so grudgingly, slowly, and parsimoniously yields her secrets"(1987a, 43):

> I always wonder on what ground those who reject the generalized view of "experience," such as is presented for example in *Experience and Nature*, justify their own acceptance of the findings of, say, astronomers and/or physicists working in the field of infra-atomic events. I am confident they do not believe these men draw on telepathy or consult spiritualistic mediums; and it is difficult to suppose that they believe it *all* comes through *a priori* deliverances of Pure Reason. Were they to examine what the word "experience" stands for and name, including both *what* is experi-

> enced and the various *ways* in which it is experienced, with the gradual selection of those manners of experiencing that constitute the methods of scientific inquiry now in use (itself a matter of the continuity of "experience"), I think they might refrain from adverse criticism of a generalized view of experience upon which their own criticisms must rest for validity. (Dewey 1949, 711)

To reframe the question as what exists beyond *the reach* of experience, is to reject the fundamental assumptions of the original formulation; that is, the notion of fundamentally differentiated experiential and supra-experiential "realms" of activity. If Dewey had been arguing under the assumption of such dualisms, the charge of the romantic fallacy would indeed apply. Dewey's reformulation of the question, however, to emphasize the significance of the *what* and *how* of experience, is an effort to point out and thereby reorient it within the more appropriately metaphysical context of the matter. That is, the concern of metaphysics is not the relationship of simple "experience" and "existence," which is doomed to mire itself in the worn-out dualisms philosophy has inherited, but rather, as the search for "generic traits" of existence, it is concerned with the relationship between *existence and value*.

One can understand Dewey's frustration in having to reemphasize this fundamental assumption of his metaphysics in response to criticisms which leverage their arguments on points misattributed to his theory. This frustration is all the more palpable in consideration of the fact that the most routinely cited passages of *Experience and Nature* concerning Dewey's metaphysics are found in its final chapter entitled "Existence and Value." In short, metaphysics for Dewey does not intend to locate static features of the universe–to determine the status of the potential, as Kahn suggests[8]–but to work as a ground map for activity. It is significant that a map, however, is not a replication or comprehensive representation of the terrain it charts, nor is it a program detailing procedures to be executed. It is interpretive and selective, emphasizing features of interest that are of value in that experience. A political map would be of little use to someone in need of a topographical map for navigating uninhabited mountainous terrain, for example. Moreover, the utility and worth of a map is

[8] See Kahn's (1949) response to Dewey's rebuttal, "The Status of the Potential: A Reply to Professor Dewey."

entirely provisional and dependent upon the individual situation. Maps are guides, not simulations, informing choice and action as a basis for interpreting the concrete values of actual situations.

It is precisely this sense-making aspect of metaphysics as a kind of map of the generic traits of nature which makes it not only an explicit concern of philosophy, but a functionally basic aspect of cultural existence, for it orients and prejudices all thought and action. The significance of metaphysics, then, is not just in its articulation of generic traits per se, but in the fact that these are at least implicitly applied in the developing course of concrete life situations. Dewey closes his response to Kahn with a friendly reminder of this context in which he discusses metaphysics in *Experience and Nature*:

> This genuine subject matter [of metaphysics] is the fact that the natural world has *generic* as well as specific traits, and that … experience is such as to enable us to arrive at their identification. … Concern for values as they eventuate in the course of Life-experience is taken to be the concern that marks *philosophy* off from other intellectual undertakings. The three pages in which generic traits are discussed are explicitly devoted to the place occupied by values and the office they may render in the wise conduct of the affairs of life. Discussion of generic traits is opened by saying that a statement of them seems to have nothing to do with criticism and choice of values; that is, with "effective love of wisdom" … The remainder of the discussion of them is devoted to showing that this specious conclusion (the one held in the traditional view) is reached because detecting and registering general traits is taken to be self-sufficient, the end of the matter. Against this view it is held that their detection and noting is in the interest of providing "a ground-map of the province of criticism"; criticism, that is, of values as concrete events. For example, "Barely to note and register that contingency is a [general] trait of natural events has nothing to do with wisdom." But to note contingency in its connection with a concrete situation of life, is that "fear of the Lord which is at least the beginning of wisdom. The entire discussion, while short, is given to showing that the sense and point of recognition of generic traits lies in

> their application in the conduct of life: that is, in their *moral* bearing provided *moral* be taken in its basic broad human sense. (Dewey 1949, 713)

In Dewey's reconstruction, metaphysics ceases to be a pseudo-scientific attempt to define Reality and Truth, and instead *functions to contextualize the myriad ways we culturally inhabit nature*. The metaphysical assumptions implicit in our attitudes and perspectives color and orient the way we are in and of the world, and so the positive import of the generic traits of existence is that their search affords the beginnings of wisdom. That is, metaphysics locates critical inquiry within the complex dynamics of the ongoing development of human experience *as a natural process*. The search for generic traits is helpful in the philosophic project of appropriating wisdom in the world—in discerning a course among the plurality of possibilities encountered in concrete situations—in that they offer a functional view of nature and experience in their continuity. Perhaps more to the point, appreciation of the generic traits of existence within concrete situations is a creative realization of that continuity, and therefore their ongoing search is an integral phase of the artful and wise inhabitation of the world. The metaphysical search for generic traits, then, is a native phase of learning conceived as inhabitation; theoretically and methodologically. That is, not only is concrete experience at least implicitly an appropriation of these found traits in the present, but philosophical inquiry and criticism are paradigmatic of an art of wisdom for the active adaptation and reconstruction of experience.

Chapter 4

A Nature-Prime Metaphysics of Learning

In the previous chapter we discussed Dewey's reconstruction of metaphysics and the function of the principle of continuity or growth in that view. In this chapter we will expand upon this theme and dig deeper into the metaphysics of experience and learning. The implications of immediate experience, or the idea that experience is fundamentally aesthetic, are examined in the context of growth; in particular the significance of quality as the condition of all meaning, situations as primary realities, and the realization of interest or individuality as the creative development—or continuity—of time. This chapter closes with a discussion of the concepts of continuity and transaction in the context of cultural inhabitation to illustrate how learning, from the point of view of individuals, is a mutual growth of an individual and her world.

4.1 Immediacy & Quality

In Dewey's educational philosophy, learning is typically conceived as the growth, adjustment, or the adaptation of an organism[1] and environment. Adjustment may be prompted by the presence of some problem or obstruction, but it is importantly not the same as mere reaction to environmental stimuli; or, conditioned behavior. Learning is active, critical, and creative. It seeks to resolve a problematic situation not for the sake of restoring a neutral, stable, or *free* state of equilibrium, but rather to enrich experience by developing it to the point of consummation as *an experience*. That is, rather than seeking the path of least resistance to neutralize a problematic situation, it is a matter of imaginatively exploring the possibilities that develop it; seeing the *actual* in light of the *possible*, and responding in a manner that liberates ideas for guiding action, thereby making it fulfilling, meaningful, and coherent.

It is significant, however, that this is not exclusively an affair of cognition. "The world in which we immediately live, that in which we strive, succeed, and are defeated is preeminently a qualitative world. What we act for, suffer, and enjoy are things in their qualitative determinations" (Dewey 1998a, 1:195). The world is immediately had, suffered, and enjoyed before it is ever cognized, and the vast majority of life's subject-matter can only be experienced through just such an aesthetic encounter. This is the foundation of Dewey's entire philosophy; what he originally referred to as the postulate of immediate empiricism. Simply, it is the claim that "things—anything, everything, in the ordinary or non-technical use of the term 'thing'—are what they are experienced as" (Dewey 1905, 393). As discussed in the previous chapter, this is not to say that knowledge corresponds unequivocally to reality:

> I start and am flustered by a noise heard. Empirically, that noise is fearsome; it *really* is, not merely phenomenally or subjectively so. That *is what* it is experienced as being. But, when I experience the noise as a *known* thing, I find it to be innocent of harm. It is the tapping of a shade

[1] It should be noted that Dewey's use of the term "organism" to refer to human beings is intended to show the vital, interactive interconnectedness of human life with and as natural processes. His intent was to emphasize the transactional continuity among human individuals, experience, culture, and nature.

> against the window, owing to movements of the wind. The experience has changed; that is, the thing experienced has changed—not that an unreality has given place to a reality, nor that some transcendental (unexperienced) Reality has changed, not that truth has changed, but just and only the concrete reality experienced has changed. … The content of the latter experience is doubtless truer than the content of the earlier; but it is in no sense more real. To call it truer, moreover, must, from the empirical standpoint, mean a concrete *difference* in actual things experienced. (Dewey 1905, 395)

Experience is not primarily a matter of knowledge, and neither can the real world be reduced to our concepts about it—or what is *known*.[2] To settle the matter of truth about an object of experience has nothing to do with "Truth," or an unexperienced "Reality" deduced by "Reason," but rather simply "finding out what sort of an experience the truth-experience actually is" (Dewey 1905, 395).

This is the crux of immediate empiricism. To immediately experience a "thing" is not *necessarily* the same as knowing it as such. In reference to the above example, the question of what is actually experienced is the difference between I-know-I-am-frightened and I-am-frightened. One may be frightened and later *know* that she was frightened at something and at what exactly, but these are two different experiences—they are two different "things." The difference is between the thing as it is immediately experienced, and "a subsequent experience in which the relevant thing is experienced as cognized, as a known object, and is thereby transformed, or reorganized" (Dewey 1905, 396).

It is crucial to appreciate this fundamental premise of Dewey's postulate to clarify what is meant by "immediate" in his view, and likewise, to understand how the re-

[2] Dewey's theory of experience is an attempt to disclose the features of experience without reducing it to a self-referential account of the analytical concepts used to explain it. Dewey observed that philosophy, including empiricism, tends to erroneously "fall back on something which is defined in non-directly-experienced terms in order to justify that which is directly experienced." His theory of experience was developed as a resistance to the established empiricism of the time, which he found to be "essentially absolutistic in character," attempting "to build up experience in terms of certain methodological checks and cues of attaining certainty in knowledge" (1905, 393). See Dewey (1902) and Dewey (1903).

construction of experience is primarily aesthetic in nature. Dewey is not claiming that appearances are *real* in the subjectivistic sense, but rather arguing that there is a fundamental distinction between questions of reality and questions of knowledge and truth (Alexander 1987b, 74). Dewey sees his postulate as following from the fact that time qualifies all existence. For Dewey, "immediate experience is a phase of a situation, which develops with the situation" (78). It is a "dynamic reorientation of a whole process; it is an attempt to organize that process into a unity." Such a *transactional* view of immediacy as a "moment of coordination" or "phase of action" (76) differs from more familiar, traditional conceptions problematized by Dewey's interpretation:

> With Descartes and then Locke, what is directly or immediately before the mind are its "ideas." No longer is the *idea*, *eidos*, or *forma* that which connects the mind with an object because of its identity, but it is simply the "effect" of some mysterious "cause" which brings it before the mind's eye. It is the internal content of the mind which at best will stand for or represent the external world. … The alternative reached in the German tradition of Kant and Hegel was to deny that the mind could passively behold any immediate object without imposing some sort of mediating activity. … There was something "immediate" as an object but it was a "mediated immediacy" … [which] revealed nothing less than that the mind was a self-constituting and self-transcending process, and that it could grasp itself through and in this process. In other words, knowledge as self-knowledge was possible … understood as the thoroughly mediated result of a process whereby the Absolute ultimately grasped itself wholly, comprehensively, infinitely, and eternally in and for itself. (Alexander 1987b, 75)

"Immediacy," as it was used by Dewey, does not refer to a passive state of a viewer or the material in her view. It denotes an active involvement in the complex, uncertain dynamics of experience as it develops in time. "To the extent any moment is a genuine part of a temporal process, the attitude taken will reflect a certain perspective on the past *as* past and the future *as* future. It is a phase *of* action, which is also a phase of interpretation" (Alexander 1987b, 76). What is "immediate" in experience, then, is

the quality of the whole situation as it is aesthetically encountered—the quality which makes it that situation and no other—"inclusive of its determinate and indeterminate, cognitive and non-cognitive aspects" (80).

An important implication of this view is that the very way in which something is qualitatively experienced is itself the grounds for objectivity—the principle of *control*. Dewey uses the example of Zöllner's illusion to illustrate this point.

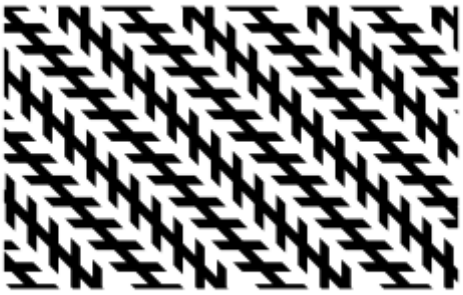

Figure 4.1: Zöllner's Illuson

Figure 4.1 features longer parallel lines cross-hatched by shorter, angular lines, producing the illusion that the longer lines are not parallel. It is *true* that the longer lines are, in fact, parallel, yet they are readily perceived to be divergent. The experience of the lines as divergent, however, is *real—those* lines not only appear to be divergent, but in *that experience*, they *are* divergent. As Alexander (1987b) explains, arriving at truth is not the result of seeing through appearances with a kind of x-ray vision. Rather "We have 'seen through' the experience by staying with it, by 'seeing it through,' and by interacting with it, start to finish" (79). It is because the illusory experience of divergent lines is itself fully real that there is any possibility of determining that they are in truth parallel and that the initial experience was illusory:

> The question of truth is not as to whether Being or Non-Being, Reality or mere Appearance, is experienced, but as to the *worth* of a certain con-

> cretely experienced thing. … It is in the concrete thing *as experienced* that all the grounds and clues to its own intellectual or logical rectification are contained. It is because this thing, afterwards adjudged false, is a concrete *that*, that it develops into a corrected experience … whose content is not a whit more real, but which is experienced as true or as truer. (Dewey 1905, 397)

The illusion of Zöllner's lines appearing to be convergent occurs because of some qualities internal to the image itself; that is, its being illusory is not a matter *determined* by anything outside of *this* experience of exactly *these* qualities. "It is *this* thing, and not some separate truth, which clamors for its own reform" (Dewey 1905, 398).

All experience, then, is determinate, and this determinateness is "objectivity." "Either every experienced thing has its own determinateness, its own unsubstitutable, unredeemable reality, or else 'generals' *are* separate existences after all" (Dewey 1905, 398). It is not at all a matter of certainty or truth. As the example of Zöllner's illusion demonstrates, experience can be vague, doubtful, and confused. One may have a vague sense of the presence of an object in a dark room, and although it is uncertain, the experience itself, as a *thing*, is real and determinate:

> This vagueness, this doubtfulness, this confusion is the thing experienced, and, *qua* real, is as "good" a reality as the self-luminous vision of an Absolute. It is not just vagueness, doubtfulness, confusion, at large or in general. It is *this* vagueness, and no other; absolutely unique, absolutely what *it* is. (Dewey 1905, 398)

To determine the qualities of "things" immediately perceived is to control, or objectively regulate, the development of experience. This is to say that quality is primary, and therefore functions as the condition of all thought and meaning—even logic. It is worth noting that the concept of quality as it is discussed here differs from the classical conception. Qualities are not fixed properties an object *has*, nor are they substantive *identities*. The quality of a thing is precisely what makes it *that* thing and no other, but, importantly, is determined by *how it is experienced*. Functionally,

quality is the "defining and regulating aspect of situations" which constitute "the horizon and focus of experience and the teleology of action" (Alexander 1987b, 62). A qualitative determination, then, is a continuity among the distinct elements of something that unifies it *as a thing*—as *an experience*—which is to say that "things" are themselves complex, interactive *situations*.

4.2 Situations as Primary Realities

This concept of situations as ousiai, primary realities, or ontic individuals (Alexander 1987b, 104) is key to understanding the regulative function of quality in the continuation or growth of experience. What is "immediately given" in experience is "an extensive qualitative *situation*" (Dewey 1938, 517). But the immediate situation is not a world of ideas or sense-data, but existences themselves. "Existences *are* immediately given in experience; that is what experience primarily *is*. They are not given *to* experience but their giveness *is* experience" (Dewey 1938, 522). In other words, Dewey's immediate empiricism "begins with the lifeworld as the primary fact," an irreducibly complex "world of life where things function in experience" (Alexander 1987b, 81). "Before the world is 'experienced-as' phenomenon or 'encountered-as' providing the material for inquiry … it is the *way* we are in a situation—that is to say, the situation itself—which is ultimate" (Alexander 1987b, 81).

Dewey emphasized how the complex, tensive dynamics of situations cannot be accounted for by cause-effect relationships; that they require a more inclusive description of their plural and ambiguous "conditions" and "consequences," which are obscured by accounts that reduce them to functions of simple causation. One important reason for this is that Dewey's naturalism regards both the ontological modalities of the "actual" and the "potential" as basic to nature. In other words, in a world in which time qualifies everything, an "existence" is both what something *is* and what it *could be*—it is a history. To exist is to be situated in the present situation as the struggle (agōn) between the continuum of pure possibility (apeiron) and the necessity of the factical past (anankē) (Alexander 2013, 99). This fundamental tension between the actual and potential is the impetus for growth, achieved through the qualitative determination of sucessive situations. This continuity of situation, however, is not serial

or summative, but a creative response to, or qualitative transformation of conditions which establishes a consummatory history. A situation itself, then, is the inclusive setting of experience, functionally "controlling" its subject-matter as that quality which unifies all of its aspects. In other words, a situation is the taken-for-granted total subject-matter of an experience which functions as its assumed context:

> By the term situation in this connection is signified the fact that the subject-matter ultimately referred to in existential propositions is a complex existence that is held together in spite of its internal complexity by the fact that it is dominated and characterized throughout by a single quality. By "object" is meant some element in the complex whole that is defined in abstraction from the whole of which it is a distinction. The special point made is that the selective determination and relation of objects in thought is controlled by reference to a situation—to that which is constituted by a pervasive and internally integrating quality, so that failure to acknowledge the situation leaves, in the end, the logical force of objects and their relations inexplicable.[3] (Dewey 1998a, 1:197)

"To be in a situation—to be in a world—is a condition of understanding" (Alexander 2013, 172). The objects of thought and experience can be grasped as distinct elements precisely because they are distinguished within an immediate context-giving subject-matter that serves as a basis for their intelligibility; for their distinction in the first place. The terms of a simple proposition such as "the sky is blue," for example, are not meaningful because they refer directly and unequivocally to absolute existences and properties. Rather they are only intelligible *because* they are determinations "instituted within the total subject-matter to which thought refers" (Dewey 1998a, 1:197). That is, the distinctive "parts" of situations do not exist independently of them. They *become* parts through the perceived unity of a pluarlity of events which mark it out as an "event"—as a situation—which is qualitatively apprehended in a prereflective manner (Alexander 1987b, 104). That distinctive parts or separate qual-

[3] In a 1949 letter responding to criticism (cf. (Balz and Dewey 1949)), Dewey emphasizes the inherent temporal quality of situation: "Situation stands for something inclusive of a large number of diverse elements existing across wide areas of space and long periods of time, but which, nevertheless, have their own unity" (Dewey and Bentley 1949, 315).

ities emerge through the immediate situation is a result of observation or interaction in general; "they are functional distinctions made by inquiry within a total field for the sake of control of conclusions" (Dewey 1938, 522).

The total situation is implicit in all thought, but not necessarily *implied* by it. "It is present throughout as that of which whatever is explicitly stated or propounded is a distinction," and therefore cannot itself be stated. One situation can, however, become an object of thought in another situation, but *that* new situation cannot become an object within itself. Furthermore, situation controls the objects of thought because they are distinctions *of* it. Therefore, applicability to the present situation is the test of the validity of distinctions (Dewey 1998a, 1:197):

> The underlying unity of qualitativeness regulates pertinence or relevancy and force of every distinction and relation; it guides selection and rejection and the manner of utilization of all explicit terms. This quality enables us to keep thinking about one problem without our having constantly to stop and ask ourselves what it is after all we are thinking about. We are aware of it not by itself but as the background, the thread, and the directive clue in what we do expressly think of. For the latter things are its distinctions and relations. (Dewey 1998a, 1:198)

A further implication of the transformational nature of situation is that just such an unanalyzed whole is the beginning of all thought. "Something presents itself as problematic before there is recognition of what the problem is. The problem is had or experienced before it can be stated or set forth; but it is had as an immediate quality of the whole situation" (Dewey 1998a, 1:198). The pervasive quality of a situation is immediately *felt* and then transformed into determinate distinctions by thought.[4] In logic, the subject and predicate of propositions function to make such an undetermined yet felt quality determinate as an object of thought to be developed. That is, the objects indicated by subject and predicate are not ready-made, self-sufficient existences whose meanings are *given* to thought as-is. What *is given* is the quality that pervades

[4]The inception of thought originating in an immediately felt quality Dewey refers to as intuition: "Intuition … signifies the realization of a pervasive quality such that it regulates the determination of relevant distinctions or of whatever, whether in the way of terms or relations, becomes the accepted object of thought" (1998a, 1:199).

the experience as it is immediately had, and subject-predicate distinctions represent the development of that qualitative whole into a determinate thought-experience by virtue of their being distinctions *of it* themselves.

> My thesis is that the intellectual element is set in a context which is non-cognitive and which holds within it in suspense a vast complex of other qualities and things that in the experience itself are objects of esteem or aversion, of decision, of use, of suffering, of endeavor and revolt, not of knowledge. (Dewey 1916b)

The aesthetic quality of a situation, then, is the condition of its meaning and value. "The gist of the matter is that the immediate existence of quality, and of dominant and pervasive quality, is the background, the point of departure, and the regulative principle of all thinking" (Dewey 1998a, 1:205). Not only is it true that the aesthetic or imaginative mode of understanding is a precondition for any cognitive or analytical one (Alexander 2013, 172), but also that the aesthetic is the beginning and end of all experience.[5] Thought and experience consummate in qualitative transformations; in meanings and values which predispose the aesthetic quality of subsequent situations. Learning in such a conception becomes expressly a matter of aesthetic appreciation and production. That is, because "situations are funded outcomes of histories and contain potentialities for further development" (95), to make distinctions among determinate qualities of a situation is to *creatively* develop it through imagination; to appreciate the *actual* in light of the *potential*, and produce or realize ideals of thought and action which liberate and thereby enrich experience with meaning.

4.3 Imagination, Appreciation & *In*-habitation

Imagination in Dewey's philosophy differs significantly from traditional notions which distinguish it as a discrete mental faculty. According to Alexander, pragmatic imagination rejects the two dominant views of imagination in Western philosophy;

[5] Not only is aesthetic experience "experience in its integrity" (Dewey 2005, 274), or the paradigm of experience itself, the aesthetic is the telos of experience (Alexander 1987b, xiv).

namely, the romantic and Aristotelian conceptions. The Aristotelian concept of phantasia conceives of imagination as the "psychological property of having images of absent or non-existent objects." The literal meaning of the word imagination refers to this creation of mental images. The romantic view regards imagination as a spontaneous "power of primary and unlimited creativity" (2013, 174) that transcends rationality. In contrast, pragmatic imagination rejects the disembodied reason-spontaneity dualism upon which these concepts of imagination are premised:

> Imagination is neither merely an extension of the passive capacity of sensation, subsumable under preestablished rational categorical structures, nor is it a purely intuitive source of novelty. It is a mode of action and as such seeks to organize experience so that it anticipates the world in a manner that is meaningful and satisfying. In more human terms, it is an essential and necessary element in our perpetual project of making sense of life. (Alexander 2013, 174)

Imagination is not a faculty of the mind, but a modality. It emerges through interactions as the active engagement of that situation's meanings—actual *and* potential. "It is a *way* of seeing and feeling things as they compose an integral whole. It is the large and generous blending of interest at the point where mind comes in contact with the world. Where old and familiar things are made new in experience, there is imagination" (Dewey 2005, 278). Imagination, then, is a condition of consciousness;[6] that is, "all conscious experience has of necessity some degree of imaginative quality" (283):

> For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a

[6]For Dewey, mind and consciousness are not things in themselves which exist apart from the environment and other individuals. They are transactionally emergent organs of experience. "Mind denotes a whole system of meanings as they are embodied in the workings of organic life. … Mind is a constant luminosity; consciousness is intermittent, a series of flashes of different intensities" (Dewey 1929, 303). "Mind in its individual aspect is shown to be the method of change and progress in the significances of values attached to things. … The meanings that form mind become consciousness, or ideas, impressions, etc., when something within the meanings or in their application becomes dubious, and the meaning in question needs reconstruction" (vii-viii).

> matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather … the conscious adjustment of the new and the old is imagination. (Dewey 2005, 283)

"When an engaged habit governing overt action is impeded, the goal of the activity is transformed into a conscious ideal, not simply because action is frustrated, but because consciousness is a reconstructive organ of action itself." Imagination emerges through and as an extension of activity *in medias res* as a kind of awareness or working-understanding of the dynamics of the situation. It "arises in consciousness as a crisis of that activity, carrying within itself the contradiction between what is and what ought to be" (Alexander 2013, 170). "The object which then presents itself in thought as the goal of desire is that object *which, if it were* present, would secure a re-unification of activity and the restoration of its on-going unity" (Dewey 1922, 249–50). In other words, imagination evokes and embodies the potentialities of a situation to intelligently determine its meaning or value, thereby qualitatively transforming the situated action into a meaningfully consummated experience.

It is significant, however, that this process is not just a selection of desired outcomes and necessary means. That is, imagination does not, "like the material brought into new relations in a machine, merely provide *means* by which purposes over and beyond the existence of the object may be executed" (Dewey 2005, 285). As one might expect, imagination is, like all experience, basically and wholly interactive:

> Imagination allows the aesthetic nature of the ends it reveals to operate upon us as part of the environment—of the imaginatively extended environment. … The end of action ceases to merely be the outcome and becomes instead a "pivot of action" integrated into the event and determining of its own outcome, the "end-in-view," which becomes the anticipated meaning of action itself. Thus meaning becomes consciously embodied when action undergoes reconstruction through the art of imagination. (Alexander 2013, 171–72)

Imagination is the mode of understanding which allows us to aesthetically grasp, or appreciate, the dynamic elements of a situation—namely, the ontological modalities of the actual and the potential—in order to construct or transform it into *an experience*. It is most literally art, and like all *work* of art, it transforms and integrates the subjective and objective material of experience into a *medium* which embodies and therefore immediately expresses or communicates its meaning; the generic medium of imagination being concrete activity (including thought). The implication of this, as explained in the above quotation, is that the imaginative reconstruction of experience is not a matter of selecting an outcome to function as a form or template for interpreting and defining the conditions of some event, but rather *developing that situation by critically integrating its potential ends and means into a concrete, expressive medium of embodied meaning*. It exhibits all the same characteristics of appreciating and creating a work of art:

> The artist strives to make each moment of the creation of his work a meaningful, selected option that contributes toward the meaning of the whole. A great work of art exhibits its "choices" in terms of being especially meaningful; other choices simply would not have done so well. A poet, for example, cannot place down just *any* word; it must be the right word. If that "rightness" does not show itself in the structure of the whole poem, the work of art does not have that inner coherence to generate in the reader a responsive sense of meaningful selection and continuity that is the basis for "an experience," the aesthetic value of the whole. (Alexander 2013, 172)

Aesthetic experience is an experience in which its meaning is embodied within itself as the quality which integrates the whole and its parts; 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 some remote thing beyond itself" (Dewey 2005, 285–86). It is, of necessity, imaginative, for imagination is how experience is capable of such integrity in the first place. There could be no reconstruction of experience, no meaning, no communication, no culture—no humans, no mind—without an imagination capable of grasping the indeterminate dynamics of a situation; grasping the old in light of the new, the actual in light of the potential.

Without imagination, there could be no novelty, save the dumb reconfiguration of what has already existed.

Therefore, imagination is a condition for any intelligent action. "The engagement of imagination is the only thing that makes any activity more than mechanical" (Dewey 1916a, 276). It follows that not only is imagination, as a mode of adaptation, opposed to habituation, or mere accommodation, but it is likewise a condition for the meaningful formation of habits—*in*-habitation—and is therefore a condition for learning and growth.

Habit refers to an ability to use natural conditions as means to ends, or the active control of an environment (Dewey 1916a, 55). It frees energy and attention to respond more effectively to circumstances that bear upon action, and as such, represents the active capacity for readjusting activity to meet new conditions (62). Habit contrasts with habituation in that the latter represents adjustment which does not involve control, but rather assimilation or accommodation of an environment. This is not to say that habituation is *bad*. It is simply a fact of life that we become used to conditions that constitute our habitat. We are not capable of controlling every aspect of our environment, and neither is it in our interest to do so. Indeed, habituation as conformity to an environment less the concern for modifying it serves as a background for growth, supplying leverage to our active habits (56), functioning as a general and persistent balance of organic activities with surroundings (62).

This is a crucial point of Dewey's educational philosophy that is easily overlooked, especially if learning is interpreted in strictly instrumentalist terms.[7] Because the "instrumentality" of reflection is a "unique intrinsic good" which secures "freer and more enduring goods" (Dewey 1929, 405), it is easy to conflate with the general process of learning or growth. Of course, for human beings, reflection and learning are intimately connected, but it is important to acknowledge why they are distinct. If inhabitation is to have the habits of one's environment, to cultivate and be culti-

[7] Dewey's most comprehensive and influential writings on education were, in fact, written during his so-called instrumentalist period. Read in isolation from the context of Dewey's developing philosophy, these works risk narrow utilitarian interpretations. The metaphysics which features prominently in Dewey's later works discusses the metaphysical assumptions of the key themes in his education philosophy, albeit, in an often indirect manner. cf. Dewey and Bentley (1949).

vated by it, then such an instrumentality as reflection exceeds whatever properties of "utility" it is perceived to have. Rather, for human beings—who inhabit nature through culture—it is modally basic to growth. To be sure, reflection itself does not equate growth. Nor is it true that more reflection equals more growth, or that growth has only to do with reflection. Prior to becoming the object of reflection, the world exists as the ways we are in it. Experience itself is this involvement in the complex dynamics of the world, which are not *known* per se, but primarily felt as the qualitative integrity of successive situations. Because nature is primary—because existence does not *occur* except *in and of* nature—habituation is not only perpetual, but a necessity of life and therefore growth.

Because consciousness itself is fundamentally concerned with the reconstruction of action—because it emerges as the very search for opportunities of adaptation—we tend to regard habituation negatively, and idealize lucidity or awareness as ultimate reality. This manifests variously across cultures; for example, the trope of enlightenment as pure consciousness or awareness, sagely spontaneity, the supremacy of pure reason, etc. Of course, reflective consciousness is a unique good for its ability to secure freer and more enduring goods, but to regard it as ultimate and primary is to submit to a narrow view of the world at best, and to entertain an escapist fantasy at worst. There may be an inherent tension between habituation and imagination or consciousness, but their relationship is not one of plain negation. Indeed, consciousness is able to emerge *because of* the myriad unconscious interactions which establish a relatively stable transactional whole, wherein the organism and environment are distinguished as functional developments of one another. Consciousness is concerned with the active adaptation of these ways we are in the world, not the elimination of unconsciousness itself. Such a project would be self-defeating, and is made coherent only under the assumption that consciousness is somehow ultimate and primary, and therefore capable of bootstrapping itself all the way to nirvana. Of course, such a view must deny the continuity of experience and nature, and does not account for the undeniable fact of entropy in a basically interactive cosmos. Consciousness, like everything else that happens in the universe–everything that exists–requires energy. So long as this is the case, there should be no way to actualize all the potential of any given situation; no way for consciousness to be so self-sufficient in itself that it

can exist independently of the reality of time to obtain a privileged, comprehensive insight into the actuality and potentiality of any and all existence. Consciousness is the focal center of experience. It is not possible to focus on everything all at once nor experience everything all at once. Nature, in all its untidy plurality is irreducibly perspectivistic, and therefore wherever consciousness emerges it will always be backgrounded by an indeterminate range of ways one is organically embedded in or integrated with her environment.

It is in this sense that habituation is not only a natural condition and eventual consequence of transaction, but also a condition for learning; a condition for being able to explore the possibilities of the world in the first place. As a persistent balance of oganic activities with one's surroundings, habituation is a relatively passive-yet-functional continuity between experience and nature. It represents the presence of a vital transactional whole *within* which and *of* which learning or growth may take place. In other words, habituation does not require reflection, but reflection depends upon a minimum of habituation. To be habituated is to be a functional part of a habitat—to have a habitat and for it to have you. But to grow, habits must be adapted. Our ethos must be adjusted if we are to grow, for it is not only how we are in that world, but also how the world is within us. Ultimately, growth or continuity involves this very adjustment, this development of situations toward meaningful qualitative closures to enrich and to be enjoyed in experience. Habits themselves may afford some control over conditions in our environment, allowing us the opportunity for meaningful activity, but this control is provisional and relative. It is not an uninhibited power of dominion, of course. Rather, habits are significant, variable, adaptive functions within other *transactional wholes*. Their power, effect, and meaning are not determined by the sheer willpower of an autonomous individual unbeholden to his environment. Habits are, in a manner of speaking, protocols for activity whose content and context are determined through the interactive whole that *is* an individual-and-his-environment; that *is* a given situation. To adapt a habit is to adapt *this* whole. The growth of an individual person *is* growth or adaptation of a transactional whole by way of *in*-habiting it; by adapting the habits that are the ways the environment and organism "have" or "become" each other. Macroscopically, **it is the transactional whole which grows**.

The development and adjustment of habits, then, is not an affair of free will; not the work of an autonomous being's willpower against the world. Habits are not the product of a disciplined mental constitution, but rather functions of the ongoing process of adapting in and of a world. Rather than being brought into existence by a free will, habits are developed through the realization of *interest* or individuality in a given situation; which is to say that it always entails a minimum of an awareness of and concern for how one and his environemnt are involved with each other. Interest will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section, but the point to make here is that habits are either growing or decaying, for they do not exist apart from the concrete situations in which they function or do not. Either habits are vital in activity—thereby "revitalized" or adapted in situ—or they stagnate and eventually deteriorate into routine. Keeping a habit alive, functional, and meaningful requires an imaginative appreciation of the situational dynamics through which it operates and to which it is an active response. "Habits reduce themselves to routine ways of acting, or degenerate into ways of action to which we are enslaved just in the degree in which intelligence is disconnected from them." Routine indicates where a habit is controlled by conditions rather than affording control over them. Habits which possess us rather than our possessing them are habits which discontinue plasticity, or the ability to learn, in that they mark the close of power to vary (Dewey 1916a, 58); that is, the absence of consciousness, of imagination, of a sensitivity and responsiveness to immediate qualities:

> When past and present fit exactly into one another, when there is only reoccurrence, complete uniformity, the resulting experience is routine and mechanical; it does not come to consciousness in perception. The inertia of habit overrides adaptation of the meaning of the here and now with that of experiences, without which there is no consciousness, the imaginative phase of experience. (Dewey 2005, 285)

The dysfunction of a habit, like any problem, requires an imaginative appreciation of what is possible to be consciously reformed. As we noted earlier, imagination does not just supply means to a learning machine fulfilling whatever aims or instructions it receives. The significance of aesthetic experience here cannot be overstated. Habit formation that is not achieved through aesthetic appreciation can be nothing more

than an instance of conditioning—precisely, it is the conditioning of a value rather than the *valuing* of conditions. More pithily, it is the entrenchment of routine. Indeed, in Dewey's view, the scope of appreciation is as comprehensive as the work of education, which is life itself. "The formation of habits is a purely mechanical thing unless habits are also *tastes*—habitual modes of preference and esteem, an effective sense of excellence" (1916a, 276). A habit which actually affords control over conditions is one that affords individual agency in discerning those conditions; in valuing or estimating them. This applies not only to habits, but to all facts—all learning:

> Appreciative realizations are to be distinguished from symbolic or representative experiences. They are not to be distinguished from the work of the intellect or understanding. 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. (Dewey 1916a, 276)

Here Dewey emphasizes the fact that appreciation is an immediate experience. A *mediate* experience, by comparison is had indirectly through symbols or other abstractions of some remote experience. This is not to say that immediate experience does not concern language or the intellect. The point is that there is no surrogate for direct experience. To appreciate an experience it must be had. It is one thing to attend a concert and another to experience a conversation *about* it—they are two different "things." Another succinct analogy is thought: if someone else does it for you, it is not really thinking.

The point Dewey stresses is that **the beginning of all meaningful learning is aesthetic appreciation**–that all intelligent activity is basically imaginative. All else subordinates one's energies to things remote to her actual experience. She may be able to hold the tool in her hand, but to creatively assess under what other conditions it may be applied, or how the tool may be adapted to function in some other novel situation requires imaginative evaluation. This depends on appreciative realization, which is not *given* when merely handed a mediate experience, a ready-made tool:

> An adequate recognition of the play of imagination as the medium of realization of every kind of thing which lies beyond the scope of direct physical response is the sole way of escape from mechanical methods in teaching. The emphasis put in this book, in accord with many tendencies in contemporary education, upon activity, will be misleading if it is not recognized that the **imagination is as much a normal and integral part of human activity as is muscular movement.** The educative value of manual activities and of laboratory exercises, as well as of play, depends upon the extent in which they aid in bringing about a sensing of the *meaning* of what is going on. In effect, if not name, they are dramatizations. Their utilitarian value in forming habits of skill to be used for tangible results is important, but not when isolated from the appreciative side. Were it not for the accompanying play of imagination, there would be no road from a direct activity to representative knowledge; for it is by imagination that symbols are translated over into a direct meaning and integrated with a narrower activity so as to expand and enrich it. When the representative creative imagination is made merely literary and mythological, symbols are rendered mere means of directing physical reactions of the organs of speech. (Dewey 1916a, 277–78) (emphasis added)

Dewey observed that imagination had been so underappreciated in education because it was commonly associated with "imaginary," or fanciful and unreal (and therefore inconsequential), aspects of experience rather than with a "warm and intimate taking in of the full scope of a situation." The result was that imagination was seen as something to do with *the* arts, with private, inner experience, or with leisurely activities, and generally neglected. The consequence for education was that learning was reduced to "unimaginative acquiring of specialized skill and amassing a load of information" (1916a, 276); a condition contemporary society apparently still struggles to overcome. Indeed, these are not symptoms of the *old school*, nor are they exclusive to education, but rather they evidence social conditions in which activity is devoid of interest and imagination:

> Neither the people who engage in [industrial and political activities], nor

> those who are directly affected by them, are capable of full and free interest in their work. Because of the lack of any purpose in the work for the one doing it, or because of the restricted character of its aim, intelligence is not adequately engaged. The same conditions force many people back upon themselves. They take refuge in an inner play of sentiment and fancies. They are aesthetic but not artistic, since their feelings and ideas are turned upon themselves, instead of being methods in acts which modify conditions. Their mental life is sentimental; an enjoyment of an inner landscape. Even the pursuit of science may become an asylum of refuge from the hard conditions of life—not a temporary retreat for the sake of recuperation and clarification in future dealings with the world. The very word art may become associated not with specific transformation of things, making them more significant for mind, but with stimulations of eccentric fancy and with emotional indulgences. (Dewey 1916a, 159)

These words are just as relevant today as they were when Dewey uttered them over one hundred years ago. There are numerous factors which contribute to these social conditions, but a particularly noteworthy point to mention is the reduction of work to labor. Contrary to the popular cliche, work and play are not opposites—it is labor that opposes both. Work and play are inherently enjoyable; their value as an activity is intrinsic. Although work may be instrumental to achieving some end or yielding some product or outcome, the ends of work are necessarily integrated as part of its process. It is fulfilling and gratifying in itself. To state it differently, like art, the ends and means are determined *in and as* the work itself. As such, individual interest is a condition for work and play alike, for this is the selective ideal which controls the development of the activity in all phases.

By contrast, labor is activity devoid of intrinsic meaning and value. The crucial distinction from work is that the ends of labor are remote to the activity itself, and therefore is indifferent to the interest of individuals. It is most literally mechanical, merely providing means for the fulfillment of some extrinsic end or value, whose determination is independent of the particular activity in question. Of course, what is meant here by "labor" refers not to manual occupations exclusively, but any activity virtually devoid of interest and imagination—including learning. Dewey recognized

that so long as society is organized on the basis of a division between laboring and leisure classes it will perpetuate these conditions:

> The majority of human beings still lack economic freedom. Their pursuits are fixed by accident and necessity of circumstance; they are not the normal expression of their own powers interacting with the needs and resources of the environment. Our economic conditions still relegate many men to a servile status. As a consequence, the intelligence of those in control of the practical situation is not liberal. Instead of playing freely upon the subjugation of the world for human ends, it is devoted to the manipulation of other men for ends that are non-human in so far as they are exclusive. (Dewey 1916a, 160)

The peculiar problem for education is that it "cannot immediately escape from the ideals set by prior social conditions. But it should contribute through the type of intellectual and emotional disposition which it forms to the improvement of those conditions" (Dewey 1916a, 160). Education which functions to fulfill ends remote to individual experience, which reduces learning to a laboring toward such ends, "accepts the present social conditions as final, and thereby takes upon itself the responsibility for perpetuating them" (161). In the degree that education so prioritizes the valued and esteemed over individual valuing and estimation—over direct, appreciative realizations—it effects in the dispossession of "learners," or "inhabitants," from their own quotidian life-worlds.

4.4 Interest, Individuality & Temporality

If there is any contribution education can make in modifying these social conditions to be more humane, more civilized, or more meaningful, it is in securing conditions which nurture and facilitate the imaginative, appreciative realization of individual interest.[8] "[Our] fundamental attitudes toward the world are fixed by the scope and

[8] See Dewey (1913) and chapter six of Dewey (1916a) for a thorough examination of interest. Dewey cautions against conflating interest with mere impulse or caprice; interpretations he explicitly criticizes. For this reason Dewey often emphasizes interest's relationship with effort—that interest

qualities of the activities in which [we] partake" (Dewey 1916a, 159), and if activity is reduced to banal, routine, mechanistic labor, then we become disenfranchised from the process of social reconstruction. The ends of labor are not *concerned* with the activity that is its means of fulfillment; they do not appeal to imagination for appreciation of possibilities in the development of the activity. There is no connection, then, between the individual and the end value, and so there is literally no involvement of interest—nothing *between* them. Therefore, when learning is reduced to labor we become spectators to, not participants in, social reconstruction.

As the literal meaning of the word implies, interest suggests that a participant is bound up with possibilities inhering in objects (Dewey 1916a, 146); that a self and world are engaged with each other in a developing situation (148). It is significantly purposive, imaginative, and therefore individual; concerned with the potential meaning of a situation and its temporal control, or continuity:

> Purpose implicates in the most organic way an individual self. It is in the purposes he entertains that an individual most completely exhibits and realizes his intimate selfhood. Control of material by a self is control by more than just "mind"; it is control by the personality that has mind incorporate within it. All interest is an identification of a self with some material aspect of the objective world, of the nature that includes man. Purpose is this identification in action. Its operation in and through objective conditions is a test of its genuineness; the capacity of the purpose to overcome and utilize resistance, to administer materials, is a disclosure of the structure and quality of the purpose. (Dewey 2005, 288–89)

Interest is the embodiment of a continuity of meanings in a developing mind-and-world (situation) in the form of purpose—a *phase of context*.[9] In contrast with a habituated accommodation of a relatively static and familiar environment, it is an imaginative view of and *concern* for things in motion, of the dynamic conditions and

is active and inherently purposive. Central to the metaphysics of interest, then, is the notion of temporal quality as basic to all existence, which is discussed later in this section.

[9] Interest is "implicated in all thinking, as in all eating, business, or play. Since it cannot be entirely made an explicit object of reflection and yet since it affects all matters thought of, it is legitimately called a phase of context" (Dewey 1998a, 1:212).

consequences that determine the course of a continually developing situation. It is the identification or engrossment of oneself within a situation; an expression of value, intent, desire, and therefore individuality. It indicates a desire to act to secure a possible result (Dewey 1916a, 147), and as such, is what is practically meant by "will" (161).

It is significant, however, that interest is not instantaneous or momentary. It is not mere caprice, fancy, or pleasure. To be interested, is to be in transition; to see the horizon and the obstacles of the course. To have an interest—literally, to realize what is between you and your purpose—is to grasp the situation temporally, or narratively; as having a definite beginning, middle, and end. Fulfillment of a purpose requires effort in transformation and continuity of attention and endurance (Dewey 1916a, 161). It requires, in other words, a continual concern to control the development of the process. In a manner of speaking, interest is the inertia of consciousness and intelligence in the creative development of time. Understood in this way, the realization of interest would be the source of objective novelty in the world, and therefore a condition for fulfilling the human need for meaning; the Human Eros. In order to grasp this significance of interest in learning, it is necessary to first examine the nature of individuality[10] and time.

Dewey observed that the concept of time has always been associated with "mortal man's quest for certainty" (1998a, 1:217).[11] What is true and real was traditionally conceived to be eternal and unchanging, while change and time were considered to be of an inferior reality. With the advent of the Enlightenment and the advancement of scientific thought, time came to be thought of as "working on the side of good instead of as a destructive agent" (218). The marriage of natural law and the faculty of reason consummated in an optimistic interpretation of change; namely, the indefinite perfectibility of man, and time and evolution as objective progress toward this end. This reinterpretation of change, however, was still premised on the notion of certitude:

[10] Interest is practically synonymous with individuality: Interest "is not part or constituent of subject-matter; but as a manner of action it selects subject-matter and leaves a qualitative impress upon it. One may call it genius or originality or give the more neutral and modest name of individuality" (Dewey 1998a, 1:213).

[11] See Dewey's (1930) *The Quest for Certainty* for an in-depth treatment of this theme.

> Change was on the working side of man but only because of *fixed* laws which governed the changes that take place. There was hope in change just because the laws that govern it do not change. The locus of the immutable was shifted to scientific natural law, but the faith and hope of philosophers and intellectuals were still tied to the unchanging. The belief that "evolution" is identical with progress was based upon trust in laws which, being fixed, worked automatically toward the final end of freedom, justice, and brotherhood, the natural consequences of the reign of reason. (Dewey 1998a, 1:218)

Dewey traces the consequent development of a philosophical appreciation of genuine temporality through the criticisms of mechanism and idealism in Bergson and James, and into the process metaphysics of Whitehead. He observed that the crux of the *problem* of time had to do with individuality; in particular, how individuality as the uniqueness of a history seems to apply to human but not inanimate or physical individuals. The Newtonian atom, for example, "moved and was moved, thus changing its position in space, but it was unchangeable in its own being. … It had no development, no history, because it had no potentialities," yet "as an ultimate element it was supposed to have some sort of individuality, to be itself and not something else." For some, this supposed atomic immutability, or atemporality, was grounds for a dualism between spirit-endowed man and dumb, inanimate matter. For others, it was evidence that human individuality itself was an illusion, being the net effect of so many changes and reconfigurations on a molecular scale. Dewey's view falls into a third school of thought; namely, the view that "temporal quality and historical career are a mark of everything, including atomic elements, to which individuality may be attributed" (Dewey 1998a, 1:220).

Dewey provides an explanation of the basis for this view of time and individuality using demonstrative examples from physical science. First, he points to the fact of a "growing recognition that scientific objects are purely relational and have nothing to do with the intrinsic qualities of individual things and nothing to say about them" (Dewey 1998a, 1:220). He illustrates this point with the example of mass:

> The idea that mass is an inherent property which caused inertia and mo-

> mentum was simply a holdover from an old metaphysical idea of force. As far as the findings of science are concerned, independent of the intrusion of metaphysical ideas, mass is inertia-momentum and these are strictly measures of relations. (Dewey 1998a, 1:221)

The consequence of this acknowledgment, he observed, is the idea that "laws which purport to be statements of what actually occurs are statistical in character" (Dewey 1998a, 1:221), in that "no statement is made about what will take place in the case of an *individual*." The third example Dewey gives in defense of his thesis is Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty or indeterminacy, which states, in short, that both position and velocity cannot be determined at once. Dewey admits that Heisenberg's principle is easily appropriated as a scientific basis for arbitrary free will and uncaused activity, but contends that "its actual force and significance is the generalization of the idea that the individual is a temporal career whose future cannot be *logically* deduced from its past" (222):

> The unescapable conclusion is that as human individuality can be understood only in terms of time as fundamental reality, so for physical individuals time is not simply a measure of predetermined changes in mutual positions, but is something that enters into their being. Laws do not "govern" the activity of individuals. They are a formulation of the frequency-distributions of the behavior of large numbers of individuals engaged in interactions with one another. (Dewey 1998a, 1:222)

The point here is not that human and physical individuality are identical, but rather that "the principle of a developing career applies to all things in nature, as well as to human beings—that they are born, undergo qualitative changes, and finally die, giving place to other individuals" (Dewey 1998a, 1:222–23).

The implications of this view are numerous. First, the notion of change and time as hinging on some fixed or static principle—progressing toward some definite end—are completely baseless. On the contrary, "potentiality is a category of existence, for development cannot occur unless an individual has powers or capabilities that are not actualized at a given time." Furthermore, "these powers are not unfolded

from within, but are called out through interaction with other things" (Dewey 1998a, 1:223). This is to say that potentialities are not predetermined, and, in fact, can only be known *through* interaction. Dewey illustrates this point with the example of milk, which, for centuries was primarily a food source until it was brought into interactions with other materials through which some other potentialities were realized—such as its use as plastic. In the context of human beings, Dewey gives the example of Abraham Lincoln; that "it is impossible to think of the historical career, which is the special unique individuality constituting Abraham Lincoln, apart from the particular conditions in which he lived" (224):

> The career which is his unique individuality is the series of interactions in which he was created to be what he was by the ways in which he responded to the occasions with which he was presented. One cannot leave out either conditions as *opportunities* nor yet unique ways of responding to them. An occasion is an opportunity only when it is an evocation of a specific event, while a response is not a necessary effect of a cause but is a way of using an occasion to render it a constituent of an ongoing unique history. (Dewey 1998a, 1:224)

Understood temporally, then, individuality is the source of whatever is unpredictable in the world—which is not to "arbitrarily introduce mere chance into the world. It is to say that genuine individuality exists; that individuality is pregnant with new developments; that time is real" (Dewey 1998a, 1:224). In the context of individuality as a temporal development, the role of interest and imagination in learning increases in significance. Being able to grasp the potentialities of a developing situation, to purposively identify oneself within its interactive dynamics to effect its consummation as an event, is to establish a continuity through the realization of a novel individuality, and therefore creatively develop time. We see too the significance of aesthetic experience illuminated by the fact that all existence has temporal quality; that is, that things are what they are in their unique, individual qualities:

> We are given to forgetting, with our insistence upon causation and upon the necessity of things happening as they do happen, that things exist as just what they qualitatively are. … We forget in explaining its occurrence

> that it is only the *occurrence* that is explained, not the thing itself. We forget that in explaining the occurrence we are compelled to fall back on other individual things that have just the unique qualities they do have. … Their occurrence, their manifestation may be accounted for in terms of other occurrences, but their own quality of existence is final and opaque. The mystery is that the world is as it is—a mystery that is the source of all joy and sorrow, of all hope and fear, and the source of development both creative and degenerative. (Dewey 1998a, 1:225)

"Genuine time," then, is not just a measure of motion, but has to do with the "existence of individuals as individuals, with the creative, with the occurrence of unpredictable novelties." However, this is not to say that individuality is immutable. "An individual may lose his individuality, for individuals become imprisoned in routine and fall to the level of mechanisms. Genuine time then ceases to be an integral element in their being. Our behavior becomes predictable because it is but an external rearrangement of what went before" (Dewey 1998a, 1:225). The condition described here is one of discontinuity, in which experience lacks interest, purpose, meaning. It is discontinuous because it is not developing as an individual "thing" to be continuous with any other, for it is sheer assimilation of given conditions.

Understanding individuality as a career developing in time, we can see how the human desire for meaning manifests in efforts to creatively develop time, to actively respond to it as an opportunity—that this is what meaning and value *do*. It is through the integrative control of meaning and value in action that it is capable of being continuous, of developing, otherwise it is merely dumb material motion—insignificant cause and effect. Dewey emphasizes this point as a conclusion to his thesis about individuality and time; that unlike naive interpretations of time and evolution which supposed progress and individuality to be givens, the actual course of events is determined by human individuals:

> While progress is not inevitable, it is up to men as individuals to bring it about. Change is going to occur anyway, and the problem is the control of change in a given direction. The direction, the quality of change, is a matter of individuality. Surrender of individuality by the many to some

> one who is taken to be a superindividual explains the retrograde movement of society. Dictatorships and totalitarian states, and belief in the inevitability of this or that result coming to pass are, strange as it may sound, ways of denying the reality of time and the creativeness of the individual. Freedom of thought and of expression are not mere rights to be claimed. They have their roots deep in the existence of individuals as developing careers in time. Their denial and abrogation is an abdication of individuality and a virtual rejection of time as opportunity. … The weakness of the philosophy originally advanced to justify the democratic movement was that it took individuality to be something given ready-made; that is, in abstraction from time, instead of as a power to develop. (Dewey 1998a, 1:225)

To deny the reality of time is to effectively deny one's humanity; to ignore individuality as the creative development of time, and therefore to lack an interest in it as a source of power to be cultivated. Even the "liberating" ideals of free will and freedom as the natural state of man obscure the reality of time because of their assumed *originality*.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion regarding the temporal quality of existence, especially concerning learning, is that art is the full expression of nature—that art is the authentic expression of any and all individuality (Dewey 1998a, 1:226), and therefore the genuine manifestation of the potentialities of nature. Art is not only the "disclosure of the individuality of the artist but is also a manifestation of individuality as creative of the future, in an unprecedented response to conditions as they were in the past" (225). This is not to say that anything labeled art achieves this, nor does it mean that art is exclusive to *the arts*. Any activity is capable of art, which is the expression of individuality—the embodied realization of potentialities. The significance of art's role in fulfilling the Human Eros—of art *as* learning, as growth and civilization—cannot be overstated.

> The artist in realizing his own individuality reveals potentialities hitherto unrealized. This revelation is the inspiration of other individuals to make the potentials real, for it is not sheer revolt against things as they are

> which stirs human endeavor to its depths, but vision of what might be and is not. … To regiment artists, to make them servants of some particular cause does violence to the very springs of artistic creation. But it does more than that. It betrays the very cause of a better future it would serve, for in its subjection of the individuality of the artist it annihilates the source of that which is genuinely new. Were the regimentation successful, it would cause the future to be but a rearrangement of the past. (Dewey 1998a, 1:226)

We see here the recurrent theme of this chapter: things are unique in their individual quality, and so there is no replacement for immediate experience, for individuality. Learning as inhabitation is the realization of interest, of individuality—it is imaginative. It is an active and conscious effort to appreciate the potential meanings and values of activity that control its development. It is learning concerned not with this or that meaning or value in particular, but with *valuing*, with *meaning*. As such, it is expressly concerned with life in its most artful capacity; with meaningful inhabitation of the world.

Importantly, the realization of individual potentialities is not a *personal* or *private* affair. Embodied in activity, the realization of interest is both critical and expressive—it is necessarily interactive, necessarily a risk, an opportunity. To disclose one's individuality is to implicate others interactively as participant artists of the *work* in whatever form this may take. Through such a manner of learning, through creative interactivity, the Human Eros constructs the human world. To learn, then, is to literally *communicate*—to become a community, to *civil*-ize or *human*-ize the world. To learn is to inhabit this world of shared meaning, to participate in its creative development as an individual identified with its immanent purpose: *growth*.

4.5 Growth & Culture as Transactional

As we saw in the previous chapter, continuity does not mean *identity*, nor does it refer to perpetuation, repetition, or a formal series of isolated events. Continuity as

growth is the tendency of natural processes toward the establishment of a consummatory history. As Dewey(1938, 18–19, 23) explains in his *Logic*, continuity is the transactional emergence of novel individuality:

> The term "naturalistic" has many meanings. As it is here employed it means, on one side, that there is no breach of continuity between operations of inquiry and biological operations and physical operations. "Conitnuity," on the other side, means that rational operations *grow out of* organic activities, without being identitcal with that from which they emerge…The primary postulate of a naturalistic theory of logic is continuity of lower (less complex) and the higher (more complex) activities and forms. The idea of continuity is not self-explanatory. But its meaning excluides complete rupture on one side and mere repetition of identities on the other; it precludes the reduction of "higher" to the "lower" just as it precludes complete breaks and gaps. The growth and development of any living organism from seed to maturity illustrates the meaning of continuity.

For Dewey, continuity *is* the process of *organization* through which emerge the distinct structures and orders of nature. As Alexander (1987b, 99) puts it, "continuity refers to increasing levels of organic functioning which exclude either the possibility of being reduced to one identical type or of being utterly disconnected into self-enclosed, autonomous categories." A human child, for example, is born and expected to mature along regular lines of development. But the history that is that person, and the *actual* organic processes which make her *that* person, *that* organism, are unique individuations of those situations *through which* she develops. Whatever she is individually cannot be reduced to, for example, the myriad cellular divisions responsible for her physical growth and survival, the category of "human," nor the concepts and conclusions of "cellular biology" in general. However, what she is "individually" is not independent of these. Her individuality necessarily includes all the natural and cultural transactions *through which* she exists; embedded or integrated in that world.

A key aspect of Dewey's principle of continuity as transactional organization is the "re-

alization of newer, more inclusive types of order" (Alexander 1987b, 99). The source of this novelty is importantly derived internally. It is not a purely random anomaly, but a "functional development" which grows out of prior conditions (100):

> What *is* excluded by the postulate of continuity is the appearance upon the scene of totally new outside force as a cause of changes that occur. … On the other hand, should the consideration of scientific investigation be that development proceeds by minute increments, no amount of addition of such increments will constitute *development* save when their cumulative effect generates something new and different. (Dewey 1938, 24)

In other words: the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This is not because the whole includes something from the outside to which its parts do not have access, as Dewey rejects in the previous quotation, but rather because both actuality and potentiality are modally basic to nature. Continuity is not just the perpetuation of what already exists. It is the *development* of existence, the interactive realization of its potentialities in concrete situations—or, in other words, it is growth. What distinguishes growth from mere seriality or accumulation is this qualitative transformation through the interactive realization of possibilities. An embryo, for example, grows into a mature adult not through simple addition or multiplication—or the accidental accumulation of structure—but through an increasingly complex process of organization *in and of* the environment, whereby novel forms and processes emerge in response to the conditions which situate it. The person I am today, physically and culturally, is an outgrowth of so many prior conditions to which my very continuation as a living human organism is a *functional response*.

As discussed previously, potentiality is not a separate category or "realm," nor does it suggest that growth is a dialectical progress toward an ultimate end. Like actuality, potentiality is a basic modality of nature. If this were not the case, then time would be impossible, for it is through this fundamental tension between what is and what could be that anything *happens*; that anything exists as an event in nature. What something could become is just as much a part of its existence as what it *actually* is in a given situation. Experience is this actualization of potentialities, and the fact of

its growth reveals something about nature; namely, that nature is capable of being ideally reconstructed (Alexander 1987b, 102–3).

Involvement in this reconstruction of nature is a predisposition of human life. We do not appear on the scene and either engage the possibilities of nature or not, but rather, we exist *as* an involvement in the reconstruction process. We *are* the consequence of reconstructions in nature that realized what was previously inchoate potential. For Dewey, **this tensive nexus between the ideal and the real is *the* human concern** (Alexander 1987b, 71). It is the generic impetus of all human desire and activity, which is to say that culture itself is "the material and the ideal in their reciprocal relationships" (Dewey 1929, 362):

> "Culture" is the shared life of human beings upon the earth as it is appropriated in terms of meaning and value. "Experience" designates this relationship and "metaphysics" will attempt to describe it in its most general features. "Nature" will provide the material of "culture," and "culture" ("experience") will be an exploration of the possibilities of nature. Nature will not be something that is "hidden" by culture any more than the nature of clay will be "hidden" by the art of pottery. (Alexander 1987b, 71)

"Nature and Experience, in other words, are dimensions of the structured transactions of organism and environment and of self and world which at each moment have a qualitative, organic continuity making it *that* situation" (Alexander 1987b, 98). For human beings, experience is a kind of narration of life situations—not the assembly of successive scenes, but the integration of its elements *as* a story. It is most literally *cultivation*, in that it is a mutual adaptation or development of the *real* and *ideal* aspects of a situation. But to meaningfully interpret and cultivate the possibilities of a situation takes work—it does not happen automatically. Indeed, it is because of the immediate tension between the real and ideal that growth is even possible, but the depth and breadth of their appropriation represent the degree of continuity between experience and nature (97).

This tendency for situations to grow together is characterized by transaction—a distinctive type of interaction which successfully creates a whole (Alexander 1987b,

108). A common illustration of transaction is organization. An organ is a whole which emerges through the transactions of the myriad cells which constitute it. It contains its cells, but its cells are not capable of containing it—not simply because it is larger than they, but because it exists as a functional development of their transactions. Anything that exists, in fact, has such an organic structure, for to exist is to be continuous within a field of activity extending into space and time. An important implication of this is that "things" in their qualitative individuality are not unitary, atomic nodes within a web of cosmic interconnectivity, but are irreducibly parts of some whole process:

> No one of its contituents can be *adequately* specified as fact apart from the specification of other constituents of the full subject matter. … Transaction regards extension in time to be as indispensible as is extension in space. … Transaction assumes no preknowledge of either organism or environment alone as adequate, not even as respects the basic nature of the current conventional distinctions between them, but requires their primary acceptance in a system. (Dewey and Bentley 1949, 69–70)

The utility and convenience of language betrays the reality at which it grasps. It is difficult for us to perceive how an individual exists only within the context of a whole. It seems to go against our common sense assumptions about the world that "things" exist together, in connection with one another, but as distinct things in themselves. It is not easy to see how these individuals appear to be individuals only in respect to an assumed background of transactions through which they emerge. It is significant that this backgrounding transactional whole is not a self-contained "environment" any more than the individuals within it are primarily self-sufficient "things" or "selves." The transactional whole, the total system of growth that is the situation, is not just a container that includes its parts, but the very qualities which *integrate* it aesthetically as the thing that it is. In other words, whatever distinction we may draw between an organism and its environment is more-or-less superficial from the point of view of the ongoing transactional process of organization of which they are each phases:

> For the sake of pointing out, we "define" the cougar or mountain lion by its visible shape; but any biologist knows that the animal inhales, excretes,

> establishes territory, catches prey, mates, and occupies a position in the ecology of its environment. The term "cougar" simply signifies an organized integration of complex relationships, activities, and events which incorporate a whole transactional field. To understand the cougar is to understand it transactionally rather than simply as an individual thing which one can point at in a zoo. (Alexander 1987b, 109)

Transaction is not only characteristic of physical things, but of existence generally, for to exist is to be continuous with and therefore be in transaction with other existences. Just as a cougar is not simply whatever is contained within its skin, interacting with but independent of whatever is *without* it, our immaterial (and material) culture is not an assortment of definite or immutable types and forms suspended within a vacuum of meaning. Our symbols, technology, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, etc. do not exist apart from the concrete transactions that *are* our world (including our "selves" within it). In other words, culture is not something "out there" or anywhere that is obtained, exchanged, activated, or deactivated. It is wholly embodied in activity as the regulating qualities of situations which develop them *as* situations. That is, it is the creative appreciation and response to the native tension between the actual and potential in a situation—in nature—as opportunities for meaning or growth. That culture is embodied, however, does not reduce it to an infinitely abstract or "other" background, even if its experience is largely unconscious. In a letter to Arthur Bentley, friend and co-author of *Knowing and the Known*, Dewey writes:

> I think a word like "situation" may be safely used, provided its use is accompanied by a statement that it does *not* mean environment in the sense of "surroundings" of an organism … "Situation," is a name for the field-event in its own diversified unity of qualities, qualifications. … What has influenced my use of "situation" is the necessity for the definite acknowledgement of the intrinsic variety of qualities in every event as a durational-extensional affair. … The situational aspect is that which makes possible and which invites or demands the analysis in consequence of which an *event* is capable of treatment as complex. (Dewey and Bentley 1964, 69–70)

A transactional whole, then, is not a given "setting" which contains the parts of a situation, nor an ad hoc sum total of events, but rather it is itself *situation*; or, the *situating* transactions through which distinct qualities become individuated. If nature is fundamentally plural and indeterminate, whatever order is perceived to exist—in the form of distinct and regular "things" and "events"—exists as an expression of the myriad transactions among existences across vast stretches of time and space. Their "identity" is a *function* of that immediate whole through which they emerge as qualitatively distinct. Such an ecological view "lessens the stress on the separated participants and sees more sympathetically the full system of growth or change" (Dewey and Bentley 1949, 128). This full system of growth denoted as a transactional whole exceeds the superficiality of the vague concept of "environment." It is an individual yet indeterminately open-ended transformation of energies in time, qualifying all existence and action as the immediate embodiment of the expansive spectrum of tensions between the actual and potential at play in the continual development of consummatory wholes.

Culture illustrates the inclusiveness of this "whole system of growth" in a way that is easy to understand. Culture has no substance, yet it exists everywhere. We recognize its more conspicuous forms, such as customs, foodways, art, and so on as being culturally significant, yet culture is not a property we can locate within or attribute to any of these things in particular. It is commonplace to speak of cultural differences, cultural relativity, cultural diversity, or being from another culture, etc., as if culture has definite, objective boundaries, identities, or species. We even speak of culture as if it is esoteric or even mystical in nature—something to be respected, preserved, and conspicuously enjoyed. Indeed, culture is the most inclusive category of human activity, but is itself inessential. It exists *as* everything humans do, but it cannot be identified with any aspect of those activities in particular. Culture is not any one thing or act or quality, but rather a matrix of meaning embodied, vitalized, and reconstructed through the concrete activities of human beings. In this way, culture lives *in* us as much as we live in it. It is not the net sum of all human activity, but rather human activity itself. It is immediately embodied in everything we do as the meaning and value of our activities, as our responses to the tensive aspect of nature—the tension between the real and the ideal in situations.

To say that humans inhabit nature through culture is to say that the human inhabitation of nature *is* culture. The world we inhabit is not one of symbols superimposed over the brute matter of the physical world. Ours is one of quality and meaning which emerges functionally through physical and biological transactions. It is the inclusive development of those physical and biological energies into a fuller expression of nature, embodied in the meanings and qualities of experience generally. It is for this reason that Dewey held art to be the fullest expression of nature, and therefore of human existence also. This transactional inclusiveness of culture so conceived also has profound implications for learning. The growth of an individual, the realization of her individual interest and potential, is not a private affair at all. To realize one's potential is to realize it at large; to effect in the adaptation of the whole system of growth of which she is an organ. This is the root of the basic tension between individuals/communities and social norms and institutions. The individual's inhabitiation of the world is not the sum of her actions upon that world, but the situated development of its energies. In other words, growth is always a mutual adjustment. The qualitative transformation of the individual is itself the simultaneous transformation of her whole world.

Continuity and transaction, as they have been described here, are incoherent within a dualistic subject-object metaphysics. As we will see in following chapters, such metaphysics underpin our commonplace concepts of teaching and learning, posing significant challenges to the accommodation of a more inclusive, transactional interpretation of these ideas. We will examine how these metaphysics manifest in various tropes about the process and role of education, and explore the implications of a pluralistic appropriation of them; namely, how learning and teaching are transactional phases of growth. I will first preface this examination of the "learning situation" with an account of how cultural inhabitation involves the philosophical method of aesthetic receptivity for the critical appropriation of our world, and how learning is itself artistic and the factors that prevent it from becoming so.

Chapter 5

The Philosophical Foundations of Inhabitation in Experience

In this chapter I will discuss the relationship of philosophy and inhabitation, or learning, in experience. I will first sketch the contours of a working "definition" of philosophy assumed throughout this paper, which considers philosophical inquiry to be basically empirical and imaginative and life experience to be paradigmatically philosophical. Philosophical method is understood as a method for aesthetic receptivity—of perceiving the world beyond our ideas of it. I will then review Dewey's exposition of philosophy as a generalized criticism of criticism to show how the philosophical concern of life experience involves the critique of values that situate it and predispose it. Finally, I will close with a synthesis of these themes in the context of learning, noting in particular the significance and meaning of wisdom in the process of inhabitation.

5.1 Philosophy as Art

Philosophy is not straightforwardly defined in terms of its subject-matter for two important reasons. First, the subject-matter of philosophy may include anything in the

entirety of culture. "Philosophy is an attempt to comprehend—that is, to gather together the varied details of the world and of life into a single inclusive whole,"[1] to the end of attaining "as unified, consistent, and complete an outlook upon experience as possible" (Dewey 1916a, 378). Second, this comprehensive perspective or general attitude which philosophy seeks to effect importantly "represents an attitude not to this and that thing nor even to the aggregate of known things, but to the considerations which govern conduct." That is, while the subject-matter of philosophy may include the entirety of culture—scientific theories, works of art, mundane quotidian affairs, etc.—the generality or totality that philosophy seeks through them is not the "hopeless task of a quantitative summation" of the facts of the world or drawing general conclusions about them, but rather our general disposition about the world they constitute. Philosophy strives for a "consistency of mode of response in reference to the plurality of events that occur" (379). It attempts to establish continuity among the various subject-matters of experience, not by directly producing knowledge about them, but by considering the potential courses of action the known world suggests. It is an idea of what is possible, not a record of accomplished fact (381).

Philosophy, then, is basically axiological in orientation.[2] That is, it inquires into values, and in the most general sense, it is the critique of culture. Given the state of knowledge, it questions our values and attitudes in and about the world. In other words, it is chiefly concerned with contextualizing the plural aspects of experience. As such, the role of philosophy is not to prescribe solutions to problems, but to define difficulties and suggest methods for dealing with them (Dewey 1916a, 381). The purposive nature of philosophy is indicative of its methodological peculiarity—the unity of its method and material: thought.

Thought is neither exclusive to language and cognition, nor does it exclude feeling

[1](cont.) "…which shall either be a unity, or, as in dualistic systems, shall reduce the plural details to a small number of ultimate principles."

[2]Dewey does not use this term himself, and is actually critical of those views which suppose values are something to be studied in themselves. It is used here to indicate that the basic problems of philosophy, conceived naturalistically, are questions into the basis of value—its conditions and consequences. Dewey calls this criticism, and explains that it is paradigmatic of all conscious experience. Philosophy as an activity is distinct from other critical modes in its generality as a sort of criticism of criticism. This will be discussed in further detail below.

or any other mode of experience. Unlike knowledge, which represents objects[3] that have been rationally ordered and settled, thinking is *prospective* in reference, and is occasioned by some unsettlement which it strives to overcome (Dewey 1916a, 380). The peculiarity of philosophy is that what we would consider its "data" are not the particular facts, knowledge, ideas, etc. about the infinite subject-matters of human experience per se, but importantly, they are *the very act of thinking through them*; of hypothesizing the possible, uncertain meanings or experiences they seem to suggest beyond themselves. In other words, philosophy examines the ways we think *through* experience. Philosophy is thinking about these prospective thoughts—it is reflective. It is through such means that philosophy attempts to arrange these thoughts toward its general end of reestablishing continuity among the various interests in experience, or culture, effecting a general perspective about them.

Therefore, philosophy reads as a sort of natural history of culture—it is the work of "adjusting that body of traditions which constitute the actual mind of man to scientific tendencies and political aspirations which are novel and incompatible with received authorities" (Dewey 1998a, 1:79).[4] A philosophy is the very work it does in and of civilization (79-80), for its problems derive from the "widespread and widely felt difficulties in social practice" (Dewey 1916a, 383). A system of philosophy is an attempt to reestablish continuity among the various aspects of culture whose significance has become ambiguous in light of new knowledge or change in social and political values and interests. Philosophy does not accomplish this by clarifying and supplying the truth or facts about a situation, which is the work of empirical science. Rather, the questions of philosophy pertain to the meanings of culture in all its diverse manifestations, including the *significance* of facts and truths.

It is worth noting, however, that truths, or the meanings of culture to which scientific thought pertains, are but a class of the wider category of meanings; that is, truths are those meanings in which "a claim to verifiability by their consequences is an intrinsic part of their meaning" (Dewey 1998a, 1:79). Truths are determinate conditions of

[3]The term "objects," as it is used here and in similar contexts within this paper, refers to "meanings to which reference may be made" (Dewey 1998a, 1:202), not discrete physical or psychical entities.

[4]Compare this view with Mary Midgley's (2007, 146–52) analogy between philosophy and plumbing—the maintenance of civilization's necessary, complex, often problematic, yet not so easily accessed or adapted infrastructure.

existences or events, but truths, or meanings generally, are importantly not identical with existence:

> We cannot compare existence and meaning; they are disparate. The characteristic life of man is itself the meaning of vast stretches of existences, and without it the latter have not value or significance. There is no common measure of physical existence and conscious experience because the latter is the only measure there is for the former. The significance of being, though not its existence, is the emotion it stirs, the thought it sustains. (Dewey 1998a, 1:79)

Meanings and existences, then, are not identical, yet, in experience, they mutually condition each other. Meanings are "generated and in some degree sustained by existence," and thus cannot be entirely irrelevant to the real world (Dewey 1998a, 1:82). However, meanings—truths or otherwise—are also not direct, unequivocal references to existence. Therefore, scientific thought (or experimentation) is a test of the values suggested by philosophical thought. In determining what exists, it suggests some conditions for what could exist, thereby indicating "what generalizations are tenable and what they actually are" (Dewey 1916a, 379). This is not to say that philosophy must only handle those matters which have been verified by the methods of science:

> The criterion is negative; the exclusion of the inconsistent is far from being identical with a positive test which demands that only what has been scientifically verifiable shall provide the entire content of philosophy. It is the difference between an imagination that acknowledges its responsibility to meet the logical demands of ascertained facts, and a complete abdication of all imagination in behalf of prosy literalism. (Dewey 1998a, 1:82)

Indeed, it is because philosophy is concerned primarily with the possibilities implied by the known world—with things as *situations* having context and temporality, with directing the focus of consciousness to the pervasive qualities that condition all meaning—that it is capable of auditing the orientations of scientific inquiry and the

applications of knowledge. Because science is itself "an instrument which is indifferent to the external uses to which it is put … we are forced to consider the relation of human ideas and ideals to the social consequences which are produced by science as an instrument" (Dewey 1998b, 2:364). "The problem of securing proper use succeeds to that of securing conditions of [social] growth" (365), or in other words, critiquing the values which motivate and orient scientific inquiry and the application of its findings. As Dewey explains, philosophy has a double task:

> that of criticizing existing aims with respect to the existing state of science, pointing out values which have become obsolete with the command of new resources, showing what values are merely sentimental because there are no means for their realization; and also that of interpreting the results of specialized science in their bearing on future social endeavor. (1916a, 384)

As the generalized theory of criticism, philosophy enriches life-experience by providing the tools for critiquing the values found in all aspects of experience: beliefs, institutions, actions, products, etc. (Dewey 1929, ix). "Physical science deals with connections of things with one another that determine outcomes and hence can be used as means. … The intrinsic nature of events is revealed in experience as the immediately felt qualities of things. Combined, they are intelligently directed experience" (v). Philosophy offers a method for *appreciating* the meanings of the refined objects of empirical inquiry in the context of life as it is actually lived, making them serviceable to the end of wisdom; of constructing and vitalizing civilization. While philosophy may be capable of discerning the most salient points of critique and suggesting desirable programs of reconstruction, it in itself is incapable of actualizing the changes it envisions; namely, it requires education, or more generally, it requires art:

> In the mechanical arts, the sciences become methods of managing things so as to utilize their energies for recognized aims. By the educative arts philosophy may generate methods of utilizing the energies of human beings in accord with serious and thoughtful conceptions of life. Education

> is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested. (Dewey 1916a, 384)

Indeed, Dewey (1916a, 383) regarded philosophy itself as the general theory of education, considering education, broadly conceived, to be the process of "forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men." Does this suggest that philosophers should also be teachers, school administrators, policy makers, or curriculum specialists—or vice versa? Not necessarily. Philosophy as it is conceived by Dewey, however, is in no way exclusive to philosophers or the academic field of philosophy. But perhaps the more significant take-away from Dewey's conception of philosophy and education is that philosophy necessitates art in general; that it is itself an art. The "consistency of response" and "whole perspective" philosophy endeavors to achieve is an attempt to develop experience as *an experience*, integrating its dynamics into as inclusive an aesthetic as possible. It compels a heightened awareness of the meanings within experience and active participation in those interactive processes which realize and cultivate them. It compels communication, community, and the humanization of our institutions to the end of nurturing our fundamental need for meaning.

The methodological import of philosophy for learning and the affairs of life-experience pertains to this aesthetic appreciation and reconstruction of situations. We navigate the dynamics of concrete situations in all their indeterminacy and ambiguity by choosing—if only implicitly—to respond to certain aspects of them. By doing so, we selectively denotate or point to features which thereby function as the relative limits which determine the meaning of that situation *as a situation* which *situates* the experience. This is paradigmatic of all inquiry, but the peculiarity of philosophical inquiry is its critical concern for the relationship between events and value—in *appreciating* the conditions and consequences which make an experience what it is. That is to say, its primary aim is wisdom; the artful *situation* of activity in response to as comprehensive and whole a perspective as possible. The project of wisdom, in philosophy and life generally, is an art in that its methods and material are necessarily provisional—unique to the qualities of individual, concrete experiences. Whereas knowledge functions as a tool that affords control over materials under certain conditions, wisdom is a situated receptivity and evaluative

response to conditions, thereby orienting activity and determining its meaning as a whole. Such methods, then, do not aim to define conditions of experience for explicit control—as with knowledge—but rather they question the meaning of those experiences in regard to the more expansive and inclusive context of growth, and therefore demand an aesthetic appreciation of experience in its irreducible plurality and polymodality; that is, an appreciation of the continuity of experience and nature *as* the temporal continuum of concrete situation.

Such meanings must be grasped in thought without reducing them to mere concepts, and so the arts of wisdom depend on denotation or pointing to "things" to preserve their context; things whose significance is a function of *the way they are experienced*. This manner of philosophizing and inquiring Dewey referred to as the denotative-empirical method.

5.2 The Denotative-Empirical Method

Dewey is well-known for his instrumentalism, or, his theory of inquiry or knowing. Dewey's theory of inquiry, however, is but one phase of his more encompassing project of recovering experience from the narrow interests of canonical Western philosophy, which he observed to be chiefly concerned with problems of knowledge and mind—with epistemology.[5] According to Dewey, such philosophies are guilty of committing what he called the intellectualist, or philosophic fallacy (1929, 21, 29); the conflation of the known and the real; the assumption that experience is primarily cognitive, or that all experience is also a matter of knowing. Dewey's instrumentalism itself was a critique of such intellectualist theories of knowledge, expressly rejecting the very notion of epistemic certainty.[6] It was an attempt to temporalize and contextualize "knowing" as the instrumental and provisional product of the strictly situational process of inquiry. Instrumentalism, however, pertains specifically

[5]Following Dewey, Alexander (2013, 4) suggests that much of what goes under the name philosophy is perhaps more accurately described as *philepistemy*.

[6]For a thorough analysis of Dewey's instrumentalism, or, his critique of technology, see Hickman (1992).

to thought and knowledge,[7] and, importantly, is a sub-category of his more general philosophical method.

Dewey's denotative-empirical method, or simply philosophical method, is offered as "a way of preventing philosophy from succumbing to 'intellectualism'; it is a way of putting 'knowing' in context and making 'experience' serviceable for the real philosophical project: wisdom" (Alexander 2004, 248). Dewey introduces the method in the first chapter of *Experience and Nature*, one of his most well-known works, yet it has for the most part been neglected or misunderstood by his readers (249). Dewey's writings are notoriously difficult to interpret, due partly to the fact that his terminology, although colloquial enough, connote specific meanings which differ conceptually from their typical usage within the field of philosophy.[8] Contemporary critics of *Experience and Nature* read Dewey's appeal to experience as mere subjectivism; a position Dewey's naturalism clearly rejects.[9] This prompted him to rewrite the first chapter again four years later in an attempt to clarify the nuance of his theory—arguably confusing the matter even more.[10]

The apparent failure of his rewritten first chapter doomed the denotative-empirical method to be misunderstood by generations of readers as a reification of the scientific

[7] cf. Personal communication to Corliss Lamont (1961): "Of course I have always limited my use of 'instrumentalism' to my theory of thinking and knowledge; the word 'pragmatism' I have used very little, and then with reserves."

[8] See the introduction to the second edition of *Experience and Nature* (Dewey 1929). Here Dewey expresses his frustration with the problematic terms central to his philosophy, such as "experience," which were always doomed to be misinterpreted, having already so much conceptual baggage. He considered replacing the word "experience" with "culture" in hopes that the latter would clarify what is meant by the former, although he recognized that "culture" too is not innocent. According to Dewey (2008c, 1:372) "were the denotative method universally followed by philosophers, then the word and the notion of experience might be discarded," but it is "necessary as long as philosophers seek to define reality … in terms of some selected features and not in terms of everything found in experience" (Alexander 2013, 59). "All cognitive experience must start from and terminate in being and having things in just such unique, irreparable, and compelling ways. And until this fact is a commonplace in philosophy, the notion of experience will not be a truism for philosophers" (Dewey 2008c, 1:378).

[9] cf. footnote at Dewey (1929, 16). Dewey explains that from points of view where a disembodied mind is taken for granted as primary, experience is regarded as private and subjective, and therefore untrustworthy. In the same chapter, Dewey makes an example of subjectivism in exposing the fallacies of intellectualist philosophy. See below.

[10] Both versions of the first chapter can be found in Dewey (2008c). For a thorough analysis of the differences between the two versions see Alexander (2004) or chapter two of Alexander (2013).

method itself, and thus a mere elaboration of instrumentalism:

> In the 1925 version of the chapter, Dewey stresses the non-cognitive aspects of experience and sees the denotative method as a way of bringing them into view. In 1929, in the effort to make himself better understood, Dewey uses the scientific method as an example of how experience and nature "get along." Dewey appeals to science at the very start and continues to do so at critical junctures. Readers who had been troubled about his earlier appeal to myth, magic, and dreams revealing nature would be reassured, Dewey must have reasoned, by seeing that his main point could be illustrated by science and the experimental method. This not only made him deemphasize the richer description, it also obscured his basic point and made it sound as if it were science—knowing—that "really" disclosed nature. The result was that Dewey was read as privileging science—a common and persistent misreading. (Alexander 2013, 60)

Dewey's emphasis on scientific inquiry was an attempt to bring the methods of philosophy down to earth; to keep it grounded in its oikos of human inhabitation and "at least weaken those verbal associations which stand in the way of apprehending the force of empirical method in philosophy" (1929, 1). It was an exposition of the fact that experience is primary, and that, concerning inquiry, it is not exclusive to the domain of natural science. For Dewey, science does not reveal essences, nor does it distrust experience and dismiss it as precarious or accidental. Dewey observed that modern empirical science was a practical affirmation of experience as the *paradigm of inquiry*, which was an evident challenge to the traditional viewpoints of philosophy, to whom the burden of proof had consequently shifted. Dewey was aware, however, of the capabilities of residual "superstitions" surrounding science to corrupt it into scientism, which, he admonished, privileges science as a subject-matter and reduces the empirical method to a glorified grimoire of spells.

Empirical science as a method of inquiry had established a legitimate presence in modern industrial society, which, for Dewey, represented a kind of revival of experience; an emancipation of experience from the intellectualist dominion of western philosophical traditions. His emphasis on empirical science was an appeal to this

revival, attempting to reveal the continuity between experience, quotidian life, scientific inquiry, and art in order to disclose the experiential foundations of philosophical method.

5.3 Philosophy as the Study of Life-Experience

Dewey's exposition of the denotative-empirical method critiques three important ways in which Western philosophy had disconnected itself from experience and nature: the separation of subject and object (of what is experienced and how), the exaggeration of features of known objects at the expense of qualities of objects, and the exclusive isolation of various types of selective simplification which are undertaken for diverse, unavowed purposes (1929, 31).

For Dewey (1929, 8), experience is "double-barreled" in that "in its primary integrity [there is] no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality." The trouble with philosophy, as Dewey saw it, is not that it is theoretical or analytical—that it makes subject-object distinctions—but that it has historically supposed these divisions are ready-made and real in-and-of themselves; that it has taken them as given and primary. The starting point of philosophical reflection, traditionally, has been this very duality of "subject-matter experienced and the operations and states of experiencing" (9), which, in fact, are rather the consummatory effects of prior and remote phases of reflection. These analytical divisions of experience are themselves man-made, yet they are taken-for-granted as natural or universal, obscuring their origin in the unreflective, primary qualities of immediate experience. "When objects are isolated from the experience through which they are reached and in which they function, experience itself becomes reduced to the mere process of experiencing, and experiencing is therefore treated as if it were also complete in itself" (11) as states and processes of consciousness.

Dewey's critique of this philosophical orientation is a central theme of his overall philosophy, namely, that when the connections among the refined and the primary objects—or raw qualities—of experience are obscured or neglected, our perspective

of the world is made indifferent to human interests. When secondary objects are considered fixed and final in themselves, they become "a source of oppression to the heart and paralysis to the imagination" (Dewey 1929, 11). All experience, then, becomes primarily a cognitive affair concerned with the explicable features of known objects, as opposed to the primary, yet indeterminate qualities of experience as it is had or undergone. In the Cartesian fashion, all non-cognitive modes of experience—physical sensation, affect, etc.—are thus teleologically bound to consummate in cognition as instances of knowledge if they are worth anything at all. The consequence of this orientation is a preoccupation with artificial problems pertaining to the systematic reconciliation (or rationalization) of the supposedly essential dualisms of its subject-object metaphysics.[11] It becomes a problem of putting together again the arbitrarily fragmented pieces of experience in a way that justifies their division in the first place. Presumed to be primary, fixed, and final, explaining and justifying these dichotomies and solutions to their false problems requires an appeal to principles, forces, or states which are external or remote and therefore inaccessible to ordinary, "accidental" experience. Thus, in the Western philosophical canon we observe a consistent reliance on tropes of essence, totality, permanence, unity, objectivity, and certainty.

Furthermore, these tropes are representative of the values of a leisure class preoccupied with the riddles of their own contrivance, being so relieved from the urgent necessity of dealing with actual conditions of experience as it is had. That is, notions of essence, permanence, certainty, etc., and the various intellectual and moral doctrines derived from them, are not empirical facts about the actual conditions of nature and human being, but are, in fact, values or desiderata converted into the "given" or "antecedent and final features of a reality" (Dewey 1929, 28). They indicate where the philosophizing class has conflated reality with what it considers to be of superior value; where it has committed the philosophic fallacy: the conversion of eventual functions—values, desires, etc.—into antecedent existence (29). Matters of selective emphasis turn into matters of *necessity*; objects of choice into objective facts or self-evident truths.

[11] According to Dewey, Western philosophy's preoccupation with the problem of knowledge, with epistemology, has been a chronicle of its struggle to settle the impossible mysteries that ensue the dichotomies of mind and body, nature and experience, etc. For a thorough and detailed account, see Dewey (1920).

Dewey illustrates this point through a subjectivist account of a chair. In such a view, "experience" is reduced to the traits connected with *the act of experiencing*—in this example, the act of seeing the chair in question. Therefore, to experience a chair is to experience "only a few of the elements that go to make up a chair, namely the color that belongs to the chair under these particular conditions of light, the shape which the chair displays when viewed from this angle, etc." (1929, 16):

> These qualities, which define the act of seeing when it is made an object of reflective inquiry, *over against what is seen*, thus become the chair itself for immediate or direct experience. Logically, the chair disappears and is replaced by certain qualities of sense attending the act of vision. There is no longer any other object, much less the chair which was bought, that is placed in a room and that is used to sit in, etc. If we ever get back to this total chair, it will not be the chair of direct experience, of use and enjoyment, a thing with its own independent origin, history and career; it will be only a complex of directly "given" sense qualities as a core, plus a surrounding cluster of other qualities revived imaginatively as "ideas." (Dewey 1929, 17)

Subjectivism, then, compels the "recognition of an object of experience which is infinitely other and more than what is asserted to be alone experienced," selecting only a portion of the actual experience to the "deliberate omission, *for the purpose of the inquiry at hand*, of what is experienced" (Dewey 1929, 17). Thus, in subjectivism "reflective analysis of one element in actual experience is undertaken; its result is then taken to be primary; as a consequence the subject-matter of actual experience from which the analytic result was derived is rendered dubious and problematic, although it is assumed at every step" (18).

Displayed in this example are the crucial features of Dewey's critique of intellectualist philosophy from which his denotative-method diverges. A dichotomy between subject and object is presupposed—between what is experienced and how—and the features of the object *as it is known* are selected at the expense of the other qualities of objects as they may be immediately or directly experienced. This selection of features is taken for granted because they are considered givens, and it is therefore

unaccounted for in the process of inquiry. That is, the *method*—the means by which the material of experience are used toward some end—in this case, selectively emphasizing features of experience, is excluded from the process of inquiry. The act of selection is implicit during every phase of inquiry, and conditions it throughout, yet it is not considered a contributing factor in that process.

This thought experiment demonstrates the crucial problem concerning method in philosophy as Dewey saw it: philosophizing that begins not with experience neither ends with it. As Dewey (1929, 6) observed, non-empirical philosophizing "fails to use its refined objects as paths pointing and leading back to something in primary experience" precisely because its refined objects are themselves perceived to be primary. Lacking an account of how method itself—the selective emphasis of features in experience–affects the subject-matters of experience, a non-empirical approach to philosophy is neither lucid about the generative conditions of its ideas in lived-experience—in culture—nor is it capable of making its refined objects serviceable to the end of enlarging and enriching ordinary experience. The reflective objects of such philosophizing become isolated details discontinuous with experience, and therefore, also functionally discontinuous with nature.

Selection, or choice, is an inevitability of experience. It is the heart-beat of mental life (Dewey 1929, 25). "Since we are creatures with lives to live, and find ourselves within an uncertain environment, we are constructed to note and judge in terms of bearing upon weal and woe—upon value. … Something to be accomplished, choice is genuine and manifest through action" (28). A philosophy which, rather than regarding the desired objects of its choices as antecedent and final features of reality, appreciates the operation of choice as a vital and meaningful orientation of experience is one concerned with the *study and service of life experience*. Its process is a *work* of art, in the fullest sense, as it integrates the subjective and objective materials of experience *as an experience*. It is an expressive realization of a way or ways of inhabiting a world; a dramatic development and individuation of those dynamics which situate life-experience.

Dewey's denotative-empirical method was an attempt to demonstrate how philosophy can and must be recovered from the impotent office of the *study of philosophy*

and function as a *means* for studying life-experience, actually contributing "to the common experience of man instead of being curiosities deposited in a metaphysical museum" (1929, 19). This method is a testament to the fact that "common experience is capable of developing within itself methods which will secure direction for itself and will create inherent standards of judgment and value" (38); a fact denied by so-called non-empirical philosophies.

This manner of philosophizing, it should be noted, like any other form of reflective analysis, "takes us away for the time being from the things had in primary experience as they directly act and are acted upon, used and enjoyed" (Dewey 1929, 19). The difference, however, is that the denotative-empirical method "is given as a method of disclosing experience without reducing it to a theoretical object" (Alexander 2004, 249). Either it begins "with 'experience in gross' and [notes] the features of the world in which it arises while bearing in mind the refined objects in which it may terminate," or it begins "with refined selective products and [works] from them back to the primary facts of life" (250).[12] It is meant to contextualize cognitive interests within the non-cognitive scope of life (252), whereby refined objects—methods, concepts, conclusions, etc.—may be verified by acknowledging the needs and problems out of which they arise and which they have to satisfy (Dewey 1929, 36). The crucial, distinguishing point being that, whether it is science, philosophy, art, or mundane quotidian intercourse, "the very meaning and purport of empirical method is that things are to be studied on their own account, so as to find out what is revealed when they are experienced" (2).[13] In short, it is a method for aesthetic receptivity

[12] Here Alexander is paraphrasing and quoting the original introductory echapter to *Experience and Nature*. cf. Dewey (2008c).

[13] Dewey's (2008c, 1:372) original yet ambiguous definition of the denotative-empirical method echoes this fundamental premise: "denotation comes first and last, so that to settle any discussion, to still any doubt, to answer any question, we must go to some thing pointed to, denoted, and find our answer in that thing." In a lecture from the same time period, Dewey (2008a, 13:389) explains, "to point, indicate, is ambiguous; may mean a direct act or the function of evidence. Denotation is the former, is non-logical. With reference to connotation, pointing means selecting the things which determine the meaning-content, 'intension' and the things to which meanings apply—extension. Denotation as direction of inquiry and experiment, search, is the essence of the empirical method. When search stops without detecting connecting links of things found, it is traditional empiricism. To follow up the search till connections are found is scientific, experimental empiricism." Denotation as "search," then, contrasts with the "'identification' of predetermined and recognizable objects or settled definitions" (Alexander 2013, 61).

and openness (Alexander 2004, 251).[14]

In stark contrast to the aforementioned non-empirical philosophies, the denotative-empirical method assumes no dichotomies between mind and body, nature and culture, subject and object, etc. The basic premise of this orientation is that inquiry must begin with experience as a testimony of the characteristics of natural events because it itself is a manifestation of nature (Dewey 1929, 19):

> Upon this basis, reverie and desire are pertinent for a philosophic theory of the true nature of things; the possibilities present in imagination that are not found in observation, are something to be taken into account. The features of objects reached by scientific or reflective experiencing are important, but so are all phenomena of magic, myth, politics, painting, and penitentiaries. The phenomena of social life are as relevant to the problem of the relation of the individual and universal as are those of logic; the existence in political organization of boundaries and barriers, of centralization, of interaction across boundaries, of expansion and absorption, will be quite as important for metaphysical theories of the discrete and continuous as anything derived from chemical analysis. The existence of ignorance as well as of wisdom, of error and even insanity as well as of truth will be taken into account. (Dewey 1929, 20)

Cognition, or any other mode of experience, does not constitute a basis for discriminating what is *real* (or *essential*) and what is not. More to the point, it is nature that is primary, not *being*, and so existence of a thing, even in idea, is evidence that it is naturally possible. "All modes of experiencing are ways in which some genuine traits of nature come to manifest realization" (Dewey 1929, 24) Even hallucinations, nonsense, and fantasy, regardless of their significance or worth, are no less real than established fact, so far as experience is concerned. "Illusions are illusions, but the occurrence of illusions is not an illusion, but a genuine reality" (20). Irrationality and incoherence may appear insignificant or pose a challenge to knowledge, but they can

[14] In this regard, Alexander associates Dewey's method with Delphic *gnosis* (2013, 56) and Buddhist mindfulness or *sati* (59).

only be understood as "less real" if the *known world* is regarded as *the real world* and the faculty of reason is considered the singular arbiter of truth.

In short, the objects of knowledge are not the whole world itself, nor is consciousness itself experience. Experience refers not only to the subconscious and unconscious dynamics and history of an organism, such as his biology, evolutionary traits, etc., but also refers to something "at least as wide and deep and full as all history on this earth" (Dewey 2008c, 1:370). For Dewey, experience is the cosmos, wholly continuous with nature, without exception. Expectedly, then, "what is really 'in' experience extends much further than that which at any time is *known*," (Dewey 1929, 20):

> In any object of primary experience there are always potentialities which are not explicit; any object that is overt is charged with possible consequences that are hidden; the most overt act has factors which are not explicit. Strain thought as far as we may and not all consequences can be foreseen or made an express or known part of reflection and decision. In the face of such empirical facts, the assumption that nature in itself is all of the same kind, all distinct, explicit and evident, having no hidden possibilities, no novelties or obscurities is possible only on the basis of a philosophy which at some point draws an arbitrary line between nature and experience. (Dewey 1929, 20–21)

Nature, in its infinitude of possibility, is anything but self-evident, and cannot be definitively accounted for by ideas *about it—being* does not equate *meaning*. If the opposite were true—that meaning and existence were identical, and values the same as events—then idealism would be the only possible philosophy (Dewey 1998a, 1:80). Moreover, if the world were constructed of discrete essences that self-sufficiently disclose their identity and significance as objective matters of fact, there would be no impetus for conscious experience in the first place:

> Mind in its individual aspect is shown to be the method of change and progress in the significances and values attached to things. This trait is linked up to natural events by recurring to their particular and variable, their contingent, quality. … The meanings that form mind become

> consciousness, or ideas, impressions, etc., when something within the meanings or in their application becomes dubious, and the meaning in question needs reconstruction. (Dewey 1929, vii)

Meaning and value are inherently unstable, because "the things that possess them are exposed to all the contingencies of existence, and they are indifferent to our likings and tastes." The meaning and worth of existences, of whatever kind, "endures" not because it is justified in reference to the truth of objects apprehended by reason, but rather because the mind *adapts*, finding in them "new meanings to be perceived and enjoyed" (Dewey 1929, 399).

"A sensitive and vital mental career thus depends upon being awake to questions and problems; consciousness stagnates and becomes restricted and dull when this interest wanes" (Dewey 1929, viii). Denotation is an attempt to be sensitive and responsive to the world beyond our ideas to adapt them intelligently; to understand "how 'Nature' is in human existence and how human existence is in 'Nature'" (Alexander 2004, 243); to disclose how experience and culture are continuous with nature. There is no substitute, however, for direct experience. "The having of experience, in fact, is ultimately 'indescribable,' and therefore 'must ultimately be 'pointed to' or 'shown'" (ibid.). In other words, the significance of an experience is intrinsic to the experience as it is *immediately had*, and is therefore incapable of being transmitted *conceptually* through mere analysis of its apparent properties.

The denotative-empirical method aims not to provide yet another conceptual stand-in for direct experience, nor does it exhaustively catalog all of its perceived features or properties. Generally speaking, it aims to cultivate awareness of the "world beyond our ideas of it" by noting how and why distinctions are made in the subject-matters of experience, examining "to what effect the distinction is made: how the distinguished factors function in the further control and enrichment of the subject-matters of crude but total experience" (Dewey 1929, 9). The "how" and "why" point to the temporal processes that constitute experience, to the conditions which mediate thought and the things to which it is in turn mediatory (397). The "how" and "why" of distinction, then, are a kind of discursive gesture, indicating the reflective criteria responsible for

generating the distinctions in question, while also disclosing the bearings or value orientation of the thoughts and actions they consequence.

Therefore, philosophy becomes a general criticism of criticism. It is a way of thinking through the thoughts that make up our cultural world, prompting a critical encounter with the discursive practices of discerning and refining value. "Its ultimate value for life-experience is that it continuously provides instruments for the criticism of those values—whether of beliefs, institutions, actions, or products—that are found in all aspects of experience" (Dewey 1929, ix).

5.4 Critique of Value

Criticism is not exclusive to philosophy. Conscious experience itself is basically critical, in that intelligently guiding action entails discerning among values. Philosophy is distinct among various modes of criticism, however, in its generality as a sort of criticism of criticisms. What is meant by value and criticism, however, should be clarified in order to understand philosophy's particular involvement with them.

From the perspective of Dewey's emergentist naturalism, conceptions of value as being external to existence and nature are completely arbitrary. The problem of value for philosophy, traditionally, has been superficial; namely, that of reconciling those aspects of experience it artificially isolates from natural existence conceived to be self-sufficiently mechanistic. It has been preoccupied with various definitions of the world of values and how it relates to the physical world. Presupposed in these views is a teleology of perfection, in which the ends of nature are necessarily good and beautiful and of a predetermined quantity and kind. The scheme is that things of true value are those which are more real, more intrinsic, and more refined or complete. Values, morals, tastes, etc., in other words, are universal—their standards are independent of the world in which they appear, for they are the necessary ends toward which tend those objects of experience meant to possess them.

Criticism in such a view becomes "judicial" or "legalistic,"[15] in which a critic arbitrates

[15] "Much criticism of the legalistic sort proceeds from subconscious self-distrust and a consequent appeal to authority for protection. Perception is obstructed and cut short by memory of an influential

between good and bad, ugly and beautiful in reference to some remote standard or supposed authority. Thus, such judicial criticism discriminates among what it assumes to be objective facts, "on the basis of general rules supposed to be applicable to all cases" (Dewey 2005, 312). A proposition that one thing is *more beautiful* than another, for example, is justifiable on the basis of appeal to objective truths, whereby the degree in which its beauty is intrinsic may be appraised. The presence of remote, objective standards for judgment, thusly precludes *appreciating* the qualities of those ends and goods as they are immediately enjoyed in experience, and rather submits them to a paradigm of quantifying and objectifying them as discrete phenomena to be defined and explained. Valuation, then, becomes a matter of rationalizing and accommodating values *in themselves*, rather than grasping their origin and function in experience to enrich it through their reconstruction and revitalization:

> Unfortunately such activities have infected the very conception of criticism. Judgment that is final, that settles a matter, is more congenial to unregenerate human nature than is the judgment that is a development in thought of a deeply realized perception. The original adequate experience is not easy to attain; its achievement is a test of native sensitiveness and of experience matured through wide contacts. A judgment as an act of controlled inquiry demands a rich background and a disciplined insight. It is much easier to "tell" people what they should believe than to discriminate and unify. And an audience that is itself habituated to being told, rather than schooled in thoughtful inquiry, likes to be told. (Dewey 2005, 312)

For Dewey, a naturalistic or empirical theory of value must "surrender the identification of natural ends with good and perfection," recognizing that "a natural end, a part of endeavor expressing choice, has no intrinsic eulogistic quality, but is the boundary which writes 'Finis' to a chapter of history inscribed by a moving system of energies." The consequence of this view is that natural ends are not limited to those events perceived to have consummated in a manner congenial to some assumed teleological

rule, and by the substitution of precedent and prestige for direct experience. Desire for authoritative standing leads the critic to speak as if he were the attorney for established principles having unquestionable sovereignty" (Dewey 2005, 312).

structure. "Failure by exhaustion as well as by triumph may constitute an end; death, ignorance, as well as life, are finalities." Within nature understood to have "only relative, not absolute, impermeability and fixity of structure, new individuals with novel ends emerge in irregular procession," making natural termini "as infinitely numerous and varied as are the individual systems of action they delimit" (1929, 395). These ends, or relative boundaries marking the consummation of events, represent the continual and mutual adjustment of interacting systems, not static features of an inherent teleological structure.

Values, goods, and ends in themselves, however, have no substance. They are the intrinsic qualities of events in their consummatory reference (Dewey 1929, ix). That is, value marks the culmination of histories, of processes, *as they are immediately enjoyed in unreflective experience*. Where traditional philosophies have required judgment and aesthetic appreciation to be modes of contemplation, capable of transcending into the world of values as such, Dewey rejects the notion that values are things in themselves readily available to thought and discourse. When values are pointed to or made the object of reflection, what is referred to are not the values per se, but rather their 'generative conditions and the consequences to which they give rise' (396).

However, Dewey cautions against conflating causal categories with immediate qualities. That is, the distinction of *objects* considered causal factors in the fulfillment of some end is not the same as the distinction of *values*. The reason for liking something has nothing to do with the "intrinsicalness or nature of the value-quality, which either does or does not exist." The causes for a thing being valued are not the value itself. Means and ends are *qualitatively* different—their difference is not one of degree of "immediacy or intrinsicalness of value-quality; it is a difference between one affair and quality and another" (1929, 397):

> Fulfillment is as relative to means as means are to realization. Means-consequences constitute a single undivided situation. Consequently when thought and discussion enter, when theorizing sets in, when there is anything beyond bare immediate enjoyment and suffering, it is the means-consequence relationship that is considered. Thought goes beyond immediate existence to its relationships, the conditions which

> mediate it and the things to which it is in turn mediatory. And such a procedure is criticism. (Dewey 2005, 397)

Values do not exist independently of experience—they are the qualities which pervade, orient, and color uncritical experience as it is had or undergone. Thinking and talking about values, then, is not the same as directly or immediately experiencing them. In reflection, values are experienced as *meanings* which simultaneously disclose reflective criteria which influenced the interactions that formed them and the potential interactions into which they may lead. Discursively they indicate the threshold between actual and potential; the consummation of forces which condition experience and therefore predispose it to some possible experiences over others. In traditional "aseptic" metaphysics, as discussed in the chapter three, values are conceived as stable, somehow existing preeminently as features of the cosmic teleology. Therefore, thinking about them, contemplating them, was to experience them directly. In such a view, values are their own sufficient causes. The reason for their being a value was presumed to be immediately self-evident. To put it differently, the value itself is the definite cause for objects, by whatever means, to posses it.

Dewey's theory of criticism intended to naturalize value, bringing it down to earth to be understood as a matter of experience like everything else in nature. In his view, values occur as the consummatory qualities of prior experiences; not paradigmatic, universal givens, but consequences (and conditions) of choice and action. They are, therefore, inherently unstable, because "the things that possess them are exposed to all the contingencies of existence" which are "indifferent to our likings and tastes" (Dewey 1929, 399). Due to the instability of values, sheer enjoyment of immediate goods naturally passes into criticism, or valuation, which is understood as "the question of the control of events so that it may yield, as ends or termini, objects that are stable and tend toward creation of other values" (ix). Criticism aims to "perpetuate more enduring and extensive values" (403); liberate and expand the meanings of which experience is capable (411), cultivating an aesthetic sensitivity and responsiveness capable of constantly uncovering in some object new meanings to be perceived and enjoyed (399). "Philosophy is and can be nothing but this critical operation and function become aware of itself and its implications, pursued deliberately and systematically" (403):

> It starts from actual situations of belief, conduct and appreciative perception which are characterized by immediate qualities of good and bad, and from the modes of critical judgment current at any given time in all the regions of value; these are its data, its subject-matter. These values, criticisms, and critical methods, it subjects to further criticism as comprehensive and consistent as possible. The function is to regulate the further appreciation of goods and bads; to give greater freedom and security in those acts of direct selection, appropriation, identification and of rejection, elimination, destruction which enstate and which exclude objects of belief, conduct, and contemplation. (Dewey 1929, 403–4)

This is not to say that philosophy assumes authority over value, nor does it mean that the category of good-and-bad "is supreme in its jurisdiction over intellectual life and over all objects" (Dewey 1929, 404). Dewey attempts to clarify what had been traditionally overlooked, namely, that the subject-matter of a belief (and disbelief) is itself a value-object; that the immediate goodness of belief objects "is both the obstacle to reflective examination and the source of its necessity" (406):

> The all-important matter is what lies back of and causes acceptance and rejection; whether or no there is a method of discrimination and assessment which makes a difference in what is assented to and denied. Properties and relations that *entitle* an object to be found good in belief are extraneous to the qualities that are its immediate good; they are causal, and hence found only by search into the antecedent and the eventual. The conception that there are some objects or some properties of objects which carry their own adequate credentials upon their face is the snare and delusion of the whole historic tradition regarding knowledge, infecting alike sensational and rational schools, objective realisms and introspective idealisms. (Dewey 1929, 404–5)

The fact that an object of belief is considered good does not reveal the reason for believing in it. It is a truism that whatever is accepted is also considered good. That the object of a belief (or a disbelief) is a good is a consequence of so many interactive conditions in which some phase of experience has terminated. The question of value,

of why something is believed or not, concerns this means-consequence relationship. It is not even a matter of truth or falsity about an object. Just because something is true does not mean that it is of value or that it *causes* belief—nor is the inverse true.[16] One need only look so far as mass and social media and the state of public opinion to understand this fact. If truth had absolute jurisdiction over value, then the facts of global warming, the efficacy of vaccines, the severity of COVID-19, or even the fact that the Earth is round would be indisputable. Of course, there are so many angles from which to approach that phenomenon. What is notable in the context of the current discussion is that truth in no way has a monopoly over value; that "the realm of meanings is wider than that of true-and-false meanings; it is more urgent and more fertile" (Dewey 1929, 410). "A large part of the goods of life are matters of richness and freedom of meanings, rather than of truth; a large part of our life is carried on in a realm of meanings to which truth and falsity as such are irrelevant"(411). This is not to deny the possibility or worth of truth, however. The point is that the actual conditions and criteria of what we consider good and valuable are not, necessarily, controlled by truth or the intellectual subject-matters of experience alone.

The emphasis on truth as a self-evident good is a habit of the intellectualist philosophical and academic tradition we inherit. This way of thinking isolates the subject-matter of intellectual activities from the scope of values and valuation; the subject-matter of aesthetic experience and immediate enjoyment from judgment (Dewey 1929, 406). Furthermore, such isolation of the subject-matters of experience effects in our taking for granted the institutional distribution of activities and interests as if they occupy their own exclusive domains. Science and art, for example, in their subject-matters appear to be irreconcilable polar opposites, when, in fact, as activities their problems are paradigmatically similar; "embodying intelligence in action which shall convert casual natural goods, whose causes and effects are unknown, into goods valid for thought, right for conduct and cultivated for appreciation" (407).[17]

[16] This fact is well-demonstrated by humorous or comical statements or occurrences. The very falsity of a statement, the juxtaposition of truth and untruth, or the non-sequitur quality of an act may be the reason for its being perceived humorously. Indeed, whole genres of humor, such as satire, are possible because truth is not a *necessary* condition of value; that value itself is immediate.

[17] "Science is itself but a central art auxiliary to the generation of other arts" (Dewey 2005, 26), "a function of the imagination in enriching life with the significance of things" (Dewey 1998a, 1:80). "It would be seen that science is an art, that art is practice, and that the only distinction worth drawing

Of course, there may be a natural basis for the distinctions among activities, but their *isolation* marks a discontinuity of experience and nature; a problem to be addressed through criticism:

> It is natural that nature, variegatedly qualified, should exhibit various trends when it achieves experience of itself, so that there is a distribution of emphasis such as are designated by the adjectives scientific, industrial, political, religious, artistic, educational, moral, and so on.
>
> But however natural from the standpoint of causation may be the institutionalizing of these trends, their separation effects an isolation which is unnatural. Narrowness, superficiality, stagnation follow from lack of the nourishment which can be supplied only by generous and wide interactions. … Over-specialization and division of interests, occupations and goods create the need for a generalized medium of intercommunication, of mutual criticism through all-around translation from one separated region of experience into another. (Dewey 1929, 409–10)

Therefore, "the need for an organon of criticism which uses knowledge of relations among events to appraise the casual, immediate goods that obtain among men is not a fact of philosophy, but of nature and life" (Dewey 1929, 409):

> Nothing but the best, the richest and fullest experience possible, is good enough for man. The attainment of such an experience is not to be conceived as the specific problem of "reformers" but as the common purpose of men. The contribution which philosophy can make to this common aim is criticism.
>
> No just or pertinent criticism in its negative phase can possibly be made, however, except upon the basis of a heightened appreciation of the posi-

is not between practice and theory, but between those modes of practice that are not intelligent, not inherently and immediately enjoyable, and those which are full of enjoyed meanings. When this perception dawns, it will be a commonplace that art—the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession—is the complete culmination of nature, and that 'science' is properly a handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue" (Dewey 1929, 358).

> tive goods which human experience has achieved and offers. … The more aware one is of the richness of meanings which experience possesses, the more will a generous and catholic thinker be conscious of the limits which prevent sharing in them; the more aware will he be of their accidental and arbitrary distribution. (Dewey 1929, 412)

Philosophy, *the love of wisdom*, as an activity is concerned with critiquing "beliefs, institutions, customs, policies with respect to their bearing upon good" (Dewey 1929, 408). It claims no authority over or privileged access to value, nor are its methods exclusive to philosophy as a discipline. Indeed, philosophy is not even exclusive to philosophers or academics. The difference between a highly developed and systematic philosophy and the critical judgments of everyday life is a matter of scope, *not kind*. The question of value and meaning pervades all aspects of human life, for this is what motivates life; what the Human Eros strives for. Value and meaning are not extraneously superimposed over the bare facts of life, nor are they particular to the arts or humanities or some other department of human activity. They are the common condition of human being *in and of nature*:

> Of necessity [man] acts within the world, and in order to be, he must in some measure adapt himself as one part of nature to other parts.
>
> In mind, thought, this situation, this predicament becomes aware of itself. Instead of the coerced adaptation of part to part with coerced failure or success as consequence, there is search for the meaning of things with respect to acts to be performed, plans and policies to be formed; there is search for the meaning of proposed acts with respect to objects they induce and preclude. (Dewey 1929, 414)

"The striving of man for objects of imagination is a continuation of natural processes; it is something man has learned from the world in which he occurs, not something which he arbitrarily injects into that world" (Dewey 1929, 421). Human existence occurs *as* nature; *of* nature, not just *in* it. Interaction is an inevitability of nature—not merely a linear chain of causation enacted through the actions of actors acted upon others, but rather the mutual adjustment of individuals and systems. "A world

characterized by qualitative histories with their own beginnings, directions and terminations is of necessity a world in which any interaction is intensive change" (434). Every interaction of nature changes it qualitatively, and it is to this dynamo of meaning we turn a critical eye to grasp *how we are* and *how we could be* in the world:

> When he perceives clearly and adequately that he is within nature, a part of its interactions, he sees that the line to be drawn is not between action and thought, or action and appreciation, but between blind, slavish, meaningless action and action that is free, significant, directed and responsible. (Dewey 1929, 435)

It is through intelligent critique that the casual goods of nature are recreated into intentional and conclusive goods of art, integrating knowledge and value; "turning assent and assertion into free communication of shareable meanings, turning feeling into ordered and liberal sense, turning reaction into response." But intelligence is importantly not a matter of faith, it is not automatic. There is no magical guarantee of its success, nor does it do anything unless it is actually tried. "The issue is one of choice, and choice is always a question of alternatives" (Dewey 1929, 437). Intelligence as *adaptation* compels us to dream; not just to have dreams (i.e. goals), but to feel, to wonder, to see, to have the audacity to speculate what is possible:

> As long as we worship science and are afraid of philosophy we shall have no great science; we shall have a lagging and halting continuation of what is thought and said elsewhere. As far as any plea is implicit in what has been said, it is, then, a plea for the casting off of that intellectual timidity which hampers the wings of imagination, a plea for speculative audacity, for more faith in ideas, sloughing off a cowardly reliance upon those partial ideas to which we are wont to give the name of facts. (Dewey 1998a, 1:80)

5.5 Wisdom & the Worth of Wondering

Philosophic inquiry as criticism, as it has been discussed here, is paradigmatic of all conscious experience in general and learning or growth in especial. All conscious experience affords at least a minimal degree of lucidity or meta-awareness about the dynamics which make the situation at hand the unique situation that it is, for conscious experience is a response to or readjustment of those very dynamics; that is, it is inherently critical and imaginative. Responding to a problematic situation necessitates a critical awareness of the apparatuses which are either brought into question by the problematic or which are utilized to resolve it. Of course, the scope of awareness is dependent on so many factors, but when mind is stirred to action, it notably does not arise independently of the conditions which situate its response—including the problematic factors considered "environmental," but also the myriad transactions which *are* the mind. It is precisely because the mind itself is the embodiment of so many local and remote transactions that whatever is involved in its activation is also involved in its adaptation.

To illustrate this idea, a reasonable analogy can be made to the lenses of a microscope. Although they themselves are not viewed when observing objects *through* them, they determine how the objects are observed. Because they are so entailed in the activity, they may for whatever reason become the conscious focus of subsequent phases of the process. For example, the need for a different focal depth to observe a specific specimen may draw attention to the function of the lenses in the activity, opportuning an evaluation of their utility.

"Consciousness" is the shifting focal center of the expansive field of experience, and in the process of some activity, whatever is involved—the "instrumentation," the setting, the mood, etc.—may be brought to attention. This is not to say that everything in experience may become an object of knowledge, nor that consciousness penetrates Truth. On the contrary, intelligence is not exclusively cognitive, but also aesthetic and moral. The point to note here is that nothing involved in conscious experience exists in isolation from it—the "what" of experience is never without a "how." As we saw in the example of the chair, it does not exist *primarily* as properties of extension,

density, color, etc. In experience, the chair itself is a complex matrix of meaning whose qualities are determined by so many prior phases of experience compounded in that particular encounter. Even the implicit, assumed, or taken for granted metaphysics or values that situate experience are still a functional part of *that situation*. The theoretical import of this is that there is no exception as to what is available to critique in experience, and, practically, that the ordinary material in the foreground of experience always includes clues into the background, however obscure they may be.

A learning situation, then, will always at least imply the background, and when the situation is critically and imaginatively engaged, a continuity between the background and the foreground of experience is creatively realized. Assimilation, or relatively passive "learning," uncritically appropriates the working metaphysical map of the background's generic traits, but learning that is active senses and evaluates the qualities of the situation, effecting in a critical awareness of how that map is referenced and authored in the process of activity; how it is continuous (or not) with the more expansive horizon of meaning that is the background. At minimum, actively engaging a learning situation draws attention to how things are conditional, contextual, and situated—to what and how *that situation* means. That is, it is an evaluation, an appraisal, an estimation, or appreciative realization of the qualities of an experience, which, according to Dewey, is what distinguishes learning as growth from mere mechanistic assimilation, conditioning, or habituation.

As we have seen, the critique of value pertains not to the intrinsic qualities of things deemed good themselves, but rather to the conditions and consequences of their *valuing*. We may say, then, that all conscious experience, being paradigmatically critical, involves a minimum of adjustment of the *whole* situation—including, by association, the unconscious aspects of experience—for it is an imaginative appropriation of the present in terms of the conditions and consequences by which it is delimited. This will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter, but here it will suffice to say that this imaginative appropriation of the present is the mutual adjustment of the "old" and "new" in experience; the realization of potentialities in light of what is actual. Previous experience equips us with means for interpreting what is new in experience, but to accommodate these novelties is to recursively reinterpret the

"old" in experience. "Valuing is an integral ongoing phase of organizing situations and helps discern what features are to function as 'facts' within inquiry" (Alexander 2013, 79). In other words, values delimit the "boundaries" which define the present as a "thing" qualified by temporal tension—as a "history." To evaluate a situation is to locate its tensive dynamics within the temporal continuum of ongoing experience; to constructively narrate a situation. While the critical focus of conscious experience may be concerned with anything in particular, the net effect of this narrative adjustment is one of growth or continuity, for it develops the situation *as a situation*—as an individual whole "thing"—situated among other wholes in time.

Wisdom becomes a unique good in a world where nature and experience are continuous and continuity *is* growth; where learning *is* this development of situations in time. As the art of inhabiting the world by attending to the world (Alexander 2013, 76), wisdom manifests "in the relation of life to the world in which it is lived" (74) as a sensitivity and responsiveness to the dynamics of concrete situations. As a quality, wisdom is not something to posses and *use* for a particular purpose. Wisdom *qualifies the experience itself*, and is experienced as a sense of appreciation for how that experience is qualitatively integrated *as an experience*. Like any art, it is its *work*; that is, what it does in experience. Wisdom, then, is not an object of experience, but a way it is. Experiences qualified by wisdom are those which gain a kind of spontaneity or *holistic fluency*[18]—an acute situational awareness, an appreciation of how the world is in a given situation, and how it is in the world. Wisdom itself is intrinsically valuable, yet its insight influences all activity in the experience it enriches. In effect, it makes intelligent action more intelligent—intelligence being understood here as "action that consciously realizes ends that fund existence with reflective meaning and value" (73).

In this sense, wisdom is a perennial good of human life—of growth—for wisdom and learning are mutually conditioning. As one grows, experience becomes funded with perspective that liberates ideas and action. But for ideas and action to be *free*, it is not that they must exercise control over those conditions which would otherwise inhibit them—that they must transcend or eliminate them—but rather they must be novel responses to, or developments of those conditions as opportunities for growth.

[18] cf. Bruya (2010).

What is required, then, is an imagination capable of appreciating what is actual and potential in a situation, which in turn is qualified by a sensitivity and responsiveness to the dynamics of the world *of which* it is situated. In other words, ideas and action do not occur independently of the world, and so their relative freedom hinges on an ability to attend to, care for, and cultivate—or appreciate—the world they inhabit.

Life necessitates growth, but not just to achieve the minimum of survival in the world as granted. To live is to be interested in the world, and any effort to remain in it entails an openness to its possibilities. Even for plants, which we perceive to be "inanimate," life is an ongoing process of adapting to the world as it is encountered. Of course, this is not to argue the consciousness of plants, but their *experience* as organisms certainly involves myriad macro- and microscopic interactions. What we perceive as relatively "lifeless" static things, are themselves constantly negotiating with their habitat. A plant *grows*, it does not just persist in space and time, nor does it strive to achieve and maintain some ideal form of itself. Nothing is so basic and self-sufficient that it can simply be—not even nature itself. On the contrary, what something *is* is most fully disclosed in what it *does*. Whatever lives does something, therefore its existence is *interactively* qualified by some value, some perspective. This fundamental interactivity of nature means that living things cannot exist without being open to the potentiality of situations. In such a way, existence is an event; to be is to happen, and whatever happens is qualified by the unique conditions and consequences which situate it. Therefore, to live is to expect novelty, for adaptation is a condition of life and change or transformation a condition of existence.

For human beings, inhabiting nature *through* the complex interactivity of culture, this predisposition to anticipate novelty manifests as a fundamental desire or need to experience meaning and value in the world—the Human Eros. Arguably, meaning is a condition of human life, for without *meaningful* interaction with other human beings an infant cannot survive. To fulfill this need, however, is not simply to satiate desire, which is a perpetual force in human life. Human beings are fulfilled when experience is meaningful, which is not to be conflated with mere pleasure or diversion (which may be meaningful, of course). Fulfillment is a "*realization* of a deep meaning *of* the world *in* human existence" (Alexander 2013, 79). Fulfilling the Human Eros, then, involves developing arts of inhabitation—wisdom—for it is in the concrete ways one

inhabits the world that meaning is realized. It motivates, then, the life-long process of growth, or inhabitation; of continually experimenting with ways one can be in the world, and the world within oneself.

As the process of inhabiting and creating a habitat—a natural and cultural life-world—inhabitation eventuates the need to care for and attend to that very world through which meaning and value are to be realized and enjoyed. That is, care is required for a world to be inhabitable. It is not simply given for the taking. Moreover, the need to experience a deep sense of meaning and value in and of the world one inhabits entails a candid concern, or literal *interest*, for that world as an existence profoundly interdependent with oneself. In other words, for meaning to be sustained or effectively pursued, an appreciation of how we are in the world is as necessary as that of how the world is within us. The greater appreciation one has of her world, the more sensitive and responsive she is to the possible meanings to be seized by action in concrete situations. Furthermore, an appreciation of how one is in the world and how the world is in oneself matures desire, so to speak, for it affords a comprehension of the conditions and consequences of its object. To merely exploit the world as an infinitely other "thing" is to jeopardize its ability to be a home for human beings; or, more colloquially, it is to shit where we eat. Less the art of inhabitation, or wisdom, growth is severely inhibited; learning is enfeebled. A critical situational awareness is necessary if learning is to exceed mere habituation, assimilation, or conditioning. This critical imagination must appreciate and appraise the aesthetic integrity of situations, evaluating the worth of a good—either finding new meaning in it or adapting or abandoning it.

The point of learning is not to acquire knowledge that will enable one to merely control his environment or function within it (including the seizure of opportunities). Any degree of control which knowledge leverages over the environment is always provisional, and the fantasy of escaping the precariousness and uncertainty of nature is irredeemably utopian. Learning is more generally and expressly concerned with wisdom, for inhabitation is always a matter of mutual adjustment; not something that is done *in* the environment, but also *of* it. That is, "the world" does not begin where our bodies end. Inhabitation is always a realization of that continuity, and therefore eventuates the need for a genuinely critical openness to the dynamics and limitations

of the world. "Criticism is moral, involving the active disposition of curiosity and receptivity to discovery, a generosity toward the play of free possibility the world can offer. To inhabit the world is not to dominate or renounce it, but to play in it, learn from it, care for it, and realize the beauty of its meanings" (Alexander 2013, 101).

Learning and wisdom, then, are reciprocal—learning as an activity is primarily philosophical, and philosophy, as the loving search for wisdom, is primarily concerned with matters of learning or inhabitation. "Philosophy reflects our human embeddedness in the world. It offers the possibility of responsible inhabitation in pursuit of ecological wisdom. To inhabit the world is to have the habits that make one at home, the wisdom of the environment" (Alexander 2013, 101). The search and service of wisdom necessitates learning that begins and ends in wonder and appreciation of the world; learning that is a critical adjustment of the world in which it is embedded or *inhabitates*. Wisdom is not a passive ability, nor a magical, esoteric power. It is actively and intelligently appropriated or embodied in a concrete situation. Wisdom *lives in learning situations*, for it is through the creative development of continuity that the world may be attended and responded to.

As we saw in previous sections, philosophic method begins and ends with experience, which is to say that its modal priority is an aesthetic encounter with situations rather than a definition of them. Philosophic inquiry *must be* an exploration of primary, non-reflective experience because "every empirical situation has its own organization of a direct, non-logical character" (Dewey 1916b, 5–6). It is precisely this aesthetic appreciation, or "appreciative realization," that makes learning—and by extension, living—anything more than mechanical (Dewey 1916a, 276). Such appreciation, as we saw in the previous chapter, either accommodates or problematizes the values and metaphysical assumptions which predispose experience, or culture. If we consider culture to be the *material* and *ideal* in their reciprocal inter-relationships, then the tensive nexus between the ideal and the real may be seen as *the* human concern (Alexander 1987b, 71). Learning, growth, or world-making inhabitation, then, is the imaginative exploration of and direct participation in the dynamics of this basic tensive aspect of nature:

> "Culture" is the shared life of human beings on the earth as it is appro-

> priated in terms of meaning and value. "Experience" designates this relationship and "metaphysics" will attempt to describe it in its most general features. "Nature" will provide the material of "culture," and "culture" ("experience") will be an exploration of the possibilities of nature. Nature will not be something that is "hidden" by culture any more than the nature of clay will be hidden by the art of pottery. (Alexander 1987b, 71)

The significance of this is that learning in the nature-prime philosophy of ecological humanism is itself continuity—the growing together of situations, whose impetus is this perpetual tension between the modalities of actuality and potentiality in nature. In other words, from the point of view of nature, learning *is* continuity. The growth of an individual is the realization of a continuity in nature at large; or, an individual is herself the individuation of a continuity among material and ideal conditions of nature. The growth of an individual, any individual or event, is a growth of nature in general and of a concrete situation in particular; the effect of which is the mutual adjustment of transactional wholes radiating out into time and space.

Chapter 6

Learning & Living as Art

In the previous chapters we sketched an eco-ontological metaphysics of learning distinguished by the principle of continuity. Continuity is growth in the most general sense, and to inhabit the world is to grow with it. "Growth" is not the mere addition or accumulation of structure, but "the tendency of natural processes toward the establishment of a consummatory history," which is why, as Alexander (2013) observes, Dewey illustrates continuity primarily in terms of the aesthetic (99). The consummation of experience, as *an experience*, in an aesthetic is the very telos of experience (Alexander 1987b, xiv), as well as the paradigm for conscious experience generally. Therefore, learning that is genuinely growth occurs primarily in the domain of aesthetic experience. It is, in the fullest sense, *artistic*—a process of aesthetic appreciation and production.

In this chapter we will examine what is meant by the idea of learning as art; learning as the artful inhabitation of the world. To get at the significance of the aesthetic in learning, we will first review some of Dewey's key points about art and experience while paying special attention to their implications for a theory of learning. We will then consider the cultural and social significance of art in general and learning-as-art in particular

6.1 Continuity, Aesthetic & Art

Because the very process of living involves an interaction between a "live creature" and environing conditions, experience occurs continuously (Dewey 2005, 36). It is only when a continuity is *established* that experiences become individuated *as* experiences, which is to say that an experience becomes distinct as *an experience* integrated among other experiences when it reaches a point of fulfillment, or consummation in Dewey's idiom. What is significant about an experience being consummatory is not a cessation of activity—that the experience itself ends—but that its constituent materials and phases are unified by a developing quality that pervades the whole experience making it *that* experience and no other. In contrast, bare action and occurrence do not in themselves constitute an individual experience of an aesthetic quality:

> [In] much of our experience we are not concerned with the connection of one incident with what went before and what comes after. There is no interest that controls attentive rejection or selection of what shall be organized into the developing experience. Things happen, but they are neither definitely included nor decisively excluded; we drift. We yield according to external pressure, or evade and compromise. There are beginnings and cessations, but no genuine initiations and concludings. One thing replaces another, but does not absorb it and carry it on. There is experience, but so slack and discursive that it is not *an* experience. Needless to say, such experiences are anesthetic. (Dewey 2005, 41)

An aesthetic experience is reconstructive. Its continuity is not merely an addition of more "experience" on top of what came before, nor a juxtaposition of isolated events, but a refactoring of those constitutive elements into *an experience*; a re-imagination of them through the developing situation and one's interest in it. Consider the process of writing a poem. The selection of individual words, phrasing, or register is a continual reworking of the whole piece. The words that make up the poem are not simply aggregated within stanzas on a page. What makes them poetic, what gives them aesthetic integrity as a poem, is how they qualify each other in the development of a whole experience, of the work itself. The same is true for a reader of the poem.

Reading each word in isolation from each other would make little sense, and would certainly inhibit the reader's ability to appreciate the sense that integrates the words as a poem. "While in most experiences the unifying qualitative sense of the whole, which ultimately constitutes the horizon of meaning, is left tacit, in *an* experience this is consciously apprehended and realized so that the *sense* of the experience is the presence of its meaning, felt as a guiding, controlling, qualitative unity pervading all the various parts in their variety" (Alexander 1987b, 202–3). This relationship between the whole and its parts, the quality which pervades and unites a process and its consummation, is the source of all meaning, and grasping it is the objective of all intelligence (Dewey 2005, 46).

We may begin to see the severity and urgency of Dewey's admonition that learning is mechanical conditioning unless it begins with such an appreciative realization. Here in Korea, for example, school education is dominated by the eventual, fateful event of taking the college entrance exam. The socio-economic utility of doing well on this exam is so high that its contents and criteria become the de facto priority of schooling; so much so, in fact, that extracurricular, private education is a multi-billion dollar industry.[1] A consequence of this is that the importance of preparing for these exams eclipses the interests and life experiences of individual learners, practically justifying and normalizing cramming as a necessary means for ingesting the sheer volume of material required to succeed. The net effect of this is that the more education you receive, the less it has to do with learning and more with the accumulation of competitive "specs." This is a topic that will be explored more in the next chapter, but the important point here is that, ironically, learning that is genuinely growth becomes either an accident or a luxury in school education. Of course, in their work, students do learn and grow, but it is hard to imagine how appreciative realizations can initiate learning experiences when that activity is depreciated to the point of labor—laboring to complete a course or assignment, compete for the best ranking, or attain the best specs possible.

Of course, the de-prioritization of individual interest and primary experience is not a phenomenon exclusive to Korea. It is not difficult to see how the neo-liberal ad-

[1] In 2019, the total spending on extracurricular private education in Korea exceeded 20 trillion KRW, which is roughly equivalent to 17 billion USD. cf. ("2019 년 초중고 사교육비조사 결과" 2021)

ministrative imperatives of standardization and accountability in the public school system in the United States, for example, similarly reduce "learning" to a relatively assimilative process. The question is, what is the meaning of this sort of "educative" experience? What does it realize? The effect of such experience is not the mutual adjustment of inhabitant and habitat, but the assimilation of pre-determined conditions. Learners are made to accommodate their world rather than appreciate and therefore participate in its adaptation, and so the work that ensues in their school career becomes a series of events virtually insulated from the world supposedly external to and independent of them. Now, this is not say that such an education completely precludes agency, but it undoubtedly impedes its cultivation and expression. "Aesthetic experience is inherently revelatory in character. It acquires this property by organizing experience around our perceptions of the qualitative uniqueness of some object or situation. Through this reconstructive activity, a new dimension of the meaning of the human encounter with the world finds expression" [granger2006, 104], and so to the extent that education neglects the primary experience of learners it depreciates their individuality, virtually dispossessing them from their own inhabitation of the world.

The predominance of this ethos is a tragic waste of the potential of individuals and of society in general. "No matter the situational context, experience will fail to become art whenever intrinsic meanings or values are not allowed to emerge and develop in a perceptible and satisfying way" (Granger 2006, 103), and therefore where the activity of learning becomes reduced to a mere means in service to extrinsic ends it ceases to be artful. The creative development of potentialities in the situations one inhabits becomes displaced to the peripheral of activity at best, and entirely excluded at worst. It is hard to see how such "learning," which occupies so much of a young person's life, can be said to prioritize the growth of human life; the realization of its meanings and values.

The aesthetic of one's experience in the world makes all the difference. What is meant by "aesthetic," however, is not the acquisition of or conforming to some form or quality which makes an experience Aesthetic in the canonical sense. To recapitulate, the aesthetic is the continuity of an experience. It is, as Dewey (2005, 48) puts it, the "clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally com-

plete experience," which is to say that the aesthetic of an experience develops *of* its internal dynamics. Such dynamics are generic to every situation, every event or res, but the dynamics of a particular experience uniquely situate *that* experience. The emergence of an aesthetic through these situating dynamics is the "conversion of resistance and tensions, of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversions, into a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close" whereby the form of the whole is present in every member (Dewey 2005, 58). It is not an addition of some ethereal or otherwise external quality, but simply the way a given experience is; the way it feels as an experience. What is meant by aesthetic, therefore, does not exclude whatever is not perceived to be "beautiful" or pleasant, but is, rather, wholly inclusive of whatever is involved in the consummatory reconstruction of experience:

> I have emphasized the fact that every integral experience moves toward a close, an ending, since it ceases only when the energies active in it have done their proper work. This closure of a circuit of energy is the opposite of arrest, of *stasis*. Maturation and fixation are polar opposites. Struggle and conflict may be themselves enjoyed, although they are painful, when they are experienced as means of developing an experience; members in that they carry it forward, not just because they are there. There is, as will appear later, an element of undergoing, of suffering in its large sense, in every experience. Otherwise there would be no taking in of what preceded. For "taking in" in any vital experience is something more than placing something on the top of consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction which may be painful. Whether the necessary undergoing phases is by itself pleasurable or painful is a matter of particular conditions. It is indifferent to the total esthetic quality, save that there are few intense esthetic experiences that are wholly gleeful. They are certainly not to be characterized as amusing, and as they bear down upon us they involve a suffering that is none the less consistent with, indeed a part of, the complete perception that is enjoyed. (Dewey 2005, 42–43)

An aesthetic may terrify and depress as well as excite and inspire. Indeed, when we recall traumatic experiences, what unifies or individuates that experience as *an expe-*

rience—in spite of the particular way it feels—is an aesthetic quality which pervades and integrates all aspects of that experience, making it what it is. While the development or presence of an aesthetic in experience is not contingent on any particular *kind* of feeling, it is inseparable from feeling or emotion as such. Not only is it true that the aesthetic is primarily felt in experience—that it is perceived as the way an experience feels—but emotion is the "moving and cementing force" in the development of an aesthetic continuity in experience. Emotions themselves, however, are not self-sufficient things-in-themselves "as simple and compact as are the words by which we name them." Rather, they are qualities of a complex, transforming experience, and are therefore more accurately "qualifications of a drama" which change as the drama develops. In other words, "experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it" (Dewey 2005, 44). Emotion functions as the narrative thread through experience. 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. … [Emotions] enter into the settlement of every situation, whatever its dominant nature, in which there are uncertainty and suspense" (ibid., 45-46).

It is significant to note that because the aesthetic is so dynamically organized, every aesthetic experience has a narrative form; "it takes time to complete it, because it is a growth" (Dewey 2005, 57). This narrative form of the whole experience is present in all of its parts or phases, not just as a some final deposit abstracted from the process of its development. That is, each of the phases of a whole developing experience—its inception, development, and fulfillment—are not only mutual qualifications of each other, but also qualify every aspect of the subject-matter or whatever is involved in that experience becoming what it does. The aesthetic, then, is not a passive, inert material added to experience, nor is it merely an attribute acquired under certain conditions. It is an active, vital, and *interested* involvement in the qualities of experience; a creative and imaginative *grasp* of them. The important consequence of this is that "the nature and import [of an aesthetic experience] can be expressed only by art, because there is a unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience" (Dewey 2005 ,44). There can be no substitute for immediate experience. It cannot be felt for you, which is to say that the meanings and values realized in experience

can only be communicated through art. Art, in both its appreciative and productive phases, is the "revelation of what experience is all about," and so the absence of the aesthetic from experience, not its presence, is what needs to be accounted for (Alexander 1987b, 60). Expectedly, learning experiences are no exception.

6.2 Learning as Aesthetic Appreciation & Production

To get at what art is and how learning is itself art, it is important to clarify that the aesthetic and art do not exclude what are customarily considered to be primarily "intellectual" activities. The aesthetic "cannot be sharply marked off from intellectual experience since the latter must bear an esthetic stamp to be itself complete." In other words, no intellectual activity is *an experience* unless it is so unified by an underlying aesthetic quality; the lack of which makes thinking inconclusive (Dewey 2005, 40). This quality which pervades and unifies an experience "in spite of the variation of its constituent parts" is not in itself emotional, practical, nor intellectual in nature, "for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make with it" (38):

> In discourse *about* an experience, we must make use of these adjectives of interpretation. In going over an experience in mind *after* its occurrence, we may find that one property rather than another was sufficiently dominant so that it characterizes the experience as a whole. There are absorbing qualities and speculations which a scientific man and philosopher will recall as "experiences" in the emphatic sense. In final import they are intellectual. But in their actual occurrence they were emotional as well; they were purposive and volitional. Yet the experience was not a sum of these different characters; they were lost in it as distinctive traits. **No thinker can ply his occupation save as he is lured and rewarded by total integral experiences that are intrinsically worthwhile. Without them he would never know what it is really to think and would be completely at a loss in distinguishing real thought from the spurious article**. (Dewey 2005, 39) (emphasis added)

An experience of thinking, then, not only has its own aesthetic quality (Dewey 2005 ,39), but, as we saw in the chapter four, this quality is a general condition of thought itself. What we perceive of as the objects of thought—ideas—are not analytically discrete things-in-themselves having primarily "intellectual" form and import. "They are phases, emotionally and practically distinguished, of a developing underlying quality; they are its moving variations … [the] subtle shadings of a developing hue" (ibid.). It is because an aesthetic unity emerges among the diverse elements of thought that it is able to consummate in the form of a conclusion at all.

One barrier to our perception of this fact is that, because we perceive the consummatory products of reflection as having expressly instrumental or practical value, we tend to regard the activity of thinking as differing in *kind* from that of activities and experiences customarily understood as "aesthetic," such as "the arts." What distinguishes an "aesthetic experience" from *an* experience in general, such as an experience of thinking, is not the presence or absence of an aesthetic, but the particular concern for the materials involved in the experience itself. A distinctly "aesthetic" experience is an experience in which the continuity of the experience itself, the aesthetic quality which pervades and integrates it, becomes the overwhelming focus of the experience. The materials of interest are its raw qualities as they are themselves experienced—this is what the experience *is*. By contrast, a predominantly "intellectual" experience, although having an internal aesthetic continuity of its own, is marked by an interest in the reflective objects of thought that the aesthetic integrates and concludes. Experiences "having intellectual conclusion" involve "signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own, but standing for things that may in another experience be qualitatively experienced" (Dewey 2005, 39). This is not to suggest, however, that thought and its material are mutually exclusive with predominantly aesthetic experiences and art, or that thought is wholly uninvolved with the raw qualities of experience:

> It is not possible to divide in a vital experience the practical, emotional, and intellectual from one another and to set the properties of one over against the characteristics of the others. The emotional phase bind parts together into a single whole; "intellectual" simply names the fact that

> the experience has meaning; "practical" indicates that the organism is interacting with events and objects which surround it. (Dewey 2005, 56)

What differentiates experiences as predominantly intellectual or aesthetic, is not their content or subject-matter per se, nor their having to do with either thought or emotion exclusively. The difference may be summarized by saying that what an experience makes or does *makes* it the kind of experience that it is:

> The most elaborate philosophic or scientific inquiry and the most ambitious industrial or political enterprise has, when its different ingredients constitute an integral experience, esthetic quality. … Nevertheless, [these experiences] are dominantly intellectual and practical, rather than *distinctively* esthetic, because of the interest and purpose that initiate and control them. In an intellectual experience, the conclusion has value on its own account. It can be extracted as a formula or as a "truth," and can be used in its independent entirety as factor and guide in other inquiries. In a work of art there is no such single self-sufficient deposit. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself but as the integration of the parts. It has no other existence. A drama or novel is not the final sentence, even if the characters are disposed of as living happily ever after. In a distinctively esthetic experience, characteristics that are subdued in other experiences are dominant; those that are subordinate and controlling—namely, the characteristics in virtue of which the experience is an integrated complex experience on its own account. (Dewey 2005, 57)

It may be said that what an aesthetic experience "makes" is an experience, which is to say that its product and its process are a unity. Therefore, what is most distinctive of an "aesthetic experience" is its immediacy; the immediacy of its constituent parts and the pervading quality that integrates them as *an* experience. By contrast, so-called intellectual experiences, necessarily integrated by aesthetic qualities of their own, culminate in mediate objects or events which nevertheless may enrich and lead into an experience, but which in themselves do not constitute one. The trains of thought running throughout this paper, for example, integrate each other in an aesthetic

quality that provides the sense of their meanings. These meanings, however, are portable existences that may find their own careers in other trains of thought, other contexts, other theses. In other words, the concept of "learning as inhabitation" is a constellation of meanings developed and grasped aesthetically in the course of discussion throughout this paper, yet which does not in itself constitute an experience so immediate that it cannot be expressed except as the experience of reading *this* very paper.

It should be emphasized that it is not the case that an aesthetic experience is devoid of intellectual elements, or vice versa. Moreover, it is not the case that a work of art is unavailable as material for a distinctively intellectual experience, such as a critical analysis of the work. These are simply different experiences. The special point is that art is irreducibly its *work*; what it does in an of experience. "One can always reflect on a good work of art, for there is much more in it than is ever immediately or initially apprehended. But one reflects *on* the work because it is only through the textured surface of the work that its world is revealed" (Alexander 1987b, 202). A song may be analyzed, altered, covered, critiqued, parodied, explained, remembered, etc., but what it *is* cannot be reduced to any of these secondary experiences, nor to its material or digital recorded form. In summation, what makes experience art—or perhaps more appropriately, what makes it *artful*—is the embodiment of meanings within itself such that they are *immediately* enjoyable. It is this immediacy of meaning which makes art especially expressive. This is also why, for Dewey, "strictly intellectual art will never be popular as music is popular" (Dewey 2005, 39), and why "'science' is properly a handmaiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue" (Dewey 1929, 358); an art in its own right, contributing *material* for a more enriching and fulfilling experience of nature's qualities:

> Thought, intelligence, science is the intentional direction of natural events to meanings capable of immediate possession and enjoyment; this direction—which is operative art—is itself a natural event in which nature otherwise partial and incomplete comes fully to itself; so that objects of conscious experience when reflectively chosen, form the "end" of nature. 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 esthetic. 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 and meanings that are immediately possessed, suffered and enjoyed, come together in one. And all of these things are preeminently true of art. (Dewey 1929, 358–59)

In Dewey's naturalism, the significance of the aesthetic's immediacy can hardly be overstated. The aesthetic is the telos of experience, so to speak. The natural tendency of situations is to grow together, and this establishment of continuity is itself the consummation of experience in an enriched, aesthetic encounter with nature. Art in this view becomes the "complete culmination of nature," the fullest experience of nature toward which all human endeavour ultimately strives or contributes. Dewey observed that such an understanding of nature and experience as creative dissolves the familiar dualisms which superficially compartmentalize them and enfeeble thought and action: "the division of everything into nature *and* experience, of experience into practice *and* theory, art *and* science, of art into useful *and* fine, menial *and* free" (Dewey 1929, 358). That is, contrary to the classical compartmentalization of experience into the hierarchy of contemplation (theoria), practice (praxis), and production (techne), in Dewey's naturalism, in which nature is what nature does, all human activity is creative, a mode of techne, and is natively capable of becoming art. For Dewey, once creation is regarded as primary, and therefore paradigmatic of all vital experience generally, "it would then be seen that science is an art, that art is practice, and that the only distinction worth drawing is not between practice and theory, but between those modes of practice that are not intelligent, not inherently and immediately enjoyable, and those which are full of enjoyed meanings." (Dewey 1929, 357–58)

"Art, in other words, is nothing more than the quest for concretely embodied meaning and value in human existence" (Alexander 1987b, 269), which is to say that it is preeminently growth; the establishment of continuity of meaning, the fulfillment of the

Human Eros, the creative development of time. Art is the meaningful inhabitation of the present through the imaginative integration of the actualities and potentialities situating an experience. It 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" (Dewey 1929, 359). In other words, art is any activity that is simultaneously process and product, means and consequence, instrumental and consummatory (361); which is to say that any form of human activity has the potential to be artful. Art is in no way exclusive to "the arts," and is opposed not by "science" but by meaninglessness; or, routine and impulse:

> The limiting terms that define art are routine at one extreme and capricious impulse at the other. It is hardly worth while to oppose science and art sharply to one another, when the deficiencies and troubles of life are so evidently due to separation between art and blind routine and blind impulse. Routine exemplifies the uniformities and recurrences of nature, caprice expresses its inchoate initiations and deviations. Each in isolation is unnatural as well as inartistic, for nature is an intersection of spontaneity and necessity, the regular and the novel, the finished and the beginning. … Experience fails to be art … when the regular, repetitious, and the novel, contingent, in nature fail to sustain and inform each other in a productive activity possessed of immanent and directly enjoyed meaning. (Dewey 1929, 360–61)

Art is an active process of doing or making (Dewey 2005, 48). The "meaninglessness" of routine and impulse has to do with the disunion of the process and product of making; namely, the meaning of the activity being extrinsic to the activity itself. It is not just that artful making must be an integration of the stable and the precarious—the "old" and "new" in experience—but that when it is not, when the meaning of making or doing is not inherent to the activity, it does not establish a continuity of meaning such that the experience can grow into *an* experience. There is no reconstructive phase through which an aesthetic may develop in either a bare routine or brute impulse. Were the relatively static conditions of a routine and the consequences of an impulsive deviation from them to be perceived as mutually qualifying phases of a developing experience, a reconstructive opportunity through which artful activity can

originate may then present itself. But when we are unable to perceive how the phases of doing and undergoing reciprocate to develop an experience in a particular way, its meaning will fail to develop as an inherent part of the activity itself and default to whatever is available peripherally.

It is tempting to attribute a minimum of meaning to activity that is menially routine for its being "useful," for the task it completes or role it fulfills. But as Dewey admonishes, if we were to ask for what such an activity is actually useful, we would find in its consequence evidence to the contrary:

> We call them useful because we arbitrarily cut short our consideration of consequences. We bring into view simply their efficacy in bringing into existence certain commodities; we do not ask for their effect upon the quality of human life and experience. They are useful to make shoes, houses, motor cars, money, and other things which *may* then be put to use; here inquiry and imagination stop. What they also *make* by way of narrowed, embittered, and crippled life, of congested, hurried, confused and extravagant life, is life in oblivion. But to be useful is to fulfill need. **The characteristic human need is for possession and appreciation of the meaning of things, and this need is ignored and unsatisfied in the traditional notion of the useful**. We identify utility with the external relationship that some events and acts bear to other things that are their products, **and thus leave out the only thing that is essential to the idea of utility, inherent place and bearing in experience**. (Dewey 1929, 362) (emphasis added)

For something to have genuine utility, for its being useful to exceed supplying mere means to an extrinsic end, it must be meaningful. Meaning, however, entails a realization of interest, and therefore value, in the activity. It requires some degree of perception of the desire actively developing the experience; a perception not of brute cause-effect relationships, but a direct concern for the conditions and consequences through whose development the experience gains a particular value. A painting, for example, may be abstracted into an analysis of what series of physical events *caused*

the given art product, yet this would have almost nothing to do with the work itself—the experience of appreciating and producing it. It may contribute something to the overall appreciation of the work, yet it would not in itself be a perception of it. At any given point in the process of creating the work, the artist could have made different choices that would have resulted in an entirely different experience and an entirely different product. Her perception of the process is not just an execution of procedures to *cause* or produce a desired *effect* or product. It is an imaginative evaluation and experimentation with the conditions and potential consequences—or, mutually conditioning means-consequence relationships inherent to the unfolding activity—at every phase in the development of the experience; of the work.

This sensitivity and responsiveness, this imaginative play over the materials of experience and the free exploration of interest in activity are conditions for all meaning, and therefore function as the generic criteria of utility also. That is, whatever is really "useful" is a contribution to the liberation of thought and action; of interest and imagination. This is partly what makes art so special. Art's value is intrinsic, it cannot be subordinated to extrinsic ends for it would then cease to be art, yet for its enrichment of experience—as the fullest experience of nature, no less—it is perennially the most "useful." Now, this is not to say that anything that comes under the name of "art" is of profound significance, or that meaning is a static property something has or has not; that it is a stable good of nature. In fact, because the things in which we find value and meaning are themselves unstable, meaning and value are themselves provisional and vulnerable to the same fluctuations of situations as anything else. For this reason, too, meanings and values which either become renewed continually through successive, novel experiences or are so enduring as to persist across great stretches of time and space, are all the more significant. Of course, the same is true of the art in which these are produced and embodied:

> To be conscious of meanings or to have an idea, marks a fruition, an enjoyed or suffered arrest of the flux of events. But there are all kinds of ways of perceiving meanings, all kinds of ideas. Meaning may be determined in terms of consequences hastily snatched at and torn loose from their connections; then is prevented the formation of wider and more enduring ideas. Or, we may be aware of meanings, may achieve ideas, that

> unite wide and enduring scope with richness of distinctions. The latter sort of consciousness is more than a passing and superficial consummation or end: it takes up into itself meanings covering stretches of existence wrought into consistency. It marks the conclusion of long continued endeavor; of patient and indefatigable search and test. The idea is, in short, art and a work of art. As a work of art, it directly liberates subsequent action and makes it more fruitful in a creation of more meanings and more perceptions. (Dewey 1929, 371)

The immediacy and richness of meaning is what distinguishes art, and as Dewey was wont to emphasize, the distinction to be made is not between art and science, or "useful" and "fine" arts at all. What is important is simply the actual meaning of the experience as it is experienced; how enriching or thoroughgoing it is. The meaning of being a family, for example, is particular to the concrete experience of living in a particular family. There can be no catch-all for what it means to be a family. Every family is different, and every individual's experience of it differs from the next. This meaning can *feel* any number of ways, and it can be felt more or less at different times and in different situations. The meaning of family may be experienced more intensely and vividly in the wake of a family member's death, for example, than it is when ritually saying "I love you" to your mother after speaking briefly over the phone. But, of course, there is nothing about the latter which would exclude it from the possibility of being a profoundly meaningful experience. It depends on the situation, and art is the process of exploring, developing, and expressing the fullest meaning of situations as possible. Our innate need to experience meaning in the world provides the enduring impetus for all art, in whatever form, constantly pushing us toward the possibility of a more fluent and meaningful inhabitation of the world.

The connection to learning hardly requires drawing to be visible: learning is irreducibly art, and art is the zenith of growth and inhabitation. The special point to note, however, is that life is about so many things—so many different kinds of experiences are had, so many different things are learned, lives lived, dreams dreamt. These differing subject-matters and situations involved in vital experiences are practically different art forms, different media. Deducing a mathematical theorem, raising a child, surfing, learning a foreign language, etc., are all different experiences, dif-

fering in scale and scope as well as in the nature of their activities, materials, and the concerns involved. What unifies them in their special characters, as music and sculpture are unified as distinctive "arts," is the paradigm of aesthetic appreciation and production of meaning that distinguishes art in general. It is worth examining what this means and how it manifests in concrete learning situations.

First, it is important to note that the word art refers to activity that is both aesthetically appreciative and productive. Dewey draws attention to the fact that there is no word in the English language which "unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words 'artistic' and 'aesthetic' (Dewey 2005, 48). The awkward consequence of this is that, while"aesthetic" and "artistic" denote the appreciative and productive phases of an artful or aesthetic experience, it is easy to assume that these are two entirely separate things and reduce them to oversimplified concepts of "taste" and "skill," respectively. But given the nature of conscious experience as a "perceived relation between doing and undergoing" (ibid.), it is clear that art involves both appreciation and production in their reciprocal relationship. What is done and undergone—what is produced and appreciated, or perceived—are "reciprocally, cumulatively, and continuously instrumental to each other" (52):

> In short, art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience. Because of elimination of all that does not contribute to mutual organization of the factors of both action and reception into one another, and because of selection of just the aspects and traits that contribute to their interpenetration of each other, the product is a work of esthetic art. Man whittles, carves, sings, dances, gestures, molds, draws and paints. The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that *its* qualities *as perceived* have controlled the question of production. The act of producing that is directed by intent to produce something that is enjoyed in the immediate experience of perceiving has qualities that a spontaneous or uncontrolled activity does not have. The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works. (Dewey 2005, 50)

Whatever is "artistic" cannot *just* involve production, nor can it be reduced to the skills or techniques it employs. Likewise, whatever is "aesthetic" can be neither *just* a taste, nor a passive reception of an art product. What "artistic" and "aesthetic" denote are two mutually conditioning phases of an aesthetic experience; that is, "art" is itself a process of aesthetic appreciation and production. The conscious integration of appreciation and production, of doing and undergoing, is what makes art *art*.

It is easy enough to see how creation or production would involve aesthetically appreciating what is being handled in the experience, but it is less straightforward how appreciation actively involves production; how it is, in fact, creative in itself. This point is well illustrated by the difference between perception and mere recognition:

> Receptivity is not passivity. It, too, is a process consisting of a series of responsive acts that accumulate toward objective fulfillment. Otherwise, there is no perception but recognition. The difference between the two is immense. Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of an act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of a full perception of the thing recognized. It is arrested at the point where it will serve some *other* purpose, as we recognize a man on the street in order to greet or to avoid him, not so as to see him for the sake of seeing what is there. (Dewey 2005, 54)

Perception is an active looking or seeing—a seeking out of what is seen, so to speak—as opposed to a passive viewing. Of course, perception is in no way limited to sight. The point is that it is reconstructive, whereas recognition is assimilative. Recognition falls back upon a stereotype or previously formed scheme, whose details serve to identify an object and function as a kind of stencil for determining one's experience of it (Dewey 2005, 54). Recognigtion assimilates ready-made experiences of the things it identifies, triggering stock reactions to them. By contrast, perception is a conscious, and therefore imaginative, reconstruction of the thing as it is encountered. It indicates an *interest* and involvement in what is perceived, whereas bare recognition "is satisfied when a proper tag or label is attached, 'proper' signifying one that serves a purpose outside the act of recognition—as a salesman identifies wares by sample"

(Dewey 2005, 55). That aesthetic appreciation is active and involves a "productive" phase necessarily, is because receptivity to the dynamics of experience requires an active *response* to them:

> The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves surrender. But adequate yielding of the self is possible only through a controlled activity that may well be intense. In much of our intercourse with our surroundings we withdraw; sometimes from fear, if only of expending unduly our store of energy; sometimes from preoccupation with other matters, as in the case of recognition. Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive, not a withholding of energy. To steep ourselves in a subject-matter we have first to plunge into it. When we are only passive to a scene, it overwhelms us and, for lack of answering activity, we do not perceive that which bears us down. We must summon energy and pitch it at a responsive key in order to *take* in. (Dewey 2005, 55)

The crucial point to note is that appreciation is itself reconstructive; that it is creative. It is not enough, for example, to simply read the words of a poem or hear them recited. To grasp the work, to be moved by it, is to interact with it imaginatively—to respond to its internal aesthetic continuity. "To perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience" (Dewey 2005, 56), which is equally true for both the audience and the creator of a work of art. To produce a work of art requires an active appreciation of the materials to be handled, an openness to their peculiarities and possibilities—a sensitivity and responsiveness to them. But these do not present themselves self-evidently to experience. They are determined imaginatively through a situated exploration of one's interest in them as they are experienced. The artist produces a work, an experience, through such appreciative realizations, and to experience this work *as a work*, to appreciate the experience, requires that it be recreated according to her point of view and interest. Without actively appreciating experience, a work of art can be neither made nor perceived. "There is work done on the part of the percipient as there is on the part of the artist. The one who is too lazy, idle, or indurated in convention to perform this work will not see or hear. His 'appreciation' will be a mixture of scraps of

learning with conformity to norms of conventional admiration and with a confused, even if genuine, emotional excitation" (Dewey 2005, 56).

Of course, what has been said here applies not only to "the arts," but to any and all human activity. What prevents activity from becoming artful is a disproportion of either doing or undergoing in an experience, and therefore a failure to perceive how each phase qualifies the other to develop the experience itself. "As production must absorb into itself qualities of the product as perceived and be regulated by them, so, on the other side, seeing, hearing, tasting, become esthetic when relation to a distinct manner of activity qualifies what is perceived" (Dewey 2005, 51). When our doing is routine and mechanical, or when we are overstimulated by a situation, or merely endure it idly and passively, then there is no *work* to establish a continuity of meaning in that experience. Unless what is done and undergone are actively or consciously integrated, then there can emerge no perspective through which the experience is perceived as *an* experience, nor develop an aesthetic integrity to constitute a *work*.

This point is well illustrated in relation to learning. For example, drills and rote memorization or rehearsal function to reinforce an individual's ability to recognize and respond appropriately to whatever it is they are "learning"—be it musical scales, multiplication tables, etc. The aim is recollection of facts, which in itself, has no intrinsic worth. If rote memorization has any "utility," it is in service to some remote end—that it may be applied to some other situation. The focus of a drill or rote memorization is so narrow as to include only the abstract thing to be assimilated, that the experience as such and the way it is undergone become virtually irrelevant to the activity itself. That is, the direct experience of whatever those abstract ideas represent is superfluous to and out of scope of the form of the activity of memorizing and reciting material. Such a situation remains indistinct and drifts. It does not develop its own meaning through the interplay of what is done and undergone, and assumes the "meaning" of the criteria which have determined that the task must be completed. Another, perhaps more relevant example is cramming and the completion of assignments or modules—especially for a grade. When the work is just done, when its doing is just to get it done, then whatever is not essential to its completion becomes excluded for the sake of efficiency and economy of energy invested.

It is significant, however, that, while any activity may become artful, nothing simply is preeminently art. It takes effort, care, interest, and time to experience art; to create or appreciate its work. It takes energy, which, in consequence, means that the potential meanings of any experience cannot be exhaustively realized; that we cannot perceive everything all the time. Not only is it true that entropy makes this a practical impossibility, but even perception itself is a participation in the development of situations such that it contributes something to whatever is perceived. In some small way, even our appreciation of something in experience changes it. As a vital sensitivity and response to the qualities of a situation, aesthetic appreciation affects the situation to some degree—the way things are situated—thereby qualitatively altering the perspective itself; the percipient and what and how she perceives.

This point has especial relevance to learning. The prirority of "getting an education" or "being educated" in our educational institutions is a practical denial of the learning process as a work of art. More will be said about this in the following chapter, but the notable consequence here is that, in terms of our common sense concepts of learning and education, it is difficult to appreciate how the learning of individuals is a *creative* participation in what they learn; how the individual learning process is simultaneously a microscopic and macroscopic reconstruction. Of course, this is not to suggest that it is possible to be cognizant of the effects of one's actions that are remote in space and time. The important matter here is that what makes learning a genuine growing process in the first place, is its initiation in an appreciative encounter with the material of experience—which is itself a *creative* response to it. Her unique appreciation of what becomes vaguely present in her experience, the unique palette of experiences she brings to the situation to develop it, her particular interest in it, and its eventual meaning in the continuity of her life experience are all phases of significant transactional readjustment. Her growth is a growth of her habitat if even for the simple fact that it becomes a different world for her having changed within it. But to state this fact in this way obscures the crucial point that this mutual readjustment does not occur ad hoc; that it is not merely a virtual or theoretical change. It exists primarily in the concrete interactions of existences *as* their mutual adjustment. The transactional nature of existence is such that the change of an individual is also a change of the whole, without exception. In other words, given the constant

interactivity of nature, continuity is established in and of these interactions, not in addition to or superimposed on top of them. Learning is a creative participation in this process of realizing continuities in nature.

Before looking at learning and art macroscopically, it is worth examining in finer detail what is appreciated and produced in a learning experience; what is involved and entailed in that process. It may be tempting to assume that a learning experience is ultimately cognitive in nature, and that aesthetic appreciation and production have to do with mediate, reflective objects exclusively. Both learning and thought, however, are much more general than the narrow scope of cognition. If it seems that learning *must* be cognitive, it is because we have systematically preoccupied learning experiences with concerns, content, and methods that are predominantly cognitive themselves. If learning is a qualitative transformation of habitat-and-inhabitant, of experience, then it is hard to see how that process could be reduced to cognitive functions or to knowledge alone. As we saw in the previous chapter, thought itself includes much more than could ever be available as a cognitive object; that cognition is situated within a non-cognitive context through which its objects obtain their meanings in the first place.

But even if we assume that learning is a process of aesthetic appreciation and production, the fact remains that it may involve cognition and reflective objects. An especially instructive example may be learning mathematics. What is aesthetic or artful about learning cold hard math? Let us recall the previous point that art and science, or the aesthetic and intellectual, are not in opposition; that they are not mutually exclusive. In even an overtly aesthetic experience, such as in the production of a work of art, symbols may be involved in the intermittent mediation of the action that develops the work. Writing a poem, for example, may involve gratuitous invocation of symbols, and indeed, entire genres may crystallize out of that approach. The special point, we will recall, is the immediacy of meaning. The apparent conflict with the case of math is that its being overtly analytical and mediate seems to conflict with this requisite of meaning being immediate. In the process of learning math, or in any other predominantly analytical activity, what is aesthetically appreciated and produced?

There are several points to consider here. First, the consummation of an overtly analytical experience may involve and result in mediate objects, but the development of that experience and its products is paradigmatically aesthetic. It occurs within a situation which may only be grasped aesthetically. Even the most abstract factotum is realized in and of a process of appreciating and adapting the qualitative context wherein its meaning derives. It is through such a process that it may emerge as an idea at all.

The second point is that, the gross effect of consummation is a reconstruction of experience, which constitutes a fundamental shift in perspective; a growing together of situations. That is, experience originates and consummates *in* an aesthetic. The meaning of even an experience that is not overtly aesthetic, and which handles and results in mediate objects, such as "knowledge," abstract concepts, etc., *is* the consummation of such an aesthetic in a novel situation of experience. The mediacy of these ideas may allow them to be handled independently of *that* experience through which they were appropriated, yet the fact remains that their meaning is grasped through a qualitative background that *is* immediate—a background whose development expresses the unity of the process and products of that experience. These ideas may continue to be refined in subsequent situations, and the aesthetic of the original experience which produced them may be relatively thin and ephemeral, but importantly, the adjustment in which the appropriation of mediate objects effects is a qualitative reconstruction of experience whose aesthetic functions, at least provisionally, as a frame of reference for interpreting and applying these ideas in subsequent experiences. In other words, to learn even the most abstract of mathematical concepts, for example, is to incorporate it as part of the transactional whole one inhabits. It is a qualitative transformation of ones world, however minute; a transformation of the way it is felt, enjoyed, suffered, and encountered thereafter.

Lastly, it is important that even learning which involves highly formal analysis is a creative process. These ideas must be constructed—not simply assembled per the included instructions. They are built from the raw materials of experience using refined tools which derive from the raw materials of other previous experiences. Interaction with these materials in the raw requires an appreciation and integration of the mediate and immediate aspects of the situation in tandem. It is in this sense that reflection

is not only creative, but irreducibly and primarily a process of aesthetic appreciation and production. The high-level cognition involved in learning math is a phase of this broader, polymodal process in which things are imaginatively encountered, handled, and experimented with in relation to and as a development of the sense-giving qualitative situation through which their meaning emerges.

What makes art so special is that it is a direct experience and expression of meaning. In art, in the *work* of art, meaning is so immediately embodied in the experience that it is expressed with a richness and fullness that escapes statement and definition. In other words, art is an expression of meaning—a direct experience of it—as opposed to a statement of meanings, or, an indication of the conditions for an experience. We may wonder, then, what is expressed in learning experiences, especially where the subject-matter has to do with such statements of experiential conditions in the abstract. That is, if math, for example, is a statement of meanings, how can learning it be artful; what is expressive about the experience of learning math? Before exploring the more nuanced aspects of learning as an art necessary for answering these questions, it is worth clarifying the difference between statement and expression in order to understand what is special about what art *does* in the first place.

A statement of meanings "sets forth the conditions under which an experience of an object or situation may be had." It leads to an experience whereas an expression constitutes one (Dewey 2005, 88). Dewey illustrates this point with the example of a signboard indicating the direction of a town. The signboard itself does not supply the experience of the town, even vicariously, but only the conditions that must be met to be able to experience it; namely, that one must travel in a certain direction to reach it (ibid.). If one follows the directions stated by the signboard, he may "*have* in his own experience" (ibid.) some expression of the meanings of that place:

> We may have it to such an extent that the city has expressed itself to him—as Tintern Abbey expressed itself to Wordsworth in and through his poem. The city might, indeed, be trying to express itself in a celebration attended with pageantry and all other resources that would render its history and spirit perceptible. Then there is, if the visitor has himself the experience that permits him to participate, an expressive object, as

> different from the statements of a gazetteer, however full and correct they might be, as Wordsworth's poem is different from the account of Tintern Abbey given by an antiquarian. The poem, or painting, does not operate in the dimension of correct descriptive statement but in that of experience itself. Poetry and prose, literal photograph and panting, operate in different media to distinct ends. Prose is set forth in propositions. The logic of poetry is super-propositional even when it uses what are, grammatically speaking, propositions. The latter have intent; art is an immediate realization of intent. (Dewey 2005, 89)

This passage illustrates how, in art, meaning is an expression of what the experience *does*. The meaning or "expressive object" is itself an expression of how subjective interest and desire integrate with objective materials or conditions to produce *that* experience. *This* is the *work* of art. The meaning of what a gazetteer writes about this fictional town is a description or statement of objective conditions—a statement which relates to his individual experience only for his having observed and recorded them. Now, this is not to say that a statement is an enunciation of objective, factual reality, or that it discloses or expresses the inner nature of things (Dewey 2005, 88). The important point is that the statement of meaning is an account of experiential conditions, while the expression of meaning is a direct, creative experience, and is therefore a participation in making that meaning and experience what they are. An expressive object, therefore, is individual; a unique individuation of experience—a novel realization of its possible meanings—that is inseparable from the activity which develops and situates it. That is, the expression of meaning is neither a representation of an existence nor of a "universality":

> The juice expressed by the wine press is what it is because of a prior act, and it is something new and distinctive. It does not merely represent other things. Yet it has something in common with other objects and it is made to appeal to other persons than the one who produced it. A poem and picture represent material passed through the alembic of personal experience. They have no precedents in existence or in universal being. But, nonetheless, their material came from the public world and so has qualities in common with other material of other experiences, while the

> product awakens in other persons new perceptions of the meanings of the common world. The oppositions of individual and universal, of subjective and objective, of freedom and order, in which philosophers have reveled, have no place in the work of art. Expression as personal act and expressive result are organically connected to each other. (Dewey 2005, 86)

The statement of meanings, then, is a description of the relationships of existences, whereas an expression is a direct experience of an existence, of an event or "thing"—a situation or res. The statement that water is H_2O, for example, "is primarily a statement of the conditions under which water comes into existence. But it is also for those who understand it a direction for producing pure water and for testing anything that is likely to be taken for water" (Dewey 2005, 88). That is, what is experienced in the statement of water's chemical makeup is not water itself, nor its "essence," but an experience of water abstracted into a concept having a certain scope and intention in guiding or regulating thought and action.

The meaning of "water" stated as H_2O—and the very nature of the experience of this idea—differs fundamentally from the experience of water as it is expressed, for example, in William Carlos William's "The Red Wheelbarrow" (Appendix I). The meaning of water here is embodied in the very sense of the poem as a whole. The overall meaning of the poem, as an expressive object, is recreated through the reader's experience, acquiring a particular nuanced and textured expression through their own particular interpretation of the work. The words are the same for each reader, but the meaning they express depends on the concrete experience of the one appreciating them. The same cannot be said for the statement of the chemical makeup of water, which states conditions that do not depend on individual experience for their meaning. That is, the experience of the meaning stated by H_2O is mediate, or mediatory. To grasp its meaning does involve some active "participation" on the part of whoever perceives it, but the mediate nature of statement is such that its meaning does not derive from the concrete experience of that statement for the reason that it is not in itself *an* experience. Of course, one's experience of the statement may differ—such as that of a thirsty person encountering a sign reading "H_2O" that indicates the location of a water fountain—but the meaning of *that* experience had in response to the statement is distinct from that of the statement itself. To avoid convoluting the issue

further, suffice it to say that the expression of meaning is not a representation but a creation of existences that is individual while also communicable. Consider the meaning of water as it is variously expressed by other works of art, such as Homer's "The Gulf Stream" (Figure 6.1) or Katsushika Hokusai's "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" (Figure 6.2), or in Langston Hughes' poem, "Sea Calm" (Appendix II).

Figure 6.1: The Gulf Stream by Winslow Homer, 1899

To return to the matter of learning, specifically learning math, we may see that mathematics are statements whose meanings function to mediate experience. The generic function of mediate objects of experience, such as math, is like that of stepping stones—to lead experience into the consummatory experience of meaning. The meaning of a mathematical theorem, in its formal statement, may itself be mediate, yet my be realized in the eventual expression of a subsequent, concrete experience.

A particularly illustrative example of this is the life, work, and heritage of Pythagoras and his school. As Aristotle explains in *Metaphysics*, the Pythagoreans "who were the first to take up mathematics, not only advanced this study, but also having been brought up in it they thought its principles were the principles of all things" (Aristotle,

Figure 6.2: The Great Wave off Kanagawa by Katsushika Hokusai, 1831

n.d., I–5). Mathematical principles, particularly proportion, were of such significance to the Pythagoreans that they found expression in their art and music, in their ascetic lifestyle, and in their speculative philosophy. It may be hard to imagine how an entire way of life could be rooted in abstract mathematics, but what this is meant to demonstrate is that even the likes of "cold hard math" may find expression in creative learning experiences; that it can provide material for expression. The Pythagorean Theorem,[2] for example, states the proportional conditions of a right triangle, which has evident theoretical import for mathematics, but which also contributes to expressions in engineering, architecture, painting, etc. The meaning of the theorem, as a statement, is initially grasped aesthetically through some situating background of meaning, and while it is not expressive in itself, may contribute to consequent expressions as a mediatory or regulatory element of *that* new experience. Consider the different meanings of "gravity," for example, as stated by the law of gravity or expressed in a high-rise building, the kinetic painting of Jackson Pollock, or in the

[2]While the Pythagorean Theorem was already known and used in parts of Asia prior to its discovery in Greece, Pythagoras is credited with having introduced it to the Ancient Greeks (C. H. Kahn 2001, 32). The influence in Western civilization of the theorem as received from Pythagoras in particular is, of course, well-known.

rare experience of a spacewalk. A high-level understanding of gravity, among other things, is necessary to put a person in space, but undoubtedly takes on new meaning in the life of those who have experienced weightlessness in orbit.

The gist of the matter is that, whatever the subject-matter, the learning experience *itself* has its own meaning. To learn a mathematical principle, for example, is not only to grasp what is stated, but to heed its gesture and creatively *realize* its meaning in and of one's uniquely situated experience. *That* experience of imaginatively playing or experimenting with the potential meanings of what one encounters effects in an expression of how one's experience has been reconstructed to integrate that novel perspective. Even the most abstract principle does not exist as-is in the hearts and minds of those who learn it. It becomes incorporated within them, in their perspectives and attitudes, as a way they are in the world and what it does in their experience; including how it operates in one's perception.

There are several important points here which require some elaboration. First, the meaning of a learning experience is perspectival and individual. Whatever one learns is encountered at a uniquely individual cross-section of space and time, at a particular phase of one's lifelong growing process, or Vita Humana. The immediate meaning of a learning experience is expressed in that experience of the newly reconstructed perspective which is its process and its product. It can be said, then, that wonder is a generic trait of learning. A learning experience is *wondered* through, and the meaning it constructs is a renewed perspective whose very realization is an enriched perception of possible meanings in the world; or, wonder.

Another crucial point is that learning, or growth, is temporally complex; the perspective it affords is a re-seeing of the past and the future, so to speak. Such is the nature of continuity that growth is recursive; that is, the learning one does in the present is an imaginative reconstruction of the past and the future. What somebody learns today may become expressed over the course of their lifetime, taking on new meaning in different experiences and situations. As discussed previously, time is not linear, and growth is no exception. Learning takes time. A learning experience, while *an* experience, is not an isolated, discrete event. Events are always concurrences, and learning is the establishment of continuity among them. It is a kaleidescopic contin-

uum of situation that spans, incorporates, and transforms vast stretches of space and time. One particular learning experience may be relatively shallow and ephemeral, while others may ripple throughout one's lifetime—into her past and future—finding expression and renewal of meaning through myriad situations.

Finally, the temporal complexity of learning as art, as aesthetic appreciation and production, precludes the notion of inherent directionality. Of course, the absence of such a teleology is a distinctive feature of ecological humanism's nature-prime ontology. A term like "growth" may seem to suggest some kind of bearing along which learning takes place, or ought to, but rather it demonstrates just the opposite. Learning is not the accumulation or extension of structure and form, nor is it the gradual attainment of some ideal state. It is irreducibly a transactional recreation of existences—a kind of bootstrapping of realities. Not only does learning realize novel potentialities, setting a new bearing into the future, but this process is itself a *recreation* of the very past through which it grows and which conditionally situates the learning experience itself. This simultaneous reconstruction of the past, present, and future is like rebuilding the very scaffolding upon which we stand as we construct a high-rise skyscraper; or the simultaneously adapting our tools while they are applied in work. While this kind of *physical* "bootstrapping" is evidently impossible, learning or growth as a "bootstrapping of realities" is easy to dismiss as paradoxical if it is assumed that presence precedes how it is present in the first place. That is, where Being is ontologically prime, complex temporality cannot exist for Being itself is atemporal. If it is understood that nature is prime, that *being* itself is transactional, then the idea of learning as the creative development of complex temporality is uncontroversial.

This is a point to be further explored in the next chapter. The special point here is that this simultaneously recursive and prospective adaptation of the past and future, respectively, is a continual "renewal" of existence—an individuation of situation—that introduces novelty into the world. This novelty, as we saw in the previous chapter, is a cornerstone of the "reality of time" in a world where nature itself is transformation—both the modalities of actuality and potentiality—which therefore precludes the possibility of unchanging absolutes. The import of this novelty as concerns learning is that whatever directionality learning may have is either arbitrary or derived from the learning process itself. The net consequence, in other words, is

a thoroughgoing plurality of directionality and intention. An apt metaphor for this plurality, which I borrow from my late mentor, Dr. James Horton, is that of "many mountains, many roads." It is not that there is one mountain with one road to the top, nor one mountain with many ways to the peak. The plurality described here is one in which the metaphorical peaks of learning—the perceived aims—are themselves ways among other ways; or, in Dewey's parlance, ends-in-view.

This radically situated directionality should indicate that the value of learning as art is not that art is "good" and provides some extraordinary power or privileged status—that it achieves a step in the "right direction." If there is any reason to make a special plea to consider the artful nature of learning, it is because it is the zenith of experience, of our very existence. Its peculiar *good* for our cultural inhabitation of nature is that through art we encounter ourselves and our world most fully, which is to say that through art experience is most fully shared and communicated. Therefore, it is worth developing our aesthetic sensibilities—our sensitivity and responsiveness to the qualitative dynamics that situate experience—not only for our personal enjoyment, but for the sake of more fluent and cooperative inhabitation of the world.

6.3 Learning & the Common Aesthetic

The bootstrapping of realities through learning involves more than the "personal" or "private" experience of an individual. If we consider culture to be an "organized body of activities by which human beings are meaningfully present to each other," then we may understand art as the generic agent through which cultures, as "fields of communication … realize shared, participatory ends" (Alexander 1987b, 270). This concept of art as the paradigm of the cultural co-habitation of nature is at the crux of the famous Deweyan sentiment that learning is life itself; that social life is identical with communication, and that all communication and genuine social life is educative (Dewey 1916a, 6):

> To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one

> who communicates left unaffected. … Except in dealing with commonplaces and catch phrases one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience. All communication is like art. It may fairly be said, therefore, that any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it. Only when it becomes cast in a mold and runs in a routine way does it lose its educative power.
>
> In final account, then, not only does social life demand teaching and learning for its own permanence, but the very process of living together educates. It enlarges and enlightens experience; it stimulates and enriches imagination; it creates responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought. (Dewey 1916a, 6–7).

Through art, through the reconstruction of experience, we *communicate*[3]—we develop common aesthetics among ourselves through which we grow together and express some meaning of our co-habitation of the world. As Alexander (1987b) explains, "more is required for there to be a community than either mere physical proximity or working together toward a common end." Indeed, a machine may achieve as much. "Without the existence of communication, two human beings can hardly be said to be significantly present to each other" (270-271). Communication, in the sense described here, is achieved through a participation in expressive activity, in the co-creation and re-creation of expressive objects of vital experience. It is precisely through such aesthetic appreciation and production that we participate in culture; that we are able to imaginatively explore, adapt, and incorporate the ideals of our cooperative inhabitation of the world—our ways of life—in concrete situations and activities. The "cultivation" of our ways of living, then, is an ongoing learning process.

Of course, there is nothing automatic about this, nor is it the case that all communication that does occur is a peak experience. Profundity is not a condition of communication and expression, nor of significance generally. Furthermore, so much of

[3] "There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common" (Dewey 1916a, 5).

our communication originates in and consummates in mundane quotidian situations. This fact is of particular interest here. Communication of experience is the zenith of experience and constitutes the lifeblood of culture and civilization, but communication importantly involves a continuity of not only meanings—and therefore minds—but of bodies also. That is, while "works of art are the only media of complete and unhindered communication between man and man that can occur in a world full of gulfs and walls that limit community of experience" (Dewey et al. 2008, 110), the continuity of their meanings embodies a "communion at a primordial nonlinguistic, animal level," which is functionally the generic origin and background for comprehending all meaning (Garrison 2011, 301). The community of experience which is our cultural inhabitation of nature is, in other words, the manifold expression of aesthetics that integrate qualities, existences, and processes originating in all levels of experience; in the physical as well as the psychic. In spite of the often overtly linguistic component of communicative experiences, however, this aesthetic quality is not a reflective object:

> When intellectual experience and its material are taken to be primary, the cord that binds experience and nature is cut. That the physiological organism with its structures, whether in man or in the lower animals, is concerned with making adaptations and uses of material in the interest of maintenance of the life-process, cannot be denied. The brain and nervous system are primarily organs of action-undergoing; biologically, it can be asserted without contravention that primary experience is of a corresponding type. Hence, unless there is a breach of historic and natural continuity, cognitive experience must originate within that of a non-cognitive sort. (Dewey 1929, 23)

> The undefined pervasive quality of an experience is that which binds together all the defined elements, the objects of which we are focally aware, making them a whole. The best evidence that such is the case is our constant sense of things as belonging or not belonging, of relevancy, a sense which is immediate. It cannot be a product of reflection. (Dewey 2008c, 1:198)

As we saw in the previous section, our ideas about an experience are not the same as the direct experience of *that* aesthetic itself. These ideas, explanations, or descriptions are statements, not expressions. Of course, this is not to say that words or language are not expressive. The point reiterated here is that ideas which state the conditions of an aesthetic do not express the experience of that aesthetic to which they are auxiliary. This immediacy so emphasized throughout this paper has special import for our communion (and disunion) in culture, and demonstrates how profoundly meaningful art and communication can be. That is, the work of art is an immediate expression or experience of the way we are in the world, not just in *idea*, but in the fullest perception of our existential situation:

> A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live. This fact, I think, is the explanation of that feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling that accompanies intense aesthetic perception. (Dewey 2008c, 1:199)

Of course, not all of our experiences with culture involve such a profound sense of wonder and meaning. It is, however, significant that they can, and those aspects of life experience which inhibit this appreciation and production of common aesthetics, which prevent the fulfilment of the Human Eros, are what require account. Our meaningful participation in our culture is the all-important, generic process and product of learning, of inhabitation, and whatever manner of education we endeavor upon must realize this priority. Indeed, *this* participation in the aesthetic appreciation and production of culture, the ability to fluently and meaningfully inhabit one's world, is the very point of what "democratic education" denotes. In the view of ecological humanism, cvilization is the project of "democracy"—the "artistic appropriation of the ideal possibilities for human life, the creative endeavor to live with meaning and value" (Alexander 1987b, xx). Indeed, for Dewey, "democracy" refers primarily to community life itself:

> The idea of democracy is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified

> in the state even at its best. To be realized it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion. And even as far as political arrangements are concerned, governmental institutions are but a mechanism for securing to an idea channels of effective operation. … Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself. (Dewey 1946, 143, 148)

We may caution against the temptation to endorse all organization, institution, and group effort as preeminently "democratic." Indeed, there may be structures and mechanisms inherent to a system or institution which are fundamentally anti-democratic. Consider the typical corporate organizational structure of a school. The school is operated through a hierarchical structure in which the actual activities of learners have nothing to do with its operation overall; let alone with its readjustment or reform. It makes no difference upon the institution itself—which we may be tempted to erroneously call a community by default—if *this* or *that* child, in all her uniqueness, attends this school or not. Special accommodations may be made, to meet particular needs, for example, but these are relatively superficial. The school itself does not exist through the communication of individual learners—teachers included—sharing in its spirit, participating in its creative determination as a community. Individuals are temporary occupants or tenants at best. They provide the materials and the means through which the institution achieves the ends for which it is accountable.

The project of democracy, of democratic communication, is one of developing a "culture that is consciously aware of itself as a shaping and shapeable power." A school, and, of course, society at large, "must recognize itself as a creative project in which the need for critical self-reflection, re-evaluation, and exploration of the possibilities of life are of utmost importance. Such a culture must see itself problematically rather than ideologically" (Alexander 1987b, 272):

> [The idea of democracy] is an ideal in the only intelligible sense of an ideal: namely, the tendency and movement of some thing which exists carried to its final limit, viewed and completed, perfected. Since things

> do not attain such fulfillment but are in actuality distracted and interfered with, **democracy in this sense is not a fact and never will be**. But neither in this sense is there or has there ever been anything which is a community in its full measure, a community unalloyed by alien elements. The idea or ideal of a community presents, however, actual phases of associated life as they are freed from restrictive and disturbing elements, and are contemplated as having attained their limit of development. Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is in so far a community. The clear consciousness of a communal life, in all its implications, constitutes the idea of democracy. Only when we start from a community as a fact, grasp the fact in thought so as to clarify and enhance its constituent elements, can we reach an idea of democracy which is not utopian. (Dewey 1946, 148–49) (emphasis added)

There are several points to note here. First, democracy lives primarily in the domain of the commons, as opposed to the public.[4] Democracy *is* the "community which realizes itself or comes into being through the very ideal of fulfilled human existence." As Dewey emphasizes in the previous excerpt, democracy is not and never will be a "fact," it is an ideal. But this ideal is *realized*, or embodied, in the aesthetics which integrate the community as such in its diverse activities. In other words, "ideals are the integrating factors of a community, and a democratic community is one which defines itself in terms of the democratic ideal" (Alexander 1987b, 273). Therefore, secondly, to be so vitally realized, democracy requires continual problematization. "The full potential of experience to fund human life with meaning and value is an ideal always at peril because it is the highest ideal possible" (274). The perennial problem of democracy, then, is that of the community keeping itself "ideally present to itself"; that of keeping itself from "becoming hidden from the possibilities of the present or from its own inherently unfinished and problematic nature" (273).

[4] An interesting comparison might be made between Dewey's idea of democracy as communication and Elinor Ostrom's well-known work on polycentric governance and resource commons. cf. Ostrom (2010), Ostrom (2015).

The perpetual problematization that democracy requires is squarely a matter of art; of communication, learning, growth. Art "not only realizes the community in its fullest sense, as communication, but embodies in itself the very quest of the democratic community: the creative exploration of the fulfilling meanings and values of experience" (Alexander 1987b, 273). In other words, "democracy is a name for a life of free enriching communion. … It will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of free and moving communication" (Dewey 1946, 184). Problematic situations and the possibilities they reveal are perceived and communicated through the appreciative encounter and critical estimation of individuals. There can be no programmatic substitute for the *work* of art, not even if—as we saw in chapter three—art is enlisted to serve the cause of democracy. There is simply no substitute for having an aesthetic experience, in which creative, imaginative, and critical endeavor originates, and through which novelty is introduced to the world.

This problematization through art, however, is not a peculiarity of overtly democratic organization. Given the inherently tensive aspect of nature, that every thing or event is preeminently "problematic" for its being qualified by time—always astride the modalities of actuality and potentiality—our inhabitation of it is itself a continual effort to cultivate the energies of successive problematic situations into meaningful consummatory experiences. In other words, our learning or growth in and of the world is fundamentally this process of appreciating and creatively responding to the problematic dynamics of life situations for the fulfillment of the Human Eros. In short, it is art; "the quest for concretely embodied meaning and value in human existence" (Alexander 1987b, 269):

> The material out of which human life is built is "experience," understood in its Deweyan sense as that vast concurrence of natural events and cultural meanings in all their obscurity and power as well as in their focal clarity and luminosity. The tremendous task to be undertaken is to grasp the present—not as an immediate, isolated bare occurrence, as an indefinitely fleeting "now," but as the dynamically insistent occasion for establishing continuity or growth of meaning. Present experience stands for that whole complexity which establishes the human project as such. The "problematic situation" behind all problematic situations is just this ulti-

> mate task of creatively appropriating the ideal possibilities of the present which will illuminate action so that experience will consummately fulfill and enrich human existence. (Alexander 1987b, 269–70)

We see, then, that democracy and communication are achieved through learning experiences, because ultimately communication is this process of growing, cultivating, caring for, and inhabiting a common world; continually encountering and responding to its tensive dynamics. It should be clarified that this does not concede the premises of a "utopian optimism" or "romantic voluntarism." "Commitment to the aesthetic possibilities of experience necessarily requires the active presence of an alert, critical intelligence"—creativity is not realized by "faith or raw will" (Alexander 1987b, 274). The aesthetic encounter with the tensive aspects of nature, as present in some particular situation, importunes critical reflection. It arouses a critical sense about that situation, prompting a consideration of one's interest in it and an imaginative evaluation of its potentialities to develop it meaningfully. Reflection, in other words, originates and consummates in unreflective, aesthetic experience—it is wholly embedded within it. Its work, we will recall, is that of denotation; of encountering and disclosing the objects and conditions of experience without isolating them from the vital experiences from which they derive. The process of denotation is self-critical and self-reflective, recursively including itself as an experiential object in order to remain as aesthetically receptive as possible. Criticism, so understood, may not be the overt focus of every vital experience, but it is implicit in all creative activity (ibid.):

> Criticism confronts the problematic relationship of man and the world and of man and history in undertaking the understanding of culture. It can then become the continuation of the project called forth by the creative act or object. Every work of art stands in a tensive, ambiguous relation with its substance, whether it has achieved a revelation of the substance and communicated care for it. Criticism, in its concern with the working of the work, is also sensitive to this tensive dimension; it must seek to establish the relation of the work and the world. That is to say, it must pursue the question of the creative continuity of the work. Criticism can be and is legitimately concerned with questions of form. But

> it is equally concerned with questions of content, of historical interpretation, of interpretation itself, and with the relation of the work in all its dimensions to the world. … The final task of criticism is none other than the quest for community, for the elucidation of those values and ideals which create and bind a public together through a recognition of its fate and history as well as its inherent choices and possibilities. It is not so much that criticism is a function of "communities of interpreters" as it is the quest for community in which interpretation becomes a meaningful activity. (Alexander 1987b, 276).

Criticism, as we can see, is an inherent—if only implicit—phase of all creative activity, including learning. This critical aspect of experience, in its concern for the "working of the work" and establishing the relationship of the work with the world, reveals the inherently philosophical nature of inhabitation. That is, living and growing together in the world, cultivating and caring for a commons or habitat, entails an implicit concern for wisdom; an embodied sensitivity and responsiveness to the dynamics of situations. The very realization of meaning and value in the world, the fulfillment of the Human Eros, is itself a process of embodying in activity the wisdom of the world one inhabits. This sense of what is possible affords an awareness of "constrictions that hem us in and of burdens that oppress" (Dewey 2005, 361), which is to say that wisdom is realized as a critical sense about the disfluencies and discontinuities in the situation one inhabits; a vital appreciation of the tensive aspects of which it is astride. This sense finds expression in the concrete activities in which it operates, and is communicated through the aesthetic integrating those experiences.

Chapter 7

The Learning Situation

In our efforts to fulfill the Human Eros, we cultivate entire worlds of meaning. Participating in this ongoing experiment—this attempt to discern value and meaning in the currents of time—is how we can achieve more fluent and wise ways of inhabiting our world. Participation in the common aesthetic of the culture we inhabit is not only the general ideal of learning, but also its very process. An education which denies individuals and groups of this direct participation in their world—in its direct perception, experimentation, and reconstruction—is not a learning, or growing situation at all, but a stagnation or distraction of energies and interests whose unique contribution would otherwise make communication potentially more fluent and meaningful. Such an education arrogantly stands in the way of more liberated thought and action and more meaningful communication among human beings, for a community is not a form to which individuals must conform, but the form which derives through the very process of individuals communicating through their unique contributions to the expression of a common aesthetic. For this there is neither substitute nor exception.

In this chapter, I will attempt to disclose some implications of an eco-ontological metaphysics for education, particularly relating to the notion of continuity and transaction. First, I will discuss how this view problematizes our concepts of learning

and teaching by examining some common tropes about them, focusing in particular on their relevant metaphysical assumptions and the social milieu in which they consequence. Namely, I will argue that transmission and facilitation, when dualistically conceived, ironically enfeeble would-be educative experiences or learning situations, and that this conrtributes to the perpetuation of education as an industry and the commodification of learning in general. Second, I will provide an account of teaching and learning as phases of the transactional whole "learning situation." It is found that the learning situation itself is the "subject" of learning creatively realized through the transactivity of its participants. I will then conclude with an account of what such a transactional take on learning means for "doing" democracy; for so-called democratic education and the relationship between learning and the democratic ideal generally.

7.1 Transmission, Facilitation & Transaction

A familiar model of learning and teaching is that of education as the process of transmitting the knowledge, customs, and traditions of a civilization from its mature to immature members. For human beings, the process of transmission is a natural development of the basic social needs of human beings. Humans cannot exist in isolation of other humans. We exist and grow only *through* the care and communication of a community. The disparity in perspective among immature and mature members of a community is itself the impetus of formal and informal education, for to communicate as a community requires that members share in some common values and interests. Transmission becomes the de facto protocol for the regeneration of societies, so to speak, paradigmatically rooted in the fundamental caregiving relationship of parents and their young. Because our cultural inhabitation of nature necessitates transmission in some form—that the process of cultivation is basic to human life and the structure of our institutions—the transmission model of education dominates our concepts of learning and teaching, and the concrete forms it takes are easily taken for granted. It is not easy to envision alternatives, moreover, because whatever alternatives we may contrive must all in some way account for the fact that, having been raised by other, more mature humans, we are all predisposed to the trope of trans-

mission in some way. We might unconsciously expect that structure in our world. Even in a case of a neglectful home, for instance, the basic human need for nurturing still backgrounds the experience, and is at least minimally satisfied.

Some kind of transmission must occur if we are to continue living, individually and collectively, but the scope and mode of transmission is specific to a time and place and a people–to an ethos. Transmission can occur by force and coercion as much as by collaboration; by subjugation to an ideal as much as by the communication of one. The form transmission takes derives from the general socio-economic conditions of a society and the values embodied in the concrete activities which realize them. In a society having a relatively less complex structure, the direct association of its members in shared activities may suffice for the transmission of its traditions and technology, including knowledge. With the advance of industry, the specialization of technology, and an increase of significant interactions among diverse and geographically distant groups of people, education becomes institutionalized to accommodate the complex and diverse needs of that society to remain stable, cohesive, and functional through successive generations.

The theories and practices of education in contemporary society vary greatly by time and place—many of which are, in fact, highly critical of the "old school" transmission model of education. In spite of academic trends, however, in our post-capitalist, hyper-consumerized information society the trope of teacher-learner transmission evidently persists in various forms. Perhaps the most salient manifestation is the trope of learning as the acquisition of knowledge, information, skills, etc. We go to school to "get an education," to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue a desired career and achieve the lifestyle we desire. Knowledge is *what* we learn and teach; it is the immediate object and objective of those activities. An education gives us the power or privilege to do the things we want in life, or even to just attain the basic capabilities for making a functional contribution to society. The goods of education—its certificates, diplomas, social status, etc.—become implicit requisites for seizing the carrot at the end of the stick: "the good life."

The trope of knowledge acquisition is a controversial issue in education. While knowledge itself is an undeniably important aspect of education, and intelligence generally,

it is just that: *an aspect*. In spite of whatever poignant criticisms we may leverage against knowledge and the trope of acquisition, regard for knowledge as an object to be exchanged is not an easy habit to adapt for several reasons. The intellectual heritage of the Western academic tradition we inherit places a premium on knowledge, and today in the so-called informational age, we find the sense-giving context of the epistemological conclusions of rationalism and pseudo-rationalist empiricism renewed. This is compounded by the fact that knowledge, or "knowing," itself is how we literally grasp the "things" in experience and exercise control over them. The high estimation of knowledge is validated by its role in liberating thought and action, but as has been repeatedly emphasized, knowledge is not all there is to experience. The preoccupation with knowledge in education is symptomatic of views which either reduce experience to knowing, to conscious states, or regard intelligence itself to be a cognitive function. It is a symptom of learning understood instrumentally; as a means to ends external to particular learning situations themselves. This trope of acquisition is further exacerbated by neo-liberal paradigms and administration policies in the field of education—such as standardized testing, teacher accountability, privatization, commercial curriculum development, for-profit universities, etc.—as well as by consumerism generally.

Knowledge, and education in general, are highly commodified in the 21st century, and the value of learning—chiefly concerned with knowledge—is largely extrinsic to the activity itself and the interests of individuals and communities. What is to be learned, and what is feasibly pursuable, is more-or-less pre-determined by social and economic conditions. Of course, individuals have the freedom to choose their career, but what comprises that course of study is decided independently of the *actual* interests, desires, insights, and curiosities of the learner herself. The subject matter itself is given, standardized, and authoritative. A learner in pursuit of some goal to which such subject matters are the conspicuous means has no say over what is learned and how. There is no *need* to include variable individuality in this equation. What is necessary and essential to the pursuant career is transparent and explicit. A definite goal—be it a degree or career—has a definite procedure by which it shall be achieved. "Learning" involves connecting these dots, jumping through these hoops, and adjusting one's habits to accommodate just these conditions. Formal evaluation

"makes sense" in this paradigm, for the course is relatively settled, and thus it is reasonable to grade how well or not one is able to complete it and satisfy the given conditions.

Because the constitutive ends and means of "getting an education" are, in this way, relatively static, through "learning" we compete for and *earn* knowledge, skills, status, and certificates which can then be spent like currency to seize upon other goods and life chances. In a society animated by the desire for and expectation of profits and gains, this competitive and procedural model is necessary to ensure that new generations will be motivated to fill the ranks and carry out the operations necessary for a capitalist society to continue functioning with minimal resistance. The population must desire the opportunity to obtain a greater social status and achieve a more satisfactory lifestyle; the ability to enjoy the preferred goods of society. The desire for meaning may be innate to human life, but its object must be shaped to correlate with some aspect of the material conditions of one's society. Formal education is a means by which the values necessary for the formal regulation of socially congenial desire are institutionalized. Not only must the desires of individuals be made to more-or-less formally coincide with the functional demands of society, but a mechanism is required for determining how those resources—the desired ends—are to be distributed. The institution of education assumes this role by functioning as a program through which individuals earn the privilege to pursue access to preferable life chances by adapting their habits to the conditions of those ends. Ivan Illich (2002, 47) referred to this process as "prealienation":

> Alienation, in the traditional scheme, was a direct consequence of work's becoming wage-labor which deprived man of the opportunity to create and be recreated. Now young people are prealienated by schools that isolate them while they pretend to be both producers and consumers of their own knowledge, which is conceived of as a commodity put on the market in school. School makes alienation preparatory to life, thus depriving education of reality and work of creativity. School prepares for the alienating institutionalization of life by teaching the need to be taught. Once this lesson is learned, people lose their incentive to grow in independence; they no longer find relatedness attractive, and close themselves

> off to the surprises which life offers when it is not predetermined by institutional definition. And school directly or indirectly employs a major portion of the population. School either keeps people for life or makes sure that they will fit into some institution. … The New World Church is the knowledge industry, both purveyor of opium and the workbench during an increasing number of the years of an individual's life.[1]

The implicit organizing principles of this structure are those of stability and conservation—a preference for establishment over experiment; actuality over potentiality; dictation, policy, and protocol over communication. The institution of formal education, in this way, serves to maintain an even keel and preserve the winnings of those who have "earned" them. The goods of society, after all, would not be worth their wanting if they could not be kept and conspicuously enjoyed. So long as worth is a function of possession, then maintaining the status quo will always be implicit in society's processes of self-regeneration; that is, where material possession is the object of the game, preserving what is already possessed—private property—must be assumed to motivate playing the game in the first place.

This preoccupation with stability and the conservative adjustment of the establishment is, to some extent, a natural trait of any complex system. The current global warming crises is an apt example of how rapidly changing variables in a system can destabilize the entire system itself and jeopardize the very existence of individual "parts" which cannot accommodate the sudden change of conditions. If a system is unable to accommodate the quantity *and* quality of adaptations within itself, it will, at least in part, be destroyed—literally de-structured. To continue functioning as a system, it must remain structurally stable. But does this morally obligate us to prioritize the status quo and yield to the conditions and demands of established practices? No, it does not. Stability is not a given, original state to be preserved, it is something

[1] What is ironic here is that Illich is well-known for having predicted the internet in his idea of "learning webs" intended to replace formal education in a "deschooled" society (cf. chapter six of (Illich 2002)), yet the internet of the 21st century facilitates the gross asymmetry of the division of learning in society at the hands of a surveillance technocracy. This is especially relevant now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in millions of students having to submit to surveillance through the compulsory use of proprietary surveillance platforms and devices, such as Google Classroom, Chromebooks, etc., in order to even attend school.

we achieve. To morally justify culture by appealing to the need to maintain a stable society per its received traditions, values, structures, etc., is to ignore the irreducibly plural reality of affairs in favor of a narrative congenial to the desires and interests of those least inclined to investigate methods of meaningfully reconstructing society. It is, ironically, to avoid adaptation. Evading the inconveniences of real conditions is a false economy. **How could deliberate ignorance[2] achieve a sustainable, stable habitat for human beings, let alone the ecosystem generally?**

The takeaway is that not only is growth reconstructive—that it is a kind of *bootstrapping*, or restructuring of the structures upon which it depends—but also that growth is not a given. Negation of the status quo alone cannot guarantee growth or any kind of positive transformation of conditions. Indeed, negation is a phase of reconstruction—an explicit account of what must be eliminated. Negation is capable of destabilizing monolithic social practices to allow positive changes in their stead. But negation alone does not disroot those practices, values, or structures by default. It is not the case that we can simply dispose of unwanted aspects of our culture and society. They will grow back or mutate in the shadows and cracks of whatever we build. The only way to effectively address the deep, structural problems of culture is to problematize them; not simply reject them, but make them vulnerable to creative intelligence by naming and exposing them through expressive arts of communication. In plain sight, their threat to the habitat can be immediately communicated, and their presence can be creatively responded to. Such responses to undesirable "bugs," so-to-speak, become preemptively "eliminated" in a kind of refactoring of the source code of the reconstructive program. We become capable of growing *through* them because they are so included (but not enabled) in the reconstruction process.

There cannot be a simple method or procedure for achieving this, however. The medium of communication—the method of reconstruction—must be derived from concrete conditions and materials. As we saw in the previous chapter, this process is, without exception, one of continual problematization through expressive, communicative arts. It requires an imaginative appreciation of conditions, and the sustained

[2]It should be noted that ignorance, as it is used in this context, is not opposite knowledge, but appreciation. It is not just a lack of knowledge—a lack of definition—in experience, but a lack of imagination. It is a lack of sensitivity and responsiveness to the more inclusive, plural dynamics of a situation to develop.

focus and care to realize an expressive response to them through a qualitative transformation of objective conditions. This theme of creatively responding to the tensive aspect of situations characterizes all growing situations—all learning situations. Before exploring this claim further in the next section, I will first examine one more common trope of education.

Since the early twentieth century, the concept of education as transmission and the trope of learning as knowledge acquisition have been continually problematized. Teachers are no longer (supposed to be) yard-stick wielding disciplinarians, and in some circles it is a matter of debate whether or not teachers should even *teach* at all. More informed and robust theories of human development have rendered the majority of traditional "old-school" methods obsolete, and in the space of that problematic, the very concept and aims of school education have become the objects of much inquiry and experimentation. A familiar development of this problematic is the trope of teacher-as-facilitator; or, education as facilitation.

The trope of facilitation is a consequence of humanist psychology constructivist theories of knowledge. If mind is of social origin, and knowledge is not a representation of reality, but rather a social construction itself, then the work of education must involve that process of constructing and accommodating schemata through the direct association with others in shared activities. The practical emphasis of education shifts from the content or subject-matter itself to the process through which it is accommodated, or "psychologized," to borrow Dewey's term. Knowledge in this milieu is not the kind of thing that can simply be transmitted—it is no longer a representation of a corresponding objective reality or even a mental state. It is closer to Dewey's concept of knowledge as the active process of "knowing," in that it is always situated and therefore historical. Knowledge does not exist atomically in a vacuum, and neither does learning occur independently of real conditions. Even what is already *known* by others must be actively constructed by a learner, who necessarily depends upon her existing schemata to make sense of it in the first place. The learning process *is* this process of adapting and accommodating schemata in concrete situations.

In this paradigm, the individual needs and interests of the learner are primary concerns, and the development and implementation of methods for satisfying these in

meaningful learning experiences is the main object of teaching. A teacher no longer presents material for learners to accommodate, but rather facilitates their own efforts to ask questions and experiment with potential answers. Their work is that of guiding learners by providing support in the form of stimulation and resources that will help develop the experience toward meaningful closure. This may come in the form of a curriculum or pedagogy developed in consideration of the interests and capabilities of the learners, scaffolded modules, or improvised collaborations with learners in situ.

Like any theory of education, the actual implementation of facilitation is context-specific. Its actual practice depends on so many environmental variables, such as the constraints of given policies and standards, school culture, availability of resources, rapport among learners and facilitators, etc. While facilitation is a promising alternative to traditional models in that it provides a more robust account of learning as a situated, interactive process, it remains vulnerable to the same social and economic factors that reduce education to the rehearsal of routines. The problem is that facilitation may just as readily facilitate the status quo as much as it does the self-directed learning of individuals. This is not to say that facilitation is itself an affirmation of the status quo, but rather that it is capable of assuming the dichotomies and hierarchies of the status quo,functioning as an instrument for conserving the interests of established social structures; of accommodating the implicit directionality of the institutions through which it operates. Facilitation may provide a better picture of the dynamics of educative experiences and how to engage them from the point of view of a "teacher," but its involvement and interest in those dynamics may be determined by extrinsic conditions. Any *method* of facilitation must make choices about the ends and means of a developing learning situation, but there is nothing about its internal logic which prevents it from facilitating ends that are relatively static and remote to the immediate conditions of that situation—actual or potential. Certainly, facilitation is capable of challenging the status-quo, but that is not built into the method per se. For facilitation to *work* it does not require considering the expansive scope of a learning situation as it extends and intersects with a broader horizon of cultural activity. It is perfectly acceptable for learning situations to be self-contained, isolated incidents in the controlled environment of the school.

Concretely, what facilitation *facilitates*—from the point of view of constructivism—is the adaptation and accommodation of schemata. It performs this function well, but it *may* be indifferent to the values of which it becomes instrumental. Within the neoliberal ethos which dominates our social institutions, this is acceptable and preferred. If the underlying protocol of our work is to keep an even keel, then it is appropriate that our tools be "neutral" to the work they do. But this is a fantasy. There is always a choice involved; a value assigned to the variables which determine the parameters of the activity itself. It is simply a question of who gets to choose, and if tools are imagined to be value-free—if stability and conservation are a priority, and therefore functionally provide the default values for variables in learning situations—then we can expect that this phase of education will occur outside of and prior to concrete learning situations. Indeed, such a *learning* situation is not a *growing* situation at all. The illusion of neutrality works in favor of the establishment. It will always default to economy, efficiency, facility, and therefore it will privilege custom, conservation, and establishment over experimentation and problematization; effectively stagnating the would-be growth of the situations it *neutralizes*.

A case could be made, I think, for a concept of facilitation more consistent with what Rogers had in mind—one that can instigate a critical awareness of the hierarchies and values operating in the situation by appealing to the "realness" or candor of the teacher himself:

> Learning will be facilitated, it would seem, if the teacher is congruent. This involves the teacher's being the person that he is, and being openly aware of the attitudes he holds. It means that he feels acceptant toward his own real feelings. Thus he becomes a real person in the relationship with his students. He can be enthusiastic about subjects he likes, and bored by topics he does not like. He can be angry, but he can be sensitive or sympathetic. Because he accepts his feeling as *his* feelings, he has no need to impose them on his students, or to insist that they feel the same way. He is a *person*, not a faceless embodiment of a curricular requirement, or a sterile pipe through which knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. (Rogers 1970, 287)

This excerpt illustrates facilitation's potential to facilitate both genuine, self-directed growth as well as the implicit internalization of extra-experiential directionality. From the point of view of this paper, facilitation *works* when understood as trans-activity; that is, when facilitation is understood as a phase of a learning situation. The hierarchies and dichotomies of teacher and student are dissolved only when understood as vital processes within a primary system whose growth *is* the subject of learning. This will be explored in more detail in the next section, but the point to stress here is that facilitation makes sense only when it itself is understood as learning—when facilitators are primarily learners—and when that learning is a genuine exploration and *communication* of interest unencumbered by expectations and obligations alien to the activity itself. From the point of view of the *whole* learning situation, the distinction between facilitator and learner is arbitrary and functions to determine the purpose and conditions through which the situation is to be controlled and developed. The determination of some individuals as facilitators or teachers and others as learners or students, as is typical in explicitly "educational" activities, is a structure assumed on the basis of some values or obligations remote to the actual learning situation itself. It is an indication of learning made instrumental to some end. Of course, a teacher-student distinction may be relevant in some certain situation, but this logic is not innate to learning situations generally. Outside of "educational experiences" where we are likely to assume this structure, it is clear that learning and teaching are not specific roles to be assumed for real life situations to grow of their own accord, but are rather the dynamics of a situation that is growing. In an ordinary conversation, for example, there is nothing about "conversing" itself which requires that the roles of "speaker" and "listener" be made explicit. Participants speak and listen in succession, or at the same time, in the course of the conversation is it develops. Indeed, we would not even recognize a situation which differentiates between speaker and audience to be a "conversation." Similarly, a so-called educative experience or learning situation is a situation that is itself *learning*, or growing. It is not a situation predicated on the qualitative transformation of "learners" in a particular given direction; a direction embodied in the role and influence of the facilitator or teacher.

The hierarchy of teacher and student is so deeply habituated in our common sense

that even when we attempt to minimize the power and authority of the facilitator, as in the above excerpt's appeal to candor, we still attribute too much to facilitation, especially as a role to be fulfilled in explicitly educational settings. It is true that there exists a qualitative *and* quantitative difference among advanced or mature learners and novice or young ones. Even after living in the world for a decade, there is still so much about the world that is beyond the comprehension of a child. However, this may only be perceived as a deficit from a point of view that assumes a *supremacy* of the adult or expert position; that it constitutes an objectively more valuable or real perspective, which may then reasonably determine and control the directionality of learning experiences in general. But the "fuller reality" of the whole situation is that which includes the perspectives of both the novice and the expert; what they both know and what they both do not. To be clear, the immediate concern of learning exceeds questions of truth and falsity, which, as we noted in previous chapters, is a subset of meaning in general, for learning is a matter of living in the fullest sense. In a given situation involving an adult and child, the fact that the adult perceives dimensions of the world of which the child is oblivious and incapable of perceiving, and which the adult holds to be true, is a matter of indifference in so far as that perspective does not immediately enrich that of the child. Their communication is not predicated on the child's appreciation and acknowledgement of the adult's view as "better" or "right." The view of the novice is not less "right" or somehow incomplete just for their being a novice. On the contrary, simply for their having habituated a particular way of living in and perceiving the world, an adult or relative expert may be oblivious to so many qualities and possibilities which may be so vividly apparent to a child or neophyte. This difference of perspective, it should be noted, is not exclusive to the mature and the young, but rather, it is a fact of life. Curiously, differences in perspective among peers or peoples of different backgrounds do not incur the kind of prejudice that is typical among adults and children, particularly in "educational" settings. In a learning situation, the difference in perspective among those involved is not primarily a problem to be resolved in the name of truth. Appreciating and communicating the *meanings* of those perspectives, however, is of utmost importance—in learning and life generally—and facilitating each other's ability to do so is modally native to learning transactionally conceived.

These foregoing remarks are not meant as a rejection of facilitation—or even transmission—altogether, but are intended as a preface to the crucial point that their meaning in concrete activity is most fully and appropriate realized when understood in the context of art, communication, and the metaphysics of transaction. It is not so much the idea of facilitation itself that is problematic, for example, but its implicit metaphysical assumptions and the resulting blindspots. What must be assumed to allow the ends and means of education, of any activity, to be isolated from one another—from time? The very prominence of this fundamental dualism evidences that the original integrity of experience is not accommodated in its metaphysics—which is to say that in its logical structure there is no meaningful account of the continuity of experience and nature. For this reason, facilitation is susceptible to the lure of "ultimate simples" and their promise of regularity, for such a simplistic teleology of action does not follow from an appreciation of the irreducible plurality and indeterminacy of nature. If such a dualistic metaphysical map overlays the terrain of concrete learning situations, then the binaries of teacher-learner, child-curriculum, self-society, etc., will not only persist, but they will be taken for granted. Any alternative view which problematizes those binaries, although it may *seem* appealing, is difficult to accommodate—let alone practice concretely—for it requires adapting this metaphysics under which it is wholly incoherent. Indeed, we are not short on ideas, but we do lack arts for constructively problematizing the assumed metaphysics of the dominant culture and the communicative exploration of those through which the meaning of our ideas may be immediately appreciated. It is not enough to plant and water a seed. If the soil is unsuitable, it will not grow. Perhaps we should be composting our bad ideas.

Such a dualistic metaphysics arguably undermines facilitation's efforts to problematize the traditional teacher-learner model. Facilitation correctly asserts that learning must be interactive, experimental, and exploratory, but it also implies that there is a desirable bearing along which these activities should develop, and, ironically, this is embodied in the role of the facilitator. As with the case of transmission, this is, to an extent, natural. An adult is capable of perceiving a wide array of directions in which a learner's experiences may be developed, and which of these are reasonably desirable. The problem is not that adults have such awareness or that they act upon it, but

rather that the selection of a direction is arbitrary; that is, not only is it always made from a limited view of a given situation and its dynamics, but that making such a choice collapses the possibilities of that situation around a relatively narrow scope of interest. Of course, it is impossible to actualize all the potential of any given situation, but there is also no ultimate basis for discerning how a child's interests and activities may (or should) grow. The intervention of a facilitator will always depend upon standards of judgment remote to the child's experience, and regardless of whether a particular intervention is appropriate or not, this imposes a relatively fixed structure upon the supposedly self-directed experiments of learners. What is problematic here is that the role of teacher or facilitator—and by extension the whole remote and abstract world of adult society—may become a given and virtually immutable constant around which educative experiences develop.

This relative fixity of the adult's role in education is, of course, not exclusive to the facilitation model, but it is a problem that it is capable of overlooking; a problem it is capable of not even regarding as a problem. What are the alternatives, though? It is unrealistic to expect or allow children to make their own choices, completely uninhibited by the views of adults or other members of groups in which they associate. The point is not that mature perspectives should be rejected. An adult's point of view is not worthless or irrelevant because it is arbitrary and remote to the experience of a child. However, it is also not just a matter of helping a child connect the dots in a congenial or fair way; a way that is reasonably comprehensible and enjoyable for the child. **The real issue is that teachers must also have skin in the game**, so to speak. If a learning situation is to fully benefit from a "teacher's" perspective and not be arbitrarily limited by it, then that perspective must also be a variable in the ongoing development of an educative experience. The teacher must also genuinely participate *as a learner* in the learning situation. Whatever perspective and experience she may contribute must be mutable if it is to be vitally available as a resource at all. The pretense that the teacher or facilitator is in any way external to the learning activity because he is more mature, is fallacious from the point of view of the greater transactional whole which *is* the learning situation, and *of which* learning and teaching are functional parts or phases.

7.2 Learning & Teaching as Transactional Phases of Learning Situations

The assertion that learning and teaching are transactional phases of a learning situation—that a teacher is, or must be, genuinely participant *as a learner* within it, is almost nonsensical within a dualistic metaphysics which would regard such a transactional whole as the sum of its parts. Interpretation of this view through a dualist lens results in a slough of seemingly absurd questions: Do you expect a teacher to be genuinely interested in learning basic addition? How would that work? How are you supposed to learn what you already know, and why? In the context of the ongoing discussion of this paper, however, this assertion becomes more sensible. That learning and teaching are transactional phases of a whole learning situation is because it is the *whole situation* which grows. Our isolation of "growth" within any one of its constituents is secondary to the qualitative transformation of their preeminent situatedness.

We may recall, as discussed in chapter three, that in a thoroughgoing pluralism where nature itself is fundamentally indeterminate, the "fullest reality" is just this untidy, ambiguous transactional matrix. Whatever divisions may be distinguished within such transactional wholes are possible by virtue of their being constituent to a whole in the first place. Not only is it the case that things do not exist in isolation—that all existences and events are "concurrences"—but the very determination of individual existences in experience is itself achieved through some perception of their being situated *as* existences. In other words, the situatedness of existence is assumed; taken for granted. Of course, this is not to say that we are conscious of these wholes in their entirety at every moment; let alone how they are themselves phases of more expansive transactions of incomprehensible scale. Situation is a fact of existence, however, and provides the qualitative background of all thought and action.

The point to stress here is not that learning and teaching should aim to be conscious of these wholes per se; that learning should be *about* them. What is significant is that in appreciating that existence is fundamentally transactional, that inhabitant and habitat both exist *primarily in and of a system*, we may grasp how our individual

growth is an expression of a growth of *that system as a whole*. The growth of individuals is a mutual adjustment, however imperceptible and indirect, of everything involved in that system. To reiterate, this does not suggest that the activity of learning should strive for an explicit account of everything in the system as such, which is a virtual impossibility, nor that learning equates some kind of power over objective conditions. An "awareness" of the transactional whole of the situation is realized aesthetically—*immediately* perceived—in concrete activity as our attitude toward it. It is embodied in the experience as the way it feels. A learning situation, then, is grasped and developed through the aesthetic appreciation of these qualities which integrate it, and which thereby function as the "horizon and focus of experience and teleology of action" (Alexander 1987b, 62). These qualities are not *in* oneself or in the objects of his experience, but are "only in the situation and [are] of it" (112). The direct encounter of these qualities in experience, however mundane, is an immediate experience of one's entire lifeworld at a particular cross-section of space and time. Such aesthetic experiences are *modally* consistent across the most quotidian of situations as well as the most profound. But to artfully inhabit the world, to aesthetically appreciate and reconstruct our experience in it, is to grow *with* it; to participate in its reconstruction. Understanding educative experience from the point of view of the transactional whole reveals how learning, most generally speaking, is not a private affair of discrete beings, but a process of experimental communion among existences.

Within this context we may gain a sense of how "teaching" and "learning" are phases of a learning situation; or, more succinctly, that teaching is a phase of learning. What is typically denoted by the word "teacher" is someone who plays a special role in educative experience, and so it is difficult to perceive how her work may be considered a *phase* of learning itself. That is, we tend to perceive the activity of teaching as being of a fundamentally different kind or class from that of learning—that they are mutually exclusive tasks performed by two distinct roles in an educative experience. In spite of the fact that in our actual educational practices this formulation may be observed, the nature of situations, as has been examined in this paper, suggests a more dynamic model.

An analogy might be made to the process of a birth. A midwife assists in birthing the

child, yet her concrete role and actions differ fundamentally from the mother birthing the child—not to mention the baby being born. We can easily perceive that her experience *is* different from that of the birthing mother. This difference in experience among those involved distinguishes the *phases* of "the birth" as a situation which are responsible for its vital development as such. What the midwife and the mother each *do* differently in the birthing situation constitutes a unique contribution to and participation in making that situation what it concretely *is*.

The same applies to a "teacher" and a "learner" in a learning situation, but differs for the special fact that learning is a much more general activity than a physical birth or the act of assisting in one. Whoever we may designate as "teacher" or "facilitator" is not only a "learner" for their having learned whatever it is they are meant to "teach," but their involvement in a genuine learning situation requires their participation as a learner. That is, the art of teaching is modally consistent with the art of learning. Recall the aforementioned analogy of a conversation. A conversation requires that whoever is involved actually participate—that they listen, respond, etc. If a conversation is one-sided, then it is not really a conversation. In spite of differences in perspective, experience, and interest, a conversation occurs only when participants actually converse. It would not be a conversation if, say, one person read from a script while the other actively listened and gave genuine responses. The same applies for learning situations. A "teacher" is not a participant if they merely read from a script, assign reading, mark papers, etc. Their involvement must be as open-ended and creative as those who are meant to "learn" in that experience; those who are open to the experience as a new and interesting opportunity to experience themselves and the world differently. Even for someone who is "matured" in relation to the "learners" in the group—someone who is a complete expert on the matter at hand even—*that* situation is completely unique and may lead into directions that no participant may have imagined previously. It demands a novel perception of what they understand in terms of that novel experience and situation. To engage the actual dynamics of that situation, to appreciate how it is and experiment with how it could be, is entailed in the participation of anyone involved, no matter their particular stake in the experience or the angle from which they approach it. In short, teaching is a phase of learning for the simple reason that it is a matter of communication, without excep-

tion; which is to say that learners, learning, and the learned (or to-be-learned) all co-exist in and of the primary transactionality which situates them as distinct events or existences. If anything is "taught" or "learned" by virtue of that situation, from an individual's standpoint, it is because it was cultivated through a direct appreciation and communication of its potential to grow a certain way that was fulfilling and meaningful to those involved.

To be clear, "teacher" and "learner" are vague distinctions to begin with, and their usage here does not attribute any special meaning to the "roles" they denote. That is, who or what a teacher is in a given situation is not to be assumed, nor should we assume that the relationship of teacher and learner is hierarchical. Everyone involved is preeminently a learner and inhabitant of that situation. Of course, the point is not that everyone involved in a learning situations grows the same way or learns the same thing simply for their being present and participant in it. A growing situation, however, *does* affect every one and thing meaningfully involved in its development as such—and vice versa. Each person experiences that situation differently, and their individual experience is itself an integral dynamic of the learning situation itself. "Teaching" must be realized as a phase of this organic continuity of transactional wholes, which is itself the generic paradigm of growth in nature.

7.3 Democracy & the Learning Community

To understand learning as this process of inhabitation has major implications for the practice and institution of education. Perhaps the most obvious of these is that the notion of learning situations as growing transactional wholes demonstrates that the content and context of education are indivisible; that what we learn and how we learn it are mutually qualifying. What is actually learned is never atomistically reduced to the mere contents of a curriculum or activity, nor is it a matter of isolated "private" experience. The learning experience as a whole is always also qualified by the situation of that experience—the way it is experienced by each particular person at that particular point in their life.

If there is any injunction implicit in the foregoing discussion of the concept of learning as inhabitation understood in terms of the growth of transactional wholes—or learning situations—it is that education should not be preoccupied with *providing* certain information or experiences per se, but should prioritize the process of experimenting with ways that learning activity can achieve a greater unity of process and product—of content and context—and develop as a work of art. In this section, it will be argued that the project of democratizing education, and society generally, entails such a paradigm shift in the direction of a decentralized, grassroots model of a learning commons, as opposed to universal, institution-centric public education.

The typical school or learning situation is a laboratory; less in the sense of it being a place for learners to experiment, but more in the sense of it being a controlled environment. This is perhaps the most feasible option we have for "universally" *providing an education* to the population, but this relative fixity of conditions ironically inhibits the realization of interest and communication. In spite of however progressive we may believe our theories and philosophies to be, the fact remains that an arbitrary limit or boundary is imposed on learning experiences for the sake of facility, convenience, or even accountability. Whatever reconstruction of education we may attempt must effort to organize the educational process itself *as a phase of communication in learning situations*. What happens in a learning situation must not be arbitrarily limited to that fixed and isolated point in time and space, but must itself be *practically* unified with the very processes which organize the learning community as a whole. Concrete learning situations should have a say, so to speak, in as much of what is involved in them as possible. This free and open *communication*, this free inquiry, play, and expression with any and all aspects of individual and shared experience is a condition not only for a democratic education, but for realizing the democratic ideal in experience generally.

We may observe in the matter of democratic education an irony similar to that which Dewey observed in the relationship between art works and aesthetic theories about them. Similar to how the existence of works of art, traditions, and conventions predispose us to perceive and understand art works and "art" itself in a particular way, inhibiting "fresh insight" and the construction of a more general and inclusive aesthetic theory, it is easy to take "democracy" for granted and inadvertently reinforce

the status quo, because many of us live in a nominally democratic society, or at least live in a world impacted by the existence of such societies.[3] In other words, it is easy to reduce would-be democratic education to a rehearsal of values, duties, and roles to produce habits that are congenial to the presumed "democratic" conditions of the democracies we inhabit; or even adhere to explicitly sanctioned standards and criteria.[4] This "habit of thinking of democracy as a kind of political mechanism that will work as long as citizens [are] reasonably faithful in performing political duties" (Dewey 1998a, 1:341) is a facility which betrays the inherent creativity of the real *work* of democracy as the art of experience: the continual cultivation of a common intelligence to further enrich and liberate experience unto itself.

Dewey rejected traditional concepts of democracy which regarded its ideals and values to be self-evident and given. Dewey saw this as primarily contributing to the reduction of "democracy" to the ideological province and authority of a kind of orthodoxy of liberalism as such. One reason for this, as we saw in chapter three, is that the very notion of self-evidence is a practical denial of the reality of time—and individuality—which is effectively a subjugation of experience to super-experiential control. For Dewey, this is ironically anti-democratic, for it virtually denies the ability of experience to fulfill itself, to realize its own value and meaning; amounting to a kind of fetishization of ideals with whose alignment experience and activity become preoccupied:

> Democracy is belief in the ability of human experience to generate the

[3] See the introductory paragraph of Dewey's (2005) *Art as Experience*, which begins with the following observation: "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."

[4] An old yet hauntingly relevant exposition of this theme is Ralph Waldo Emerson's "New England Reformers" found in his *Essays: Second Series*, which includes many frequently quoted passages, including: "I notice too, that the ground on which eminent public servants urge the claims of popular education is fear: 'This country is filling up with thousands and millions of voters, and you must educate them to keep them from our throats.' We do not believe that any education, any system of philosophy, any influence of genius, will ever give depth of insight to a superficial mind. Having settled ourselves into this infidelity, our skill is expended to procure alleviations, diversion, opiates. We adorn the victim with manual skill, his tongue with languages, his body with inoffensive and comely manners. So have we cunningly hid the tragedy of limitation and inner death we cannot avert. Is it strange that society should be devoured by a secret melancholy, which breaks through all its smiles, and all its gayety and games?"

> aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness. Every other form of moral and social faith rests upon the idea that experience must be subjected at some point or other to some form of external control; to some "authority" alleged to exist outside the processes of experience. Democracy is the faith that the process of experience is more important than any special result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process. … All ends and values that are cut off from the ongoing process become arrests, fixations. They strive to fixate what has been gained instead of using it to open the road and point the way to new and better experiences. (Dewey 1998a, 1:343)

Preserving the integrity of experience is a democratic priority, not because it aligns with the expected virtues of democracy, but because democracy is this very process of learning to enlarge and enrich experience on its own terms and by way of its own native capacities. The ideals of freedom and individuality, for example, are not merely the absolute ends which experience must be made to attain in the name of democracy, but rather they are realized in this process of experience exploring, creating, and communicating its own meanings which *is* itself the project of democracy. We do not achieve freedom and individuality in a vacuum—in the absence of obstructions to our otherwise "free will." They are more accurately arts whose concrete processes and products are appreciated, created, and expressed through communion with the world, and embodied in the meanings and values of those lives as they are lived. Democracy is this general art of co-habitation in pursuit of further horizons of meaning, value, and feeling, derived from and achieved through the native capacities of experience and nature in their fullest integrity:

> [Experience] is that free interaction of individual human beings with surrounding conditions, especially the human surroundings, which develops and satisfies need and desire by increasing knowledge of things as they are. … Need and desire—out of which grow purpose and direction of energy—go beyond what exists, and hence beyond knowledge, beyond science. They continually open the way into the unexplored and unattained future. Democracy as compared with other ways of life is the

> sole way of living which believes wholeheartedly in the process of experience as end and as means; as that which is capable of generating the science which is the sole dependable authority for the direction of further experience and which releases emotions, need and desires so as to call into being the things that have not existed in the past. For every way of life that fails in its democracy limits the contacts, the exchanges, the communications, the interactions by which experience is steadied while it is also enlarged and enriched. … Since it is one that can have no end till experience itself comes to an end, the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute. (Dewey 1998a, 1:343)

Dewey's interpretation of democracy as the generic project and ideal of shared, community life is an expression of his principle of continuity. In Dewey's metaphysics, bare social interactivity exhibits most fully the generic traits of nature. They constitute the "fullest" reality of which human beings are aware. Democracy is not simply a system or method of "fair" governance to minimize conflict and maximize the greater good, but the active, collective experiment of trying to realize human potential as fully and meaningfully as possible. In the context of the principle of continuity and eco-ontology, the realization of human potential is itself a realization of genuine potentialities in nature. Of course, human potential includes our vices as much as our virtues; humans may become despots as well as saints. What is special about the democratic ideal is that it functions as a kind of feedback loop which makes this process aware of itself, so to speak. It is an effort to make the natural process of continuity or growth more fluent; to enable "learning" to be more "learning-like." It is not an endorsement of any and all action for the sake of action itself, but rather, being premised on the human need to experience meaning and value, democracy works to enable this innate desire to freely initiate, explore, realize and communicate its own ends and means. In other words, for the democratic project, meanings are most meaningful when they contribute to the enrichment of this process of meaning-making.

Democracy, then, is chiefly concerned with growth in the fullest sense of the word; with learning or inhabitation. It is important to distinguish this notion of growth from inevitable—or even dialectical—progress, which is often misattributed to Dewey's

philosophy. Indeed, such notions of "growth" were among the many aspects of late Victorian civilization which Dewey explicitly combatted (Alexander 1994, 244). The project of democracy is something to be tried; an experiment. It may be the highest ideal conceivable for human civilization, but there is no inherent promise in nature that its intelligent pursuit will prevail. As Dewey concludes in the final paragraph of *Experience and Nature*, experimental methods are not the only option we have, but they are the most viable alternatives for liberating and enriching the common experience of human beings:

> Because intelligence is critical method applied to goods of belief, appreciation and conduct, so as to construct, freer and more secure goods, turning assent and assertion into free communication of shareable meanings, turning feeling into ordered and liberal sense, turning reaction into response, it is the reasonable object of our deepest faith and loyalty, the stay and support of all reasonable hopes. To utter such a statement is not to indulge in romantic idealization. It is not to assert that intelligence will ever dominate the course of events; it is not even to imply that it will save from ruin and destruction. The issue is one of choice, and choice is always a question of alternatives. What the method of intelligence, thoughtful valuation will accomplish, if once it be tried, is for the result of trial to determine. Since it is relative to the intersection in existence of hazard and rule, of contingency and order, faith in a wholesale and final triumph is fantastic. But some procedure has to be tried; for life itself is a sequence of trials. Carelessness and routine, Olympian aloofness, secluded contemplation are themselves choices. To claim that intelligence is a better method than its alternatives, authority, imitation, caprice and ignorance, prejudice and passion, is hardly an excessive claim. These procedures have been tried and have worked their will. The result is not such to make it clear that the method of intelligence, the use of science in criticizing and recreating the casual goods of nature into intentional and conclusive goods of art, the union of knowledge and values in production, is not worth trying. (Dewey 1929, 436–37)

Democracy is not the ideal terminus of some inherent teleology of nature toward

which growth is a progression. Such a concept of growth, as was discussed in previous chapters, is atemporal, amounting to a rearrangement or reconfiguration of what already exists in experience as opposed to its qualitative transformation or reconstruction. Likewise, growth is not merely a systematic or formal reconciliation of contradictions. Dewey's idea that democracy is a "faith" that the process of experience is more important than any of its particular results is an allusion to the fundamental plurality of experience and nature. Plurality is not an impediment to democracy—or communication and learning for that matter—but rather it is a requirement; a perennial condition. As far as the full integrity of experience is concerned, plurality is not to be reconciled but appreciated. It is itself something to be grown. Democracy affirms this fundamental ambiguity and indeterminacy as the primary and fullest reality of existence, and therefore all growth grows out of and into such a plurality. The aim of the democratic project, then, is not to rectify social interactivity to identify with or align with its tenets, but rather to enable the fullest and freest participation in this process of plural experience's organization in and of itself.

The fundamental plurality of experience behooves democracy to pursue as broad and nuanced an appreciation of the world as possible; that is, it necessitates arts of wisdom in our inhabitation of the world. "Democracy requires a tradition of pluralism that goes beyond mere toleration of diversity or knowing a smattering of superficial details about various subcultures. Pluralism involves a rigorous, deep and wide exposure to the dimension of human symbolization and the ultimate aim of civilization … the need to create the most meaningful experience possible for the fulfillment of human life" (Alexander 1994, 243). In a Deweyan democracy, plurality is not accommodated for the sake of "checks and balances," but is appreciated as a perennial source of opportunities for growth and the development of wisdom. Importantly, plurality is not only the general impetus for communication, but it is through a diversity of perspectives that situations become most comprehensible and communicable:

> The situation is a feature of the world with which we are involved. There may be aspects of it that transcend our individual understanding or to which we are blinded by our own personal habits and dispositions. The complex topography of situations is better discerned through a variety of participants who do not share exactly the same outlook. But diversity is

> not enough: these different points of view must be in *communication* with each other, otherwise they become reduced once again to isolated individual perspectives, like two eyes without a common brain. (Alexander 1994, 251)

The challenge for a democratic education becomes that of cultivating an "intelligent and aesthetic vision of the ways human beings create meaning" in order to "encounter difference meaningfully" (Alexander 1994, 244) in life experiences. This entails developing individual's aesthetic sensibilities, for it is through aesthetic experiences that meanings are most immediately communicated and perceived, which is especially necessary for appreciating different perspectives and ways of life. This is how we primarily relate to and participate in a culture, which is itself this communication among individuals. The democratic ideal discloses the need for the continual expansion and realization of individual interests as a condition of participation in and the fluent reconstruction of a vital common aesthetic through which a community is present to itself. Exposure to difference is not sufficient to participate in its meaning. To simply live in the world is to be exposed to so much diversity and ambiguity, but this in itself does not reveal their meaning, for meaning is not self-evident. Interest *grows* through its free exploration and realization; through those concrete "occupations" of life situations in which interest is meaningfully "occupied," or literally *grasped*. To seize upon one's interest, how one is and may be in a situation, is to actively mold it and craft it. To establish continuities in experience through this creative development of interest—and, as we saw, time itself—opens up new possibilities and raises new questions. It is through such a process that interest grows *interested* in existences across more expansive stretches of time and space, and through which we grow to most meaningfully encounter and appreciate the plurality of our world to communicate and share in its interests.

For education to encourage individual interest to be freely realized, learning situations must be allowed to determine the conditions for their growth. That is, the means and ends of education must derive in concrete learning experiences themselves to as expansive and inclusive a degree as possible. To meaningfully contribute to a democratic inhabitation of the world, not only must they not be reduced to mechanisms for achieving established ends, which arbitrarily divorces their processes and products,

effectively dispossessing learners from their own learning experiences, but they must actively problematize such stagnation and arrest of growth. This is the theoretical crux of Dewey's educational philosophy.

For as radical as Dewey's ideas about education were, as Raymond Boisvert (1995, 326) observes, they were "old-fashioned" in the sense that they attempted to "preserve the best of home education in a world where schooling as a distinct institution had become a necessity." The "best" of home education being the inherent unity of process and product and the self-derivation of ends and means in activity. Dewey's "experiments" in education where not flashy, futuristic methods and technologies for conditioning and programming youth, such as those of Skinner. Dewey's philosophy of education, as with his philosophy generally, was an effort to remain faithful to the original integrity of experience. Wherever arbitrary limits encumber learning experience, even for the sake of facility, custom, or convenience, there is evidence of some disfluency in the milieu which education may serve to ameliorate. If there would be any meaningful effort at education in a democracy, it would have to accommodate this reality in its methods and organization.

In his own time, it was apparent that the habits of schooling were at odds with experimental methods for the liberation of experience itself. For Dewey, the growing public school system—and the democratic polis at large—must assume responsibility for adapting to the conditions of a democratic education. His own work in the field of education was a response to this apparent need in society. Dewey was, of course, a very vocal and prominent advocate of public education, and he remained optimistic throughout his life about its potential as a great experiment in democracy. The public school system, for Dewey, was a novel opportunity to democratize society and civilization—indeed, it was a novel opportunity for democracy itself. Understanding democracy experimentally, Dewey perceived even the mixed successes and struggles of the school system in his day to be positive developments, especially having endured "old-school" schooling himself as a youth in Vermont.

It is debatable, however, how optimistic we can remain about institutionalized education in the twenty first century. It is hard to imagine how our current milieu could be seen as embodying or even working to realize democracy at all. In contemporary

society, it is practically taken for granted that education is vocational education; that learning is for acquiring "specs" to compete at securing life chances and preparing for a career in adulthood. The almost cliche example of this is that of the fateful college entrance exams here in Korea, which have assumed so much importance in the life of learners as to cast their shadow over school and extracurricular education years in advance. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with going to school to get a better job and live a better life. But when this vague aim dominates education itself so as to obligate competition in the volatile job market, or at least the preparation for a perpetually precarious future, then it is clear that education is functioning to serve economic ends rather that accommodating the self-determination of individuals' and communities' ends and the means for their attainment. It is a functional perpetuation of a way of inhabiting the world to perpetuate *the conditions of that world*; a conditioning of values rather than the valuation of conditions. It is an arrest of the possibilities of experience around a limited range of values, which is a facility that serves established norms and the relevancy of institutions themselves, rather than *facilitating* the growth of democracy through the free development of vital learning situations.

My position is that, when it comes to democracy, institutions are not "the best man for the job." The task of democratizing society, which the institution of education assumes in a democracy, is a job that is virtually impossible for any institution to achieve. The nature of that process arguably exceeds the capabilities of "institution" in general. Even if we grant that democracy is not the responsibility of a single institution—that it must penetrate every aspect of social life—then it is still dubious whether *many* institutions are capable of such concerted adaptation; let alone whether they are capable of prioritizing and being sensitive enough to the "demo" over the "cracy." "Instead of thinking of our own dispositions and habits as accommodated in certain institutions we have to learn to think of the latter as expression, projections and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes" (Dewey 1998a, 1:339). Yet, if there does not exist such a fluency and communication among individuals and groups that we must depend on a centralized model of institution, then how can we expect these institutions to effect in a reconstruction of experience so thoroughgoing and expansive as to achieve their own obsolescence? If there is any

hope or value in reforming our institutions such that they become, in fact, expressions and extensions of community life, then we must first begin with reclaiming life and communication from them. In other words, the democratic process is always a matter of inhabitation, and if it is true that human beings do not live primarily by grace of institutions themselves, then it behooves us to take it upon ourselves to pursue democracy directly through the realization of meaning in the lives we actually live:

> The end of democracy is a radical end. For it is an end that has not been adequately realized in any country at any time. It is radical because it requires great change in existing social conditions, economic, legal, and cultural. A democratic liberalism that does not recognize these things in thought and action is not awake to its own meaning and to what that meaning demands. (Dewey 1998a, 1:338–39)

If the existence of an institution of education is to be meaningful in our democracy, then it must be a vital expression of the meanings and values shared among the communities through which it emerges. Yet given the inherent plurality of experience, it is hard to imagine how a relatively inflexible institution or system could adequately embody the meanings of its plural constituency while also fluently adapting along with its growth, needs, and desires. The amount of versatility and flexibility democracy would demand from institutions can only be achieved through communication itself. So why not cut out the middle man?

Rather than public institutions, we should prefer a model of a federated learning commons comprised of spontaneous learning communities and shared resource pools. In such a way, the project of democratic education can remain awake to its own meaning through the continual experimentation of ways in which learning situations can preserve the unity of their context and content, their product and process. That is, interest is most freely realized and expanded when the ends and means of learning situations are determined by those involved and unencumbered by arbitrary limitations imposed by extra-experiential institutions, authorities, customs, etc. The process of learning would itself be the process of cooperatively organizing the community.

A kindergarten, for example, would not be a place to occupy young children with explicitly "educational activities," but would exist primarily as a cooperative effort on the part of *all who are involved* to explore, cultivate, and express the meanings of the experiences through which they communicate and grow. The group may then remain sensitive and responsive to the actual needs and interests of everyone involved—not just in terms of the "learning activities" to be undertaken, but the organization process of the group itself. Of course, we would not expect kindergarteners to be capable of making financial decisions for the organization of which they are a part, which may be conceptually outside of their grasp. The point is not to involve everyone in every single decision and phase of activity, but to appreciate the capacities and meanings each contributes to that shared experience such that the concrete learning experiences of individuals qualify and control the growth of the community as a whole. The freedom to openly and freely adapt the conditions of the learning situation is to allow it to select and pursue its own ends and develop its own means for achieving them. In short, this flexibility allows learners to experimentally inhabit their worlds, to participate in its recreation, and to share in and be most fully present to its meanings.

Such an approach requires that learners be resourceful and make an active effort to expand their interests and tastes. To function at scale would require the pooling and governance of resource commons and the free communication among and assembly of learning communities and other cooperatives and collectives. This would provide opportunities for groups to share and exchange resources and services, and to benefit from the diverse interests of others. This paradigm, however, is largely incompatible with the predominant economic models of today. An average working family in Seoul, for example, cannot easily spare the time, energy, or resources required to school their own children. The current circumstances are such that most of us simply cannot afford to not send our kids to school. For this reason "alternative" approaches, such as unschooling—with which the views of this paper generally align—remain alternatives to the existing education system expected to continue functioning in some capacity. It is, I think, unrealistic to expect society at large to accommodate these alternatives, which would require a radical transformation of the entire structure of our society. It is even more unrealistic to expect that something of this sort could be

"provided" by a central, authoritative institution of education in the first place.

What is suggested by the unschooling orientation of inhabitation, of a learning commons model of education, is not a prescription for how to do things better given our current conditions. It is an appeal to change them such that an unschooled democracy is not an alternative to the existing system, but the general direction in which the existing system should be made to grow. These conditions will not be changed through official channel, for such a change would render them obsolete. This movement must be a grassroots effort, whose gradual success and expansion would provide the conditions for further experimentation and growth.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Learning Just Because

Human existence is animated by our fundamental need and desire for meaning and value; or, the Human Eros. Our cultural inhabitation of nature is the transformation of our biophysical environments into worlds in which meaning and value are experienced. This world is primarily qualitative and encountered aesthetically. It exists as the way we are in it prior to it becoming an object of reflection; which is to say, we are embedded in our world through constant transaction in and of it. This fundamental continuity of nature and experience means that all existence is qualified by time; that all existence is an event or concurrence betwixt the past and future, betwixt what is and what could be. This tension, as it exists in all life situations, is perceived imaginatively as an interpretive appropriation of the old and new, past and future, and actuality and potentiality in terms of each other *as* the present. The human lifetime, then, or Vita Humana, is not a chronological succession of events but an organic structuring of existences recursively and continually reorganized through subsequent experiences.

From the nature-prime perspective of ecological humanism, nature is what nature does. Everything exists *in and of* nature. We are what we do and how we live; or,

we are our worlds, and our worlds are how they are lived. Questions of existence, of *what* something is, are questions of continuity, of situation, rather than identity or essence. To exist is to be continuous, and to live is to grow. Continuity so understood is creative, and basically plural. Plurality, ambiguity, difference, and uncertainty are basic qualities of nature, and are therefore not to be overcome, but appreciated, explored, and experimented with. Nature in its totality can only be this.

Metaphysics works as a kind of map or map-making process for navigating this terrain, functioning as a meaning- or sense-giving background that orients experience. Dewey saw social phenomena as the most macroscopic view of nature humans may perceive. Social interactivity, of course, is never static and is mostly indeterminate. The special point of this reconstruction is that human activity does not occur outside of, atop, or in addition to natural process, but are themselves ways of participating in the realization of the potentialities of nature as a phase of nature itself. Experience and nature are not identical or unitary, but rather experience is a transactional or functional development of nature; an emergent phase of it. That is, experience emerges through myriad transactions, including in itself novel characteristics of nature that are not found elsewhere. Through the adaptation of our so-called metaphysical maps of this terrain we adjust our perception of what is possible, and our ways of understanding nature and our place in it. These maps are not meant as faithful replications of existence in all its detail, which is fundamentally indeterminate. Like all maps, they display what matters, and what matters depends on one's perspective and what they are doing. They represent, then, a perceived connection between existence and value which orients and predisposes—or guides—experience. Rather than attempting to define nature as such, metaphysical excursions serve to contextualize the ways we inhabit nature.

If our world is primarily qualitative and encountered aesthetically, then things are what they are experienced as being. Questions of reality are not the same as questions of truth per se. "Reality" is a matter of what kind of experience one has or how something is experienced; which is to say that meaning and value are more basic to experience than is truth. This immediacy is a phase of a situation as it is experienced—a dynamic reorientation of the whole process, a phase of action and involvement in its growth. What is immediate in experience is the aesthetic; the

quality of the whole sitaution that integrates it as such. The "determination" or expression of this quality is the "objective" control of a situation's development, and therefore quality is a condition of all thought and meaning.

All "things" are complex, interactive situations having histories and dynamics which make them what they uniquely are. Existences are not given to experience, but rather the givenness of existences is experience; which is to say that what is immediate in experience is an extensive qualitative situation. The aesthetic quality of a situation is the condition of its meaning and value, and the regulative principle of all thinking. Furthermore, the aesthetic is the beginning and end of all experience. Experience grows out of and into the aesthetic. The consummation of experience as an experience is the appreciation and creation or expression of meaning and value which predisposes subsequent aesthetic encounters.

Situations develop imaginatively through an appreciation of and mutual appropriation of the actual and potential in experience. Imagination emerges through interactions as the active engagement with a situation's actual and potential meanings. It is a condition of consciousness for it is the only gateway through which meanings of prior experience can find their way into the present situation. It is, however, not just a means. It allows ends to become more than expected outcomes and instead function as "pivots of action," or, in other words, a conscious embodiment of meaning.

Imagination is was what makes activity more than mechanical, and is therefore a condition for learning and habit formation, or adaptation generally. Habits are abilities to actively control one's environment, to use natural conditions as means to some ends. Habituation, on the other hand, serves as a background of growth. It is a persistent balance of organic activities with the world through which our ways of being in it may be imaginatively and situationally adapted. Learning, then, cannot be equated with reflection per se, nor can it be reduced to the process of reflective thought generally. Growth necessarily involves the active and passive phases of inhabitation—habits *and* habituation. Consciousness and reflection emerge through unknown and unknowable phases of human and non-human experience which make up the vast majority of experience as such; the expansive transactions of existences across stretches of space and time. Conscious, or reflective experience, is always

backgrounded and premised on—and emerges through—the myriad indeterminate transactions through which one is organically embedded or integrated with her environment. It a focal center in a field of experience[1] that extends beyond individuals and environments and exists as the primary process of transacting inhabitation through which these become individuated. "In-habitation," then, is the adaptation of the ways an environment and organism have or become each other; the primary organizing process of which they exist.

Inhabitation stagnates when habits possess us and simply perpetuate—when they become closed off from or resistant to change and degenerate into routines. Experience becomes a blur of action simply occurring in the absence of embodied meaning. Habits formed without an appreciative realization of their conditions results in mere conditioning and perpetuation of pre-existing conditions. That is, all meaningful learning begins in aesthetic appreciation. In the primarily aesthetic, qualitative world, appreciation is how we are most fully perceptive and responsive to its dynamics; how we are most aware of world beyond our ideas of it. This is how we are most present to and directly relate to the so-called more-than-human dimension of experience. Our contact with the world is not just that of brute cause and effect, nor is it contained in our ideas or concepts about each other, but rather it is the ways we are in the world together. Such a perception of the world, in varying scopes and depths, is the beginning and end of all learning. The priority of "educational" endeavors must be to allow individuals to appreciate their worlds for themselves as part of that world; through the unique ways they occupy and are vitally integrated with it. Realizing this *interest*, or "inter-being," is what learning paradigmatically *is*: a meaningful communion with and of the world. The concept of learning as inhabitation discloses how learning is, in this way, a significant modal "overlap" of the human and non-human world. Growing in and of and as a world is how we are most fully and significantly aware of and present to that world and all its phases or individual "inhabitants" and "habitats." Understanding learning this way discloses its importance and meaning for not only ecological discourse, relating to ecologically conscientious inhabitation, but for human inhabitation in general.

The realization of interest, how one and one's world are mutually integrated, is the

[1] cf. Ames (2015)

appreciation and realization of potentialities in a unique situation; which is to say, it is the realization and expression of individuality. It is an individuation of a situation, an expression of its unique quality that makes it what it is. This realization of interest is the creative development of time. It is a kind of "storytelling" about how a qualitatively unique individual is situated transactionally in the world by establishing a continuity among situations. Our desire for meaning and value manifests in such efforts to respond to situations as opportunities for growth. We appreciate and imaginatively project what situations could mean, and our realization of this interest in situations is the development of that situation as continuous with others, and is therefore individual. Art is the fullest expression of individuality, and is creative of the future as an unprecedented response to conditions. This process is the foundation of the human world. That is, this emergence of novel, qualitative individuality is itself *continuity*—the process of transactional *organization*. Growth realizes newer and more inclusive orders, structures, and processes—it is a "functional development" of the world of which it is a continuity. Humans are born into the world through such processes, and are likewise participants in this continual reconstruction of natural process; participants in the ecosystem. Driven by our desire for meaning and value, our primary concern is with this fundamental tensive aspect of nature between what is actual and potential, what is real and ideal. The interrelationship between these modalities is culture itself. Our inhabitation of the world is an appropriation of these modalities as a continuity or growth of situations. Our *cultivation* of nature, as it were, is an expression of our embeddedness in it. Culture, and all human activity, is a phase of transactional processes spanning vast stretches of time and space, continuous with all existence. That culture and experience are phases or parts of ever more inclusive transactions is not to say that transactional wholes are environments, but rather that their existence is mutually qualifying. Transactional wholes don't contain existences, but rather represent their primary continuity and integration as an organic system. They are the situation or situating dynamics which simultaneously individuate and are individuated by the qualities that integrate them.

Philosophy, generally speaking, is the work of adapting traditions and values of culture in light of new and incompatible experiences which challenge or problematize them. It strives for as general a perspective of the world as possible in pursuit of

an expansive view of what is possible. In other words, it pursues wisdom, understood as the receptivity and responsiveness to situational dynamics. As a method, or more accurately an art, it is paradigmatic of conscious experience, and it is an aesthetic appreciation and critical evaluation of situations and their conditions. It is concerned with events and values; in appreciating and critiquing the conditions and consequences that situate and predispose experience. Through denotation, it is capable of remaining receptive to raw experience and of approaching its subject matter without reducing it to a mere object of reflection. In this way it grounds cognitive interests in non-cognitive scope of life at large, in all its wild ambiguity and polymodality. In other words, it is a method for aesthetic receptivity and openness through which things may be understood in terms of how they are experienced. It is a method for cultivating awareness of the world beyond our ideas of it, by appreciating the selectivity of experience as a native part of the inquiry process.

Philosophy is preoccupied with critiquing value; with grasping what is and gaining insight into what could be, so to speak. It is not just a reaction to whatever we encounter, judiciously deciding our stance and the value of each particular thing in itself, but rather an effort to achieve a more general view of the possibilities they indicate and their worth in life experience. Further, its concern is not with the value itself, but in the process of valuing, which, in a manner of speaking, is how we navigate the cosmos. Wisdom, then, is a unique good, for it is a sensitivity and responsiveness to the dynamics of situations—to the way one is in the world and it is in her. An ecologically conscientious inhabitation entails a prioritization of wisdom for this reason. To live and grow in the world entails being open and responsive to its conditions and possibilities not only to seize upon them as opportunities, but for caring for the world itself, and, in the very least, for it to continue being a world.

The process of inhabiting the world, in appreciating and responding to its actualities and potentialities, is not only fundamentally aesthetic in nature—in that experience is primarily aesthetic—but it is also art in the most general sense. We are in constant interaction with the world. We experience it continuously, but experience becomes *an experience* only when it is individuated as one continuous among other experiences. What is significant about the individuation of experience and situations is that they are pervaded by a unique quality which integrates it as that experience and

no other. Aesthetic experience, then, is reconstructive—it is a realization of interest and a refactoring of the elements in that experience in terms of each other to consummate it as an individual situation. It is, in other words, the creation and expression of meaning and value.

The aesthetic is the continuity of experience itself, so to speak, and an aesthetic experience is one in which the aesthetic becomes the overwhelming focus of the experience. The aesthetic is not a matter of beauty per se, but simply that of the qualities which contribute to making an experience what it is. It is an interested, active, and vital involvement or imaginative grasp of them. What such an experience means can only be expressed as an experience. In this way, art is the concrete embodiment of meaning and value in human experience. It is any activity that is simultaneously its very process and product or means and consequence. Learning that is artful is that which, regardless of its subject matter, is such a process of aesthetic appreciation and production or expression which so integrates its process and product as the experience itself. For learning to be art, then, it must be autotelic. It must be allowed to determine its own meaning; its own means and ends, process-product, etc.

A peculiarity of learning understood as art is that what is learned is expressed as the meaning of *that* experience, but also that it is temporally complex. Growth is recursive in that what one learns is not expressed as a static object which may be observed per se, but rather it is a reconstruction of the past and future, and may therefore be expressed over the course of one's entire lifetime—-taking on new meaning in new experiences and situations. Furthermore, learning understood as art demonstrates that genuine growth can have no inherent directionality. It is a kind of bootstrapping of realities in situ that realizes novel realities and possibilities, which then radially lead on to new horizons which are then also recursively appropriated. The net result is a plurality of directionality in which the ends and means must be derived internally. In other words, learning that is art is learning that is autotelic.

Learning understood as art is also significant as communication—as a participation in the continual reconstruction of culture and the creation and critique of common aesthetics, but also in a communion with the world at large. It is an expression of aesthetics which integrate qualities, existences, and processes originating in the

human and non-human experiences of the ecosystem—an expression of our concrete existential situation at a cross section of time and space. Cultivating our aesthetic sensitivity and responsiveness to our world in order to participate meaningfully in this communion is a condition for a more ecologically conscientious inhabitation of the earth, but also for a more humane culture. It is a condition for genuine democracy, which in the Deweyan sense, is community life itself. Democracy depends on its being continually problematized by such a plurality of perspectives through art and communication. How might the biosphere contribute its voice to this conversation? In a way, it always does. We are perhaps most aware of it in our collisions, in the ecological consequences of our actions as a species, usually when it is too late. A genuine democracy, in light of this, is one that is sensitive to the dynamics of the ecosystem and able to communicate them meaningfully. Given the fundamentally tensive aspect of nature, we are always astride here and there, actual and potential, and so the problematization of *organization* is an ongoing process of the life process itself.

Education in this view ceases to be a predominantly social process, and learning ceases to be private experience. Inhabitation is what the learning situation does, which may include human as well as non-human inhabitants and habitats. The manner through which learning occurs is derived through what and who is involved in itself. The learning situation itself as the primary "subject" of learning or inhabitation reveals many disfluencies about how we go about education conceived dualistically, and provides a few insights for more fluent alternatives.

First, the commodification of learning, knowledge, and education are antithetical to learning and to democracy. The crux of the problem is a reduction of learning and education to means and ends that are external to the process itself, which precludes the possibility for learning to be a free and meaningful exploration and realization of individual interest. Second, learning and teaching are transactional phases of the learning situation itself, which is to say that, not only are teachers co-learners, they must be equally participant in the learning situation *as* learners. Third, learning must be autotelic. It must be allowed to determine its own ends and means—its own meaning. Our priority should not be to provide an education, to provide certain experiences as such, but rather we should prioritize the process of experimenting with ways to

enable learning activity to achieve a greater unity of process and product, or content and context. The efforts of education should not be to provide one-for-all solutions, but to allow learning situations to determine as much about themselves as possible—to identify arbitrary and stagnating customs, structures, etc., and allow them to be adapted through the learning process itself. In other words, education and everything involved—the place, the activities, curricula, methods, content, etc.—should be allowed to derive from and be adapted through the concrete learning situations. Fourth, this autotelic learning process whereby individual interest is freely explored and realized is a condition of democratic education, and democracy generally. The plurality of experience through which democracy emerges and through which is must be problematized can only be communicated through individuals' realization of interest and direct participation in the reconstruction of society through expression and communication. Finally, the demands of such an autotelic learning paradigm of education are not best met by institutions meant to provide an education to the public; institutions which inherently cannot account for the sheer diversity of human and non-human experience in our world. The more viable alternative is working to promote conditions through which education and society may be de-institutionalized through a grassroots approach of a federated "learning commons."

There is no point to life apart from its very living. Learning as inhabitation is simply the life process itself, undergone for its own intrinsic value, enjoyment, and meaning. Life and learning can be so many things, but none of these can account for life and learning themselves. If there is any injunction involved in the special consideration of learning as inhabitation it is to appreciate this primary transactional wholeness of learning-learner-learned in order to preserve the integrity of life experience for its own self-enrichment and self-worth. This "aimlessness" of life is embodied in the democratic ideal, which is itself a deep appreciation of the unity of ends and means of life. It's realization is not the attainment of some pie-in-they-sky ideal, but learning for the sake of wondering, experimenting, realizing, and sharing possible ways life can be.

For education to be democratic and ecologically conscientious, it must allow life and learning to be for their own sake. It must be autotelic. Education that does not allow itself to emerge through the processes and products of individual learning situations

obstructs their free development as such, thereby enfeebling itself; remaining "effective" only in so far as it is perceived to sufficiently satisfy some sanctioned ends of the established ethos. The state of democracy and the ecosystem in the twenty-first century behooves us to prioritize adjustments which encourage and allow autotelic learning to be pursued and to flourish. The emergence of autotelic learning communities would not be a superimposition over the top of our current social structure, but would require their continual and significant adaptation over time. This sort of grassroots revival of democracy and education through the emergence of cooperative learning communities would itself be an embodiment of significant social reconstruction, and would provide the functional basis for realizing greater, more enduring democratic change in other industries and dimensions of society.

Appendix I: The Red Wheelbarrow

"The Red Wheelbarrow"
by William Carlos Williams
from *Spring and All*, 1923

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

Appendix II: Sea Calm

"Sea Calm"
by Langston Hughes
from *The Weary Blues*, 1926

How still,
How strangely still
The water is today,
It is not good
For water
To be still that way.

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국문요약

서식 (棲息) 으로서의 배움

Alexander 의 생태학적 휴머니즘에 비추어 보는 Dewey 의 배움 개념

본 논문은 John Dewey 와 Thomas Alexander 의 생태 중심적 철학에 비추어보는 배움의 의미를 살펴본다. 특히, “배우는 상황” 그 자체의 교호작용을 배움의 주체로 보는 이른바 “서식 (棲息) 으로서의 배움” 개념을 제시한다. 본 연구는 생태에 대한 의식이 높아지는 서식을 위하여 자연과 인간의 관계를 재고찰하는 과제의 긴급한 과제에 대응하고자 한다. 이러한 과제의 특성에 따라 생태학적 휴머니즘의 자연 중심적 혹은 생태존재론적 (eco-ontological) 특별한 주목을 받을 만한 가치가 있다. “배우는 상황” 그 자체의 서식으로 보는 배움 개념은 교육 이론과 실제를 생태화하거나 인류중심적인 성향에서 벗어나기 위한 교육철학 연구 동향에 이러한 생태학적 휴머니즘적인 관점을 기여한다.

Dewey 와 Alexander 의 저서 및 관련 문헌을 검토함으로써 배움을 서식으로 재해석하는 본 연구의 목적은 1) 생태 중심적인 배움 개념의 철학적 또는 형이상학적 요점을 정리하고 2) 배움, 예술 그리고 철학의 교차성을 드러내며 이러한 배움 개념에 비추어 보는 의미, 가치, 흥미 그리고 지혜의 의의를 살펴보고 3) 사는 과정 그 자체로 보는 배움의 보편성 및 자기목적적인 (autotelic) 특성을 밝히고 4) 이러한 배움의 개념이 생태의 성장과 교감에 직접적으로 참여함으로써 보다 생태적으로 충실한 서식의 가능성과 장애물을 드러내며 교육과 사회에 대한 그것의 함의를 논하고자 한다.

Alexander 의 생태학적 휴머니즘의 주요 개념과 입장을 정리한 다음에 Dewey 의 연속성 개념을 중심으로 Dewey 가 재구성한 형이상학을 자세히 살펴본다. 이어서 경험과 배움의 형이상학에 대한 자연적 연속성의 의미를 해석한다. 개별적 흥미의 실현으로 이루어지는 상황의 성장 그 자체를 배움으로 보는 관점을 드러내고자 한

다. 이러한 과정이 근본적으로 심미적이라는 점에 주목한다. 철학적 탐구는 세상에 대한 심미적 감수성을 보존하면서 그 세계에 처하는 우리의 사는 방식 혹은 서식 과정에 비평적으로 접근하기 위한 활동이 된다. 따라서 배움은 “심미적 감상과 창조”로 이해되는 하나의 예술이 되고 자연적 또는 문화적인 세계에 가장 직접적으로 관여하고 교감하는 과정이 된다고 논의한다.

이러한 관점에 입각하여 현대 교육 담론에서 흔히 나타나는 이분법들을 비평하고 교호작용적이며 배움 중심적인 교육 패러다임의 가능성과 의의를 논한다. 서식으로 이해되는 배움이 사는 과정 그 자체로서 근본적으로 자기 목적적인 과정이며, 세상 혹은 생태와의 제일 보편적인 교감과 관여가 된다는 점에 특별히 주목한다. 결론적으로는, 소위 “배우는 상황” 이 스스로의 뜻, 목적, 그리고 방법을 스스로 결정할 수 있어야 하며, 이는 지구상에서의 생태적으로 성실하며 민주주의적인 서식을 위한 조건이라고 주장한다.

핵심되는 말: John Dewey, Thomas Alexander, 서식 (棲息), 심미 경험, 자기 목적적인 배움, 생태학적 휴머니즘, 교호작용, 배우는 상황