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Aesthetic Experience and Art Appreciation: A Pragmatic Account

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Aesthetic Experience and Art Appreciation: A Pragmatic Account

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M.A., University College Cork, 2010
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An abstract of
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Abstract

Aesthetic Experience and Art Appreciation: A Pragmatic Account
By Alexander Robins

What is art appreciation? Although it is recognized as a positive experience by art patrons, museum educators, and scholars alike, this aesthetic phenomenon has only a limited amount of philosophic literature that attempts to explicate the experience of art appreciation. Within the existing literature there is a variety of competing theories that include cognitivist and affective approaches. This study examines writings relating to art appreciation from the tradition of American pragmatism, drawing heavily on the work of John Dewey. Dewey argues that the act of appreciation ascribed to the fine arts is not a specific form of appreciation reserved only for the arts but is instead a generalized phase of all experience. He suggests that there is no singular experience of appreciation but that experience is itself appreciative. This expanded perspective on appreciation and aesthetic experience has significant implications for several issues in the contemporary philosophy of art. This includes ascribing a naturalistic basis for aesthetic judgments, denying a rigid distinction between art and non-art objects, and advocating for an aesthetic dimension to politics as well as everyday life.

This dissertation ultimately defends and updates Dewey's position and discusses its implications in three complementary chapters. The first chapter considers a historic episode in which John Dewey collaborated with Albert C. Barnes of the art institution the Barnes Foundation to develop a curriculum for the appreciation of paintings. The philosophic writings produced in these efforts as well as the pedagogical activities implemented at the Barnes Foundation are analyzed as a practical case study of Dewey's concept of art appreciation as it relates to democratic theory. The second chapter considers Dewey's monographs in order to explain and defend the naturalistic assumptions underlying this theory of art appreciation. The final chapter takes up the conclusions of the previous two chapters in order to consider their implications for contemporary theoretical discussions in several fields. These include Dewey's place in the history of aesthetics, his applicability for the contemporary analytic philosophy of art, and contemporary art history.

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Introduction

This dissertation analyzes John Dewey's collaboration with the Barnes Foundation. The Barnes Foundation was founded in 1922 in Merion Pennsylvania to house an extensive collection of paintings and to offer courses in their appreciation. Dewey was the foundation's first director of education and helped develop an ambitious curriculum in the appreciation of painting called "applied aesthetics."[1]

While contemporary readers may be familiar with the philosophic literature around "applied ethics" the term applied aesthetics does not have a developed discourse and raises the question: what exactly did Dewey and his colleagues at the Barnes Foundation have in mind? What is it in the study of art and beauty that could be of utility or could be applied to practical affairs? Just what would it mean to teach or practice an applied aesthetics? There are many possible ways to answer this question but this dissertation will focus solely on John Dewey's philosophy as well as his historic activities at the Barnes Foundation to offer an answer.[2] What emerges is a unique and philosophically rich idea that aesthetic appreciation is useful for the expansion and enrichment of democracy.

Dewey's conviction was that this course was a tool for strengthening democracy in America. In materials written for the Barnes Foundation Dewey suggests a direct

[1] Course listings of the Barnes Foundation 1925 classes held at the Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA. Education Files, 1925 AR.EDU.AEP.COL.1.

[2] Another example would be: Paul Gilbert, "Applied Aesthetics?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol. 15 No. 1 (1998): 105-107.

connection between aesthetic appreciation and the vibrancy of democracy.[3] The presumed link, however, between looking at paintings and the status of democracy is not an obvious one. It even seems to confuse the categories of art and politics. But if on the other hand Dewey does have sound philosophic reasons for linking art appreciation to democracy it opens up a rich discussion about the possible interconnections between art and society at large.

My approach to this material is distinctly pragmatist. I consider traditional philosophic texts, but I also analyze historic primary documents to get a picture of the classes and activities at the Barnes Foundation. This dissertation considers both philosophical ideas and how they were deployed in practice. In later chapters I will often emphasize this practical dimension of Dewey's aesthetics. In these efforts I take Dewey's presumed connection between art appreciation and democracy seriously in order to mine it for contemporary philosophic relevance. My hope is that by thoroughly working through Dewey's claims about art appreciation I will be able to show implications which have a reach beyond this specific historic episode.

One idea that emerges from my analysis, which I believe has this kind of reach, is the idea that social change requires material change to the environment. I will argue that the Barnes Foundation under Dewey's tenure was a practical manifestation of this idea. It was designed in its activities and its architecture to enact a radical shift in the conventional approaches to art. To engender new habits in society it deliberately created

[3] For example consider the speech at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Barnes Foundation where Dewey frames the institution in his way. Available in John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 2*, 383-386

new environmental conditions. This environment included both the way we talk about art and how we physically interact with art.

Dewey and Albert C. Barnes, the founder of the institution, both perceived a problem within contemporary industrial America that there were too few spaces conducive to aesthetic appreciation.[4] And what places did exist were reserved for the wealthy. In their estimation art museums had become distant and esoteric buildings that were only nominally for the public. Museums encouraged the public to pass through them as if on a conveyer belt in a kind of bewildering leisure activity, but as institutions they were often more interested in the conspicuous consumption of elite collectors.[5] Universities were not much better. The academy was not interested in knowing a work of art as a platform for appreciation, but as an example of a particular style or formal rule leading to academic theories taking priority over the enjoyment of paintings.[6] Meanwhile the popular arts, cinema and the radio, were not approached with any seriousness. They were more often seen simply as the opposite of work, more a form of relaxation, than a call for strenuous appreciation.[7] Dewey and Barnes believed that since the current institutions of society were not up to the task of engendering appreciation then a deliberate shift in the activities and habits of Americans was needed.

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[4] This sentiment is evident in John Dewey, "Art in Education and Education in Art," *New Republic* 46, (24 February 1926): 11-13.

[5] This argument is made in Albert C. Barnes, "The Temple," *Opportunity*, no. 17 (May 1924), 138-140.

[6] Albert C. Barnes, "Art Teaching that Obstructs Education." *Journal of the Barnes Foundation*, Vol.1 no.2 (May 1925), 44-47.

[7] John Dewey, "Character Training for Youth." In *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1952, Volume 9:1933-1934*. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

The Barnes Foundation wanted to be a catalyst for that change. It sought to break with convention and pre-existing institutions. Although in many ways it resembled a traditional museum, it is important to mark its differences. During the 1920s and 30s under Dewey's leadership the only people granted access to the collection were people enrolled in foundation courses.[8] It was first and foremost an educational institution not a space of leisure. This differs from the idea of a public museum. But neither was it a private collection. Enrollment was free and the limited spots in the class were often given to working-class participants. The foundation's initial students were adult black factory workers and first generation European immigrants. Although these classes were small they embodied a populist ethos.[9] They did not privilege the wealthy that often benefit from limited access to private collections. For several years Barnes also funded European trips in which students could visit the encyclopedic collections of France.[10]

The foundation built a specialized gallery and classroom building opened in 1925. The paintings were often displayed a-historically to highlight elements of color or design across periods. This is in contrast to curating paintings chronologically as they are in many museums. Paintings were often moved and there was no rigid ordering. If it was important for inquiry to compare the colors of a Monet and an El Greco they could be put

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[8] This history is explained in Margaret Hess Johnson, "Democracy and Education at the Barnes Foundation," *The Bulletin of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education*, no. 8 (1987), 62-69.

[9] For a more detailed account of Barnes interactions with black communities see Mary Ann Meyers, *Albert Barnes and the Science of Philanthropy: Art, Education, and African-American Culture,* (Edison: Transaction Publisher, 2006).

[10] B.P. Suplee, *Reflections on the Barnes Foundation's aesthetic theory, philosophical antecedents, and "method" for appreciation* (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 50.

on the same wall for analysis.[11] Paintings were not only compared to paintings but also to other objects including an extensive collection of furniture and hardware. Classrooms were also outfitted with a record player so that music could be brought in for comparison. For example, students would be asked to compare the musical rhythms in Beethoven to the visual rhythms in Cezanne's *Card Players*.[12] Lastly each room had a specific view onto an arboretum with its own rare collection of flora.[13] While the focus of the Barnes curriculum was paintings and their visual aspects in practice this was enriched by reference to many other sensory experiences. This kind of multi-modal approach is not often taken up in conventional art museums. A more detailed history of the Barnes Foundation will be taken up in my first chapter.

The Barnes Foundation wanted to change the ways in which people ordinarily approached artworks. It was clear that it was not as easy as simply pointing to a few good paintings in a book, a museum, or a university classroom, but instead it required the marshalling of many resources, the coordination of many people, the construction of architectural spaces, and cultivation of specific habits of looking and comparing. Each of these actions required the breaking of old habits and the forming of new ones. The underlying assumptions here about habit and the material environment as it relates to aesthetic appreciation will be taken up in my second chapter. There I will explicate the complementary theory in Dewey's "social psychology" and his "naturalistic esthetics" to

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[11] Jeremy Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012): 138.

[12] Machia Sachs Littell, "Encounters With Great Educators," in *Working to Make a Difference: The Personal and Pedagogical Stories of Holocaust Educators Across the Globe,* (Blue Ridge Summit: Lexington Books, 2003), 54.

[13] William M. Klein, *Gardens of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 114.

explain how habits can be broken and formed in the interest of aesthetic experience. These pragmatist theories connected with the activities of the Barnes Foundation I will argue explain what it meant for Dewey to have an applied aesthetics. That is the reconstruction of habit towards the intensification of appreciation.

For Dewey the seemingly minor task of the appreciation of paintings became an exemplar of how any social action is to take place in a democracy. It requires expansive and imaginative thinking. It requires rigor and seriousness, and it fundamentally requires the acknowledgement that all local change is happening within a complex larger environment. Because the environment itself is always shifting there is no *a priori* or formal ways to address social problems. They must instead be tackled experimentally. Their solutions are reached progressively by the intelligent use of the experimental method which draws on past experiences to predict future ends. When the Barnes Foundation is chartered in 1922 with the state of Pennsylvania it is designated as an "experiment in education."[14] The members of the foundation approached the problem of appreciation in this experimental spirit, and many of the activities and ideas I've mentioned developed over time and through trial and error. They did not arise because of specific axioms or formal theories of art. In chapter one I will show that many of the ideas attributed to Dewey's mature aesthetics originally arose in a collaborative discussion between several philosophers employed by the Barnes Foundation whose names have been mostly lost to history. This fact only helps to emphasize the experimental nature of Dewey's approach to art.

[14] Barnes Foundation Charter filed 1922, Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds Office, Norristown Pennsylvania.

It is this experimental ethos, expressed in the foundation's founding document that embodies Dewey's concept of democracy. The ability to collectively address shared problems in a progressive manner is what Dewey calls democracy.[15] Democracy for Dewey is not a governmental form specific to nations or states, but instead it is a way of life that can be enacted in a group of any size. In the case of the Barnes Foundation the achievement of art appreciation is an achievement of democracy, because the solution to the problem of the lack of aesthetic experiences in society is one that must be addressed progressively, collectively, and experimentally. The democratic and aesthetic ambitions of the Barnes Foundation are for these reasons one and the same.

The democratic attitude Dewey and the other members of the foundation brought to the seemingly minor topic of the enjoyment of paintings still required major material shifts in the environment. It demonstrated that to enact a proportional response to entrenched conventions is often difficult and rigorous. The appreciation of paintings, however is only one of the possible problems that can be taken up in this way.[16] Dewey never believed that these efforts should be exclusively applied to paintings. Instead the serious minded experimental approach applied here to painting could be used for any problem arising in society. The lesson of the Barnes Foundation, however, is that this is not easy and even the seemingly simple task of art appreciation requires a sustained engagement with the world at large.

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[15] This is presented in John Dewey, "Liberalism and Social Action," *The Later Works of John Dewey Volume 11: 1935-1937 Essays and Liberalism and Social Action*, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991).

[16] This language of the problem of appreciation is taken from Albert C. Barnes, "The Problem of Appreciation," in *Art in Painting* (Merion: Barnes Foundation, 1925), 21-23.

A related point from Dewey's time at the Barnes Foundation is that aesthetic experiences must be actively created and do not simply occur spontaneously. He suggests that even if potentially aesthetic objects exist current habits fail to engender aesthetic experiences. It is not enough to simply realize an object can be aesthetic; to appreciate that aesthetic aspect sometimes requires a radical shift in action.[17] Dewey argues for the aesthetic potential of everything from comic strips, cooking, street protests, and railway cars.[18] In the classes at the Barnes students scrutinized pottery, chairs, hinges, and many other household items. But while Dewey suggests that these objects, which are not traditional fine arts, are still potentially aesthetically valuable he also emphasizes that this potential is distinct from its realization. That is to say a flower, a spoon, and a Matisse canvas all have the potential to be aesthetic objects but often fail to be so. Dewey argues that many forces in society prevent or deform experience and render art and non-art objects alike as non-aesthetic.

This first half of the aforementioned argument has been taken up in recent years by many contemporary philosophers. This is the idea that everyday objects and activities have an aesthetic dimension. Dewey is often cited as the progenitor of "everyday aesthetics."[19] But this idea of the aesthetic dimension of the quotidian should be coupled with Dewey's distinct concern about the deforming nature of our environment on the aesthetic dimension of life. I will argue that when Dewey discusses the everyday aspect

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[17] This is the closing argument in the final chapter of John Dewey, *Art as Experience*. In *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953, Volume 10:1934*, p. 1-352. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987).

[18] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 353.

[19] This history is suggested in Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

of the aesthetic this is not some happy invocation that lifts a fog and allows us to finally see the art that was always around us.[20] It is, instead, like a warning that art is something we have to attend to each and every day. Art of the everyday is a challenge to our perception and a relentless activity to be taken up. This interpretation I offer as an intervention into the scholarship on Dewey and everyday aesthetics ongoing today. I want to emphasize the daily practical aspect of appreciation as demonstrated at the Barnes Foundation. The aesthetic dimension of life has to be worked for and often this work requires environmental changes. I work out this line of argumentation in the conclusion to this dissertation.

These core ideas about the relationship between democracy and appreciation, between appreciation and the environment, and the place of Dewey in contemporary scholarship I work out in the following three complementary chapters.

In chapter one I detail the two decades between 1918 and 1938 where Dewey is most actively involved with the Barnes Foundation. I give an analysis of both the published writings and the activities of the Barnes Foundation and its earliest faculty. I show the close connection between Dewey's concept of democracy and how this is embodied in the activities of the foundation.

In chapter two I offer a close reading to Dewey's more famous monographs including *Human Nature and Conduct*, *Experience and Nature*, and *Art as Experience*. I use this to explain Dewey's concept of appreciation underwriting many of the efforts at the Barnes Foundation. I show that it is connected to a particular concept of materialism and the environment.

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[20] John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 12.

In chapter three I consider the implication of my previous chapters for contemporary scholarship in several fields. First I consider Dewey's place in the history of aesthetics. Second, I show that Dewey's naturalistic aesthetic of appreciation can be productively contrasted with current ideas in analytic and evolutionary philosophy of art. Third and finally I put forward arguments about the value of this study for modern and contemporary art history.

Collectively these chapters take up key themes of Dewey's philosophy: naturalism, pedagogy, and democratic theory and each show how they reinforce the claim that change, even change in aesthetic experience, also requires significant environmental change. The answer to the question, "what is applied aesthetics?" appears more clearly when we realize just how deeply integrated aesthetic appreciation is with the world at large.

Chapter 1

Applied Aesthetics

1. Introduction

In 1916 John Dewey published *Democracy and Education.* Therein is a passage about the role of appreciation in learning. Dewey argues that while appreciation is often only connected to the idea of "art appreciation" it is in fact "a serious mistake to regard appreciation as if it were confined to such things as literature and pictures and music."[21] Instead appreciation is a way of relating to the world in general, so that emotional values can be immediately felt. For Dewey appreciation marks the difference "between learning mathematical equations about light and being carried away by some peculiarly glorious illumination of a misty landscape."[22] The scientist, the statesmen, and the philosopher all utilize the felt dimension of appreciation in their respective fields. Dewey extrapolates from this a curricular principle for the irrevocable "place of the fine arts in the [any] course of study."[23] The direct experience of fine art, Dewey suggests, leads us to appreciation and the heightened value of other practices, including civic and political activity, thus asserting a theoretical link between appreciating the fine arts and

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[21] Dewey, John. *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume 9: 1916, Democracy and Education* (ed.) Jo Ann Boydston. (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985): 245.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

developing oneself into a better citizen overall. In this move Dewey ties the vibrancy of democracy to the concept of "appreciation." [24]

Dewey could not have conceived that this passage on appreciation would help instigate the longest and most deliberate investigation into the relationship of pragmatism to the arts. Dewey's description of appreciation would guide the creation of a new kind of art school, one in which students were rigorously exposed to the fine arts in order to cultivate an aesthetic appreciation and ultimately encourage increased appreciation across all parts of life. This school was the Barnes Foundation, started by the art collector Albert C. Barnes, who read *Democracy and Education* in the summer of 1917 and subsequently reached out to Dewey.[25] The two men became friends and collaborators and over the following two decades developed a curriculum for art appreciation. Barnes describes their efforts as founded on the shared belief that, "the prime and unwavering contention has been that art is no trivial matter."[26] This utter seriousness about art was to be consistent with an approach to democratic life. This chapter investigates these claims, lays out the history of Dewey's work at the Barnes, and analyzes the philosophic output of the foundation.

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[24] The connections being made here between art, education, and society may put readers in mind of the writings of Friedrich Schiller and in particular his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (New York: Dover, 2004). Schiller suggests that the failure of the French revolution was the result of the limited aesthetic education of the revolutionaries and imagines instead an alternative utopia in which the arts are paramount. Dewey although familiar with the work of Schiller does not make him part of his own aesthetics, while it is unclear if Barnes knew the work of Schiller at all. Schiller is in many respects sympathetic to the discourse at the Barnes Foundation but despite this makes no substantive appearance in the literature produced by the foundation.

[25] Albert Barnes, Letter Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey, Dec.19 1918, Presidents Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA

[26] John Dewey and Albert Barnes. *Art and Education* (Merion; Barnes Foundation, 1928), 4.

This link that Dewey makes between the appreciation of art and the development of a more democratic citizenry raises interesting reconstructions of both the conventional way of talking about art and politics.[27] Democracy for Dewey is a way of life in which diverse connections of meaning are sought and strengthened. If our current historic moment cultivates one part of experience at the expense of another then this is symptomatic of a non-democratic culture that perpetuates divisions. This chapter defends Dewey's conviction that art appreciation is constitutive of a vibrant democracy. This is because democracy is for Dewey an appreciative way of life. To explain this will require an examination of Dewey's writing about appreciation from his aesthetics, politics, and philosophy of education. As well as an examination of the activities of the Barnes Foundation that enacted this kind of appreciation in practice.

Dewey's involvement with the Barnes Foundation is not well known in our time, nor was it given serious consideration in his. The English poet Sir Herbert Read, an outspoken admirer of Dewey, once remarked, "I regard it as one of the curiosities of philosophy that when John Dewey…came to the subject of aesthetics, he nowhere…established a connection between aesthetics and education."[28] Admittedly,

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[27] It might be asked why art is privileged here as a special site of appreciation? Dewey suggests that appreciating fine art makes one more appreciative of other fields of action, but is the inverse true? Can attentiveness to politics make one more appreciative of art? This link appears tenuous and there are plenty of counter examples where an appreciation expressed in one field does not necessitate appreciation in another. Consider this point just between two different arts: if I learn to appreciate opera do I also increase my appreciation of paintings? It is not inconceivable that there are painting-hating opera fans. There are many counterexamples of individuals who are deeply engrossed by one dimension of culture but mostly unmoved by another. The solution comes when we realize that Dewey does not see these as permanent divisions. Democracy is for Dewey an experiential orientation in which divisions between experiences become superficial. There is no reason in principle why opera may not enrich our experience of paintings or even baseball.

[28] Herbert Read. *Education through Art* (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 247.

when looking at Dewey's aesthetic writing of the 1930s, there is a seeming disconnect between Dewey's earlier educational philosophy and his thoughts on art. Philip Jackson in his 1998 volume *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* echoes Read's bewilderment about Dewey's omission of education in his aesthetic works. Jackson speculates that, "…Dewey may have chosen not to discuss the educational implications of his theory of the arts chiefly because he had not yet thought them through…He also lacked the time and means to do so…without a school of his own in which to experiment and try out ideas…"[29] These criticisms are only reasonable if limited to Dewey's monographs, but are in ignorance of the historic record of Dewey's work at the Barnes Foundation.

Dewey served as the foundation's director of education and dedicated his work there to the development of a curriculum for art appreciation. This work effectively bridged his pedagogical theories, his politics, and his interest in aesthetics into a single practice. Furthermore, the foundation's first teachers were former graduate students of Dewey's and the organizing philosophy was explicitly pragmatist. These activities predate the publishing of *Art as Experience* by almost a decade and suggest that Dewey's aesthetics were created as a direct response to problems encountered in this educational experiment.

Despite omissions made by scholars like Jackson and Read, there is a small body of scholarship in art history and education studies which has recently taken up Dewey and Barnes's collaboration. Even though these studies have helped established the historic facts of the close friendship and active collaboration between Dewey and Barnes, there are still unresolved interpretive questions concerning Barnes's influence on Dewey and vice versa.

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[29] Philip Jackson, *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), xiii.

Biographers who address Dewey's involvement with the Barnes Foundation often lump Barnes into a category with Dewey's eccentric associates, including Scudder Klyce and F.M. Alexander, and generally dismiss the Barnes Foundation as not having a serious influence on Dewey's work.[30] In contrast, the Barnes Foundation and its adherents wholeheartedly claim Dewey as one of their own and conceive of the Barnes Foundation as being a fundamental part of Dewey's philosophic career.[31]

It is my conviction that Dewey's relationship to the Barnes Foundation was neither inconsequential nor was he seamlessly integrated into the foundation, and we do not need to decide between these two interpretations. Instead I offer a picture of an unfolding dialogue between Barnes, Dewey and a host of other voices including the other faculty at the Barnes Foundation. This dialogic aspect of Dewey's aesthetics has gone wholly unnoticed among philosophers, biographers, and critics but should play a central role in its interpretation. It reveals that Dewey was engaged in a live conversation which brought with it disagreements, misunderstandings, and challenges but was formative for his own mature thinking about the arts and led to the creation of shared pedagogical practices.

It is my position that the Barnes Foundation offered Dewey an opportunity to have his own books, in particular his *Democracy and Education* and *Human Nature and Conduct*, reinterpreted and represented back to him by the other members of the Barnes Foundation. What emerges from this group's integration of Dewey's philosophy in the

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[30] Martin, Jay. *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 285.

[31]This is the overall argument of: Carolyn L. Berenato, "A Historical Analysis of the Influence of John Dewey's Educational Philosophy on the Barnes Foundation's Art Educational Experience 1922 to the Present," (PhD Diss., St. Joseph University, 2008).

service of looking at paintings is Dewey's mature aesthetics expressed in *Art as Experience*.

To best understand this dynamic I will argue that several figures, now mostly lost to the annals of aesthetics, should be reconsidered. These include: Thomas Munro, a former doctoral student of Dewey's and major framer of the Barnes Foundation's earliest courses; Laurence Buermeyer, a PhD in philosophy from Princeton who attended Dewey's courses at Columbia and eventually became largely responsible for the theoretical texts produced for the foundation; Mary Mullen, a former secretary to Barnes who was a primary instructor in the first decade of the foundation; and Barnes himself, whose industriousness brought the aforementioned scholars together for an improbable experiment in art appreciation and democracy.

The remainder of the chapter follows a roughly chronological account of Dewey's earliest thinking about the arts up to the founding of the Barnes Foundation. It then charts the subsequent philosophic discussions and transformations that occur at the foundation. It ends with a discussion of the philosophic positions taken in the late 20s and 30s which closely align appreciation and democracy.

2. Dewey's concept of appreciation before 1920.

Dewey throughout his career touched on topics in art and the aesthetic. An early recurrent topic in Dewey's work is the experience of aesthetic appreciation, in time it became to be a central concern, and ultimately it was the practical aim of the Barnes Foundation.

Some of Dewey's earliest speculation about appreciation appears in his *Psychology* of 1887.[32] Therein he makes a distinction between correct taste on the one hand and genuine appreciation on the other. This is clear when he remarks that "He [a person] becomes a connoisseur or an amateur, and prides himself upon his fastidiousness and refinement of taste rather than loses himself in the realm of objective beauty."[33] The supposed connoisseur only registers the object's qualities, while the true appreciator ascertains the felt significance of those qualities. This distinction between appreciation and crude connoisseurship will persist throughout Dewey's authorship, however what constitutes a "genuine" appreciation changes markedly. [34]

Dewey did not arrive at his vocabulary of appreciation spontaneously. Dewey himself notes that a concept of appreciation is already at work in the philosophy of German Romanticism, and suggests in an 1892 review of Bernard Bosanquet's lectures on aesthetics that... "In Kant, Schiller, and Goethe, or rather *through* them, the data of æsthetic were brought face to face with the metaphysical problem, and the union of Kant's abstract æsthetic with the appreciation of art…"[35] This signals that there are diverse antecedents to Dewey's thought about appreciation.

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[32]John Dewey, *Psychology*, in *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898. Volume 2:* (ed.) Jo Ann Boydston. (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985).

[33] Ibid, 279.

[34] In this earliest of formulations Dewey is still drawing on the language of German romanticism. Ultimately, for Dewey, what is appreciated is the embodiment of ideals. Abstract universals like beauty, grace, and loveliness become objectified reality. Likewise, what is most prized is enthusiasm and the intensity of feeling over discursive forms of knowledge. Later on in Dewey's career he will diverge from this language of idealism and Hegelianism and his discussion of appreciation will become distinctly more Darwinian. Appreciation will become coextensive with experience and not a particular feeling or judgment.

[35] John Dewey, "A History of Æsthetic, by Bernard Bosanquet, formerly Fellow of University College, Oxford. London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co.; New York:Mac-millan Macmillan Co.,

It is important to note also that this comment on Kant and Schiller comes in the context of a review of the British Hegelian Bernard Bosanquet. Bosanquet is a figure whom Dewey returns to often even in his late career works on aesthetics.[36] Bosanquet uses his *Three Lectures on Aesthetic*, to expand upon the "aesthetic attitude" which he argues plays a major role in both the production and reception of art.[37] Bosanquet puts forward a detailed idealist philosophy of appreciation. In particular his first lecture on the "aesthetic attitude and contemplation creation" emphasizes the idea of appreciation as a specific mental disposition. While there are many differences between Dewey and Bosanquet there are still echoes of Bosanquet's ideas throughout Dewey's aesthetics, including the close connection between production and reception, and an emphasis on appreciation.[38]

By the 1900s Dewey is more directly in conversation with American philosophers and engaged a wide-ranging discussion about appreciation that is not specific to the arts. For example, Dewey interrogates Josiah Royce's concept of a "World of Appreciation" as early as 1902 in his review of Royce's published Gifford lectures.[39] In particular he

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1892." in *The Early Works Of John Dewey, 1882-1898. Volume 4*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), 195.

[36] For example in John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 174.

[37] Bernard Bosanquet, *Three Lectures on Aesthetic* (London : Macmillan and co., limited 1915).

[38]It is also my conviction that Dewey's preferred spelling of "esthetic" is a nod to Bosanquet. His peers including William James, George Santayana, and even Albert Barnes each prefer different spellings of this word. Dewey himself from about 1890-1920 uses "aesthetic" or "æsthetic" in various published works. Bosanquet however uses the spelling "esthetic." This is the spelling Dewey takes up during the 1920s. There is no textual record accounting for the shift in Dewey's writing. I will use aesthetic in the body of my own text. This is more in keeping with contemporary practices. I will however leave Dewey's spelling as is within direct quotations.

[39] John Dewey, "The World and the Individual. Gifford Lectures, Second Series: Nature, Man, and the Moral Order by Josiah Royce Ph.D. New York: Macmillan Co., London: Macmillan and

takes issue with Royce's distinction between the World of Description and the World of Appreciation,[40] the latter being the immediately felt realm of the sensual, which Dewey thinks cannot be cleanly separated from the prior realm of discursive thought. In his engagement with Royce, Dewey casts doubt on a presumed separation of object and subject and is disparaging of the idea that appreciation is exclusively on the side of the subject but that it is also connected to objective fact.[41]

A decade after this, Dewey finds a more sympathetic interlocutor in William James. He reviews James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism* in1912 and highlights the essay a "World of Pure Experience." Dewey writes:

> In the fifth essay…Mr. James makes a very interesting application of the doctrine of a pure experience to the matter of ...appreciation … The doctrine itself saves us from the necessity either of making the values upon which…aesthetics…depend purely subjective and mental, or of calling in some transcendental, unexperienceable principle to give them validity.[42]

In James, Dewey finds confirmation of the idea that appreciation tells us something about the real world and reveals real values. Unlike in the philosophy of Bosanquet and Royce where appreciation is exclusively tied to the subjective for James appreciation it is

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Co., 1901." in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume 2*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) 125.

[40] Ibid, fn 1, 124. As Dewey puts it: "I do not find, however, in Professor Royce's discussion, any basis for a distinction between the problem of *what* our will intends, and *how* the will is expressed. To know what the will intends is precisely to know how it is embodied."

[41] This point about Royce's dualism however was already made in his syllabus for Ethics in 1894 for the University of Michigan. John Dewey, "The Study of Ethic," in *The Early Works Of John Dewey, 1882-1898. Volume 4: 1893-1894*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) 259.

[42] John Dewey, "Essays in Radical Empiricism By William James." In *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume 7*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) 148.

integrated into all experience. Dewey grabs hold of the Jamesian observation that: experience is not appreciated but instead it is appreciative. This is an important change of perspective; appreciation is not simply a limited activity within experience but it an orientation for experience in general. This Jamesian move is of significance in discussions of Dewey's mature philosophy. What is key here is that experience is not an object that can be stood apart from and regarded appreciatively; instead appreciation marks a quality of experience with no presumed critical distance.

By the 1920s Dewey's concept of appreciation had articulated itself. Dewey's "appreciation" can be understood as a phase of experience, it is both affective and empirically grounded, and takes a pride of place in his educational and aesthetic thinking. Dewey captures it best in the revised edition of *How We Think* that: "Barriers and obstructions that have previously come between the mind and some object…fall away. The mind and the subject seem to come together and unite. This is the state of affairs that is designated by the word 'appreciation'."[43] This philosophic work sets the stage for the conversation that will be struck up by Albert Barnes in the decades that follow.

3. Dewey's link between appreciation and democracy.

Before we address the work of the foundation it will be important to grasp the political material they were explicitly responding to. Barnes was less stimulated by Dewey's few works in aesthetics than he was by Dewey's educational and political writings. As Dewey began to work with the Barnes Foundation he also continued to write

[43] John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 8: 1933, Essays, How We Think, revised edition*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,1985), 196.

about democratic theory. His most famous works in social and political philosophy were written during the tenure of his directorship at the Barnes Foundation including *The Public and its Problems*, 1927, and *Liberalism and Social Action,* 1935. I want to suggest that these should be read alongside the aesthetic work produced by Dewey and his colleagues at the foundation.

A recurrent theme in Dewey's writing is the conception of democracy as a way of life. This idea has its origins in his earliest pedagogical writing and finds a coherent expression in *Democracy and Education*. Democracy is not a governmental system but a way in which we move though our social environment. This early conception of democracy is maintained and concisely captured in a late essay entitled "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us." He writes, "We have had the habit of thinking of democracy as a kind of political mechanism.... We can escape from this external way of thinking only as we realize in thought and act that democracy is a personal way of individual life..."[44] In *Liberalism and Social Action,* Dewey makes this same point when he remarks "The problem of democracy was seen to be not solved, hardly more than externally touched, by the establishment of universal suffrage and representative government." [45] Democracy for Dewey cannot simply be reduced to a procedural definition; it instead is a way of life itself with an inextricable felt dimension. [46]

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[44] John Dewey. *The Late Works of John Dewey Volume 14* (ed.) Jo Ann Boydson (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985), 225-226.

[45] John Dewey. *The Late Works of John Dewey Volume 11* (ed.) Jo Ann Boydson (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985), 26.

[46] The disjunction between democracy as a way of life on one hand and democracy as a political form of government has the positive effect of allowing Dewey to talk about democracy irrespective of a regime's formal structure. The fact that a people are democratic does not mean that their government is.

In Dewey's political writing he optimistically states that the felt dimension of democracy is captured in art. According to Dewey, art allows individuals to communicate the perception and existence of social problems. Art can transform aspects of the world and its constituent problems into communicable form. As Dewey himself poetically says "Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible."[47] Without the ability to compellingly share our experience we would languish in apolitical isolation, but the possibility to communicate through symbolic means initiates us into communities. Art, in so far as it communicates, is always wrapped up into the process of making publics out of disparate individuals. [48]

Art, however, does more than just relay news of social problems it also becomes a source of democratic life, even in the absence of a democratic government. Contemporary philosopher John Stuhr explains that, "Given a Deweyan view, people's actual lives and social relations may fail to be actually and substantially democratic even when their government surely and formally is democratic… accordingly, no one can

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[47]Dewey, John. *The Late Works of John Dewey Volume 2* (ed.) Jo Ann Boydson (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985) , 324.

[48] Ibid. Dewey's clearest concept of the public is provided in *The Public and its Problems* of 1927 a text written in response to an earlier work by Walter Lippmann *The Phantom Public*. Lippmann bewails the lack of political agency of modern liberal citizens. For Lippmann citizens must make decisions on public matters yet these matters are often too complex or too obscure to ever make a reasoned response. Therefore the realm of politics is reserved for elite technocrats and propagandists who reduce the public to complete political impotence. The disconnect between the demands of a complex polity and an ignorant citizenry is intractable for Lippmann and renders the realization of a politically active public impossible (Lippmann, *Phantom Public*, Chapter 1). Dewey agrees with much of Lippmann's analysis including the separation between a government and the people (Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, 246) but wholly rejects Lippmann's conclusions. Dewey believes we must abandon the idea of a singular public and conceive of the presence of multiple publics within social life. These publics emerge from the perception of negative externalities upon individuals. Individuals then bond together as a group to address the specific shared problem impacting them. It is at this level of a specific group coalesced around a specific problem that politics occurs, and not at the abstract level of a nation.

afford passively to idolize practices and institutions that proved instrumental in the past; instead, there is a need continuously to appraise and be ready to revise them when necessary relative to their present and future contributions to a democratic way of life."[49] Stuhr suggests that the place in which these consequences take root is most significantly in the realm of imagination. He writes that democracy as a way of life "may be or may become—a deep commitment, grasped by imagination, that draws lives together, makes meaningful our efforts, and directs our actions. As an ideal, it is generated through imagination, but it is not 'made out of imaginary stuff.'"[50] Democracy as a way of life is deeply integrated into our imaginative lives.

Art, in addition to forming publics, is also democratic in so far as it effects the imagination by the introduction of new experiences. This is opposed to tired, routine, and conventional experiences. Art, if it is to be democratic, must exceed what is currently imaginable, and in the process it opens up new connections and associations in a shared space of discovery. The textbook for the Barnes Foundation's courses proclaims that art "opens our eyes to what unaided we could not see."[51] It does so in two ways. First, it opens our eyes to what we may have been unaware of. Second, it opens our eyes to newly imaginable possibilities.

For Dewey, painting becomes privileged as an expedient tool for stimulating the imagination and fostering novel perceptual experiences. This focus on painting does not in principle exclude other forms of experience from enacting the same kind of

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[49] John Stuhr, *Pragmatism, Post-modernism and the Future of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge 2003), 52-54.

[50] John Dewey, *The Late Works of John Dewey Volume 9* (ed.) Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 1985), 33-34.

[51] Albert C. Barnes, *The Art in Painting* (Merion: Barnes Foundation Merion PA. 1925), 3.

communication and imaginative activity. All manner of daily activity may fulfil the same function and likewise traditional artworks may also fail to stimulate any new experience and be themselves tired and mechanical.

This dynamic is brought into focus by Dewey when he compares it to an analogous part of culture: friendship.[52] He says the appreciative function of art is like, "the effort to understand another person with whom we habitually associate. All friendship is a solution of the problem."[53] The problem is of shared experience. Friendship is fundamentally collaborative and involves multiple parties who share an experience; however, no single party has the same experience. If this kind of pluralism is possible in this kind of everyday association Dewey believes it is possible in art. Those who interact with an artwork share complimentary, but not identical, experiences of the artwork. He writes, "Friendship and intimate affection are not the result of information about another person even though knowledge may further their formation. But it does so only as it becomes an integral part of sympathy through the imagination."[54] Friendship is a democratic institution which challenges and expands our sympathy through our imagination. Likewise appreciation brings out these same features in art and daily life.

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[52] This analogy to friendship and sociability is in contrast with the aesthetic tradition of disinterestedness. The idea of disinterestedness is famously worked out by Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* and has had critical traction into the 20th century in the works of figures like Clement Greenberg. Kant originally suggests that a proper aesthetic judgment must be arrived at without arousing an individual's personal desire. This desire would be contingent and hence not universal. Disinterestedness when invoked is often tied to the conviction that beauty is universal. Dewey's philosophy has no interest in preserving universality and instead upholds pluralistic values. Dewey grounds beauty in practical action and lived experience and simply has no need to posit disinterestedness. The use of friendship while in contrast to the Kantian tradition is perfectly in keeping with the pragmatic tradition Dewey continues.

[53] John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 340.

[54] Ibid.

The thrust of Dewey's political writings is not that aesthetic appreciation can take up democracy as an object, but that democracy as a way of life is fundamentally appreciative. In this way to develop appreciation is to always already to develop democracy as a way of life. This conception of democracy and the previously identified ideas of appreciation, especially as they are articulated in *Democracy and Education*, predate and animate many of the efforts of the Barnes Foundation. In the following section we will consider the development of the foundation as it was originally conceived to develop Dewey's concepts of the interrelation between democracy and art.

4. The Creation of the Barnes Foundation (1916-1923)

In 1916 Albert Coombs Barnes (1872-1951), a Philadelphia business man and chemist, hired a Princeton philosophy PhD student named Laurence Buermeyer (1896-1954) to privately tutor him through the works of William James (1842-1910). Their frequent sessions allowed them to work through James's *Psychology* and *Pragmatism* and other related texts including the recently published *Democracy and Education* by pragmatist John Dewey (1859-1952).[55]

At this point in his life Barnes was financially successful and running a growing pharmaceutical company which produced the drug Argyrol.[56] Barnes came from a

[55] Harold was the nickname of Buermeyer at the Barnes Foundation. This was apparently because he bore a striking resemblance to Harold Lloyd the silent film comedian. See Barbara Anne Beaucar, **"**Harold," *Archive Dive*, Barnes Foundation Website, accessed August 1 2014, http://www.barnesfoundation.org/blog/071414.

[56] Albert C. Barnes, "The Methods of Using Argyrol" *The Alabama Medical Journal* 14 (1902), 558-563.

working class background and as a result his fast success came with a reflective attitude about class, race, and socio-economic disparity.[57] This nascent concern in egalitarian politics fostered an interest in the democratic role of education. It is in this period that Barnes begins to offer voluntary courses in his factory for his workers.[58] Many of Barnes's employees were black and few had high school educations. These classes were conducted over the lunch period and volunteers were encouraged to participate in discussion-based seminars, often presided over by Barnes himself or his secretary Mary Mullen (1875 – 1957).[59] Barnes would later write about the success of these classes for serving an underprivileged population, and cite them as instrumental for thinking about expanding these ideas to a larger scale.[60]

The factory sessions began with discussions of novels and graduated to the philosophy of William James, the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, and, by the end of

[57] Albert C. Barnes, "Negro Art in America," In *The New Negro*, ed. Alaine Locke (New York: Athenaeum 1925), 19-25.

[58] There is no exact date for the start of these classes in the archival record, but there is evidence that there were classes in some form as early as 1908. Education Files. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

[59] Albert C. Barnes, "The Barnes Foundation," *The New Republic* XXXIV 432 (1923): 65.

[60] The complicated power dynamics built into these classes should not be overlooked. They were a project by management for the workers. They were conducted by whites and attended by a majority of black participants. They clearly followed Barnes's personal interests about painting. The factory classes were not a spontaneous democratic association but instead a top-down experiment. Arguably this was a successful experiment which yielded productive discussions and grew over time, but it should still be viewed critically. These earliest classes highlight a paternalistic aspect to many of Barnes's efforts and writings. This paternalistic attitude greatly complicates the progressive ambitions of Barnes, and will be a recurrent point of criticism in the following decades. It is also a point of contrast between Dewey and Barnes. What is important for us at this juncture is to see that Barnes was already practically engaged with questions about education and politics at the time he encountered Dewey's work.

the teens, the appreciation of paintings.[61] This last effort was fueled by Barnes's growing interest in contemporary European painting and sustained by his burgeoning art collection. His factory in urban Philadelphia became a kind of showroom for the works of Picasso, Renoir, and Matisse.[62] These paintings were relatively unknown in American circles. In their acquisition, Barnes relied heavily on the advisement and introductions of his high school friend and Ashcan School painter William Glackens (1870-1938). Glackens personally introduced Barnes to Leo Stein (1872-1947) and Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) and the many young artists who frequented their salons. On his regular trips to Paris, Barnes also became acquainted with African art dealer Paul Guillaume (1875 – 1957) and Harlem Renaissance thinker Alain Locke (1875 – 1957), both of whom he kept correspondence with over many years.[63]

By the time Barnes picked up *Democracy and Education* he was already engaged in an ongoing, but informal, discussion about the value of education and the place of art in American life. The first topic was a major theme of Dewey's; the second a minor refrain. This volume gives a philosophic argument for the democratic need for education. It emphasizes that a democratic culture needs to be progressive in order to face currently unimaginable problems. Dewey argues that education should lead to more education and the ability to respond to a changing world. In this text Dewey puts forward a broad view of culture which is itself unburdened by tradition.

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[61] B.P. Suplee, *Reflections on the Barnes Foundation's aesthetic theory, philosophical antecedents, and "method" for appreciation* (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 56.

[62] Ibid, 32-34.

[63] This history is well explained in the Guide to the Barnes Correspondence finding aid produced by the Barnes Foundation Archive. Barnes Foundation, "Albert C. Barnes Correspondence 1902-1951 Guide," available at: http://www.barnesfoundation.org/assets/public/ead/acb_frameset.html

In 1918, after persistent invitations by Barnes, Dewey visited Barnes's home in Merion, Pennsylvania to view his unique collection of paintings. [64] Dewey and Barnes, however, soon found a common interest not in paintings but in the politics of assimilation and the role of ethnic groups in America. Barnes and Dewey devised a project to study, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the Polish population of urban Philadelphia. [65] Barnes funded the effort, including salaries for researchers and the purchase of a house for them to stay in within the Polish neighborhood under scrutiny. Dewey recruited several graduate students to move to Philadelphia and gather sociological data. This group included the young Irwin Edman (1896-1954) who would become a member of the Columbia philosophy department and taught their courses on aesthetics for many years. Although never hired by the Barnes Foundation Edman maintained a personal connection to the foundation and its members. The "Polish Project," fizzled after the summer of 1918. It produced almost no scholarly or political impact, but the episode cemented John Dewey and Albert Barnes's friendship and highlights that they were mutually interested in social issues and not exclusively the connoisseurship of paintings.

Between 1919 and 1921 Dewey departs for China and Japan on a prolonged lecture junket but maintains a vigorous correspondence with Barnes including thoughts for a future school for art appreciation.[66] By early 1922 Barnes had applied to the state of

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[64] Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey, January 10, 1918, in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III).* Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters.

[65] Mary V. Dearborn, *Love in the Promised Land The Story of Anzia Yezierska and John Dewey* (New York: Free Press 1988).

[66] During this time Barnes first puts pressure on Dewey to teach, a proposition Dewey flatly rejects when he writes, "I was interested in your suggestion about a seminar in esthetics. But I can't rise to my part in it..." See John Dewey to Albert C Barnes, January 15, 1919. in *The*

Pennsylvania to establish an educational charter. The institution was to be named after his mother and called the Barnes Foundation. In the educational charter, he declares, "The purposes for which the corporation is formed is to promote the advancement of education and the appreciation of the fine arts…"[67] He recruited Mary Mullen and Laurence Buermeyer to develop courses and literature for the emerging institution. He purchased land near his home in Merion, Pennsylvania, retaining the architect Paul Cret (1876-1945) to design a special classroom gallery hybrid building for his collection. He enlisted his wife, Laura L. Barnes (1875 – 1966), to organize a garden and horticultural appreciation program on the grounds. He also established a small publishing operation in order to print a journal.

Later that year, with all this in place, Barnes solicits Dewey to become the Director of Education for the Barnes Foundation.[68] In the letters they exchanged negotiating Dewey's position they agree Dewey would not teach, but would participate in reviewing the materials and overall pedagogical plans of the organization, allowing him flexibility while having oversight of the institution's development.[69]

Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III). Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters.

[67] Barnes Foundation Charter filed in the Montgomery County Recorder of Deeds Office, Norristown Pennsylvania, 1922.

[68] See 1922 folder, Presidents Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

[69] Ibid. Dewey's involvement waxed and waned in the coming decades. Sometimes Dewey would actively edit texts as he did with Mary Mullen's 1923 book *An Approach to Art*. Other times, much to Barnes's chagrin, he would drop out of communication, like when he disappears to finish his 1932 edition of *Ethics*. In this period Dewey took no salary and seems to have participated out of friendship and genuine interest. It was only when Columbia failed to honor a retirement agreement in 1930 that Barnes stepped in to provide Dewey a stipend for his position. See Allen, *High Tide of American Liberalism,* 243-244.

In the summer of 1925 at the Barnes Foundation's gallery ribbon-cutting ceremony Dewey gave a very optimistic and congratulatory speech which signaled the high hopes he had for the foundation and its curriculum.[70] Dewey, Barnes, and the other faculty had grand ambitions for their curriculum to be applied at the city, state, and eventually national level.[71] While this expansive vision never became realized, and most of the classes of the Barnes only ever occurred within the Merion campus, the next decade still saw a flurry of intellectual activity. The most conspicuous output of this period was a series of books and articles by the foundation staff working out the philosophical ideas at stake in this project. The following section will survey this material and interpret the discourse during this period.

5. The Early Activities of the foundation (1923-1934)

The day-to-day work of the foundation was to be conducted by the young staff: Mullen, Buermeyer, and one of Dewey's PhD advisees, Thomas Munro (1875 – 1966).[72]

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[70] John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 2*, 383-386.

[71] Some of these ambitious were dashed by their own impracticality, but others were halted by Barnes' combative and protective character. Many of the personal conflicts are outlined in Howard Greenfeld, *The Devil and Dr. Barnes: Portrait of an American Art Collector* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 2006).

[72] Barnes was still actively running his Argyrol factory and coordinating international sales and distribution. Presumably he wanted to delegate much of the foundations activities, but would come to play an increasingly direct role in its operations, until 1929 when he sold his company and dedicated his energies entirely to the foundation.

In 1924 Penn hires Munro as a visiting lecturer with the title "Barnes Foundation Professor of Modern Art." He taught the course "Fine Arts V: Modern Art." See the *Journal of the Barnes Foundation* 1 (1925) back cover. Buermeyer was in negotiations with Penn to teach courses titled "Psychological Aesthetics" and "Aesthetic Experience" but there is no evidence that these ever took place. In 1925 Munro began a similar class at Columbia under the auspices of the philosophy department and on Dewey's recommendation. Simultaneously to the courses at

In the two years between drawing up of the charter and opening the gallery building, there was a lot of philosophic activity. This period and the years that follow I believe to be the most intellectually fertile in the long history of the foundation. It is in this period that a wide variety of ideas were being considered, and an interest in articulating a new aesthetic philosophy was strong. Furthermore, the first staff was comprised mostly of philosophers. This period culminated with the creation of classes and publication of texts which are still in use at the foundation. During these years, Dewey finished his book *Experience and Nature*, whose final two chapters see an evolution of his metaphysics towards an explicitly aesthetic register and would deliver the William James lectures which would eventually become his volume *Art as Experience*.

These various figures eventually moved on from the Barnes Foundation,[73] but in the decade roughly between the charter and the publishing of *Art as Experience* saw a rare productive collaboration around philosophy, pragmatism, and art appreciation. Although the Barnes Foundation is an ongoing entity, for these reasons just mentioned institution I will only be focusing on these early years.

Penn and Columbia Barnes and Mullen taught twice weekly in Merion for Philadelphia locals. They offered an introductory and an advanced course. The advanced course advertised itself as applying, "modern psychological principles and education methods to the study of aesthetics and of art…based upon the contributions of William James, John Dewey, and George Santayana, which will be linked directly to concrete works of art." See Education Files. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

These pedagogical ambitions and institutional collaborations would, however, crumble amidst infighting and personal disagreements, but it is worth noting the original ethos of the Barnes Foundation was to reach large numbers of students and encourage a serious study of art appreciation.

[73] Munro for example would eventually become the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art and helped found the American Society for Aesthetics and the Journal for Aesthetics and Art Criticism. See Lydia Goehr, "The Institutionalization of a Discipline: A Retrospective of the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism and the American Society for Aesthetics, 1939-1992," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 51 No. 2 (Spring, 1993), 99-121.

In 1924, the Barnes Foundation's began negotiations with Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania to offer courses in appreciation for their students.[74] In January 1925 Munro offers a course through the Columbia philosophy department entitled "Applied Aesthetics" which was one of the first official offerings from the Barnes Foundation.[75] In the course students would attend lectures on "psychology and philosophy" and then take regular trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Barnes Foundation building in Merion for direct contact with paintings.[76]

This early class presents a rather simplistic idea about what it could mean to do "applied aesthetics." In this instance students would sit and hear a lecture and then later *apply* that didactic information to a gallery visit. This divided approach proved

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[74] There were also discussions with Bryn Mawr and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. By 1926, however, Barnes had ended the course at Penn over disagreements with the University administration. Buermeyer had to be mostly relieved of his duties after getting in a fight that left him hospitalized in 1926 and in 1927 Munro is fired over poor performance in the classroom. In 1927, Barnes and Mullen retreat from teaching and Barnes hires a new generation of teachers. By 1929 external collaborations are all over and the foundation moves to have only in-house instruction without any philosopher's on staff apart from John Dewey.

The final effort of this first generation of foundation teachers was the publication of an edited volume entitled *Art and Education* which aimed to promote the Barnes Foundation's pragmatic approach to art appreciation to a national audience. It anthologized the previous articles of Buermeyer, Mullen, Munro, Barnes, and Dewey from the Barnes Foundation Journal and included a passage from *Experience and Nature*. This book marks the closing of the first era in the development of the Barnes Foundation. Another contributor to *Art and Education* was the newest teacher at the foundation. Her name was Violette de Mazia (1899 – 1988) and her tenure represents the next period in the history of the Barnes Foundation. De Mazia was a European émigré from Belgium of Russian decent who was originally hired by the foundation to teach the staff French. She soon, however, demonstrated a talent for lecturing and a keen eye for painting. In the next decade, the 1930s, Barnes and de Mazia would co-author five books on specific artists, and after his death in 1951 she would assume leadership of the foundation. It is in this period that many of the practices and curricular plans were settled upon and set for the decades to come. It is less a period of philosophic debate and more a period of practical streamlining.

[75] Very little material still exists from these early classes. What constituted a lecture in philosophy and psychology is unknown. An incomplete selection of student essays from Munro's Columbia class is archived at the Barnes Foundation. See Educational Files, Spring 1925 AR.EDU.AEP.COL.1 and AR.EDU. AEP COL.2. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

[76] Ibid.

unsatisfactory and by 1926 the Barnes Faculty moved all teaching to the gallery to be with the paintings. When this shift happened the emphasis of the *applied* in "Applied Aesthetics" changed as well. The serious study of painting became an opportunity for the enjoyment of painting but also a model for appreciation that could be applied to other aspects of life. No longer was theory simply being applied to the study of painting, but instead the integrated study of philosophy and painting was to be applied elsewhere.

What would develop at the foundation was a three year cycle of courses capturing this more nuanced idea of applied aesthetics. The first two years were dedicated to learning skills of observation and a basic sense of art history the third year was open for students to appreciate whatever they felt was in need of serious study. This could be poetry, automotive repair, or any field of inquiry that wasn't painting.[77] A version of this approach is still practiced at the Barnes Foundation today. This suggests that aesthetics can be applied in the service of creating a general orientation towards the world outside the gallery.

6. The Early Writing of the foundation (1923-1934)

The founding scholars at the Barnes Foundation created a considerable body of writing to supplement the applied aspects of their classes. These texts explain in detail the

[77] Much of this pedagogy and the course structure is discussed in serial articles written by Violette de Mazia towards the end of her career in the journal *Vistas* published by the V.O.L.N. Press, Merion Station, PA. For example See Vol. I, No. 1, 1979.

philosophic orientation of the group and thus it is useful for us to examine this literature in a systematic way.[78]

One of the most conspicuous aspects of this literature was a shared negative project criticizing academic approaches to art. The positive theory underlying this assault varied from thinker to thinker and is perhaps only fully worked out by Dewey in the next decade. These early effort were mostly led by the young faculty. Barnes and Dewey left much of the theoretical work to the teachers. They did not initially do the research or writing. This is important because the early articulation of the foundation's philosophy was not Barnes's or Dewey's exclusively. It is important to stress the collaborative and corporate nature of these years.

The earliest writings of the foundation are skeptical about the value of art historians, museum curators, and art collectors who, according to the writers in the foundation, fail to really look at the art they are charged with evaluating and validating, often deferring to outdated traditions or market fashion.[79] In Buermeyer's article, "Some Popular Fallacies in Aesthetics," 1924,[80] he goes after critics Thomas Craven and Roger Fry for having poor conceptions of the term "form." His general argument is that they

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[78] It is also worth noting the other thinkers the Barnes group was looking to as they formulated their own literature. The Barnes Foundation Archives contain numerous letters in which the each of the early faculty members suggests lists of texts and readings for an introduction to aesthetics course. In a letter to Dewey, Barnes suggests that there is a new aesthetic literature which he is anxious to capitalize on. He enumerates several thinkers he considers important: Roger Fry, George Santayana, Percy Moore Turner, William James, and Dewey. In correspondence the faculty discussed several other thinkers, including John Ruskin and William Morris, Havelock Ellis, Clive Bell, Sigmund Freud, Gustav Fechner, Alfred Adler, and Carl Jung. From our historic vantage this seems like a pedantic grouping of texts and thinkers, and it is idiosyncratic to call them an aesthetic literature, but I believe this list reflects the brainstorming atmosphere at the Barnes Foundation.

[79] Albert C. Barnes, "Some Remarks on Appreciation" *The Arts* III 1 (1923), 25-28.

[80] Laurence Buermeyer, "Some Popular Fallacies in Aesthetics" *The Dial* 76 (February 1924), 107-21.

equivocate on the use of form which leads them to make inconsistent judgments about art. Buermeyer is decidedly more dismissive of Craven who he thinks wrongly equates form with the suggestion of solidity in representational painting. This aspect of figural modeling epitomized in Renaissance painting is for Buermeyer an arbitrary standard and wrongly confuses technique with form. Craven gives a fallacious argument for the superiority of Renaissance painting while simultaneously missing what is valuable and artful in Renaissance painting. What is valuable is somewhat murky in this article but is exemplified by Renoir. Renoir is able to capture something humanistic through his deviation from photographic representations. In this article Buermeyer fails to lay out a strong alternative to Craven or Fry and the thrust of the text is mostly negative. But it shows where the young Barnes Foundation wished to make its stand against art history and criticism as it was being practiced in the 1920s. We see in this article a rejection of technique as a standard of judgment, and the rejection of historical prominence as a standard for value.

In the books that follow we see moves to develop the positive side of this aesthetic. Four books each authored by the four core faculty members and overseen by Dewey can be seen as the steps towards an aesthetic theory to complement the applied practice being enacted in the classroom. The first produced was a short text by Mullen entitled *An Approach to Art* and aimed at an audience of readers with a high-school education. Second, *Aesthetic Experience* by Buermeyer covers much of the same material but is written at a college level. Third, *Art in Painting*, attributed to Barnes was designed to be a textbook. These first three books were written before courses began and the final book *The Scientific Method in Aesthetics* by Munro was written after classes had begun

and makes reference to observations made during class sessions. Collectively these are the philosophy texts of the Barnes Foundation.

All of these texts echo the negative points of Buermeyer's earlier article. That is, the appreciation of art requires the reforming of habits which have thus far deformed or prevented the genuine observation of painting. The main enemies of looking in this literature are academic rules, personal reverie called "day-dreaming," an overemphasis of narrative, and religious mysticism. What emerges in the collective attempt to articulate a positive aesthetic begins as a vague expressionist theory of art in which what we look for in painting is human emotion but develops in time to be a more subtle analysis of experience. Let us consider this progression in preparation to consider Dewey's mature philosophy in the next chapter.

The earliest book *An Approach to Art* is not rigorously organized. It is a grab-bag of various ideas from many of the aforementioned thinkers of the "new aesthetic literature" including John Dewey, Roger Fry and Havelock Ellis. While it is notable as the first attempt at writing a philosophic text by the Barnes Foundation it suffers from many conceptual inconsistencies.

A central problem in this text is its reliance on dualisms to make many of its points. For example, Mullen takes up the idea from Fry that human's live dualistically between sensation and imagination.[81] She writes, "A person lives a dual life, one actual and the other imaginative."[82] This kind of language is in contrast with Dewey's philosophy which would not want to separate mental from "actual" life. This idea that

[81] Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (Mineola, Dover, 2012), 17.

[82] Mary Mullen, *An Approach to Art* (Merion: Barnes Foundation 1923), 11.

there is an "actual" life of action and a second life of imagination leads Mullen to sympathize with theories of art for art's sake. Mullen asserts that art does not charge us with any action. "When we are looking at a picture all we have to do is to look at it…and enjoy it, we do not have to act."[83] This division between thinking and acting is in direct opposition to a Deweyan pragmatic philosophy which sees thinking abstracted from practice as impossible.

From Santayana Mullen pulls the idea that artworks are materialized emotions. That is, they "embody those discoveries [of feeling] in fit and meaningful expression."[84] Here we have a binary between a piece and its expression which are analytically separable. What is expressed is a specific human emotion which becomes material in a painting. What is expressive in a Renoir canvas is, for example, joy. For Mullen, joy predates the painting and is transmitted by the painting without any essential transformation. "We embody our feelings in pictures if we are painters."[85] Embodiment of emotion is the presumed mechanism by which paintings gain value. In this system the more unalloyed the emotion is the better the painting will be.

This kind of one-to-one expressionism is a particular conceptual lacuna for the Barnes faculty. The first portion of Mary Mullen's book is spent denying the viability of a mimetic theory of art. That is, the value in a painting is how well it mimics natural objects. This allows her to argue for the value of artists who use abstraction and purposefully distort visual content. However, the same skepticism is not pointed at

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[83] Ibid, 8.

[84] Ibid, 11.

[85] Ibid.

emotions. Emotions are replicated and transmitted by the paintings. Sensitivity to this level of communication is what Mullen advocates, but this is not regarded as another kind of problematic mimesis. As she writes "literal copies of nature may in themselves arouse pleasure but they are not art."[86] Mullen seems unaware that she has already argued against her own claim that art is a literal copy of an emotion.

In the final pages Mullen introduces one final binary which further complicates her claims. She proposes that the emotions which are communicable through art are specific aesthetic emotions. This makes an analytic distinction between every-day emotions and aesthetic emotions. She claims that these are the special emotions that accompany unity, variety, and harmonious combinations.[87] While this distinction helps clarify what constitutes successful form in Mullen's system it creates a whole new category of idiosyncratic emotions.

Mullen's work is overall more assertive than deductive. Her book is interesting and important as the earliest articulation of the Barnes Foundation theory of art. While problematic in many respects it signals much of what will come and highlights some conceptual problems Dewey will have to overcome.

Some, but not all, of the dualisms highlighted in Mullen will be worked out by the next book to be published by the Barnes faculty. Buermeyer's *Aesthetic Experience*.[88] This book is short but dense. It takes as its starting premise that art is part of every-day life. It finds resources in Santayana, James and Dewey while also giving serious regard to Bosanquet and Croce. Although Buermeyer does not call himself a pragmatist this title

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[86] Ibid, 14.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Laurence Buermeyer, *The Aesthetic Experience 2nd Edition* (Merion: Barnes Foundation, 1929).

can be bestowed upon him. Aside from pulling heavily from the classical pragmatists, James and Dewey, he begins his own work with the pragmatic formulation that: "Perception and action, in a word, are correlative: neither has meaning in the absence of the other."[89] This spins into a theory of art in which both the creation and reception of art are active and appreciative.

In his introduction Buermeyer makes the critical assertion that he is putting forward and expressionist theory when he states: "a work of art is something made or created and the purpose which underlies its making is expression..."[90] But he deviates from Mullen by arguing that this quality of expression can be found outside the realm of the fine arts and is part of any experience. The idea of a special aesthetic emotion is dropped. He offers as an example, "the 'art' of the base-ball player…"[91]

Buermeyer explains that his approach was to take the insights of Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* and applying it to the realm of art.[92] In doing so Buermeyer traces an instrumentalist argument about the natural psychological propensity for humans to fulfil instinct and for instinct to develop habits. These habits are rich in affect and the cultivation of emotions is a biological need of humans. Art becomes an expedient way in which to test and communicate feelings. Buermeyer coins the term "laboratory of feeling" to capture this aspect of art.[93]

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[89] Buermeyer, *Aesthetic Experience*,16.

[90] Ibid, 19.

[91] Ibid, 22.

[92] Buermeyer, *Aesthetic Experience*, 59.

[93] Ibid, 84.

He writes that instinct, "…appreciates and anticipates; but its appreciation and anticipation are always partial, over-hasty and so unstable. The role of intelligence is therefore to suspend judgment, to broaden appreciation, and to render anticipation tentative and subject to confirmation by fact…our thesis is that the intelligent transformation of instinct is art, that art, is that and nothing else, the exact nature and function of intelligence is a matter of not inconsiderable importance."[94] Herein Buermeyer makes one subtle move and one brazen move. He subtly affirms that communication is always partial and imperfect and that it is also wrapped up into a mediated process of anticipation and appreciation. This pulls him further away from Mullen who asserted that aesthetic experience is unmediated emotion and that there is an essential feeling which can be wholly expressed. He also defines art as the conscious transformation of instinct, which still has the ring of a Jamesian vocabulary but heads towards a Deweyan concept of ever-changing nature and the role of intelligence therein. Note also that he makes appreciation an ever-present and instinctive function of human psychology. This is much closer to Dewey's articulation than Mullen's implicit description of appreciation as the achievement of aesthetic emotions.

In the second half of the book he foreshadows many of the ideas which will recur in Dewey's *Art as Experience*. Buermeyer paints a dynamic picture of experience in which flux is accounted for. He writes "The aesthetic embodiment or incarnation is never identical with the original object of the emotion or the mere sum of the impressions produced by the object. It is always such a reorganization of those impressions or acts."[95]

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[94] Ibid, 50.

[95] Ibid, 93.

The arts for Buermeyer actually produce new values, instead of merely replicating them in a simple mimesis. It is this sensitiveness to the mutability of values that makes him an under-recognized aesthetic thinker and puts him close to Dewey. [96]

Throughout the book he asserts his "particular indebtedness to Professor Dewey..."[97] He asserts a very Dewey-like conclusion:

> We may sum up the discussion of the expressiveness of art by saying that the artist anticipates or summarizes for us the process of experience by which an object, from being merely a signal or cue to an emotion, becomes an embodiment or realization of it. He completes and purifies something which in our actual lives is constantly going on, but which, though our insensitiveness or irresoluteness, or the perversity of circumstances, is ended or disfigured before it can reach its consummation. [98]

In this passage Buermeyer makes a claim strikingly similar to the later work of Dewey that artworks are both artifacts of a past aesthetic experience and an occasion to have another aesthetic experience. The artist offers his work as a clue towards the cultivation of a consummatory experience. It is notable too that Buermeyer introduces the language of consummation here. In this theory of expression the artwork becomes more like testimony of an experience and functions as a guide to future experience. This is contrasted with the expressionism put forward in Mullen where there is an unchanging set of feelings produced by an artist, transmitted by a work, and taken up by a viewer. In Buermeyer this communicative path is indirect, relative, and partial.

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[96] These comments however are written almost a decade before *Art as Experience* was published. It is important to note that while Dewey and Barnes were often discussing art and teaching it is Dewey and Buermeyer who are discussing philosophy and exchanging drafts of material of a theoretical nature. I believe that Buermeyer is very important for showing Dewey the aesthetic implications of his earlier writing and helping to stimulate his later thought on the subject.

[97] Ibid, 59.

[98] Ibid, 83.

Both Mullen and Buermeyer's books lacked any strong examples of how this theory is applied to the actual task of looking at a painting. Barnes felt it necessary to write an introductory textbook that both sketched the theory Buermeyer and Mullen had been negotiating and to supplement it with plenty of examples of real paintings and an account of their merits. What developed was *The Art in Painting*. It would eventually be attributed to Barnes as the sole author but the entire faculty had a hand in its creation.

It is a difficult book to analyze. It is idiosyncratic in form. The first half is a summary of expressionist ideas similar to the ones already discussed, but not identical. In many ways it is a continuation of the previous texts but also stands apart in some of its assertions. Its most substantial break from the previous work is its historical commentary. The middle sections of the book are dedicated to tracing traditions in painting and to show links between the masterpieces of early Christian painting up through post-impressionism. For example, the distinctive green flesh tones of Sienese devotional painting is traced up though the greens used in the flesh of Renoir.[99] A new kind of art history is being pointed at in these sections, one which traces periodicity not by shifts in politics or technology, but in terms of the interrelations of color, light, line or as the book calls it "plastic design."[100]

The latter sections of the book are collections of short, mostly paragraph-long, assessments of hundreds of individual works. The final section is a list of questions taken from Munro's course which would allow a student to write up their own such assessment of a given painting. This list includes 9 topics and over 100 individual questions. From

[99] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 141.

[100] Ibid, 61.

cursory questions like "Do qualities of color contribute to a distinctive emotional state (e.g., peaceful, commonplace, dramatic, violent, brutal, fantastic, weird, gloomy, gay.)"[101]To more synthetic questions like "Are the various subordinate patterns, made by each of the plastic means, firmly integrated into a total design?"[102] Part of what makes this book so hard to evaluate is that the majority of its pages are either meaningless or cryptic in the absence of looking at the paintings under discussion. It is a book that is supposed to be brought along to the gallery and used as an aid to observation. Divorced from that activity it is mostly empty words.

The descriptions of paintings were derived primarily from Barnes's personal testimony and notes he took while in the presence of great works. Buermeyer was charged with organizing and typing these notes into a usable form. Buermeyer also added the first section on aesthetic theory. However before the book was finished Barnes removed Buermeyer from the project and did most of the final drafting himself. Some of the early drafts of the book still exist in the archive but it remains a Gordian knot of intellectual history to speculate what Buermeyer, Mullen, Munro or Barnes's individual contributions were.

The book is a hybrid of manifesto, text-book, historical survey, and how-to manual. It is, however, still the primary text of the Barnes Foundation, where it has been required reading for almost 90 years. From the outside it appears to be a Chimera but its continued use speaks to its efficacy in the foundation.

The philosophic section is terse and under-developed. The subtlety present in *Aesthetic Experience* is replaced with a staccato tone of assertion. The recurrent negative

[101] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 520.

[102] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 521.

project is reiterated and what is offered is instead "something basically objective to replace the sentimentalism, the antiquarianism, sheltered under the cloak of academic prestige, which makes futile the present courses in art in universities and colleges generally."[103] However, this "something" is not precisely spelled out in positive terms.

The kind of expression supposed in this method is unclear. "All we can ask of a painter is whether, for example, in a landscape, he has caught the spirit of the scene; in a portrait, if he has discovered what is essential or characteristic of the sitter."[104] This is another mimetic theory in which an essence is captured and replicated. This lacks the relativity present in Buermeyer's aesthetic theory and aligns more closely with Mullen's earlier *Approach to Art*.

Aside from being purely a continuation of these earlier works *Art in Painting* puts forward an important concept. This is the concept of "plastic design." This term had already appeared in the articles written for the in-house journal of the Barnes Foundation, but gets its most concise articulation in *Art in Painting*. "The word 'plastic' is applied to something that can be bent or worked or changed into other forms than it has originally …"[105] In the context of painting, to be plastic means to bend objective conditions towards a holistic unity. For example Cezanne distorts objects, pears float, tables stand on uneven legs, and all manner of other distortions from photographic identity exist. These distortions, however, aid the overall effect of the canvas. A floating pear has a distinct and pleasing spatial relationship to a green patch found on a painted apple etc. Deviation

[103] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 9.

[104] Ibid, 12.

[105] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 85.

from photographic reproduction, or plasticity, allows for a more pleasing design. Plasticity becomes the key value term in this aesthetic. "Quality in painting is merely another name for the successful use of the plastic means..."[106] However, plasticity as a concept has very little explanatory power about what constitutes a successful use of plasticity.

Some of these concerns about imprecision and vagueness of the Barnes Foundation philosophy are addressed in Munro's book at the end of the 1920s, *Scientific Method in Aesthetics*. [107] In this book Munro advocates for the need to apply an experimental attitude to the observation of paintings.[108] He prioritizes the role of descriptive observation and believes that aesthetics can be treated scientifically insofar as we can record and share data about our experiences of artworks. This in turn can be deployed for the intelligent use of resources to help promote further enjoyment.[109]

One goal of this treatise is to breakdown the presumption that aesthetics is a merely normative study as opposed to a conventionally objective study. Munro writes, "It is still a current practice to distinguish æsthetics… as "normative"… dealing with "values," from "descriptive" sciences, dealing with "facts." This antithesis obviously suggests…that values are not facts, but some strange sort of entities apart from the natural order of things."[110] His overall philosophic point is that facts are always already

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[106] Ibid, 70.

[107] Munro also in these years co-authored with Paul Guillaume a book on African sculpture called *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (Merion: Barnes Foundation Press, 1926)

[108] Thomas Munro, *Scientific Method in Aesthetics* (New York: Norton, 1928), 29.

[109] Ibid, 98.

[110] Ibid, 81.

value laden and values are always connected to the real world. There is then in principle, for Munro, no reason why aesthetics and appreciation cannot be approached scientifically. This would be through the careful documentation of observations and by sharing notes between researchers to arrive at better descriptions of the phenomena.

He does not, like the other faculty, put forward a specific theory of expression, but instead says that such a theory should be arrived at experimentally. He suggests that this is what the Dewey and the Barnes Foundation were already practicing.[111] The classes at the Barnes Foundation were an opportunity to observe, describe and share these "data" with a group other inquirers.

While there is deviation between all of the books written under Dewey's tenure as director of education at the Barnes Foundation they all shared a conviction about the importance of observation. Overall the negative project of the Barnes Faculty speaks to many of the problems endemic to interpretation, its tendency to rely on outmoded rules or to treat personal taste as a general value. It is easy to side with their skepticism of academic and religious standards previously used to look at paintings. But in the final summation it is not clear if they articulate a functional alternative in their piecemeal theory of expression. Perhaps, however, to focus too much on the specific theoretical hypothesis they put forward in their earliest days of thinking and writing is to miss the real positive project of the Barnes which was continuously to promote direct and extended contact with paintings.

Whether or not, Munro's list of questions in *Art in Painting* and his own book are the exact right questions is perhaps less significant than the fact that in order to answer them one must spend significant time with a canvas. Whether or not, Mullen's concept of

[111] Ibid, v.

emotion is airtight is less important than taking her classes to the gallery to be in the presence of real paintings. Even though the Buermeyer's writings are occasionally vague, underwriting the whole project is a unifying conviction about the educative role of experience itself. This practical conviction is what holds the literature together and is the legacy of the foundation.

There are significant philosophic inconsistencies between Mullen, Buermeyer, Barnes, and Dewey, but this never led to outright disagreement. They all found common ground on two points which kept their various associations fertile and friendly until Barnes's untimely death in a car accident in 1951.[112] They were all committed to the idea that students must spend extended time with paintings and that this direct experience will aid appreciation, and that appreciation is a central concern for education as a whole. No theory on its own will aid appreciation; it must be married with experience for any appreciation to take hold. The same can be said of democracy for Dewey. It cannot be realized in the abstract but only as a lived experience.

I think it is important that we see the Barnes faculty as collaborators in a laboratory and not as combatants in a battle of wits. What is the philosophy of the Barnes Foundation, I think becomes an empirical question, found in their practice. The foundation becomes an extended experiment about the importance of sustained observation of painting to yield richer and more significant experiences. The writing produced during this period all support the idea of direct observation even if they differ in other ways.

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[112] John Anderson, *Art Held Hostage: The Battle Over the Barnes Collection* (New York: Norton, 2013), 46.

"What is appreciation?" may have always been an experimental question. This makes pragmatic sense. No theory has yet been able to abstractly capture the complex dynamism of looking at a painting. In this way, an *Art in Painting* is perhaps an excellent embodiment of this ethos. It is an unwieldy book when uncoupled from experience, but when used in a gallery to guide one's eye across a canvas, it slows one down; it offers a different perspective and tests old habits. This has proved useful for decades when people actually use it.

The collaboration between Dewey and the Barnes Foundation is a story about the irreducible need to experience art without recourse to tradition, narrative, and academic rules and instead to valorize the human capacity for education and enjoyment. It is this priority of appreciation in direct experience that I believe is the philosophic legacy of the Barnes Foundation and is worth promoting in its own right.

7. Interpreting the connection between Dewey and the Barnes Foundation.

As we have seen there is ample evidence in the historic record that Dewey's aesthetics emerged after the period in which he spent significant time with Barnes and was in conversation with the other teachers at the foundation. Dewey himself admits that this amounts to a difficult question of influence just before delivering the William James lectures at Harvard. He writes:

> I have had the same question…to deal with constantly in writing up my lectures. There are no chapters and not many, if any, pages that don't owe something to you [Barnes]… the way I have decided to meet the question is not to encumber the pages with repeated

> acknowledgments… but to make a general acknowledgment in the preface [113]

This is all suggestive that Dewey's aesthetics was greatly influenced by the Barnes Foundation, but this does not mean it is indistinguishable from it.

In 2011 museum educator George Hein wrote the article "Dewey's Debt to Barnes,"[114] in this he argues that despite the evidence of Barnes's influence, including the circumstantial evidence from their correspondence, as well as the explicit references to Barnes in Dewey's text, and the use of images from the Barnes collection in the early editions of *Art as Experience*, their relationship has received little to no scholarly attention.[115]

Hein forcefully states that, "…Dewey scholars have failed to recognize the significance of the relationship between Albert Barnes and John Dewey, frequently attributing it to some peculiar quality of Dewey's character." [116] His more damning accusation, however, is not towards biographers but towards philosophers who have neglected Barnes almost entirely. Hein writes, "Even writers who focus on Dewey's aesthetics fail to appreciate the nature of their [Dewey and Barnes's] friendship, often misstate facts concerning their relationship or don't acknowledge the significance of

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[113] John Dewey to Albert C Barnes, September 18, 1933. in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III).* Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters. In the preface Dewey will eventually write: "My greatest indebtedness is to Dr. A.C. Barnes…The influence of these [his] conversations, along with that of his books, has been the chief factor in shaping my own thinking about the philosophy of esthetics." *Art as Experience*, 8.

[114] George Hein. "Dewey's Debt to Barnes." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 54.2 (2011): 123-39. Much of this material is restated in his more recent book *Progressive Museum Practice* 2013.

[115] However see: L.J. Dennis, "Dewey's Debt to Albert Coombs Barnes," *Educational Theory* 22, no. 3 (1972): 325-333. For an early and largely similar attempt at the same project.

[116] Hein, "Dewey's Debt to Barnes," 126.

Barnes's educational efforts for Dewey." [117] The implication is that their interpretations have suffered and they certainly did not do their historical due diligence.

Hein provides substantial evidence and support for his claim that the Barnes Foundation had a lengthy and significant impact on Dewey as a thinker, but he does not provide any examples of specific aesthetic ideas which could be attributable to this relationship. He ends his piece with the call that "Barnes's contributions to Dewey's aesthetics…deserves to be more widely acknowledged."[118] While I sympathize with this position I think it needs to be strengthened by concrete examples of philosophic influence now that the historic points have been made. Additionally, as I hope I have amply agued, the influence upon Dewey was not solely from Barnes but also from the others working at the Barnes Foundation.

Sometimes the influence is explicit, for example, when Dewey's cites whole parts of Barnes Foundation books during his Harvard lectures of 1931, this included the analysis of Manet from *The Art in Painting*.[119] There are multiple examples of direct concepts lifted from *The Art and Painting* and transplanted into the final draft of *Art as Experience* as well.[120] To illustrate this I would like to focus on one concept in particular.

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[117] Ibid,125.

[118] Ibid, 136.

[119]John Dewey to Albert C Barnes, April 4, 1931. in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III).* Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters. Dewey writes: "I used your analysis of Manet in my lecture Tuesday—downright robbery."

[120] Arguably the later book was of some impact on Dewey, whereas Barnes's later work on Matisse and Renoir are not.

This is Dewey idiosyncratic use of "the decorative" in art. This will give more than incidental evidence that Barnes and the Barnes faculty influenced Dewey.[121]

In chapter six of *Art as Experience* in a passage about the relationship of substance to form Dewey first broaches the topic of the decorative. He notes that not all art work must have decorative elements but admits that any useful aesthetic theory must account for decoration whether it is a bouquet at a funeral or a Matisse canvas. Decoration becomes an important example of Dewey's insistence on unity in artworks. Any decorative element must be so integrated so as to produce an overall unity of form. As Dewey explains, "The special bearing…of decoration on the problem of substance and form is that it proves the wrongness of the theories that isolate sense qualities. For in the degree in which decorative effect is achieved by isolation, it becomes empty embellishment, factitious ornamentation—like sugar figures on a cake..."[122]

He goes on to give a list of painters who succeed in integrating their expressive qualities with their decorative elements to create a unified experience for vision. He notes, Titian, Velasquez, Renoir, Watteau, Lancret, and Fragonard. All of these are artists specifically analyzed in terms of decoration in Barnes's *Art in Painting*.[123] These painters, Dewey explains, do not use the same degree of decoration in their works but still achieve aesthetic unity in balance with their expression. Boucher is mentioned as a counterexample as a painter who exhibits a split between expressiveness and decoration

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[121] It is notable that Dewey takes mostly from *Art in Painting* which as I have argued is substantially a product of Buermeyer's efforts. While we might be able to separate Dewey from Barnes a little easier after this analysis, we are still troubled with the new problem of separating Buermeyer from Barnes. When I refer to Barnes in what follows I am referring to the corporate author of the *Art in Painting*.

[122] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 132.

[123] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 209, 440, 447, 448, 449, 474-475.

the result is that his paintings have "extraneous ornamentation…" In which, … the decorative quality stands out by itself and is oppressive—like too much sugar."[124] Dewey is aiming not at a binary of decoration and expression but instead at a concept of experience that sees them as indistinguishable parts.

Dewey explains the analytic division between expression and decoration by way of example. He asks us to consider an ancient object moved from one cultural context to another. He writes, "Rugs and bowls of the Orient have patterns whose original value was usually religious or political—as tribal emblems—expressed in decorative semi-geometrical figures…"[125] In their original context expression of particular religious or political values fused with specific decorative motifs. Dewey continues, "The western observer does not get the former any more than he grasps the religious expressiveness in Chinese paintings of original Buddhist and Taoist connections…" however "…The intrinsic [decorative] value remains after local elements have been stripped away." [126] While we can still enjoy the merely decorative the more full-bodied and eminently more aesthetic art works involve both elements.

Dewey brings all this up to signal a failure in prior aesthetic theories which would privilege expression at the expense of decoration or vice versa and never properly consider their interrelation in form.[127] For example Santayana in *A Sense of Beauty* is, from this Deweyan perspective, overly fixated on mere expression. [128] While this interest

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[124] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 132.

[125] Ibid, 133.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Ibid, 136.

in decoration may seem idiosyncratic it functions as an important concept in Dewey's overall aesthetics

The origins of this idea are very likely coming from Barnes. In *Art in Painting*, Barnes dedicates a chapter to the concept of decoration. He writes, "Decorative quality in the visual arts may be illustrated by the pleasantness of vivid colors, or of simple designs and patterns…" He continues that the decorative, "is thus a value in art, and any account of art which overlooks it omits an important element in the total aesthetic effect."[129] This point is re-emphasized by Dewey, that to overlook the decorative is to not fully grasp aesthetic experience and its omission weakens any theory.

What Barnes writes in his books is echoed in his private letters to Dewey. While Dewey had begun his William James lectures at Harvard but was still in the process of writing up his later lectures Barnes writes to him to say:

> I wandered through the gallery this morning after a day of reflection upon your remarks about Decoration... I got a bushel of ideas… Decoration, per se, while a fundamental and primary aesthetic quality, gets its value in proportion as it is organized into a form… Renoir, Cezanne and Matisse…The ability of these various painters to realize the expressive and merge it with the decorative, not only explains their individual forms but …the criterion of which is the satisfaction of deep-seated human values which are universal in people …"[130]

In this letter Barnes reiterates the primary role of decoration in aesthetic theory and its essential connection to the concepts of expression and form. We can also see in this letter

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[128] George Santayana, *A Sense of Beauty* (New York: Dover Press, 1955) 119-122.

[129] Barnes, *Art in Painting*, 29.

[130] Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey, March 3, 1931, in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III*). Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters.

evidence that Barnes and Dewey were actively discussing these substantive topics, and not only did Barnes influence Dewey, but Dewey in turn influenced Barnes. From these sources we know that Dewey was reading Barnes's book on decoration and discussing it directly with him. The language in Barnes is mirrored in Dewey and many of the same conceptual moves are made. This would appear to be one of the many un-cited influences of Barnes upon Dewey.

It is my conviction, after evaluating all this information and texts from the Barnes Foundation, that *Art as Experience* was simultaneously an opportunity for Dewey to publicly acknowledge his debt to the Barnes Foundation but to also stake his own claim.[131] It is too simplistic to say that Dewey was Barnes-like or Barnes was not a Deweyan. But their conversations and disagreements were mutually beneficial to one another. *Art as Experience* also shows important disagreements between the men.

Art historian, Megan Bahr, suggests that there was a clear philosophic break between Dewey and Barnes during the late 30s.[132] I sympathize with much of Bahr's interpretation; it has the benefit of showing differences between the works of these two thinkers, but I find it describes too clean of a break. The two men may have had disagreements, but that seems to have always been present, and they continue to

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[131] It is telling to consider Dewey's aesthetic project parallel to his political activities. In the realm of politics he was constantly being pulled by the energetic Sidney Hook to claim Marxist allegiances. It is in this period that Dewey travels to Mexico to investigate Trotsky and the claims of the Moscow show trials. Although Dewey is deeply engaged in left-wing political causes, associates openly and actively with Stalinists, Trotskyites, socialists of various stripes, and often writes in a voice reminiscent of a young Marx, he himself never takes on the label Marxist. As it seems to be his character, he was stubbornly independent, and on the topic of aesthetics this is true too. See George Dykhuizen, *Life and Mind of John Dewey* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 239.

[132] Megan Bahr, "Transferring values: Albert C. Barnes, work and the work of art," (PhD Diss., University of Texas Austin, 1998), 244.

collaborate right up to Barnes's death. This is despite their apparent philosophic difference. What does happen in this period is that they both write books which seem to offer divergent positions. I propose that this is not so much of a break as it is a phase in their ongoing discussion.

Bahr's overall argument is that Barnes began to side more stridently with the work of Santayana over that of Dewey's. Indeed Barnes was sympathetic to Santayana, this is clear from the numerous citations and casual mentions of his work, but this interest in Santayana predates the founding of the foundation. This is all to say that there is no evidence that Barnes became more Santayana-like. What I argue instead is that Dewey more strongly rejects idealisms including Santayana's in this period. Dewey in his more mature works becomes doggedly anti-dualist and anti-idealist and it is my interpretation that Barnes does not follow Dewey down this path.

Bahr puts much of her argumentative weight on Barnes's use of the term "plastic" which we have already seen used substantively in *The Art in Painting*. Bahr traces this idea to Santayana's use of the term in the *Life of Reason*.[133] While I think that this is partially correct, I also think it over emphasizes Santayana's ownership of that term. There are extended notes in the archives about Craven's use of "plastic" and its poor formulation.[134] There would be an equally forceful argument that the Barnes faculty landed on the term plasticity in their efforts to argue against Craven and not for Santayana.

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[133] Ibid, 237.

[134] For example Dewey, John. 1923. Letter, John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes, Sept. 14, 1923, Presidents Files, AlbertC. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA

Regardless of this debate in attribution, this period of the 1930s marks a more significant divergence of philosophic ideas than was even present in the 1920s. Barnes hangs his hat on the concept of "transferred values" first expressed in his artistic biography of Matisse. As he writes "If an object has been part of an experience having emotional value, another object resembling the first may subsequently attract to itself at least a part of the original emotion. Such values we have termed "transferred values"[135] This is the idea that emotional values can be translated from one material to another. By looking at the whimsical arabesque on a Persian lamp one will be better equipped to see the decorative whimsy in the more complex work of Matisse. This establishes continuity between all art forms and sets an imperative to experience diverse visual material. As already mentioned Dewey does not take up this idea.

Barnes and de Mazia during this decade co-author books, which with the exception of a book on French Primitives, focus on single figures: Matisse, Renoir and Cezanne. These works take up the new concept of transferred value and try to demonstrate it in the works of these specific artists. The idea of transferred value encapsulates a kind of visual expressiveness Barnes sees at work in all the best paintings. What is expressed for example in a given Matisse may be the visual quality of Moorish tile work, but it is communicated in a Parisian domestic scene. The canvas carries for Barnes the sense of being flat, hard, geometric and overall tile-like.[136] The values at stake are visual, as opposed to moral or religious.[137]

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[135] Albert C. Barnes and Violette de Mazia, *The Art of Henri-Matisse* (Merion: Barnes Foundation 1932), 40.

[136] Ibid, 32.

[137] Ibid, 203.

The drift between Dewey and Barnes is captured in an exchange of letters just after *Art as Experience* is published. Barnes writes to Dewey about a problem he sees in the book. Barnes frames the issue in a thought experiment which he presents to Dewey. Barnes recounts a story in which he looks out his office window on a late winter day. Outside he sees a snow bank which has the distinct character of a Picasso composition. The snow bank is of course created without an artist, but Barnes responds to it with just as much appreciation as he would to an oil painting by Picasso. He is worried that Dewey's theory is too wedded to an artist's intention and that spontaneous works of nature are excluded.[138]

Dewey admits that he had not thought through this problem adequately and does not want to demote the beauty of nature. Barnes suggests a solution is a kind of theory of transferred values in which the values of the snow bank and the values of a Picasso are actually one and the same. Dewey, resists this interpretation, and instead puts his emphasis on the creative efforts of Barnes's imagination to appreciate the snow bank itself. The exchange drifts into other topics and the problem is never brought up again.[139]

I find this exchange very telling, however, of the two positions these men are occupying after almost two decades of discussion on aesthetics. Dewey is resistant to transferred values because it functions, I believe, like a mimetic theory of art, and he prefers instead to emphasize the active experiential aspect of appreciation. There is a pitfall in Barnes's concept of transferred value. "Value" is identical across objects, it is an objective core to art, and finding it is the task of aesthetics. Value is ideally repeated

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[138] Albert C. Barnes to John Dewey, March 29, 1934. Presidents Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

[139] John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes, March 30, 1934. Presidents Files, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA.

between snowbanks and Picassos. Dewey would not want to make this kind of universalist claim and makes that clear in their exchange. Instead Dewey reinforces the individual or imaginative aspect of appreciation itself. He argues that, if confronted with the same snow bank, he would be unable to see the Picasso, but trusts that Barnes has the strength of imaginative vision to do so. The exchange has the quality of a high-brow discussion of what clouds look like, but it also illustrates the intellectual independence these men had from one another.

In the attempt to understand where the Barnes Foundation's philosophy ends and Dewey's philosophy begins we have encountered several complicating factors. The discussion about aesthetics at the Barnes Foundation was not a dialogue between Dewey and Barnes but really a wider discussion between at least three other dedicated researchers. We see that this relationship never produced philosophic consensus, but did allow for the various thinkers to draw on the vocabulary of the others. For example, Buermeyer takes Dewey's language from *Human Nature and Conduct* and Dewey takes up Barnes's language about decoration. What is so crucial to understand here, and which has not been given attention in either philosophic or historic literature is that the nature of the relationship of Dewey to the Barnes Foundation was experimental, collaborative, and changing.

8. Conclusion

In the next chapter we will closely scrutinize Dewey's aesthetic texts. This will be done in full awareness that all the material presented in this chapter have a complex

relationship to Dewey's later aesthetic writing. This complexity is difficult for intellectual historians who want to trace clear influence, but is an important fact for a pragmatic philosopher looking at this episode. Dewey's aesthetics cannot simply be seen as a corrective on earlier discussion, nor is it a definitive rejection of any of the other writings that came out of the Barnes Foundation. Instead it must be understood to be in conversation with all of them. This interpretive stance is in line with the practice of the early Barnes Foundation. It was a place in which diverse ideas were suggested and tested for their viability to the observation of painting and the development of appreciation. Dewey was part of that experimentation and his aesthetics are not his alone.

From a pragmatic perspective this is a strength and not a weakness. This experimental approach to action is consistent with the best practices in multiple fields of inquiry. It is also importantly in line with Dewey's conception of democracy as a way of life. While the word democracy was rarely invoked by the other Barnes Foundation faculty their very interactions constituted a democratic approach to aesthetics. They worked together to address a shared problem and to improve the conditions for the enjoyment of painting.

These efforts were long and serious. In the next chapter I will show that what Dewey pulled from his time at the Barnes is a philosophy that sees art as deeply connected to the social and material world around it, and that the central concern of appreciation requires specific environmental change. It is a philosophy that shows that philosophy on its own is never enough to enact change. The theory must be realized in practice and Dewey gives us a way to understand that interrelation.

Chapter 2

Dewey's Naturalistic Appreciation

1. Introduction: "The Philosophy of Shakespeare and Keats"[140]

If the Barnes Foundation was aimed at promoting aesthetic appreciation, what exactly does appreciation mean for John Dewey? In the previous chapter we saw some provisional accounts of appreciation from the other Barnes Foundation faculty, including a correspondence theory of expression from Mullen and a conception of the scientific method from Munro. I signaled that Dewey diverged from all of these. In this chapter I will present the philosophic writing of John Dewey, which developed during his tenure at the Barnes Foundation, and explain his alternate account of appreciation.

I will show that Dewey believed appreciation to be an overall quality of experience, meaning he sees experience itself as appreciative. Dewey puts forward this theory of appreciation in a biologically-inflected vocabulary. What emerges is the proposal that appreciation is linked to a kind of organic growth. My interpretation of this material will assert that appreciation is the enjoyed feeling of growth. In light of this thesis the Barnes Foundation can be understood as a space to promote and encourage growth.

This idea about growth is most completely outlined in Dewey's *Art as Experience* but has important connections to the earlier texts *Human Nature and Conduct* and

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[140] In *Art as Experience* Dewey describes his approach as one that "accepts life and experience in all its uncertainty, mystery, doubt, and half-knowledge and turns that experience upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities—to imagination and art. This is the philosophy of Shakespeare and Keats" (*Art as Experience*, 35). I am partial to this description of Dewey's aesthetics as being aligned with the spirit of poets.

Experience and Nature. All these books were published while Dewey was involved with the Barnes Foundation and *Art as Experience* was included as part of the curriculum of the Foundation. I see these texts as part of the mutual development of the Barnes Foundation and Dewey's aesthetics.

Dewey's emphasis on growth has two interesting implications for the concept of appreciation. First if appreciation is a form of growth then it is a transformation of present conditions into a new experience. Appreciation then is not simply a function of judgment or the recognition of pre-existing forms. It is instead the regard for wholly new experience. This suggests that, in principle, to appreciate something is to experience it as new or novel. Like the constantly evolving phenotypes in Darwin's zoology the experience of appreciation is constantly changing towards presently unknown organizations. Second, we can see that for Dewey appreciation is never over. It is itself a process embedded in life. It lasts as long as we live. It is not a terminal application of a judgment of value. One cannot simply say a given painting is a good or bad painting. Instead one can say that it is presently a good or bad painting. This value is in fact a product of a constantly changing interaction of the individual with the environment. This means that the evaluations of aesthetics experience is also in flux. An experience of an artwork may become more intense over time, or it may degrade into boredom, or dissipate into total irrelevance. The implication for the arts is that you do not simply apply a judgment once to an art work but continually re-experience it over a lifetime.

What follows will trace the specific arguments that support these claims. I will sketch the relevant points in his published writings on aesthetics. This material combined with the historic information about the practical activities of the Barnes Foundation will

serve as the basis for the next chapter where I work out the implications of these ideas for debates in contemporary philosophy. This current chapter will show that Dewey's aesthetics are inseparable from his claims about nature and put forward an interpretation of his aesthetic theory which explains the act of appreciation should be understood as a kind of organic growth.

2. Key Texts.

In his 1909 essay "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy" John Dewey explains that Darwin's writing had a beneficial influence for philosophy by demonstrating the futility of the concept of fixed species in zoology.[141] The idea of a fixed species, which had held sway since Aristotle, Dewey explains, was decisively challenged by Darwin's concept of evolution as exemplified in shifting animal phenotypes. Darwin's concept of evolution suggested that there was no basis for claiming any eternal form to animals but instead animals should be seen as ever-changing entities in interaction with a simultaneously changing environment. Darwin's influence on philosophy then, Dewey argues, is as a model for considering phenomena without fixed categories. Dewey suggests, philosophers could now think about concepts without presupposing their eternal forms. Evolution after Darwin and in Dewey's interpretation became a powerful heuristic for all the branches of philosophy including aesthetics.

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[141] John Dewey, *The Middle Works, 1899-1924 Volume 4: 1907-1909,* Ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville*:* Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 3-51.

In this section we will consider Dewey's contribution to the aesthetic literature surrounding the Barnes Foundation. My proposal is that his philosophy more than any of the others at the Barnes Foundation embraced a naturalistic and Darwinian approach to the arts. Dewey took up many of the same topics already addressed in the previous chapter including expression, emotion, and of course appreciation. He, however, will deny that there is any fixed concept for appreciation. To appreciate an object will not have to do with applying a formulaic judgment but will instead have to do with the overall quality of experience

We may colloquially say that an artwork "grows on us." When we do this we casually blend the language of taste with the language of biology. Time, repeated-exposure, and reflection, intuitively contribute to our appreciation of artworks. Artworks get better or worse, richer or more saccharine. I will show that Dewey intends us to see his aesthetics as continuous with his metaphysical conception of nature and a biological conception of life. This is not a new point, nor a controversial one, however what is new in my study is its emphasis on appreciation. In my interpretation of John Dewey, appreciation is the positively valanced feeling attendant upon growth and occasioned by the transaction of an organism and its environment. Appreciation is a biologically grounded pleasure connected to the development of increased perceptual and imaginative complexity. In so far as organismic growth is never complete appreciation, as well, is an open-ended process found in all vital activity and promoted in human culture.

Three texts play a central role in this interpretation. Each began as a prominent public lecture which Dewey then edited and amended for book-form. The first is *Human Nature and Conduct* based on three lectures delivered at Leland Stanford Junior

University in honor of the West Memorial Foundation in 1918 and published as a book in 1922. The second is *Experience and Nature* which was derived from the Carus lectures at the Union Theological Seminary in 1922 and was released as a book in 1925. Third, *Art as Experience* which began as the William James lectures at Harvard University in 1931 and was published in book form in 1934.[142]

These three books establish the core cluster of ideas underlying Dewey's conception of aesthetic experience. From *Human Nature and Conduct* we get an argument for the role of instinct and habit in human conduct including the arts and how this is connected to environmental conditions. From *Experience and Nature* we get an expansion of the conventional idea of aesthetics in the fine arts to encompass experience in general. Finally in *Art as Experience* we get an explanation of how aesthetic experience is consistent with Dewey's naturalism. Collectively they offer a naturalistic picture of aesthetic appreciation as a kind of organic growth in a changing and developing environment.

Let us canvas and contextualize several key terms which arise in these texts and are operative in Dewey's argument. First, "consummation" or the feeling which

[142] *Experience and Nature* is not exclusively concerned with aesthetics, and the most relevant chapters are the final two. Topics of art, fine art, and industrial art, however, appear throughout. The final chapters are important and can be seen as a test run for ideas that are expanded and developed in *Art as Experience*. The importance of *Experience and Nature* rests in its clear exposition of Dewey's underlying metaphysics. Many passages in *Art as Experience* gloss arguments already provided in *Experience and Nature*. It is important to read the two in tandem and each mutually contributes to a better understanding of the other. *Art as Experience*, on its own, is a sprawling book. It alternates between the captivating quotes of poets to the prosaic technical writing of a logician's manual. Abraham Kaplan in the introduction to the critical edition quips, "Dewey's philosophy of art is dispassionate…"This comment carries a high degree of irony because art for Dewey occasion the most passionate and intense experiences of life. This stylistic disconnect between Dewey's philosophic commitment to the felt power of art and his apparent failure to write with any consistent feeling often leaves readers cold. This presents a minor interpretive problem, while Dewey makes many comments about art and emotion the tone of his prose often works at cross purpose to his point. This problem can be easily overcome if we as readers bear in mind Dewey's constant commitment is to growth, life, and feeling.

designates aesthetic experience, Second, "appreciative-criticism" a non-dualistic mode of intelligence which Dewey believes to be active in any aesthetic experience, third, "freshness" a term Dewey uses to designate a positive feeling regarding novelty or the unexpected in experience.

It would be wrong to claim that Dewey is offering an explicit argument for a definition of aesthetic appreciation. Instead he offers across several texts ideas which are consistent with a naturalistic and pragmatic orientation towards aesthetics. Arnold Isenberg in his 1950 article "Analytical Philosophy and The Study of Art," targets Dewey as a prime offended for non-systematic thinking in aesthetics. He writes Dewey provides a "hodgepodge of conflicting methods and undisciplined speculations."[143] This accusation may say more about Dewey's winding writing style than it does about any specific philosophic idea. Dewey's lengthy and winding style may have been more conducive to the lecture setting where he first produced these works and comes off as diffuse in book form. Beyond this issue of presentation there is a conceptual issue as well. What will become clear is that when Dewey speaks about an aesthetic experience or aesthetic appreciation he is not speaking about an object that can be captured in necessary and sufficient conditions. Instead he is pointing towards phases of experience itself and not objects in experience. As readers of Dewey we will never find a propositional definition, but instead a cluster of ideas which can be interpreted as being oriented towards the same position. When considering the term aesthetic appreciation we will have to see how Dewey uses it in several contexts and how we might come to use it ourselves.

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[143] Arnold Isenberg 1987, "Analytical Philosophy and The Study of Art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 46 Special Issue: Analytic Aesthetics (1987), 128.

3. Consummation and Related Concepts.

A concept of aesthetic appreciation is overtly presented in the closing chapters of *Experience and Nature* and I will use this text to explain these concepts. These ideas are expanded upon in *Art as Experience* which I will turn to in the following section to situate Dewey's concept of appreciation vis-à-vis his concept of nature and supplement with passages from *Human Nature and Conduct*.

An original concept worked out by Dewey is the idea of "consummation." This quality of experience becomes instrumental for Dewey's definition of aesthetic experience. Consummation is the feeling potentially found in any experience of being resolved. Dewey notes that the presence of the consummatory quality in experience marks a useful distinction, "Without a sense of moving tendencies which are operative in conjunction with a state of fruition, there is appetitive gratification, but nothing that may be termed appreciation."[144] This is to say that there are plenty of experiences that finish, entering a car, eating a sandwich, or waking up from a nap which all have finality but usually in the bare sense of satisfying some appetite. Appreciation points at experiences in which, "Sense of moving tendencies supplies thrill, stimulation, excitation; sense of completion, consummation, affords composure, form, measure, composition."[145] These events don't merely end they end with felt significance and sum up the activities that led to their fruition.

Any experience which is immediately enjoyed in this way is "esthetic" and this cannot be confined to mere museum objects, there is no *a priori* rule for what may

[144] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 283.

[145] Ibid.

become aesthetic. All experience is potentially aesthetic and in this way "experience is equivalent to art."[146] Dewey concludes that an aesthetic experience is any experience in which "the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession."[147] For example, when we fully experience a symphony we do so in the act of listening which we immediately, not retroactively, enjoy and find meaningful. We may also have an immediate enjoyment in response to a stroll in a garden, solving a mathematical problem, or even eating a sandwich.

Aesthetic appreciation is not possible without consummation. Aesthetic appreciation in *Experience and Nature* appears as an important psychological function attendant upon consummation and continuous with experience in general. Aesthetic experience and its appreciation are both felt and thought. Thinking and feeling happen all the time and all at once. There are feelings attendant upon meanings, and what is meaningful is so because it has felt value. When we retrospectively discuss these experiences Dewey suggests that it is useful to describe two different phases: first appreciation and then criticism. However, he affirms that they are not experienced as being distinct. Dewey is pushing towards a concept of appreciative-criticism or critical-appreciation in every experience.[148]

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[146] Ibid, 267

[147] Ibid, 270.

[148] Ibid, 299. "Any *theory* of values is perforce entrance into the field of criticism. Value as such, even things having value, cannot in their immediate existence be reflected upon; they either are or are not; are or are not enjoyed. To pass beyond direct occurrence, even though the passage be restricted to an attempt to define value, is to begin a process of discrimination which implies a reflective criterion. In themselves, values may be just pointed at; to attempt a definition by complete pointing is however bootless. Sooner or later, with respect to positive or negative value, designation will have to include everything."

This single function of appreciative-criticism, however, may be enacted with differing emphases. One experience may be more intensely felt while another is more predominately reflective but both phases are always present. In fact we may alternate emphases within the same experience. Dewey adds that:

> If we are misled into ignoring the omnipresence in all observations and ideas of this rhythm [between appreciation and criticism], it is largely because, under the influence of formal theories, we attach too elaborate and too remote a signification to "appreciation" and "criticism." They are in fact ubiquitous and constant. We enact them in infancy and adulthood. These are the many, 'perchings and flights' (to borrow James's terms), characteristic of alternate emphasis upon the immediate and mediate…phases of all conscious experience.[149]

Experience becomes aesthetic only when it is consummatory, immediately enjoyed, and this enjoyment is only attained through the interaction of both the felt and thought parts of consciousness.

Appreciation is present at some level of intensity in all experience. This includes both the production and the response to artworks. Dewey notes that "within art a distinction is drawn between … the ground that it is 'creative,' while taste is relatively…passive, dependent for its material upon the activities of the creative artist."[150] But for Dewey active appreciation pervades both creation and reception.[151] The production of art needs to be understood as being thoughtful and the reception of art needs to be thought of as active. Dewey leverages this intimate link between appreciation, creation and the aesthetic to reconstruct the very notion of philosophy. He

[149] Ibid, 300.

[150] Ibid, 268.

[151] Ibid, 311.

suggests in the midst of his analysis of appreciation and criticism, "These remarks are preparatory to presenting a conception of philosophy…"[152] The point Dewey is pushing towards is that philosophy is a critical-appreciative practice that is inextricably affective. What follows for Dewey is that if the activities of philosophy are immediately enjoyed they are also aesthetic. Philosophy itself becomes an aesthetic art.[153]

This makes the stakes very high in Dewey's aesthetics. Aesthetic qualities do not merely touch upon the rarified realm of paintings or symphonies but reaches into all realms of human endeavor. Appreciation positions itself at the center of his analysis and Dewey makes his own work as a philosopher dependent on the task of appreciation. A meaningful and productive life is then dependent on appreciation and a practical imperative is placed on the cultivation of appreciation. To this end Dewey suggests that, "Cultivated taste alone is capable of prolonged appreciation of the same object; and it is capable of it because it has been trained to a discriminating procedure which constantly uncovers in the object new meanings to be perceived and enjoyed."[154] Here Dewey suggests that to increase the intensity of appreciation requires training and that appreciation can be applied repeatedly to the same object. The possibility of continued appreciation hinges upon the ability to uncover new meanings.

This all seems initially plausible, because we often find it rewarding to return to certain poems over and over again and that these poems were only meaningful after we

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[152] Ibid, 299.

[153] This point has been made by John Stuhr in many of his writings but is concisely put forward in his article: *Consciousness of Doom: Criticism, Art, and Pragmatic Transcendence*. The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, New Series, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1998), 255-262.

[154] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 300.

were mature enough to read and recite them. Regarding this idea of new meanings in old objects Dewey suggests that novelty is a regular part of experience. We encounter novelty all the time. New technology, new cereals at the grocery, a new back ache are only the most conspicuous forms of novelty, but our environment is constantly and subtly changing to foster new and unforeseen relationship. Aesthetic experiences, including the perceptions of artworks is importantly novel, which Dewey will often call "fresh".

Change happens constantly and if we encounter something new our perception is prompted to change and adapt. But this growth is not easy or guaranteed. "In many persons with respect to most kinds of enjoyed perceptions, the sense of possibilities, the arousal or excitation attendant upon appreciation of poetry, music, painting, architecture or landscape remains diffuse and inchoate…."[155] In the traditional arts novelty arises in perception itself but it causes mostly indistinct feelings in people. However, "In some happily constituted persons, this effect is adequately coordinated with other endowments and habits; it becomes an integral part of craft, taking effect in the creation of a new object of appreciation."[156] This sensitivity in concert with previously honed skills allows artists to create completely new objects and audiences to earnestly receive them. But in both cases of the creator and the observer "The integration is, however, progressive and experimental, not momentarily accomplished."[157] At the core of Dewey's aesthetics is an insistence that to be responsive to the radically new requires a lot of prior preparation and learning.

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[155] Ibid, 282.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

What we gain from the pages of *Experience and Nature* is a premise that aesthetic experience and aesthetic appreciation are irreducibly connected. We have the outline of a theory which posits appreciation of art as a psychological attitude which is responsive to both the affective and intellectual aspects of perception. In the next section we will see how this integrates into Dewey's particular conception of nature and biology.

4. Art in and of Nature.

Dewey's nature operates with regularity but not ideal repetition. Dewey, unwilling to claim a mechanistic determinism within nature, instead posits recurrent activities, such as orbits, seasons, respiration and other measurable phenomena as "rhythms."[158] As he puts it, "All interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms. There is ebb and flow, systole and diastole: ordered change."[159] While we may speak here of stability, in fact, this is only temporary and relative stability as all things change, even those which appear to be unchanging. "The rate of change of some things is so slow, or is so rhythmic, that these changes have all the advantages of stability…To designate the slower and the regular rhythmic events structure, and more rapid and irregular ones process, is sound practical sense."[160]

[158] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 161: "A pond moving in ripples, forked lightning, the waving of branches in the wind, the beating of a bird's wing, the whorl of sepals and petals, changing shadows of clouds on a meadow, are simple natural rhythms."

[159] Ibid, 15.

[160] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 64.

Whether we use the term structure or process makes no difference. All things change in Dewey's nature even if slowly and imperceptibly. **[161]**

There is no ideal repetition in nature but instead resemblance of phenomena over time which forms patterns of recurrence. No spring is exactly like the past spring but it resembles the previous occurrence with enough regularity so as to plan and adjust our activities accordingly.[162] Along with this language of rhythm Dewey was also open to

[161] This resonates with sentiments coming from the American Nature writers such as John Muir. John Muir, a naturalist and explorer wrote many texts about the wilderness of California, encounters a problem writing about the beauties of nature. The problem arises when he attempts to present two conflicting ideas about nature together in the same passage. On one hand, nature seems to be a constant, stable whole on the other nature appears to be constantly changing. This tension is captured in the following passage from Muir's *Mountains of California* of 1894 given as he peers down at a quiet vista from the slopes of Mt. Ritter. He writes "standing there in the deep, brooding silence all the wilderness seems motionless, as if the work of creation were done. But in the midst of this outer steadfastness we know there is incessant motion and change…These cliff-bound glaciers, seemingly wedged and immovable, are flowing like water and grinding the rocks beneath them…Here are the roots of all the life of the valleys, and here more simply than elsewhere is the eternal flux of nature manifested. (John Muir, *The Mountains of California*, (New York: Random House, 2001), 52.)." In this passage Muir focuses on the pervasive dynamism of nature and denies the static character of natural objects. The frozen landscape of Mt. Ritter is thrilling because it is in motion. To appreciate a glacier is to appreciate its melting, grinding, and slow erosion. Flux itself becomes integral to appreciation. An aesthetic response is not a fixed judgment about a static object.

[162] Consider this illustrative passage line from *Art as Experience* 153-154: "Dawn and sunset, day and night, rain and sunshine, are in their alternation factors that directly concern human beings…The circular course of the seasons affects almost every human interest. When man became agricultural, the rhythmic march of the seasons was of necessity identified with the destiny of the community. The cycle of irregular regularities in the shape and behavior of the moon seemed fraught with mysterious import for the welfare of man, beast, and crops, and inextricably bound up with the mystery of generation. With these larger rhythms were bound up those of the ever-recurring cycles of growth from seed to a maturity that reproduced the seed; the reproduction of animals, the relation of male and female, the never-ceasing round of births and deaths…Man's own life is affected by the rhythm of waking and sleeping, hungering and satiety, work and rest. The long rhythms of agrarian pursuits were broken into minuter and more directly perceptible cycles with the development of the crafts."

quantum theories of matter, which inclined him to use language reminiscent of Einstein; Dewey even ascribes an ontological status to "energy."[163]

As he puts it, a theory of nature and art, "can be based *only* upon an understanding of the central role of energy within and without, and of that interaction of energies which institutes opposition in company with accumulation, conservation, suspense and interval, and cooperative movement toward fulfillment in an ordered or rhythmical experience."[164] Nature becomes a collection of rhythmic energies and in this way, "The terms "natural law" and "natural rhythm" are synonymous."[165] This has the effect of understanding natural laws as plastic and changing themselves.

While there is constant change, there is not wholesale entropy, within nature there is also accumulation and development. There is not mere heterogeneity; instead there is gathering of forces and progressive changes. "There is in nature…something more than mere flux and change…In a world of mere flux, change would not be cumulative"[166] Dewey suggests that there are changes which coalesce and reinforce energy. In this view local growth is part of the basic dynamism of nature.[167]

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[163] Dewey had the occasion to meet Albert Einstein several times both formally and casually. Albert Barnes solicited Einstein to join the faculty of the Barnes Foundation. This position never materialized but the two men kept up a correspondence and Einstein visited the collection several times. For example: John Dewey to Albert Einstein, October 22, 1932. in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III).* Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters.

[164] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 166.

[165] Ibid, 155.

[166] Ibid, 15.

[167]Consider this passage from *Experience and Nature*, 67: "Structure and process, substance and accident, matter and energy, permanence and flux, one and many, continuity and discreteness, order and progress, law and liberty, uniformity and growth, tradition and innovation, rational will and impelling desires, proof and discovery, the actual and the possible, are names given to

With this comes the conviction that nature is unified but not closed nor deterministic. Dewey calls this "the including whole implicit in ordinary experiences"[168] which is a mixture of growth and proliferation contrasted with dissipation and entropy. Nature is full of change but does not cease to be nature.[169] Progressive change pervades the whole system and nature becomes a network of relative intensities where energies coalesce and collapse. There are moments of stasis, but these are limited in space and time. Dynamic equilibriums are achieved only to give way to dissonance and dissipation. Dewey's nature is a place that is not wholly active or wholly static. This ebb and flow of energy into rhythms of rest and turmoil is consistent at all levels of observation.[170] This dynamism is true of subatomic particles, stellar objects, and human institutions. At all these levels change and growth is a fact of reality.

While I speak of levels, I do not want to suggest any rigid separation between the macroscopic and microscopic phenomena of nature. They are, instead, completely integrated into the whole of Dewey's nature. At the specific level of human life Dewey also denies any special separation between humans and the rest of nature. Instead humans are a confluence of energies which momentarily coordinate to form an organism. This

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various phases of their conjunction, and the issue of living depends upon the art with which these things are adjusted to each other."

[168] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 201.

[169] As Dewey points out in *Experience and Nature* regarding the history of Greek metaphysics on 161: "No longer was the individual something complete, perfect, finished, an organized whole of parts united by the impress of a comprehensive form. What was prized as individuality was now something moving, changing, discrete, and above all initiating instead of final. As long as deviation of particulars from established order meant disorder, the metaphysics and logic of subordination of parts to the form of a pre-formed whole was reasonable." A shift in the history of thought allows us to think that wholes can exist without being pre-formed.

[170] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 174: "What is true in the large is true in the small. Repetition of uniform units at uniform intervals is not only not rhythmic but is opposed to the experience of rhythm."

organism exists only in an environment.[171] While we may talk of distinct entities for the purposes of discourse and commerce there is no metaphysical break in nature between objects, organisms, and their environment. What constitutes the boundary between an organism and its environment is variable and often superficial. Dewey cites the example of skin which is only conventionally the boundary of our organism. It is in fact a porous layer which lets many things in and out and makes no clear split between an inside and an outside.[172]

What distinguishes an organism from an object, in this view of nature, is the quality of energy which it occasions. An organism is marked by the fact of life.[173] Unlike material objects, organisms are alive. This is to say, organisms both vegetative and animal, are a particular confluence of energies which are able to absorb additional energy and facilitate localized growth.[174] What is critical here is that in Dewey's nature life and growth are coextensive.

Life is the ability to grow and growth only occurs when an organism interacts with the environment. In the opening passage to Dewey's seminal book on pedagogy *Democracy and Education* he begins with a simple assertion that the distinction between

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[171] Ibid, 12: "The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely *in* it but because of it, through interaction with it."

[172] Ibid.

[173] Much of Dewey can be read in conversation with the history of Vitalism. In particular the philosophy of Henri Bergson. This connection is outlined briefly in: Neil Gross, "Durkheim's Pragmatism Lectures: A Contextual Interpretation," *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1997): 126-149

[174] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 12: "While man is other than bird and beast, he shares basic vital functions with them and has to make the same basal adjustments if he is to continue the process of living."

living and non-living things is that the former "maintain themselves by renewal."[175] He contrasts a stone with a living creature. The stone when struck either repels the blow or succumbs to the force and shatters but there is no overall change. A living creature on the other hand may take a supervening force and turn it into a means for further existence. If the force is too strong the living creature becomes inanimate, but as long as it "endures…struggles to use surrounding energies in its own behalf…the energy it expends is…more than compensated for by the return it gets: it grows."[176] Organisms, including humans, encounter external force in their environment and use that resistance to increase in strength and size.[177]

Living organisms are always in a tense but sympathetic relationship with their environment. Nature both sustains and stresses. The need for growth in a world of constant change and struggle opens up the idea of organisms changing with and in nature.[178] Struggle and growth coupled with rest and accumulation, become the constant ebb and flow of animal existence.

All animals for Dewey share certain drives. All animals have needs, many related to nourishment and bodily growth. There is no purely self-sustaining organism.[179] Needs,

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[175] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 5.

[176] Ibid.

[177] This is echoed *in Art as Experience* pg. 13: "Nevertheless, if life continues and if in continuing it expands, there is an overcoming of factors of opposition and conflict; there is a transformation of them into differentiated aspects of a higher powered and more significant life. The marvel of organic, of vital, adaptation through expansion (instead of by contraction and passive accommodation) actually takes place."

[178] *Art as Experience* pg. 17: **"**To the being fully alive, the future is not ominous but a promise; it surrounds the present as a halo. It consists of possibilities that are felt as a possession of what is now and here. In life that is truly life, everything overlaps and merges."

such as hunger, drive animals into sometimes hostile environments of which they have almost no control and no alternative. This act of plunging into the world is what Dewey terms an "impulsion."[180] Dewey's analysis of impulsion is noteworthy.[181] Impulsions are non-discursive and non-intentional. That is to say, that while an impulsion may be rooted in the need for food which has a clear end for its fulfillment, namely the acquisition of nutrients, the organism does not proceed with a directed action. The organism does not reflect upon the motivating need. Instead it is impelled into an environment blindly seeking a fulfillment to a mute urge. What distinguishes an impulsion from mere impulse is that it occupies the whole organism. Dewey acknowledges that there are a different set of volitional actions which he calls "impulses" which isolate one or another system within an organism.[182] For example, one may have an impulse to scratch an itch on the tip of the nose. This may not involve the full attention or bodily structure to fulfill it. However impulsions like hunger conscript the full organism in the service of their fulfillment. [183]

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[179] *Art as Experience* pg. 12: "At every moment, the living creature is exposed to dangers from its surroundings, and at every moment, it must draw upon something in its surroundings to satisfy its needs. The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way."

[180] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 60.

[181] The most complete account of impulse in Dewey's philosophy is found in: John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume 14*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978) 63-117

[182] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 60.

[183] This analogy between hunger and the aesthetic is teased out in the chapter "The Dewey Effect," in: Michael Kelly, *A Hunger for Aesthetics: Enacting the Demands of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) 1-25.

When a need is satisfied and an impulsion fulfilled this can happen in one of two ways: either by habit or adaptation. The latter requires growth; the former is the result of prior growth.[184] In each case the organism needed to grow in order to satisfy its needs. Consistent with a view of nature in which change is constant, even these needs change and are changed in the process of fulfilment. "Needs" are never constant or essential, but are themselves in a dynamic relationship with the environment. It is this mutual transaction between organism and environment within the whole of nature which captures the essential dynamism of Dewey's nature. When growth occurs, when the organism is led to change in concert with nature, Dewey says, "The moments when the creature is both most alive and most composed and concentrated are those of fullest intercourse with the environment."[185] Moments of growth are the moments of most intense life and vice versa.

This intensity in the organism is registered at the level of affect and presupposes an inextricable felt dimension to reality. Growth has accompanying feeling for Dewey; it often does not transpire unnoticed. Its benefits are felt in action, as an increase of power, or as an increase of intensity in emotion. This is of course relative to the whole system of rhythms and energy. Life is a somewhat regular series of exertions and rests, and the intensity of each is marked only in contrast with the other. We have calm because we are

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[184] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 213: "In contrast with lower organisms, the more complex forms have distance receptors and a structure in which activators and effectors are allied to distance even more extensively than to contact receptors. What is done in response to things near-by is so tied to what is done in response to what is far away, that a higher organism acts with reference to a spread-out environment as a single situation. We find also in all these higher organisms that what is done is conditioned by consequences of prior activities; we find the fact of learning or habit-formation."

[185] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 107.

also stirred. We have rest because we have excitement. Life, growth, and feeling are inseparable but are internally differentiated by contrasts of intensity.

Growth when successful enacts accumulated change in the organism particularly in the form of habits of action. Once established the organism is better equipped to deal with a force in the environment which once required struggle, but can now be dealt with by habitual "channels."[186] But if a habit is deployed to engage the environment in a routine way there is no necessary growth. This is important because while growth is possible it is not inevitable.

For Dewey growth is not opposed only to decay but also to routine.[187] There are many reasons organisms do not grow. They may be too weak to withstand the environment, or too strong such that their environment does not challenge them and they are satisfied by the use of routine habits. Routines allow organisms to function in complex environments and to build up necessary skills to maintain the organism for future growth. This is most of what constitutes lived experience for Dewey. That is to say that most of life is not intense, not challenging, and expressly reliant on pre-established channels of action. We rely on the execution of pre-established channels of action as we navigate our environment. However if habit successfully exhausts the activities of an organism without any growth they enact a kind of inert lifelessness for Dewey. What is important here is that growth is not constant and growth is not automatic, there is struggle, luck and action involved.

It is this last idea which puts a finer point on Dewey's remarks about organisms. There are for Dewey certain organisms which have a special relationship to growth

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[186] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 214.

[187] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 42.

because they can intelligently effect the conditions of that growth and direct their future actions. Humans and many high-order animals fall into this category. Not all organisms float aimlessly in their environments waiting to bump blindly into food and avoid predators, although some such animals certainly exist. Humans by contrast have a complicated mental life which retains memories and imagines outcomes. Action can be directed to replicate or avoid certain outcomes. When activity is so coordinated Dewey calls this "thought."[188] Thought is not a noun but an adverb which describes action. It is a quality of activities which are done for an intended goal. Thought occurs when a present action considers past events in the interest of securing future outcomes. When past actions are reflected upon mindfully they achieve, "meaning."[189] Meaning comes out of the dynamism of actions attempting to effect change in the environment. There is no meaning independent of specific actions. Things are meaningful insofar as they are taken up into the operation of thought and used to guide action and further experience. When action is successfully coordinated Dewey calls this "intelligence." At its most basic level this establishes are relationship between the organism and nature through trial and error. In its most elevated form we get the scientific method. All this is captured in Dewey's concept of thinking which he terms "inquiry." Thinking itself becomes an integrated part of nature enacted in the flow of change and open to the unforeseen.[190]

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[188] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 126: "Thought," reason, intelligence, whatever word we choose to use, is existentially an adjective (or better an adverb), not a noun."

[189] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 14: "Desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony. With the realization, material of reflection is incorporated into objects as their meaning."

[190] An excellent and early formulation of these ideas in Dewey's epistemology is contained in John Dewey, *How We Think*, in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924, Volume 6: How*

5. Appreciation in the Environment.

Humans are additionally complicated because their environment is partly social. Their environment is as much about trees and rivers as it is about institutions and groups. It also includes stories, rumors, and the remnants of bygone civilizations. All this makes up experience. Need, impulse, affect, inquiry, and society are the stuff of experience. Experiences are sometimes focused or distracted, intense or forgettable, pleasurable or painful, and any number of combinations. Dewey often elides all this under the title of "culture."[191] Culture is the whole of our experience in nature and of nature.

This integrated vision of the individual in and of the environment is explained in depth in Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct*. Therein he explains his "social psychology" or a theory for the psychology of habits including habits of thought.[192] It was noted in the previous chapter that Laurence Buermeyer saw that this text had distinct implications for aesthetics. It explains the place of a psychology of habits in experiences including aesthetic experience. It explains that experiences even aesthetic ones are wrapped up in a complex of present conditions and pre-existing habits. Dewey explains this dynamism with the example of admiring a flower.

We Think and Selected Essays, 1910-1911, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois
University Press, 1985)

[191] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 361-364. And, Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 28. Late in life Dewey started to revise Experience and Nature. In an unpublished new introduction to that text he lamented his use of experience and said that he should have instead used the term culture. This anecdote is related in the introduction to the Carbondale edition of *Experience and Nature*.

[192] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*, in The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924, Volume 14: 1922, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press: 1988), 60.

He writes, "Taste for flowers may be the initial step in building reservoirs and irrigation canals. The stimulation of desire and effort is one preliminary in the change of surroundings…Taste, appreciation and effort always spring from some accomplished objective situation."[193] Here he connects the enjoyment of flowers with the specifics of an objective situation. The existence of flowers belies the existence of a whole complex of material conditions by which to grow flowers and a cluster of habits by which to acknowledge flowers as objects of taste. He continues, "A genuine appreciation of the beauty of flowers is not generated within a self-enclosed consciousness. It reflects a world in which beautiful flowers have already grown and been enjoyed. Taste and desire represent a prior objective fact recurring in action to secure perpetuation and extension."[194] The desire for flowers does not emerge from some transcendental love of beauty but is instead an index of specific material conditions. He continues that "Desire for flowers comes after actual enjoyment of flowers… It projects in securer and wider and fuller form some good which has been previously experienced in a precarious, accidental, fleeting way.[195] Our desire to cultivate flowers and "make the desert bloom" in fact belies a desire to perpetuate an experience of flowers that happened accidentally because of the confluence of contingent material conditions. [196] There simply is not experience, aesthetic or otherwise, that does not implicate the whole environment, and our thinking is directed at action in that environment.

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[193] Ibid, 20.

[194] Ibid.

[195] Ibid.

[196] ibid

Because habits of thought are so intimately tied to the environment, or rather that they are part of the same environment, to change one requires a change in the other. This philosophic materialism underwrites much of the institutional ambitions of the Barnes Foundation. Dewey remarks also in *Human Nature and Conduct* that the, "short-cut revolutionist fails to realize the full force of…institutions as embodied habits."[197] Here Dewey argues that institutions are the mode of adjusting the material conditions which in turn change habits. He believes the need for long-term environmental change is not adequately grasped by revolutionaries who simply wish to change ideas abstracted from the environment. This is in many ways why the Barnes Foundation could not simply be a set of ideas or books, but had to also develop correlated institutional changes in the environment.

Within this naturalistic and materialist framework of culture and experience Dewey makes his most original contribution to aesthetic theory. He argues that there are certain experiences which bare a unique quality which is "esthetic." As already explained in *Experience and Nature* this quality of experience he calls "consummatory."[198] Dewey uses the word consummation to suggest that certain experiences have a constituent felt quality of completion, well-roundedness, and unification. This does not mean that an aesthetic object is a self-contained whole, but rather that the experience in which one encounters an object has the quality of being resolved. As one might feel at the end of Hamlet when the line "the rest is silence" is uttered. [199] On its own, spoken out of context, this is a quizzical line but at the end of the play it draws on what has gone before

[197] Ibid, 77.

[198] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 67. And, Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 14.

[199] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 24

and meaningfully signals Hamlet's immanent death. When well executed in the act of performance and stagecraft this line brings with it a special kind of satisfaction of a well-rounded experience. What is important to emphasize in the concept of consummation is its connection to past events, present conditions, and anticipated future experience. It is not a disembodied judgment, but itself an sign of our organisms imbeddedness in the world

Although consummation has been absent from the canon of aesthetic philosophy Dewey thinks it is a perfectly intuitive concept and is already in common usage.[200] He suggests that what we call "*an* experience" in everyday language has exactly this quality. His examples are of a fine French meal or riding out a storm at sea.[201] In these instances we may say "that was *an* experience." These experiences stood out against the flow of routine as progressive and consummating events. These experiences were consummatory and consummatory experiences are aesthetic.

Experience when aesthetic, when consummatory, is both a doing and an undergoing for Dewey. It is the felt realization of our integration within the nature which Dewey posits. There is no higher achievement of value for Dewey. But this does not mean it is the achievement of momentary bliss or utopia.[202] There is no cessation in such an experience because it is still one of change and struggle. Instead the achievement of

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[200] While even Aristotle in the *Poetics* suggests that a good play must end well, and literary critics worry about narrative arcs, these are distinctly different from positing the existence of a consummatory quality in experience in general. Consummation is really a new idea from Dewey.

[201] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38.

[202] Dewey often discusses the concept of utopia in *Human Nature and Conduct*. For example: Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*,189.

consummation can happen recurrently and in a variety of changing ways.[203] For example a listener to a symphony can have multiple consecutive aesthetic consummations while listening to a symphony not simply after the final movement ends. The possibility of an aesthetic consummatory experience is ever-present in life.

This privileging of the aesthetic within experience permits Dewey to make one of his most bombastic claims. Dewey asserts that scientific inquiry serves the interest of aesthetic appreciation. He begins this claim by contrasting the arts this with sciences,[204] which even in their most elevated forms are more a means for future action and possible enjoyment. A scientific theory about an eclipse, for example, is only a call to go test the

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[203] D. Kuspit, "Dewey's Critique of Art for Art's Sake," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 27 (1968): 93–98.

[204] Dewey, much to the chagrin of analytic interlocutor, is not careful about his use of the term art instead of "esthetic." It would be safe to say that Dewey's main target in his aesthetics is a broad conception of aesthetic experience and not an explicit theory of art. He is happy to talk about fields of flowers, Renoirs, and skyscrapers in the same breath and that they are all art. He is not concerned with the question of "What is art?" Dewey invites this slippage between the terms aesthetic and artistic. He is happy to promote everyday objects and demote the privileges of fine art. As he writes:

> We hesitate to call the penny-dreadful of fiction artistic, so we call it debased fiction or a travesty on art. Most sources of direct enjoyment for the masses are not art to the cultivated, but perverted art, an unworthy indulgence. Thus we miss the point. A passion of anger, a dream, relaxation of the limbs after effort, swapping of jokes, horse-play, beating of drums, blowing of tin whistles, explosion of firecrackers and walking on stilts, have the same quality of immediate and absorbing finality that is possessed by things and acts dignified by the title of esthetic (*Experience and Nature*, 71).

Although, somewhat controversial, I am inclined to read Dewey as consistent with an institutional theory of art akin to the early work of George Dickie. I am sympathetic to the arguments of Susan Rouse in her dissertation *The Institutional Definition of Art: A Pragmatic Reconstruction*. I would similarly argue that Dewey could acknowledge that the term art, and fine art, are mere conventions; they are historical, and contingent. They are real, however, in so far as it effects action and institutions. If designating a urinal as art has a demonstrable effect for future action we can tell a consequentialist story, but not an ontological one about the term art. This is all to say that while Dewey is almost always talking about aesthetic experience he often uses the term art to mean the same thing. When we encounter this language we should realize that he is not making any strong ontological claim about art *per se* but about aesthetic experience in general.

prediction by observing an eclipse. The acts of science guide action towards a richer more intelligent experience but need not be a rich experience themselves. [205] It is in following this line of thought that Dewey makes his claim that science is second only to art. First in *Experience and Nature* and re-quoted in *Art as Experience* he writes 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."[206] Aesthetic experience is as good as it gets for Dewey. It is an ultimate value with a naturalistic basis.

Consummation is importantly charged with feeling. To be felt is to be real for Dewey.[207] Extending from his metaphysics and underwriting his aesthetics is a realist theory of value. For Dewey the qualities instantiated in objects are real. This is an extension of his naturalistic metaphysics and his empiricism that argues that perception engages reality and that there are no higher and lower degrees of reality.

Objects are really beautiful and ugly, cold and hot, soft and rigid, covetous and repugnant etc.[208] These qualities, however, are understood to be simultaneously relative,

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[205] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 269 and Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 26.

[206] Ibid.

[207] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 18: "'Experience' denotes the planted field, the sowed seeds, the reaped harvests, the changes of night and day, spring and autumn, wet and dry, heat and cold, that are observed, feared, longed for; it also denotes the one who plants and reaps, who works and rejoices, hopes, fears, plans, invokes magic or chemistry to aid him, who is downcast or triumphant. It is "double-barrelled" in that it recognizes in its primary integrity no division between act and material, subject and object, but contains them both in an unanalyzed totality." Qualities like joy, fear, hopeful are just as real as spring and autumn.

[208] This position is a consequence of the pragmatic theory of truth. As a tradition pragmatism seeks to articulate the inseparability of facts and values. I raise these issues to show that Dewey is not espousing a simple subjectivism in respect to aesthetic objects but instead a more robust relativism in keeping with other pragmatists. See Hillary Putnam's instructive observations on

provisional and plural. Qualities are real but not absolute. As Dewey quips in *Democracy and Education* many people can look at a mountain. A geologists, a climber, and a skier can each see it from a different perspective.[209] It is commonsensical that they are looking at the same mountain and that they are making real, but different, observations consistent with one another. In *Art as Experience* Dewey uses the anecdote of several men looking at the New York skyline. One sees the real estate as a money-making venture, another sees it as an overcrowded mess, and a third enjoys the view.[210] There is nothing inconsistent for Dewey in having multiple values ascribed to the same reality. This is analogous to aesthetic experiences which can be viewed in many plural, incomplete, but real ways. Although real, aesthetic value is not univocal. As in the natural sciences, there is but one nature, but many partial views on that nature.[211] Likewise when considering Dewey's realism about art we must accept a version of pluralism.[212]

The philosophically significant implication of this position is that aesthetic value becomes objective and empirically accessible for Dewey. It is not a private subjective reverie. It is an objective fact about experience which is biologically and socially

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pragmatist theories of truth in "The Inheritance of Pragmatism" in *Words and Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995):151-245.

[209] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 117.

[210] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 141.

[211] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 201: "But whether the scope of vision be vast or minute, we experience it as a part of a larger whole and inclusive whole, a part that now focuses our experience. We might expand the field from the narrower to the wider. But however broad the field, it is still felt as not the whole; the margins shade into that indefinite expanse beyond which imagination calls the universe. This sense of the including whole implicit in ordinary experiences is rendered intense within the frame of a painting or poem."

[212] This is not to be confused with Danto's pluralism. Contrast this with Danto's cognitive essentialism put forward in: Arthur C. Danto, *The Madonna of the Future: Essays in a Pluralistic Art World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

grounded. There can be multiple, sympathetic, and exclusive experiences of the same object without having to posit private worlds or multiple realities. Felt values are not subjective descriptions supervening on indifferent objects. Feelings have no lower ontological status than material objects or logical operators. Instead all values and feelings have real correlates to their application in practical action within the whole of nature.

Consummation is no different. Specific events and interactions with objects are consummatory, and there is no consummation in the abstract.[213] This is true even within a single organism over a stretch of time. The organisms view on the world is partial but cumulative, and successive interactions with nature yield different but complimentary judgments about it. This is true for basic induction and complex aesthetic judgments. Aesthetic artworks stand not just as a consummation of an organism's local experience, but a kind of consummation of a more general natural process of life itself. They are natural objects born of natural organism entwined in an environment of energy and rhythm. The aesthetic is the most consciously felt, coherent, and intense integration of the organism into this nature.

We have sketched the origin of aesthetic experience in Dewey's theory of nature and metaphysics. This helps makes sense of Dewey's sweeping comments in the later sections of *Art as Experience* where he remarks, "the work of art operates to deepen and to raise to great clarity that sense of an enveloping undefined whole that accompanies

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[213] This should not, however, be confused with the quality of "roundedness" as one finds in Shaftsbury. Consider: A. Cooper Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001). "Roundness" in an object, for Shaftsbury elicits a necessary pleasure in inner sense. Dewey would not want to say that consummation is connected to any specific primary or secondary qualities of an object. Instead it is a quality of an overall experience.

every normal experience. This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves…we are citizens of this vast world beyond ourselves, and any intense realization of its presence with and in us brings a peculiarly satisfying sense of unity in itself and with ourselves."[214] The aesthetic is not merely a passive observation about nature but is an active experience in which one *feels* at home in nature, and intensely so. It is this felt aspect which is important to emphasize. No experience is out of nature but it is the aesthetic experience that is meaningfully felt to be continuous with nature.

This description has been useful to pinpoint some key premises for Dewey and to rehearse some of his esoteric vocabulary. Dewey's aesthetics is unabashedly naturalistic and links a generic theory of energy to the specifics of human works of art. This metaphysical vantage on Dewey's philosophy is important because it contextualizes Dewey's comments on artworks and artists. He must be read as putting forward a theory that is naturalistic, realist, pluralist, and empirical. He describes his project in *Experience and Nature* as putting forward an "empirical naturalism" and we can see his comments on aesthetics as an extension of that effort.[215] It is a theory that accepts that nothing in nature is stable and all things are changing and changeable.

Appreciation fits squarely and prominently into this naturalistic system. In the following section I will explain in detail that way in which appreciation constitutes the affective dimension of an aesthetic experience, and put forward an interpretation upon the material from the previous section that appreciation is the pleasurable feeling of growth in perception and imagination.

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[214] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 203

[215] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 11.

6. Appreciation as Growth

In the winter of 1930-1931 the painter Henri Matisse came to New York and visited Dewey.[216] This was just before Dewey would depart to deliver the William James lectures that would become *Art as Experience*. They dined together and Matisse showed Dewey the preliminary sketches he had prepared for a mural destined for the Barnes Foundation.[217] In advance of Matisse's trip to Merion Dewey wrote to Barnes:

> I'm enjoying Matisse immensely. Day before yesterday he showed me his sketches…It was interesting to see the *growth* in his three sketches— If anyone ever writes the actual psychology of the artist's processes in creation, it will be thru access to waste paper baskets, and discarded sketches…[218]

What interested Dewey in this encounter was the change and growth of Matisse's work. Dewey acknowledges that the creative process is one by which the artist makes many false starts and provisional attempts signaled by allusion to a basket full of discarded sketches. The artist, in this case Matisse, must inevitably go through a process by which ideas and their expression start off comparatively inchoate and gradually gain coherence and solidity until the artist's own experience of the work is appreciated as consummatory.

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[216] Dewey, John Dewey To Albert C. Barnes, December 12 1930. in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III).* Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters.

[217] This would eventually become the mural "*The Dance*." Matisse also drew sketches for a portrait of Dewey never realized. A complete history of these drawings is provided in internal documents for Matisse at the MOMA archives. See: Louisa Judge, *Henri-Matisse 1869-1954* (MOMA internal document Print and Drawing Department, N.D.).

[218] Dewey, John Dewey To Albert C. Barnes, December 12 1930. in *The Correspondence of John Dewey, 1871-1952 (I-III).* Electronic Edition. Accessed through InteLex Past Masters. (I added italics for emphasis).

This is a rather mundane observation about a rather prominent artists but it belies a perspective that Dewey will develop for aesthetics in general. Finished works of art and critical judgments about art are the result of similar processes of inquiry and growth. We cannot look merely at the finished product and capture the character of the phenomenon of art. As Dewey will come to say later in *Art as Experience* "It has been repeatedly intimated that there is a difference between the art product (statue, painting or whatever), and the *work* of art. The first is physical and potential; the latter is active and experienced."[219] Artwork is a verb in the sense that art "works" by being dynamic, active and a site of growth. This work does not end with the artist but also extends to an audience.

Dewey quotes Matisse at length in *Art as Experience*, and two of these passages address this aspect of growth for both the artist and the audience. Matisse describes his process of painting as follows:

> If, on a clean canvas, I put at intervals patches of blue, green and red, with every touch that I put on, each of those previously laid on loses in importance… A relation is now established between this red and the paleness of the canvas. When I put on besides a green, and also a yellow…between this green and the yellow and the color of the canvas there will be still further relations. But these different tones diminish one another. It is necessary that the different tones I use be balanced in such a way that they do not destroy one another... that they are built up instead of being knocked down. A new *combination* of colors will succeed to the first one and will give the wholeness of my conception."[220]

[219] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 168.

[220] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 142. Dewey quotes this From *Notes d'un Peintre*, published in 1908.

This description of laying down one color and then another captures the developmental process of art making. Each successive application confronts the artists with a new set of decisions and the train of decisions takes the artist towards a combination of colors not previously planned for. There is open-ended growth and development in this mode of art making.

This passage also highlights another aspect of artistic creation, namely the felt aspect. Matisse suggests that certain color combinations build upon one another while others knock themselves down. What is insinuated by this language is that certain colors *feel* more active while others *feel* stunted or dull. His intermittent decisions about color and their relations are grounded on judgments felt more than stated. In this analysis Matisse continuously judges the overall quality of experience while being attentive to a qualitative intensification of feeling. He wants the canvas to "build up" and to progress so as to resolve itself or in Deweyan language to consummate.

This felt developmental process of the artists is mirrored in the observer of a given object. Again Matisse is reported to have said: "When a painting is finished, it is like a new-born child. The artist himself must have time for understanding it. It must be lived with as a child is lived with, if we are to grasp the meaning of his being."[221] The process by which anyone, including the artist, comes to "understand" a painting is progressive and temporally extended. One must live with the painting as we do a child. That is to see it in different lights and angles, greet it in different moods and with different thoughts, and consider the fact that both object and observer are changing.[222]

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[221] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 111.

[222] This idea was enacted in practice by the mid-century artist Donald Judd. He became dedicated to the concept of "permanent installation." This led him to experiment with space in his New

When the qualitative feelings of life are enhanced in the company of an object this would be to really live with it.[223] To be enhanced implies change and this change implies growth. In this example of Matisse we begin to dimly see that appreciation occurs throughout the flow of events that constitute both artistic creation and reception.

This gives us enough material to put forward the proposition that appreciation is the feeling of growth in experience. What kind of growth, however, are we talking about? It would be hard to compare the growth of a Matisse canvas to the growth of hair or nails. We might also say that bank accounts grow or that rust grows on car doors, and all this would be consistent with Dewey's metaphysical conception of growth. Growth as it pertains to aesthetics, however, is connected to a biological vitality which is able to increase in relative intensity. This is relative in respect to a particular organism's status within an environment. This presumes a vitalist position, in which there is energy particular to living organisms that can be increased.

As already noted, for Dewey, when a novel element in the environment is encountered the organism draws upon pre-existing channels of habit. Sometimes these are adequate to sustain the organism, however in the truly novel situation the organism must abandon, adjust and adapt these old habits to sustain and promote growth in the new

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York Spring Street home. This included commissioning frescos which are more permanent than paintings, as well as installing his own work so that it would never be moved. Eventually he would expand his efforts to the desert of Texas and purchase a former POW camp in Marfa. The guiding thought is that one must have extended time to live with objects to really appreciate them. David Raskin the art historian has done extensive work into the influence of Dewey upon Donald Judd's practice. In his book *Donald Judd* he examines the marginalia on Judd's personal copy of *Art as Experience* found at the library in Marfa. Raskin argues that Judd's philosophy is decidedly pragmatist and deeply Deweyan. See: David Raskin, Donald Judd (New Haven: Yale UP, 2010), 2-7.

[223] Throughout *Art as Experience* Dewey compares aesthetic experience to friendship. Both take time and both suggest change in each member of the relationship. See: Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 38, 66, 282.

environment. It is in these moments when the organism confronts a new environment that they are most apt to grow and most apt to feel the intensity of organic growth. If they succeed in their adaptation they strike a new equilibrium with the environment and a momentary state of repose is connected to the proceeding intensity of feeling when the organism is forced to tussle with something new. Growth of this sort belies an arc from momentary stasis to necessary agitation to potential intensification and ending in eventual equilibrium. There is no set time on this process and no *a priori* guarantee of its completion.

This arc of growth is behind much of what Dewey says about aesthetic appreciation in *Art as Experience*. Dewey remarks that a creature in a new environment:

> …is most alive, he is most observant of the world about him and most taut with energy. As he watches what stirs about him, he, too, is stirred. His observation is both action in preparation and foresight of the future. He is as active through his whole being when he looks and listens as when he stalks his quarry or stealthily retreats from a foe. His senses are sentinels of immediate thought and outposts of action...[224]

All organisms are caught in this rhythm of tension and relaxation, impulsion and cessation, novelty and adaptation. It is this same cycle which will characterize artistic production and appreciative reception. All these are operations are consistent with a nature which is in constant flux and an organism that is a site of growth. What is being suggested here about appreciation is the idea that appreciation is the feeling of growing in the moment of growth. [225]

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[224] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 18

[225] In the case of the Matisse painting the emphasis of experience was on visual sensations. The growth that is initiated is then also predominantly connected to visual sensation. But growth can happen in the auditory system, in tactile sensation, or imaginatively. When we encounter an

But this is not mere growth such as the growth of scabs, beehives, and tree bark. Instead aesthetic growth is meaningful. Growth as appreciation requires this critical addition of meaning. This requires a degree of consciousness on the part of the growing organism. I am claiming that the growth of the organism itself becomes meaningful and is not merely passively accumulated or indifferently undergone.

Let's apply this idea of appreciation as conscious growth back into the example of Matisse. In this analysis Matisse grows after he applies a new color and perceives it to be a novel change in his environment, he consciously adjusts his present habits to guide future action. In this instance the application of the next color. In this limited moment we already have appreciation and growth; we need not have a completed artwork to talk in these terms. As he paints he is constantly confronted with new visual stimuli and responds to them appreciatively and experimentally. He presumes a yellow may go well with a blue but after its application finds he needs to add additional green and so on. Each step builds on the one before and pushes Matisse farther into uncharted territory.

When the sum total of these actions, each consummatory in their own right, reaches a quality of sufficiently intense consummation Matisse can be done. His painting serves as a testimony to the progressive development of his aesthetic experience. It

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artwork it may initiate growth in different systems of the organism and not in a wholesale or equal way. As Dewey notes in the opening chapter of *Art as Experience* our culture has historically separated our senses to be connected to different media. That is, auditory senses are reserved for the symphony and visual senses for painting. This, however, leads to the over accentuation of certain senses in habit. Such that a lover of opera may not love painting and vice versa, while a deep appreciator of baseball may not respond to puppetry. Dewey's point is that socially determined divisions have led to perceptual divisions amongst people's taste. This point is forcefully made at a lecture Dewey gives at the Dance Association of America, where Dewey mediates on the multi-modal nature of perception and the need for more generalized appreciation across the senses: John Dewey, "The Philosophy of the Arts," in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953.* Volume *13,* ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press 1985) 358-369.

solicits an observer to follow a similar path, for example, to regard the relation of colors and their coexistence. This cannot be done in an instant but progressively over time. Likewise, Matisse can return to the same canvas as an observer and find more novel visual combination for even more aesthetic experiences.

Matisse's development of the canvas is not the same process of trial and error exemplified in the thought experiment of a bunch of monkeys sitting at typewriters, which given enough time, will eventually type out Shakespeare. This counterfactual forgets about the fact of feeling all the way along. Matisse's trial and error as he paints is deeply felt and not mere mechanical execution of permutations. Appreciation happens all the way along, and is not placed solely on the finished product. It happens as growth happens.

The movement of an organism into a novel environment and the ability for the organism to adapt itself to the changing conditions is an extension of Dewey's metaphysics and his naturalism. We are a species that must learn, in learning we grow, and when this growth is pleasurable, meaningful, and consummatory we appreciate it. Because our view of nature is always limited and piecemeal it has the ability to become more complex and intense over time. The ability to grow and appreciate more strenuous and complicated environments increases as we ourselves grow. For Dewey learning leads to more learning, growth prepares for more growth, and in the aesthetic context appreciation leads to more appreciation.[226]

[226] Thayer is a commentator sensitive to Dewey's concept of growth: H.S..Thayer, *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism* (New York: Bobbs Merrill,1968), 177.

7. The concept of adventure

Dewey throughout his career struggled with language. He never knew quite what to call his own philosophy. At times he accepted pragmatism, while at other he rejected it for terms like instrumentalism. A similar kind of word play happens in Dewey's aesthetics and is instructive of many of the concepts that we have dealt with in this chapter.

As already mentioned a key aspect of consummation and appreciation is what Dewey often refers to as "freshness."[227] This is a sense that any thoroughly aesthetic experience feels new, and any genuinely new experience is aesthetic. Dewey sums up this dynamism of novelty, growth, and appreciation as being "experimental." This captures the sense in which we plunge into the world provisionally but are often rewarded with an increase of power and intimate connection with our environment. However Dewey realizes that the term experimental lacks any of the exciting emotional connotations he wishes to imbue it with and suggests another term, "adventure." He writes:

> If, instead of saying "experimental" one were to say "adventurous," one would probably win general assent—so great is the power of words. Because the artist is a lover of unalloyed experience, he shuns objects that are already saturated, and he is therefore always on the growing edge of things. By the nature of the case, he is as unsatisfied with what is established as is a geographic explorer or a scientific inquirer. [228]

The artist, the scientist, and the explorer when executing their vocations become aesthetic adventurers for Dewey. For Dewey risk is a fact of life for a growing organism and also a

[227] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 73, 122

[228] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 160

fact of aesthetic experience. This is not a cause for dread but instead a call to adventure. The unknown both threatens the organism and also allows for aesthetic experiences.

This makes Dewey's philosophy importantly open-ended and applicable to any new art, both in Dewey's day and in ours. It makes no prescriptive assumptions about what art is or can be. It, in fact, demands novelty, the truly unforeseen, to be part of any aesthetic experience and emphasizes qualities of newness, freshness, and originality. It is this necessary confrontation with novelty in aesthetic experience that reinforces the imperative to continually observe artworks, as the adventure may be ongoing or taken up anew.

While it is not common to think about the production and reception of art as an adventure, this word does capture the energy constitutive of the most successful efforts in those respects. Appreciation is an adventure into a world of the unforeseen, in this way it can be regarded with all the enthusiasm and seriousness with which we explore the natural world.

8. Appreciation, Recurrence and the Barnes

I'd like to conclude this chapter with some speculation about the implications of Dewey's theory of appreciation for the pedagogy of the Barnes Foundation. If we take up Dewey's convictions that our relationship with art is progressive over time, and wrapped up in a nature of rhythms and recurrence, the scale of appreciation can then be extended across a lifetime.

This has some intuitive plausibility. Sometimes we have the occasion to listen to one song over and over. Maybe we hear it recurrently on the radio, or perhaps we have the album and can play it at will, or for a few who know an instrument they can play it for themselves. If we are lucky, over time, we come to enjoy the one song more and more. Each successive listen does not diminish our enjoyment but seems to actually enrich it. The song grows on us. Some movies, paintings, and poems do this as well over repeated encounters. Of course only a few of our interactions with the arts have this gratifying outcome. More often the repeated encounter with the same object can be boring, grating and unpleasant. This regularly happens with overplayed pop song. Even more common, however, is for art works that we regularly encounter to drift away into the background of daily life and cease to occupy our active attention. Few of us spend any time dwelling on wallpaper. Instead it makes up the hazy horizon of our peripheral attention. Even if our regular interactions of art often vacillate between irritation and indifference this does not preclude the comparatively rare instances of increased and increasing enjoyment.[229]

Dewey makes this principle explicit in *Experience and Nature* when he writes:

> Anyone who reflects upon the commonplace that a measure of artistic products is their capacity to attract and retain observation with satisfaction under whatever conditions they are approached, while things of less quality soon lose capacity to hold attention becoming indifferent or repellent upon subsequent approach, has a sure demonstration that a genuinely esthetic object is not exclusively consummatory but is causally productive as well... The "eternal" quality of great art is its renewed instrumentality for further consummatory experiences.[230]

[229] The same argument can be made for natural objects and events.

[230] Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 274-275.

Here a premium is placed on repeated observation. A single artwork is not a source for a single aesthetic experience but the site of multiple aesthetic experiences. This could be multiple experiences between different people but also in same individual over time.

This emphasis on repeat observation is what reconnects Dewey with the other Barnes Faculty. This is a rationale for the shared belief that students should be exposed and re-exposed to paintings and that this recurrent exposure will increase appreciation. The Barnes Foundation then became a dedicated space for the repeated observation of painting. It was a physical location created to allow the serious and progressive work of appreciation. Appreciation of painting at the Barnes is tied to the simple action of looking and re-looking. When allowed to run its course, by luck or by design, this approach will help an individual have multiple aesthetic experiences.

This valorization of recurrence is one of the few critical criteria Dewey suggests in any of his writing about the arts. More often he withholds judgment and suggests all sorts of everyday objects are in fact aesthetic. This emphasis on recurrence however compelling is tricky to square with artworks that are ephemeral or temporary artworks, Consider the topical political cartoon or summer albums. It is not uncommon for popular music to appeal broadly and deeply to many people but that this is seasonal. Sartorial fashion perhaps functions in a similar way. It can be a source of aesthetic enjoyment for only a limited amount of time. Does it follow from Dewey that because we cannot return to these for ever-more intense aesthetic experiences they are of less value than art that we can return to?

I believe Dewey's answer is yes, but with some reconstructions of the question itself. Artwork that allows for more recurrent aesthetic experiences are more valuable, but

there are no *a priori* criteria about what would constitute that artwork. Dewey's focus is always on the experience and not simply on the objects of experience. In fact to put too much metaphysical weight on the dualism between subject and object is to already go astray. Dewey already suggests that a work of art exceeds its material manifestation. In *Art as Experience* he explains that the work of art is not a noun but a verb.[231]A sculpture also exists in the active flights of imagination it inspires and the memories it creates. These temporarily extended aspects of the product of art are the actual *work* of art. Apparently ephemeral works way may not persist in matter but may persist in memory. The imagination can also be a site for continued appreciation. With this expanded understanding of the work of art we may maintain Dewey's valorization of recurrence.

I believe Stanley Cavell provides a way to think more clearly about what Dewey is suggesting with his priority of recurrence. Cavell highlights a similar problem in his essay on the romantic comedy *The Awful Truth.* He muses on this problem of having to continually revitalize the meaning of objects in our society. He considers abstract objects like marriage and laws, that he points out we are compelled to continually reconsider the value of marriage as we are married or to reconsider the meaning of our Constitution as we are already constituted as a country. He calls this ongoing interrogation of the recurrent aspects of life a confrontation with the "diurnal."[232]

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[231] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 219.

[232] Stanley Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1983): "The diurnal succession of light and dark takes the place in these films of the annual succession of the seasons in locating the experience of classical comedy. The point is to show that the diurnal, the alternation of day and night, and in the city, mostly sheltered from the natural seasons (as in a film studio), is itself nevertheless interesting enough to inspire life, interesting enough to be lived happily; lived without, one may say, outbreaks of the comic, as if there is no longer a credible place from which our world can be broken into; that is, no communal place, no place we have agreed upon ahead of time" 238.

This use of diurnal captures much of what Dewey is aiming at in his insistence on recurrence. He is not stating that there is a quantitative criterion for evaluating an art work. It would not follow, for example, that painting x is better than painting y because x engendered ten consummatory experiences while y only engendered nine. Instead it is a claim that these kinds of evaluations are nonsensical. There can always be another chance for an aesthetic experience and the scope of appreciation is coextensive with life. It is not a special activity reserved for select visits to a museum, but encompasses all visits to museums and our everyday activities.

Dewey's ideas of recurrence seemed initially like a value criterion but should instead be interpreted as a claim about the nature of the aesthetic quality in experience. Objects in nature are always already recurrent, nature itself is diurnal. We are always engaged in appreciating things that are already saturated with value and meaning. We are always appreciating things which have already been appreciated in some way. What become important for thinkers like Dewey and Cavell is that we acknowledge that we live with the aesthetic.

Appreciation means to feel the reality of diurnal nature and objects such as paintings become an expedient way to exercise this kind of experience. This idea is raised to absurdist levels in the 1985 novel *Old Masters* by Thomas Bernhard which tells the fictional story of a man who returns every two days for thirty years to the same room in the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* of Vienna. There he sits in the same spot on the same bench and regards Tintoretto's "White Bearded Man" (c1545).[233] For this man this single painting has offered an inexhaustible resource for observation and appreciation. In many ways the novel is Bernhard's extended meditation on the phenomenon of appreciation as

[233] Thomas Bernhard, *Old Masters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

we have been discussing it. In his story, however, he elevates the act of looking to tragic-comic proportions and draws the process out over decades.

But things go wrong. Even though he becomes enamored with this painting he loses contact with those around him. When his wife is in the hospital he forgoes his duties to visit her and instead goes to look at the painting. Dewey would never be suggesting this kind of obsessive retreat into art. This is in fact not living with an artifact not allowing its association to strengthen and nuance other associations. It is instead the logical conclusion of the museum. It is an Institution that severs art and appreciation from the flow of life. Museums, since at least the French revolution, have been seen as agents of democracy.[234] But if they sever the continuity of people with their culture they are anti-democratic. As Dewey says in the conclusion to *Art as Experience*, "Civilization is uncivil because human beings are divided into non-communicating sects, races, nations, classes and cliques." [235] The negative implication of all this is that appreciation unless it is reconnected with democratic life is an un-civilizing force.

The Barnes hoped to not simply be another museum but a haven in which to meditate on paintings and their ability to be progressively and more intensely appreciated. It also wanted to take this exercise and return it to the world. It wanted to return appreciation to the world.

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[234] Tony Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*(London: Routledge, 1995), 36.

[235] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 350.

9. Summary

In this chapter we looked closely at John Dewey's conception of appreciation and in particular aesthetic appreciation. This was shown to be intimately connected with his metaphysical conception of nature. The interpretive conclusion based on an analysis of Dewey's primary philosophic texts of the 1920s and 30s gave us the proposal that appreciation is the pleasurable feeling of growth.

This position was derived from an understanding that aesthetic experience always includes something radically new. This could be constituted by some new perception or new concept. Regardless it becomes an occasion for an organism to adapt and adjust to the object. This adjustment carries with it an affective dimension. When this felt aspect is meaningfully grasped we have what Dewey believes to be an aesthetic experience. Appreciation is the dispositional orientation in experience which is open to this kind of growth. It was suggested that this disposition is captured in the concept of "adventure."

We concluded with speculation about the importance of recurrence in appreciation. Dewey seemed to suggest that the ability to return to an artwork repeatedly and to enjoy it in a variety of ways over an extended period of time constitutes an aesthetic quality of the object. We considered this principle in light of Dewey's concept of experience and argued that this may be a criterion in a very broad sense but it provides no prescriptive force for making or viewing art. It has only descriptive value for understanding the recurrent nature of all objects in nature.

In the next chapter we will look at a variety of different academic fields and I will suggest ways in which this approach to Dewey's aesthetics and his naturalistic ideas about appreciation can be usefully applied to discussions beyond the Barnes Foundation.

Chapter 3

Applying Appreciation

1. Introduction

In this chapter I take up the conclusions of the previous two chapters and consider their implications for contemporary theoretical discussions in a several fields. These will include: Dewey's place in the history of aesthetics, possible interventions into the contemporary philosophy of art, and finally contemporary art history.

The core insight of the previous chapters was to show that Dewey provides a compelling theory of aesthetic appreciation. We approached this from two angles. First we considered in chapter one the practical activities he engaged in related to appreciation. This included his duties as the Director of Education at the Barnes Foundation. There he was part of efforts to create a course in art appreciation specifically aimed at the appreciation of painting. In these efforts he articulated that the goal of art appreciation was co-extensive with the practice of democracy. The episode at the Barnes becomes a way to demonstrate how Dewey saw art, education, and democracy as intimately connected in action. In this instance they are deployed towards the goal of increasing appreciation. In the second chapter we looked closely at Dewey's monographs to tease out an explicit statement of appreciation. There I argued that for Dewey appreciation was to be understood as a pervasive quality of experience which captured the meaningful feeling of growth. Throughout I signaled Dewey's materialist comments, to reinforce the point that to cause a change in art appreciation requires an environmental change.

This emphasis on appreciation and its implications has not occupied a significant place in the literature on John Dewey's aesthetics. Before jumping into the specific disciplinary topics in the following sections let us briefly canvas the place of Dewey's aesthetics in the intervening years since his time at the Barnes Foundation in the 1920s and 30s.

The place of Dewey's aesthetics in the second half of the twentieth century has had limited prominence but also on ongoing presence. Immediately after Dewey published *Art as Experience* there is a quick and sustained response from his contemporaries. Out of the twenty-six reviews the book received from 1934 and 1936 the majority were lukewarm.[236] Many readers found the book disproportionately tiresome despite its lively topic. In the philosophic journals several debates emerge during Dewey's lifetime, taking up the topics of expression, naturalism, and emotion. By far the most animated disagreement related to Dewey's Hegelianism. Famously this was debated in a series of articles and responses in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* in which the Italian aesthetician and Intuitionist Benedetto Croce and Dewey argued about artistic essence.[237]

Dewey's aesthetics only receives sustained attention in philosophic periodicals until the 1950s, after which the discourse drops off precipitously. This period concludes

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[236] A complete listing of reviews of *Art as Experience* in chronological order during its first printing can be found in the Carbondale edition starting on page 388.

[237] There are several accounts of this debate see: G.H. Douglas "A Reconsideration of the Dewey-Croce Exchange," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (1970): 497–504. Also, Thomas Alexander, "The Pepper-Croce Thesis and Dewey's 'Idealist' Aesthetics," *Southwest Philosophical Studies* 4 (1979): 21–32

with the works of Monroe Beardsley who, despite lauding Dewey's aesthetics, worked in an Anglophone analytic mode and did not further the pragmatic tradition.[238]

In the following decades Dewey receives only a few mentions, mostly negative, from prominent analytic philosophers. For example John Scruton dismisses Dewey in his early work.[239] Overall, however, by the 1960s, Dewey had dropped out of the popular and philosophic conversation about art and aesthetics.[240]

Beginning in the 1970's a renewed enthusiasm for Dewey's aesthetics appears. In 1975 the first book-length treatment of his aesthetics was published. This book *John Dewey's Aesthetic Philosophy* by Philip M. Zeltner is a bit of a misnomer.[241] Although it does give a general account of Dewey's philosophy it is ultimately a work of music criticism. Its force is as an argument against formalist theorists of music.[242] A more significant reconsideration about Dewey was made by Joseph Margolis in his book *Art and Philosophy* in 1980.[243] Therein Dewey gets a short but positive mention which suggests his value for analytic approaches to the arts.[244]

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[238] Monroe Beardsley, Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism (Indianapolis: Hackett 1981), 555.

[239] Roger Scruton, *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind* (London: Methuen and Co, 1974).

[240] John Fisher, "Some Remarks on What Happened to John Dewey," *Journal of Aesthetic Education,* Vol. 23 No. 3 (Autumn, 1989), 54-60.

[241] Philip M. Zeltner. *John Dewey's Aesthetic Philosophy* (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner Publishing Company, 1975)

[242] Morris, Bertram. "Review of *John Dewey's Aesthetic Philosophy* by *Philip M. Zeltner*." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Vol. 35, No. 1 (1979) 87-89.

[243] Joseph Margolis, Art and Philosophy (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf,1980).

[244] Ibid, 89.

Seven years later another monograph appears from Thomas Alexander, John Dewey's *Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizon of Feeling*.[245] Alexander's comprehensive volume is unique for its historical breadth. He is one of the few to scrutinize Dewey's earliest writings on art starting in the 1890s and takes significant, if brief, looks at writings over the next four decades of Dewey's career.[246] Alexander leverages this historical approach to show the way in which Dewey's aesthetics is present throughout his general philosophy. He argues that in order to understand Dewey one must understand his aesthetics and that aesthetic experience is the paradigmatic example of experience itself.[247]

In 1992 Richard Shusterman published the next major monograph dedicated to Dewey's aesthetics entitled *Pragmatist Aesthetics*.[248] This was followed up by *Practicing Philosophy* in 1997 which picks up political themes and expands many topics of the first book.[249] These two books have in more recent years inspired several related projects, and represent the most widely acknowledged return to Dewey's aesthetics.[250] Shusterman

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[245] Thomas Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizon of Feeling* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987).

[246] Ibid, 58, 136.

[247] Ibid, 258.

[248] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

[249] Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1997)

[250] These include but are not limited to: "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55(2000): 29–41. *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 2002), *Surface and Depth: Dialectics of Criticism and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press) Ch. 7, "Pragmatism between Aesthetic Experience and Aesthetic Education: A Response to David Granger," *Studies in Philosophy and Education,* 22(2006): 403–412. "Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64 (2006): 217–230. "Aesthetics," *A Companion to Pragmatism*, ed. R. Shook and J. Margolis

draws mostly from *Art as Experience* and teases out important comparisons between Dewey's aesthetics and both continental and analytic theories of art, arguing for the viability and even urgency of Dewey's thought. [251] Of central concern to Shusterman is the philosophy of art's general disregard for the body. Shusterman's conviction is that Dewey's non-dualistic theories of perception and inquiry allow us to think in a more expansive way about the integration of mind and body and body with the world. He develops a non-dualistic approach to art and gives it the neologism "Somaesthetics."[252]

The last forty years have seen an increase in journal activity around Dewey's aesthetics, with dozens of book chapters placing Dewey in conversation with general philosophic concerns beyond aesthetics.[253] This activity, however, tends to cluster around several topics. Presently there is notable energy in researching Dewey's aesthetics for education and education policy, in particular for public school education and museums.[254] Likewise, Dewey has emerged as a figure of interest for environmental studies and policy.[255] In philosophy, Dewey's aesthetics have emerged in discussions of value

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(Malden: Blackwell, 2010), 352–360. "Dewey's Art as Experience: The Psychological Background," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 44: 26–43.

[251] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Chapters 1 and 3. Also Richard Shusterman, "Why Dewey Now?," *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 23(1989): 60–67

[252] Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, 30-1, 109-10, 123, 128-9, 177

[253] For example: William S. Lewis, "Art or Propaganda? Dewey and Adorno on the Relationship between Politics and Art," Journal of Speculative Philosophy, New Series, Vol. 19 No.1 (2005), 42-54.

[254] For example: Kazuyo Nakamura, "The Significance of Dewey's Aesthetics in Art Education in the Global Age." *Educational Theory*, No. 59 (2009), 427-440.

[255] For example: Arnold Berleant, "Naturalism and Aesthetic Experience," The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, New Series, Vol. 9 No.3 (1995), 237-240.

theory.[256] Meanwhile, another group of scholars has worked to put continental thought in conversation with Dewey's aesthetics.[257]

The largest and most sustained scholarship on Dewey's aesthetics, however, emerges in two distinct but complimentary areas of study. The first is Asian or comparative philosophy and the second is "aesthetics of the everyday." Much work has been done on comparing Dewey to Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.[258] This literature emphasizes connections in many of these Asian philosophies to Dewey's philosophy written by philosophers but also by art historian and design theorists. For example it has been argued that Zen concepts of appreciating beauty in the everyday has important overlaps with Dewey and can be deployed to dismantle the academic distinction between high-art and low-art.[259]

It is important to acknowledge the many directions Dewey scholarship has taken in the last century.[260] There are significant sympathies with this study and much of this

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[256] For example: Ken McClelland, "John Dewey and Richard Rorty: Qualitative Starting Points," Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Summer, 2008), 412-445.

[257] For example: Colin Koopman. "The History and Critique of Modernity: Dewey with Foucault against Weber." In *John Dewey and Continental Philosophy*, edited by Paul Fairfield (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 194-218.

[258] For example: Dinesh C. Mathur, "Abhinavagupta and Dewey on Art and Its Relation to Morality: Comparisons and Evalauations," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 42 No. 2 (Dec. 1981), 224-235.

[259] For example: Thomas Leddy, The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012).

[260] Simultaneous to these developments in the published literature, similar trends have emerged in dissertations about Dewey's aesthetics. Among the two dozen dissertations written on Dewey's aesthetics they cluster around four main topics. The first is Dewey's application for theology and religious worship. The second is the implications of Dewey's writings for ethics as well as meta-ethics. Thirdly is Dewey's relevance for education policy and applied curriculum studies. The fourth and most popular topic is the use Dewey's theories for the interpretation of specific art forms. Dewey himself gives mostly examples of paintings. These authors, however, apply

literature. This current works contribution is to highlight the importance of appreciation in Dewey's concept of the aesthetic and to see that as rooted in a specific history. In the next section we will consider how this approach situated Dewey in the history of aesthetics more broadly construed.

2. Dewey's Place in the History of Aesthetics

Across Dewey's aesthetics he directly criticizes prominent figures from the Classical, Modern, and Romantic periods and stakes a place for himself, and arguably the Barnes Foundation, amidst the texts of Plato, Locke, and Kant. In this project Dewey distinguishes himself in two important ways. First he aligns himself with empirical and naturalized theories and second he presents himself as an anti-dualist. While he shares many of the same convictions of the Modern empiricists, German idealists, and American transcendentalists his rigorous denial of dualisms places him among the pragmatists.

Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics stretches across his whole career, but four texts stand out for their clarity on the subject. They are *Human Nature and Conduct*, *Experience and Nature*, *Art as Experience,* and *Logic a Theory of Inquiry*. Together they provide what Dewey believes to be an account of the biological and ecological processes which allow aesthetic experience to occur. The promise of Dewey's project is a thoroughly naturalistic aesthetic that links basic biology to the heights of culture. Similar projects have been attempted throughout the modern period, but Dewey is unique in his naturalism's dogged anti-dualism. Let us sketch that history to argue for these claims.

Dewey's ideas to film, theater, performance art, music, poetry, food, and enigmatically the art of war.

In the 18th century a cluster of European thinkers began to question art as an extension of mankind's natural constitution. An early figure in this discourse was Abbe Du Bos, a clergyman and contemporary of Diderot. He put forward an early comprehensive natural theory of art.[261] For Du Bos art and its qualities are determined by a civilizations geographic position on the earth.[262] The different latitudes on the globe emit different "air" which then becomes part of the bodily constitution of artists and is incorporated into their blood.[263] The strength of an artist is then pre-determined by the quality of the vapors they breathe and their work is merely a mechanical byproduct of that nutritive system.

This attempt at a naturalized, mechanized and pseudo-biological theory puts Du Bos in many conceptual binds. For instance, when Du Bos had to account for the art of Classical Rome in contrast with Roman art of the Middle Ages he is at a loss. He supposes that because Rome once had fine art but ceased to despite having maintained the same geographic location, this shift might have resulted from intervening volcanic activity.[264] This overall theory is ludicrous on many levels but the guiding idea that art and nature are dynamically related is important. It asks an important question: how do our environmental surroundings both support and suffuse artistic production?

Later the in 18th century, in Scotland, discussions of aesthetics appeared parallel to the rise of empiricism. David Hume and Adam Smith are perhaps the best known

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[261] Jean Baptiste Du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting Vol. 1 and 2*, trans. Thomas Nugent (London: 1748).

[262] Du Bos. *Critical Reflections Vol 2*, 5.

[263] Du Bos, *Critical Reflections Vol. 2*, 108.

[264] Du Bos. *Critical Reflections Vol. 2*, 204.

figures today, but all were directly influenced by their older professor Francis Hutcheson. Of this milieu Hutcheson writes the most complete treatise on aesthetics.[265] Harkening back to Locke, Hutcheson seeks to demonstrate that one's response to beauty is an inevitable "inner-sensation."[266] To have an impression of natural objects, like crystals, clouds, and formal English gardens is to immediately produce an aesthetic feeling in the observer.[267] His basic argument aims to prove that aesthetic feelings are natural, innate, and universal. He leverages this position in order to underwrite a theory of ethics, arguing that if aesthetic feeling is empirically defensible then so is moral and religious feeling.[268] Aesthetics is then a stepping stone to a naturalized ethics.[269] While we need not fuss over the ethical and religious moves in Hutchison's theory we can see him asking a different but equally compelling question as Du Bos: What role does our natural bodily and psychological constitution play in the reception of existing aesthetic objects?

Collectively Du Bos and Hutcheson investigate the natural production and reception of beautiful objects. Their notoriety, however, has not fared well in the intervening centuries. With the writing of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and subsequent post-Kantian enthusiasm for idealist philosophy of all stripes, naturalized theories akin to Du Bos or Hutcheson which sought exhaustive accounts of the arts

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[265] Hutcheson, Francis, "An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises" in *Collected Works and Correspondence of Francis Hutcheson,* Ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004).

[266] Ibid, 15.

[267] Ibid, 40.

[268] Ibid, 12, 46, 99.

[269] Ibid, 81.

through the observation of nature retreated into the historic record and the romantic theories of Hegel and Schopenhauer dominated European imaginations.

It is, however, among the critics of Kant's *Third Critique* that a continuation of the naturalized line of thinking progresses. Kant's former student, Johann Gottfried von Herder, published a book-length criticism of Kant's aesthetic project entitled *Kalligone* which offers up a more naturalized alternative to Kant.[270] He argues that Kant's idealist positions are inconsistent with many of his observations about the sublime and the beautiful. For example he catches Kant in a contradiction when discussing the pyramids of Egypt. Kant suggests that these monuments are supposed to illicit a feeling of the sublime because of their immense size. Herder points out that this sense of size is wholly relative and depends on how close one stands to the pyramids.[271] Such a feeling is therefore subjectively dependent on one's own bodily position and cannot be ideally universalized. Herder implores Kant to engage the natural world through direct experience and to question the seeming disconnect between his theory and empirical testimony about aesthetic objects.[272] Herder pushes Kant to base his aesthetic arguments not on transcendental ideals but on the inductive observation of nature and art.

This unlikely collection of 18th century European thinkers -Du Bos, Hutcheson, and Herder- prefigures much of what I find valuable in Dewey. That is, an attempt to account for the production and reception of art while being consistent with current theories about nature and the place of humanity in it. Divorced from their various

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[270] Johann Gottfried Von Herder, *Kalligone* (Leipzig: Hartknoch, 1800)

[271] Rachel Zuckert, "Awe or Envy: Herder Contra Kant on the Sublime" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 61.3 (2003): 219, 225.

[272] Ibid, 220.

idiosyncrasies, these thinkers advocate that we can find evidence for this theory within our observations of nature itself. Dewey represents a continuation and a transformation of this line of thinking in the history of aesthetics.

Dewey emerges from a new intellectual climate where the modern ambitions of a naturalized aesthetic could be reconstructed and revitalized. Growing up after the introduction of Darwinian evolution, and steeped in Emersonian ideas of nature, Dewey is writing in a period in which nature is longer considered a mass of fixed kinds or teleological ends, and instead it can be conceived of as an ever-changing and open-ended whole in which the human race is a fully integrated part. It is with this approach to nature that Dewey frames his naturalism and derives his aesthetic theory.

As Dewey remarks, he is advocating a kind of naturalism, but also realizes that "naturalism" can be said in many ways. "Naturalism" is often alleged to signify disregard of all values that cannot be reduced to the physical and animal. But so to conceive nature is to isolate environing conditions as the whole of nature and to exclude man from the scheme of things."[273] In this comment Dewey denies any system like Du Bos' overly mechanistic naturalism which reduces all processes to the merely physical, nor does he follow Hutcheson in espousing a psychology dependent on the dualism of inner and outer-sense which pulls human consciousness out of direct contact with nature. The naturalism Dewey is promoting integrates the physical, the psychical, and the cultural into a single all-encompassing nature. "The very existence of art as an objective phenomenon using natural materials and media is proof that nature signifies nothing less than the whole complex of the results of the interaction of man, with his memories and

[273] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 158

hopes, understanding and desire, with that world to which one-sided philosophy confines "nature." [274]

This inclusive worldview is both a positive claim for Dewey and a useful heuristic for evaluating other aesthetic theories. If a theory results in one-sided conclusions it fails to fit into this naturalistic framework. Theories which privilege the subjective over the objective, technique over expression, or conceptualization over intuition fail to realize that each member of these pairs is part of nature and are equally real. This aspect of metaphysical realism is the next important historical marker to note.

Dewey points out that many of the most prominent and influential aesthetic theories are dependent upon conceptions of hierarchical metaphysics.[275] Consider again Kant's aesthetic theory as presented in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Therein he argues that taste, while subjectively grounded in the psychological composition of an individual, i.e. in the interplay of the imagination and understanding, is actually objective only in so far as it proves the existence of a supersensible realm.[276] This reconciles the disjunction in taste between subjective individuality and objective universality, but it consigns external objects to utter irrelevance. Objects are not as real or as relevant as the transcendental subject. What becomes beautiful is the pleasure of free play between the imagination and the understanding.[277] Aesthetic values like being beautiful or sublime are not found in the objects but in their mental representations and the mechanics of Kant's

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[274] Ibid.

[275] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 308.

[276] Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004), 4.

[277] Jean-François Lyotard,. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime: Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994) 18-19.

psychology. There is an implicit hierarchy of reality with eulogistic privilege being given to the super-sensible.

This hierarchical metaphysics was concretized into an explicit hierarchy of art forms in Kant's section on the fine arts. Painting becomes a lesser artwork than poetry because it is more rooted in the world of phenomena.[278] This idea of a hierarchy in the fine arts is nothing new. Aristotle famously puts forth such a hierarchy in his *Poetics*, declaring that tragedy stands above history as the more aesthetic because it is closest to philosophy insofar as, unlike history, it is not concerned with particulars but with universals.[279]

For Dewey these various hierarchical metaphysics are not definitive but contingent. He suggests that, in the example of Aristotle, a supposedly universal hierarchy reinforces the local power hierarchies in the Greek political system.[280] The important point for Dewey in this analysis is that hierarchies are historical and should not be given universal metaphysical weight. This conceit of classical metaphysics which premises degrees of reality is one of Dewey's main targets in *Experience and Nature*. He believes that detrimental dualistic and hierarchical concepts of reality have persisted into the philosophy of his own age.

This is clear in Dewey's response to 19th century philosophy. In the wake of Kant, both Hegel and Schopenhauer tell esthetic and metaphysical stories in which the art

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[278] Immanuel Kant. *Critique of the Power of Judgment (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant)*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) Sections: §§51–54

[279] Aristotle, "*The Poetics*" in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, trans. Johnathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984) 2323.

[280] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 193-194.

object is understood as embodying greater and lesser degrees of reality. In the case of Hegel the hierarchy gets a grand articulation in his aesthetics which links his idea of historical progress to the realization of the Absolute in art.[281] For Hegel history is an ongoing process of development, but a teleological development towards higher orders of understanding. This is true of the individual arts as well as of art historical periods.

For Hegel architecture is the least aesthetic art form because it is most rooted to human need, while he ranks poetry highest for being closest to philosophy and religion.[282] Likewise, for Hegel, Ancient art embodies Absolute spirit less than Christian art, and early Catholic art embodies it less than Lutheran art.[283] As history itself progresses individual arts improve and culture in general better instantiates spirit. Hegel believes art's place in nature is never wholly intimate. It is always more incomplete and less real than what will come in the future.

Schopenhauer, at roughly the same time, echoes a similar hierarchy. Though decidedly more Platonic and less teleological than Hegel's. Schopenhauer explicitly posits a dualistic universe of reality and illusion, in his famous *The World as Will and Representation*.[284] Art becomes a powerful vehicle for breaking out of the confines of phenomenal experience and seeing through the "Veil of Maya" to the pervading reality of the universe that is "Will."[285] Music becomes the best vehicle for this activity and is the

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[281] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998) 10.

[282] Ibid, 82-91.

[283] Ibid, 334.

[284] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*., trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover Publications, 1966).

highest form of art whereas lesser arts like painting only anchor us to the phenomenal realm.[286] He uses the example of still life paintings of food, which illicit sensations of hunger thereby tying us to our bodies instead of releasing us from this sensuous illusion.[287] In Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer aesthetic theory becomes parasitic upon metaphysical theories of reality and in the Romantic era this was problematically hierarchical.

Dewey in his earliest comments on art in the first edition of his *Psychology* of 1887 adopts a similar idea and assumes there is a hierarchy of better and worse art forms with poetry again at the top.[288] By the 1920s, however, this position is all but abandoned and replaced by a concept of art that is non-dualistic and non-hierarchical. For Dewey all things are equally real and all things have the potential to be art from a baseball pitch to an opera with no *a priori* ranking.[289]

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[285] Ibid, 253.

[286] Ibid, 154.

[287] Ibid, 197.

[288] John Dewey, *Psychology*, in vol. 2 *John Dewey: The Early Work, 1882–1898*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972) 273-277. Dewey dedicates a chapter in this book to "Aesthetic Feeling." Much of what he says must be attributed to his long study in German philosophy, for example his dissertation on Leibniz, and his use of this vocabulary is still live for him in the 19th century. He eventually couches his early aesthetics in a theory of harmony "That [beauty] is a feeling of agreement of *relations*. Whether the feeling of beauty is excited by the perception of regular form, of a picturesque landscape, a pleasing melody, a poem, or a painting, its essence is the felt harmony of the beautiful object with our own inmost nature." The ability of certain art forms to achieve more or less harmony leads him to write his own hierarchy of the arts. It goes from architecture to sculpture to painting to music and finally poetry. Architecture is at the base because it is least ideal and connected most to gross muscular reactions and poetry conversely is exclusively about idealizations. This entire schema will be abandoned in his mature aesthetics.

[289] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 3.

Dewey's naturalism connects him to one line in the history of aesthetics while his non-hierarchical metaphysics sets him apart from much of it. He is in conversation with prominent figures from the philosophy of history but he breaks away from the English, French, and German traditions in important ways. His naturalized pragmatic theory of the arts is to this day unique for its realism, anti-elitism, and anti-dualism. With this broad historical view of Dewey's work let us return to the specific problem of appreciation and its current status in the contemporary philosophy of art.

3. Contributions to the Contemporary Philosophy of Art

In this section I will argue that Dewey's aesthetics and his position on appreciation can help the contemporary philosophic discussion of aesthetic appreciation to get past certain conceptual impasses. In particular it can offer an alternative to the existing cognitive and affective models of art appreciation presented in current scholarship.

Post-war philosophers of art have been decidedly hostile to the topic of art appreciation. Prominent aestheticians like Arthur Danto have even dismissed it entirely. In his book *Andy Warhol* Danto argues that analytic philosophy had "condemned to irrelevance everything that belonged to art appreciation."[290] Many others have simply ignored it. Yet a close read of the literature reveals that these scholars have a disregard for art appreciation that is disingenuous. Even those who stridently dismiss appreciation can still be caught invoking the concept of appreciation nonetheless. Danto, in talking about Roy Lichtenstein's paintings, comments that, "they internalize theories it is

[290] Arthur Danto, *Andy Warhol* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009), 28.

required that anyone who may appreciate them must understand…"[291] Appreciation slips into his evaluation despite its presumed obsolescence.

Consider also George Dickie's famous formulation of the "institutional theory" of art. Dickie argues that a discrete object can be claimed to be art if it is "conferred the status of [a] candidate for appreciation."[292] Here in one of the seminal theories of analytic aesthetics, appreciation surfaces. In this instance appreciation is not merely a casual aside but a constitutive part of Dickie's theory. Appreciation has had a pervasive but under-recognized place in the analytic philosophy of art.

Just what is meant by the term appreciation in these sources is ambiguous. One might say, "I appreciate everything you've done for me," to a friend as an expression of gratitude. One may "appreciate the gravity of a situation" or in a quite different sense say, "my stocks appreciated significantly during the last decade." But the phrase "art appreciation" stands apart from all these. It can connote a meaningful reception of an artwork, suggests both a learned refinement and an immediate emotional response, and describes a method of looking at art as well as the final achievement of looking at art. It is ambiguously a means and an end; it is an act of feeling and an act of critical thinking. In this section I will argue that the naturalized concept of appreciation of John Dewey established in the previous chapter can be usefully developed to offer a pragmatic alternative to analytic ambiguity and dismissals.

Dewey, instead of dismissing or degrading art appreciation, makes it a central part of his philosophy. Dewey sees aesthetic appreciation as an integral part of any experience. Aesthetic appreciation becomes a primary concern for his philosophy as a

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[291] Arthur Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Harvard UP, 1981), 109.

[292] George Dickie, *Aesthetics, An Introduction* (New York: Pegasus, 1971),101.

whole. For Dewey aesthetic appreciation is how we access ultimate values in life. Truth, beauty, and the good are wrapped up in our ability to aesthetically appreciate the world around us. This position entails two of Dewey's boldest claims. First aesthetic appreciation is a phase of all experience, not reserved solely for art. Second, aesthetic appreciation is non-dualistic: it is both a means and an end, it is both thinking and feeling, and it gives us the most robust access to real values in the world.

Dewey argues that previous theories in the history of aesthetics, and explanations for judgments of taste, have all suffered from a similar "one-sided"[293] quality. They either privilege appreciation as elite connoisseurship, thereby emphasizing rules of execution, or conversely they overemphasize intuition and the spontaneity of feeling. Dewey denies that there is any disjunction here and offers up a theory which understand appreciation as simultaneously active and receptive, reflective and emotional, cultivated and immediate. Deweyan appreciation dissolves these dualisms by reconceiving art appreciation as an inclusive phase of experience instead of an either/or problem. Dewey offered this up against the one-sided theories of appreciation in his own time.

The same problematic one-sidedness that Dewey observed in the early twentieth century has recurred in the twenty-first century literature about appreciation. For example, in museum education, professionals are now tasked with fostering "art appreciation" but they alternately talk about it as a process and a product. When Rika Burnham, Director of Education at the Frick Collection discusses appreciation she talks about the active series of didactic strategies aimed at the evaluation of an artwork. She

[293] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 158.

writes about the activity of "inviting people to appreciate."[294] She describes her task as bringing people along in the process of appreciation. On the flip side Philip Yenawine, former director of education at the Museum of Modern Art, talks about appreciation as an immediate feeling "displayed in the sensitivity of wine connoisseurs in their appreciation of the sensory properties of materials."[295] For Yenawine appreciation simply strikes us and when done right requires no invitation. While it's easy to agree that art appreciation involves a meaningful interaction with art, it is unclear if appreciation is active or passive, preparatory or final, means or ends.

A similar rift has developed in the literature on the psychology of aesthetic reception. The current philosophic discussion follows the same one-sided ethos. One group of cognitivists believes that a particular conceptual approach defines the act of appreciation while a second group of affective theorists believe that appreciation is a specific emotional state. In both practical and theoretical fields Dewey can offer insight into how to resolve these divisions by providing an alternative view of art appreciation. This alternate view finds a way to reconcile the two sides, and reveals their opposition as a product of a misunderstanding of the phenomena itself.

In this section I will sketch the conceptual problems with the cognitive approach and the affective approach to art appreciation. I will finish with a survey of Dewey's writing on appreciation giving particular attention to his logic. This, I will argue, gives us an additional and substantively improved means to describe the phenomenon of art appreciation.

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[294] Rika Burnham and Elliot Kai-Kee, *Teaching in the Art Museum*, (Los Angeles, Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 10.

[295] Philip Yenowine, *How to Look at Modern Art* (New York: Henry N. Abrams, 1991), 20.

The split between the cognitive and affective theories of appreciation highlights a real conceptual problem in the current discussion of appreciation. In the following paragraphs I will examine the claims of one exemplary scholar from each side of the discussion. First I will consider Gary Iseminger's cognitive approach. Then I will turn my attention to the affective theories of Jesse Prinz. These philosophers provide the most consistent and articulate positions in the current literature. I will highlight the strengths of each theory and argue that, although Iseminger and Prinz seem to approach the topic from different sides, their theories are not contradictory when viewed from a pragmatic position. I take the characterization of Iseminger as essentially cognitivist and Prinz as essentially affective from the work of Noël Carroll who contrasts these thinkers along these same lines.[296] Unlike Carroll's largely descriptive project I hope to offer a constructive alternative to these seemingly opposing views.

A cognitive approach, broadly construed, would define appreciation as dependent upon the mental possession of certain necessary concepts. This broad definition captures a variety of different theories in the history of aesthetics. This includes academic theories in which successful art is determined by its adherence to established standards and rules. Under this manner of thinking, full appreciation of a Greek column requires robust conceptual knowledge of the column form. A figure like Vasari advocated this kind of knowledge in order to understand and appreciate art and sculpture.[297] Cognitive approaches may also include theories in the *l'art pour l'art* tradition. In this mostly 19th

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[296] Noël Carroll, "Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 70:2 (2012):165-177

[297] Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari on Technique: Being the Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Louisa S. Maclehose, ed. G. Baldwin Brown (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1907).

century tradition, what is most prized in art is that it has no other function but itself. The appreciation of an artwork requires the concept of "for-its-own-sake." This was discussed at length by figures like Walter Pater of the British Aesthetic Movement.[298] Variations on cognitive theories have existed for a long time, but in contemporary aesthetics they are given voice by Gary Iseminger.

Gary Iseminger offers one of the most consistent philosophical scholarship on the concept of appreciation. Beginning with his 1981 article "Aesthetic Appreciation,"[299] Iseminger has attempted to elucidate a working definition for appreciation itself. He distinguishes himself by attempting to formalize a definition of appreciation and for upholding a cognitivist position within the debate. In 1981 he first puts forward this formalized proposition:

> [P] *S aesthetically appreciates the Fness of a if and only if:*
> *(i) a is F;*
> *(ii) S experientially takes a to be F;*
> *(iii) a's being F and S's experientially taking a to be F are "cognitively related";*
> *(iv) S believes that experientially taking a to be F is intrinsically good.*[300]

If we develop this schema we might say: Ernest appreciates the grace of bull fighting (P), since in his experience he perceives it to be graceful (ii), it is actually graceful (i), these facts are connected in Ernest's mind (iii), and he believes this to be intrinsically good (iv). In this formulation it is clear that this is an extension of the *l'art pour l'art* tradition. The fact of gracefulness, for example, is considered to be a good in itself.

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[298] Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889).

[299] Gary Iseminger, "Aesthetic Appreciation," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (1981): 389-397.

[300] Iseminger, "Aesthetic Appreciation," 389.

There are many useful insights in this formulation which capture several important aspects of aesthetic appreciation. Iseminger's formula upholds the need for there to be an objective state of affairs to which an observer is engaged when she appreciates. Appreciation is not then pure subjective fantasy but a perception of objective value. Furthermore, Iseminger's formulation demands that there be some degree of conscious response. That is to say we are aware of the things we appreciate and can be propositionally explicit about that appreciation. This is captured in (iv) where the subject possesses the concept that F is intrinsically good and applies it to F. Another admirable aspect of Iseminger's theory is that it is not specific to art objects. He like Dewey finds that appreciation of art is akin to the aesthetic appreciation of other kinds of objects. These might be natural, historical, or quotidian.

There are however some clear weaknesses to this formulation. Firstly, it is suspect to assume that we respond merely to qualities aesthetically. Iseminger's formulation requires the appreciating subject to regard individual qualities of an object yet it is arguable that one responds to the complete effect of a Vermeer canvas, not merely its jewel tones. To extend the example, a bull fight can be graceful, macabre, athletic, and sometimes grotesquely funny. All of these constitute the material of appreciation. Iseminger's model, however, operates by aggregating individual qualities, namely by adding up (F)ness's of a's. While we may have an aesthetic experience with one aspect of an artwork it still leaves unanswered what it would mean to appreciate the artwork or any object as a whole.

Iseminger has more recently revised his approach and published his thoughts in a book. His reformulated idea about appreciation appears in *The Aesthetic Function of*

Art.[301] This idea is a more stripped down and open-ended solving the previous mereology conundrum. The new formula is:

> Def: *S appreciates x's being F if and only if S finds experience x's being F to be valuable in itself.* [302]

Iseminger reaffirms his commitment to the idea that aesthetic experience is cognitively grasped as being valuable in itself. But there is a subtle move in this definition which makes the formulation more holistic. What is now valuable is the overall experience in which an object's quality is perceived. If we restate the previous example in this new language then: Ernest appreciates bull fighting's grace only when Ernest finds the experience of bull fighting's grace to be valuable in itself. This formulation solves a few problems. First it avoids the ontological question of whether or not an object or event is valuable in itself. It redirects that criterion towards only the overall experience of an object or event. In doing so it solves the piecemeal approach problem. Instead, it takes as its primary unit the totality of experience by a subject like Ernest. However, this still keeps Iseminger open to general problems associated with any cognitive approach. What is a concept of intrinsic value? How is such a concept to be appropriately applied and how can we be sure that an experience is not good for its consequences without circularity? That is to say, how can we avoid the idea that, "we appreciate it because it is good in itself, and it is good in itself because we appreciate it."

Noël Carroll in response to Iseminger's work highlights this problem through a thought experiment.[303] He imagines two young students listening to music. The first has

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[301] Gary Iseminger. *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004)

[302] Iseminger, *Aesthetic Function of Art*, 36.

an exam for her music appreciation class the next day and is listening as part of her studies. Her friend is listening without any thought of its future application. Both students have the same educational background, and both have the same physical acuity. Each can listen to and discern the same elements in the music. For the purposes of the experiment their experience is identical except for the impending exam for the first student. In this example Iseminger would have to concede that only the idle student can appreciate the symphony, but this for Carroll forestalls the possibility of many types of aesthetic experience enjoyed often in the process of learning. Furthermore the situation seems to be defined by a negative lack of concept rather than a positive concept of "good in itself." The student without an exam may simply lack a concept of utility rather than possess an adequate positive concept for appreciation.

In summary the cognitivist position captures two important aspects of appreciation. First, appreciation deals with objective states of affairs and empirical qualities. Second, appreciation involves thought. One cannot be unwittingly appreciative. Thinking is used and concepts are deployed. What seems to be extraneous and even problematic for a theory of appreciation is the need for a specific concept like "good in itself."

What is additionally problematic in Iseminger's account is that he does not recognize the pleasure of appreciation. It is not clear that to take something as being valuable in itself is to also enjoy it. There is no necessary connection between the concept of value and the pleasurable feeling of regarding that value. This is less a concern if we see Iseminger treating appreciation as a means to judgments of taste, but it is a concern if

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[303] Carroll attributes the experiment to George Dickie in his article: Noël Carroll. "Recent Approaches to Aesthetic Experience," 165-77.

we believe that appreciation is the emotional fulfillment of an aesthetic experience. This later idea is what affective theories exploit.

The affective, as with the cognitive approach, has diverse but definite philosophic antecedents. Aesthetic theories which consider the reception of art as reducible to a unique feeling qualify as affective theories. In this camp I include the Empiricist tradition coming from Burke, that presupposes feelings of the sublime, the beautiful and indifference to be constitutive of aesthetic reception.[304] Intuitionists including the 20th century figure Collingwood who advocated for a specific aesthetic emotion can also be included.[305] For Collingwood, such an emotion is only mustered in the face of aesthetic stimuli. Regardless of the particulars of these various theories, what defines them is the demand for emotion. What these various theories capture is the felt quality which pervades aesthetic experiences, and the fact that intense emotions seem to immediately usher into these experiences.

Philosopher Jesse Prinz advocates for an affective and decidedly non-cognitive account of appreciation today. He argues that appreciation is itself an emotional state without any necessary propositional content,[306] meaning we appreciate an artwork when we feel a distinct emotional stir irrespective of the possession of certain concepts. For Prinz, this stir is specifically the state of "awe."[307] By invoking awe Prinz is explicitly

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[304] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1987).

[305] R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)

[306] Prinz, Jesse. "Emotion and Aesthetic Value," in *The Aesthetic Mind: Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. Elisabeth Schellekens and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 71–88.

[307] Ibid

resurrecting Romanticisms enthusiasm for *Strum und Drang*.[308] Prinz argues that aesthetic appreciation is identical with the feeling of awe.

Prinz makes a distinction between two neurological "appraisal processes" which eventuate aesthetic appreciation.[309] The first stage is either an emotional or cognitive perception that occasions the second stage of affective appreciation. To illustrate, let us return to the prior example off Ernest at the bullfight. Ernest may be initially appalled by the gore at the bull fight (process 1) but this induces a secondary affective response of grand drama which in turn produces the emotion of awe (process 2). It is only through process 2 that appreciation has occurred. This bifurcation of the receptive experience allows Prinz to maintain a concept like the sublime in which something initially terrifying is rendered aesthetic and awe inspiring. A corresponding claim in Prinz's work is that an emotional state such as awe is already an appraisal and needs no secondary cognitive adjudication of value. For Prinz appreciation and awe are ends of a psychological process an intense emotional culmination to aesthetic stimuli. If appreciation is a cognitive means for Iseminger it is an emotional end for Prinz.

There are many strengths of Prinz's approach. His work aims to be consistent with findings in experimental science. His writings pull from diverse studies in psychology and experimental philosophy. He avoids over-intellectualizing aesthetic experience by highlighting emotions which can be possessed by both the learned and the unlearned. He reinforces the notion that emotion is centrally important to any aesthetic phenomena. However, there are some issues worth pressing in this approach. It is unclear

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[308] Prinz, Jesse. Renovating Romanticism. Aesthetics for the Birds. 2013. http://www.aestheticsforbirds.com/2013/08/wonder-works-renovating-romanticism.html

[309] Prinz, "Emotion and Aesthetic Value," 76.

how one learns to appreciate. How does someone move from process 1 to process 2? This step from brute perception to affective appreciation is left murky. Here thinking would seem to be involved in cognition rather than emotion would appear to be doing the work. Perhaps more damning, however, is that the focus on awe also risks circularity. That is the triviality that awe is the emotion felt in aesthetic experience and aesthetic experience is the feeling of awe. While it captures many important aspects of aesthetic reception, the affective approach, is also mired by its own limitations and inability to capture enough aspects of appreciation.

Considering the field of aesthetic literature it would appear that we had to choose between theories which emphasize thinking versus feeling and process versus product. The current debate is divided along these dualisms and currently has the structure of an ultimatum. This dilemma was already present in Hume's aesthetics of the eighteenth century. Hume put forward a theory of reception in which matters of taste are best to be deferred to experts.[310] It is only those who have had long experience with artworks who should set the standards of taste. This, however, establishes a curious situation. A person may have correct taste without having good taste in Hume's estimation. That is they can defer to the experts in order to know just what is good without ever appreciating it themselves. This split between correct taste and genuine appreciation is restaged in the current split between the cognitive and the affective approaches. Anyone may know that an object is good in itself without feeling awe towards that object. A gap is opened between the reasoned appreciation of an object and the felt appreciation of the object.

[310] Hume, David. *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, 4 volumes, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longman, Green, 1874–75) Vol. 3.

This gap is wide enough to allow skepticism to sneak in. If appreciation is dependent on experts and cognitive clarity, we fall prey to their possible failure. If all appreciation is reducible to a single feeling, then we skirt dangerously with crude subjectivism and relativism. What is needed is a way to capture the best of both approaches without sacrificing one to the other.

As already pointed out, both approaches also flirt with circularity. In the Iseminger's cognitive approach "we appreciate artwork X because it is good in itself, and it is good in itself because we appreciate it." Similarly in Prinz's affective approach, "when we appreciate artwork X we have the emotion of awe and we have the emotion of awe because we appreciate X." These vicious aesthetic circles are a real logical stumbling block for current theories of appreciation.

Another shared problem between Iseminger and Prinz is that appreciation yields autonomous judgments. If a work is awe-inspiring it is so in perpetuity, likewise if an experience is deemed valuable in itself this concept is invariable. Both theories struggle to describe the common experience of having an artwork grow on you. That is, to have its estimation change over time and ones appreciation of it wax and wane in character and intensity.

The dualism problem and the circularity problem are related and will be taken up by Dewey. Dewey demonstrates their interrelations and offers an alternative theory of appreciation which upholds both the conceptual and the felt aspects of experience, while being sensitive to the changeable nature of appreciation.

Appreciation as we have seen was a technical term for Dewey and captures a relationship to the world which is meaningfully felt. It is by more clearly articulating this

specific use of appreciation that we can cut through the ambiguities and contradictions in the current debate. Dewey's rich theories of education and maturation can helpfully supplement Iseminger's positions, while Dewey also has a way to take up the best of Prinz's awe theory. Dewey doesn't think that the aesthetic is a unique emotion it is instead an affective part of any generic experience.

In his 1929 book *The Quest for Certainty* Dewey quipped that despite the old adage that there is no disputing in matters of taste: "they are the one thing worth disputing about, if by 'dispute' is signified discussion involving reflective inquiry. Taste, if we use the word in its best sense, is the outcome of experience brought cumulatively to bear on the intelligent appreciation of the real worth of likings and enjoyments."[311] This is to say for Dewey that taste is the only thing worth disputing and this is at the center of his philosophy.

This comment comes late in Dewey's career when appreciation has already become a cornerstone of his work. Here taste is predicated on genuine appreciation and appreciation becomes the culmination of diverse social and environmental experiences. Appreciation is neither a singular emotion nor a cold calculation. Appreciation is a kind of orientation in experience that Dewey advocates throughout his authorship. We can dispute matters of taste because we are always negotiating our likes and dislikes and they reflect the reality of our present circumstances.

Though appreciation plays only a minor role in Dewey's early works by the 1930s it has become a key term in his ethics, politics, logic and his aesthetics. This shift of emphasis can be illustrated by comparing the original and the revised edition of *How We*

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[311] John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty*, in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 4* ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,1985), 214.

Think. This book written in 1913 was a text on pedagogical psychology intended for an audience of working teachers. A revision in 1933 adds several sections, including one exclusively about appreciation.[312] Therein, Dewey reinforces the idea explained in the last chapter that appreciation is a pleasurable feeling connected to growth.[313]

There are two clusters of issues that I have identified in the contemporary literature on appreciation. I will show how my reading of Dewey can deal with each in turn. The first cluster relates to recurrent dualisms and seeming contradictions in the existent literature. Dewey denies these and offers alternative perspectives on the same issue. The second cluster has to do with the rhetorical problem of circularity. We saw that all the previously mentioned theories fall prey to vicious circles. Dewey offers an alternative interpretation to the same phenomena which avoids this logical quagmire. Let us begin with the topic of dualisms.

We began this section wondering if appreciation is a product or a process, a means or an end, and saw how this dualism divides the literature especially in education. Likewise, we saw that a rift formed among philosophers along an axis which separated thinking from feeling. Some scholars have preferred to explain appreciation as a purely concept driven phenomena while others conversely asserted that appreciation is exclusively a feeling.

How does Dewey address the seeming separation between thinking and feeling in regards to appreciation? The logical problem here lies in the fact that appreciation is

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[312] John Dewey, *How We Think*, in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924.Volume 6*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,1978). Also, How We Think, in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 8*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press,1985) See "Appreciation," Chap. 18, Sec. 5, 340-342.

[313] Ibid.

evaluative. It functions as a judgment ascribing relative worth to objects. To aesthetically appreciate something for any of the aforementioned scholars is to enjoy it. For the cognitivists this requires something akin to a propositional judgment, i.e. "this Renoir is good." While the affective theorists are satisfied with the feeling of pleasure attendant upon viewing a Renoir and consider this an adjudicated value i.e. good, the dividing assumption here is that propositions are unfeeling and feelings are inarticulate.

Dewey, however, sees no essential divide in his logic of judgments. For Dewey propositional judgments are deeply emotional, and conversely the seemingly immediate experience of pleasure connected to art is already mediated and preceded by thinking and learning. For Dewey active appreciation is both thoughtful and emotional.

Dewey highlights this binary in his *Ethics* in a section dedicated to appreciation. "Affection…is an ingredient in all operative knowledge…It is, however, going too far to say that such appreciation can dispense with every cognitive element."[314] Dewey was sensitive to the experience of appreciation and notes that, "appreciation seems at the time to be its own reason and justification."[315] This is what is so elusive about the phenomena, its experience appears to be warranted but it is not explicitly justified. Dewey insists that the way to tackle this problem is to give it a long-term view. While the affective dimension of an experience of appreciation is felt to be immediate it is in reality the product of a long-term accumulation of habits. As Dewey puts it "immediate appreciation travel[s] in the grooves laid down by… unconsciously formed habits"[316]

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[314] John Dewey, *Ethics*, in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 7*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 268.

[315] Ibid, 269.

[316] Dewey, *Ethics*, 273.

Dewey's main targets in this passage are so-called intuitionist theories of morality and taste. These are theories which presume the existence of immediate intuitions which can establish value.[317] He agrees ardently with these theories up to a point. He concurs, "It is this direct sense of value, not the consciousness of general rules or ultimate goals, which finally determines …worth...[318] This is the insight which should be maintained from affective and intuitive theories.

While appreciation is affective to a degree, it is also inextricably thoughtful and a process.[319] While Dewey can follow Hume to a similar theory of taste, Dewey's appreciation cannot agree with any theory which conceives, "this immediate response of appreciation as if it excluded reflection instead of following directly upon its heels."[320] There is importantly thinking all the way along for Dewey, and as he points out in his Theory of Inquiry" Judgments of appreciation are not confined, however, to the *final* close."[321] By "final close" Dewey means a single declarative judgment at the conclusion of deliberation.

The intellectual component in Dewey's description of appreciation is neither propositional nor rooted in a specific concept like "good-in-itself". Instead thinking and feeling are wrapped up together.[322] "Wherever there is appreciation…there is something

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[317] We have been using the term affective in this way but they can be considered interchangeable in the current context.

[318] Dewey, *Ethics*, 275.

[319] See Scott Stroud excellent and informative discussion of means and ends in Dewey's aesthetics in his book: Scott Stroud, *John Dewey and the Artful Life: Pragmatism, Aesthetics, and Morality* (University Park, Penn State University Press, 2011), 3-9.

[320] Ibid.

[321] Dewey, *Theory of Inquiry*, 179.

over and above momentary enjoyment, and this surplusage is a sense of the objective relationships of what is enjoyed..."[323] As pointed out before in Dewey's epistemology, thinking is always connected to objective problems and directed at action.

Dewey's solution to the dualism presented in the other theories is not to dismiss them, but instead to show that they are not actually dualisms. There is no mutual exclusion between feeling and thinking. Aesthetic experience is not an exception it is merely a particularly intense instance of this ever present intertwining of the affective and the cognitive.

Instead, Dewey often points out that even in daily use means and ends are interchangeable.[324] What is at one time a means becomes an end and vice versa. This is an irreducible fact of the flow of time. In the affective and cognitive approaches we encounter the same problem, that appreciation is treated as conclusive and temporally delimited. That is to say, appreciation is limited to the feeling of awe, or the time spent applying the concept of "good-in-itself" and once these acts are initiated there is no need for revision. This, however, distorts the common-enough experience of having our

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[322] John Dewey, "Valuation and Experimental Knowledge," in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume* 13, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 14.Note that I flip interchangeably between the word appreciation and taste. Dewey himself does this. There are some admitted ambiguities when treating these terms as synonyms but I use taste to mark an appropriate evaluation of objects, just as appreciation is. This suspends and specific claims about bad taste. "Appreciation, or taste, must supply the material of criticism, while the worth of a criticism is tested by its power to function in a new appreciation which has enhancement, new depth, range of meanings because of the criticism… I *should* like cubism or imagism, although I have not done so…I like—or dislike it,—but is it a thing *to be* liked—or disliked—by a cultivated person?…distinctions between the liked and the should-be-liked… Within the field of esthetic appreciation, they are the stock implications of all intelligent *criticism*."

[323] John Dewey, "Value, Objective Reference and Criticism," in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 2*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 97.

[324] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 205.

appreciations change in character and intensity. Dewey, in contrast to these other thinkers, presents a picture of appreciation that is never final and is in fact life-long. This broad temporal view of appreciation is unique to Dewey.

He writes in an early essay, "Interest and Effort in Education" that, "The transition from one state to another is, therefore, measured by the content it ushers in, while the…appreciation of this or that object depends upon the factor of transition." [325] This dense statement explains that we recognize difference by comparing empirical content through memory and imagination, but we appreciate not the object in isolation but in transition which is constitutive to our experience. It is not the final note of a concerto that we appreciate but its place at the flow of a crescendo. Even in this early text Dewey is interested in the way in which appreciation is predicated upon a temporal flow of experience. It takes from the past and projects towards the future.

Many years later in his *Theory of Inquiry* Dewey will again insist upon the temporal extensiveness of appreciation. He uses appreciation not as the final accomplishment of an investigation but part of each step on the way towards greater insight and appeal. As he says, "Every complex inquiry is marked by a series of stages that are *relative* completions. For complex inquiries involve a constellation of sub-problems, and the solution of each of them is a resolution of some tension…The occurrence of these judgments of completion, not different in kind from those ordinarily called aesthetic, constitutes a series of landmarks in the progress of any undertaking."[326]

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[325] John Dewey, "Contributions to A Cyclopedia of Education: Interest and Effort in Education," in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume 7* ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 280

[326] Dewey, *Theory of Inquiry*, 179

Here again Dewey shows the place of aesthetic experience in scientific inquiry; appreciation is part of every step of a step-wise inquiry.

This insistence on the temporal extensiveness of appreciation sets Dewey apart. For Dewey, appreciation is a kind of value judgment which is constitutively fallible. It is part of an extended process of investigation and each minor appreciation contributes to future appreciations with greater intensity. For example if I return yearly to the works of Tolstoy since first reading him in high school I would hope to have a greater appreciation for it now and in the future and, therefore would not want be stuck in my adolescent appraisal of it.

This same model may work with a teleological view. We may suppose that I return to Tolstoy because I am trying to approach an ever richer understanding of his novels and currently only have a limited one. If I keep reading I can progressively arrive at a final and accurate appraisal. This, however, is precisely the opposite of Dewey's view. His presentation of appreciation is not teleological there is no final evaluation of objects and there is no end of inquiry in the arts. Appreciation is instead fallible. Each experience is complete but has the potential to precede another future instance of greater intensity.

Each of the theories of appreciation previously discussed risk circularity. The affective approach spirals into circularity when this approach isn't clear if the emotion or the object is the site of appreciation. Likewise, the cognitive approach stalls when we try to disentangle the difference between appreciating the concept or the concept generating appreciation. These points all hinge upon a kind of hypostatization. In each case independent ontological status is given to each element in the tautology and then when

they are presented as having similar or interchangeable values this is regarded as violating the law of identity. For example, when we ask "do we appreciate x because it is good-in-itself, or is it good-in-itself because we appreciate it?" it appears we cannot reconcile this question because two distinct entities share the same identity. As we have already seen, Dewey's ardent anti-dualism already goes a long way towards arguing against this kind of question. The problem of circularity is dependent upon a presumption of autonomous elements outside of experience, but for Dewey there is no such thing. All objects are only objects, in so far as they are part of experience.

In each example of circularity I have mentioned they are presented as disjunctions. Like the chicken or the egg, either awe precedes appreciation or appreciation precedes awe. Dewey instead converts this kind of question into a conjunction. For Dewey experience is both appreciative and awesome. Each element occurs contiguously in experience. It is only in criticism and analysis that we artificially separate them. It should be no surprise to a Deweyan that these constructs of analysis, when reunited, fail to explain the original experience. Separately they are not actually representative of the experience.

The Dewey position as applied to appreciation harkens back to his review of James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. We do not have to separate appreciation from experience; there are not distinct experiences which we might designate as appreciations. Instead appreciation is a phase of all experience; it is simply and thoroughly appreciative. What distinguishes one event from another is its level of interest and intensity.

The acceptance of identity runs throughout Dewey's logic. In discussing judgments of taste, i.e. judgments of aesthetic value, Dewey writes, "The net conclusion

is that evaluations as judgments of practice are not a particular kind of judgment in the sense that they can be put over against other kinds, but are an inherent phase of judgment itself… the valuation operation is inherent in judgment as such."[327] This is to say that there is no specialized operation of judgment specific to taste. There is no distinct feeling element; it is instead all things at once. All judgment is a judgment of taste.

This brings us to a cornerstone of Dewey's philosophy of experience and his aesthetics: the affirmation of unity in experience. For Dewey, experience is always already unified. It hangs together spatially and temporally and each instance flows into the next. Congruity, harmony, and unity are not achievements as they are the common stuff of experience. As Dewey notes, "error is due to isolating the feeling of harmony and congruity from the *operations* by which discrepant material is brought into harmonious union."[328]

Dewey has been criticized by later scholars for leaning too heavily on a concept of unity to describe aesthetic experience. Richard Shusterman dedicates a chapter to Dewey's problematic unity in his volume *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, arguing that we need to reform Dewey to keep pace with post-modern ideas of rupture found in Derrida and others.[329] Noël Carroll outright dismisses Dewey's entire aesthetic project by presenting John Cage's 4'33" as a counter example. He says Dewey fundamentally cannot address work like this that has no discernable content and no culminating sense of completion. Carroll suggests that Cage's work is importantly not-unified, and Dewey is ill-equipped

[327] Dewey, *Theory of Inquiry*, 181.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 62-84.

to explain any aesthetic engagement with this work.[330] The problem with all these criticisms is they do not see that Dewey's unity has nothing to do with the subject-matter of individual art works but is instead a claim about the unity of experience itself. Even experiences of distraction or dissipation are still experiences. Cage's piece can be varied, abrupt, disruptive, and indeterminate, but none of this means that it is un-unified in Dewey's sense. Dewey's insistence on the unity of experience and the unity of experience is agile enough to approach even the most indeterminate of contemporary art. A point I will take up in the final section of this chapter.

Dewey offers the best alternative among existing theories of appreciation. In crucial ways Dewey also solves persistent problems in these theories. Dewey's perspective on these issues helps get us away from persistent dialectics between means and ends, feeling and thinking, and logical problems related to argumentative circularity.

Dewey's account of appreciation has many advantages both analytically and descriptively, but we have only discussed it in its very limited sense as it pertains to the psychology of the reception of art and specific conceptual problems in the existing literature. As Dewey remarks in his 1916 essay on judgments of practice, "appreciation is a peculiarly treacherous term."[331] It is deceptively important. Appreciation is at the core of our experience of value, and by extension is integral to the arts. It is treacherous because it is explained in one-sided ways, as with intuitionist theories, and it is not taken seriously enough, as with Danto. Dewey offers a rejection and a response to the historic disparagement of appreciation. It need not be a term reserved for museum lectures and symphony programs. It need not be dismissed as elitist and inconsequential. Instead we

[330] Noël Carroll, *Beyond Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 49-51

[331] Dewey, "Judgments of Practice," 26.

can see a serious consideration of appreciation has serious implication for science, education, and even politics. What follows elucidates those implications.

4. Contributions to Evolutionary Aesthetics.

As we noted in chapter two Dewey uses a vocabulary rich in biological terminology. This biological position is not to be confused with an argument for an aesthetic instinct or a genetic account of the arts. Dewey makes no claim about our genetic heritage as a prediction for present or future aesthetic experiences. In this section I want to reiterate that Dewey considers appreciation itself to be changing and evolving and should be thought of in light of Dewey's interpretation of Darwin and that this has implications for current discussions in evolutionary aesthetics.

Dewey's concept of a growing and evolving appreciation can be usefully contrasted with theories in philosophy, evolutionary psychology, and biology which presuppose a specific genetic basis for the arts and their reception. In particular Dewey can be used to criticize theories which suppose the existence of biologically fixed criteria in the arts, including a fixed concept of beauty. Dewey will show that while these other theories are ostensibly naturalistic and aim to be consistent with Darwinian evolution, they are not Darwinian enough. Dewey shows us a more thoroughly evolutionary alternative model which allows artistic taste and appreciation to be understood as presently evolving.

Dewey's theory then is biological but not crudely genetic. It is thoroughly Darwinian approach without being vaguely evolutionary. The history of aesthetics has

supported many theories which use forms of biological essentialism to support claims for the superiority of certain art forms and materials. Dewey's theory while biologically grounded is not essentializing. It is importantly open-ended. It articulates a position from which to show that all aesthetic criteria are themselves evolving, changing, and sometimes disappearing. It offers a way of updating scientific approaches to aesthetics and resists academicism in criticism.

Dewey's aesthetics is an important theory in the history of Darwinian scholarship. It offers a way to conceive of the arts as evolutionary. This should be qualified, however, not to be read as saying that "the arts are the product of prior evolution" instead it is affirming that the arts are presently evolving. This is an important and subtle contribution to the history of aesthetics as well.

In his 1909 essay "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy" Dewey eulogizes Darwin for initiating the destruction of the concept of fixed species.[332] This idea which had held sway for almost 2000 years was dismantled in favor of a concept of change and mutability. The backlash against Darwin, which has conventionally been seen as coming from religion, Dewey says actually came from science itself which begrudgingly resisted giving up the idea of permanence in nature.[333]

Darwin's influence on Dewey was personal. It permitted Dewey to argue against rigid ideas of truth, beauty, and the good. Contemporary scholar Christopher Perricone points out that, "When one reads *Art as Experience* with Darwin in mind the influence is

[332] John Dewey, "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924,* ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press 1978).

[333] Ibid, 5.

patently clear."[334] Dewey even quotes Darwin favorably from *Expression of Emotions* to explain his own theory of expression in the arts.[335] Darwin is both implicitly and explicitly underwriting Dewey's aesthetics.

Dewey wants to enact the same dissolution of species as Darwin did in zoology and apply it to aesthetics. This is not the same as using Darwin to explain why the arts exist. Instead Dewey wants to explain how the arts are themselves changeable, changing, and never fixed.

This contrasts with a figure like Stephen Davies, a contemporary philosopher, who has written a recent book arguing for a necessary connection between artistic sensibility, both in the production and the reception of aesthetic objects, and evolutionary theory. The book, *The Artful Species*,[336] offers a survey of the many attempts over the last century and a half to explain taste in light of natural selection. Davies does an excellent job in casting doubt into theories which speculate about the evolutionary benefits of the arts, for example that we are disposed to landscape painting because it stimulates the instinct to find a predator free vista. This idea, and ideas like it,[337] he dismisses eloquently for having too little evidence and offering no solid arguments against viable alternatives.[338]

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[334]Christopher Perricone, "The Influence of Darwinism on John Dewey's Philosophy," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New Series, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2006): 20-41.

[335] Ibid, 162. Dewey quotes Darwin for being "full of examples of what happens when an emotion is simply an organic state let loose on the environment in direct overt action."

[336] Stephen Davies, *The Artful Species* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013).

[337] For example bilateral phenotypic symmetry leading to increased attractiveness (212), bower birds constructing aesthetically pleasing nests (32-33) etc.

[338] Similar arguments could be for the vestigial or mutational status of these traits.

At the end of the day, however, Davies still wants to say that our sense of beauty is evolutionarily derived. While he remains agnostic about the place of art in previous evolutionary epochs and throughout the animal kingdom, and is respectful to the limits of evolutionary psychology to describe or predict aesthetic reception, he still argues that: "some but not all of our aesthetic responses are outcomes of how our species' evolutionary history has molded our thoughts and emotions…"[339] and in particular our emotional response to beauty.[340]

He cites favorably the works of Edmund Burke and aligns himself with an English tradition.[341] In Edmund Burkes famous treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* Burke puts forward a concept of beauty as a positive affect connected to an irreducible instinct, specifically that of an urge to continue the species. It is a manifestation of the desire for procreation.[342] The qualities which exemplify the beautiful are smoothness, curviness, and fragility in objects. These are all qualities associated with a kind of idealized female form.[343]

There are clear problems with Burke's theory and even his basic descriptions. All of this is premised upon a simplistic mechanistic theory of emotion. In the introduction Burke asserts that what may appear as differences in taste simply cannot be. This is because we are all hard-wired the same way. We all must respond to beautiful things in

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[339] Davies, *Artful Species*, 8.

[340] Ibid, 65.

[341] Ibid, 25.

[342] Burke, "Sublime and Beautiful," Part I Chapter VIII.

[343] Ibid, Part III Chapters XIV-XVII..

the same mechanical way.[344] In the body of the text he draws heavily on Locke and Newton to reinforce this mechanistic point.[345] His theories, as he argues, should simply be an exposition of immutable human nature.[346]

While Davies offers a far more measured and restrained treatise on the subject of evolutionary aesthetics, he still makes claims about the permanence and fixity of beauty and leans on the problematic pre-Darwinian Burke to do so. I want to show that Dewey offers a different view in which we need not presuppose criteria about beauty or its associative emotional response to still have a theory of appreciation. Dewey, unlike Davies, shows us that appreciation is itself evolutionary and not merely a product of evolution.

Let us see how this Deweyan Darwinism in aesthetics can be used to contest specific theories in the cannon of the 20th century philosophy of art. Consider Frank Sibley's "Aesthetics and the Looks of Things." Sibley, famous for his formulation of "Aesthetic Concepts", also pushed the idea that we take a basic aesthetic interest in certain observable qualities in objects. These include: "warmth, light, brilliance, clarity, purity, clearness, richness, softness, smoothness or simplicity." His suggestion is that we are attracted to these qualities because we are "vitally involved" with them. That is to say that "aesthetic interest reflects our vital concerns and the sort of creatures we are." He suggests that we can read back from our taste into our biology and make descriptive claims about our vital needs, that is to say what sustains our life. Sibley is a prominent

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[344] Ibid, Introductory Note.

[345] Ibid, Introductory Note, Part 3 Chapter XX, Part 4 Chapter VII.

[346] It should be dubious to contemporary readers that Burke's presentation of a male heterosexual concept of feminine beauty should be used as the paragon for all beauty for all peoples.

figure and exemplifies a line within 20th century philosophy which seeks to identify and innumerate the atomic qualities of aesthetic objects. This is akin to Burke's attempt to justify the beauty of smoothness.

While this might all sound compatible with Dewey there are important differences. For Dewey art and aesthetics is fundamentally wrapped up with our biological constitution and our ecological place in an environment, and in this way it is part of the kind of creature we are. But it is not reflective of the kind of creature we just were or can and will become. A list like the one Sibley provides is at best contingent, because each of those qualities can take on radically different meanings and have nearly infinite degrees of aesthetic potential. The same can be said of many of their opposites. Dewey would permit there to be aesthetic responses to cold, darkness, and harshness. The explanatory power of aesthetic qualities becomes trivial to the task of aesthetics.

Dewey tackles this problem head on, with almost prescient anticipation of Sibley. He writes:

> Much ingenious effort has been spent in enumerating the different species of beauty after beauty itself has had its "essence" set forth: the sublime, grotesque, tragic, comic, poetic, and so on. Now there are undoubtedly realities to which such terms apply—as proper names are used in connection with different members of a family. It is possible for a qualified person to say things about the sublime, eloquent, poetic, humorous, that enhance and clarify perception of objects in the concrete…But, unfortunately, esthetic theory has not been content with clarifying qualities as matter of emphasis in individual wholes… and then played dialectical tunes upon the fixed concepts which emerge.[347]

[347] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 233.

Here Dewey identifies a key conceptual problem in many evolutionary theories of the arts. These theories take as nouns what are actually adjectives that describe an ongoing and unfolding process. This is where Dewey's Darwinism comes in full force and he explodes the species-concept of aesthetic qualities.

Instead of denying outright the warrant of these qualities Dewey acknowledges that they are able to disclose a quality in reality, but should not be conceived as universal. Instead he advocates that, "we regard such terms as picturesque, sublime, poetic, ugly, tragic, as marking *tendencies*, and hence as adjectival as are the terms, pretty, sugary, convincing, we shall be led back to the fact that art is a quality of activity."[348]

In proper pragmatic fashion Dewey puts his emphasis on action "Like any mode of activity, it [aesthetic production and reception] is marked by *movement* in this direction and that… A tendency, a movement, occurs within certain limits which define its direction. But tendencies of experience do not have limits that are exactly fixed or that are mathematical lines without breadth and thickness. Experience is too rich and complex to permit such precise limitation."[349] There is no sense in limited the descriptions we can give to aesthetic experience. They can be beautiful and sublime, but even these terms are provisional and mark instead a relative quality.

Dewey's Darwinism reveals to us what pragmatic beauty is. It has none of the assurance of a description, and none of the loftiness of a formal account, instead it says beauty is an adjectival description of particular changes in nature. What is seen as beautiful is different across cultures, geographies, and times. We lose a universal concept of beauty but we gain a heuristic for evaluating lived experience. Dewey's theory in this

[348] Ibid.

[349] Ibid.

way is not anti-aesthetic, against a concept of beauty in art; it is rather reserved about just what that means and how it is used. The same can be true of other powerful words in our critical vocabulary including the sublime, the awesome, the genius etc.

Dewey's biological language, his Darwinism and his theory of appreciation offer a useful theory with continued relevance, for contesting and amending even the most recent of evolutionary aesthetics.

5. Contributions to Contemporary Art Criticism.

In this section I will argue for a return to and reassessment of Dewey's aesthetics in light of contemporary art. His philosophy itself can be read as being as fresh today as when it was written. I will suggest that Dewey was writing philosophy for his own contemporary art. The work that was being shown at the Barnes Foundation was contemporary in the 1920s and 30s. Artists like Matisse, Soutine, and Prendergast who are amply represented in the foundation collection were living artists making art without any guarantee of their future posterity. Recent commentators have accused Dewey of having conservative taste,[350] but in the historic moment in which he lived he was attending to experimental and avant-garde artworks, which only now seem safe and conservative because of their enduing fame.

This suggests that Dewey's aesthetics is an aesthetics that is applicable to emergent and contemporary art. In his time it was Matisse in ours it could be a variety of new media or approaches to art making. I will show in this section that I believe Dewey

[350] Finkelpearl, Tom. *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*. (Durham N.C.: Duke UP, 2013), 346.

can be usefully applied to the criticism of "participatory art." It gives us resources to look at radically new works and consider them appreciatively.

In the last two decades there has been a body of new artworks referred to as "relational aesthetics." This term, coined by the French curator Nicolas Baurillaud, was used to designate the work of a group of artists who had during the 1990s shown work at the Palais Du Tokyo in Paris.[351] This group included artists such as Liam Gillick and Rirkrit Taravanija. Their work used the gallery as a space to coordinate social interaction amongst visitors. In Gillick's case he created platforms and boxes in which visitors were compelled to change their bodily arrangements in the gallery. Taravanija for his work cooked Thai curry and served it to visitors. Taravanija explains that the interaction occasioned by the food is the content of his work.[352]

In the last decade this kind of work has increased in scale and institutional recognition. German artist Tino Seghal converted the Guggenheim in Manhattan into an interactive story telling experience hiring dozens of actors to guide visitors through the main hall.[353] Meanwhile MFA programs in the United States have started offering degrees in this "relational" art.[354]

The term relational aesthetics has given way in recent years and other terms suggested such as participatory art, social practice, or neo-happenings.[355] Each term,

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[351] Bourriaud, Nicholas. *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presse Du Reel, 1998).

[352] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 7.

[353] Alicia Desantis, "At the Guggenheim, the Art Walked Beside You, Asking Questions." *New York Times* [New York] 12 Mar. 2010, Art and Design sec.: n.

[354] Bishop, Claire. *Artificial Hells (*London: Verso, 2012), Introduction.

[355] Ibid.

however imperfectly, tries to captures the idea that these artworks all share in common the orchestration of experience in which people are the primary medium.[356] I believe that the term "participatory art" captures this human element within the art most explicitly and I will use this phrase for the remainder of this passage.

The critical response to participatory art belies confusion about how to approach and theorize this work. The literature on participatory art has been spearheaded by art historians and curators. The two most prominent and oft cited figures that have emerged around this kind of art are the historians Grant Kester at UC Berkeley and Claire Bishop at CUNY Graduate Center. Both find their theoretical bearings amongst French continental thinkers after 1969. Within the limited field of discourse about participatory art these two scholars have very different and often conflicting interpretations. Kester finds a hopeful core in art that promotes cooperation and experiments with new forms of social interaction in the hopes of striking ever more progressive unions.[357] Participatory art, for Kester, can perform a social good even if confined to the museum.

Bishop on the other hand takes a more pessimistic tack. She questions the underlying ideological forces behind this kind of work. For example, she criticizes a recent work by performance artist Marina Abramovic in which she had actors sit under tables at a gala fundraiser with their heads stuck through the table top and protruding as a kind of human centerpiece.[358] Bishop highlights the degrading nature of this work which exploits the labor of individuals, but notes that it gets morally excused because it is

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[356] Ibid.

[357] Kester, Grant. *Conversation Pieces:Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 2004).

[358] Bishop, *Artificial Hells,* 230.

ostensibly in the service of art, but she sees it rather as control in the service of capital and labor power.[359] Bishop sees the majority of participatory work as an insidious extension of capitalist ideologies.

Curators, interested in showing this work, have also entered into the discussion. Mary Jane Jacobs of the Art Institute of Chicago has collaborated with artists of this kind since the early nineties. She has recently written a series of books expressing a dissatisfaction in the critical and art historical treatment of this work which seems either too optimistic or pessimistic without a great sense of the nuances involved. She has made calls in writing for a more holistic approach to the evaluation of this work and has openly proposed Dewey's philosophy as a direction forward.[360] There are indeed question raised here that Dewey can forward an answer on and one that can be aided by a more precise understanding of the role of appreciation in experience.

It is the mark of any mature observation, whether it be that of a geologist, a surgeon, or an artist, that the complexity of a phenomena can pervade perception, as opposed to the crude observations of a novice who may let only one feature dominate. Green troops may be overwhelmed by the noise of cannon fire, whereas seasoned troops can more acutely observe the complex cacophonous battle environment around them. For the unseasoned observer art's traditional dualism of subject and object or form and matter often are presented as ultimatums and criticism functions as the adjudicator which must come down on one side or the other. Dewey however tries to capture the experience of

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[359] Ibid, 124, 125.

[360] Jacob, Mary Jane, and Jacquelynn Baas. *Chicago Makes Modern: How Creative Minds Changed Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012).

the seasoned observer in which these dualisms cease to be guiding ideals and divisions become blurred.

Dewey makes this same point by way of a linguistic example in *Art as Experience*. He says that if you were to ask the man on the street to define a vowel, he would not find the task difficult. However, the linguist who has thought at length about vowels would say their distinction from other parts of speech is very hard to establish.[361] Similarly in art, art when artful is not only about one thing. Art of high regard is inclusive of many qualities. The mark of a good piece of art in Dewey's aesthetics is not its ability to exclude and divide, but rather to include all the complexities of experience itself. Let us consider this point in light of the work of one contemporary participatory artist and show how a traditional approach to the concept of utility fails to appreciate this work, but that Dewey's more holistic approach can reveal more interesting aspects of this art. In this art world example Dewey is both pertinent and timely

Consider the work of Cuban artist Tania Bruguera Bruguera (1968-present) received her MFA from the school of the Art Institute of Chicago and has since had a successful international career which includes shows in the Tate's Turbine Hall, at the Guggenheim New York, and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.[362] In her career Bruguera has had a consistent practice of bucking conventional concepts of utility as it relates to the fine arts. She often takes conventionally accepted works of art and reintroduces them into daily life. It is this practice that I believe Dewey can give us some philosophic insight into.

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[361] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 225.

[362] Tania Bruguera, "CV," on studio website, http://www.taniabruguera.com/info_cv.html, accessed January 20 2015.

Consider Bruguera's sculpture from 2004 entitle *Arte Útil*. For this piece she reinstalled a replica of Duchamp's infamous *Fountain* into a public bathroom. The read-made in Bruguera's hands became a fully functioning piece of plumbing.[363] This work is something of a manifesto for Bruguera. "Arte Útil" translates clumsily into English as "useful art," but loses the double connotation of the original Spanish in which "Útil" is both the concept of usefulness but also a working tool. Bruguera's gambit is that the concept of art, which has been conventionally attributed to Duchamp's urinal, can itself be made useful. The concept of art can be used as a tool to produce practical actions in the world. Artworks do not simply retreats back into the quotidian but instead they continue to carry all the pomp and privilege afforded to any work of fine art in a museum. This effect in turn becomes something that artists can manipulate.

Consider this point from a different angle in a relatively early work by Bruguera from 1998 called *Displacement*.[364] In this performance piece Bruguera dressed in a costume as an Nkisi Nkonde doll from the Congo. This object originated in Africa but has recurred in Afro-Cuban culture. Many examples of this wooden fetish are held in the Cuban national museums as ethnographic aesthetic objects. In this performance Bruguera begins in a gallery dressed as the figurine, rises and walks out of the art gallery and into the center of Havana. The gesture here should be obvious; Bruguera is staging the movement of an art object into the street. In an interview for PBS Bruguera recalls that during this performance, "I was a little nervous because…at one point a policeman came and said 'what's going on?' because we are not supposed to do that in the street that

[363] Emanuele Rinaldo Meschini, "Arte Útil part 1 – A practical theorization," in *Luxflux*, No. 49 (2013).

[364] Diana Taylor, *Holy Terrors: Latin American Women Perform* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2003), 441.

day…and then a kid [in the crowd] was saying 'no its an artwork'…and the policeman was quiet, I couldn't see it but I could hear it, then he said, 'oh ok ok proceed,' and that was the exciting moment when I realized that art can go places other people cannot go."[365] This was a revelatory moment for Bruguera.

She expanded upon this in her later work including *The New Man's Stroll* from 2007.[366] In this multi-layered piece commissioned by the Gothenberg Biennale in Sweden Bruguera used her budget as a participating artist to pay for a trip for a young Cuban couple. [367] The couple, Ezequiel Suarez and Yali Romagoza, was able to visit Sweden. Bruguera named them as collaborators so they would be eligible for cultural visas to enter Sweden and leave Cuba. More of the budget was used as spending money to purchase gifts and domestic products they could not get in Cuba and when they returned Bruguera had these consumer objects and personal effects designated as artworks so they would not go through the normal customs procedure and risk confiscation. The piece now only exists as tourist snapshots. This work is interesting at least two levels. First we see Bruguera using the concepts of art and the associated concept of artist to do something practical but also something nice for this couple. Second in doing this she exposed some of the peculiar ways in which the arts intersect with official culture including special rights to travel and raised significant questions about the privileges afforded to artists over and above other citizens.

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[365]Tania Bruguera interview with PBS Art 21 "Legacy" aired 07/08/2014. 27 min.

[366] This title is derived from a line in Che Guevara "Socialism and Man in Cuba." In The *Che Reader* (Minneapolis: Ocean Press, 2005) pp. 212-231.

[367] Tania Bruguera, "Statement, on studio website, http://www.taniabruguera.com/cms/527-0-The+New+Mans+Stroll+.htm, accessed January 20 2015.

I want to turn now to the work of John Dewey to demonstrate how John Dewey, although writing in the 1920s, has insight into the phenomena at work in Bruguera's practice. Namely Dewey sees no essential distinction between fine art and useful art.

In *Experience and Nature* Dewey takes up the distinction between fine art and useful art or crafts. In Dewey's time he would have been referring to a historic debate initiated in English by John Ruskin and his students in the 19th century. Ruskin was one of the intellectual founders of the arts and crafts movement and argued for utility as a quality of art. This was contrasted and contested by a younger generation including Oscar Wilde and members of the aesthetic movement who advocated a concept of art for art's sake and categorically dismissed utility as a part of any artwork.[368] John Dewey considering both sides makes a distinctly pragmatist intervention. He explains that the presumed choice between utility on one side or fineness of an object on the other is not an ontological distinction but is actually a functional distinction. What designates an object as art or craft already signals how it is used, and that this designation is itself relative and changeable. He explains that we call objects, "useful because we arbitrarily cut short our consideration of consequences…The same statement applies to the conception of merely fine or final arts and works of art."[369] What appears useless today may be useful tomorrow and conversely what has supreme utility now can slip into irrelevance and this applies even to art.

To attribute too much metaphysical importance to a relative quality such as fineness is to misunderstand the phenomenon. He continues that, "The source of the error

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[368] For an overview of this history see Walter Hamilton, The Aesthetic Movement in England (London: Reeves & Turner, 1882).

[369] John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 272

lies in the habit of calling [things]… ends that are not ends save accidentally, since they are not fulfillments, consummatory, of means, but merely last terms closing a process..."[370] But processes are ongoing, recurrent or cyclical. In this way the means-ends distinction is never permanently settled. While it may have momentarily appeared that Duchamp had turned a useful object into an object of pure fine art, and its status as art was a final epithet, in fact it was only one episode in an ongoing process which has continued through to today. Dewey directly lambasts philosophers of art of his own era by saying "Estheticians…see in… *acts* means to…esthetic appreciation…called a good in itself, or that strange thing an end in itself." [371]

There is no end in itself and art is no exception. It is always a mistake to assume that appreciation or even the designation of fine art could fix the ontological status of any object. Instead works of art and objects of appreciation are enmeshed in an ever-changing environment. Dewey would see no philosophic reason to separate the useful from the fine, what differentiates them is the kind of uses they are good for. Dewey offers us a position from which to show that the very concept of fineness can be deployed as useful. In Pragmatism the very concept of art can be understood as a tool. Here we have openness in Dewey to think expansively about what can constitute the medium of an artwork and what art can be used for. It is not simply traditional mediums of paint and bronze, but the social construct of art itself. Art is not simply used in the service of disinterested observation but enacts practical effects in the world. Dewey allows us to see these as legitimate directions for art and can valorize this as a site of appreciative and consummatory experience.

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[370] Ibid.

[371] Ibid.

With that pragmatic conception in play I want to close with an examination of one last work by Bruguera. *Immigrant Movement* is a long-term ongoing project for the Queens Museum of Art. For this piece Bruguera purchased a storefront in Corona Park Queens and made it available to recent immigrants in nearby neighborhoods. This space has held language classes, cooking demos, fitness clubs, and offered legal resources for immigrants. In most of its activities it is indistinguishable from similar non-profits or philanthropic organizations that seek to aid immigrants in America. There is something distinctly reminiscent of the spirit of Hull House and the efforts of Jane Addams in this work. Immigrant Movement serves an often disadvantaged and disenfranchised population but has never prescribed what its participants needed, but instead it takes its lead from those who use it and embraces democratic decision making process.

One practical effect of this designation as artwork is that *Immigrant Movement* may draw on different sources of funding for its continuance. Consider the fact that they are an artwork under the umbrella of the Queens Museum of Art, and instead of following a non-profit model they can actually apply for grants in fine arts programming, art conservation, and other funds for artworks. This has been Bruguera's most ambitious and longest standing experiment in "useful art" but its continued existence and expansion testifies to the traction of her idea to use art to enact change in the everyday world. In proper pragmatic fashion the truth of this conception of art is cashed out in the actions of artists like Bruguera, and the new and powerful idea emerging from these practitioners is that the concept of art is a material for making art and not a mere honorific.

My intention here in considering Bruguera's specific work is not to advocate it as ideal art making, but to reveal the philosophical questions that this work raises and

demonstrate that Dewey can be applied both to help articulate questions and to develop responses. As we have seen in the example of considering Tania Bruguera's work the ability to think about art and its effects on everyday life is one of the beneficial perspectives that pragmatism can bring to art criticism.

6. Summary

In this chapter I considered Dewey's value for a variety of different studies related to the topics of aesthetics and appreciation. In the first section we considered Dewey's legacy in the philosophy of art both in the 20th century and in regards to the history of aesthetics. I argued that Dewey represents an important continuation of naturalistic theories of the arts and has had an enduring value even in recent discourse.

In the next section we looked at a specific debate in the analytic philosophy of art in the last ten years. I argued that there is a conceptual impasse in the literature which pits cognitive and affective theories against one another. I argued that Dewey's pragmatic approach to appreciation as a phase of experience which includes both cognitive and affective dimensions offers an important third way. We also considered a branch of contemporary evolutionary aesthetics which tries to identify the instinctual parts of the human character which determine aesthetic responses. I argued here that Dewey contrasts this approach by denying the possibility of establishing fixed ideas of aesthetic quality but still offers a Darwinian theory.

In the final section I suggested that Dewey's original aesthetics were written in confrontation with the contemporary art of his era and could also be applied to the

contemporary art of our era. I suggested that the recent trend in "participatory art" offers an opportunity to apply Dewey's philosophy to art criticism. I considered the participatory work of Cuban artist Tania Bruguera and showed that Dewey's anti-dualism could be used to understand the dynamism of her art which aims to have utility in the world. This was one example of how this current work could be taken up into the analysis of emergent art. Combined these sections suggest a variety of ways in which Dewey's naturalized theory of appreciation can be applied in our current historic moment and across different disciplines.

Conclusion

Dewey's Pessimism

Throughout this dissertation I have highlighted the positive implications of Dewey's aesthetics. I have shown that he offers a naturalized theory of aesthetic experience which contributed to the founding of an ambitious new kind of art school at the Barnes. In the first chapter I suggested that to engage in art appreciation was co-extensive with democracy. Furthermore in the second chapter I explained that Dewey did not believe that aesthetic appreciation was exclusively reserved for the fine arts, but could be applied to any kind of experience including the quotidian. This all seems to paint a rosy picture in which all things are art, all people are artists, all experience is deeply appreciative, and all this strengthens our democracy. It might seem like one cannot fail to aesthetically appreciate all things at all times. This, however, is a caricature of Dewey's philosophy. While Dewey does give us multiple arguments about how experience can have these qualities he also asserts they are exceedingly rare. He does not believe that our current environment actually realizes the aesthetic dimension of life. This is for habitual reasons instantiated both in our philosophy and our institutions. In fact Dewey is consistently pessimistic about aesthetic experience.[372] Dewey does give us many powerful arguments especially to expand the very concept of art beyond the fine arts.

[372] One of the few scholars to pick up on this dimension of Dewey's aesthetics is John Lysaker. He sees important and productive similarities between Dewey and Adorno and suggests the thinking about art in pragmatism and critical theory can be brought together. While he does not explicitly call them both pessimists he points to their many shared criticisms of art in modern industrial capitalism. See an illustrative passage on pg. 239. John T. Lysaker, "Binding the Beautiful: Art as Criticism in Adorno and Dewey," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, New Series, Vol. 12 No. 4 (1998), 233-244.

The optimistic aspect of Dewey's philosophy has endured in contemporary scholarship. This is particularly true in the literature about "everyday aesthetics." In this sub-field of aesthetics Dewey looms large as an early and authoritative philosopher who argued for the aesthetic potential of all things including natural and domestic objects.[373] This characterization is true. Dewey does have this thread in his philosophy. Dewey's conviction about the aesthetic potential of the everyday can be dated to 1923. The year prior, in 1922, Dewey delivered the inaugural Carus lectures for the American Philosophic Association.[374] This would eventually be worked into his book *Experience and Nature*.[375] In the year 1923 while preparing this work for publication he makes an important conceptual breakthrough. This is recorded in his archived correspondence. Dewey writes to Barnes about it:

> Buermeyer's article came in the nick of time for me…[376]
> Buermeyer's paper gave me courage to say some things I should hardly have dared say . . . that anything is art, including what is ordinarily opposed to art… without Buermeyer's paper I should hardly have ventured to attack the subject of "fine" arts as directly as I have done.[377]

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[373] Consider the comprehensive volume on this field: Ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan Smith, *The Aesthetic of Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)

[374] Allen Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: Norton, 1997), 206-207.

[375] Ibid, 237-242.

[376] Buermeyer was the Princeton philosophy PhD and fellow faculty member at the Barnes Foundation. This letter is wonderful evidence to show the close intellectual relationship between the difference philosophers at the Foundation. The article was likely a draft of "Some Popular Fallacies in Aesthetics" written for the *Dial*. It shows that Dewey was both responding and responsive to the work of these other thinkers.

[377] Dewey, John. 1923. Letter, John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes, Sept. 14, 1923, Presidents Files, AlbertC. Barnes Correspondence. The Barnes Foundation Archives, Merion, PA

Here in 1923 Dewey testifies to a turning point in his own thinking occasioned by the writing of Lawrence Buermeyer. It was after 1923 that he was willing to say that "anything is art" and this broad notion of art became a central premise of Dewey's aesthetics. For example a decade later in 1934 Dewey was asked to be a juror for MOMA's exhibition "Machine Art" which was a show of industrial design. Dewey was asked to choose the most beautiful of all the objects and he chose a small outboard motor propeller. The press release quotes him as saying "To my mind there is convincing proof that there is no essential opposition between production for utility and for beauty."[378]

This anecdote captures Dewey's position against the high art low art distinction and positions him as an advocate of art of the everyday. This thought has an optimistic and populist dimension. But for this conclusion I want to complicate this optimistic picture a bit. While Dewey definitely has his moments of optimism he also has pessimistic thoughts connected to art of the everyday. Part of his pessimism comes out in passages where he simply does not believe that we are adequately attending to the aesthetic dimensions of life.

One of his main targets is the museum. *Art as Experience* opens with a polemic against museums as agents of isolation who take objects out of the flow of life and drain their aesthetic potency by warping experience into a prescribed form of elite connoisseurship.[379] He's goes even farther than that, in the conclusion to *Art as Experience* he dismisses the entire architecture of Manhattan as aesthetically repellent

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[378] Museum of Modern Art, *Judging Exhibition of Machine Art* (New York: MOMA, 1934), press release.

[379] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Chapter 1.

because it is a product of elitist economic conditions.[380] Similarly throughout his authorship he derides cinema as crass or propaganda.[381] What they all share in common for Dewey is that they render experience mechanical, repetitive, or academic. As we have already noted the opposite of the aesthetic for Dewey is not the ugly but it is the routine. It becomes a difficult task to find genuinely new experiences which can qualify as consummatory for Dewey in America of the 1930s.

So when Dewey utters the words that "anything is art" it is not a happy invocation that lifts a fog and allows us to finally see the art that was always there, as if flipping on a conceptual light. It is something more like a warning that the aesthetic is something we have to consider each and every day. "Anything is art" a challenge to our perception a relentless task to be taken up. When we talk about "everyday aesthetics" in light of Dewey we must combine it with this more demanding interpretation. Appreciation is a daily task to realize the value and scope of our experiences, and Dewey thinks we all fail at this task almost every day. It is this sobering world-weary dimension of Dewey's work I don't think gets enough voice, and makes him a much more complex thinker. Art of the everyday is not only a description it is also a challenge.

The Barnes Foundation tried to take up that challenge and create a space for appreciation. This required the mobilization of resources and specific material and institutional change in the world. In a short passage about the philosophy of Auguste Comte Dewey explains this dual need to see art in all aspects of life but to simultaneously create the conditions for that kind of appreciation. He writes:

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[380] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 345-347.

[381] Phillip S. Seng, "Reconstructing Film Studies: Towards a Transactional Theory of Movies" (PhD Diss., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2008).

> Auguste Comte said that the great problem of our time is the organization of the proletariat into the social system. The remark is even truer now than when it was made…What is true is that art itself is not secure under modern conditions until the mass of men and women who do the useful work of the world have the opportunity to be free in conducting the processes of production and are richly endowed in capacity for enjoying the fruits of collective work…[382]

The fact that the mass of people do not enjoy their environment and their labors is not simply a problem of aesthetics it is a problem of aesthetics in a deeply interconnected social and material world.

If we wanted to try and capture Dewey's optimism about aesthetics in light of his pessimism we would have to focus on his insistence that: no matter how bad the current situation is change always happening. This change can be for the better but is often slow and arduous. It is this optimism that animates a place like the Barnes Foundation, but it is the pessimism which tempered its ambition and demanded such rigor from students. The appreciation of painting required people to break many habits of looking, organizing time, utilizing space, and more. It is this aesthetics of rigor in the everyday that I hope this dissertation has helped to sketch, and which I believe continues to have relevance even today.

[382] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 347.

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