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Inquiry, Art and Consummatory Experience: A Deweyan Account of the Instrumental and Aesthetic Modes in Human Well-Being

Eric A. Evans

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, sealinc2@aol.com

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INQUIRY, ART AND CONSUMMATORY EXPERIENCE: A DEWEYAN ACCOUNT OF THE INSTRUMENTAL AND AESTHETIC MODES IN HUMAN WELL-BEING.

by

Eric A. Evans

A DISSERTATION

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This dissertation argues that a Deweyan reconstruction of philosophical theories of human well-being is needed. While philosophical interest about human well-being has existed for millennia, significant interest in such theories among philosophers has re-emerged during the past twenty-five years. During this same time there has been a resurgence of interest in the work of John Dewey. His critique of the “philosophical fallacy” is used to examine the legitimacy and value of the theories of human well-being offered by Plato and L.W. Sumner in which the target for evaluation is “happiness” and the criterion is, respectively, P-justice or preference fulfillment. It is argued that these theories fail to provide for an authentic account of human well-being because they are based upon a false understanding of “experience” as either “epistemic or cognitive” instead of “geographic.” Dewey’s theory of experience is used to redefine both the target of evaluation and the criteria for the evaluation of human well-being. His reconstruction of “experience”, “habit” and “situation” leads to rejecting the traditional conceptualization of the “private self” and to reconstructing it as a “transactionally situated self” that is an embodied, enculturated agent. By placing significant emphasis on the importance of the qualitative aspects of a situation the “pervasive quality of the
situation” emerges as the most plausible criterion for the evaluation of human well-being. Dewey’s theories of inquiry, ethics, value and art are employed to further establish the naturalistic conditions under which the pervasive quality enters into a situation, i.e., as either settled or unsettled. The problematic situation is shown to be the primary condition under which all inquiry initiates whether it is in the context of science, ethics, values or art. Human well-being is shown to have two modes, the instrumental and the aesthetic, which are context dependent. Finally, by showing that a Deweyan account of human well-being involves “embodied knowing” instead of the traditional view of “cognitive knowledge” it is possible to explain the conditions and mechanisms under which human well-being contributes to the enlargement and enrichment of both individual and collective human experience.
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Introduction

Having to say something is a very different matter than having something to say.

John Dewey, *How We Think*, 246
My motivating interest when I started graduate school in philosophy over twenty-five years ago was the “quality of life” experienced by persons with disabilities. While initially working within the philosophical framework of analytic philosophy, it was through a fortunate happenstance I became acquainted with the philosophy of John Dewey. Since the early 1990’s I have continued to maintain my interest in Dewey by working to develop connections between his philosophy and the need for reconstruction of the current paradigm dominating policies and practices in services for people with disabilities. I am not writing here as a specialist in philosophy, but only as someone who has studied and admired Dewey for years. Working with Dewey’s writings, at times, has been no easy task. He once confessed to a friend that although he was “deeply aware of my lack of art in writing…in the main I think I am headed in the right direction and it will all come out in the wash that needs to…. [it] may not be too balanced in thought to have a grip on the reader, or to have its meaning very perceptible. But when it gets a man it sticks—so much may be said.” I have a great deal of sympathy for what Dewey is expressing here. At times my involvement in working with Dewey’s texts took on an almost exegetical quality. In this respect, I hope this inquiry will be of some interest to those seeking a condensed treatment of Dewey’s theories of experience, inquiry, ethics, value and aesthetics.

The initial motivation for this particular inquiry resulted from a seminar on Well-Being conducted by Professor Karl Hostetler at the University of Nebraska during Spring Semester, 2007. It was during this time I came to understand that my previous interest in

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1 Upon further reflection, this inquiry has deeper roots. In 1968 I started college as a philosophy major, but soon discovered my interests were more in line with anthropology, which suggests an early preference for the “existential experience” of human beings over the “conceptual experience” of philosophical puzzles.

2 Dewey, as quoted in Jackson, *John Dewey and the Philosopher’s Task*, 83.
quality of life had been too narrow. Karl was also gracious in extending me an invitation to participate in a second seminar during Spring Semester 2009, which allowed me the opportunity to continue my thinking, conversing and writing about what the nature of a Deweyan account of human well-being might look like. The seminars provided exposure to recent philosophical scholarship, as well as opportunities for conversation and writing, that helped me reconstruct my previous understanding of quality of life into ‘human well-being’. One interesting occurrence during this same period is that “well-being” began to emerge as a frequent term within the context of disability studies literature. Although I still hold this to be an important area for study, since my intent in this inquiry is to provide a Deweyan account of human well-being in a more theoretical context, I do not examine it here. However, my hope is that the account of human well-being proposed in this inquiry will also be of interest to those who are now engaged in this emerging area of disability studies.

One reason I find inquiry into human well-being compelling, in not only a philosophical sense but in a personal sense as well, is that it involves investigating the natural transactional tension between our environment and our own thinking, doing and feeling as expressed in habits (thoughts, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, actions) or as dispositions (needs, desires, interests, or preferences), as well as in those of others. What, then, does it mean to say that something is in our own best interest and how are we to understand such activity within the context of other persons? This embedded tension runs deep in our Western cultural tradition and, at least beginning with the ancient Greeks, there has been an almost continuous stream of philosophical discussion about moral importance of human well-being and its definition, meaning and measurement.
Both Plato and Aristotle, in their search for answers to the question of our purpose as human beings, saw philosophy as the only means through which a person could achieve the "good life" which has, as its only goal, happiness.

With the rise of Christianity, the focus of our understanding of “living a good life” shifted from the life of the physical person to the person's "everlasting soul", while retaining Plato’s “two worlds” theory, Aristotle’s conception of the “soul” and the general view among the ancient Greeks that human well-being involves the struggle between virtue and vice. Over time, the religious view of human well-being gained increasing dominance and remained dominant until the beginning of the humanistic philosophical turn in the Renaissance, which received even fuller expression in the modern positivist philosophy of the Enlightenment. Finally, some of the more recent philosophical theories of human well-being are, in many respects, a recasting of some of the basic elements of theories from the philosophical past into the philosophical present.²

It is not surprising, then, that the history of philosophy yields an abundant amount of rich material for philosophical inquiry if one is willing to make a serious commitment to understanding human well-being. Since it is not feasible here to address all the issues that might be important philosophically, this inquiry stipulates, as a given, that human well-being begins “in experience.” This means that whenever we speak about human well-being, both our own and that of others, we are saying something about the quality of human experience in a fundamental way. However, even in limiting the focus of the inquiry to “experience” there remains considerable philosophical territory through which to travel.

² For example: Griffin, WELL-BEING: Its Meaning, Measurement and Moral Importance; Sumner, Welfare, Happiness and Ethics; and Nussbaum Women and Human Development.
The Relevance of Dewey’s Philosophy for this Inquiry

Not only are Dewey’s philosophical theories and concepts important for this inquiry, but his philosophical method is uniquely well suited to this endeavor as well. In particular, the general orientation of the inquiry rests on Dewey’s claim that one of the most important tasks of philosophy is to enable ordinary people to solve their problems by improving their methods of inquiry.⁴ Perhaps this is the ultimate test for any contribution that philosophy seeks to make to human well-being, in both its individual and collective sense. If this is the case, then the job of the philosopher is to identify the significant disjunctions between our needs, habits, objectives, etc. in order to help us rethink what we are doing, i.e., to assist in the “intelligizing” of practice.⁵ For Dewey, experimental or creative intelligence is not only the best way to conduct both philosophical and practical inquiries whether in logic, science, social science, ethics or aesthetics, but also necessary if one is to live one’s life authentically.

Although he holds that criticism is essential to inquiry, it is only by joining together criticism and experimental or creative intelligence that it is possible for criticism to be truly constructive instead of being merely a complaint. In this sense, criticism is simply a part of the work that is involved in applying creative intelligence to rethinking and readjusting our principles and practices. The logic of inquiry that forms the foundation for Dewey’s philosophy of knowledge also serves as the basis for the organization of the public sphere as well as political actions, practices and policies along

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⁴ John Stuhr observes that in America today, most philosophers are not—qua philosophers—actively engaged as citizens and, consequently, philosophy has almost no public voice. On this issue, see his essay “Re-visioning Philosophy and the Organization of Knowledges” in his Genealogical Pragmatism: Philosophy, Experience, and Community.

⁵ The inherent force in Dewey’s philosophical method lies in recognizing that the constructive power of criticism can be realized only through the joining together of instrumentalism and criticism (as experimental or creative intelligence).
democratic lines. Scientific inquiries, for Dewey, do not differ basically from inquiries carried out by ordinary citizens in everyday life: they all aim to grasp problems and to reach a better understanding in order to solve them. The way in which people assess problematic situations cannot just be descriptive but necessarily goes along with procedures of judgment, taking into account available means and valuable ends. Because pragmatist inquiry is driven by the logic of experimentation, it not only leads to improving factual knowledge but to redefining political values as well which provides a powerful justification for democracy. It is only by adopting democracy as a way of life that it becomes possible to create social situations which maximize both these factors; doing so leads not only to the breakdown of rigid traditional habits that are undesirable, but also to the creation and growth of more desirable habits.

Dewey’s philosophical view is characterized as being instrumentalist in terms of its theoretical aspects and as being melioristic in terms of its ethical aspects. It is instrumental in at least three aspects. First, it denies the existence of any special realm of “pure” or “formal” thought. Instead, thought is seen as having an adaptive dimension—it serves to mediate interactions with the world. Second, “thinking” is inseparable from “doing”—it is a function of embodied individuals leading to knowledge, however partial it may be. Third, knowledge is sought not just out of curiosity, but because it is important for living a good life. In this context, knowledge and practice are both

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7 This is possible, in part, due to the accident of extreme pluralism in America. More essentially it is due to Dewey’s view that democracy should stimulate independent critical reflection, weaken the ability of the ruling elite to control and stabilize custom, thus maximizing the opportunities for effective and creative reconstruction of social institutions and forms.
conceived “as a means of making goods—excellences of all kinds—secure in experienced existence.” Thus, “nature” is a continuously flowing stream in which thought is an “instrument” or “tool” that is used to pass from a given situation, full of ambiguities and disharmonies, to a new and better situation. Although this new situation contains elements implied in the former, it is richer and better because of its new meaning and greater complexity. Cognition, then, consists in forging ideal tools or instruments to be used in coping with a given situation and the mind is an instrument for realizing purposes. Consequently ideas are seen as being plastic and adaptable, constituting teleological weapons of mind which owe their stability to the vital functions which they serve, i.e., to be used by human beings to solve their problems.

Although Dewey believed that perfection might forever elude us, as a meliorist he held that our action can be guided by free creative intelligence, thereby making the world and our lives better than it is. His insistence on ethical meliorism allows for the rejection of both optimism and pessimism. Perhaps this is somewhat blunt in characterization, but if one insists on choosing improbably successful options in problematic situations, this merely suggests it is more likely that one is stupid, not optimistic. Neither does one have reason for pessimism just because of the absence of a guarantee that, at least in principle, each problematic situation is capable of being resolved successfully. Consequently, even if it is not possible to entirely avoid the evils of life, it is a likely possibility that they can be ameliorated to some extent. For Dewey, the essence of meliorism means “[t]he belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or

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8 Dewey, Quest for Certainty, LW 4, 30.
good, in any event may be bettered.”⁹ The reason to value meliorism over optimism is because it arouses confidence and a reasonable sense of hope in that “[i]t encourages intelligence to study the positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth endeavor for the improvement of conditions.”¹⁰

Even though Dewey insisted that experimental or creative intelligence is the best way in which to conduct inquiry in logic, science, social science, ethics and aesthetics, it is only when criticism is joined with experimental or creative intelligence that it is possible for it to be constructive, otherwise it is merely complaint. He also recognized that the force of his method of inquiry lies in its constructive power as an approach that is intrinsically critical, yet irreducibly moral. As I read Dewey, the method of philosophical reconstruction was developed with such criteria specifically in mind and constitutes the general method to be employed in this dissertation. Reconstruction refers to the work we do when we apply creative intelligence to rethinking and readjusting our principles and practices. However, it is clear to me that use of this method offers no “final answer” to what human well-being means—it becomes another construction which, itself, is subject to further reconstruction. As such, whatever view that one arrives at can only be understood as being piecemeal, multi-perspectival, uncertain and continually in-the-making.

One final note, although significant use is made here of Dewey’s writings, the account of human well-being that emerges from the inquiry is not simply a description of “Dewey’s view of human well-being.” The purpose here is to construct a theory of human well-being that is based upon Dewey’s theories and insights, and it is in this sense

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¹⁰ Dewey, MW 12, 182.
that it is to be understood as a Deweyan account of human well-being. As Randall observed in a volume published in recognition of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dewey’s death, “[t]he best way of honoring Dewey is to work on Dewey’s problems—to reconstruct his insights, to see, if need be, farther than Dewey saw. If it may be given to us to see farther, it will be largely because he pointed out to us where to look. In that way, you and I can be really working with Dewey, as he always wanted us to do, and sharing in that enjoyed meaning that was, and is, and will continue to be John Dewey.”11 In the end, all we can really do is to make a sincere effort to conduct inquiry in a way that truly honors Dewey, as Randall would have us do. It remains to be seen whether this inquiry is able to see farther than Dewey saw; I’m not sure doing so is even necessary because Dewey never provided a specific or explicit statement about “human well-being.”12 That said, perhaps it is first necessary to discern as clearly as possible just what Dewey “saw” in terms of human well-being which, itself, serves as sufficient justification for the present inquiry.

**Method or Approach Undertaken in the Inquiry**

Although this inquiry is philosophical, I also see philosophy as involving “personal work.” In this regard I think Santayana’s observation about the work of philosophers affords a faithful description of the spirit in which I undertake this inquiry since they are compelled to follow the maxim of epic poets and to plunge *in media res*…Perhaps there is no source of things at all, no simpler thing from which they evolved, but only an endless succession of different

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12 Perhaps the closest he came to doing this was in his 1937 address to the American College of Physicians titled “The Unity of the Human Being”, in Dewey, *LW* 13, 323-37.
complexities. In that case nothing would be lost in joining the procession wherever one happens to come upon it, and following it as long as one’s legs hold out... If he begins in the middle he will still be at the beginning of something, and perhaps as much at the beginning of things as he could possibly begin.\footnote{Santayana, Scepticism, 65.}

Certainly, for me, this inquiry begins “in the middle of things” and, at the end, I still feel very much in the “middle of things.” Perhaps this is because the objects and methods of philosophical inquiry necessarily occupy a space that exists literally in the “middle of things”, i.e., as the conceptual, methodological and dialogical/conversational “space” emerging from the relational “in between” of philosophical thought and the nature of the world in which we live. It is within such space that this particular inquiry begins and concludes as it explores human well-being not only in terms of our “being in the world”, but also in terms of how we “navigate” within that world.

If it is indeed the case, as Santayana suggests, that philosophical inquiry begins in the middle of things, what constitutes “being in the middle” for this inquiry? Perhaps it is being in the middle in the following way. At one end is Dewey’s criticism that all philosophical accounts within the Western historical-cultural tradition rest upon a \textit{philosophical fallacy} that renders them false. It is the resulting cleavage between objective reality and subjective appearance that has resulted in a tendency on the part of some, if not most, philosophers to discredit experience. This separation of experience from the external world is just one among many dualisms inherited from ancient Greek philosophy that continues even into modernist empiricism. The problem here is that
traditional philosophies have failed “to connect their reflective results with the affairs of every-day primary experience. Three sources of large fallacies have been mentioned …the complete separation of subject and object, (of what is experienced from how it is experienced); the exaggeration of the features of known objects at the expense of the qualities of objects of enjoyment and trouble, friendship and human association, art and industry; and the exclusive isolation of the results of various types of selective simplification which are undertaken for diverse unavowed purposes.”

At the other end is Dewey’s reconstruction of philosophy which corrects the philosophical fallacy while also providing for optimism and hope about the human condition. In working to free philosophy from its search for foundations, he offered an alternative view of philosophy by emphasizing its transformative nature that requires using it to reconstruct our practices and institutions so as to improve the quality of human life, i.e., human well-being. It is certainly the case for Dewey that “[i]mproved experience, not originary truth, is the ultimate philosophical goal and criterion.”

Perhaps it is for this reason that the American poet William Carlos Williams wrote:

And there stand
the-banded-together
in the name of
the Philosophy Dept’s
wondering at the nature
of the stuff
poured into

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14 Dewey, Experience and Nature, LW 1, 36.
15 There has been criticism directed at Dewey that he never adequately addressed the tragic in human experience, see Haskins, “Dewey’s Romanticism”, 115-123 and Boisvert, “The Nemisis of Tragedy: Tragedy’s Challenge to Deweyan Pragmatism”, 151-168.
16 Shusterman, Practicing Philosophy, 157.
Finally, it is being in the middle in yet another sense, in that being so situated creates a feeling of “unsettledness” about the subject matter of the inquiry. Since Dewey did not provide a full account of human well-being it appears there is an “open space” for inquiry into what such an account might look like. Perhaps, at the end of this inquiry, the subject matter will be more settled, but this is not to be taken as a given and, if achieved, is only of brief temporal duration since the cycle of unsettledness and inquiry begins anew.

**The Problem the Philosophical Fallacy Presents for Theories of Human Well-being**

Dewey’s philosophy of experience requires abandoning the philosophical practice of converting the function of an event into antecedent forces or causes, or converting natural functions into ontologically independent existences. Such a *philosophical fallacy* fails to provide a sufficient account of the functions of things by confusing intellectual analysis with ontological fact. Logical principles, mathematical axioms, aesthetic qualities, reason, thought, theory, etc., are all natural events and functions. The fallacy lies in transforming the natural functions of things into things that are ontologically prior to and independent of nature. If Dewey is correct about the philosophical fallacy, and he presents a strong argument in its defense, then the problem confronting past and present philosophical theories of human well-being is that it renders them false. The nature of the problem lies in their claim that experience is mind-dependent (as either an epistemic

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17 Williams, "Choral: The Pink Church" in *Selected Poems*, 123-124.
or cognitive state) and that the mind exists as the sole connecting apparatus to the natural world when it comes to any legitimate claim about knowledge.\textsuperscript{18} The very act of bifurcating nature into two realms, since it involves the stipulation of antecedent definitions that exclude (as non-natural and prior to inquiry) certain aspects of the world, means that what constitutes knowledge of the existence of the actual world rests on an inference about its existence. This inference is based on either perceptual or linguistic sense-data, thereby reducing “experience” to only a cognitive state.

In this inquiry, those philosophies in which experience is taken as being something exclusively mental are referred to as “experience\textsubscript{C}” so as to distinguish such conceptualizations from the way in which Dewey uses the term.\textsuperscript{19} Regardless of what “experience” consists in, such accounts claim that it is located in the dimension of a private consciousness where it is essentially cut off from nature and the world, i.e., from the objective state of affairs of every-day primary experience. The mistake here is the result of what Dewey referred to as the “exaggerated subjectivization” of experience. He rejected such traditional accounts on the grounds they lack a naturalistic base and criticized them as affording mere intellectual entertainment. Although some may regard the latter claim as being a somewhat harsh criticism, I find that I agree with the general merit of it. However, I think it goes much deeper, perhaps to the extent of becoming an avoidance mechanism for some philosophers, i.e., a philosophical manifestation of Dewey’s “failure of nerve”. It serves as a way to avoid or remove oneself from the press and pull of the day-to-day “lived experience” of human existence. Consequently, the

\textsuperscript{18} This is specifically a criticism against the empiricism of Locke as well as later philosophers such as Bertrand Russell.
\textsuperscript{19} From this point forward, whenever discussion involves the traditional conception of experience, it is to be understood as referring only to experience\textsubscript{C}. 
work of philosophy comes to involve merely solving intellectual “puzzles” instead of solving real human problems.

Given the sheer volume of philosophical theories about human well-being, it is clearly not feasible to address all of them in this inquiry. In order to establish a manageable context for the inquiry, my critique focuses on theories of well-being as advanced by Plato and L.W. Sumner. They are similar in that both theories regard “happiness”, in some form, as being the central feature in human well-being. They have radically different ideas, however, about what constitutes the correct target of and criterion for its evaluation. Although there are a number of problems associated with each theory that deserve attention, this inquiry will focus only on the following three problems shared by both accounts:

1. A formalistic conception of human well-being as consisting only in an epistemic or cognitive state.

2. A formalistic conception of human well-being as being either a fixed-form or fixed-state.

3. A formalistic conception of human well-being solely as a final-end, as either an ethical or a prudential value.\(^\text{20}\)

I argue these problems are significant because holding such commitments results in the disconnection of human well-being from experience that results in its falsification. Certainly, this is a strong indictment to make against these theories, although I believe the examination and analysis provided in this inquiry supports this claim.

\(^{20}\) Ethics and prudence certainly are important contexts in which to think about well-being, but this does not necessarily rule out the possibility that there may be good grounds for an account of human well-being notably different from most ancient, modern and contemporary philosophical theories.
A Geographic Understanding of Experience and Human Well-being

In making the effort to understand, both conceptually and practically, what a Deweyan account of human well-being might look like, I have considerable sympathy with James Griffin’s observation that a proper explanation of human well-being requires that we “have to know the context in which it needs to appear and the work it needs to do there.”

My intent in this inquiry is to argue that the context in which human well-being needs to appear is as a human response to “being in the world.” The primary conceptual element operating here is experience_G in that it provides the grounds for understanding the work that well-being needs to do in that context, i.e., navigating in the world. The use of this term designates that “experience” must be understood in its geographic sense and not merely as an epistemic or a cognitive state.

In addition, navigating in the world is understood as involving two modes of human well-being, the instrumental mode and the aesthetic mode, which serve to describe the kinds of work that an account of human well-being needs to do. Given the heavy lifting that is required of experience_G for the account of human well-being under development here, it is critically important to be clear about the use of the term within the context of this inquiry.

Making such a commitment to experience_G also requires that the inquiry proceed on naturalistic grounds, i.e., it must be consistent with nature and human experience. In choosing to use the term “naturalistic”, however, it is important to recognize that it cuts

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21 Griffin, WELL-BEING, 1.
22 Late in his career Dewey expressed regret about using “experience” as a term and suggested he would substitute “culture.” Because this alternative seems too limiting, I propose using “geographic” which is much larger and best reflects the scope and extent of organism-environment transactions that Dewey intended and sought to emphasize with his use of experience.
across a variety of philosophical traditions. In this inquiry, it is used to designate the particular philosophical form of *pragmatic* or *experimental naturalism*. Pragmatic naturalism holds that everything we encounter, experience or talk about is natural and a part of nature. Dewey argued forcefully that, “[i]n experience, human relations, institutions, and traditions are as much a part of nature in which and by which we live as is the physical world. Nature, in this meaning is not “outside.” It is in us and we are in it and of it. But there are multiple ways of participating in it, and these ways are characteristic not only of various experiences of the same individual, but of attitudes of aspiration, need and achievement that belong to civilizations in their collective aspect.”

The most fully developed account of pragmatic naturalism is found in his *Experience and Nature*. It recognizes that the transformation of the biological organism can be realized through cultural influences. Adopting such a thoroughly naturalistic and empirical metaphysics has significant applications to virtually every form of inquiry and activity because the very “character of inquiry, knowledge, evaluation and value is a consequence of the particular inter-minglings of the actual traits of nature; and so are all events of experience.” Perhaps the most significant implication, in terms of this inquiry, is that Dewey’s theory of experience constitutes a reaction to conceptions that

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24 Paul Kurtz provides a concise summary of the development of pragmatic (experimental) naturalism in his *Philosophical Essays in Pragmatic Naturalism*, 11-59. However, his account: 1) gives short shrift to the melioristic constraints that Dewey placed on instrumentalism and 2) overlooks the later aesthetic turn taken by Dewey. As a result, Kurtz’s description is insufficient as a fully developed and robust version of pragmatic naturalism, which requires conjoining “instrumental-melioristic” naturalism of the Dewey in the *Middle Works* period with the “aesthetic” naturalism of the Dewey in the *Later Works* period.
26 See Dewey, *LW* 1, 10-68.
reduce experience to the cognitive content of a “mind”, even though philosophers holding such a view still have to stand in this world to ask the question in the first place.\textsuperscript{28}

Furthermore, his reconstruction of experience provides the only legitimate starting point for philosophical analysis in that it is wholly empirical and analyzable in terms of a naturalistic metaphysics. Although Dewey is an empiricist, it is important to understand that such empiricism is, as James’ held, radical in that it

must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system. Elements may indeed be redistributed, the original placing of things corrected, but a real place must be found for every kind of thing experienced, whether term or relation, in the final philosophic arrangement.\textsuperscript{29}

Following James’ lead, Dewey later described a genuine empirical method as being one that “sets out from the actual subject-matter of primary experience, recognizes that reflection discriminates a new factor in it, the act of seeing, makes an object out of that, and then uses that new object, the organic response to light, to regulate, when needed, further experiences of the subject matter already contained in primary experience.”\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} If one clear unifying theme exits in pragmatic naturalism, although appearing in many variations, it would be ‘experience’. This is so evident and pervasive in the writings of Dewey that Geiger finds “…all of them part of a long, discriminating celebration of experience.” Geiger, \textit{John Dewey in Perspective}, 7.

\textsuperscript{29} James, \textit{Essays in Radical Empiricism and a Pluralistic Universe}, 42.

His reconstruction of experience also has significant implications for his theories of inquiry, valuation, ethics and aesthetics, of which perhaps the most important is that human beings and their behavior are thereby open for study as natural phenomena.

Dewey recognized that, as human beings, our situation is that we live in an environment upon which, on the one hand, we depend not only for maintaining our lives but which, on the other hand, is altered by our activity. He saw environment not as an encompassing context, but as the conditions that allow a body to exercise its capacities and develop itself. However, he went even further by intrinsically linking environment to experience and interactions, thereby defining actions and situations as the result of a process of interaction between an organism and a given environment.31 When experience is understood as a transactional process it is taken to include not only physical states and mental states or cognitive processes, but the qualitative aspects of a situation resulting from the organism-environment interaction as well. Shusterman describes the point of Dewey’s philosophy of experience as “not so much aimed at proving theoretical continuity but instead at enhancing continuity in practice, at healing the painfully (though often unconsciously) experienced fragmentation of human life.”32

Finally, some philosophical theories of human well-being make the claim that self-interest and morality are co-extensive, in some way, but disagree as to how they are reconcilable. This disagreement results from the differences among theories in terms of their conception and/or description of the target of evaluation and the criteria for

31 Dewey distinguishes between “pre-reflective” and “reflective” experience to demarcate two different kinds of primary experience. However, the former is not synonymous with “non-reflective” which fails to convey that what begins in pre-reflective experience, which comes before reflective experience, can transform into reflective experience given the nature of one’s transaction with the environment, and vice versa.

32 Shusterman, Practicing Philosophy, 171.
evaluation of human well-being. Since these terms will be used throughout the course of this inquiry, perhaps the following example will be helpful to understanding what they mean in this context. Plato and Aristotle both identified eudaimonia (a form of happiness) as the proposed “target of evaluation” and character (as virtue in some form) as the proposed “criterion for evaluation” of human well-being. From the perspective of this inquiry, one of the most vexing problems for ancient, modern and contemporary theories of human well-being is that they totally ignore, virtually neglect or greatly diminish the relevance of the aesthetic dimension (as creation and creativity) in human experience. Not only do general typologies of theories of human well-being not give recognition to any aesthetic theories, some contemporary philosophers go so far to argue that an aesthetic theory of human well-being is not plausible. However, this need not be the case given the virtually explosive resurgence of contemporary interest in Dewey, particularly his theory of art and aesthetics. The reconstruction of human well-being in this inquiry recognizes that it is necessary to give equal attention to the instrumental and the aesthetic (and perhaps even somaesthetic) aspects of human well-being.

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33 Thomas Nagel claims the relationship of aesthetic values to human interests is too “obscure, though they are revealed to us by the capacity of certain things outside us to command our interest and respect.” Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 164. Unfortunately Nagel adds to their obscurity by saying little else about why they are obscure. As we will see in Chapter 1, Sumner explicitly rejects the plausibility of theory of well-being based on aesthetic values because “well-being would be subordinated to artistic accomplishment.” Sumner, *Welfare*, 165.


35 The pragmatic naturalism of Dewey during his “Middle Works” period is instrumentalist in terms of its theoretical aspects and melioristic in terms of its ethical aspects. Whenever I use the term “instrumental” in this inquiry, it is to be understood as denoting “instrumental/melioristic” thereby emphasizing the inseparability of value, in this case understood morally, from inquiry (knowledge) and, later on, I adopt the designation $\text{instrumental}_M$ to signify this inseparability.
Chapter Summaries

Chapter One examines and analyzes the three problems identified in the Introduction that are associated with theories of human well-being, within the context of pragmatic naturalism. A trajectory of theories of human well-being, beginning with Plato’s virtue-based eudaimonic theory and concluding with Sumner’s authentic happiness theory, is presented in order to understand the specific nature of Dewey’s criticism of such accounts. Although a brief account of the trajectory of the development of theories of human well-being between Plato and Sumner is also presented, those theories are not examined and analyzed in terms of their legitimacy and value. After an examination and analysis of the theories advanced by Plato and Sumner, their legitimacy and value are assessed. I conclude that their legitimacy and value are limited because such theories result in the disconnection of human well-being from experience and nature, which results in their falsification.

Chapter Two represents the first step in developing the theoretical bases for a naturalistic account of human well-being that reconnects human well-being to nature and experience (as geographic). Examining the legitimacy and value of Dewey’s Theory of Experience (DTE) shows that it is not only consistent with nature and human experience, but it also has the conceptual power necessary for developing a thoroughly naturalistic, holistic account of human well-being. Perhaps the most important implication of DTE is that it leads to a radical reconstruction of our understanding of the person or self, i.e., not as a separate, individualistic and private “mind”, but in terms of the continuous interaction of human beings with the environment as mediated by habit. Such a reconstructed view of self requires a shift away from viewing human well-being as solely
a cognitive state to viewing it geographically, as the transactional field of organism-environment interactions. Finally, a basic understanding of DTE is necessary for the subsequent examination and analysis of other theories of Dewey presented in later chapters and for assessing their legitimacy and value for the account of well-being under development in this inquiry.

Chapter Three assesses the legitimacy and value of the nature, function and operation of inquiry (as creative intelligence) in human experience. This involves an examination and analysis of: 1) what inquiry consists in or has as its features, i.e., the techniques, attitudes and temperament it requires, 2) the contexts in which inquiry operates or the problems it is called upon to solve, and 3) the mechanics of inquiry, i.e. how we form and handle conceptions, abstractions, propositions and inferences. What marks a successful inquiry is that it transforms an indeterminate or conflicted situation into a unified whole for which the pervasive quality of the experience is this unity. By coupling the biological and cultural conditions of inquiry with intelligence, as the function of the interacting conditions in a particular situation with respect to a certain problem and its outcome, Dewey’s theory of inquiry provides a generalized description of the organic, cultural and formal conditions of intelligent action. Inquiry, as creative intelligence, is a powerful tool for use in successfully navigating through our world and, as such, is central to human well-being.

Chapter Four assesses the legitimacy and value that Dewey’s theory of ethics and theory of value have for the account of well-being under development here. All forms of inquiry involve value because it is a process that results a judgment as to whether the problematic situation has been resolved or not. The foremost function of creative
intelligence in moral life is value formation because whatever functions as value in experience, and is the subject of reconstruction by intelligence, is the crucial determinant of voluntary conduct. However, for it to be of moral significance, the agent must be self-conscious, well-informed and interested in a given act whose projected consequences coincide with her preferences and/or long-term projects. Dewey’s theories of ethics and valuation are shown to provide an empirical grounding for both the valuation and evaluation of the consequences of chance, choice and change in association with human activity. The further unification of Dewey’s theories of inquiry, ethics, and valuation provides the basis for an account of human well-being referred to as InstrumentalM Well-being, wherein the target for evaluation is “betterment” as opposed to “happiness.” This is the result of reconstructing human well-being in terms of the situation and its pervasive quality, i.e., the resulting field of organism-environment transaction which can be evaluated empirically as being better. Although sufficient on empirical grounds, this account remains partial or incomplete in that it conceives human well-being only in terms of its instrumental mode.

Chapter Five examines Dewey’s theory of art and aesthetics to assess its legitimacy and value for the account of human well-being under development in this inquiry. The work here is to extend the InstrumentalM mode of human well-being developed in Chapter Four to its logical, existential, and aesthetic conclusion. His theory of art and aesthetics reveals a continual emphasis on the importance of natural, transactional features in experience such as continuity, interaction, equilibrium, resistance, growth, rhythm and consummation. For a Deweyan account of human well-being to be complete, however, it must bring into union his earlier empirical theories of
inquiry (as creative intelligence), ethics, and valuation with his later theory of art and aesthetics. Such union affords the necessary context required for bringing together truth (inquiry) and meaning (aesthetics) in the service of human well-being. The context begins with the “live creature” which, through its transactional engagement with the environment and operating under the demands of the principles of continuity and interaction, enters into a situation that is qualitative in nature. When interaction and continuity intercept and unite, the resulting transactional experience itself becomes a living, moving, growing and creative force essentially similar to aesthetics. This suggests the possibility for understanding human well-being in an aesthetic mode that is based upon the natural features of experience.

Chapter Six concludes the inquiry by identifying five key themes that serve to insure that the proposed account of human well-being is consistent with nature and human experience. In terms of this inquiry, these themes provide the framework for a Deweyan account of human well-being. This leads to an examination of an alternative account of “cognition”, as embodied knowing, and the implications it has for human well-being. It is argued that, given that our understanding of the physical universe and the human universe continues to grow and undergo reconstruction, the account of human well-being that holds the most promise is the one which is most open to continuous reconstruction not only philosophically, but in other contexts for inquiry as well, e.g., psychology, sociology, education, medicine, and art.
Chapter 1

Plato, Sumner and the Falsification of Human Well-being

For irrespective of whether a satisfaction is conscious, a satisfaction or non-satisfaction is an objective thing with objective conditions. Happiness may mark an awareness of such satisfaction, and it may be its culminating form. But satisfaction is not subjective, private or personal; it is conditioned by objective particularities and defections and made real by objective situations and completions.

John Dewey, Experience and Nature, 59
Certainly, “Reason” is among the most common and recognizable philosophical terms. It not only has deep roots in our Western cultural tradition but continues to occupy a central place in its ongoing narrative and critique. Given the “quest for certainty” which is a hallmark of Western philosophy, it is of little surprise that reason (rationality) stands out as a central feature of most theories of human well-being. However, from the perspective of this inquiry, the most significant and detrimental consequence of this quest is that it has led repeatedly to formalistic conceptions of well-being as solely an epistemic or cognitive state. Such a limited conception of human well-being is a result of a fundamental misunderstanding of what constitutes experience and the nature, function and operation of reason. From the perspective of pragmatic naturalism, traditional conceptions of reason possess significant metaphysical and epistemological problems which provide strong grounds for their rejection.

Perhaps the root of this rejection is found in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s answer to the question “What would we know?” He answers that what we know is the concrete experience of our environment— it is “The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye.”36 Although knowledge may come from the patterns or principles derived from reason, it assuredly comes from the great variety of “insistent particularities” occurring within the field of environmental transaction that constitutes our immediate experience. Although Charles Sanders Peirce and William James developed this line of thinking in the “American grain of thought” even further, it was Dewey who offered the most vigorous and sustained critique of the traditional conceptions of reason by observing that although the answers of traditional

36 As cited in Winn, Survey, 67.
philosophy “do not thoroughly agree among themselves….they agree that experience never rises above the level of the particular, the contingent, the probable. Only a power transcending in origin and content any and all conceivable experiences can attain to universal, necessary and certain authority and direction. The empiricists…admitted the correctness of these assertions. They only said that since there is no faculty of Pure Reason…we must put up with what we have, experience, and make the most possible of it.”

Reason enters into philosophical theories in two forms as either “pure” or “practical”; however, it is the former that is problematic because Pure Reason is not only held to be the exclusive realm of Absolute Truth, but it also shares a close association with oligarchic forms of sacred and secular social arrangements.

The instrumental value of the very idea that there is a faculty such as Pure Reason, in Dewey’s view, is almost inconsequential since, “as a means of arriving at truth [it] is like the spider who spins a web...The web is orderly and elaborate, but it is only a trap.” His metaphor suggests that after all the elaborate work that reasoning entails, what we end up with ultimately is a trap by which we can catch poorly constructed thoughts. Although, at a more phenomenological level, it may suggest that although the spider creates its own web it cannot exist outside of it. The consequence of separating Reason from the natural world of human interaction is that it leads to the

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37 Dewey, Reconstitution in Philosophy, MW 12, 124; see also Human Nature and Conduct, MW 14 and Quest for Certainty, LW 4.

38 He attributed this view with philosophers such as Plato, Descartes, Locke and Kant. He also noted that one function of the controlling oligarchic power is to select out individuals who possess the “methods of Pure Reason” necessary for accessing knowledge of the Truth. This recognition on the part of Dewey presages similar philosophical analyses about “power relations” and “dominant culture” that fall under the general rubric of “Post-Modernism.” He also observed that the same cultural tradition assumes that knowledge of Truth occurs only within the confines of a private and “spectatorial” mind which has implications for how person and self are to be understood in this inquiry.

39 Dewey, MW 12, 97.
construction of a theoretical universe (web) that is merely self-contained in its
“philosophical geometry”, and from which we cannot escape.⁴⁰

Furthermore, any claim that traditional dualistic accounts of Reason afford
superiority to change, by dominating both its occurrence and understanding, is mistaken
because “[w]hat has been lost in the theoretical possibility of exact knowledge and exact
prediction is more than compensated for by the fact that the knowing which occurs within
nature involves possibility of direction of change. This conclusion gives intelligence a
foothold and a function within nature that “reason” never possessed. That which acts
outside of nature and is a mere spectator of it is, by definition, not a participator in its
changes. Therefore, it is debarred from taking part in directing them.”⁴¹ Locating
Reason outside of nature presents two significant philosophical problems. On the one
hand, there is a metaphysical problem in that it is becomes necessary to posit the
existence of some mysterious ontological relationship between the “world of reason” and
the “world of ordinary experience.” On the other hand, it is an epistemological problem
because it emphasizes a fixed linearity and an exact knowledge that are simply not up to
the task of assisting human beings to negotiate within a universe of chance—a world of
constant flux with innumerable possibilities for the direction of change.

Another problem with the theories of human well-being examined in this chapter
is that they claim that well-being is a fixed-state or final-end. I will only mention it
briefly here, since it will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. The problem with
the doctrine of fixed and final-ends, Dewey observed, is that it

⁴⁰ This leads Dewey to claim that any account which holds reason to be a faculty separate from experience
(e.g. Descartes) or a faculty that introduces generality and regularity into experience (e.g. Locke, Kant) is
problematic since both are the “…unnecessary creation of men addicted to traditional formalism and to
elaborate terminology.” Dewey, MW 12, 134.
⁴¹ Dewey, LW 4, 170.
not only diverts attention from examination of the consequences and the intelligent creation of purpose, but, since means and ends are two ways of regarding the same actuality, it also renders men careless in their inspection of existing conditions. An aim not framed on the basis of a survey of those present conditions which are to be employed as means of its realization simply throws us back on habits. We then do not do what we intended to do but what we have got used to doing, or else we thrash about in a blind ineffectual way. The result is failure.  

As we will see, Plato clearly viewed human well-being not only as an epistemic state but as a fixed or final end in life as well. As for Sumner, his formalistic account of well-being is, in the end, cognitive-state dependent and it seems his commitment to welfarism requires that well-being be the final end for ethics.

**Platonic Happiness as Formal Knowledge**

The root cause of the difficulties with Plato’s theory of happiness is two-fold. First his theory of knowledge (the “two-world theory”) rests on a dualistic metaphysics. He posited that existence consists of two distinct realms: 1) a physical realm consisting of physical objects subject to the limitations of space and time and 2) a non-physical realm of Forms (objects of the mind or intellectual objects) without such limits. Since Absolute Truth is not derivable from experience, Plato imagined the existence of Forms that lie outside the realm of ordinary experience which are fixed, permanent, and not subject to the contingencies that the physical world reveals. Consequently, our knowledge of the physical world can never be a source of Absolute or Fixed and Final Truth because it is

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always in flux. Thus, the only possibility for true knowledge, as an absolute truth that never changes, lies in the latter realm.

The second difficulty to confront Plato’s conception of human well-being involves what it means to be a person. His conception of personhood is grounded in his view of the human soul (psyche) which is divided into three parts: appetite, passion and reason. He extended this conception of the individual soul to his conception of the ideal or utopian society which is organized around a three-level class structure. This tri-partite structure is fundamental for the realization of the ideal person (the Platonically just person) and the ideal state (the Republic of Callipolis) both of which rest heavily on the concept of balance. Plato formulates the following argument to connect Justice to Happiness in “Book IV” of the Republic by using a now famous simile in which he compares the just soul to a healthy body and the unjust soul to a diseased body:

(1) One will be happier if she has a healthy soul than if she does not.

(2) One has a healthy soul if and only if each part of her soul performs the task for which it is best suited and no other.

(3) One is Platonically just if and only if each part of one’s soul performs the tasks for which it is best suited and no other.

(4) Therefore, a person has a healthy soul if and only if she is Platonically just.

(5) Therefore, she will be happier if she is Platonically just than if she is not.

43 For Plato, the “soul” and the “body” are two distinct things. The soul is, in itself, something rational and all irrational aspects of our existence belong to the body. It is what constitutes the “real self” of a person because it is involved in all the activities of the body. Further, “its proper state is when it is apart from the prison of the body.” Rowe, Plato, 167.
Thus, for Plato personal well-being requires the rationally coordinated functioning of the soul’s three constituent parts which he also associates with justice. However, it also involves health in that a happy person simply does not want to live with a “diseased” soul. So, although a person is P-just if and only if the three parts of the soul are equally proportioned, the problem is that such balance must be found internally. Thus Plato’s particular conception of well-being is subjective, individualistic and non-relational. In basing his theory of well-being on “internality”, Plato ultimately failed to take the world into account.

Plato also viewed “knowledge” as being, at most, a necessary but not sufficient condition of virtue, since virtue also requires bringing the non-rational desires of the soul under control.\textsuperscript{44} Education is what serves to fix the character necessary for a P-just life such that only one who is P-just can be both happy and good, the result being that a P-just person is happier than an evil one.\textsuperscript{45} Thus, justice is not merely a means to well-being but is what constitutes well-being, both personally and socially (politically). In terms of this inquiry, the particular consequence of these two difficulties is that his conception reduces human well-being (eudaimonia) to a state of cognitive balance. Such balance involves non-physical “Forms” that occupy a non-physical realm and is achievable (to the extent anything non-existent in ordinary experience is achievable) only through the development of a power of rigorous rational introspection.

**Platonic Happiness as a Fixed-form and Final End in Ethics**

Plato’s central claim is that happiness can only result from living a P-just life, in which all three parts of the soul are coordinated in harmonious relation which requires

\textsuperscript{44} Rowe, *Plato*, 93.
\textsuperscript{45} As an economy, I will use P-just to refer to Platonically just and P-justice to refer to Platonic justice in what follows.
that all the virtues be in balance. In order for happiness to enter into one’s life, in its truest sense, a person must possess the right character, that of being P-just, which requires that she has achieved the correct balance among the virtues. This means that since virtue, at the most minimal conceptual level, involves having a systematic concern to do the morally right thing, then to live a “happy life” entails that one is prepared to do the morally right thing systematically and not just occasionally. This most likely requires developing a certain degree of self-mastery and strength of mind such that one is able to overcome all the many and varied incentives one may have for doing something else. Indeed, if there is a route to virtue, it is likely at some point along the way it will become difficult to follow, even to the point of its being unpleasant and frustrating. This seems to suggest that virtue demands something more than one simply doing what is morally right, i.e., one must also possess a firm disposition to do the morally right thing.

The way in which one achieves the unified state or balance that being P-just requires, for Plato, is through *phronesis* which involves practical reasoning integrated with the motivation to engage in it. Such motivation is necessary because there can be situations in which a person may have the understanding of what a moral action requires, but is also fighting contrary motivations to do what it requires. However, since he also viewed all wrong-doing as involuntary, he believed it possible that virtue could be taught. Given that virtue is knowledge, he assumed it must be a good, in fact, the only certain good since knowledge is the only sure guide to the good use of what the world says is

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46 In fact, virtue itself is an ultimate good because each of the virtues is a form of knowledge or because each, when taken in its highest sense, involves all the others.
47 At this conceptual level one is required to have only some grip on the idea of what is morally right or wrong, so it isn’t necessary to start with an elaborate theory.
48 This serves to illustrate the difference between being merely self-controlled and being virtuous, since the self-controlled person has to fight against contrary motivation in order to do what a moral action requires. In contrast, virtue requires that a person’s motivation go along with her understanding.
good. Although opinion and habit often suffice to regulate action, and this is the key here, persistent right opinion presupposes knowledge in its teachers, and the highest rule of conduct must be deduced from and referred to a rational apprehension of the ultimate good.

It is precisely in the rational apprehension of the ultimate good that one can determine which choice, among several competing choices, constitutes the right action. Plato’s account of human well-being, because it rests upon his “two-world theory,” disconnects choice from experience by locating the only reliable criteria for the truth in the immaterial realm of the ideal.49 Thus one’s contemplation of the Ideal Form of Justice, if one possesses the enhanced introspective reasoning such contemplation requires, is what must guide one’s choices for one to attain true or authentic happiness. It is clear that Plato held this to be a very difficult and genuinely serious undertaking, in fact only certain ones among us have the capacity to develop the finely-honed intuitive abilities required to make such discriminations.

Furthermore, it is not surprising that Plato assigns an important role to education in the development of character given that the specific and fixed character necessary for being P-just does not come naturally. Indeed, the development of such character requires one to undergo a very specific type of education that is lengthy, rigorous and highly disciplined.50 Thus, happiness (eudaimonia) can become the final-end for one’s life if and only if one possesses the character required for being P-just. However, one consequence of his theory is that the “truest” or most “authentic” form of happiness that

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49 For Plato, when it really matters and one has to make a choice between whichever of two or more things, the ultimate test for knowing what constitutes the right, good or best choice, is the one that bears the strongest resemblance to an ideal form of what is right, good or best.
50 Plato, Republic, translated by G. M. A. Grube, especially Book VIII. See also Nettleship, The Theory of Education in the Republic of Plato.
Another key element in Plato’s conception of well-being is the idea that happiness applies only to one’s life as a whole. He viewed this as the measure of the authenticity of happiness because it is only in such cases that a person can make any true claim as to one’s happiness or to what constitutes a happy life. However, one must be cautious about understanding the conceptual role that Plato gave to happiness and pleasure in that it is quite different from modern conceptions of happiness. Since he saw the overall purpose of or goal in one’s life as happiness, this naturally leads him to seek an answer to “What are the routes to it as a destination point?” Of course, what should immediately strike us here is the claim that happiness consists in a destination point—why a destination point? If it is not a destination point or final-end, then what other possibility is there? One alternative would be to claim that happiness lies simply in never deferring gratification, but Plato sees this as being a dangerous prescription for living one’s life. Obviously, such a simple form of hedonism would form a weak foundation upon which to base a theory of happiness or human well-being. He rejects simple hedonism as a theory because happiness does not involve a demand of immediacy in any sense, which leads him to the conclusion that it applies only to one’s life as a whole.

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51 Some versions of modern moral philosophy (e.g. utilitarian hedonism) conceive happiness as the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. Thus, happiness is attributable not only to our lives, but also to individual moments and fleeting experiences that are part of living. For Plato, happiness is not an emotion at all since neither feeling good nor being pleased ever enters into it.
52 Plato’s criticism applies to simple forms of hedonistic theories. The inability to control your desires has an undesirable consequence, i.e., you will likely end up at the mercy of those who can control theirs. Their superior self-mastery secures them an advantage over you and, through their greater success in competition, they gain control over your life.
53 As we will see later in this Chapter, there are more complex forms of hedonism that are able to avoid this concern.
His answer to the question “What kind of life would that be?” is that such a life lies in developing those characteristics (as virtues) that a person needs so that she does the right thing systematically. For one to be of virtuous character she must possess a “firm understanding” of morality coupled with a “willingness” to act upon it. However, since developing these characteristics is not easy, by the time someone is virtuous she will have made herself to be a certain kind of person. Plato also recognized that since there are a variety of virtues (isolated habits of action) it is necessary to unify them through an understanding of what it means for a person to act in a morally appropriate way. It is not enough for one to have merely localized virtues, because for one to be truly virtuous one must possess the “unified understanding” which grounds all the virtues, which requires achieving knowledge of Justice. Justice, then, is not merely something that is desirable for its own sake, as merely one from among a number of virtues. Instead, it is that very thing that makes life worth living and whose presence gives other things any value they may possess. Perhaps the relevant distinction to make here is between happiness and pleasure.\textsuperscript{54} Since in experience we demarcate the latter as episodic, consisting of what one can feel now (but not later), it is discriminated in experience as something that pertains to the activities one performs that makes up one’s life. Surely, for one to give in constantly to the short-term satisfaction of one’s present desire at the cost of a proper concern for the rest of one’s life would be nothing short of irresponsible. Since it is only one’s pleasure that one can judge over the short-term, this

\textsuperscript{54} Thus, Plato’s ethical theory viewed pleasure as being a defective aim for use in structuring one’s life.
leads Plato to conclude that any judgment about happiness (*eudaimonia*) is derivable only over the long-term.\(^{55}\)

**The Modern Trajectory of Happiness: From Pleasure to Preference**

Before proceeding to L.W. Sumner’s account of *authentic happiness* it will be helpful to provide a context for understanding the philosophical motivation for the development of his theory of human well-being. This is important because, although he offers a theory about happiness, the understanding of happiness on which his account is based is radically different from that of Plato. In contrast to Plato, most modern theories presuppose some general account of what it is for something to benefit or harm us and, ultimately, what it means for our lives to go well or badly, although some hold that human well-being is merely one among a plurality of values to hold seriously. The first major attempt to provide a theory of welfare in the modern period in philosophy is found in the work of the Utilitarians, especially Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Two main traditions have developed around the meaning of utility: 1) as a mental state and 2) as a state of the world that fulfills desires or preferences.\(^{56}\)

The first tradition, characteristic of classical utilitarianism (CU), claims the best state of affairs among any set is the one that contains the greatest net balance of aggregate human pleasure or happiness or satisfaction.\(^{57}\) Within the general theory of utilitarianism, in which *utility* (as determined by the ratio between pleasure and pain) becomes the measure of happiness, hedonism finds expression in both a psychological and an ethical

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\(^{55}\) *Eudaimonia* is different in meaning from happiness in that it serves to denote “not so much a man’s subjective feeling of contentment as his possession of whatever it is thought desirable for him to possess—the *eudaimon* man is literally ‘blessed with good *daimon*’, fortunate.” Rowe, *Plato*, 106.


\(^{57}\) As a philosophical theory CU refers to Jeremy Bentham’s ‘systematic quantitative hedonism’ that grew out of his work on legal and social theory. See Bentham, 1948/1967.
CU claims that pleasures (and pains) can be quantified because the quantity of a pleasure is a function of both its intensity and its duration. Thus, an increase in the amount of pleasure (calculated in this way) achieves a subsequent increase in happiness or the good as well. The most crippling problem for CU, however, is in regard to the “interpersonal comparison of utilities” which involves comparing the amount of pleasure two different people obtain from the same state of affairs or thing. The point here is that if pleasure is a “subjective” experience, then how can one person know when another person is experiencing it or how much of it the other person is experiencing? In response to this problem with CU, Mill’s version measured utility in terms of the “greatest happiness principle” which holds that an action is right or good in proportion to its tendency to promote the greatest happiness. Conversely, an action is bad or wrong to the extent it tends to produce the reverse. Happiness, then, is either the intended pleasure or the absence of pain, while unhappiness is either the presence of pain or deprivation of pleasure, as qualified by the greatest number of people who experience either happiness or unhappiness.

It is also possible that hedonism can take a third form, i.e., about the nature of welfare. This seems evident since Mill provides an argument in which he identifies happiness with welfare. Such identification has relevance for this inquiry because he claims that welfare is a final-end because pleasure and freedom from pain “are the only things desirable as ends; and…all desirable things…are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as a means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of unhappiness.

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59 See: Mill, Utilitarianism.
60 His argument seems to be as follows: 1) only happiness is good in itself, 2) happiness is pleasure and the absence of pain, 3) therefore only pleasure and the absence of pain are good in themselves.
pain.”\textsuperscript{61} At another point, however, he claims that it is happiness, not pleasure, that “is desirable, and the only thing desirable as an end; all other things are desirable only as a means to that end.”\textsuperscript{62} However, this is a problem in that Mill “derives ethical hedonism as a conclusion from two premises: welfarism plus a hedonistic theory of welfare.”\textsuperscript{63} It may be possible to do so, however, by holding that “pleasure and pain characterize the primitive attitudes, positive and negative respectively, which subjects may have towards objects or states of affairs. Minding something or caring about whether it happens, will ultimately be a matter of finding the experience of it either pleasant or painful. Such a theory will map the polarity of welfare unto the polarity of pleasure and pain.”\textsuperscript{64} Even though equating well-being with happiness is implicit in the utilitarian tradition, it just might not rise to the level of a developed theory about the nature of welfare.

The most difficult and perhaps insurmountable problem for utilitarian theories of happiness is that they view utility as consisting in a kind of mental-state.\textsuperscript{65} In particular, CU is inadequate as a subjectivist theory of welfare because of its commitment to classical hedonism (CH) which treats pain and pleasure or suffering and enjoyment as merely mental states or collections of mental states. Because all mental state theories lack the ‘experience requirement’, they are vulnerable to objections from delusion or deception. If this is the case, then what is it that makes utilitarian theory attractive as a theory of human well-being? Perhaps one answer lies in its systematization since utilitarian theory moves from statements about people’s pleasure or happiness to

\textsuperscript{61} Mill, \textit{Utilitarianism}, 7.
\textsuperscript{62} Mill, \textit{Utilitarianism}, 7.
\textsuperscript{63} L. W. Sumner, \textit{Welfare}, 85.
\textsuperscript{64} L.W. Sumner, \textit{Welfare}, 84-85.
\textsuperscript{65} Griffin describes this problem as follows, “we cannot find any one mental state that we regard as having utility—eating, reading, creating, helping. What one mental state runs through them all in virtue of which we rank them as we do?” Griffin, \textit{WELL-BEING}, 8.
statements more easily open to empirical confirmation. However, this presents a problem as to how we are to understand such hedonistic quality (at least in a narrow sense), although there may be other ways to accomplish this and avoid the problems associated with mental state theories, e.g. preference hedonism. One advantage of the preference form of hedonism is that it is possible for someone to reveal her preferences by empirical investigation, i.e., the choices she actually makes and their consequences. One question this raises is whether the quest to systematize human aims under a concept of happiness remains as the pivotal difficulty for quantitative hedonism as well as desire-fulfillment theories of happiness. In this regard, Parfit argues that the most plausible form a theory of self-interest can take is one based on hedonistic desire fulfillment. Such a theory is subjectivist in that it claims that what ultimately matters for human well-being is the hedonic quality of an individual’s experience and nothing more. Consequently, individual happiness will still consist of the balance of pleasant over unpleasant experiences that one has, e.g., enjoyments/sufferings, pleasures/pains, etc.

Following the course of narrow hedonism (NH) is a problem because it falsely assumes that pleasure and pain are two distinctive kinds of experience which means such hedonists end up comparing different pleasure experiences that do not contain any distinctive common quality. Even though this makes NH implausible as a theory of self-interest, some version of preference hedonism (PH) could be more promising because it would recognize that what is common to one’s pains and pleasures is their relation to one’s desires. One advantage of PH is that it need not commit only to the ordinary

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67 It might be helpful to think of PH in the following way: generally, when we experience pain as unwanted it is worse or greater the more it is unwanted. Likewise, when we experience pleasure as wanted it is better
ways in which “pain” and “pleasure” are used; it can also refer to having a “better” experience.\textsuperscript{68} However, doing so requires shifting the focus from mental states such as pain and pleasure to desires. Desire theories identify well-being with the actual fulfillment of an individual’s desires and hold that a condition or state of affairs makes one better off by virtue of the fulfillment of some desire on one’s part. Sumner notes that although desire theory “uses these terms in its own way: a desire or preference is satisfied just in case its object comes to exist. However…there is a logical gap between fulfillment of your desires and your \textit{fulfillment}, a gap which is fatal to desire theory.”\textsuperscript{69} Parfit also distinguishes between unrestricted theories (UT) and success theories (ST) of desire-fulfillment. UT can be rejected because they claim that what is best for someone is what would fulfill \textit{all} of one’s desires throughout one’s life and such a claim is not plausible.\textsuperscript{70} ST, on the other hand, appeals only to someone’s desires about her own life. PH is different from ST in that it appeals only to preferences about those present features of our lives that are introspectively discernible. Even though ST may be more plausible than UT because it appeals only to desires that are about our own lives, the problem with ST is that it may be unclear what this excludes.\textsuperscript{71}

Although there are questions and objections that arise for both PH and ST, a promising candidate seems to be \textit{informed} desire theories that restrict the desires that

\textsuperscript{68} Consider making a choice to go to a party with its associated pleasures or sitting at home reading Dewey. Which choice results in the “better” experience? PH suggests that the one I prefer is the “better” experience.\textsuperscript{69} Sumner, \textit{Welfare}, 149.

\textsuperscript{70} Here is the problem: consider a stranger with a fatal illness who arouses my sympathy but, much later and unknown to me, is cured. UT says this event is good for me and makes my life go better.

\textsuperscript{71} Even though ST is more plausible than UT, Parfit offers a number of counter-examples to demonstrate the problems with ST. An interesting development here is a question about the desires that people have about what happens after they are dead. Where PH says that once you are dead, nothing bad can happen to you, ST says you should be able to deny this claim.
count to ones for which the individual has access to full information (e.g. rationality, reflection, etc.).\textsuperscript{72} Such an account holds that one’s life is going well to the extent one succeeds in getting what one wants through the fulfillment of one’s informed desire or the achievement of one’s aims. One attraction of desire theories is that they forge an obvious link between an individual’s welfare and motives. However, the problem here is that since the enjoyment of desires is only one source of well-being, and there are other ways to advance our good, desire-theory is not adequate for developing or deriving a theory of welfare. One way in which to avoid such criticisms of desire theories is to shift criterion for the evaluation from the enjoyment of desires to the fulfillment or satisfaction of preferences. However, Parfit argues for the possibility of revising PH by appealing not only to my actual preferences in the alternative I choose, but also to the preferences that I would have had if I had chosen the alternative. This suggests that, with either PH or ST, the appeal should not be only to desires or preferences that one actually has but also to those desires and preferences one would have had, in the various alternatives that were, at different times, open to one. In this case, the best among these alternatives is the one which fulfills the \textit{strongest} preferences and desires. Finally, both PH and ST can be \textit{summative} when they appeal to all of someone’s desires, actual and hypothetical, about one’s life. However, it is possible to rule out summative theories because they have a plausibility problem. This leads Parfit to conclude that there is another version of both theories that does not appeal, in a summative way, to all a person’s desires and

\textsuperscript{72} Should we appeal only to the desires and preferences that someone actually has? Consider the earlier example of staying at home to read Dewey. Suppose that knowing what both alternatives would be like, I choose to stay at home and I never come to regret that choice. PH says reading at home gave me the better evening. This is a mistake because it might be true that if I had chosen to go to the party, I would have never regretted that choice, but according to PH, going to the party would have given me the better evening. Thus, PH implies that each alternative would have been better than the other one, which is contradictory.
preferences about his own life. This version would appeal only to global rather than local desires and preferences. 73

Preferences, Fulfillment and Authentic Happiness

L. W. Sumner’s thinking and writing on human well-being is an excellent example of rigorous use of the approach and methods generally associated with the philosophy of analysis. His first task in developing his account involves a detailed, thoughtful conceptual analysis of welfare leading to questions about both its nature (what is it for a life to be going well) and its value (the role it should play in an ethical theory). Although his concern is not in advancing a theory that would determine what is good or bad for people, early on he observes that “[s]urely, welfare is valuable in itself, if anything is.” 74 Since he holds that questions about the value of welfare cannot be answered by the sciences, because of their attempt to “expel all questions of value” from their domains, they are thus relegated to philosophy. However, he also notes that science is an “obvious place to turn” when it comes to understanding what something is or what it is like. This leads him to argue, by analogy, that a theory of well-being can best be conceptualized in a way that is similar to a theory of causation, i.e., it doesn’t tell us what causes what, since this is the business of science. Instead, a theory of causation only tells us what constitute the specified conditions required for something to be the cause of something else. 75 Since a theory of causation seems to occupy a middle ground between being merely conceptual and fully empirical, this leads Sumner to claim that “[an] inquiry

73 A global preference is a preference about some part of one’s life considered as a whole, or about one’s whole life and he claims the global version is more plausible.
74 Sumner, Welfare, 4.
75 Such theories are not empirical or scientific since they don’t report causal connections between particular events or states of the world; neither are they merely analytic or conceptual in that they claim to tell us something about what the world is like and not just remind us of our ideas about it.
into the “nature of welfare” seems to occupy the same territory.” Although such a theory of welfare will not tell us whether a particular thing is good for a person, it will specify the conditions under which that particular thing will be good for the person.

There are two ways, in Sumner’s view, that a theory of welfare can be considered to be adequate, i.e., either in terms of its normative adequacy or in terms of its descriptive adequacy. In regards to the first criterion, a theory of welfare would be normative if its background is either rationality (e.g., prescribing that agents maximize their own welfare) or morality (e.g., the maximization or equal distribution of the general welfare). In contrast, descriptive adequacy decouples welfare from its role in a normative framework. This involves testing a candidate conception in terms of its fit with our ordinary experience of and judgments about welfare and favoring one that is “faithful to that experience and makes sense of those judgments.” Given the number of recent competing conceptions or accounts of welfare that focus primarily, if not exclusively, on normative adequacy Sumner argues this shows the need for an independent test of descriptive adequacy for theories about its nature.

The basic test of the descriptive adequacy of a theory of welfare is relatively simple: the best theory is the one that is most faithful to our ordinary concepts and our ordinary experience. He characterizes “ordinary experience” as being given by what we think or feel or know about well-being, both our own and that of others. The data which a candidate theory must fit, therefore, consist of the prodigious variety of our preanalytic convictions. We manifest these convictions when we judge that our lives are going well or

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badly, that pursuing some objective will be profitable or advantageous for us….A theory of welfare tells us what the world must be like in order for such judgments to be correct; it offers truth conditions for them. Its degree of fit with our ordinary experience will therefore be a function of the extent to which the truth conditions it offers can support and systematize our intuitive assessments.78

In addition, since the concept of welfare is “analytically connected” to related notions such as well-being, interest, good, benefit, profit, advantage etc. and their antonyms, an adequate theory must preserve this “network of analytic connections” otherwise it is merely an interpretation of some other concept.

Consequently, because of the great number of such connections, it is necessary to have many substitution tests for any candidate theory offered. This has implications in terms of the truth conditions because an adequate theory of welfare must be capable of supporting judgments within all of the cognate notions. Ultimately, having “fidelity to our experience” involves embracing our “pretheoretical beliefs”, their role in our practical deliberations, and our common-sense explanations. From his initial criterion of fidelity, he also derives three additional criteria of descriptive adequacy that form the “cardinal virtues” for an adequate theory of welfare: generality, formality and neutrality. Although all three are important for Sumner’s theory, the one most relevant from the perspective of this inquiry is formality.

As a criterion for a theory about the nature of welfare, formality requires that the theory tell us what it is for someone’s life to go badly, or for someone to benefit from

78 Sumner, Welfare, 10.
something or be harmed by it. Such a theory “…must provide the appropriate relation to complete such formulas as ‘x benefits y’ if and only if x stands in relation R to y.’” In terms of an adequate theory such a formulation avoids confusing the nature of well-being with its sources (direct or intrinsic) in that it also requires an account of what qualifies something or anything to be on that list, i.e., it serves to separate the nature of well-being from its sources. This leads Sumner to observe that although “[w]e should expect many sources of welfare to vary from individual to individual, and from group to group, reflecting differences of taste or situation or constitution….a theory of welfare, because it must be both formal and general, must abstract from these contingencies of history, culture and even biology.”^79 Instead, an adequate theory of welfare will be able to answer questions about what the good or well-being of people consists in, what it is for their lives to go well or what it takes to make their lives go better. Such a theory of welfare will be unitary at the level of its nature regardless of the plurality of welfare at the level of its sources because there is only one answer to these questions which “applies equally to all the different varieties of welfare, all of its sources, and all of its many subjects.”^80 However, because such unity is merely an assumption, Sumner suggests that its status is that of an “unproven regulatory hypothesis” whose purpose is to guide his inquiry into the nature of welfare.

The final aspect of descriptive adequacy requires that a theory about the nature of welfare must also tell us something about what it is for our lives to either have or lack a certain kind of value because our lives are “complex things whose value can be assessed

^79 Sumner, Welfare, 16-17.
^80 Sumner, Welfare, 17.
along a number of different dimensions or from a number of different standpoints.\textsuperscript{81}

Since welfare is only one way in which a life can be going well it is also important to distinguish it clearly from among other relevant dimensions or standpoints. The distinguishing feature of welfare assessments is their concern with the \textit{prudential value} of life, namely how well the life is going \textit{for the individual whose life it is}. Thus, regardless how valuable something is, it can promote or hinder my well-being only if it is also good or beneficial for \textit{me}. An adequate theory of welfare, then, must preserve the “subject relativity” that is definitive of prudential evaluation since failing to do so means that it wouldn’t be a theory about welfare at all. However, Sumner requires more in that it must also “fit our ordinary concept” of subject-relativity, but also provide “an interpretation” of its principal features. Given that subject-relativity is a “key ingredient” in how we conceptualize welfare because it serves to differentiate prudential value from other modes of value, an adequate theory must also “tell us what it means for my life to be going well not just in itself or from some other standpoint but \textit{for me}, to explain how it is that lives can have this peculiar perspectival kind of value.”\textsuperscript{82} However, he acknowledges that while it is an essential aspect of welfare, it is also “somewhat elusive.”

**Sumner’s Argument that Well-being is not as an Aesthetic Value**

As a \textit{value}, Sumner distinguishes well-being from aesthetic, perfectionist, and ethical values. The most relevant of these, in terms of this inquiry, are his characterizations of aesthetic and ethical value. Aesthetic values are involved with “the domain of feeling and sensibility; we attribute aesthetic value to those objects or characteristics which we find in some respect appealing or attractive or admirable….the

\textsuperscript{81} Sumner, \textit{Welfare}, 20.

\textsuperscript{82} Sumner, \textit{Welfare}, 20.
aesthetic standards appropriate for assessing a particular thing will depend on the kind of thing it is.\textsuperscript{83} However, if we are going to evaluate lives from such a standpoint, this will require standards which are warranted by the kind of thing a life is. Here is one story as to how this could play out: a human life is, in some measure, an artifact capable of being “shaped and molded” by both is possessor and/or by others, thus it is something we could treat or live as a “work of art.” As a “temporally extended object or event”, a life can be shaped or subjected to “conscious direction” through imposing a structure on the way in which it unfolds, so that its development conforms to some conscious pattern; although it need not be only one such structure or pattern that confers aesthetic value on a life. Even though there will be many ways of living such a life, the only feature they share is having been under some degree of “artistic control.”

An alternative background story could be to hold that a life acquires “aesthetic value” by manifesting an “aesthetic sensibility” through gaining “a suitable degree of appreciation” of the aesthetic value of other things in the world. The problem here is that lives are treated as second-order aesthetic objects whose value is dependent on the recognition of first-order aesthetic objects. A third story might be to think that the point is to live one’s life with style or panache regardless of the substantive ends one might choose to pursue, i.e., it’s not what we do but how we do it. Due to the “wide range” of its possible objects, aesthetic value is unlikely to be confused with welfare, although lives are capable of bearing both aesthetic and prudential value. The problem with accounts such as those above is that the fact that a life possesses these features to a high degree doesn’t mean that one can conclude that one is faring well since “[k]nowing that your life

\textsuperscript{83} Sumner, \textit{Welfare}, 21.
has a high degree of aesthetic value does not just fail to tell us the full story about your well-being—it tells us none of the story.”84 Thus, it is one thing for your life to be going well and quite another for it to contain those features that augment its “aesthetic value.” This is not to say that if you take on the project of living an aesthetically valuable life, your success or failure will have no bearing on your well-being, but the same holds true for all your other projects. Sumner concludes that “...while success in one’s projects is arguably an important source of welfare, scoring high on aesthetic value, just considered by itself, makes no independent contribution.”85

**Sumner’s Argument for a Subjective-Relative Theory of Welfare**

It is possible to not only distinguish between theories of welfare in terms of value, but also as to whether they are objective or subjective in orientation.86 An objective theory of human well-being holds that it is independent from, at least in part, experiences and preferences. Sumner views objective theories as being inadequate because 1) they lack subject-relativity, and 2) they generally end up being about something other than welfare.87 For these reasons, although acknowledging this to be a contentious position, Sumner rules them out as a plausible category. In contrast, subjective theories of welfare hold that any judgment one makes about one’s well-being must appeal directly to one’s experiences and preferences which serve as the primary criteria for the evaluation of their fulfillment. They are primary in the sense that preferences are what we refer to when

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86 Although Sumner admits reluctance to invoking these notion, Griffin observes that the distinction between subjective and objective as commonly defined “does not make an especially crucial difference. It would be better if these terms (at least in this sense) were put into retirement.” *WELL-BEING*, 33.
87 In regard to the former he claims that they are unable to provide an adequate account of the perspectival character (prudential value) of well-being and in terms of the latter he means such concepts as “private ownership of intrinsic goods”, “basic needs or goods”, “functionings and capabilities”, or “perfectionism”. 
making our subjective evaluation of those experiences that we seek out (like) or we avoid (dislike). However, this is not to deny that there may be many other reasons we seek out or avoid certain experiences as well, e.g., pleasure, pain, enjoyment, suffering, happiness, satisfaction of need, satisfaction of interest, etc.

One problem, however, is that there can be conflict between and among preferences. Such conflicts arise, in part, from the fact that, at least for human beings, preferences are numerous and not equivalent in strength, thereby resulting in differing valuations. This can be a problem for a theory that establishes preferences as criteria for the evaluation of happiness especially if the analysis becomes more complex, such as when multiple layers of preferences (meta-preferences) are involved. In such cases one’s choice may not result just from one’s preferences, but preferences about one’s preferences, and perhaps even preferences about one’s preferences about one’s preferences ad infinitum. Also meta-preferences constitute “second order” preferences or, if more than one layer, “higher order” preferences. A troubling implication of meta-preferences is that since one may have preferences one does not wish to have or of which one may not be necessarily aware, one may act in ways one does not wish to act. So how are we to decide which preferences count in making a subjective assessment of one’s life-satisfaction?

88 If one prefers both “always to be on time” and “to travel in slower moving vehicles”, it is possible that one will pay for a wild taxi ride in order to make an important business meeting on time.
89 Do we need to consider all of the preferences we have or only a sub-set of those preferences? Since under most ordinary circumstances it is unlikely that my aversion to slimy okra will have much effect when it comes to making a judgment about my well-being, it is probably the latter.
One way is to reduce the number of preferences that count in the assessment of
one’s well-being. A theory of welfare might accomplish this by restricting the scope of
preference-fulfillment to those that involve a sense of personal satisfaction, although it
need not. However, since personal satisfaction is likely too broad in both scope and
extent to be useful in making any judgment as to whether or not our life is going well,
perhaps restricting the relevant preferences to those that lead to life satisfaction offers the
best possibility for narrowing the scope of preferences that are relevant to making
judgments about one’s well-being. Life satisfaction, then, forms the conceptual context
in which the fulfillment or satisfaction of rational preferences, under certain specifiable
conditions will lead to a judgment that one’s happiness is authentic.

The two conditions that Sumner’s theory requires for authentic happiness are: 1)
that one has access to all the information “relevant” for making decisions about one’s
life, and 2) that such decisions are “autonomous” in that they represent values that are
truly one’s own and not the result of manipulation or coercive social conditioning. If it is
the case these conditions that serve to “fix” the authenticity of one’s judgment because
they are both necessary and sufficient, then “authentic happiness” consists in a fixed
cognitive state either at the level of judgments about preference formation or judgments
about preference fulfillment. Such necessary and sufficient conditions apply to the
formation of one’s preferences as well as to one’s subsequent judgment about their
fulfillment or satisfaction. In order to avoid the standard problems with subjectivist
theories, his account requires that he adopt subject relativity as a requirement, which

90 Perhaps this could be done by engaging in some non-absolute hierarchical ordering or ranking of our
preferences. The rank ordering of one’s preferences can change over time based on one’s experience over
time or a change in the material conditions of one’s life could produce a more immediate re-ordering of
one’s preferences. Since this would require some type of elaborate decision-process to weight the priorities
and calculate the satisfaction coefficient, this does not seem a likely way to go.
holds that there is only one possible choice of “authoritative subject” since the prudential value of my life is its value for me.

Adopting subject relativity as a requirement is necessary in order for any statement about my well-being to be true because it is the case that only my attitudes and inclinations figure in a constitutive account of my well-being. The root idea here is that one’s happiness should reflect a response “of one’s own, to a life of one’s own” in which one becomes “the proprietor or manager of a set of attitudes, both positive and negative, toward the conditions of your life. It is these attitudes which constitute the standpoint from which these conditions can be assessed as good or bad for you. Prudential value is therefore perspectival because it literally takes the point of view of the subject.”

However, in order for his theory to be plausible, subject relativity must explicitly address experience, which Sumner does through invoking an experience requirement which stipulates “that a state of affairs can make me better off only if, in one way or another, it enters or affects my experience…. [a] desire theory which incorporated such a requirement might look like this: x makes me better off intrinsically just in case (1) I desire x, (2) x occurs, and (3) I am at least aware of x’s occurrence.” Since any desire theory is a state-of-the-world theory, i.e., the actual occurrence of the desired state of affairs is a necessary condition in the analysis, the benefit it affords is that it becomes impossible to convert it into a mental state theory.

Finally, Sumner’s account is welfarist in orientation since it presupposes some general account of what welfare ultimately means, which is important because he views human well-being as being particularly concerned with prudential value. The experience

91 Sumner, Welfare, 43.
92 Sumner, Welfare, 127. He also notes that this is necessary for the descriptive adequacy of a theory of welfare which was important insight in classical hedonism.
requirement and subject relativity are what serve to distinguish *subject-relative welfare* from all other modes of value, because it holds that your life is prudentially valuable only if it is going well for you. Further, since welfare requires such an internal reference to its bearer, subject-relativity is an essential feature of our ordinary concept of welfare. Thus, any subjective theory of welfare will make one’s well-being dependent on one’s own concerns, e.g., what one cares about, to what one attaches importance, to what matters, etc. As a result, positive (favorable) or negative (unfavorable) feelings, interests, dispositions, attitudes, etc., constitute possible targets for subjective analysis, partly because of their moral force.  

However, not all philosophical theories of human well-being are *welfarist* in orientation since, just because a value theory holds that human well-being is important, does not mean that it qualifies as a theory of *welfarism*. Instead, such theories must claim that individual well-being is the only thing with final or ultimate ethical value. Consequently, since individual well-being is the only “state of affairs” we have a moral reason to promote for its own sake it is the only thing that matters for ethics.

**Analysis and Conclusion**

The central claim here is that the theories offered by Plato and Sumner are false because they commit the philosophical fallacy which results in the disconnection of human well-being from experience in the geographic sense. The analysis began with Plato’s conception of happiness as an epistemic state, fixed form and final-end which was shown to have unsettling implications as an account of human well-being. However, this is not to suggest that there is nothing about his theory that deserves attention. For

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93 For Sumner a legitimate subjectivist theory of welfare will be able to map the polarity of welfare onto the polarity of attitudes, so that being well-off requires having a positive (favorable) attitude toward one’s life, while being badly-off depends on having a negative (unfavorable) attitude toward it.
example, he established an explicit and important connection between human well-being and ethics, i.e., that one’s happiness involves possessing a certain fixed character that consists in achieving a balance of the virtues. Also, he viewed education as being central to securing the correct type of knowledge and methods necessary for living the life of a person who has the right character which makes it essential for the achievement of his view of authentic happiness.94 Finally, he recognized almost immediately the importance and need to establish the connection between “justice in the individual” and “justice in the polis” in order for Justice to take its place as the unifying virtue (i.e., the most “authentic” virtue) and the only end worth pursuing for its own sake.

The picture of the just man and the just city that he created in *The Republic* illustrates the definition of the Form of Justice. So, for Plato, to understand that picture is to grasp the definition of human well-being. In establishing a direct relationship between individual happiness and the well-being of the polis, Plato also drew attention to the importance of the bi-conditionality of the relationship between individual and community well-being, which is certainly consistent with the conceptualization of human well-being within which I am working. The major problem with his theory lies with his claim that the physical world and its objects are at best merely “copies” or, at worst, “corruptions” of the Forms that exist in an immaterial world (as things-in-themselves). If this is indeed the case, then how will it ever possible to find “authentic”, in this case “True” or “Absolute” human well-being, in the natural world—the world of lived experience?95 In making P-justice the only and final purpose of one’s life, for Plato, True or Absolute

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94 His account of character also serves to draw our attention to the concepts of harmony, balance and unity that will have relevance later for our discussion about the aesthetic aspect of human well-being.

95 This is not to say that Plato finds the situation hopeless since he also identifies the true nature of the person with the process of thought, thus making it possible for one to transcend the world of experience.
Happiness exists, if this can even be said to apply in this case, as only a Form in some immaterial place. However, it seems reasonable for our experience to demand that there be more to the notion of the “authenticity” of happiness than merely some mysterious relationship to an immaterial Form. In fact, the limitations in the very nature of our being that Plato recognizes suggest that P-justice, as a form, will always be inaccessible or unavailable to us within the context of the natural world of experience. However this isn’t particularly surprising since, depending on the view of happiness we accept, some of us are likely to be able to get closer to “True”, “Absolute” or “Authentic” happiness, whatever it may mean, than others.

In addition, there also exists a significant practical limitation in being able to determine whether or not a person is P-just since “only like can know like…only one who is dialectically skilled can be a good test or touchstone for the condition of another’s soul.” Consequently, in conceiving human well-being as P-Justice, it ultimately becomes something that is inaccessible to most human beings. For the vast lot of humanity, one’s well-being is determined by whatever “common justice” permits, which is whatever the P-just elite determine that to be since most humanity is subject to their rule. This should come as little surprise given the essentially aristocratic origin and grounding of ancient Greek philosophy. Perhaps, then, Plato’s theory should not be interpreted as a general theory of human well-being, but instead interpreted as a theory of

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96 This may sound harsh but, in the end, it seems that Platonic happiness is something that most human beings will never be able to experience since they will never be in the position of being among the elite. Even if authenticity does lie elsewhere, we should still find it unsettling that that it seems none of us can ever be in the possession True Happiness—it will always be a copy or corruption of what is truly authentic.

well-being for aristocrats. Although one might be tempted to claim that Plato’s account could be interpreted as entailing that there is a level of happiness that is appropriate to each class, such a claim is problematic in that such happiness, depending on one’s class, would be merely a more corrupted form of True Happiness.

However, even putting aside the above problem, even though Plato offered a reasonably sound argument for P-justice that establishes it as the final-end of happiness (eudaimonia) and fixes it in the character of the P-just person, in its most “authentic” form it remains something which none of us will ever be able to experience. Even for those who are able to attain a P-just character, the truest, absolute and most authentic form of happiness possible, in the end even their happiness is at best a copy and, at worst, a corruption of the authentic Form of P-justice. Although for Plato a P-just character is the criterion of evaluation for human well-being, it consists in an individualistic, private or internal cognitive state (as knowledge or wisdom) that is achievable only through one’s detachment from the world of nature and experience. Within the context of pragmatic naturalism adopting such dualism, itself, represents a falsification of experience. Consequently, since his theory of human well-being is based upon a false understanding of experience it represents a total disconnection of well-being from experience.

98 Although Plato agrees with Socrates that success in life requires knowledge and a successful life is a virtuous one, he “tied the knowledge in question to a special set of entities—the Forms—to which only the minority can have access. If, then, the minority is to achieve virtue (to whatever degree) then they must be subject to the majority.” Rowe, Plato, 135.

99 The relationship of the “body” to “knowledge” in Plato has relevance for later discussion in Chapter 5. For example, Plato believes that “[d]eath means ‘release of the soul from the body’; and this is the state which the true philosopher will have tried to achieve so far as is possible in life…The body is a hindrance to the pursuit of wisdom and truth: its senses confuse us, and its pleasures distract us. We must therefore purify ourselves of its influences and allow reason to operate alone and unsullied.” Rowe, Plato, 166-67. The solution to this involves a process of purification that Plato describes in The Republic at 67cd.
Sumner’s theory of authentic happiness clearly represents an advance over Plato’s theory and addresses a significant number of “philosophical puzzles” that plague other forms of hedonistic and non-hedonistic theories of human well-being. However, despite his commitment to an “experience requirement”, his account remains grounded in a view of experience that commits him to a cognitive conception of human well-being in which the target of evaluation is happiness and the criterion for evaluation is preference satisfaction or fulfillment. His conception falsifies human well-being in that it fails to begin with a non-dualistic theory of experience and allows experience to enter in only as a subsidiary criterion or requirement for his theory. Further, arguing that some form of a subjective account of human well-being holds plausibility, as Sumner does, strongly suggests that his account of human well-being, from its very beginning, commits the philosophical fallacy.

In failing to begin with a non-dualistic theory of experience Sumner pursues a cognitive theory of happiness which fails to address the importance of the “pervasive quality” that is characteristic of our situated experience. As such, “authentic happiness” consists only as a cognitive state in which a feeling of “satisfaction” is associated with the “fulfillment” of rationally derived preferences, which also consist in a cognitive state. In conceiving “happiness” as a cognitive state he reduces it to only a narrow slice from within the total spectrum of our discriminations in experience that are important, at least equally and perhaps more, for achieving a holistic understanding of human well-being. Although Sumner does not reject the possibility that other things, even non-cognitive ones, can contribute to our well-being, the problem is that that they fail to serve as plausible criteria for evaluating theories of human well-being.
Sumner also recognizes that not all instances of preference fulfillment are the same and that, under certain conditions, some judgments one makes about satisfaction or fulfillment are “authentic” while others are not. Such “authentic happiness” is possible only in the case that the two conditions for information and autonomy are met. These two conditions are necessary in order to establish authentic happiness as a fixed cognitive state. In applying these conditions of authenticity to preference fulfillment, the unfortunate result is that, instead of enlarging happiness as a slice of the full spectrum of human experience, human well-being is narrowed even further. It is only by meeting both conditions, in terms of the selection of one’s preferences as well as one’s subjective relative judgment about their fulfillment, that one can achieve the authenticity necessary for happiness as the final-end of preference fulfillment.

Finally, Sumner’s theory also represents an attempt to link the prudential understanding of human well-being to ethics through his conception of welfarism. However, when he says that well-being is “all that matters ethically”, such a claim appears similar, at least in some respects, to the claim of ethical egoism, i.e. that one should always do what is in one’s self interest. If welfarism claims that well-being is all that matters ethically then in what way is it distinguishable from the claim of ethical egoism that “one should always do what is in one’s self-interest”? If indistinguishable from ethical egoism, then it would be difficult for any welfarist theory of human well-being to withstand the typical arguments advanced against ethical egoism. Alternatively, if the claim is “one always acts in one’s self-interest” then welfarist theories are merely
variants of psychological egoism, thus they have nothing to do with ethics. Even so, psychological egoism is open to dispute since many of us believe that we do act in the interest of others, although in the final analysis, it may be that even in these cases we are always acting to preserve or advance our own self-interest.

Obviously, one does not have to deny the existence of the interests of others if one adopts a welfarist orientation. It is certainly possible that such interests have some secondary ethical value and are deserving of one’s consideration, even if what really matters ethically is one’s self-interest. Perhaps part of the confusion here rests with what we mean when we say that one acts in one’s self-interest. Regardless, it seems that in claiming that one’s own interest is the only thing that matters ethically welfarist theories require some further qualification, such as, “in general” or “in most cases”. So, when one does act in one’s own interest, which may not always be the case, it is the discrimination in experience as an “act of self-interest” that matters ethically at that time. Thus, while there may well be other relevant ethical considerations, e.g., regard for others’ interests, they are not discriminated in experience as being what matters most when one acts in one’s self-interest.

Finally, “authentic happiness” requires that one’s appraisal about one’s satisfaction be one’s own, i.e., it only involves my life and, therefore, my personal satisfaction. However, Sumner’s restrictive subjectivistic theory of human well-being fails to recognize that, ultimately, our appraisal of our satisfaction or fulfillment is not

100 There are two ways to interpret PE: 1) everyone acts to maximize her self-interest and 2) everyone acts to maximize her perceived self-interest. Of the two, the former is clearly not plausible since it is vulnerable to a number of counter-examples, e.g., a person who smokes does so to satisfy his own desires.

101 At one extreme, total or absolute self-interest disregards the interests of others. At the other extreme, total or absolute altruism disregards one’s self-interest. It is likely that the set of practitioners of each extreme forms a null set.
personal and subjective, but objective and inherently social. The very satisfaction or fulfillment of one’s preferences has a lived consequence in the community life of which one is a member. In fact, although the very idea of satisfaction is a social construction, it is possible to ground it in a naturalistic metaphysics since, as a concept, its use is only to discriminate some quality of our individual experience in given situations. If this is the case, it seems that in one’s acting to bring about satisfaction for herself, she necessarily acts for the public or social good. Thus, it is through the realization of one’s “individual well-being” that she is able to contribute to the well-being of other members of her community.

In conclusion, for Plato happiness must be something more than the episodic or fleeting pleasure in our experience. For this reason, he rejects experience as having much, if any, relevance for how human well-being (eudaimonia) should be understood. Instead, our happiness involves things that transcend our experience in nature, e.g. fixed forms or fixed-ends. It involves coming into the possession of a certain “cognitive state”, i.e., the balance that is achieved through the harmonious coordination of the relations among the three aspects of the soul (psyche). His theory also holds that human well-being is a matter of ethics since it involves possessing the right character (although as a fixed epistemic state) as well as its being the final-end of all human activity. Thus, it is not just that living a P-just life constitutes a final-end in itself, if indeed there is any; it is the final-end for one’s life, as well as for all human life. This means that in Plato’s theory of human well-being the primary target for evaluation is happiness (eudaimonia) for which the criterion of evaluation is the character that one possesses.

102 This view of individuality recognizes that while we are individuated, we are not isolated, each of us is a social individual.
L.W. Sumner bases his theory of “authentic happiness” on preference formation and judgments about their fulfillment that must meet certain necessary and sufficient conditions. Although he retains preferences as the criteria of evaluation of happiness, he follows most PH theories by shifting the focus away from the pleasure to betterment as the determinative criterion of evaluation for happiness. His theory is a cognitive state theory because he heavily emphasizes the importance of rationality both in the formation of one’s preferences as well as in terms of one’s judgment as to the extent of their satisfaction. Although acknowledging the importance of choice in human well-being, his emphasis on rational decision-making under certain necessary and sufficient conditions serves only to reduce “authentic” human well-being to a very small sliver of human experience, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. A final limitation is that although Sumner’s theory stipulates the necessary and sufficient conditions governing one’s preference-formation and subsequent judgment about fulfillment, which also form the grounds for authenticity as well, they are so stringent that it appears they can be rarely, if ever, met in actual experience.
Chapter 2

Dewey on Nature, Experience and the Situated Self

It is not experience which is experienced, but nature—stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways are experience, they are what is experienced.

John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 12
Given the irresolvable problems the philosophical fallacy creates for accounts of human well-being such as those offered by Plato and Sumner, what is required now is a radically different understanding of human well-being. At this point in the inquiry, it is necessary to establish the foundation for a Deweyan account of human well-being in which the target for evaluation changes from *happiness* (as eudaimonia or authentic happiness) to *betterment* and the criterion for evaluation changes from *virtuous character* or *preference fulfillment* to the *pervasive quality of the situation*. The intent is to introduce the latter two elements here, but we will return to them occasionally at other points during the inquiry. The starting point for a Deweyan account lies in the recognition that human well-being is, fundamentally, a consequence of our response to existential situations that involve the naturalistic tension that is always at play in achieving a balance between the precarious and the stable in existence.

This tension, which is most recognizable in the alternating periods of stability and instability associated with living, led Dewey to conclude that “the significant problems and issues of life and philosophy concern the rate and mode of the conjunction of the precarious and the assured, the incomplete and the finished, the repetitious and the varying, the safe and sane and the hazardous. If we trust the evidence of experienced things, these traits, and the modes and tempos of their interaction with each other, are fundamental features of natural existence.”

Making *Experience* the central feature in a Deweyan account of human well-being recognizes that it has its roots in the natural world. In such a world “precariousness” and “stability” come to constitute the fundamental, brute, and natural features of human existence. It is also the case that

human existence involves “to put it baldly, a gamble. The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable, uncannily unstable. Its dangers are irregular, inconstant, not to be counted upon as to their times or seasons.”

However, although we have substituted sophistication for superstition relatively successfully, the fact remains that

[our magical safeguard against the uncertain character of the world is to deny the existence of chance, to mumble universal and necessary law, the ubiquity of cause and effect, the uniformity of nature, universal progress, and the inherent rationality of the universe….But when all is said and done, the fundamentally hazardous character of the world is not seriously modified, much less eliminated….our attainments are only devices for blurring the disagreeable recognition of a fact, instead of means of altering the fact itself.]

It appears there are only two paths open to us when it comes to responding to the instability and insecurity that constitute the fundamental natural features of existence. On the one hand, we can attempt to appease the powers which “environ” us and determine “our destiny” or, on the other hand, we can “invent arts and by their means turn the powers of nature to account….This is the method of changing the world through action, as the other is the method of changing the self in emotion and idea.”

To put it rather simply, the choice open to us is either to anchor ourselves to some immaterial and transcendent realm or to find a way in which we can achieve stability and security within

104 Dewey, LW 1, 43.
105 Dewey, LW 1, 45.
the natural world of lived experience. In choosing to pursue the latter course the first step is to identify and describe the “common traits of nature” that constitute the foundation for all transactional situations and their resultant pervasive qualities.

**The Intelligibility of Nature and the Common Traits in Experience**

A correct theory of experience must begin by working to discriminate the traits that are common to all contexts or situations of experience since this makes it possible to formulate those traits which belong to nature in its most inclusive sense. At a most basic level they are the function of interactions between human beings and the natural environment (as nature). Through analysis of the characteristics of particular kinds of experience it is not only possible to discriminate among them (e.g., as moral, scientific, or aesthetic), but also to determine the specific common traits of nature that are implied by all these kinds of experience. Although Dewey’s conception of “experience” recognizes that we make cognitive discriminations (experience) it certainly involves a great deal more because it consists in the transactional field resulting from the ongoing interactions between the organism and the environment. Consequently, experience provides a considerable enlargement over the traditional understanding of the term as well as avoiding any possibility of dualism entering into it.

His approach to discriminating the common traits in experience rests on the methodological assumption that, “the characterization of nature must be such that clarifies and enlightens experience as we actually find it, rather than making it obscure and unintelligible.” This led him to employ the method of experience or denotative empirical method which holds that all inquiries generated by any human experience must

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107 Experience, whenever used in the context of Dewey’s theories, always refers to experience.
lead to concepts and distinctions that are valid only to the extent to which they make intelligible the sort of experience that prompted their formulation. Philosophy then ceases to be merely an intellectual diversion and becomes an indispensable function of enlightening human experience and conduct. In fact, the “first-rate test” of the value of any philosophy is whether it “ends in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful.”109 One way we seek to make our experience intelligible is by organizing our ordinary life-experience and, consequently, our inquiries around three principle modes of interaction: 1) those between experience and nature, 2) those between body and mind, and 3) those between the individual and society. These also serve as the starting point in Dewey’s metaphysics and theories of inquiry, ethics, value and aesthetics.

As to the “extent and method” of his metaphysics, it involves identifying and describing those things that “communicate the genuine features” of the world in which we live, i.e., “the large and constant features of human sufferings, enjoyments, trials, failures and successes together with the institutions of art, science, technology, politics and religion which mark them.”110 Given this context, the challenge lies in specifying the kind of world in which such traits take place, i.e., what constitutes the most general and irreducible description of that world? This involves discriminating those traits that are common to all occasions of experience, i.e., the most general “generic traits” of nature that are present in any encountered subject matter or situation. Part of the answer relies on the methods of scientific inquiry and the concept of evolution in that both lead us

109 Dewey, LW 1, 18.
110 Dewey, LW 1, 59.
towards a description of the natural world as being one in which at least some changes take on “evolutionary form.” In referring to the theme of the evolution of living things, Dewey noted “the distinctive trait of metaphysical reflection would not then be its attempt to discover some temporarily original feature which caused the development, but the irreducible traits of a world in which at least some changes take on evolutionary form. A world where some changes proceed in the direction of the appearance of living and thinking creatures is a striking sort of world.”

Although we know that nature functions in a number of different ways, one clear thing it does is bring about qualitatively different events since “it is an affair of affairs, wherein each one, no matter how linked up it may be with others, has its own qualities.”

Such “affairs” or “situations” always imply some conscious human participation and, if there were no humans (or similar sentient creatures), there would be no situations in nature since “[t]he situation is not indifferent to man, because it forms man as a desiring, striving, thinking, feeling creature. It is not egotism that leads man from contemplative registration of these traits to interest in managing them, to intelligence and purposive art. Interest, thinking, planning, striving, consummation and frustration are a dram enacted by these forces.” Situations, then, are the distinctive relationships existing between an individual and the objective conditions of the environment. As a result, the relationship that exists between the individual and the environment is a product of what both bring to each other and each individual is, to some degree, in a unique situation.

111 As quoted in Bernstein, John Dewey, 213.
112 Dewey, Art as Experience, LW 10, 83.
113 Dewey, LW 10, 68.
Certainly, as human beings, we function in a number of different combinations of circumstances. After we discriminate certain ones of them in experience, e.g., as cognitive, religious, moral, aesthetic, indeterminate, etc., we then characterize them in terms of certain situations. It is from the quality of the situation (or context) that the kind of behavior emerges that effects “…a transition to a particular determination in which objects and relations are discriminated, and discriminated in a way which is stimulated by the original quality. Thus situations move by means of their own instrumentalities from indeterminate and problematic stages to settled and determinate fulfillments.”

The fact that certain situations are distinguishable in terms of their kind, however, does not mean there is only one kind of transaction within the entire set of relations that constitutes the pervasive quality associated with each kind of situation. For Dewey, the work of metaphysics is to raise questions about the sort of world in which there is such evolution, not to settle the question of the sort of world that causes it. It is science that traces the conditions of their occurrence in detail and connects them in their variety with their antecedents. In fact, we can mark off the “metaphysical subject matter” of science by referring to certain irreducible traits that can be found in any and every subject of scientific inquiry.

As we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4, the same holds true for those situations that are distinguishable as moral since “[q]ualitative individuality and constant relations, contingency and need, movement and arrest are common traits of all existence. This fact is a source of values and their precariousness; both of immediate possession which is causal and of reflection which is a precondition of secure attainment and

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approbation.”\textsuperscript{115} However, it is important to emphasize that his use of “reflection” here refers only to those situations “qualified by uncertainty, alternatives, questioning, search, hypotheses, tentative trials or experiments which test the worth of thinking. A naturalistic metaphysics is bound to consider reflection as itself a natural event occurring \textit{within} nature because of traits of the latter.”\textsuperscript{116} In Chapter Five we will examine how an empirically naturalistic metaphysics is able to discriminate the common traits found in aesthetic situations as well since “[t]he doings and sufferings that form experience are, in the degree in which experience is intelligent or charged with meanings, a union of the precarious, novel, irregular with the settled, assured and uniform—a union which also defines the artistic and esthetic.”\textsuperscript{117} Further, the distinguishable common traits in an aesthetic situation consist in the “solvent union of the generic, recurrent, ordered, established phase of nature with its phase that is incomplete, going on, and hence still uncertain, contingent, novel, particular.”\textsuperscript{118}

What is common to all of the “processes of experiencing” that we discriminate, e.g., knowing, valuing, loving, worshipping, desiring and dreaming, is that they go on in nature. The only way to describe and understand such processes is through using the \textit{method of experience} in all forms of inquiry and subjecting them to analysis in terms of their naturalistic common traits. Any other method of analysis constitutes a falsification of such processes since it separates them from the common matrix in which they occur. The relevance this has for developing an account of human well-being based on Dewey’s theory of experience (DTE) is that human well-being must be analyzed in terms of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Dewey, \textit{LW} 10, 308.
\item Dewey, \textit{LW} 10, 62.
\item Dewey, \textit{LW} 10, 269.
\item Dewey, \textit{LW} 10, 269.
\end{enumerate}
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common matrix in which human existence continually unfolds. The consequence here is that Dewey’s emphasis on the relational nature of situations requires that the description of human well-being involve more than just the cognitive state that a person or collections of persons might have. This is not to say that cognition is not important for one’s well-being, which would be absurd. The question then becomes “what are the most common traits with which to begin our analysis?”

**Continuity, Interaction and Situation in Human Experience**

William James referred to ‘experience’ as a “double-barreled” word because we use it to refer not only to what people “do and suffer, strive for, love, believe and endure,” but also to how they act and how things act upon them. He recognized that one of the more significant problems a theory of experience must address is the “conjunctive relation” of *co-conscious transition*. This is the process by which “one experience passes into another when both belong to the same self...My experiences and your experiences are ‘with’ each other in various external ways, but mine pass into mine, and yours into yours in a way in which yours and mine never pass into one another.”

Clearly, each of us has “personal histories” within which subject, object, interest and purpose are continuous or may be continuous (this is not to say, however, that discontinuity has no place here). The conjunctive relation of continuous transition is the most important since for one to be a *radical empiricist* means that one must “hold fast to this conjunctive relation above all others, for this is the strategic point, the position through which, if a

hole be made, all the corruptions of dialectics and all the metaphysical fictions pour into our philosophy.”

Although these transitions are processes of change in time, the key here is that the change itself (as continuous or discontinuous transition) is one of the things we experience immediately. This led him to emphasize the felt nature of the continuity-discontinuity of experience, “[w]hat I do feel simply when a later moment of my experience succeeds an earlier one is that though they are two moments, the transition from one to the other is continuous. Continuity here is a definite sort of experience; just as definite as is the discontinuity-experience which I find it impossible to avoid when I seek to make the transition from an experience of my own to one of yours.” This experience constitutes the “what-ness of nature” and contains real empirical content.

In fact, even minute feelings include an earlier and later part, along with a sense of their continuous procession. Although James clearly showed that continuity has importance for a theory of experience, it was Dewey who significantly deepened and extended the analysis of this common trait in experience.

The first common trait is continuity, specifically the principle of continuity (PC) in experience, which holds that every experience not only retains something from prior experience but also modifies the quality of subsequent experience in some way. As a result, PC is involved in every attempt to discriminate between those experiences that are

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120 James, *Essays*, 48-49.
121 James, *Essays*, 49.
122 James, *Essays*, 50.
worthwhile and those that are not.\textsuperscript{124} As Dewey observed, “[e]very experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the grounds of what it moves toward and into.”\textsuperscript{125} Since PC is involved in some way, with every experience, the quality of the present experience is what influences the way in which the principle applies. Although universal in its application, the principle of continuity alone does not provide a ground for discriminating among experiences.\textsuperscript{126} Furthermore, experience\textsubscript{G} is not something that simply goes on “inside” a person; it also influences the formation of one’s desires and purpose. This has important consequences in that our present experience can lead to changes in the “objective conditions” under which our future experiences occur. This has significant social implications as well since the world we live in is what it is because of what has happened before, i.e., the previous human experience of others, as well as ourselves, is what humans carry forward into their present and future experience.

The second common trait is the principle of interaction (PI) where “interactions” are understood as events that have “either tighter or looser ties…which qualify them with certain beginnings and endings, and which mark them off from other fields of interaction.”\textsuperscript{127} Although such events themselves are “closed fields,” when their conjunction leads to interaction, this forms a larger field which releases new energies and to which new qualities belong. However, these qualities are not “in” objects or organisms, but “always were qualities of interactions in which both extra-organic things

\textsuperscript{124} At a more fundamental level, however, Dewey claims that PC rests on the principle of habit (PH) which holds that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, thus in turn affecting the quality of subsequent experience. I assess the legitimacy and value of Dewey’s concept of habit later in this chapter.


\textsuperscript{126} One possible candidate for discrimination suggested by Dewey is “growth”, although it is necessary to specify the direction of the growth, i.e., towards what end. He claims the only “end” is the creation of conditions for future growth, of opening up avenues for future development.

\textsuperscript{127} Dewey, \textit{LW} 1, 207-08.
and organisms partake. When named they enable identification and discrimination of things to take place as means in a further course of inclusive interaction. Hence they are as much the qualities of the things engaged as of the organisms. Dewey suggests that it is possible to discriminate three “plateaus” among such fields: 1) more narrow and external interactions, 2) that of life, and 3) association, communication, and participation.

The first plateau is qualitatively diverse in the physical sense and the distinctive properties here are those of the mathematical-mechanical system (physics) that serves to define matter as a general character of nature. The second plateau is where qualitative differences are more obvious, e.g., the discrimination of plant from animal life (as lower vs. higher); however despite their variety, they have common qualities which define the psycho-physical character of nature. The third plateau is still further internally diversified, consisting of “individualities”, and is characterized throughout its diversities by “common properties” which define the “mind” as intelligence, understood as the possession and response to meanings. Each plateau has its own characteristic empirical traits or own categories of description consisting of the conceptions that are required to state the fact in question, but not to explain it. This is because they do not designate the operation of “force” as “causes”, but adhere to empirical facts by noting and denoting the characteristic qualities and consequences which are unique to various levels of interaction. The function of PI becomes, then, to assign “equal rights” to both the “objective factors” and the “internal conditions” in experience.

Dewey, LW 1, 198-99.
Any “normal” experience consists in an interplay between these two sets which, when taken together as interaction, form a situation. Further, PC and PI are not separable but intercept and unite to form the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience,

Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later ones. As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts....What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument for understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow...The process goes on as long as life and learning continue.

Otherwise the course of experience is disorderly since the individual factor that enters into making an experience is split...A fully integrated personality...exists only when successive experiences are integrated with one other. It can be built up only as a world of related objects is constructed.¹²⁹

It is precisely the experience of continuity and interaction by an organism, within an environment, that leads to a situation. For Dewey, the very notion that individual human beings live in a world means that they live in a series of situations. He is careful to point out that the word “in” means “that interaction is going on between an individual and objects and other persons. The conceptions of situations and interactions are inseparable from one another. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment...The

environment is...whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had.” A situation, then, is the *field of transaction* that arises from the negotiations that occur between oneself and one’s environment resulting from the give and take of existence.

What is common to each situation is the “pervasive quality” that it manifests. This includes not only the immediate aspect of the agreeableness or disagreeableness of the experience (the easy part), but also its influence upon later experiences (the hard part). In this sense, the pervasive quality of a situation is a measure of the functional operation of the principles of continuity and interaction in experience. The active union of continuity and interaction is what provides the measure of significance and value of an experience because “[t]he qualities of situations in which organisms and surrounding conditions interact, when discriminated, make sense. Sense is distinct from feeling…it is the qualitative characteristic of something, not just a submerged unidentified quality or tone.” Consequently, for a Deweyan account of human well-being, what is of the most immediate and direct concern are the situations, understood as “objective conditions in nature” in which human transactions occur.

**Human Experience as Geographic Not Cognitive**

At this point, Dewey’s answer to the question “What is experience and what is experienced?” is that it involves identifying and describing what constitutes the common

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131 He defines environment not as an encompassing context, but as the conditions that allow a body to exercise its capacities and develop itself. He goes even further by intrinsically linking the environment to experience and interactions, designing action and situations as the result of a process of interaction between an organism and a given environment. See: Dewey, LW 13, 25–41.
traits and preconditions of experience.\footnote{133} However, they are not always so readily apparent because the underlying structure, traits and preconditions of experience may not be obvious to everyone.\footnote{134} This may tempt us to ask the question “What is the form or structure of experience?”, but providing an answer is not such an easy task. A problem arises whenever we try to step back from experience to examine it because we remain locked within it. The result is that whatever we are trying to develop conforms to the same structures and circumstances of that which we are seeking to describe. Thus, if the substance of experience is always contingent upon the “situation as a whole,” the same holds for what we say about it—it, too, is situated. Consequently, there is no privileged place outside experience from which to make our observations—there is no completely neutral ground on which to stand. As such, what we say about the nature of experience must be provisional in the sense of being open to revision in light of subsequent experience.

A final question to consider is “Can we really know what experience is like generically?” Clearly, in mastering how we communicate with others, each of us develops a perspective on what it means to be human based on any number of tacit assumptions and beliefs (as “common-sense”) about the nature of experience.\footnote{135} However, these can be problematic when it comes to our willingness to entertain

\footnote{133} Clearly, ordinary experience is historically prior to all its variants, e.g. the more specialized forms of experience encountered in the arts, the sciences or religion that make their appearance secondarily. These more highly evolved forms of interaction, although derived from ordinary experience, would never have come into being if ordinary experience were not the way it is.
\footnote{134} Dewey reminds us that “It is not experience which is experienced, but nature—stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways are experience; they are what is experienced.” Dewey, \textit{LW} 1, 12.
\footnote{135} Perhaps some are built directly into our language, becoming a part of our thinking without our realizing it, while others are transmitted more explicitly. Both can be immensely helpful, perhaps in the sense of being “common sense”, in that they save us from having to construct a world-view entirely from scratch.
alternative perspectives, since we have the tendency to believe that whatever appears commonsensical usually seems incontrovertible. All too often, unfortunately, this results in our unwillingness to give up our assumptions and beliefs without a struggle.\textsuperscript{136} These “inherited ways” of looking at things, in particular the dualistic way, constitute historical obstacles in that they lead us to separate subjects from objects or facts from values. Clearly, such distinctions can be useful, perhaps even necessary in some cases, and Dewey sees no difficulty in our continuing to use them as instruments of thought. However, it is not the case that these distinctions, which we have come to recognize through reflection, were there to begin with and, therefore, constitute reality pure and simple, i.e., as an intellectual invention that is treated as the discovery of an unquestionable truth.\textsuperscript{137}

Perhaps the most problematic consequence of the conventional view is that it treats experience as a purely psychological concept or a mental state of some sort, forced upon us by Nature, that happens within us (the philosophical fallacy). In so doing, such a view places experience inside the one having “an experience” such that, although each of us can report our experiences to others, we can never share them directly. Dewey challenged us to abandon this conventional view of experience and offered a far more inclusive conception that embraces the “experiencer” as well as the “experienced” so that “[i]nstead of signifying being shut up within one’s own private feelings and

\textsuperscript{136} He was acutely aware of these difficulties and almost defeated by them, “I would abandon the term ‘experience’ because of my growing realization that the historical obstacles which prevented understanding of my use of ‘experience’ are, for all practical purposes, insurmountable.” Dewey, \textit{LW} 1, 361.

\textsuperscript{137} Dewey, \textit{L W} 1, 34.
sensations…[experience] signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events.**138**

His reconstructed view recognizes the essential fact that experience is transactional, including not only what registers on our consciousness as we make our way through the world, but the objects and events that compose the world as well. Such full immersion in experience occurs only when its components so “interpenetrate” one another that all sense of separation between self, object, and event is lost.139 Another trait of experience is its temporality or history—that it exists in time and changes over time.140 Also, changes that occur within experience may or may not be intentional, since chance and accident often play as large a part as do ideas and intentions.141

Finally, we also demarcate some segments of ordinary experience by a sense of wholeness and unity often accompanied by feelings of fulfillment or delight. Dewey spoke of these singly, as each one being an experience. An experience, then, is a discrete unit with discernible boundaries that serve to distinguish it from the general flow of events,

We have an experience when the material experienced runs in its course to fulfillment. Then and only then is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experiences from other experiences. A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its

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139 It is only when situations become problematic that such distinctions become evident and useful for isolating this or that element within experience so that we might better deal with the situation as a whole.
140 He reminds us that “[a]n instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically…An experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world.” Dewey, *LW* 10, 224.
141 Consequently, from the standpoint of the one that is experiencing, things do not always unfold in a predictable and smooth flow or turn out as one planned or intended and, when they do, it is likely to be the exception rather than the rule.
solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. Such an experience is a whole and carries with it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. It is an experience.\textsuperscript{142}

Here we return to the significance of the “pervasive quality of the situation” in an experience. The distinguishing feature of the situation, as its pervasive quality, is that it constitutes a sense of fulfillment which results in its subsequent demarcation in and integration within one’s general experience. However, it is fulfillment only in the sense of consummation, not cessation, which gives it its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency. In making the “pervasive quality of the situation” the criterion of evaluation for well-being, what comes to matter most is its pervasive quality i.e., the sense of fulfillment as consummation that is the consequence of the unification of all elements within the transactional field of organism-environment interaction.

**Habits as the Organized Response in Human Situations**

After describing the primary traits of experience and explaining how they function in experience, it seems appropriate at this time to ask the question “What is it that connects continuity and interaction to the situation in human experience?”

Answering this question, at least from the standpoint of pragmatic naturalism, involves examining both the biological and the cultural workings of habit. Habits play a critical role in a Deweyan account of human well-being because they are responsible for

\textsuperscript{142} Dewey, *LW* 10, 42.
organizing the transactional negotiations that occur between the organism and the
environment within nature. They play a constitutive role in human well-being in that, as
organized responses of the organism to the environment, they have a direct relationship to
the pervasive quality of the resultant transactional situation. Thus, in terms of DTE, the
concept of habit is as central to the theory as are the concepts of continuity and
interaction.

The concept has a long tradition within pragmatic naturalism and appeared,
initially, in the pragmatic thought of Charles Sanders Peirce and was developed further
by William James. Peirce defined habit as being the “effect that attention produces upon
the nervous system”, but later came to use the term “fixation of belief” to refer to the way
that ideas “settle down” in the minds of people as habits, customs, traditions, and
folkways of thought.¹⁴³ A belief is something of which we are aware, that settles the
“irritation of doubt” and becomes established in our nature as a rule of action or a
habit.¹⁴⁴ However, it “is not a momentary mode of consciousness; it is a habit of mind
essentially enduring for some time, and mostly (at least) unconscious; and like other
habits, it is (until it meets with some surprise that begins its dissolution) perfectly
satisfied.”¹⁴⁵ Because the essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, it also follows
that we can distinguish different beliefs according to the different modes of action to
which they give rise.¹⁴⁶ Further, in identifying the primary and fundamental law of
mental action as consisting in a tendency to generalization, the general conceptions so

¹⁴³ See “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” (1868) and “The Fixation of Belief” (1877) in Weiner,
Values in a Universe of Chance, pages 39-72 and 91-112 respectively.
¹⁴⁶ He noted, “If beliefs do not differ in this respect, if they appease the same doubt by producing the same
rule of action, then no mere differences in the manner of consciousness of them can make them different
beliefs, any more than playing a tune in different keys is playing different tunes.” In Weiner, Values, 121.
derived are, themselves, the result of the formation of habits consisting of “molecular changes that are consequent upon the activity of the nerve matter and connected with its nutrition.”  

Although it may appear that habits, for Peirce, are purely mental actions, this is not the case because, as rational persons, we believe we can exert a measure of control over our future actions. Although it is not possible to give our future actions any “assignable character”, such control is possible through the process of “self-preparation.” In holding that the highest aim or good of thought consists in the “process of evolution wherein human beings exercise self-control,” that is guided by “socially reasonable purposes,” deliberate conduct is self-controlled conduct. This leads him to claim that a “Reasoning Power” can only refer to the future because “its meaning refers to conduct, and since it is reasoned calculation, must refer to deliberate conduct, which is controllable conduct. But the only controllable conduct is future conduct.” Thought, which is the product of this power, is not something to which “silence and darkness are favorable”, but something that covers “all relational life, so that an experiment shall be an operation of thought. Of course, that ultimate state of habit to which the action of self-control ultimately tends, where no room is left for further self-control, is, in the case of thought, the state of fixed belief, or perfect knowledge.”  

Although habits of beliefs are mental, Peirce claimed that they are empirical because they are something of which we are aware that not only “calms the irritation of doubt”, but they also constitute rules for action that influence future thought and action.

Habit, as understood by James, covered a very large part of life by functioning as “the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent.”\(^{152}\) He saw all living creatures as being “bundles of habits.”\(^{153}\) Given the immensity of habit, anyone engaged in studying the “objective manifestations of mind” must begin by defining its limits clearly.\(^{154}\) In this regard, he distinguished between “simple and complex habits.”\(^{155}\) One of the key traits of habits is their plasticity, i.e., “their structure is weak enough to yield to influence, yet strong enough not to do so all at once.”\(^{156}\) It is the achievement of a relatively stable phase of equilibrium in such a structure that serves to mark-off a new set of habits.

The primary consequence of habits is psycho-physiological growth, which depends upon the particular mode of exercise of the nervous system, although any human being “is born with a tendency to do more things than he has ready-made arrangements for in his nerve-centers. Most of the performances of other animals are automatic. But, in him the number of them is so enormous, that most of them must be the fruit of painful study. If practice did not make perfect, nor habit economize the expense of nervous and muscular energy, he would therefore be in a sorry plight.”\(^{157}\) Given this context, the function of habit is to diminish fatigue by simplifying and making more accurate the movements required for achieving a given result, and reducing the conscious attention

\(^{152}\) James, *Principles of Psychology*, 121.

\(^{153}\) Habits that exhibit an innate tendency he called instincts, while some of those due to education he referred to as “acts of reason”.

\(^{154}\) James, *Psychology*, 104.

\(^{155}\) James, *Psychology*, 108.

\(^{156}\) In this regard James notes that “[o]rganic matter, especially the nervous tissue, seems endowed with a very extraordinary degree of plasticity of this sort; so that we may without hesitation lay down as our first proposition the following, that *the phenomena of habit in living beings are due to plasticity of the organic materials of which their bodies are composed.*” It is the organic nature of this plasticity that led James to conclude that the philosophy of habit is “in the first instance, a chapter in physics rather than in physiology or psychology.” James, *Psychology*, 105.

\(^{157}\) James, *Psychology*, 113.
with which we perform acts.\(^{158}\) An action becomes habitual when “what instigates each new muscular contraction to take place in its appointed order is not a thought or a perception, but the sensation occasioned by the muscular contraction just finished.”\(^{159}\)

For James, if something is “habitual” this means that it is not only the case that we do the right thing at the right time involuntarily, but the wrong thing as well. Consequently, in many cases sensation can serve as a sufficient guide for habitual action. However, for an act to be strictly voluntary, it is necessary that idea, perception, and volition guide it throughout its course until completion.

So, how are we to go about strengthening our (good) habits? For James, the answer lies in the following three maxims of the “law of habit”: 1) that we should be resolute when seeking to acquire a new habit or cease an old one, 2) that we must remember the importance of continuity and that the best way to acquire a new habit is quickly, but only if this is a real possibility, and 3) we must act on every resolution made at the first opportunity.\(^{160}\) The desired consequence of acting in accord with these maxims is a will as “an aggregate of tendencies to act in a firm and prompt and definite way upon all the principal emergencies of life. A tendency to act only becomes effectively ingrained in us in proportion to the uninterrupted frequency with which the actions actually occur, and the brain ‘grows’ to their use.”\(^{161}\) By following the three maxims above, one is in the position to follow James’ final practical maxim: Exercise the will on a daily basis.

\(^{158}\) James, *Psychology*, 114.

\(^{159}\) James, *Psychology*, 115.

\(^{160}\) James, *Psychology*, 123-124.

\(^{161}\) James, *Psychology*, 125.
In essence, this maxim holds that we must “[k]eep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day. That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points, do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test.”162 Failure to act in accordance with these maxims has consequences that range from our “character” to our “nervous system.” James admonishes us that

[the hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in a plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or vice leaves its never so little scar…Down among…nerve-cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering it and storing it up… Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out.”163

The above discussion of the concept of habit in the work of Peirce and James not only serves to set the background for Dewey’s pioneering work in this area, but has implications for the theory of human well-being being under development here.

As I read Peirce, when one’s “habits of mind” are “perfectly satisfied”, as occurs with the “fixation of belief”, what one experiences is not just a sense of equilibrium in a cognitive sense but in a somatic sense as well. It is precisely this somatic sense of

162 James, Psychology, 126.
163 James, Psychology, 127.
equilibrium that has central importance for one’s well-being. James, as well, recognized the psycho-physiological growth dimension of habit (plasticity) and understood the need for the “constant exercise” of habits. Since the primary function of the “three maxims of the law of habit” was to exercise the “will.” I read James as claiming that one’s will is what is of central importance to one’s well-being, i.e., the more resolute one’s will, the better off one will be. Finally, both Peirce and James draw our attention to the projective power that emanates from the interaction between our habits (as thought and will) and the environment we inhabit.

The Unification of Habit in Pre-reflective and Reflective Experience

As with the earlier discussion around the continuity in experience, although Peirce and James provided a necessary foundation for understanding the operation of habit, it was Dewey who significantly deepened the analysis of habit and its operation in experience. Habits, as the controlled adjustments of individuals and environments that are readily available within a given situation, are functions because they require, “the cooperation of the organism and environment. Breathing is an affair of the air as truly as the lungs…We may shift from the biological to the mathematical use of the word function, and say natural operations like breathing and digesting, acquired ones like speech and honesty, are the functions of the surroundings as truly as of a person. They are things done by the environment by means of organic structures or acquired dispositions.”¹⁶⁴ They consist of the acquired tendencies to act which, in experience, we discriminate as ideas, beliefs and emotions. Dewey often referred to them as “arts” because “[t]hey involve skill of sensory and motor organs, cunning or craft, and objective

materials. They assimilate objective energies and eventuate in command of the environment. They require order, discipline, and manifest technique. They have a beginning, middle and end. Each stage marks progress in dealing with materials and tools, advance in converting material to active use.”\textsuperscript{165}

In its most general sense, however, “a habit” refers to a sequence of acts following upon some internal or external cue that leads to the satisfaction of needs.\textsuperscript{166} Furthermore, since it is energy harnessed for a particular purpose and converted to active use, habit is “in itself energetic.” Nor is habit something that just involves interactions of individuals with the physical and natural environment, e.g., the habits of breathing, eating, etc. They pertain to the social environment as well since, in regards to what individuals learn and what groups teach, habits are social not only in terms of their origins but in the sense of their being shared as well.\textsuperscript{167} Kestenbaum argues that the only way to understand human experience is “as the experience of a variety of habits that are formed as a result of the transactions of humans with their surroundings. The meaning carried by the objects of experience, including human beings, is expressive of pre-conscious habitual meaning. They, in turn, are to a large extent responsible for the way the world, including ourselves, is experienced. Consequently, the existence of meaning can be found in the formation of habits and is a pre-condition of reflection and knowledge.”\textsuperscript{168}

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\textsuperscript{165} Dewey, \textit{MW} 14, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{166} He uses the term to refer to a broad range of phenomena, from the gross behavioral phenomena of the individual to the skills that are involved in the social and cultural activities of the group, including patterns of verbal phenomena that constitute the language of the group.
\textsuperscript{167} We commonly call such shared habits “customs” which not only enable us to act in the environment, but also serve to define the environment in which we act.
\textsuperscript{168} Kestenbaum, \textit{The Phenomenological Sense of John Dewey: Habit and Meaning}, 91.
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What is common to all forms of habit in human experience is *interaction* with a physical, natural and social environment that is undergoing constant modification by the action of human agents. In relation to the account of human well-being which forms the focus of this inquiry, habit plays a central role not only in terms of the formation of one’s individual conception of well-being and attainment of it, but also at the social level in terms of the societal formation of our concepts and theories of human well-being. A habit, in essence, is “an acquired predisposition to *ways* or modes of response, not to particular acts except as, under special conditions, these express a way of behaving…. [it] means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimulus, standing predilections and aversions. It means will.”  

It is through the operation of concrete habits that we come to understand our experience since they “do all the perceiving, recognizing, imagining, recalling, judging, conceiving and reasoning that is done.”

Whether at the organic (individual) level or the social level of operation, they consist of the acquired mechanisms or organized activities that are available for dealing with repeated classes of stimuli. Furthermore, they are empirical in that they constitute “lines of activity” that are observable, recurring and subject to reconstruction.

Habits operate at both the *pre-reflective* and the *reflective* levels of experience, with the former accounting for much of our experience and the latter accounting for a much smaller part. At the pre-reflective level, habits operate silently and go unnoticed; however, when our concrete habits fail to operate successfully, our pre-reflective experience immediately transforms itself into reflective experience. This transformation, which is a result of continuous interactions between the organism and the environment, is

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169 Dewey, *MW* 14, 32.
what produces the “challenges” and initiates reflective thought. In such cases, the operation of reflective thought transforms “…a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious.”

Although the basic architecture or blueprint for this concept is Peirce’s “crisis of doubt”, Dewey’s contribution was to enlarge Peirce’s conception so that it could include the development of the self as well as of cultural movements.

In terms of its importance for an account of human well-being, the “principle of habit” is wide-ranging in its scope since it applies to “the formation of attitudes…that are emotional and intellectual…. [and] to all our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions we meet in living.”

As long as concrete habits operate successfully during environmental transactions and negotiations in which one engages in order to live, it is likely that one is not thinking about her well-being at all. Instead, one’s well-being comes to matter existentially when the operation of habit begins with a felt “unsettledness” as discriminated in doubt, irritation, discomfort, disturbance, etc., that serves as a necessary but not sufficient condition for reflective activity.

Dewey referred to this as a problematic situation in which we experience a hesitation or uncertainty as to how to proceed combined with an urgent need to find a way out. It is at times such as these that our well-being comes to matter to us most urgently. Further, depending upon its degree, such unsettledness can further disrupt

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171 Dewey, How We Think, 100.
172 Dewey, LW 12, 19.
173 It is not sufficient because in some unsettled situations non-reflective habits do an adequate job and reflective activity is not needed.
174 Although Dewey placed emphasis on “problematic situations”, Alexander suggests it might be better to describe them as tensional situations in order to stress the importance such readjustments hold for constructive growth and learning. See: Alexander, John Dewey’s Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling, 301, Fn. 32.
settled habits to the extent they are no longer able to reduce doubt or irritation by 
restoring one’s settled experience. If this is the case, then the degree to which a situation 
is unsettled can serve as a comparative measure for the evaluation of human well-being, 
i.e., the more unsettled the situation is the less well-off one will be.

Obviously, our experience shows us that habits do not always work successfully 
since there can be alterations in the physical, natural or social environment that render old 
habits obsolete or generate conflicts among our habits so the performance of one inhibits 
the performance of another. Conflict occurs in situations where the flow of activity is 
blocked, restoration is frustrated and one is uncertain how to proceed. In such situations, 
the energy that was previously channeled through habit is obstructed. It then overflows 
into uncontrolled “impulse” which, without habit to guide it, is directionless and random. 
Ultimately, if the unsettled situation remains then further reflective activity is necessary 
in order to establish new habits. Consequently, the success of any restorative effort 
depends on the instrumental effectiveness of the pre-reflective or reflective habits 
operating to achieve restoration. If new habits are successfully established, then they are 
available when needed in future experience.

At the reflective level of experience, the problematic situation also functions to 
engage the operation of intelligence, i.e., deliberation and reflection. As we will see in 
Chapter 3, deliberation begins with working to recognize what the problem is by 
diagnosing the confronting difficulty, which often requires an inquiry into the character 
of the situation and then re-conceptualizing it. Before taking any overt action, such

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175 Thinking arises when habit is blocked, when a problem arises and initiates the process of inquiry that, if 
successful, will solve the problem. So long as habit works and there is no conflict, there is no occasion for 
thought—action becomes automatic and no thought is required. It is when the habit no longer works that 
something goes awry and we are compelled to think.
deliberation involves, in part simultaneously, the use of a “dramatic rehearsal in imagination” of alternative courses of action that might resolve the conflict. Only afterwards can intelligence play its essential part by not only enabling us to judge, from among the possible courses of action, the one that seems most likely to offer the solution sought, but to make a rational choice from among the alternatives considered as well.\textsuperscript{176} Testing or actually trying out the plan of action to see what happens is necessary because, without such verification, our knowledge is only hypothetical. It is through verification of the hypothesis that energy is enabled to flow smoothly once more into consummation and, with the problem solved, the necessity for deliberation ends.

However, the establishment of a new habit is likely to entail further conflicts, inquiries, and changes so that the process of inquiry continues. Since inquiry is always context specific—it is usually the case that we do not think in general terms, but more often about specific problems, what often comes to be in question is the specific habits involved in the conflict. Although we usually take our habits for granted, they provide us with the tools for developing solutions or determining alternative courses of action that may involve altering either the environment or some aspect of our own behavior, or both. When the need to do so arises, we have to use the tools we have at hand, i.e., the habits we have already learned and still use. They provide the mechanisms we can use to design and execute new modes of behavior, create new institutions, and modify the environment. Even though we can’t question everything at once (e.g., Descartes), we can question different habits as different problems arise. But this must be done against the background of existing habits which, in that situation, are taken for granted. Therefore,

\textsuperscript{176} Dewey is not committed to the claim that a solution actually exists or that we will be able to put it into effect. In fact, he recognizes that our choice may very well be wrong, i.e., the choice we believe is a rational one may not work out in practice.
inquiry must be piecemeal in order to be effective, and hypotheses about future courses of action must rest upon a solid foundation of successful past action.

**Analysis and Conclusion**

Kestenbaum sees Dewey’s pragmatism as an effort to establish the outlines of a philosophy of experience which, by beginning with the “entrance points to the world of the ordinary, opens up to the extraordinary and transcendent.”

The examination of Dewey’s theory of experience undertaken here reveals two fundamentally important facts to bear in mind: 1) the generic traits Dewey does distinguish are the essential ingredients of any intelligible naturalistic metaphysics, and 2) the analysis of these traits shows that they are indissolubly interrelated in the existential context of nature. Perhaps Dewey’s accomplishment here is that he “progressed rather far in characterizing the diversity of experience with common concepts…. [and] developed a metaphysics which restored to nature all the traits and qualities of which it had been divested by the dualisms of modern thought, and he thereby made all of human experience subject matter for experimental intelligence.”

Among the more important features identified in DTE are: its characterization of natural existence as a constant mixture of the precarious and the stable; its sensitivity to the qualitative and aesthetic dimensions of primary experience; its complexly developed conception of the circular interdependence between primary and reflective experience; its demand for open-mindedness to the contingency of the world in which we live; and offering an empirical-experimentalist account of all kinds of knowing (knowledge).

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DTE offers a perspective on the intimate relationship that exists between knowing and making, and by making primary experience the source and *telos* of all reflection, opens up a view on life that acknowledges the indeterminate, vague, obscure and fuzzy dimensions of human existence in an extremely frank manner. Alexander observes that

[b]alancing this teleological dimension of experience is Dewey’s conception of experience as a total *field* of action which has a complex structure at each and every moment and different degrees of focus, clarity, obscurity, and organization. It is *this* which changes from one moment to the next, not by a jerky series of mechanical actions, but by increasing articulation, illumination, meaning and apprehension. To summarize: one must keep vividly in mind that experience for Dewey is both process and field—a “field-process” if you will. Structure is temporarily *dynamic*; activity is ordered.\(^7\)

In claiming that “the cognitive never is all-inclusive,” his philosophical experimentalism rejected all rationalistic attempts at symbolic closure for the benefit of appreciating the varieties and perplexities of human life-experience as it is lived in the concrete.\(^8\) The advantage is that this allows for a vision of a universe that is still “in the making”—an open and pluralistic universe in which there is space for something new and better to happen. Further, since DTE claims that life is neither “bound” nor "reduced” to the surrounding environment but is the consequence of transactions within it, this means that circumstances both in and of nature contribute to the making of a “person” or “self.”

\(^7\) Alexander, “John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Human Experience”, 128.

\(^8\) Dewey, *LW* 1, 30.
However, the “philosophical fallacy” again comes into play here because most accounts of human well-being, including those offered by Plato and Sumner, equate the self or person with a “private consciousness.” Doing so reduces human well-being exclusively to a cognitive state and thus provides only a partial account. In contrast, a Deweyan account of human well-being views the self as an agent operating in an environmental “field of transaction” instead of a spectator who possesses a “private inner life.” The implication this has for our understanding of human well-being is that any account that contains a “privatistic conception” of the self continues the fallacy of a private self or “inner life” from which the “world” is merely inferred. Such falsification of ordinary life is a problem for an account of human well-being because, ultimately, it would mean that human well-being is nothing more than a logical inference that is solely cognitive.

In a Deweyan account of human well-being, one’s valuation or judgment about one’s well-being must be made in terms of the qualities of a situation that are of immediate concern for the self-in-situation and, as such, are empirical judgments. In particular, some experiences (perhaps not that many) can be described as consummatory in that one experiences a situation in which the qualities of harmony and unity are both present. Shifting the locus of well-being to the qualitative features of the situation, as experienced by the self, offers another way to think about well-being that goes beyond merely satisfying one’s desires or preferences. However, this does not mean rejecting that desires, preferences, flourishing or objective lists are involved in human well-being. The problem here is that theories based on desire fulfillment, preference satisfaction or objective lists provide only a partial or incomplete account human of well-being. Such
incompleteness raises a question as to whether they rise to the level of constituting a satisfactory theory of human well-being.

Understanding what it means to be an “individual” in terms of a Deweyan account of human well-being, given the significant emphasis that is placed on the importance of habit, can be accomplished only by relating such understanding to the context of the social group, since no individual exists in total isolation. In fact, since the very generation of the human “self” resides in habits there is no reason to make any claim of a separate substantive self, i.e., to invoke either a “metaphysical soul” or “transcendental knower.” Instead, of a substantive thing, the self is to be understood as a dynamic construct that consists in a particular organization of relatively stable and enduring habits. Although habits can actualize only under appropriate conditions, they exist continuously in a latent form as pre-dispositions to a particular mode of behavior and are at the ready whenever the necessary circumstances are present. The self, as the dynamic structure of these latent or actual habits, although itself an enduring structure, can change and develop as new habits form and old ones are modified. This is the case because habits “interpenetrate” and are not wholly discrete entities—they can combine, interact, conflict and reinforce each other. On this view, the “self” is similar to “character” in that it is “the interpenetration of habits,” which suggests that we know a person or their character when we know how she habitually acts.

Kestenbaum notes that the value in clarifying Dewey’s view of habit from the standpoint of pre-reflective intentionality “helps to make the greatest sense out of this concept. The dramatic, creative meaning of habit, the human meaning of habit, simply

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181 A social group’s immature members become effective adult members through socialization which involves learning the “habits” or the modes of behavior that are successful in satisfying needs.
182 Dewey, MW 14, 29.
cannot be grasped until its sense-producing character is traced to its pre-reflective, pre-predicative foundation.”

The essence of the operation of habit lies in permitting the “stream of action” that is involved in organism-environment interaction to flow without interruption, thereby bringing with it the satisfactions which human needs demand. This helps to demonstrate the importance of habit for well-being since, whenever the flow of the stream of action is interrupted, human well-being will most likely suffer. Similarly, efforts undertaken to restore the flow will contribute to the improvement in well-being. Whether successful or not, our habits provide us with the necessary reconstructive patterns that are enlivened by flexible readjustments to new experiences that are important for growth and learning. Dewey’s theory of habit also offers an interactive phenomenology that helps us to understand the intimate relationship of constructions, reconstructions and deconstructions at the personal level as well as in terms of cultural practices, routines and institutions. On the one hand, cultural viability rests on the operation of habits that inform our active capacities to master new situations, while on the other hand our individual habits incorporate the customs of our life-world.

The self-in-situation or the transactionally situated self is understood as the conscious awareness of the continuity of one’s experience achieved through one’s use of a flexible set of pre-reflective and reflective habits that are brought forth in consequence of one’s interactions with the environment. Such a self is continuously engaged in numerous transactions that involve knowing, doing and feeling within the context of a situation and it is through such engagement that habit, situation, and self become linked together. The self-in-situation, when grounded in the fundamental concepts of

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experience, is an ongoing process of self-reconstruction in relation to the fundamental workings of habit. The reconstructed self-in-situation identifies the human organism with the relations that constitute its situation and the habits used in negotiating transactions within the environment. Human well-being, in this sense, is the consequence of the negotiations or transactions of a self within its situation. This has importance for understanding the “subject relativity” requirement for judgments about one’s well-being discussed in Chapter 1. The valuations or judgments one makes about one’s well-being must be viewed as being ecological rather than egological in scope. As such, the self or subject is the point-of-place in experience for the negotiations that occur in consequence of continuous transaction with the environment. Any judgment one makes about or valuation one gives to one’s well-being must be in terms of the self-in-situation. Consequently, valuations or judgments we make about our well-being are understandable only in terms of situation-relativity, which I believe still preserves the intent of the subject-relativity requirement. In conclusion, although this Chapter has argued that an account of human well-being must be based on “experience,” it also must have respect for experience because in so doing respect is also shown “for the possibilities in thought and knowledge as well as an enforced attention to joys and sorrows. Intellectual piety toward experience is a precondition of the direction of life and of tolerant and generous cooperation among men. Respect for the things of experience alone brings with it such a respect for others, the centers of experience, as is free from patronage, domination and the will to impose.”

\[184\] Dewey, *LW* 1, 392.
Chapter 3

Inquiry, Creative Intelligence and Human Well-being

The striving to make stability of meaning prevail over the instability of events is the main task of intelligent human effort.

John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 49
As Richard Bernstein observes, the existence of inquiry is not in doubt since in every area of life activity human beings examine, and investigate. It is a mode of conduct that is accessible to objective study in which logic functions to discern the methods and patterns of inquiry thereby providing a guide for better and more successful inquiries.\textsuperscript{185}

There are three reasons Dewey’s theory inquiry has value for the account of human well-being under development here: its sensitivity, its self-correcting nature and that it is problem driven.\textsuperscript{186} First, its sensitivity is derived from its being \textit{context-bound} since it is a set of methods that are built up in and through the contexts in which they serve. This is important since the purpose of inquiry is to understand, order, and control our experiences of and relations with the world—it is a primary tool by which we navigate our way through the world. Second, it is \textit{self-correcting} because it is designed to adjust itself in light of anticipated and unanticipated changes in the context or transactional field of organism-environment interaction. Finally, it is \textit{problem driven} in that what guides it are the problems of the inquirer, her interests and efforts, and when it is finished there is no longer the unsettled situation that gave rise to it in the first place. Perhaps most importantly for human well-being, however, is the recognition that inquiry is transformative in that it involves discriminating, analyzing and relating. In terms of the project undertaken here, his theory of inquiry offers the possibility of unifying the operation of discovery and creation in relation to human well-being.

Dewey’s theory of inquiry avoids one-sidedly linguistic, cognitivistic, subjectivistic, or even biologistic reductions since it holds that observers are, at the same

\textsuperscript{185} Bernstein, \textit{John Dewey}, 102.
\textsuperscript{186} In \textit{Deweyan Inquiry: From Educational Theory to Practice}, James Johnston provides a general sketch of the familiar stages in Dewey’s theory of inquiry and relates it to educational practice.
time, agents and participants in cultural practices. He strongly rejected such one-sided theories because they rest upon perhaps the most influential philosophical fallacy which he described as follows:

The theory of knowing is modeled after what was supposed to take place in the act of vision. The object refracts light to the eye and is seen; it makes a difference to the eye and to the person having an optical apparatus, but none to the thing seen. The real object is the object so fixed in its regal aloofness that it is a king to any beholding mind that may gaze upon it. A spectator theory of knowledge is the inevitable outcome. There have been theories which hold that mental activity intervenes, but they have retained the old premise. They have therefore concluded that it is impossible to know reality. Since mind intervenes, we know, according to them, only some modified semblance of the real object, some “appearance.” It would be hard to find a more thoroughgoing confirmation than this conclusion provides of the complete hold possessed by the belief that the object of knowledge is a reality fixed and complete in itself, in isolation from an act of inquiry which has in it any element of production of change.187

What Dewey opposes here is not only the philosophical heritage of Platonist epistemology, but the purported correction offered by modern empiricism as well.

In contrast, his conception of “observing” is much broader in that it involves not only seeing, but hearing, feeling, sensing, and imagining as well. It includes not only

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perceiving and thinking, but acting and participating as well. It is a case of doing and undergoing in the Deweyan sense that comprises all the immediate, fuzzy and elusive qualities of primary experience. Observing begins and ends in life-worldly contexts—in life-experience—with all its ambiguities, uncertainties, contradictions and myriad variety. Here we are always involved as agents who act in more or less consciously reflected ways on the basis of pre-established habits that largely determine the viability of our daily practices. However, as agents we are always participants as well since it is only by communication and shared activities that acting becomes meaningful and informed by performative agency.

Although knowledge may be defined as the “objective” of inquiry, what counts as knowledge is only what is justified by careful use of the norms and methods of inquiry, i.e., what meets the test of warranted assertibility. Knowledge, in the particular sense that Dewey intends, involves continuity in that, when gained in a specific inquiry, it becomes “funded” in our experience, thus serving as the background for further inquiry. But what forms the grounds for such an account of knowledge? Johnston suggests that it is grounded in the following:

1. Knowledge of our individual immediate past. Since we bring previous problem-solving habits to the situation this suggests that we need to distinguish between those that are good and bad

2. The accumulated knowledge of the past that is transmitted through traditions, customs and knowledge of the past.

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188 When understood in this way, “knowledge” is simply an abstract term that relates to “inquiry” in the abstract.

3. Experimental and reconstructive knowledge, i.e., that derived from the investigation of problem solving strategies of past peoples and from which we take such knowledge and use it in the context of the future.

4. Knowledge of current technique, i.e., the ways and means of problem solving which differs depending on the nature of the problem that is being presented.\textsuperscript{190}

Clearly, then, the materials of inquiry depend upon context, e.g., those used to construct an experiment in the physical sciences are notably different from those used to acquire an understanding of a specific work of art or literature.

Knowledge derived through inquiry has two additional characteristics that serve to give it \textit{projective force}. Not only is inquiry required to submit to a public test, but it also constitutes an ongoing self-corrective process in that 1) it has the capacity to adjust itself when its findings are not in accord with the anticipated results and 2) it has the capacity to adjust itself to the contexts in which it is in and used. Although, with the exception of some general features, inquiry will look quite different in different contexts, what is common to all contexts is that a problem or potential problem exists. Granted the context of a specific inquiry may require assuming some knowledge claims, norms, rules, and procedures as “fixed”, it is only in a temporary sense because they may be criticized, revised or abandoned in light of subsequent inquiry and experience. Thus, knowledge is possible without invoking any absolute first truths that are given or knowable with certainty and it neither has nor requires such a foundation in order to be rational.

\textsuperscript{190} Johnston describes these as an assemblage of built-up techniques, common to the various contexts, that are used to problem solve in those contexts. Among the more common techniques are theories, mathematical methods, observational methods, interpretation strategies (e.g. empathy), textual analysis, logic, and communication patterns and strategies. However, such techniques are only “tools” or means, not ends-in-themselves.
Inquiry and its objective, “knowledge”, are rational because inquiry itself is self-correcting since those who engage in the inquiry gradually become clearer about the epistemological status of both its starting points and its conclusions. This is achievable because knowledge claims are continually subject to a public test in order to clarify, refine and justify them.\(^{191}\) This further suggests that a specific inquiry cannot be completely isolated from the context of other inquiries because procedures, methods, rules, and evidence required for the conduct of any inquiry derive from other successful inquiries that have achieved warranted conclusions.\(^{192}\) Irrespective of the specific content of human problems or the nature of problem situations, it constitutes a reflective evaluation of existing conditions. It reflects both shortcomings and possibilities with respect to those operations that are intended to actualize certain potentialities of the situation so that what was once doubtful is now resolved. The relevance of inquiry for human well-being is that its purpose is to create goods, satisfactions, solutions, and integration in what was initially a wanting, discordant, troubled and problematic situation. In this respect, for Dewey, all intelligence is evaluative and there is no need to separate moral, scientific, practical or theoretical experience.

\(^{191}\) A social or public context for inquiry serves as the medium for establishing the warranted conclusions, norms, rules, procedures, etc. for further inquiry. Inquiry not only requires a community of inquirers but helps to further its development as well. Dewey relates his idea of a community of inquirers to his view that an effective democracy requires the existence of a community of free, courageous and open-minded inquirers.

\(^{192}\) By studying them, we can abstract norms, rules, evidence and procedures for directing further inquiry that are open to modification during the course of further inquiry.
Dewey’s Instrumental Logic and Theory of Inquiry

Earlier in Chapter 1, I indicated that this chapter would offer an answer to the question of Dewey’s alternative to the traditional account of Reason. His alternative is an account of reason that forces, through active experimentation, “the apparent facts of nature into forms different to those in which they familiarly present themselves; and thus makes them tell the truth about themselves, as torture may compel an unwilling witness to reveal what he has been concealing.”\(^{193}\) He further recognized that not only are there conditions under which reasoning occurs but that there are forms, or controlling operations, which are characteristic of thought in establishing future consequences as well. Although the “guts of inquiry” depends on different contexts, there is a general operation of the logic of inquiry that is not context dependent. However, this does not entail a system of formal logic because such formalization prevents one from seeing the contexts in which logic takes place and, even more importantly, that the point of logic is that it is something to be used to settle situations. Thus, logic is never an intellectual end in itself, but only a means for solving problems. The advantage to be gained from the logic of inquiry is that, in being descriptive, it is concerned with the ways in which human beings actually do inquire. It is also prescriptive or normative in that its aim is to isolate, appraise and evaluate those norms and standards that are most successful for making warranted knowledge claims.\(^{194}\) However, such standards and norms are not “a priori forms”, nor are they externally imposed upon inquiry. There is nothing that is sacrosanct about them because they only serve as “guiding principles” in order to engage

\(^{193}\) Dewey, MW 12, 97.

\(^{194}\) Bernstein, Dewey, 102.
in inquiry that can be refined, altered or abandoned as a result of the self-corrective process of inquiry.

Perhaps the germ of his conception of inquiry lies in his criticism of the reflex arc concept in psychology, especially his example of the child touching a candle flame. Here he argued that what determines the nature of a particular phase (as stimulus or response) is its function in bringing into successful completion the intentional end established by the organism. The demarcation of these functions in experience is by discriminating between a phase which represents the conditions required to start a reflexive activity (the stimulus) and a phase which represents the completion or meeting of the conditions introduced by the stimulus (the response). It is not necessary here to go into the details of the context and argument, since the crucial point is that this simple example clearly demonstrates the purposeful and teleological nature of any human act. In fact, understanding behavior as involving a “circuit” is what makes it possible to explain why, in the future, the child will normally avoid touching fire. She will avoid it since, as a “circuit of behavior”, the response becomes part of the prior set of conditions that constitutes her particular situation. Consequently, her future responses will adjust to the same stimulus in a way that only her previous engagement with the environment and the organic retention of information (as habit) can provide. The experience of the original relation, the child touching the candle flame, will therefore predictably transform itself in further acts, adding to its function a modified and holistic structure. The modification of the experience of the original relation is that the response now retains the

196 For a detailed discussion of Dewey’s functionalism and critique of the reflex-arc, see Tiles, “The Fortunes of Functionalism”, 39-61.
197 Such “prior status” or “prior conditions” clearly emphasize the primacy of context in human behaviors or actions, as well as anticipates his later emphasis on contextualism.
stimulus. Now, stimulus and response are only “functions” in the organic structure of human behavior. The type of thinking exemplified here, what Dewey refers to as *instrumental thought*, serves as the basis for his theory of inquiry and forms the core of his version of instrumentalism.\(^{198}\)

In a more philosophical sense, however, instrumentalism is primarily associated with the theory and practice of scientific inquiry, although it applies equally to moral and social inquiry.\(^ {199}\) Dewey describes it as “an attempt to constitute a precise logical theory of concepts, of judgments and inferences in their various forms, by considering primarily how thought functions in the experimental determinations of future consequences….it attempts to establish universally recognized distinctions and rules of logic by deriving them from the reconstructive or mediative function ascribed to reason. It aims to constitute a theory of the general forms of conception and reasoning.”\(^ {200}\) Such broad application is possible because the methods and forms of thought that function in the experimental determination of future consequences differ only in type, not in kind. What is common to thought and reflective behavior is that both use the same functional pattern wherein problematic situations become resolved through inquiry that yields *warranted assertion* as opposed to *truth*. It is the settlement of the conditions of doubt, as produced and warranted by inquiry, that distinguishes the warranted assertion as a “working”, “satisfactory” or “verified” idea or hypothesis.

It is also a “kind” in that all inquiry initiates in antecedent conditions of doubt or irritation (after Peirce) and terminates in the establishment of conditions in which doubt

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\(^{198}\) It is in this sense that, in Chapter 4, I develop the construct for a particular “mode” of human well-being that I refer to as *instrumental well-being*.

\(^{199}\) Dewey’s instrumentalism differs from the traditional view of instrumentalism in morals and ethics, for a discussion of the latter, see Sayre-McCord, *Essays on Moral Realism*, 1-23.

or irritation is felt no longer or no longer exists. However, it is not the case that we label a particular bit of a situation as indeterminate. Instead, it is the situation in its entirety that is indeterminate since “we are doubtful because the situation is inherently doubtful.” Further, the situation in which inquiry arises is indeterminate in terms of the issue which prompted it. When the outcome of the situation cannot be anticipated, we usually refer to it as confused. We might call it obscure when the course of its movement involves final consequences that are unclear. We may refer to the situation as conflicting whenever it tends to evoke responses that are incompatible. The point here is that inquiry arises in specific indeterminate situations which involve a complex of factors that are united by a pervasive quality. Finally, the situation that gives rise to inquiry is uniquely qualified by its indeterminateness in that “[t]he peculiar quality of what pervades the given materials constituting them a situation, is not just uncertainty at large; it is a unique doubtfulness which makes that situation to be just and only the situation it is. It is this unique quality that not only evokes the particular inquiry engaged in but that exercises control over its special procedures.” As Bernstein notes, it is this last point that illustrates why Dewey placed so much emphasis on the function of the pervasive quality.

Perhaps Dewey’s most definitive statement of the process of inquiry is that it consists in the “controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.” Here, again, his focus remains on the “pervasive unifying quality” of the experience or situation, as transformed through

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201 Dewey, MW 12, 109.
203 Dewey, LW 12, 108.
the process of inquiry. As a ‘kind’, all inquiry begins with antecedent conditions that consist of situations characterized by their indeterminate nature or internal conflict in which we, as the experiencer (inquirer), experience a felt difficulty. Although indeterminacy certainly motivates us to look for a settlement, the mere existence of an indeterminate situation is not yet inquiry. It is initiated when we anticipate existential consequences resulting from an examination of the conditions in our environment “with reference to their potentialities; and when responsive activities are selected and ordered with reference to actualization of some of the potentialities, rather than others, in a “final existential situation,” is inquiry begun.”

Although not every felt difficulty demands resolution in terms of inquiry, whenever the situation requires it, we tend to follow a general procedure. The first step is to articulate the problem that needs solving, i.e., determining the problematic situation; however, this may require successive refinements during the progression of the inquiry. It is only when we have a “deliberate focus” that we can then say that there is a problem, therefore “problem finding” is always prior to “problem solving.” Thus, an indeterminate situation is not a “problem” until a judgment is made that it is problematic. The challenging task here is to make a judgment as to the “right” or “correct” problem, i.e., to label the existential situation properly. Further, in order for the problem to be genuine (authentic) it must reflect the indeterminate situation out of which it develops. The next step involves the anticipation of consequences through the formulation of suggestion or hypothesis in which various relevant hypotheses or suggestions for solving or resolving the problematic situation are formulated in imagination. This involves thinking ahead.

\[204\] Dewey, Theory of Valuation, LW 13, 111.
about what a particular solution or set of solutions will accomplish, e.g., manipulating our environment(s) to effect a potential improvement by contemplating what the actualization of such manipulation will accomplish. In this case solutions to problems are *existential* in that they require finding the “definite constituents” of a situation which are those found in a “settled situation.”

It is only settled, existential (real) traits that count because a solution produces some improvement in the situation that is notable through observed changes in these traits. One way this may play out is either through a *dramatic rehearsal in imagination* or, if the situation necessitating the inquiry is complex enough, through *hypothetical-deductive reasoning* which requires further refinement of the hypothesis, as well as ascertaining its logical consequences. At this stage in inquiry, *ideas* consist of the anticipated consequences that will be carried out in practice and represent possibilities. While moving along the path of inquiry, some ideas are jettisoned while others are retained and strengthened; however, the test of a good idea lies in the “instrumental force” of the consequences it bears out. At this stage, however, what counts as a consequence is not “existential” since what counts is only what is anticipated to have the preferred existential import. Here, the criterion for success is how well the ideas hook into each other so as to construct a coherent framework or model that is context specific, even though these ideas may be more or less abstract.

The observed facts and the entertained ideas represent the “functional divisions” in the work of inquiry and since both are operational there is a resulting transaction between them which also transforms the character of each. The former are existential and operate in a variety of ways in that
Some observed facts point to an ideal that stands for a possible solution. This idea evokes more observations. Some of the newly observed facts link up with those previously observed and are such as to rule out other observed things with respect to their evidential function. The new order of facts suggests a modified idea (or hypothesis) which occasions new observations whose result again determines a new order of facts, and so on until the existing order is both unified and complete. In the course of this serial process, the ideas that represent possible solutions are tested and proved.205

Although the ideational content of the latter is non-existential, nonetheless they serve to activate and direct further operations of observation because “they are proposals and plans for acting upon existing conditions to bring new facts to light and to organize all the selected facts into a coherent whole.”206 What counts as a fact is dependent on the specific mode of inquiry and, in order to advance the inquiry, the facts must be appropriately selected and used. Not only do they play a role in the inquiry itself, but their role often changes throughout the development of the inquiry. It is generally the case that those facts and ideas which pan out tend to be those that are most often meaningfully related to each other.

The final step in inquiry requires operationalization which tests out the solution in an existential situation, i.e., the one that we determine is a problem. This involves experimental testing which either confirms or disconfirms the hypothesis or suggested solution. At this stage in inquiry some ideas lead directly to existential change while

205 Dewey, LW 12, 117.
other ideas are operationalized when they lead to further operations that terminate in existential change. Because ideas are meaningful relations (thought relations) that arise out of the circumstances of reflecting on anticipated consequences and the means to attain them, Dewey made a further distinction between two types of meaningful relations: conceptions and propositions. Conceptions take the form of a rule that states “if such and such occurs, then this and that will follow” and are “universal”, i.e., they serve as a rule that claims something is the case, given certain specifying conditions. It is under these rules that generic propositions, e.g., “humanity”, “dignity”, “well-being”, etc. operate and the reason they are able to function is that many different generic or existential propositions can comfortably fit under or work with them, which is what gives them the authority to operate. For example, Johnston suggests the cash value of the generic concept of “humanity” is that it has led to existential propositions that have a tangible effect on human conduct by providing ways to develop better living conditions for human beings.

Some propositions consist in statements or sentences, e.g., “It is raining outside” that we believe to be the case and which can be tested existentially (concretely). In inquiry, a proposition is an existential claim about what is in fact the case and are referred to as “generic” propositions. Often, such statements are propositions of classes or kinds that we use to sort, order and classify existential traits, data, phenomena, etc. However, they do not occur in a vacuum since the very authority for their formation comes from a conception. Johnston observes that one trait both universal conceptions

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207 Johnston, *Deweyan Inquiry*, 20.
208 For example, consider the classification of the Animal Kingdom under a “rule”. What is the defining characteristic of a “human being”? So, all human beings have opposable thumbs. Bob has opposable thumbs. Therefore, Bob is a human being.
and generic propositions share is their ability to self-correct. In fact, a conception is only as good as the meaningful relation that it generates, i.e. being helpful. Conceptions also have their operational nature bound up in the generic propositions that evolve from them. If the generic proposition doesn’t pan out or succeed, then either it or the conception that instantiates it is faulty. The repeated failure of a generic proposition is what signals to the inquirer that the original conception is faulty. Whenever the anticipated consequences don’t pan out, it becomes necessary to return to the problem in question in order to develop new conceptions and anticipated consequences. Given this context, it is necessary to view inquiry, which begins and ends in situations, as being a loosely circular or spiral process.

As we have seen, indeterminate situations and their later problematic situations mark the beginnings of an inquiry, while a “satisfactory” (settled) situation marks the end of an inquiry. This means that an inquiry forms a whole with its beginnings and endings in a situation. What is important here is that what occurs between the beginning and the end is an adjustment. Specifically, inquiry forces adjustments to the following: 1) our judgment of what constitutes the problem, 2) our conceptions and generic propositions, and 3) the way we modify the environment, including the tools which we use to do so.209 Ultimately, what counts as a successful inquiry is a satisfactory or settled situation and, until this is achieved, inquiry is continuously self-correcting. What adjustment serves to accomplish is to return harmony and balance to an unsettled environment or state of affairs. In this regard, Ralston notes that accommodation and adaptation are two types of

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209 Johnston, *Deweyan Inquiry*, 22.
adjustment. The former involves acquiesce to the stubborn conditions of our environment by conforming to our physical and social surroundings. The latter involves the active manipulation of the conditions of our environment in order to regain harmony and achieve our desires. He suggests that “hope” could be the regulative principle operating here that “links the inquirer’s means (tools, instruments and even logical forms) to the end, goal or “end-in-view.” It orders the instrumental relations between means and ends, not just in terms of an efficient relation, but as a desire, longing and aspiration that effectively spurs the inquirer on in the face of adversity. It is thus a motivator for growth.”

Nor do we have to look far to find this general procedure since it can be found in common-sense thinking, practical reasoning and the most advanced forms of scientific reasoning; in fact, it is the basic form of all inquiry. They are the general features of both the method of knowing and the reflective situation. It is not a uniform method, however, since the specific elements of an “individual’s method” result from her “native tendencies” and “acquired habits and interests.” Therefore, any ‘individual method’ varies in the degree to which one’s “original instinctive capacities” and “past experiences and preferences” may vary. Once inquiry has established a set of anticipated consequences and successfully shown that these are the fact of the matter for an inquirer or inquirers, it is tested by others. Until this occurs, the anticipated consequences are merely hypotheses. It is the frequent testing of inquiry over lengthy spans of time that tends to generate “common sense” facts of the matter. Here, the existential import of the

211 Ralston,”Growth”, 359.
212 For Dewey, common-sense operates at the level of the concrete while scientific inquiry operates largely at the level of abstract reasoning and ideas.
inquiry is played up and the manner in which the inquiry is carried out is played down. Also, common-sense is oftentimes habituated in that we develop a stock of habits that we use in solving day-to-day problems and in our interactions with others. In the end, the fact of the matter is that we have and use dispositions to treat certain situations in certain ways and, for the most part, when we are successful this contributes to our well-being.

**Creative Intelligence and Human Well-being**

The concept of *creative intelligence* did not arise with Dewey, but emerged out of the earlier classical position in American thought beginning with Emerson who said of the “method of nature” who could ever analyze it? That rushing stream will not stop to be observed. We can never surprise nature in a corner; never find the end of a thread; never tell where to set the first stone. The bird hastens to lay her egg; the egg hastens to be a bird. The wholeness we admire in the order of the world is the result of infinite distribution. Its smoothness is the smoothness of the pitch of the cataract. Its permanence is a perpetual inchoation. Every natural fact is an emanation, and that from which it emanates is an emanation also, and from every emanation is a new emanation.213

Emerson’s understanding of nature viewed the *original tension* as the irreducible dialectic that arises between the imagination and the creative impulse of the human organism that occurs within the unpredictable giveness of Nature (read as the environment). Further, this response is necessarily creative, individualistic, melioristic

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and experimental, i.e., one in which the human organism is given as a creative force in the universe instead of merely a spectator in its unfolding.\textsuperscript{214}

Following Emerson, Pierce further pointed to the essential phenomenology of human thought. As discussed in Chapter 2 he theorized that the process of thought, unlike the traditional understanding of reason, has only one function, i.e., to appease the irritation of doubt. Pierce saw thought as operating according to two elements. First, an individual’s established beliefs are challenged which results in a state of doubt or uncertainty. This requires that the individual must adopt a new belief, which for Pierce is equivalent to adopting a new habit. Second, beliefs serve as rules for acting in a particular way given similar future situations. The important point here is that the function of thought is always to resolve the inevitable tension that continually exists between organism and environment. Where Emerson speaks of “creative imagination”, Pierce talks about the practical function of thoughts while living within a “universe of chance” and James speaks of the “will to believe” that is needed in order to overcome problematic situations. Each sees beliefs and habits as derived from the continuous irreducible interaction between the organism and the environment. Clearly, the concept of creative intelligence, in one form or another, is a long-standing and essential characteristic of American philosophical thought.

For Dewey, it offers the possibility of a naturalistic account of thought that serves as the driving force behind his melioristic-humanistic teleology. He argued for the naturalization of the function of thought and boldly asserted “intelligence within nature

\textsuperscript{214} By stressing self-reliance in his numerous writings, he called on Americans to create their own response to nature through art, poetry and science.
means liberation, as reason outside of nature means fixation and restriction.” Further, a naturalized conception of intelligence is preferable to the traditional dualistic conception of Reason because it has greater instrumental value. He described such intelligence as consisting in the “concrete suggestions arising from past experiences, developed and matured in the light of the needs and deficiencies of the present, employed as aims and methods of specific reconstruction, and tested by success or failure in accomplishing this task of readjustment, suffice. To such empirical suggestions used in constructive fashion for new ends the name intelligence is given.” The central point here is that intelligence is occurring within the very process of experience, which means that it is radical, transformative and constitutes the recognition that consequences and results matter.

Adopting intelligence instead of the traditional conception of Reason has significant implications for philosophy in that the “recognition of the place of active and planning thought within the very process of experience radically alters the traditional status of the technical problems of particular and universal, sense and reason, perceptual and conceptual. But the alteration is of much more than technical significance. For reason is experimental intelligence, conceived after the pattern of science, and used in the creation of social arts; it has something to do.” Nor is Reason (as statically conceived) capable of satisfying the immediate practical needs of the human organism. What serves to make an intelligent human being is not “having reason which grasps first and indemonstrable truths about fixed principles, in order to reason deductively from them to

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215 His reconstruction of reason as naturalized intelligence follows the same general form: after exposing and rejecting the relevant dualism(s) inherent in the traditional Western account of the static conception of Reason, he reconstructs the function of thought to that of creative intelligence. Dewey, LW 4, 156-177.
216 Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, MW 12, 134.
217 Dewey, MW 12, 134.
the particulars which they govern, but in virtue of his capacity to estimate the possibilities of a situation and to act in accordance with his estimate. In the large sense of the term, intelligence is as practical as reason is theoretical.”218 In fact, this is the function of intelligence—overcoming the gap between the organism and the environment. In this context, intelligence involves the judgment or ability to select and arrange the means to achieve those consequences that lead us towards what we have chosen as the end-in-view, which constitutes a potential consummatory experience.

In applying “creative” to the concept of “intelligence” Dewey sought to illustrate the way in which intelligence is reconstructive in that it serves as the purposeful re-shaper of experience:

Essential philosophic reconstruction represents an attempt to state these causes and results in a way freed from incompatible inherited factors. It will regard intelligence not as the original shaper and final cause of things, but as the purposeful energetic re-shaper of those phases of nature and life that obstruct social wellbeing. It esteems the individual not as an exaggeratedly self-sufficient Ego which by some magic creates the world, but as the agent who is responsible through initiative, inventiveness and intelligently directed labor for recreating the world, transforming it into an instrument and possession of intelligence.219

One consequence of his conceptualization of creative intelligence is that his critique of the traditional conception of “Reason” led him to reject the traditional conception of the

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218 Dewey, LW 4, 170.
219 Dewey, MW 12, 108.
“person” as well. As a naturalistic account of reason, creative intelligence implies a set of relations and habits that extend well beyond an individual’s self-encapsulated ego. Furthermore, given that creative intelligence leads to social well-being, it is fundamentally a social-communal conception since it can be directed at the resolution of an original tension that is manifested socially, e.g., as an organism-environment problematic at the community level. This resolution must be achieved not only in as liberating a way as possible, but also must maintain such open possibilities for others.

**Deliberation and the Dramatic Rehearsal in Imagination**

Earlier, in Chapter 2, it was noted that habit is one of three factors that figure into activity, the others being impulse (instinctive activity) and intelligence. As a natural activity, the action of habit carries within it natural information that “pre-reflectively” influences not only our overt behavior, but any reflective or introspective cognitive activity as well. At times, however, the organism-environment interaction becomes so problematic that our habits no longer work effectively and efficiently to overcome the problematic situation. In such instances, it becomes necessary to engage in the process of deliberation since it “has its beginning in troubled activity and its conclusion in choice of a course of action which straightens it out.” Such problematic situations move us from a pre-reflective field of beliefs (as habit) to a reflective level of beliefs (as intelligence) as we seek to maintain or retain a sense of transactional equilibrium. Since natural needs constantly motivate reflective activity, both in terms of establishing immediate lines of activity or general ideas for conduct, *dramatic rehearsal in*

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220 For a detailed analysis of Dewey’s reconstruction of the person, see Lubling, *The Person Vanishes: John Dewey’s Philosophy of Experience and the Self.*
221 However, the more advanced the organism, the more complex, sure and flexible the habits.
222 Dewey, *MW* 14, 139.
imagination offers the best paradigm for negotiating with the actualities of decision-making.  

Because the origination of inquiry lies in the felt need to overcome problematic situations—it is felt existentially and physically instead of merely as a mental or cognitive state—it is necessary to understand deliberation as “dramatic and active, not mathematical and impersonal; and hence it has the intuitive, the direct factor in it.” It begins whenever prior habits and newly released impulses conflict, thereby blocking efficient overt action. The basis for such a view of deliberation is a conceptual system in which practical, not intellectual, activity is the central concern. The process of deliberation lies in our capacity for operating in a reflective mode of experience. Such an account of reflective activity describes the local and present individual as situated within a radically relational universe, not existing outside of it. As a dramatic rehearsal in imagination, deliberation is an experiment in trying out various competing lines of possible action in which “[t]hought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to wait the instruction of actual failure and disaster.” It is “experimental” in that it involves trying out “each habit, each impulse, involved in the temporary suspense of overt action…finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like…[by] making various combinations of selected habits and impulses, to see

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223 In fact, Dewey viewed ethics as the “general activity of problem solving”, i.e., of resolving conflicts between organism and environment.
225 He observed, “[w]e, indeed, estimate the import or significance of any present desire or impulse by forecasting what it would come or amount to if carried out; literally its consequences define its consequences, its meaning and importance. But if these consequences were conceived merely as remote, if their picturing did not at once arouse a present sense of peace, of fulfillment, or of dissatisfaction, of incompleteness and irritation, the process of thinking out consequences would remain purely intellectual.” Dewey, *MW* 5, 292.
what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon. But the trial is in imagination, not in overt fact.”227 Although deliberation occurs in imagination, it ceases when the decision or choice is made. What distinguishes deliberation, as dramatic rehearsal in imagination, from mere calculation is that it attempts to create new values continuously, while calculation attempts to establish fixed values.

Furthermore deliberation, as a dramatic rehearsal in imagination, “is not irrevocably tied to the delight and disappointment of the past as a calculus must be…the calculative model offers no real standard for making decisions, just the injunction to accumulate more of what has seemed enjoyable before.”228 This has significant implications for how we are to understand the relationship between the “self” and human well-being. The self in calculation is one that considers pluses and minuses in isolation from one another. Like profit and loss entries in a ledger, they cannot be related to one another—only added or subtracted. This is because the conception of self which underlies calculation is inferior to that which grounds dramatic rehearsal…The method of calculation treats human beings as repositories of disconnected states. Figuring out the psychic costs and benefits of each action deals with the individual as a place for credits and debits to be recorded…Implied in calculating outcomes…is a conception of the self as a collection of unrelated states or

227 Dewey, MW 14, 133.
228 Kupfer, Experience as Art, 144.
moments. No enduring structure of the self enters into the calculative way of decision-making.\textsuperscript{229}

In contrast, deliberation as dramatic rehearsal in imagination leads to conceiving the “self” as the more or less successful organization of habits and interests that, ultimately, determines a way of living (well-being). Simply put, the act of rehearsing our options in imagination provides a procedure for discovering and not simply rehashing sources of value.

The importance that dramatic rehearsal in imagination has for our own well-being is that it not only focuses our attention on the nature of our activities and their impact on us, it also projects the satisfaction or frustration of our interests through it. It gives us something concrete with which to work and revise, thus providing us a way to discover the possibilities in action. In doing so, it “can suggest new possibilities of action, beyond those entertained at the outset of the decision-making.”\textsuperscript{230} The most powerful feature of deliberation (as dramatic rehearsal in imagination) is that it involves a choice that gives decisive direction to action. Not only does it release energy, it leads to the emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences, as the pervasive quality of the situation. All deliberation is a search for acquiring new beliefs and continuous transformation—it is a way to act, not a search for a final terminus since its aim is to facilitate stimulation.\textsuperscript{231} Since there are no fixed-ends or final-states, the only possibility is to conceive deliberation as being a circular process in which there is no beginning and

\textsuperscript{229} Kupfer, \textit{Experience as Art}, 159-152.
\textsuperscript{230} Kupfer, \textit{Experience as Art}, 145-146.
\textsuperscript{231} As I noted earlier in this chapter with regard to Dewey’s theory of inquiry, the entire paradigm he suggested for deliberation is likewise traceable to his early work in psychology in which he discredited the reflex arc concept.
no end. There are only “aims” or “ends-in-view” and the aims of deliberation serve as “redirecting pivots in action” and as the “turning points in activity.”

The process by which aims are formed clearly has significant importance for the account of human well-being under development. It generally begins with a wish (as an emotional reaction against the present situation) along with a hope for something better, in which

\[\text{action fails to connect satisfactorily with the surrounding conditions.}\]

Thrown back upon itself, it projects itself in an imagination of a scene which if it were present would afford satisfaction. This picture is often called an aim, more often an ideal. But in itself it is a fancy which may be only a phantasy, a dream, a castle in the air. In itself it is a romantic embellishment of the present; at its best it is material for poetry or a novel...It becomes an aim or end only when it is worked out in terms of concrete conditions available for its realization, that is, in terms of a “means.”

However, aims are not all we use to guide our deliberation, since our judgments must also conform to some principles and criteria. It is creative intelligence that is concerned with principles, criteria and judgments because it involves foreseeing the future so that our actions have order and direction. In this regard the “diffused or wide applicability of habits is reflected in the general character of principles: a principle is intellectually what a habit is for direct action. As habits set in, grooves dominate activity and swerve it from conditions instead of increasing its adaptability, so principles treated as fixed rules

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233 Dewey, MW 14, 161.
instead of helpful methods take men away from experience….situations into which change and the unexpected enter are a challenge to intelligence to create new principles.”

Finally, since creative intelligence operates not only at the individual level, but at the social level as well, it has broad relevance for human well-being.

**Analysis and Conclusion**

Obviously, there are those who question the plausibility of Dewey’s theory of inquiry. Some critics have suggested that it leaves little room for emotion and imagination—it is just a theory about experimentation. However, the fallacy here is in claiming that his view of experimentation has nothing (or very little) to do with emotion, imagination and creativity. Such criticism ignores that Dewey consistently and strongly accentuated the aesthetic and qualitative nature of inquiry within the context(s) of art by emphasizing the *satisfaction* of the experience rather than the particular techniques and methods involved. Consequently, the “unified whole” is what all inquiry aims for and what is given priority in his account. Further, claiming that inquiry has little to do with emotion, imagination and creativity seemingly disregards the very contexts within which they occur. The very function of inquiry is to order and control responses thereby increasing the possibility for richer and more deeply felt emotions to rise to the surface.

Another feature such critics apparently overlook is the importance Dewey gives to deliberative or dramatic rehearsal since this involves imagining anticipated consequences to the tentative solutions at hand. Imagination, especially in dramatic rehearsal, is at the core of inquiry because “our capacity for having a conceptually coherent world stable

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235 Johnston, *Deweyan Inquiry*.
236 Johnston attributes this criticism to Israel Scheffler, E.D. Hirsch and Diane Ravitch, and Keiran Egan.
enough to allow some measure of intelligent, deliberate mediation is imaginative through and through. Imagination is at the very foreground of meaning.”

Imagination’s most important function results from our capacity, while situated in the present, to take in the full scope of a situation and establish continuity between the actual consequences of past conduct and the prospective consequences of future conduct. In dramatic rehearsal imagination serves as “the only gateway though which these meanings [derived from prior experiences] can find their way into a present interaction; or rather…the conscious adjustment of the new and the old is imagination.” In this context imagination involves “the capacity to understand the actual in light of the possible…it constitutes a phase of activity…in which possible activities are envisioned in relation to our own situations, thereby amplifying the meaning of the present and creating the context from which present values may be criticized, thus liberating the course of action itself.”

A related criticism is that Dewey’s theory of inquiry denigrates or downplays abstract thinking. This criticism is dealt with easily once it is made clear that conceptions are required in order for the various existential propositions to function at all. Perhaps the real concern here has less to do with “abstract thought” and more to do with the tentative nature that Dewey gives to conceptions and propositions. The problem here is that the abstract thoughts that Dewey endorses are tentative because they depend on their operational status instead of being the “timeless truths” or metaphysical states of affairs that his critics have in mind. As shown in Chapter 1 and 2, as well as in the

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239 Dewey, LW 10, 276.
241 Johnston in his Deweyan Inquiry, notes that such criticism has been around for close to a century now and cites Henry Edmundson, Kieran Egan, E.D. Hirsch, and Dianne Ravitch as among the more recent critics in this vein.
present chapter, since these critics endorse a realm of “fixed ideas or notions” that Dewey
denies, they will never find his theory satisfactory.

Another criticism is that the “self-correcting” nature of inquiry is too lenient on
what counts as hard facts and truths, and that the “facts of the matter” have more force
and depth than Dewey’s theory gives credit. Although this may be correct, the problem
here is that what counts as truth has little to do with the “correspondence theory of truth”
of the traditional empiricists. Instead, as noted earlier in this chapter, Dewey preferred
the term “warranted assertibility” which emphasizes that the “settled results of inquiry”
are always potentially subject to modifications or outright dismissal. His point here is
that the putative “facts of the matter” are potentially subject to change under varied
conditions, and these conditions are occasioned by the problems that we face.

One final criticism that is particularly relevant to this inquiry is whether our own
best results can be assured by the success of our inquiries. Although this may appear
circular, it depends upon how we define “success” in this case. For Dewey, the definition
of success is the satisfaction that results in consummatory experience, i.e., the situation as
a unified whole. This response is not merely emotional, but includes cognitive,
behavioral and affective elements as well. On this view, “success” leads to “future
success” because there is now a method that can be applied in different contexts. Of
course, this method may require “adjustments” or be developed as a “habit of inquiry”
that becomes a routine feature of our general dispositions. Dewey often spoke of acquiring an attitude or temper of inquiry.

242 Thus, a successful inquirer
not only understands that different contexts require different techniques, materials and
tools, but also recognizes the importance of possessing attitudes that are congenial to
different contexts. For Dewey, among the most important dispositions necessary for inquiry are *directness* (confidence), *open-mindedness* (willingness to entertain other ideas), *single-mindedness* (whole-heartedness) and *responsibility* (seeing a thing through).243

One advantage of Dewey’s account of creative intelligence is it recognizes that the success of any inquiry involves not only the context-relative processes and materials of inquiry, but the dispositions of the inquirer as well. Perhaps the latter suggests that character, albeit of a Deweyan type, is a necessary ingredient of inquiry. Although valuable information and techniques can be gained through practice there is, however, a limit to which they are transposable to other contexts. Ultimately, there is no substitute for information and exercise that is internal to the context of inquiry. Recently, Code has advanced a non-transcendent view of knowledge referred to as “ecological thinking” which is a picture of:

an epistemic subjectivity and agency social-culturally learned and practiced, for which community, ecologically conceived, is a condition sine qua non for the production, circulation and acknowledgement of claims to know. Its articulation in the language of ecology…is intended to unsettle assumptions about isolated, abstract, formal knowledge claims advanced and evaluated in isolation from their circumstances of their making and the concrete conditions of their possibility and from their consequent situational effects…[they] can be articulated, heard and

enacted only by knowers inculcated into a form of life…where conditions
for their articulation and acknowledgment are already in place.244
Lang notes that although ecological thinking does not reduce to a set of rules or methods
and may play out differently from situation to situation, it is sufficiently coherent to be
interpreted and enacted across widely diverse situations. Some contexts involve the use
of metaphors, images and symbols that operate to shape and govern possibilities of being,
thinking, feeling and doing. In making no assumptions about separation between a
context and the elements that are contained by it, ecological thinking holds that
knowledge is something that is made, negotiated and circulated because “the nature and
conditions of the particular “ground” the situations and circumstances of specific
knowers, their interdependence and their negotiations have claims to specific epistemic
scrutiny equivalent to those of allegedly isolated, discrete propositional knowledge
claims.”245 As such, ecological thinking contexts come to be understood as interactive,
interdependent, transactional epistemic ecosystems in the sense that “epistemic” is taken
to involve the construction and enactment of embodied or situated knowing.

Although there are many contexts for inquiry among the most common found in
human experience are science, aesthetics, interpersonal, public, and bodily-kinesthetic.246
The scientific context involves experimentation under and in laboratory conditions where
the concern frequently is with quantification and the purpose is related to the precision
and accuracy necessary for measured findings. Aesthetic contexts, in contrast, involve
the making, doing and reflection involved in art, music and literature where the concern
is with a certain sort or quality of experience, i.e., a highly satisfactory experience. The

244 Lang, “Ecosystems”, 182-183.
245 Lang, “Ecosystems”, 183.
246 Johnston, Deweyan Inquiry, 14-16.
interpersonal context involves relationships with other individuals, e.g. family, friends, colleagues, and authority figures. In this context inquiry focuses on communication skills, dialogue, and developing a shared and sympathetic set of sentiments towards others. One reason group projects are often undertaken, whether scientific, athletic or artistic, is for the creative, imaginative and critical resources that others bring to the group. The public context involves relationships with fellow citizens, the larger community and beyond. Finally, the bodily-kinesthetic context is concerned with body awareness and psychomotor control. However, Johnston notes that one cannot simply transpose the techniques and methods from one context onto another and expect appropriate consequences to follow.

In conclusion, although all inquiry is context dependent, the common features of Dewey’s theory of inquiry can be summarized as follows:

1. Inquiry always has the same beginning point and final product. It begins in doubt, uncertainty and puzzlement that are more that “subjective” states because it is the situation itself that is problematic or questionable. It ends with the transformation of problematic situations into understandable and manageable ones. When we inquire, we develop distinctions and relations out of the situation that allows us to “see through” the problem.

2. Inquiry is inclusive of common sense and science; it has a variety of techniques although there is a common structure or pattern to inquiry and its procedures are anti-reductionistic. It also involves a “somatic intelligence” in operation, i.e., manipulation, as some form of doing by the inquirer, is involved.
3. Past inquiries form, in part, the context for further inquiries since we use what we have already learned in present as well as future problem-solving.

4. Because inquiry can help solve the problems of ordinary people (including social problems) responsibility is a human accompaniment of inquiry. There are two additional features of Dewey’s theory of inquiry related to “growth” that serve to underscore its value for human well-being: its sensitivity to context and its ability to self-correct.247 Although the ability of inquiry to induce growth and educate have been neglected by educators, Johnston observes that “[i]nquiry must presuppose experience and growth, as the increase in the fund of meaningful, as well as satisfying experiences.”248 However, it is important to be cautious when equating educational growth with engaging in successful inquiries, since by definition the inquirer doesn’t know in advance where the inquiry is headed or what the outcome will be.

Finally, since inquiry and growth are open-ended evolutionary processes guided by human intelligence, the experienced inquirer learns to recognize the features of successful inquiry through her repeated involvement in problem-solving activities. This, in itself, is an ability that signals an unfolding process of growth because “[t]he formation of a self, new in some respect or some degree is…involved in every genuine act of inquiry.”249 For example, although the difference here is only one of emphasis, the “self” in the “cognitive situation” resolves the situation by means of a change produced in the environmental conditions, while the “self” in the “moral situation” reconstructs itself as the distinctly demanded means. The “self” engaged in inquiry undergoes reconstruction “according to conditions set by the need of following subject-matter where it leads,

247 See Johnston, Inquiry and Education: John Dewey and the Quest for Democracy.
requires willingness to surrender a theory dear to the heart of an inquirer and willingness
to forego reaching the conclusion he would have preferred to reach.”

But even more is required of inquiry if the aim is to solve the problem of reconstructing the self since it
must also take into account reconstruction of the existing conditions. Scientific inquiry is
uniquely suited for this role because of its success in “effecting an outcome satisfying the
needs of the situation.”

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250 Dewey, Ibid. 587.
251 Dewey, Ibid. 587.
CHAPTER 4

Ethics, Value and the Instrumental Mode in Human Well-being

If instrumental efficiencies need to be emphasized, it is not for the sake of instruments, but for the sake of that full and more sure distribution of values which is impossible without instrumentalities.

John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 308
For Dewey, value holds a central place within the existential matrix of human experience and is inextricably tied to human well-being because “[o]ur constant and unescapable concern is with prosperity and adversity, success and failure, achievement and frustration, good and bad. Since we are all creatures with lives to live, and find ourselves within an uncertain environment, we are constructed to note and judge in terms of bearing upon weal and woe—upon value.” Although the traits of nature (e.g., the precarious, the stable, quality, ends and histories) are implied by moral experience, some form of acknowledgment of these traits is necessary in order to make the actual experience of moral life possible. For Dewey, it is possible to explicate them only by special reference to their occurrence in moral experience so that what distinguishes value, from merely liking or approving of something, is the consummatory phase of intentional conduct.

As a consequence, philosophy’s place is within this matrix of weal and woe. Both the inquiry into and the associated reflection about value are necessary not only at the level of individual well-being, but at the social level as well. In this context, moral reflection is not about producing imperatives for conduct or prescriptions for duty, but about inquiring into all the conditions that are relevant to the formation of what actually functions as human well-being in experience. Since all propositions which fulfill the “functions” of moral deliberation are cognitive in that they neither prescribe obligations nor prove that certain actions possess inherent moral properties, their function is to enlighten the formation of values. As a philosophical term, however, “value” is heavily loaded and used in different ways, so it seems especially important to be as clear as

\[252\] Dewey, *LW* 1, 33.
possible as to its meaning.\textsuperscript{253} What is clear, at least in terms of the current inquiry, is that Dewey viewed the discrimination of whatever it is that has “value” as being a function of the inclusive relation of human beings and the natural environment.\textsuperscript{254}

The Relevance of Dewey’s Ethical Meliorism for Human Well-being

Chapter 2 examined the importance of habits in Dewey’s theory of experience. The principle of habit also enters into ethics not only because habits are social in nature, but because moral considerations enter at every point in the process of natural and social inquiry as well.\textsuperscript{255} Since the meaning of “moral” covers all human action, social phenomena such as habit, custom, and scientific methods of inquiry are simultaneously moral and natural. In fact, morality is implicit in the very existence of customs or socially established ways of acting because such institutionalized habits are normative by their very nature in that

all conduct is interaction between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social…progress proceeds in two ways, and…freedom is found in that kind of interaction which maintains an environment in which human desire and choice count for something. There are in truth forces in man…infinitely frail in comparison with exterior forces, yet they may have the support of a foreseeing and contriving intelligence. When we look at the problem as one of an

\textsuperscript{253} As important as value is as a philosophical term, it is ambiguous since we often use it in different ways. Sometimes we use it as a verb, e.g., “to value” or “give value to” something or that something is “to be valued.” At other times we use it as a noun that designates something as “a value.”

\textsuperscript{254} His criticism of the principal theories of value is in terms of the erroneous metaphysical and/or methodological assumptions upon which they are based. Since they claim that certain evident truths of moral experience are denied to nature or are misunderstood, they contain philosophical concepts that “obscure rather than enlighten” such experience.

\textsuperscript{255} For a thorough treatment of the development of Dewey’s ethical thought, see Welchman, Dewey’s Ethical Thought.
adjustment to be intelligently attained, the issue shifts from within
personality to an engineering issue, the establishment of the arts of
education and social guidance.\textsuperscript{256}

Furthermore, morality is also implied by the fact that human action is oriented to natural
goods, i.e., to the things that will satisfy human needs.

Moral considerations are intrinsic to the process of deliberation as well since it is
through reflection and choice that we seek the best from among the alternative courses of
action projected in the dramatic rehearsal in imagination. However, moral deliberation is
never immediate in that, as with the general method of inquiry, it begins with an effort to
determine the nature of the problematic situation and discover what the options really are
or involve before making a rational selection from among them. It is “a process of active,
suppressed rehearsal; of imaginative dramatic performance of various deeds carrying to
their appropriate issues the various tendencies which we feel stirring within us. When we
see in imagination this or that change brought about, there is a direct sense of the amount
and kind of worth which attaches to it, as real and direct, if not as strong, as if the act
were really performed and its consequences really brought home to us.”\textsuperscript{257} By imagining
ourselves acting out the various courses of action open to us, we discover whether and
how particular dispositions are expressed in such courses of action. In fact, there is a
direct sense of worth here which comes in the form of a sense of relief or frustration,
pleasure or pain, which serve as a “subjective signal” that the course of action anticipated
will express one of our active dispositions. It is only, “[w]hen many tendencies are
brought into play, there is clearly much greater probability that the capacity of self which

\textsuperscript{256} Dewey, \textit{MW} 14, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{257} Dewey, \textit{MW} 5, 292.
is really needed and appropriate will be brought into action, and thus a truly reasonable happiness results.”

However, at the conclusion of such a dramatic rehearsal a decision about what goods to pursue still must be made. Thus, dramatic rehearsal is a method for gaining information that is necessary for a moral judgment and, consequently, such judgment is not immediate. As such, morality refers to the control of future action since, after all the consequences of the proposed alternative hypotheses are considered, some projected courses of action promise more in the way of good than do others. Morality also enters into the way that others respond to our choices of action in terms of the social consequences of our actions. Although Dewey viewed such evaluative behavior on the part of human beings as a “natural, though emergent, fact that remains mysterious” it is, nonetheless, simply an empirical fact that evaluation is a form of human behavior—people do think and act in terms of goods, and they approve or disapprove of certain thoughts or acts. Given that some persons will approve or praise certain actions while others will disapprove or condemn them, the very act of choice must take those consequences into account as well, if they are to be considered rational.

Another fact is that moral responsibility arises from a liability in that others in the group first hold us responsible for our actions so that we then learn to hold ourselves responsible in consequence of their responses. Thus, the point in praising or condemning past actions is that it leads to the control of future actions. Furthermore, moral responsibility is a necessity that exists both for the group with respect to its members and for the members with respect to itself as the group. As a consequence, all human action

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258 Dewey, MW 5, 293.
becomes “conduct” that it is morally appraised, controlled and guided from within the natural world. Not only did Dewey describe the process by which conduct is formed and preserved, he used this description to correct and refine the process itself. In viewing conduct as a continuous stream of behavior, from the cradle to the grave, it is possible to cut into the stream in many ways. It can be divided into component sequences as we like and we can view the last act of the sequence as the end for which the preceding acts are the means. Photographically fixing a distinction that is, at most, relative to ever-changing interests represents only one particular way of dividing what is actually a continuum. Here again, as with his theory of inquiry, such a distinction is context or situation dependent in that it is purely functional and relative to the specific point of view we hold at the moment.

In viewing human beings as fundamentally “energetic creatures” whose action must be directed and controlled, it was necessary for Dewey to redefine motive in its moral sense. It is not merely something that impels a specific action, but also serves to channel a human being’s natural activity in such a way that it will have specific consequences. To say that a given act has a specific “motive” (e.g., greed) is not to state the pre-existing cause of the act; instead, it simply distinguishes a particular element within the act as having the tendency to produce certain consequences, along with rendering a judgment about the act in light of the desirability of the consequences. Therefore, attributing motives to an agent is simply part of the moral appraisal of the act, the purpose of which is to control the agent’s future action. One consequence of

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259 He observes that man “is an active being and that is all there is to be said on that score.” Dewey, MW 14, 84.
260 This serves to assure the agent that her action is motivated by greed, of which the group disapproves, thereby giving her a reason to modify her action in the future, i.e., to avoid having such an adverse motive
Dewey’s view is that the whole question of motivation is inextricably involved with moral judgment and with teaching individuals to conform their future action to socially approved standards which are subject to on-going reconstruction as well.

As noted in Chapter 1, Plato’s account of human well-being rested heavily on the concept of *virtue*. Dewey provides an account of virtue in which his reconstruction of habit and motive provide the grounds for understanding it in naturalistic terms. Virtues are not separate from habits and motives, but refer to “moral properties” that exist as components of the self. Certain habits are referred to as being “virtuous” because they tend to produce consequences that are believed to be good, but “apart from such tendency a ‘virtuous’ disposition is either hypocrisy or self-deceit.”

His use of “tendency” here is critical given his opposition to any theory that locates virtue exclusively in either inner intention or a particular set of overt consequences. Virtues, then, are motives in the sense that they “are ends because they are such important means. To be honest, courageous, kindly is to be in the way of producing natural goods or satisfactory fulfillments.”

However, such goods and fulfillments are not always possible through either inner intentions or objectives since luck, accident, and contingency also play a part.

Welchman sums up Dewey’s view on virtue as being “the expression of any particular disposition to action is desirable (thus virtuous) if it enhances an individual’s freedom to construct harmonious, flexible, stable life projects that further enhance the individual’s...

attribution to her. If the disapproval of the group is successful, she is induced to channel her behavior voluntarily along those lines that the group approves, and so to want to do what she must do anyway.

261 Dewey, *MW* 14, 34.
capacity to participate in her community’s life. Dispositions to action are undesirable (vicious) if they tend to promote the reverse.”

Moral deliberation is not simply a matter of following an absolute rule or fixed method of calculation, rather it is a moral inquiry that involves making a decision about which habit (as a Deweyan motive) will lead to desirable results. Those with the highest probability of doing so are determined by observing the consequences as produced over an adequate number of successive trials. It is in this probabilistic sense that Dewey uses the word tendency. Certain habits or motives are referred to as being a “virtue” because they are especially conducive to producing particular consequences, i.e., because of their tendency to do so. Dewey saw virtue, when understood as a dynamic structure of habits and motives, as applying to the transactional or situated self—a self has a virtuous character if its habits and motives are virtuous, a vicious character if its habits and motives are vicious. One’s choice of the kind of self that one is to be is always a moral choice—it involves choosing those habits and motives having the tendencies to produce certain types of consequences.

In understanding moral deliberation as moral inquiry, Dewey held that it is the degree to which the process of deliberation is open to evaluation and improvement that further enhances the effectiveness of the process of reconstruction of the problematic situation, including its moral context. Chapter 3 noted that inquiry involves the formation of specific reflective habits, i.e., problem identification, dramatic rehearsal in imagination, elaboration of consequences, and evaluation of the consequences of our projected behavior. As did Peirce and James, Dewey saw the success of the principles of

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264 Welchman, Ethical Thought, 215-216.
the scientific method as proof that our principles of inquiry must themselves be held as hypothetical and constantly tested against new experiences, new problems, and new verifications. His reconstruction of deliberation as inquiry also led him to a re-analysis of the ends-means distinction and the role of future ends in deliberation.265

The problem of ends is crucial for the process of moral deliberation because, since action is purposive, we are always involved in seeking means to the attainment of relative ends. However, rational knowledge is possible only if based upon “tendencies” for a course of action to realize an end-in-view, i.e., the known probability, based on prior experience, that such a course of action will have such consequences.266 Thus, it is through the projected consequences of present conduct that we are able to assign meaning to present action. The significance of a present act lies in the difference that it will make in the future (as now conceived)—in all the anticipated consequences (both good and bad) that our present action may be expected to have. This is precisely what gives our moments of present choice significance; they can make the world other than it is or would have been had we acted otherwise. Such present moments of choice can make a real difference because moral choice serves as an effective agent in the world and for Dewey this fact is what gives meaning and zest to life.

It is such a view of ethics that underlies his call to the heroic life and belief in the possibility of genuine social reform. He recognized clearly that the evils of and in life, whether natural or artificial, cannot be avoided. This led him to reject both optimism and pessimism. In their place he offered meliorism which is “the belief that the specific

265 There is no such thing as an “end-in-itself.” Instead, the only goods sought are those which are always themselves means to further goods; and means which, only while we seek them, are also ends.
266 For Dewey, there is nothing else upon which to base the possibility of rational knowledge since there are no more certain guarantees of future outcomes upon which to base conduct.
conditions which exist at one moment be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event, may be bettered. It encourages intelligence to study positive means of good and the obstructions to their realization, and to put forth the endeavor for the improvement of conditions. It arouses confidence and a reasonable hopefulness that optimism does not.\textsuperscript{267} As noted previously, his view of moral deliberation and moral choice also offers the possibility for human beings to experience genuine freedom. However, such freedom can be achieved if and only if the following three conditions are met: 1) one possesses the ability to carry out plans, 2) one possesses the capacity to vary and experiment with these plans and, 3) it must really be the case that our desires and choices are effective causes in the world.

The first condition separates well-conceived plans, which can be carried out in action, from those that are merely the dream of a possible world. The second condition makes deliberation and rational choice possible; otherwise the “ruts of custom” are worn ever deeper and future thought or action is helplessly blocked by unresolvable conflict. However, Dewey placed the most stress on the third condition since its fulfillment depends upon our ability to forecast accurately what will be the consequences of present conduct.\textsuperscript{268} But what is the means by which such effective freedom can be achieved? He viewed education as being the key instrument here since it involves the way in which habits are formed and culture is transferred from one generation to another. It is through education that the habits of deliberation, critical inquiry, dramatic rehearsal, and empirical verification can be created, thus shaping the “cake of custom” before it

\textsuperscript{267} Dewey, \textit{MW} 12, 181-182.

\textsuperscript{268} This requires a solidly grounded empirical social science through which we can accurately estimate the probability that a given course of conduct or choice will have the desired consequences. For Dewey, social science becomes a condition of freedom and of the effectiveness of moral choice in the world.
hardens. Because education can affect the child before traditional habits are fully ingrained, capitalizing upon the remaining plasticity, it offers a route to the reconstruction of the world—either as a force for freedom and growth or for bondage and stagnation, depending on how we use it.

Dewey’s theory of ethics also has implications for how the person or self is to be understood, i.e., not as property of human beings, like their natural endowments. Instead, it refers to a complex set of functions that these natural endowments may be used to perform since “[o]ne becomes a person as one learns to perform the functions constitutive of personality, in accordance with the social rules for their performance.”269 It is only through participating in already established systems of conduct that one can come to “apprehend his own powers, appreciate their worth and realize their possibilities, and achieve for himself a controlled and orderly body of physical and mental habits. He finds the value and the principles of his life, his satisfaction and his norms of authority, in being a member of associated groups of persons and in playing his part in their maintenance and expansion.”270

This suggests that social interaction is a necessary condition of moral agency since, “[a]part from the social medium the individual would never know himself, he would never be acquainted with his own needs and capacities.”271 It is also the case that social conditions not only “evoke what is latent, and bring to conscious attention what is blind, but they select, encourage and confirm certain tendencies at the expense of others. They enable the individual to discriminate the better and worse among his tendencies and

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269 Welchman, Ethical Thought, 165.
270 Dewey, MW 5, 386-387
271 Dewey, MW 5, 388.
achievements.”

Not only is participation in social institutions a necessary condition for one being a *self-conscious and rational agent*, it is also a necessary condition for being a *moral agent* because being a self-conscious and rational agent is a necessary condition for moral agency. The important conclusion here is that “it turns out that Dewey’s claim that social dispositions and their satisfactions are qualitatively superior to their nonsocial counterparts is not after all fallaciously derived from a set of merely factual statements about human sociability.”

Finally, although Dewey argues that there is no universal a priori meaning or end to human life or action, this doesn’t mean that we should lack the motivation to carry on living and struggling to improve our lives. For some the very conception of a fixed antecedent standard may offer a degree of contentment, however, it is but “another manifestation of the desire to escape the strain of the actual moral situation, its genuine uncertainty of possibilities and consequences. We are confronted with another case of the all too human love of certainty, a case of the wish for an intellectual patent issued by authority. The issue after all is one of fact. The critic is not entitled to enforce against the facts his private wish for a ready-made standard which will relieve him from the burden of examination, observation and continuing generalization and test.”

Just because life has no intrinsic value from a pragmatic perspective doesn’t entail that it is valueless—it is just that it has no value until it is valued. Nor does it entail that life is meaningless, it just says that it meaning still has to be constructed. Consequently, our lives and the meaning they have for us grow continually deeper and more complex. In holding the belief that the meaning and value of our lives is up to us, Dewey saw no

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274 Dewey, *MW* 14, 166.
reason for general despair about life or morality. The problem is that that philosophers constructed “a strange dream world when they have supposed that without a fixed ideal of a remote good to inspire them, they would have no inducement to get relief from present troubles, no desires for liberation from what oppresses and for clearing-up what confuses present action [and]...sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Dewey was cautiously optimistic, however, that such “evil” will be sufficient to “stimulate us to remedial action, to endeavor in order to convert strife into harmony...and limitation into expansion. The converting is progress, the only progress conceivable and attainable by man.”

Valuation Statements, Observational Contexts and Human Well-being

If we look to our ordinary language, we often say that we “value” something or that something has “value” or even that something is a “value”. However, this isn’t the same as saying that something is “valuable”. Dewey clearly recognized the inherent linguistic difficulties in using value and value-expressions as both nouns and verbs, and attempted to avoid these difficulties by reconstructing it as valuation. He identified three distinct types of valuation expressions: 1) exclamatory, 2) prizing (esteem), and 3) appraising (estimate). Valuation-statements containing the first type of expressions serve to influence the conduct of others by evoking certain responses from them. Those containing the second type of expressions emphasize something that has a definite personal reference and emotional quality. Finally, those containing the last type of

275 Dewey, MW 14, 195.
276 Dewey, MW 14, 195.
277 When used as a noun, “value” designates an object or its intrinsic quality, e.g., “Mary is a good woman”. However, when used as a verb it is often designates either prizing (holding precious and dear) or appraising (assigning value to).
expressions designate an activity of comparative rating and are primarily concerned with a relational property of objects.\textsuperscript{278}

*Exclamatory valuation expressions* are clearly problematic because they are difficult to verify since they merely express one’s feelings about the conduct of others. Their primary use is to influence the conduct of others by evoking certain responses from them. However, from an empirical standpoint, claiming that a report of a value-expression is a “feeling” is meaningless since, “the interpretation is couched in terms of something not open to public inspection and verification.”\textsuperscript{279} Perhaps, since they involve inter-personal behavioral relations, they function as “signs.” As signs, however, do they truly constitute value expressions or are they merely “indicators of feelings” about situations involving inter-personal behavior? Dewey makes the case that they constitute legitimate value-expressions since, in order to function as such, they must refer to *valuation phenomena* that are “social or interpersonal phenomena” of some kind. What they do, however, is provide material for propositions about observable events that are subject to empirical testing and subsequent verification or refutation.

If Dewey’s analysis is correct, and I believe it is, then all statements containing exclamatory value-expressions are analyzable in terms of their observable context. In order for exclamatory value-expressions to be legitimate value statements, it is necessary to make their existential context clear. An example of such a context would be an existent situation that will have unpleasant consequences that the person uttering the

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\textsuperscript{278} Such expressions designate an activity of rating that involves comparison and “…is primarily concerned with a relational property of objects so that an intellectual aspect is uppermost of the same general sort that is found in ‘estimate’ as distinguished from the personal-emotional word ‘esteem’.” Dewey, MW 13, 19.

\textsuperscript{279} Dewey, *MW* 13, 199.
exclamation is unable to cope with, but who anticipates an improved situation if assistance is received from others. The main point here is that when we take contexts into account “what emerges are propositions assigning a relatively negative value to existing conditions; a comparatively positive value to a prospective set of conditions; and an intermediate proposition (which may or may not contain a value-expression) intended to evoke activities that will bring about a transformation from one state of affairs to another.”

The observable context in which one makes such value-expressions provides the grounds for assigning a relatively positive or negative value to propositions about existing conditions or about a set of prospective conditions. In such cases, the observable context involves both an aversion to an existent situation and attraction towards a prospective possible situation, along with a specifiable and testable relationship between the latter, as an end, and certain activities as means for accomplishing it.

With regard to *prizing valuation expressions*, the “emphasis falls upon something having a definite personal reference, which, like all activities of distinctly personal reference, has an aspectual quality called emotional.” Such expressions clearly demarcate what they designate from what the word “enjoy” designates since some things are prized that are not necessarily enjoyed. Certainly, *enjoying* is more problematic conceptually and less desirable as a value expression because it is more ambiguous than

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281 There may as well be intermediate propositions (which may or may not contain a value-expression) the intent of which is to evoke activities that will bring about a transformation from one state of affairs to another.
282 Dewey, MW 13, 195.
283 There are many variants of *prizing*, e.g., “tending for”, “caring for” and “liking” that can be expressed in a behavioral (affective-motor) sense because they are used to designate particular activities that take place in order to maintain or bring about certain conditions. They are empirically verifiable in that they involve both the relation of active or behavioral (affective-motor) attitudes, e.g. liking and disliking, and the relation of valuation to things as means-end. The distinction made here is similar to that between “affective” and “effective” thought.
prizing. This ambiguity led Dewey to conclude that any effort to assign signification to words in isolation from objects “as designata” is a futile undertaking and it is generally a good thing, at least philosophically, to keep ambiguity at a minimum. The source of the ambiguity here lies in the two different ways in which “enjoying” can be used. In some cases it means receiving gratification from something already in existence, thereby requiring no affective-motor action as a condition of its production. In other cases it can be used to signify “taking delight” in an effort in order to perpetuate the existence of conditions that are the source of the gratification.

Here again, Dewey directs our attention to the importance of the observable context in regards to prizing valuation expressions since all of them are subject to the “evocation of specifiable existential conditions and to observation of what takes place in them…we are directed to observe whether energy is put forth to call into existence or to maintain in existence certain conditions; in ordinary language, to note whether effort is evoked, whether pains are taken to bring about the existence of certain conditions rather than others, the need for the expenditure of energy shows that there are conditions adverse to what is wanted.”284 This suggests that value description and assignment is possible only through the observation of behavior which may need to extend over considerable space-time. In fact, this enables us to use qualifying adjectives such as “great” or “slight” as prefixes to valuation expressions, e.g. “Happiness is the greatest good”. Perhaps the most significant point here is that the most solid ground for making the distinction between “positive” and “negative” valuation lies in observing the direction which the energy takes.

284 Dewey, MW 13, 203.
Desires, Interests and the Existential Context of Well-being

Another feature of prizing valuation expressions is that they possess an existential element since they occur only to bring something missing into existence or to sustain the existence of something when threatened by external conditions. The existential context involves desiring (as opposed to mere wishing) and requires treating any desire in terms of how it arises and functions in that specific context. As such, desires count only when they arise within and function with reference to certain existential contexts, i.e., they serve either to satisfy existing wants or to sustain the current situation. In such cases, it becomes both possible and necessary to state the relation between desire and valuation in terms of empirically verifiable propositions. Also, instead of being a post-facto state of desire, effort becomes the “essential tension” that is involved in desire. Although such expressions are empirical, they are “situation dependent” and adequate only to the extent they adapt to the needs and demands imposed by the situation. They are empirical because, within the context of the situation, they are “open to observation, and since the consequences of the effort-behavior as observed determine the adaptation, the adequacy of the given desire can be stated in propositions…capable of empirical test.

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285 It is interesting to note that Dewey’s objection against any account based on desire is similar to that offered by Sumner. Dewey observed that in defining ‘valuation’ in terms of desire, “…as something initial and complete in itself, there is nothing by which to discriminate one desire from another and hence no way in which to measure the worth of different valuations in comparison with one another. Desires are desires, and that is all that can be said. Furthermore, desire is then conceived as merely personal and hence as not capable of being stated in terms of other objects and events.” Dewey, MW 13, 204-205.

286 The connection between “valuation as prizing” and “desire” is through existential situations and differs in terms of the particular differences in existential contexts.

287 This is possible because the content and object of desires “depend upon the particular context in which they arise, that in turn depends upon the antecedent state of both personal activity and of surrounding conditions.” Dewey, MW 13, 205.
because the connection exists between a given desire and the conditions with reference to
which it functions are ascertained by means of these observations."\textsuperscript{288}

However, desires are not the only motivation for making prizing valuation
expressions. At times, interest is involved in making such expressions since it “suggests
in a forcible way the active connection between personal activity and the conditions that
must be taken into account in the theory of valuation”.\textsuperscript{289} Having an interest in
something means that we have a stake in both the course of events as well as their end-in-
view. It leads us to act in a certain way in order to bring a particular result, rather than
some other result, into existence. Since interests occur in definite existential contexts that
are situations within the life-activity of a person or a group, they “are so linked with one
another that the valuation-capacity of any one is a function of the set to which it belongs.
The notion that a value is equally an object of interest can be maintained only upon a
view that completely isolates them from one another—a view that is so removed from
readily observed facts.”\textsuperscript{290} Because desires and interests are activities that take place and
have effect \textit{in the world}, they are indirectly observable in terms of both themselves and
their observed effects. Consequently, statements about desires or interests are
propositions about matters of fact.

In order to delimit the problem as to the existence of valuation statements in a
distinctive sense (as appraisal), valuation expressions arising from desires and interests
must be stated in terms of the \textit{conditions and consequences} that they serve. Such
statements take the general form ‘Desiring X is good’ or ‘Desire X is better than desire
Y’ or ‘Desire X is more desirable than desire Y’. The question here is whether it is

\textsuperscript{288} Dewey, \textit{MW} 13, 205.
\textsuperscript{289} Dewey, \textit{MW} 13, 206.
\textsuperscript{290} Dewey, \textit{MW} 13, 207.
possible to appraise propositions about existent valuations themselves and whether such appraisal, once made, enters into the constitution of further values. The existence of value statements, in a distinctive sense, means that “the final outcome is to show that some kinds of acts of prizing are better than others, valuation-acts are themselves evaluated, and the evaluation may modify further direct acts of prizing.”

Thus, it is only when this condition is met that propositions about valuations that actually take place become the subject matter of valuations in a distinctive sense, i.e., as marked off from propositions of physics and from historical propositions about what human beings have in fact done.

In particular, *appraising value expressions* refer to the future since propositions containing such expressions consist in a rule(s) for determining the performance of an act and an observable regulative condition, i.e., something that shall or should happen. Such propositions are normative in that they specify the condition(s) to which definite forms of future action must conform. It is in this sense that they serve as criteria or norms for judging the value of proposed modes of behavior. The key question here, however, is whether such normative statements are merely expressions of convention, tradition, and custom, or whether they are capable of stating relations between things as means and other things as consequences, when such relations are themselves grounded in “empirically ascertained and tested” existential relations (e.g., cause and effect). Further, if the goal is to achieve a fully empirical account of valuation, can such statements meet the first requirement of scientific procedure—full publicity as to materials and processes?

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Dewey’s answer is that appraisals of courses of actions as “better or worse” or “more or less serviceable” are as experimentally justifiable as non-valuative propositions because they are about “things as they sustain to each other the relation of means to ends or consequences.”\textsuperscript{292} The appraisal of a rule as to a “better or needed” action only happens within the context of an end-in-view—it is a valuation of the action’s serviceability or need/desire/interest-meeting ability. Of course, while there are situations where action is based on sheer instinct or complete trial-and-error, appraisal generally involves the observation of actual materials and an estimate of their potential force in producing a particular event. Most often this involves comparing and contrasting some observation of the “outcome attained” with the “outcome intended.” This is what sheds light upon the actual fitness of things employed as means, making possible a better judgment in the future as to their “fitness” and “usefulness”. For example, if observations about modes of conduct result in a judgment made as to their being “silly, imprudent, or unwise, or the contrary”, such discrimination rests on the validity of the estimates reached about the general relation of things as means to the end or consequence actually achieved.

One possible objection to this view is that it applies only to things as means and propositions about genuine valuations apply only to things as ends.\textsuperscript{293} However, this objection fails to recognize that when something is under consideration as a means, but requires too much time or energy for attainment or, if achieved, would lead to inconveniences or likely future troubles, the end is open to re-appraisal and ultimately to rejection as a “bad” end. Nor is it the case that valuation propositions are just about

\textsuperscript{292}Dewey, MW 13, 211.  
\textsuperscript{293}Dewey responds that this objection misses the mark since “ends are appraised in the same evaluations in which things as means are weighed.” Dewey, MW 13, 212.
valuations that have actually occurred since some are used to describe and define certain things as “good”, “fit”, or “proper” in a definite existential relation (means-ends or means-consequences) and serve as generalizations that stipulate the proper use of materials. Another possible objection is that this view fails to distinguish between things that are good and right in and of themselves (i.e., intrinsically or immediately so) and things that are simply good for something else. In raising the question of the relation between the categories of means and end, this objection also explicitly raises the question of the relation between prizing and appraising in valuation. This distinction is so crucial for Dewey’s theory of valuation and values that the failure to make it destroys the validity of his conclusions. The claim here is that appraising applies only to means (where the evaluation is secondary and derivative) while prizing applies to things that are ends (as the full sense of valuation). A further question arises as to whether the relation between appraising things as means and prizing things as ends implies that interests or desires (likings) that directly affect an institution of ends-values are independent of the appraisal of things as means or whether such appraisal intimately influences them. Dewey argues this is not the case. Indeed, we only need to look at what takes place in any deliberative activity since “deliberation is the weighing of various alternative desires (ends-values) in terms of the conditions that are the means of their execution, which, as means determine the consequences actually arrived at.”

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294 In their general form, such valuation propositions can rest upon scientifically warranted empirical propositions that are testable by observation of the actually attained results compared to the intended results.
295 Consider an instance in which a person P finds that desire X requires too much effort to achieve its realization. Does this fact react to modify P’s original desire X to some extent and, by definition, P’s valuation? For example, if P cannot achieve X in a particular circumstance, is X’s value in P’s hierarchy of values, diminished?
296 Dewey, MW 13, 213.
The only control over the operation of “foreseeing consequences”, for Dewey, is in terms of the causal conditions operating to secure their attainment. In particular, the degree to which a proposition, in which an object as an end-in-view is able to be stated or is explicitly stated, meets the test of warranted assertibility depends on the extent to which the existing conditions have been examined and appraised in terms of their capacity as means. When we consider experiences in which ends-in view are formed, and in which earlier impulsive tendencies are shaped through deliberation into a chosen desire, we see that the object finally valued as an end to be reached is determined in its concrete make-up by appraisal of existing conditions of means. Consequently, it is neither possible to separate ends from means by assuming, for example, a separation between “useful/helpful” and “intrinsically good”, nor does it follow that there is any separation between propositions stating what is “expedient, prudent or advisable” and what is “inherently desirable”.

The essential difference between “impulse” and “desire” is that an end-in-view is present in desire as an object of foreseeable consequences. What accounts for the possibility of distinctive value propositions (appraisals) is that “foresight” is dependable only to the degree it consists in an examination (inquiry) into the conditions that, in fact, will decide the outcome. Furthermore, those propositions warranted by evidence and subject to experimental test can enter into the evaluation of things that are means.

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297 If this is not the case then it follows that no deliberation occurs, no formation of ends-in-view is possible and people act directly upon whatever impulse or acquired habit presents itself.
298 Words such as “inherent”, “intrinsical” and “immediate” are often used ambiguously. Nor is any self-evident truth being stated, since such a separation is “foolishly” irrational given that words like prudent, sensible and expedient so readily merge into the word “wise”. Although some desires and interests are shortsighted while others are enlightened or farsighted, both shortsightedness and farsightedness are determinable based on whether the object of a given desire is viewed as a “conditioning means” of further consequences.
Furthermore, if these propositions enter into the formation of the interests and desires that are themselves valuations of ends, then such interests and desires constitute the subject matter of authentic empirical affirmations and desires. What is most important here, in terms of human well-being, is that any end-in-view also consists in affective-ideational motor activity that is involved in the union of the acts of prizing and appraising.\textsuperscript{299} By using Dewey’s theory of value it possible not only to determine the conditions under which desires and interests (hence valuations) are “matured and tested” but also to explain how it is possible for desires and interests to change by means of learning the consequences of acting on them.

Another distinction that is important to consider is that which arises is between what is “desired”, what is “desirable” or what “should be desired”. We often use these terms when speaking about human well-being in both prudential ways and ethical ways. Earlier we saw that a number of modern philosophical theories of well-being have clustered around desire theory. The particular issue of interest here is what such a distinction demarcates in experience. Dewey viewed it as marking the contrast between the “object of desire” at its first appearance in impulse or acquired habit and the “object of desire” that emerges from its subsequent revision(s) as contextualized by critical judgment about the conditions that will decide the actual result.\textsuperscript{300} Since social conditions and pressure are part of the conditions that affect the execution of desires, it is also necessary to account for them in framing ends in terms of available means. Furthermore, desires and interests are themselves causal conditions of results and, as

\textsuperscript{299} This occurs by observing the difference between the actual consequences, in their agreement with and difference from, the ends anticipated or held in view.

\textsuperscript{300} Since the “desirable” emerges only after prior experience shows that “hasty action upon desire not subjected to criticism leads to defeat or catastrophe”, there is no a priori distinction.
potential means, require appraisal as such. What is critical here, in terms of human well-being, is being able to discriminate between simply having an end-in-view for which any desire suffices and inquiring to make certain the resultant consequences are such that they will be actually prized and valued when they occur.

Theories that relate value to desire and interest generally make a sharp division between “prizing and appraisal” and between “ends and means”, although they fail to investigate empirically the actual conditions under which desires and interests arise and function, and in which end-objects and ends-in-view acquire their actual content.\(^{301}\) Desires arise only when there is “something the matter”, i.e., when a lack or want in the existent situation produces some form of conflict within its elements. Desires do not arise when “things are going smoothly” since there is no need to project ends-in-view—effort and struggle are not required so that things are allowed to take their natural course. Here, there is no need for the projection of an end-object or end-view because it is not necessary to investigate or examine what would be better to have happen in the future. However, at times “vital impulses and acquired habits” can operate without the intervention of an end-in-view or purpose.\(^{302}\) When desire and an end-in-view intervene between the occurrence of a vital impulse or acquired habit and the execution of an activity, it usually results in the modification and, to some degree, the transformation of the original impulse or tendency.\(^{303}\) This proves that valuation takes place only when

\(^{301}\) Such an analysis would focus the following three elements: 1) the actual emergence of desire, 2) its object and 3) the value-property ascribed to the object.

\(^{302}\) When someone steps on your foot, your reaction is usually to get out from under the other person’s foot. You really do not give any thought to forming a “definite desire” and setting up an “end” to reach. Since such behaviors are so direct no desires and ends intervene and no valuations take place.

\(^{303}\) This is purely a tautological statement since the occurrence of a desire related to an end-in-view is a transformation of a prior impulse or routine habit.
there is “something that matters” and, whenever there is valuation, there is also present an “intellectual factor”—a factor of inquiry.304

How is it possible to account for the fact that there are differences in different desires and their correlative ends-in-view? The answer here is that such differences depend upon the adequacy of the inquiry into two conditions. The first involves an examination of the “lacks and conflicts” of the existing situation and the second requires assessing the likelihood that a particular established end-in-view will, if acted upon, actually fill the existing need or satisfy the requirements of what is needed. It is only through eliminating conflict by directing activity that a unified state of affairs can be achieved. Furthermore, there are only two possible alternatives since an action can take place either with or without an end-in-view. When actions occur without an end-in-view, there is overt action with no intermediate valuation as when a “vital impulse” or “settled habit” reacts directly to some immediate sensory stimulation. Whenever actions occur with an end-in-view it means not only that a particular end-in-view exists, but also that it is valued or exists in relation to a desire or interest. It is the anticipation of consequences (as a foreseen or foreseeable end) that “tautologically mediates” the subsequent motor-activity and thereby enters into the constitution of the desire or interest. This means that things can be anticipated (foreseen as ends or outcomes) only in terms of the conditions which bring them into existence. Furthermore, it is impossible for one to have an end-in-view or to anticipate the consequences of an action without considering the means for bringing it into existence. In fact, this is the essence of genuine human desire since anything else is only an idle fantasy or a futile wish, both of which can be the result of

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304 It is the formation and projection of the end-in-view as that which, if acted upon, fulfills the existing need or lack and resolves the existing conflict.
vital impulses and acquired habits. Consequently, there is no separation between means and ends in experience since the “propositions in which things (acts and materials) are appraised as means enter necessarily into desires and interests that determine end values.”

The Existential Nature of Qualitative Thought

We live in a qualitative world that forms the field of characteristic modes of thinking because thought is definitely regulated by qualitative considerations. Although this fact has influenced metaphysics and epistemology, it has had significantly less influence in logical theory or science. The question of concern here is “What is the relation or lack of relation between propositions which refer to objects of physical science and those that refer to qualitative objects?” Dewey criticized the “property” notion of propositional content, i.e., that propositions such as “the stone is metallic” consist of an object (stone) and a property (metallic) proclaiming that “…logical theory has nothing to do with the forms of thought characteristic of qualitative objects.”

In contrast he claimed that the only thing unqualifiedly given in experience is the total pervasive quality, not a dualistic combination of the object and its properties. Dewey drew the distinction between situation and object in holding that any logical force existing between objects and their relations is inexplicable without “the selective determination and relation of objects in thought as controlled by reference to a situation.” The point he is making here is that in failing to acknowledge such underlying and pervasive qualitative determinations, a distinct logical formulation is

305 The content of fantasies and wishes are not ends-in-view precisely because they are not formed in terms of the actual conditions that serve as the means for their actualization.
306 Dewey, MW 13, 222.
307 Dewey, “Qualitative Thought”, 196.
308 Dewey, “Qualitative Thought”, 197.
problematic in two ways. One is that it denies thought to the subject matter in question by attributing “intuition”, “genius”, “impulse” or “personality” as ultimate and unanalyzable entities. The other, perhaps worse, is that it reduces intellectual analysis to a mechanical enumeration of isolated terms or “properties”.

Instead, for Dewey, what regulates the pertinence, relevancy or force of every distinction and relation within the situation is the underlying unity of qualitiveness. This is what guides the selection, rejection, and the very manner of the utilization of all explicit terms in the proposition. It is precisely this quality that allows us to keep thinking about one problem without our having to constantly stop to ask ourselves what it is that we are thinking about. He talks at length about “subject-predicate” form of propositions and why they are a problem. The chief problem is that such a view sees the subject as “given”—ultimately apart from thinking—and then thought adds to what is given a further determination or else assigns it to a ready class of things.

Dewey’s formulation of the notion of the “situation” emphasizes the fact that the subject-matter ultimately referred to in existential propositions (the “stone” is “metallic”) is a “complex existence that is held together in spite of its internal complexity by the fact that it is dominated and characterized throughout by a single quality.” It is this larger and inclusive subject-matter to which the term “situation” refers. However, it is not and cannot be stated or made explicit because “[i]t is taken for granted, “understood”, or implicit in all propositional symbolization. It forms the universe of discourse of whatever is expressly stated or of what appears to be a term in a proposition. The situation cannot

309 Dewey, “Qualitative Thought”, 200-203.
310 Dewey, “Qualitative Thought”, 197.
represent itself as an element in a proposition any more than a universe of discourse can appear as a member of discourse within the universe.\textsuperscript{311}

The situation also controls the “terms of thought” in that they are its distinctions and their applicability to it is the ultimate test of their validity. Thinking as an existential process takes place through association; existentially it is association as far as the latter is controlled. The mechanics of thinking cannot be totally irrelevant to its logical structure and function. For Dewey, “ideas” signify objects, not psychical entities, thus they are meanings to which reference is made since

the gist of the matter is that the immediate existence of quality, and of dominant and pervasive quality, is the background, the point of departure, and the regulative principle of all thinking. Thought which denies the existential reality of qualitative things is therefore bound to end in self-contradiction and in denying itself. “Scientific” thinking, that expressed in physical science, never gets away from qualitative existence. Directly, it always has its own qualitative background; indirectly, it has that of the world in which the ordinary experience of the common man is lived. Failure to recognize this fact is the source of a large part of the artificial problems that infect our theory of knowledge and our metaphysics, or theories of existence.\textsuperscript{312}

Dewey notes that the significance of dominant qualitiveness in suggestion and connection shows why thinking, as an existential process, is all one with controlled association. Controlled association refers to the connection of objects or their elements in

\textsuperscript{311} Dewey, “Qualitative Thought”, 197.
\textsuperscript{312} Dewey, “Qualitative Thought”, 205.
the total situation having a qualitative unity. But, association is more than mere contiguity because both ideas are relevant to a situation defined by a unity of quality since there must be a coherence of some sort.

**The Function and Operation of Value in Instrumental Well-being**

Dewey’s theory of value clearly represents a challenge to the traditional ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie most, if not all, theories of value.\(^{313}\) Since well-being itself is a value that is valued as well as held to have value, and may well be valuable, his theory has significant implications for the account of human well-being under development here. Consider the use of exclamatory valuation expressions such as “You lied!” Not only do they clearly signify something of value (“Lying is wrong or bad”), they are also open to empirical analysis and description, e.g., by showing remorse, not lying in future situations, etc. In some contexts, they can signify either approval or disapproval, thus they can have either positive or negative import.

Certainly, someone subjected to constant negative exclamatory value-expressions who constantly utters them as well, is unlikely to value positively his own well-being or that of others. Similarly, for someone consistently subjected to positive exclamatory value-expressions, and who consistently utters them, it is highly likely she would positively value her own well-being. Not only do exclamatory valuation expressions influence our well-being, they also serve to assign empirically established value-content to it. However, human well-being certainly includes more value-content than what is

\(^{313}\) Ontologically, it is grounded in his radical empiricism that leads him to reject the existence of fixed categories of values, e.g., the good, the right, etc. as being determinative of the meaning of values. Instead, any meaning given to ‘good’, ‘right’ is derivable only from actual world contexts. Epistemologically, the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity is no longer relevant since all valuation propositions are analyzable empirically.
provided by the exclamatory valuation expressions that occur in one’s life. Otherwise, the positive assignment of value to well-being would consist of little more than a series of signifying grunts.

Prizing valuation expressions relate to human well-being more substantively given the immediate naturalistic fact that we like some things and dislike other things. This is precisely what leads to an experience that is either enjoyable or unpleasant. Obviously, many things that we like or dislike are simply the result of impulse or habit. However, our likes and dislikes can become, depending on context, more robust; in which case we demarcate them in experience as desires and interests. They are more robust because they inherently contain the elements of deliberation and personal activity. In this form, they constitute the basis for valuation as prizing and what is prized is some end based on a desire or an interest. However, since there are no fixed or final-ends separate from the means used to achieve them, there are only ends-in-view which, depending on the context, can serve as both means and end. Consequently, since there is no “final end” what carries forward in experience is only a connected series of temporary stopping points (ends-in-view).

By using dramatic rehearsal in imagination, we are able to foresee an end-in-view or anticipated consequence as the intended outcome (the prize). After selecting a temporary end-in-view and achieving it through successful means, we come to enjoy a sense of unity of experience (consummation). The relationship between the foreseen consequence and the actual consequence is also subject to empirical analysis and description. Although what we enjoy contributes to our sense of well-being, unfortunately, it often results from capricious impulse and habit. Clearly, a robust
account of human well-being requires more than this. Perhaps what one prizes has
greater importance in one’s assessment of one’s well-being than what one enjoys. It
seems likely that if one succeeds in achieving one’s desires and interests, one would be
positive in her assessment of her well-being. As with exclamatory valuation expressions,
prizing valuation expressions are also context dependent. Since desires and interests are
activities that are both observable and have observable effects in the world, this means
that they have empirically established value-content. However, when speaking about our
well-being it seems that we refer to more than what we *prize*.

We clearly distinguish certain “prizings” as being better than others. Appraisal
valuation expressions are not only comparative. Because they are the result of the
evaluation of different valuation acts, they also serve to modify further direct acts of
prizing. They are also regulative in that they serve as rules for determining whether to
perform an act or not. Since such expressions constitute generalized appraisals of things
in terms of whether or not they actually do what they need to do, they constitute
empirical propositions that are testable by the comparative observation of the results
actually attained to those intended. Given that means and ends are inseparable as ends-
in-view, any proposition stating an end-in-view is warranted only in the degree to which
existing conditions have been examined and appraised in their capacity as means. It is
through the shaping of prior impulses and acquired habits into a *chosen* desire that the
object, which finally comes to be valued as an end to be reached through appraisal of the
existing conditions in terms of means, is determined in its concrete make-up.
Analysis and Conclusion

Dewey’s instrumentalism and meliorism are fundamental to the development of a theory of instrumental well-being in which the pervasive quality (satisfaction) of the life-situation is taken to be the pervasive quality that is the criterion for human well-being. However, it is not all that clear as to what we mean when we say someone makes a judgment about one’s “satisfaction” or “fulfillment” in regard to one’s life. Although the appraisal one makes about one’s satisfaction is one’s own since it involves one’s life and, therefore, one’s personal satisfaction, such appraisal does not occur in total isolation. Instead, one’s appraisal of what constitutes one’s satisfaction occurs within the context of the social community of which one is a member. In this sense, one’s appraisal of one’s satisfaction has larger social meaning within the given context of one’s community.\footnote{Nor is the well-being of the social group merely the sum of the well-being of its individual members.} If this is the case, it seems that in acting to bring about satisfactory activity for oneself, one is necessarily called to act for the public or social good. It is through the realization of one’s personal well-being that one contributes to the well-being of other members of one’s community. This view of individuality recognizes that while we are individuated, we are not isolated, since each of us is a social individual.

In Chapter 1 questions were raised about accounts of human well-being that involve reason, especially those claiming that one’s judgment about one’s well-being is either absolutely or formally true or false. This is not to deny that some of our judgments about our well-being have a rational basis—well-being certainly involves more than mere caprice. But, I want to push this point a little further by suggesting that judgments about well-being involve more than rationality, and that not all judgments about well-being
must necessarily have a purely rational basis. This is because instrumentalism emphasizes the importance of one’s knowing, doing and feeling, while meliorism emphasizes the importance of one’s making things better as a consequence of one’s knowing, doing and feeling. Most importantly, this requires a radical shift from understanding the person as a subject to conceiving her as field state in which her knowing, doing and feeling, as inquiry and experimentation, is situated in the context of her environmental transactions. Consequently, judgments or valuation-statements about human well-being are derived from experience—one’s embodied knowing, doing and feeling that are situated in experience and do not occur apart from it.

This requires a reconstructed understanding of the person as a transactionally situated self, for whom inquiry is an instrument, and who functions as an agent in the instrumental mode in human well-being. But, there is more to human well-being than what the instrumental mode affords and this point is reflected in the distinction Dewey made between his theory of instrumentalism (which leads to truth) and his theory of aesthetics (which leads to meaning). As we will see in Chapter Five, this distinction is particularly important when it comes to developing the aesthetic mode of a Deweyan account of human well-being and the function of judgments one makes about one’s well-being. In rejecting the claim to any formal or absolute truth, a ‘meaning-based’ theory of human well-being would count valuations that have expressed or felt meaning (embodied knowledge) as judgments about one’s well-being. But, as Dewey would caution, making such a distinction between meaning and truth does not imply that there is a hard separation between them. So, it really isn’t a question about which is the best theory for judgments about one’s well-being, but about the nature of the inter-relationship between
the two ideas in making such judgments. Once again, to push it just a little further, the least partial type of judgment about one’s well-being involves the unification of reason (as creative intelligence), meliorism (as ethics) and meaning (as aesthetics).

Although some Dewey scholars see little value in pragmatism as an approach to illuminating the nature of subjectivity or selfhood, others suggest that the prospect may not be quite so bleak.315 One possible advantage that a Deweyan approach to human subjectivity offers is that it places human agency at the center since we are human agents who are active and undergo transformations as a consequence of our activities. Colapietro describes Dewey’s conception of human subjectivity as beginning with “an incessantly active organism in transformative interchange with a historically charged environment…recognizes that—culturally as well as personally, the dynamic present through which we are moving embodies (primarily in our habits and artifacts) the presence of a largely irrevocable past, but nonetheless, the possibility of a truly novel future.”316 He views each of us as “a singular organism, an organism that has been subjected to acculturation, and is aware of itself as a subject and social agent.”317 So, it seems appropriate to describe his position as agent-relative which has significant implications for how we look at human well-being.

In contrast to Sumner’s view of subject-relativity as an expressly individual affair, Dewey’s view of the individual as a social individual requires that any one person’s well-being is necessarily related to the well-being of other community members. Colapietro notes that a Deweyan approach to human subjectivity “is the robust affirmation of human

317 Dewey, MW 14, 199.
agency: we are first and foremost agents, beings not so much goaded into activity by external stimuli as always active by our own inherent constitution. The role of stimuli in guiding and, indeed, redirecting conduct is enormous; however, their function is not to provoke an inert being into action, but to assist a dynamic being in more finely and fully reorienting itself toward the scene of some engagement." On this interpretation, well-being is viewed as an aim or end-in-view that can be achieved or pursued in both an individual and collective sense. If such interdependency is correct, this has a significant implication when it comes to making an appraisal about one’s satisfaction with one’s life. For Dewey, the primary way in which one learns to be a satisfied person, or how to be a person at all, is through the example of and interaction with other persons. Thus, in achieving a satisfactory life-situation for oneself (well-being) one is bringing about the conditions that are necessary for other community members to do the same.

Perhaps Dewey’s notion of “an individual life of satisfactory self-conscious activity that is unique to ourselves” can be helpful to our understanding of life satisfaction. But what does it mean for one to make an appraisal of one’s life satisfaction or that one’s life is satisfactory—what do we mean by satisfaction? Dewey asks us to consider the difference between satisfying and satisfactory. When we say that we are satisfied we “make a statement about a fact, something already in existence; it is not to judge the value of that fact…It is just correct or incorrect and that is the end of the matter…everyday experience informs us that finding satisfaction in a thing may be a warning, a summons to be on the lookout for consequences.”

318 Colapietro, “Embodied, Enculturated Agents”, 68.
319 See especially: Dewey, *EW* 3; *EW* 4; *MW* 5; and *MW* 14.
satisfying is the “content of a proposition of fact.” However, when we say that something is a value we assert that it satisfies or fulfills certain conditions because “[t]o say that something satisfies is to report something as an isolated finality.” But, when we assert that something is satisfactory we “define it in its connections and interactions. The fact that it pleases or is immediately congenial poses a problem to judgment. How shall the satisfaction be rated? Is it a value or is it not? Is it something to be prized and cherished, to be enjoyed….To declare something satisfactory is to assert that it meets specifiable conditions. It is, in effect, a judgment that the thing will do. It asserts a consequence the thing will continue to serve; it will do. That it is…satisfactory is a judgment, an estimate, an appraisal. It denotes an attitude to be taken, that of striving to perpetuate and to make secure.” Although the distinction Dewey made between an appraisal of something as satisfying and an appraisal of something as satisfactory is interesting, it merits further explication. Chapter 2 examined the operation of habits in pre-reflective experience and reflective experience which has relevance for a Deweyan understanding of preferences. Because our preferences are based on our experiences which are governed by the principles of continuity and interaction, the quality of our experience is mediated by these two principles. This means that our preferences consist in the habitual relationships that exist between the organism and some activity or thing. It is the pervasive quality inherent in our life-situation, as experienced in this relationship, which is at the center of instrumental well-being.

Dewey’s theory of valuation is especially relevant in regards to the account of human well-being under development in this inquiry. It provides the basis for an

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321 Dewey, LW 4, 208
322 Dewey, LW 4, 208.
323 Dewey, LW 4, 208.
empirical account of human well-being whether assessing it immediately, retrospectively or prospectively. By contextualizing valuation in terms of inquiry, it becomes obvious that finding human well-being in some final outcome or in the achievement of some fixed-state is at best an impossibility, and at worst a pathology. Instead, we can find human well-being in the pervasive quality of the situational context (immediate, retrospective or prospective) that is the consequence of the continuity of successive ends-in-view. At the immediate phase of experience, the instrumental mode of human well-being derives from the union of the affective-ideational elements of motor activity (consummation) associated with the successful attainment of one’s ends-in-view. The result of inquiry and its subsequent affective-ideational motor activity is that they successfully put a doubtful or irritating situation to rest, at least temporarily.

This is, arguably, the most significant aspect since our judgments about our well-being are more than a consequence of our cognitive-motor activity since we feel something as well. Dewey spoke of the need for our response to experience to be felt “in the muscle.” His pragmatism is well-suited to the task of developing an account of the affective conditions necessary for a theory of well-being because it accounts for the experience of disruption and how it contributes to well-being. This is possible because unsettledness (e.g., doubt, irritation, discomfort, etc.) constitutes a necessary but not sufficient condition for reflective activity. It is not sufficient because, in some unsettled situations, non-reflective habits do an adequate job and reflectivity is not needed. The experience of unsettledness, resulting from the disruption of settled habit, leads to efforts to reduce doubt or irritation by restoring settled experience. These efforts are successful

324 Since pragmatism holds that all human activity involves knowing, feeling and doing, a pragmatist account of well-being offers one possibility for developing an account of well-being that includes affective requirements and conditions.
to the extent that other habits (non-reflective or reflective) are brought forward in experience and operate to achieve a restoration or, if the unsettled situation remains, other efforts are made which involve bringing forward other habits. It is only when non-reflective habits fail to achieve a restoration of settled experience that reflective habits are brought forward in experience.

Prospectively, the instrumental mode of human well-being involves the use of dramatic rehearsal to imagine possible ends-in-view, identify foreseeable consequences of one’s actions and assess their valuation-content. Although the situation is not yet settled, inquiry leads to the identification of possible affective-ideational motor activities than can serve to return the situation to a more settled state. Thus, human well-being when conceived retrospectively consists not in an epistemic judgment about the summative effects of such consummations, but in reflecting on the pervasive quality of the situation and what it further moves into, i.e., the act of reflection about one’s well-being is, itself, consummatory. However, as we will see in the next chapter, perhaps one of Dewey’s greatest contributions to value inquiry was to investigate the continuity between aesthetic experience and everyday life.325

Chapter 5

Art, the Live Creature and the Aesthetic Mode in Human Well-being

That the aesthetic and moral experience reveal traits of real things as truly as does intellectual experience, that poetry may have a metaphysical import as well as science, is rarely affirmed…

John Dewey, Theory of Value, 7
The term “aesthetics” was invented by Baumgarten to ground a formal philosophical system comprised of a general theory of sensory knowledge that, when combined with logic, resulted in a comprehensive theory of knowledge.\textsuperscript{326} He argued that the cognitive value of sensory perception not only has potential for better thinking, but for better living as well.\textsuperscript{327} The primary problem with such an understanding of aesthetics, for Dewey, is that it isolates those art products that have attained a “classic status” from the conditions of their origin and operation in experience. It is their isolation from the human conditions under which they came into existence and the human consequences they generate in actual life experience that renders them opaque as to their general significance in terms of aesthetic theory. Consequently, in isolating and separating art, it becomes “cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effort, undergoing and achievement.”\textsuperscript{328}

Dewey worked diligently to dispel the traditional view of art products as being separated from experience. This is the result of the historical separation of theory from practice in many domains beginning with the ancient Greeks, in their distinction between \textit{theoría} and \textit{praxis} that has been carried forward since. This basic dualism has led to aesthetic theories that separate artistic objects from both the conditions of their origin and their operation in experience. He also distinguished between the “enjoyment of” and the “understanding of” art and, ultimately, within the context of the aesthetic. Understanding an art product, for example, requires that we forget them for a period of time and examine the ordinary forces and conditions of experience that are not usually regarded as

\textsuperscript{326} The term derives from \textit{aesthesis}, the Ancient Greek word for sensation or sensory perception. Alexander offers a brief account of the development of the philosophy of art and aesthetics from Plato to Dewey in his “John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Human Experience”, 160-162.

\textsuperscript{327} Shusterman, \textit{Pragmatist Aesthetics}, 263-267.

\textsuperscript{328} Dewey, \textit{LW} 10, 9.
aesthetic. In order to understand the aesthetic, however, it is necessary to begin with the “raw” events and scenes that hold our attention, stimulate our interest, and provide us enjoyment.

At this point it is clear that the function of inquiry is to assist in changing an unsettled situation into a settled one. In terms of both capacities and contexts it is means by which to change both situations and experiences; it functions as a tool we have and use to bring about satisfactory experiences individually as well as collectively. When we “have an experience” we note its immediate qualities, which are neither abstracted nor deduced and immediate qualities that are “satisfactory” that help us to discriminate among events. Obviously, we tend to prefer events that have such “satisfying” qualities. Since the business of inquiry is to select, order, and control these qualities such that they occur in other existential situations, this suggests that certain experiences, at least in terms of their qualities, are better than others. Because these are activities and not objects, Dewey often refers to them as arts and he considered inquiry, as an activity, to be an art as well.

Although he saw no metaphysical separation between the “arts of doing and making” and the “arts of knowledge (knowing)”, this is not to say that art and science are coextensive since “if modern tendencies are justified in putting art and creation first, then the implications of this position should be avowed and carried through. It would then be seen that science is an art, that art is practice, and that they only distinction worth drawing is not between theory and practice, but between those modes of practice that are

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329 As shown in Chapter 2, the generic traits of experience include not only qualitative immediacy, but constant relations such as: contingency and need, movement and arrest, and belongingness. However, these are not the results of inquiry or reflection, but are natural in that they arise in every existential situation and which we manipulate to bring about further, better experiences.
not intelligent, not inherently and immediately enjoyable, and those which are full of enjoyed meanings."\textsuperscript{330} It is aesthetic experiences that constitute the highest sorts of experience or \textit{consummatory} experience, that is, a complete experience in which all of the traits of existence are at their maximum. However, in many cases it is not possible for one to have such an experience unless one’s making, doing, observing, investigating and reflecting are operating at their maximum. Clearly, although these have different functions and can be distinguished from each other, their beginnings and endings are found in existential situations and not in some form of logical determination. To put it rather simply, an experience “is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment.”\textsuperscript{331} The naturalized, transactional sense of the aesthetic occurs only when the “live creature”, through its participation in the ordered relations of its environment, secures the stability essential to living. This is possible because experience involves continuity, i.e., when different situations succeed one another something carries over from the earlier one to the later one.

\textbf{Recognizing the Aesthetic in Ordinary Experience}

Dewey’s critique begins with the recognition that traditional theories of art and aesthetics “start from a ready-made compartmentalization or from a conception of art that “spiritualizes” it out of connection with the objects of concrete experience.”\textsuperscript{332} As a result, art products that have attained a “classic” status become isolated from the conditions of their origin and operation in experience, i.e., their “indigenous” status. A number of cultural-historical reasons account for the rise of the compartmentalized

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332 Dewey, \textit{LW} 10, 17.
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conception of fine art and more recently, as a result of the international scope of capitalism and the changes it has brought about, modern industry and commerce (economic cosmopolitanism) have further destroyed the connection between works of art and the “genus loci of which they were once the natural expression.” The result is that they have achieved a newly acquired status as merely specimens of fine art which serve as the “insignia of taste and certificates of special culture.”

The resultant isolation of works of art from the conditions that gave rise to them illustrates the loss of their validity and significance in terms of the place they once held in the life of a community. As a result artists, too, are now isolated from the “mainstream of active interest” because the very nature of their work is incompatible with industrialism since they “cannot work mechanically for mass production.” Consequently, contemporary artists are “less integrated” in the normal flow of social life than in the past, which leads to a “peculiar aesthetic individualism” wherein the artist’s commitment to her work is only as an isolated means of achieving independence through esoteric or eccentric self-expression. The consequence of the conjunction of all these forces produces a separation between ordinary and aesthetic experience, giving rise to the conditions that constitute the gulf that exists between the producer and the consumer in modern society.

In order to overcome this defect art and aesthetics must reveal the way in which works of art idealize the qualities that are found in common or ordinary experience. For a correct philosophy of art to contribute to the cultivation of “aesthetic appreciation” (as a branch of the general theory of criticism) it must disclose what to look for and what to

334 Dewey, LW 10, 15.
335 Dewey, LW 10, 15.
find in concrete aesthetic objects. A philosophy of art is “sterilized, fragmented and alienated” unless it makes “us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience…indicates why this function is so inadequately realized and…suggests the conditions under which the office would be successfully performed.”  

A correct theory of art must restore the “continuity between refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.”  

One advantage such a theory offers is that although its primary concern is with understanding and insight, it still recognizes the value of exclamations of admiration or emotional appreciation.  

An understanding of what the “aesthetic” means, in terms of its human application, must begin “in the raw”, that is, in the common events and scenes that ”hold the attentive eye and ear of man…arousing his interest and affording him enjoyment as he looks and listens.”  

The key to recovering the continuity of aesthetic experience with the normal processes of living is through discovering the aesthetic qualities involved in the experience of common “run of the mill” things.  

In this context, the aesthetic can be found in the rhythmic groans of the railroad locomotive straining to gain speed as it leaves the city, the intense fury of a fire engine rushing by, in the noisy hustle and bustle of inner-city traffic or in the seemingly death-defying choreography of high-steel workers throwing and catching rivets. Artistic engagement can be found in what is usually considered to be

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336 Dewey, LW 10, 17.
337 Dewey, LW 10, 9.
338 Thus, a great work of art has aesthetic standing not apart from experience, but only as it becomes “an experience” for a human being. Consider the Parthenon, one’s experience may be simply as personal enjoyment or it may involve seeking to understand what the thought and life of the people whose lives it entered had in common as creators as well as those who were satisfied with it. Dewey, LW 10, 10.
339 This is because “even a crude experience, if authentically an experience, is more fit to give a clue to the intrinsic nature of esthetic experience than is an object already set apart from any mode of experience.” Dewey, LW 10, 16-17.
ordinary or non-aesthetic, as in the work done by “the intelligent mechanic engaged in his job—interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his efforts—caring for his tools and materials with genuine affection.”

Dewey was quick to point out that most people would likely object if told they enjoy their casual relations, even in part, because of their aesthetic quality. This shows the extensive and subtle pervasiveness of the very ideas which are responsible for isolating art to its place upon a “remote pedestal.” One advantage that beginning with a conception of “fine art” which is connected to the discovered qualities of ordinary experience has is that it “will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favor the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value…[including] those conditions that arrest its normal growth.” Further, since the most vital forms of contemporary art, for average people, are things not usually considered as “art”, e.g., television, popular music and sensationalistic journalism, the very remoteness of objects acknowledged as “fine arts” makes them “anemic” to the mass of people so that their “esthetic hunger is likely to seek the cheap and vulgar.”

This has not always been the case since there are and have been cultures in which “everything that intensifies the sense of immediate living is an object of intense admiration.” Today it is most common to find the art products of such cultures displayed in museums, although in their own time and place they played an intimate part in the significant life of an organized community. Their significance in community life

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341 Dewey, LW 10, 11.
342 Dewey, LW 10, 17.
343 Dewey, LW 10, 12.
344 Dewey, LW 10, 12.
345 In museums, we observe the common products of “primitive people” with a sense of awe, admiration and respect. We are moved by the delicately flaked and fluted hunting points, amazing innovations in the
was that *they enhanced the process of everyday living* because “[i]nstead of being elevated to a niche apart, they belonged to displays of prowess, the manifestation of group and clan membership, worship of gods, feasting and fasting, fighting, hunting, and all the rhythmic crises that punctuate the stream of living… [as] intimate parts of the rights and ceremonies in which the meaning of group life were consummated… a vital reenactment of the legends and history of group life”.  

Dewey also recognized that comparing the emergence of works of art out of ordinary experience to the refinement of raw materials into valuable objects will strike some as being unworthy of the term “aesthetic” and, perhaps, even reduces such objects to the status of commercially manufactured objects.

Part of the problem here may involve distinguishing between *enjoying* and *understanding*. For example, one can “enjoy” flowers without any having any knowledge of the interactions of light, soil, air, moisture and seeds in their growth. But, in order to have an “understanding” of flowers it is necessary to take into account such interactions, and this is where theory comes into play. Theory, in this sense, is a “matter of understanding” which, in the context of art, is particularly “concerned with discovering the nature of the production of works of art and of their enjoyment and perception.”

Consequently, just as it is not possible to direct the growth and flowering of plants without understanding their causal conditions, so too, aesthetic understanding must “start

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with the soil, air and light out of which things esthetically arise. And these conditions are
the conditions and factors that make an ordinary experience complete.”

The Essential Conditions of Life and the Live Creature

Although Dewey’s critique led him to the position that artistic and aesthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience, most people tend to view art as being an alien experience and consider aesthetics to be a synonym for artificial. Making the relationship explicit, however, requires not only a clear and coherent idea of what normal experience means, but also the recognition that the nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life. The first consideration here is that, “life goes on in an environment, not merely because of it, through interaction with it.” Thus, for each of us our “career and destiny” as a human being are intimately bound up with our transactions with the environment. Throughout the greater part of human history, however, all art products and forms of aesthetic experience were contextualized in that they were part of the significant life of an organized community in which the meaning of group life was consummated. Over time, along with the rise of nationalism, imperialism, and capitalism, the former sense of aesthetic meaning was lost thus giving rise to a separated and compartmentalized conception of fine art.

As the original status of works of art was lost, their new status as specimens that function in isolation from the conditions of their origin resulted in placing art and its appreciation in a realm of their own. They are isolated because, in failing to understand that they arise because of specifiable extraneous conditions, theories of art and aesthetics disconnect them “from other modes of experiencing [that] are not inherent in the subject-

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348 Dewey, LW 10, 18.
349 Dewey, LW 10, 19.
matter...Embedded as they are in institutions and in habits of life, these conditions operate effectively because they work so unconsciously. Then the theorist assumes they are embedded in the nature of things.”

Again, the problem here can be traced to the philosophical fallacy which, in this case, involves the failure on the part of most theories of art and aesthetics to recognize that

[Life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step with the march of surrounding things and then recovers unison with it—either through effort or some happy chance. And in a growing life, the recovery is never mere return to a prior state, for it is enriched by the state of disparity and resistance through which it has successfully passed...Life grows when a temporary falling out is a transition to a more extensive balance of the energies of the organism with those of the conditions under which it lives.]

Although this seems to be a biologically commonplace condition, for Dewey the balance of such energies reaches to the roots of aesthetic experience.

Indeed, the world itself may well be indifferent and hostile since the very processes that serve to maintain life often “throw it out of gear” with its environment which can even be fatal. However, whenever “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...Here in germ are balance and harmony attained through rhythm. Equilibrium comes about not mechanically and inertly but out of, and because of,

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350 Dewey, LW 10, 16.
tension." Form arises and order emerges from the achievement of a stable, but ever changing, equilibrium resulting from the relations of harmonious interactions such tensional energies bear upon one another. In this sense, form is not only active but develops itself and includes, within its “balanced movement”, a greater variety of changes that interlock and sustain each other. One result of such coherence is “endurance” and, by incorporating such order into ourselves, we experience harmonious feelings whenever we find ourselves in such congruous order.

It is only through sharing in the “ordered relations of the environment” that we are able to achieve the stability necessary for living, which occurs usually after a phase of disruption and conflict. The artist, for example, “cares in a peculiar way for the phase of experience in which union is achieved, he does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing into living consciousness an experience that is unified and total.” The difference between the artist and the scientific inquirer is “one of the place where emphasis falls in the constant rhythm that marks the interaction of the live creature with his surroundings. The ultimate matter of both emphases in experience is the same, as is also their general form.” Seeing art and science as separate is “the result of converting a difference of tempo and emphasis into a difference in kind.” For the scientific inquirer the “aesthetic moment” occurs when her ideas cease to be mere ideas and become incorporated in the meanings of objects. However, scientific inquiry is more remote than aesthetic inquiry in that the inquirer operates with words, symbols and

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353 Dewey, LW 10, 21.
mathematical signs. For the artist, however, who “has his problems and thinks as he works...his thought is more immediately embodied in the object...[he] does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it.”¹³⁵⁶ In the final analysis, for Dewey, it is “aesthetic satisfaction [that] takes privilege over science, which plays the role of a “handmaiden” since it merely provides the conditions for achieving such satisfactions more frequently, stably and fully.”¹³⁵⁷

In contrast to the scientific inquirer and the artist, in nature the “live creature” does not have to project its emotions into the objects experienced but merely discriminates things as being favorable or unfavorable. However, this is also the point at which direct experience comes in to play through the interaction of nature and human being wherein human energy is gathered, released, pent up, frustrated, or successfully controlled. Here experience consists in the “rhythmic beats of want and fulfillment, pulses of doing, and being withheld from doing” since “[a]ll interactions that effect stability and order in the whirling flux of change are rhythms....Contrast of lack and fullness, of struggle and achievement, of adjustment consummated after irregularity, form the drama in which action, feeling and meaning are as one. The outcome is balance and counter balance. These are not static and mechanical. They express power that is intense because measured through overcoming resistance. Environing objects avail and counter-avail.”¹³⁵⁸ Thus, it is impossible for “aesthetic experience” to occur in either a world of “mere flux” or a world that is “finished or ended” since such experience is possible only

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because of the “actual world” in which we live.\(^{359}\) Only in our world, in which there is a combination of movement and culmination, of breaks and re-unions, is it possible for the experience of a living creature to possess aesthetic quality. This is because the live creature experiences the recurrent loss and reestablishment of equilibrium with its surroundings. It is the moment of passage from disturbance into harmony that is, for Dewey, the most intense in life.

For the most part, in our world our experience is punctuated by moments of fulfillment that tend to occur at rhythmically enjoyed intervals. These moments of “inner harmony”, in an objective sense, come into being only when our negotiations with the environment are successful although

\[\text{[f]ortunately, for variety in experience, terms are made in many ways—} \]

\[\text{ways ultimately decided by selective interest. Pleasures may come about} \]

\[\text{through chance contact and stimulation; such pleasures are not to be} \]

\[\text{despised in a world full of pain. But happiness and delight are a different} \]

\[\text{sort of thing. They come to be through fulfillment that reaches to the} \]

\[\text{depth of our being—one that is an adjustment of our whole being with the} \]

\[\text{conditions of existence. In the process of living, attainment of a period of} \]

\[\text{equilibrium is at the same time the initiation of a new relation to the} \]

\[\text{environment, one that brings with it potency of new adjustments to be} \]

\[\text{made through struggle. The time of consummation is also one of} \]

\[\text{beginning anew.}\(^{360}\)

\(^{359}\) In the world of mere flux, since change is never cumulative, nothing would ever move towards a close. In the finished or ended world, one without traits of suspense and crisis, there exists no opportunity for resolution, i.e., there can be no fulfillment in a world in which everything is already finished.

\(^{360}\) Dewey, LW 10, 23.
Although most of us consciously discriminate between our present living, our past and our future, the “live creature” adopts its prior achievements and success, using them to inform the present instead of trying to live upon their status as past achievements. In fact, it is alive only because it is in direct contact with a world of moving, rhythmic energies in which genuine hazard, contingency, and irregularity is just as much a part of it as is consummation, determinateness, and order. The matrix in which experience develops is a temporal process of events that start and stop. The future, then, is not experienced as ominous and foreboding, but as “a promise of possibilities” that are felt as a possession of what is now and here. Such a life, Dewey claimed, is “truly life” in that everything overlaps and merges (interpenetrates).

Unlike the “live creature”, though, because most of us are apprehensive about what the future may bring, we experience a division within ourselves in that we fail to enjoy the present because we subordinate it to that which is absent. One consequence such routine abandonment of the present to the past and future has is that the “happy periods of an experience that is now complete because it absorbs itself into the memories of the past and anticipations of the future, come to constitute an esthetic ideal. Only when the past ceases to be trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive.” This is aesthetic experience because it is what art celebrates, with particular intensity, i.e., those moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a “quickening” of what now is.

361 He noted that some of us treat the past as burden which “…invades the present with a sense of regret, of opportunities not used, and of consequences we wish undone. It rests upon the present as an oppression, instead of being a storehouse of resources by which to move confidently forward.” Dewey, LW 10, 23.
Grasping the sources of aesthetic experience, for Dewey, begins by observing non-human animal life since activities at this level “may at least stand as reminders and symbols of that unity of experience which we so fractionalize when work is labor, and thought withdraws us from the world. The live animal is fully present, all there, in all its actions…All senses are equally on the *qui vive.*” In contrast to most of us, what the “live creature” retains from the past and expects from the future operate as directions in the present and, when the past is fully absorbed into the present, it continues to press forward into future experience. Consequently, connecting art and aesthetics with experience does not lower their significance and dignity since

[experience in the degree to which it *is* experience is heightened vitality…it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and world of objects and events…it affords our sole demonstration of a stability that is not stagnation but is rhythmic and developing. Because experience is fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is aesthetic experience.]

Part of the problem here may have to do with our understanding of our “senses” since we usually understand them to be mechanical stimuli or irritated stimulations. It is only on rare occasions that our senses are “fraught with the deep realization of intrinsic meaning”; nor is it the case for most of our experience

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that our senses “unite to tell a common and enlarged story.”\textsuperscript{366} Dewey observed that it is under such conditions as these that sense and flesh have gotten such a bad reputation.

**The Naturalization of Aesthetic Sense**

Sense can be understood in a number of different contexts, i.e., as in the sensory (sensations), the sensational, the sensitive, the sentimental, as well as the sensuous.\textsuperscript{367} Indeed, for Dewey, it encompasses almost everything from bare physical and emotional shock to sense itself—that is, the meaning of things present in immediate experience. Each term refers to some real phase and aspect of the life of an organic creature as life occurs through sense organs. But sense, as meaning so directly embodied in experience as to be its own illuminated meaning, is the only signification that expresses the function of sense organs when they are carried to their full realization. The senses are the organs through which the live creature participates directly in the ongoings of the world about him. In this participation the varied wonder and splendor of this world are made actual for him in the qualities he experiences.\textsuperscript{368}

The material of the senses oppose neither “will”, the means by which such participation is carried on and directed, nor “intellect”, the means by which participation “is rendered.

\textsuperscript{366} Dewey, *LW* 10, 27.

\textsuperscript{367} Dewey notes that moralists associate sense with emotion, impulse and appetite, but denounce the sensual as lustful and lewd by identifying the “sensuous” with the “sensual”; also philosophers and psychologists obsessed with the problem of knowledge treat “sensations” as mere elements of knowledge.

\textsuperscript{368} Dewey, *LW* 10, 28.
fruitful in sense and by which meanings and values are extracted, retained and put to further service in the intercourse of the live creature with his surroundings.”

In such context, experience is “the result, sign and reward” of organism-environment interaction through which it is transformed, by means of the senses and connected motor activities, into participation and communication. Conceiving experience in terms of dualistic oppositions e.g., mind-body, spirit-flesh is false because they only signify marks of contraction and withdrawal that “have their origin, fundamentally, in fear of what life may bring forth.” For Dewey, recognition of the continuity of our “organs, needs and basic impulses” with that of other forms of animal life does not reduce us to the level of sub-human. Instead, it “makes possible the drawing of a “ground plan” for human experience upon which is erected the superstructure of man’s marvelous and distinguishing experience.”

What serves to make humans distinct from other forms of animal life is their ability “to carry to unprecedented heights that unity of sense and impulse, of brain and eye and ear, that is exemplified in animal life, saturating it with the conscious meanings derived from communication and deliberate expression.”

The fact that humans excel at making complex and minute differentiations in experience accounts for the necessity in having many more comprehensive relationships among the constituents of our being. Although these distinctions and relations are important, what is most significant is that there is also created “more opportunities for resistance and tension, more drafts of experimentation and invention, and therefore more

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369 Dewey, LW 10, 28.
370 Dewey, LW 10, 28.
371 Dewey, LW 10, 28.
372 Dewey, LW 10, 28.
novelty in action, greater range and depth of insight and increase in poignancy in
feeling.”373 As the organism’s transactions with the environment increase in complexity,
“the rhythms of struggle and consummation in its relations to its environment are varied
and prolonged, and they come to include within themselves an endless variety of sub-
rhythms. The designs of living are widened and enriched. Fulfillment is more massive
and slightly more shaded.”374

This has implications for our experience of space and time as well. Space is no
longer a “void” in which to roam around, avoiding dangerous things and seeking things
that satisfy the appetite, but “becomes a comprehensive and enclosed scene within which
are ordered the multiplicity of doings and undergoings in which man engages.”375
Neither is time an endless and uniform flow or succession of instantaneous points, but
instead “is the organized and ongoing medium of the rhythmic ebb and flow of expectant
impulse, forward and retracted movement, resistance and suspense, with fulfillment and
consummation.”376 Time is understood as an “ordering of growth and maturations” and,
when conceived as organization in change, it is growth because “it signifies that a varied
series of change enters upon intervals of pause and rest; of completions that become the
initial points of new processes of development.”377 However, such recognition of change
is not itself merely a point in time, but “the focal culmination of long, slow processes of
maturation, i.e. as manifestation of the continuity of an ordered temporal experience in a
sudden discrete instant of climax.”378 These two basic discriminations in experience also

373 Dewey, LW 10, 29.
374 Dewey, LW 10, 29.
375 Dewey, LW 10, 29.
376 Dewey, LW 10, 29.
377 Dewey, LW 10, 29.
378 Dewey, LW 10, 29.
have implications for Dewey’s understanding “form” in the context of fine arts as “the art of making clear what is involved in the organization of space and time prefigured in every course of a developing experience.”

Despite physical limitations and narrow localization, moments and places are also charged with accumulations of long-gathering energy, e.g. returning to a significant childhood scene with the resultant release of pent up memories and emotions. However, mere recognition only occurs when something else, other than what we recognize, occupies us, e.g. either an interruption or intent to use what we recognize as a means to something else. In contrast, to “perceive or see” involves more than simple recognition since it does not identify something present in terms of a past disconnected from it and, as such, the past carries into the present thereby expanding and deepening the content of the latter. Dewey described the process as follows: “Perception is therefore at its lowest and its most obscure in the degree that only instinctive need operates. Instinct is in too much haste to be solicitous about its environing relations…. [p]rimitive need is the source of attachment to objects. Perception is born when solicitude for objects and their qualities brings the organic demand for attachment to consciousness…. Perception that occurs for its own sake is the full realization of all the elements of our psychological being.”

Jackson notes that Dewey viewed perception as “a developmental affair. It emerges in answer to our bodily needs as we go about seeking their fulfillment. That is the condition under which we begin to see the world in meaningful terms.”

Jackson also discusses Dewey’s view of the place of perception in an art-centered experience. It involves “the translation of bare continuity of external time into the vital

order and organization of experience. Identification nods and passes on. Or it defines a passing moment in isolation, it marks a dead spot in experience that is merely filled in. The extent to which the process of living in any day or hour is reduced to labeling situations, events, and objects as “so-and-so” in mere succession marks the cessation of a life that is a conscious experience. Continuities, realized in an individual, discrete, form are the essence of the latter. 382 This suggests that art is “prefigured” in the very process of living in which internal organic pressures cooperate with external materials in the environment in such a way that the former are fulfilled and the latter transformed in a satisfying culmination. Again, although some may hesitate to call this “art” since it seems to lack directive intent, Dewey observed that “all deliberation, all conscious content, grows out of things once performed organically through the interplay of natural energies.” 383 What distinguishes the contribution of humans is that they are conscious of the relations found in nature. Such consciousness enables them to convert “the relations of cause and effect that are found in nature into the relations of means and consequences…[and] itself is the inception of such transformation…mere shock becomes an invitation; resistance becomes something to be used in changing existing arrangements of matter; smooth facilities become agencies for executing an idea.” 384 It is through these operations that “an organic stimulation becomes the bearer of meanings, and motor responses are changed into instruments of expression and communication; no longer are they mere means of locomotion and direct reaction.” 385

382 Dewey, LW 10, 30.
383 Dewey, LW 10, 30.
Even here, such “organic substratum” constitutes the “quickening and deep foundation” since conception and invention cannot exist apart from the relations of cause and effect in nature. Likewise, without the processes of rhythmic conflict and fulfillment, design and pattern would be absent from experience. Finally, without our “organs inherited from animal ancestry” our ideas and purposes would lack a mechanism of realization. The existence of art serves as concrete proof that man uses the materials and energies of nature with intent to his own life, and that he does so in accord with the structure of his organism—brains, sense organs, and muscular system. Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. The intervention of consciousness adds regulation, power of selection, and redisposition. Thus it varies the arts without end. But its intervention also leads in time to the *idea* that art is a conscious idea—the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity.\(^{386}\)

The experience of art, whether as doing or undergoing, lends itself to enriched experiences when the qualities of such experience are at their maximum. Here, making, doing, acting, and thinking are integrally fused. It is precisely this fusion that is characteristic of all art that is intelligently carried out.

**The Function of Emotion and Expression in Dewey’s Aesthetics**

Given the preceding role and function of art, Dewey recognized that emotion and imagination play a central role. In Chapters 3 and 4, it was noted that emotion and

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imagination are inseparable from the very process of inquiry. Our consciousness of the conditions of the rhythm of loss of integration with the environment, and the subsequent recovery of union, are what provides the material from which we form purposes. It begins when emotion, as the conscious sign of an actual or impending break, serves as the occasion that induces reflection. The resulting desire to restore union serves to convert “emotion” into “interest in objects” (as conditions for the realization of harmony) and further incorporates the material of such reflection into objects as their meaning. For Dewey emotion,

belongs of certainty to the self. But it belongs to the self that is concerned in the movement of events toward an issue that is desired or disliked. We jump instantaneously when we are scared, as we blush on the instant that we are ashamed. But fright and shamed modesty are not in this case emotional states. Of themselves they are but automatic reflexes. In order to become emotional they must become parts of an inclusive and enduring situation that involves concern for objects and other issues.387

Emotion arises in an inclusive or existential situation in which someone desires something and involves a complex process of reflex and desire or repulsion. Although we sometimes substitute “feeling” for emotion, feelings are never unaccompanied states since they always exist in the context of a desire or repulsion, i.e., as part of an existential situation.

Art serves to harness the emotions of artists when producing works of art. For those of us who undergo a work of art, it invigorates our emotions so that we may then

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387 Dewey, LW 10, 48-49.
get control of them. Whenever our emotions are aroused, in doing or making art as well as in our reactions to an expressive object, it is because we are producing satisfactory or having complete experiences. In such instances our generic traits of existence are at their maximum. Emotions themselves, though, do not confer the status of satisfactory or completeness on our experiences; instead they are the outgrowth of the quality of an experience. By understanding which emotions are aroused by certain practices or in certain contexts, it is possible to improve or manipulate them by producing objects that serve to stimulate them. It is in this way that emotions can be harnessed for the good of an experience and, if Dewey is correct, the function of art is that it provides benefits for the control and channeling of the “vital forces” in experience. Further, because every complete experience begins as an impulsion, as the outward and forward movement of the whole organism in its entirety, the whole self is called into play.

Impulsions arise from a need that can be met only when the organism originates and establishes definite relations with the environment. It is the need/environment interaction that produces the tension that results in an impulsion. With the subsequent release of energy, as modulated by past experience, impulsion is transformed through the process of re-creation into thoughtful action. It is this “double change” involving both impulsion and re-creation that converts an “activity” into an act of expression. Consequently, those things which are in the environment become means or media, while those things retained from past experience become “coefficients in the re-creation” thereby taking on new or renewed meaning. However, merely giving way to an impulsion does not constitute expression because it also requires an “urge from within outwards” in which values are brought forward from prior experience. Although
emotional discharge is a necessary condition for expression, it is not a sufficient condition for expression. Expression in art is possible only where material is employed as medium, i.e., employed in view of its place and role (in its relations) in an inclusive situation.

The expression of aesthetic emotion, then, is a complex process that is derived from organism/environment relations that involve environing objects, resisting objects, internal emotions and impulsion. This led Dewey to conclude that “[t]he real work of art is the building up of an integral experience out of the interaction of organic and environmental conditions and energies...The thing expressed is wrung from the producer by the pressure exercised by objective things on the natural impulses and tendencies.”

In particular, the act of expression that constitutes a work of art is a construction in time, not an instantaneous emission. In this context the expression of the self, in and through a medium, is a prolonged interaction that emanates from the self. The result of this interaction forms the objective conditions in a process through which both the work of art itself and the producer acquire a form and order they did not possess previously. Artistic expression, for Dewey, is the carrying forward to completion of an inspiration by means of the objective material of perception and imagery. The difference between the two is that perception is immediate and individual, marks concrete experience, and comes from the present occasion while imagery is derived from meaning, substance and content that is embedded in the self from the past.

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388 Dewey, MW 10, 70.
Imagination, Dramatic Rehearsal and the Aesthetics of Self-Activity

Imagination enters aesthetic experience through inquiry, in which deliberation is understood as an imaginative rehearsal in which the anticipated consequences of acting in a certain manner on the medium are thought out before they are attempted in the concrete. Dewey described the central role that imagination plays as follows:

[i]t is not so generally recognized that a similar transformation takes place on the side of ‘inner’ materials, images, observations, memories, and emotions. They are progressively re-formed; they, too, must be administered. This modification is the building up of a truly expressive act. The impulsion that seethes as a commotion demanding utterance must undergo as much and as careful management in order to receive eloquent manifestation as marble or pigment, as colors and sounds. Nor are there in fact two operations, one performed on the outer material and the other upon the inner and mental stuff.\(^\text{389}\)

The dialectic at play here is that imagination, in artistic or aesthetic experience, serves to develop the actual performance as well as leading to further imaginative inquiry. In such cases, imagination and actualization are, reciprocally, each the ends and means to the other. Whatever the medium from which art arises, whether the artist works out his original emotional idea in terms of auditory and visual imagery or in the actual medium as he works is of relatively minor importance. For the imagery is of the objective medium undergoing development. The physical media may be ordered in imagination or in

concrete material. In any case, the physical process develops the imagination, while imagination is conceived in terms of concrete material. Only by progressive organization of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ material in organic connection with each other can anything be produced that is not a learned document or an illustration of something familiar.  

Thus, artistic inquiry occurs whenever a conscious attempt at experimenting with media is made for the purpose of enacting a favorable, satisfactory and settled result. The artist also possesses a repertoire of techniques and skills (as habits) for use in solving the problems at hand. Those that are successful lead to an aesthetically pleasing or satisfying result, while those that do not are jettisoned.

It is also possible to interpret deliberation, as dramatic rehearsal in imagination, as having a story structure, at least in the sense that it has a beginning, middle and end. Its beginning is constituted by an active phase of stable, established habits and characterized by equilibrium, adaptation, and harmony. In the middle we find a troubled situation characterized by disrupted habit, disharmony, imbalance, loss of adaptation to surroundings, and competition or disunity among habits and desires. However, as we are provoked into a reflective phase of deliberation, as the active phase of imagination, the troubled situation becomes increasingly organized. The end or conclusion consists in a consummatory phase of recovered action and stability that is characterized by reconstructed equilibrium and re-unification of desires. Consequently, Dewey believed that working to discover an integrative value among competing values represents an ideal that one should strive to achieve.

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391 Johnston, *Deweyan Inquiry*.
Analysis and Conclusion

Alexander observes that “[t]he great tragedy in isolating art and aesthetic experience from the range of experience has been that we fail to treat life artistically.” In Art as Experience, Dewey again took up the issue of experience by showing that there is both a rhythm to and an interpenetration of the instrumental and consummatory phases of experience. His theory of inquiry has shown that scientific knowing is a form of activity or practice, i.e., as an art that represents an attempt to specify the ways in which knowing is an art. As a result, he showed that it is no longer possible to maintain the traditional distinction between theory or knowledge as contemplation and practice or art as being limited to lesser forms of doing and making. Goodman reflects a similar view of the aesthetic experience, which he describes as dynamic rather than static. It involves making delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, identifying symbol systems and characters within these systems and what these characters denote and exemplify, interpreting works and reorganizing the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world. Much of our experience and many of our skills are brought to bear and may be transformed by the encounter. The aesthetic “attitude” is restless, searching, testing—is less attitude than action: creation and recreation.

Therefore, consummations and the direct enjoyment of aesthetic quality are not expressions of some transcendent reality, since they can only be understood in terms of the rhythm of experience. The rhythm here consists in a movement from situations

393 Alexander, “Aesthetics of Human Experience”, 172.
394 Bernstein, Dewey, 150.
characterized by the conflicts and problems that emerge from the ongoing process of experience towards fulfillments (consummations) of these experiences. They are natural endings or consummations in experience, not endings that are fixed in some determinate hierarchy but realized through the directed transformation of experience.

Achieving success in meeting these ends is experienced as “consummations” which, themselves, are funded by the results of inquiry. Such consummations are marked by their harmony, integrity and completeness, as well as pervaded by a heightened aesthetic quality that marks them off from other experiences. However, it is not just the ending of an experience (cessation) that makes it complete since any “completed transaction” is related organically and dynamically to the circumstances that precede it.\textsuperscript{396} Consummation is also characterized by a rhythm within our experience, which involves passing from direct, immediate enjoyment to critical appraisal and from critical appraisal to consummatory experience. Bernstein observes that “[n]ot only can all inquiry and all life be understood as art—a controlled activity—but esthetic quality is not limited to a specific type of experience: it can pervade all experiences…Every integral experience, everything which is distinctively an experience, moves towards a close, an ending, a fulfillment.”\textsuperscript{397} Consequently, since any activity that is simultaneously productive and aesthetic, as well as instrumental and consummatory is art, this means that art, itself, is a natural event and can be understood as the completion of nature.

For Dewey, there is no metaphysical separation between the arts of doing and making and the arts of knowledge.\textsuperscript{398} Although they may have different functions and we can distinguish one from the other, their beginnings and endings are found in an

\textsuperscript{396} Jackson, \textit{Lessons}, 7.
\textsuperscript{397} Bernstein, \textit{Dewey}, 152.
\textsuperscript{398} Johnston, \textit{Deweyan Inquiry}, 58.
existential situation, not in a logical determination. However, there are three differences about inquiry in the context of art and aesthetic experiences that must be recognized. First, is the focus on the constructive and experiential aspects of inquiry; more so than in other contexts and particularly, the presence and use of imagination and emotion in inquiry. Second, that task of inquiry can only be understood in the context of doing and making, i.e., the manipulation of materials. Third, the different techniques and methods as used in the context of art, specifically the use of experimentation to produce an art object. Thus, “art” consists of doing and making so that when we do it, we construct something. Whatever it is that we construct, such activity is context specific, at least in the following way.

In its most traditional context “doing art” involves drawing, painting, sculpture, music, poetry and literature. But, for Dewey, art can also be found in more ordinary contexts, such as in the “manual arts” of building, sawing, welding, erecting, repairing and manipulating. In the context of intellectual activity, however, it is found in the process of inquiry (as creative intelligence) which involves doings such as thinking, imagining, reflecting, relating and communicating. Not only are the variables of the artistic enterprise numerous and complex, there are also no formulas to employ that guarantees a rightness of fit. What is necessary for doing art is an immersed engagement that demands all of one’s attention and intelligence. Eisner observes that the development of such intelligence “requires the ability to deal effectively with multiple demands simultaneously. And, it is by learning to engage in that process that perception

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399 Johnston, Deweyan Inquiry, 61-62.
is refined, imagination stimulated, judgment fostered and technical skills developed."\(^{400}\)

Consequently, in light of the complexities of these demands, he finds it ironic that the arts are widely regarded as cognitive. The relevant point here, with respect to the aesthetic mode in human well-being, is that all of these activities and abilities are art because of its unique goal, i.e., to deepen, enlarge and enrich human experience.

Inquiry in art and aesthetics is holistic in its emphasis on making and doing as well as thinking and reflecting.\(^{401}\) As a result, it offers the best opportunity to develop complete and consummatory experiences. When it is successful, inquiry leads to satisfactory experiences which are what form the standards of genuine growth—the development of better and richer experiences. It also facilitates growth by developing meanings that lead to better and richer experiences which, in turn, lead to better and more fully developed meanings.\(^{402}\) It is in this way that a loose circle of meanings and experiences are formed. Furthermore, meanings multiply as to know more about an object and, by discovering more about its connections with other things in the world, its meaning becomes more enriched.\(^{403}\) Jackson notes that this increased richness applies not only to its explicit usefulness (instrumental meaning) but also to those aspects of meaning that are reflectively attained through inquiry (expressive meaning) that are gradually absorbed by the object itself. Thereafter, it is altered in its qualitative

\(^{400}\) Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, 15.

\(^{401}\) Steven Fesmire speaks in terms of the “moral artist” and the need to cultivate rich imagination, without which life is devoid of constructive prospects. He suggests that “Our moral experiences could potentially be as developed as are those experiences consummated in the peaks of the fine arts. This is a realizable ideal for which to aim, and it escapes the time-worn irony of “grounding” ideals in an illusory transcendent realm. It is an ideal we can strive for to consummate and revivify meaning and value.” Fesmire, “Moral Imagination”, 145.

\(^{402}\) Perhaps the term “moral artist” personifies Dewey’s “ecological, democratic, and artistic-aesthetic” moral ideal in that her “aesthetically funded imagination enables sensitivity to the social bearings of action.” Fesmire, “Moral Imagination”, 145.

immediacy and we perceive it as possessing those meanings that become added on in experience.

In terms of the account of human well-being under development, one of the most important features of inquiry is that it is an affair of both the mind and the body. This is not surprising given his insistence that it is organisms and not an abstract mind or intellect that responds to existential situations. Through constant biological and psychological adjustment as a response to solving problems, the organism also adapts to its environment by changing. This is because dramatic rehearsal in imagination, which is a function of our habits, makes it possible to mark off a range of viable courses of action. It is also the case that possessing more habits serves to widen the field of possible observation and forecasting that is open to us. Further, the more flexible our habits are, the more refined our perception is in terms of its ability to discriminate, making whatever is presented in and evoked by imagination more subtle and delicate. However, dramatic rehearsal in imagination is not merely an individualistic cognitive activity since “[o]ur mostly unconscious horizon of social habits tethers our dramatic rehearsals, both disclosing and concealing potential alternatives for conduct. Social habits are shared and stable interpretative structure (e.g., symbol systems, imaginative structures, values, gestures, prejudices) that we inherit as we form personal habits. They enable us to communicate so that we can anticipate and compose the future together.”404 The relevance that Dewey’s account of deliberation and dramatic rehearsal in imagination holds for human well-being is that it recognizes that “vying prospects for harmonizing values are intelligible only in the context of the larger narratives of our lives—lives

404 Fesmire, “Moral Imagination”, 137.
enacted on the same stage as other lives. To deliberate is to co-author (with environing conditions) a dramatic story. It is not merely application of universal rules to particular instances, nor is it a pseudo-mathematical calculation of means to already coagulated ends.”

Dewey’s theory of art and aesthetics provides a corrective to Baumgarten’s exclusion or neglect of the cultivation of the body. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in this aspect of Dewey’s work on the part of Shusterman who extends Dewey’s theory of aesthetics. He introduced the term *somaesthetics* to describe “an enlarged, somatically centered field…that can contribute significantly to many crucial philosophical concerns, thus enabling philosophy to more successfully redeem its original role as an art of living.” It constitutes the “critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aesthesis*) and creative self-fashioning…[and is also] devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices, and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it.” The idea and importance of somatic care has ancient philosophical roots, e.g. Socrates declared the body is valuable for all human activity and should be as fit as possible. However, given that most philosophies have tended to neglect this aspect, perhaps philosophy as a whole should pay greater “attention to the variety of somatic practices through which we can pursue our quest for self-knowledge and self-creation, for beauty, potency and pleasure, for the reconstruction of immediate experience into improved living.”

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408 Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, 177.
The conception of somaesthetics has particular value, in several ways, for the account of well-being under development here. Since our senses belong to and are conditioned by our body, a somaesthetic way of knowing complements knowledge derived from sensory experience that is then subjected to discursive reason in that it seeks to enhance the actual performance of our senses through improved direction of our bodies. In contrast to Plato, for example, our knowledge of the world can be improved by perfecting, not denying our bodily senses. Second, if the primary cognitive aim of philosophy is more than just knowledge of worldly facts, i.e., self-knowledge, then knowledge of one’s bodily dimension cannot be ignored. As a result, it is important that philosophy become, “[c]oncerned not simply with the body’s external form or representation but also with its lived experience, somaesthetics works at improving awareness of our bodily states and feelings, thus providing greater insight into both our passing moods and lasting attitudes. It can, therefore, reveal and improve somatic malfunctions that normally go undetected even though they impair our well-being and performance.”

Third, if virtue and right action require knowledge, self-knowledge and effective will (which in particular, depends upon somatic efficiency) then somaesthetics can achieve a better mastery of the will’s concrete application in behavior since “[k]nowing and desiring the right action will not avail if we cannot will our bodies to perform it; and our surprising inability to perform the most simple bodily tasks is matched only be our astounding blindness to this inability, the failure resulting from

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409 He emphasizes that “[a]cute attention to the body and to its nonverbal messages, by the practice of body disciplines which heighten somatic awareness and transform how one feels and functions, one discovers and expands self-knowledge by remaking one’s self. This quest for self-knowledge and self-transformation can constitute a philosophical life of increasing embodied enrichment that has irresistible aesthetic appeal.” Susterman, *Practicing Philosophy*, 176.

inadequate somaesthetic awareness.”  Finally, if the pursuit of virtue and self-mastery is traditionally integrated into ethic’s quest for better living, especially as happiness, then somaesthetics’ concern with the body as the locus and medium of our pleasures suggests that it deserves additional attention.

For Dewey it is the pre-epistemological person that constitutes the most basic interaction of the organism with the environment. As a consequence of such interaction “[w]hat the live creature retains from the past and what it expects from the future operate as directions in the present…The past absorbed into the present carries on; it presses forward.” This leads Kestenbaum to suggest that Dewey located the source of the aesthetic in the “live creature” (animal life below the human scale) because “the unity and integration of the live animal itself, and the unity and integration of the live animal and environment, exemplify the conditions which aesthetic experience develops and intensifies…the savage embodied in pure form, if not sophisticated and complex form, the qualities and conditions of dramatic life, life which is ‘fully alive’….the savage, in his interaction with the environment, is “whole” in the sense that action, feeling, and meaning are unified and integrated…in the sense that the present is or organically continuous with past and future.”

In conclusion, Dewey’s theory of art and aesthetics sought to recover the continuity of the aesthetic experience with the normal processes of living. By providing a naturalized aesthetics, he emphasized such important concepts as continuity, interaction, equilibrium, resistance, growth, rhythm and consummation. This naturalized sense of the aesthetic is possible only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of

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411 Shusterman, Pragmatist Aesthetics, 269.
its environment, securing the stability essential to living. Alexander notes that Dewey also includes unifying qualities of experiences that are negative “[a]lthough terms such as unity, integration, and resolution tend to have us think of positive experiences, Dewey is concerned to show that there may be deep aesthetic aspects of life that are not particularly happy. Art seeks to express the meaning of experience, and not all life is cheerful…there may be times when we are seriously out of step with our environment. The sense of that loss may have significance and be used in works of art…these works evoke deep responses from us because they use qualities from our lives that give them shape and meaning.”

In experience, the “social world” (e.g., human relations, institutions and traditions) is as much a part of the natural world in and by which we live as is the “physical world.” In this sense “nature”, as we experience it, “is not “outside.” It is in us and we are in and of it. But there are a multitude of ways of participating in it…Works of art are means by which we enter…into other forms of relationship and participation other than our own.” When such participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict it is indeed the case that, as Dewey claimed, it becomes a consummation like the aesthetic. Art, then, is continuous with nature and provides a way of enhancing, varying and enlarging our experience of it. Indeed, art is basically there in nature—in human life and its setting. It cuts through the traditional distinctions between the instrumental and the consummatory, the practical and the theoretical, the mechanical and the immediate by relocating them so that they can now be seen to be distinction between those experiences which are full of enjoyed meanings and those which are not. For Dewey, this provides

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415 Dewey, LW 10, 336.
the only grounds for differentiating between what is authentic and inauthentic in experience, as well as in human well-being. Perhaps here is a place for criticism to enter as well, since the work of artists “is not to validate or replicate the status quo but to transform the world and educate us to perceive it afresh which can be done only by considering things differently and through new perspectives. In this sense, Dewey would agree that art is criticism of life—for the sake of life itself.”

CONCLUSION

Human Well-being and the Enlargement of Experience
The examination and analysis of Dewey’s pragmatic naturalism in this inquiry reveals that it has three essential characteristics.\textsuperscript{417} The first is its grounding in a profound respect for the richness, depth, and complexity of human experience and cognition. Second, it offers an evolutionary perspective that appreciates the role of dynamic change in all development (as opposed to fixity and finality).\textsuperscript{418} The third is that it recognizes that human cognition and creativity arise in response to problematic situations that involve values, interests, and social interaction. His philosophical reconstruction of experience, especially as exemplified in his theories of inquiry, ethics, value and aesthetics, offers the possibility for a natural and more robust account of human well-being than those offered by Plato and Sumner. Such an account is natural and more robust due to his reconstructing the traditional understanding of experience from an epistemic or cognitive state to an existential understanding of experience as the field of geographic transactions. This enlargement of “experience” (\textit{experience}_G) makes it possible to provide an account of human well-being grounded in the existential matrix in which ordinary human beings live, enjoy, and suffer in consequence of their negotiations with the environment. The implication this has for the account of human well-being offered here is that it requires understanding it in terms of our response to the continuous barrage of existential challenges that present themselves and which we are forced to face.

It is this context, in conjunction with the implications that \textit{experience}_G has for reconstructing our understanding of knowledge, ethics, value and art, that it is now

\textsuperscript{417} Johnson and Rohrer, “We Are Live Creatures: Embodiment, American Pragmatism, and the Cognitive Organism”, 21.
\textsuperscript{418} For a discussion of the impact of Darwinian and evolutionary thought on pragmatic naturalism see Smith, “Introduction”, 3-4, in \textit{Classical American Pragmatism} and Auxier, “The Decline of Evolutionary Naturalism in Later Pragmatism”, 180-207, in \textit{Pragmatism: From Progressivism to Postmodernism}.
possible to articulate the following specific elements which are central to a Deweyan account of human well-being:

1. It begins with the recognition that the fundamental natural feature of experience consists in the balance between the precarious and stable in existence.

2. It recognizes that, within the context of the natural world, human well-being is a consequence of chance, choice and change.

3. It recognizes human well-being involves both discovery and creativity (as inquiry) as qualitatively expressed in its instrumental and aesthetic modes.

4. It recognizes that the “pervasive quality of the situation” is the only legitimate criterion for “authenticity” in terms of human well-being.

5. It recognizes the “person” or “self” as an ecological field of transaction, not as an individualistic “subject”, “spectator”, or “proprietor”.

These elements provide the basic organizational structure for the conclusion to this inquiry. However, the fact that we are at a point of conclusion means only that we have arrived at an “end-in-view” for this particular inquiry since the possibility for continued inquiry remains.\(^{419}\)

**Achieving Balance between the Precarious and the Stable in Existence**

Dewey emphasized that experience begins in nature and involves the alternation between periods of precariousness and periods of stability during which the organism achieves a state of temporary balance in terms of its transactions with the

\(^{419}\) This is similar to the distinction between “open” and “closed” work where the former invites further reflection and commentary, while the latter does not. See: Jackson, *The Moral Life of the School*, 45-49.
environment. One has only to glance at the news reports on television or in the newspaper to find constant reminders of how precarious human existence truly is. With today’s 24/7 news cycle, we are continuously exposed to a seemingly endless list of accidents, natural disasters, man-made disasters and epidemic illnesses. In virtually every place we can be connected and choose to be, we are bombarded with constant reminders that human existence is precarious. However, saying that our existence is precarious is not meant to suggest that we live constantly at the crumbling edge of a dangerous precipice, although some of us may find ourselves in such a situation, either by choice or by chance. Most of us brush up against the precariousness in existence often enough so that we should not take it as only referring to the occurrence of exceptional types of situations in one’s life. Many of us have experienced, at some point in our lives, a physical health situation during which we moved out of experiencing our situation as being relatively stable and moved into experiencing our situation as being more precarious. What begins as an observation that “something’s not quite right” with our body most often serves to initiate an inquiry into what is going on with it. Perhaps the initial inquiry resolves the problematic situation quickly, i.e., “take two aspirins and call me in the morning.” Alternatively, it may lead to uncovering an underlying health condition that is more serious, which requires further testing and more waiting.

Although the situation above may be somewhat exceptional, the naturalistic tension between instability and stability also plays out in extremely mundane ways as well. Many of us have experienced driving along a familiar route only to find ourselves

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420 A simple short list ranges from poverty and homelessness in America to famine and death in Darfur; from mining disasters in Chile to toxic sludge floods in Hungary; from HIV/AIDS in Africa to avian flu in Asia; from racism in France to genocide in Bosnia; and these images almost continuously flash in front of our eyes. Such events overwhelm not only those directly affected, but also those who, though distant from the actual events, become aware of them and are moved to provide aid and assistance.
confronting unanticipated road construction that produces in us a brief moment of
instability. We often are able to make a simple or easy adjustment to our planned route in
order to restore our stability. However, when the environmental conditions are different,
for example when driving in large urban area that is unfamiliar to us, the instability we
experience even though the situation may be similar, is likely to be greater, resulting in a
sense of uneasiness or discomfort as we try to navigate our way around the road
construction. If our response to the situation is not successful in relatively short measure
(e.g., our vehicle is not equipped with a GPS device) we can end up “lost”, resulting in
our feeling even greater instability, perhaps akin to precariousness. Examples such as
these serve to illustrate that what begins with the demarcation of insecurity and instability
in existence later becomes discriminated in experience as a felt tension (e.g., anxiety,
irritation, or uneasiness) from which we seek relief, perhaps even desperately, depending
on the conditions under which the environmental transactions occur.421

Although Dewey recognized that precariousness is part of our existence, at other
times he emphasized that we also experience it as relatively stable. Ultimately, in the
particular way he conceived what constitutes our “own” experience, it is always the
consequence of this inherent natural tension between the precarious and the stable in
existence. We continuously and repeatedly move back and forth from periods of relative
stability to periods of lesser or greater instability throughout the course of our existence,
second by second, minute by minute, and so on. For the most part, we go along in the
flow of experience with our pre-reflective habits (as beliefs, attitudes, dispositions,

421 Recent, first-hand experience with such a situation allows me to attest fully to the consequences
associated with the movement from the relatively stable to the precarious in existence. Fortunately, the
underlying health condition was not particularly serious and it took very little to restore homeostasis.
desires, etc.) operating intact; and we are usually successful in negotiating any existential challenges that arise. When such challenges arise, though, there are only four possible responses to the now existent problematic or tensional situation: 1) we push back against the environment and it gives, 2) the environment pushes back against us and we give, 3) the environment pushes back against us and we push back against it, or 4) we give and the environment gives.

Perhaps the brute existential fact that life consists in the tensional alteration between the stable and the precarious is what lies at the source of our need or desire for something that can serve as a secure anchor—something to which we can remain firmly tethered or upon which we can always rely. As we saw earlier, Plato clearly recognized the desire for order and security during times of instability and his theory of justice, in particular, was motivated in great part by the political instability, civic strife and external warfare that consumed Athens during his lifetime.422 Interpreted within the context of pragmatic naturalism, his philosophy was clearly a direct reaction to his own doubt, discomfort and irritation as the historical and cultural factors of his time played out.423 His mistake in working to resolve what was, in essence, a problematic situation in experience (e.g., how it is possible to achieve good governance) was to pursue a non-naturalistic path that separated the world of ideas from the world of nature, i.e., his “two worlds” theory.

422 See: Raven, Plato’s Thought in the Making, 27-41; Robinson and Denniston, “Plato”, 3-9.
423 In his introduction to The Quest for Certainty, Stephen Toulmin observes that Dewey viewed the Platonist demand for certainty and necessity as having its own emotional origins: it was an “escape from peril.” Although these origins were partly cultural, being the product of superstitions that went back ultimately to the astro-theology of the Ancient Empires, they were also partly personal—an expression of an urge for a psychological security which the world of practical life simply does not provide. Dewey, LW 4, 15-18.
Western religion, too, has influenced not only our beliefs about the precarious nature of human existence, but our response to it as well. The continuous tension of disputes about influence of the realm of Nature and the realm of God in human existence resulted in a cleavage between the two realms. Human well-being came to involve the will of god(s)—one prospered when they were appeased and one suffered when they were not. The most sacred text of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious tradition begins with the story of Genesis which contains evidence of the first disruption of and falsification in human experience, and to which we continue to devote a substantial amount of thought and argument.424 Even now, many people continue to believe that faith can safeguard one against the precariousness of one’s existence, at least in some measure, as well as offer a route to the transcendent world of fixed forms and final-ends. It is unclear, at least to me, how one finds security and stability in tethering one’s thoughts or beliefs to an immaterial world or form. If they are by definition without substance, how is it possible for them to serve as a firm anchor to secure one against the force of the hazards encountered in human existence?

The problem with religious conceptions of human well-being is that they are univocal and homogenous. As such, they have no relevance in terms of this inquiry. They are also incompatible with the tenets of pragmatic naturalism in that all concepts, assertions, and propositions about God are devoid of cognitive significance because they are incapable of either confirmation or disconfirmation. The point of the discussion here, however, is that religion has been very effective in deeply embedding and continuously reinforcing, within the context of the Western historico-cultural tradition, the belief in

424 The disruption is as follows: soon after creation of the natural world and human existence, an angry God casts Adam and Eve, the first humans, out of the Garden of Eden (as the stable and perfect in experience) and into the world of Nature (as the precarious and imperfect in experience).
fixed forms and final-ends. Usually, when disputes among various philosophical and religious traditions arise, they tend to be disagreements about the particulars involved in specifying something as a fixed form or final-end. Rarely is discussion given to the nature of the grounds for holding the belief in fixed forms or final-ends within these traditions. Given this context, it is quite easy to understand why such an immense number of individuals continue to retain such beliefs even today.

However, to pursue the other choice, that of anchoring ourselves in the world of lived experience, requires a very different understanding of the nature of our existence as human beings. Specifically, it requires a shift in our understanding of human existence from what has been essentially non-relational to a relational conception. The former conceives human existence in terms of material objects that are collections of properties or bundles of sensations that are part of the “furniture” of the world. The latter conceives human existence in terms of a relational conception in which the process of human-environment interaction creates a transactional field within Nature. It is precisely through such relations (transactions) that we engage in a continuous struggle to reduce tension (precariousness) and to maintain homeostasis (relative stability) which is necessary for the continuance of life. This fact of nature is the reason why the element currently under discussion serves as the beginning point for a Deweyan account of human well-being—it is at its roots an existential, not a conceptual account as provided by Plato and Sumner.

This also has implications in that it offers a way to avoid the difficulties presented by the typical distinction between subjective and objective theories of human well-being as noted earlier in Chapter 2. A Deweyan account holds that our experience of our own
well-being is “subjective” only in the following sense. For most organisms, it is often the case that any disturbance in the transactional field will manifest itself as a felt disturbance in the essential constancy of inner tissue or psychological balance. As human beings, we usually experience such disturbance as tension or anxiety that, whether it is the result of internal or external stimuli, serves to motivate us to overcome such stimuli disturbances. In shifting from a standard subjectivist account to a situated transactional-field account, human well-being no longer involves being the individual bearer, possessor or owner of certain properties or states, e.g., a virtuous character, fulfilled preferences, authentic happiness, or things on some objective list. Instead, it recognizes that human well-being involves much more than this because it is concerned about the qualitative nature of the ongoing relationships that exist within the field of environmental transaction. This is what gives to any situation its pervasive quality which, itself, is a consequence of the organism’s success in overcoming disturbance or reducing tension and, therefore, in maintaining a dynamic homeostatic tension balance.

Certainly, there is little to disagree with in observing that ours is a world in which our interactions with the environment, at times and perhaps more often than we realize, involve risk, uncertainty and instability. Even though the precariousness of our existence is a given for us, this is not a reason to live our lives in constant fear. Living constantly in a highly precarious environment would be exhausting at the very least and, if unabated, will likely result in death. Fear is first marked by “contractions, withdrawals, evasions, concealments” and later by “organic shrinkage, gestures of hesitation and retreat.” 425 Aside from being a horrible state of existence, living one’s life in fear does not seem to

offer much in terms of material for a theory of human well-being other than sheer fatalism. However, this is not to suggest that fear does not have an important part to play in human well-being. Dewey suggested that fear, as an emotion, “need not be an undesirable factor in experience.” If Dewey is correct then certain “desirable traits” such as caution, circumspection, prudence and the desire to foresee future events to prevent some possible harm are all products traceable to the impulse of fear. What is noteworthy here is that he referred to “prudence” as a “desirable trait”, but not as a value.

This has implications in terms of the earlier discussion in Chapter 2 about the value status of human well-being, in particular Sumner’s claim that it is a prudential value in that it raises a question as to whether being prudential in fact rises to the level of being a value. Clearly, although human well-being is something that is valuable to have, saying that something is “valuable to have” is not the same as saying that acting in a way that is prudential is something that should be prized or held in high regard by oneself or others. However, it is possible that acting prudentially has relevance when it comes to the appraisals given to a particular action that occurs in a particular situation or context by either oneself or others. A more significant problem here is that the initial motivation for “prudential value” lies not in “doing what is in one’s own interest” but in the “impulse of fear.” If this is the case, then “acting in one’s best interest” becomes a second-order concept derived from fear, which is a problem for Sumner’s claim that there is a rational basis for a welfarist theory of human well-being.

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426 Dewey claims that, at least for humans, it seems that fear stops engagement and, therefore, growth. Impulses of fight, flight or paralysis become habituated which leaves little hope for human well-being since there is no possibility for engagement and growth.

427 Dewey, MW 9, 89-90.
What we can conclude from our discussion at this point is that human well-being involves the discrimination of the pervasive quality of the natural tension (as the mode and tempo of interaction) in our experience. Chapter 2 specifically argued that such natural tension results from the combination of the relatively isolated consequences of the fundamental traits in experience, unhappily or happily as these may be. This provides sufficient evidence that, for Dewey, *wisdom* is vitally important to human well-being because it is the means by which we are able to arrive at the “choice and administration of the proportioned union of the mode and tempo of interaction.”\textsuperscript{428} In this regard, the modern American poet Robert Creeley makes the following comparison: “Truth is a small stream one steps over, wisdom an insistent preoccupation.”\textsuperscript{429} If this is the case, then the wisdom that is required for human well-being involves an insistent preoccupation with using a naturalistic process for making choices and for achieving their administration in proportioned union, despite living in world of chance and change. The detailed examination of the process of Deweyan inquiry provided in Chapter 3 showed not only the means by which we come to acquire these naturalistic tendencies (as habits), but also how we are able to achieve attainment of the “proportioned union” of the fundamental traits in experience upon which our well-being depends.

**Human Well-being in a World of Chance, Choice, and Change**

Given the precariousness of our existence, perhaps C. S. Peirce was correct in observing that we live in a universe of chance and answering the question as to whether there are any “eternally fixed and final” values with a resounding no. If correct, even though there are different ideas about values, it is impossible to claim that any one such

\textsuperscript{428} Dewey, *LW* 1, 67.

idea itself can be a fixed state or final-end. Let us take a moment to think about how chance might play out in terms of human well-being. I am working at home writing my dissertation, which is something that I am doing in order to satisfy a preference and achieve what I believe to necessary for achieving a final-end, i.e., obtaining a Ph.D. which will enable me to live a “good life.” After a while the phone rings and it is a friend who suggests that I go with him to either an art show or a poetry reading. I respond that my preference is to continue writing but my friend insists, noting that I really have not taken much time out from writing for some time.

Although my stated preference is to continue writing and I have a fixed-end that I desire to achieve, perhaps my will is weak and I reluctantly agree to go. I also express to my friend that I am completely ambivalent when it comes to going to either the art show or the poetry reading. Thus in spite of my desired fixed-end, stated preference and good reasons for my preference, I demur and allow my friend to make the decision. However, the choice to go with my friend, even though it does not constitute a “preference” on my part, can affect future situations that may arise. My friend decides that we should to go to the poetry reading, during which I have a deeply moving experience. Afterwards, I seek out the poet to have a conversation and the encounter turns out to have important relevance to the dissertation on which I am working. The point here is this chance event, clearly not a matter of preference or choice on my part, has a moving consequence in terms of my well-being and it contributes to what is the preference for which I seek fulfillment.

Situations such as this strongly suggest the importance that both chance and choice play in an account of human well-being. One obvious consequence of living in a
universe of chance is that choice becomes an important demarcation point in human experience, although chance does not always present us with a choice. Choice clearly plays a large part in how we understand human well-being both as a practical matter and as a philosophical theory. As we saw in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, Dewey argued that it is not through mere reflective contemplation that we are able to manage the natural traits in experience, but through intelligence and purposive art, because

[i]nterest, thinking, planning, striving, consummation and frustration are a drama enacted by these forces and conditions. A particular choice may be arbitrary; this is only to say that it does not approve itself to reflection. But choice is not arbitrary, not in a universe like this one, a world which is not finished and which has not consistently made up its mind where it is going and what it is going to do. Or, if we call it arbitrary, the arbitrariness is not ours but of existence itself.430

However, as a practical matter most of us believe, at least to some extent and generally with good reason, that in many respects our well-being is contingent upon the choices that we make, at least as far as we are able to demarcate such events in experience, i.e., as pre-reflective or reflective experience. Further, choice differs from chance since, in many situations, choice is not a fifty-fifty proposition and we can often specify the conditions to meet in order to improve vastly the odds of making the “right” choice.

How, then, is it possible to increase the likelihood that one will in fact choose what is right or good or in one’s best interests in a universe of chance and change?431 If

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431 It is difficult, at times, to see where the demarcation point in experience clearly lies between these terms. Regardless, we use these terms to discriminate certain qualities in experience from others and it is possible that the discrimination of all three could be part of the reflective experience involved in a situation. Neither
we follow the course of pragmatic naturalism, since choice involves only what is “given” in nature and human experience, it has as much to do with the world of nature as chance. Further, although we discriminate between choice and chance in experience, neither has a privileged or exalted position in it. Because we demarcate choice as a factor in our experience, however, it does have importance for the way in which human well-being is conceptualized. One of the points emphasized in Chapter 2 was that the accounts of human well-being offered by both Plato and Sumner give considerable prominence to the centrality of choice. Because choice plays such an active role in human well-being, the advantage of a Deweyan account is that it views choice in a way that is consistent with nature and human experience. In so doing, it not only explains how we make choices, but also how we are to understand their consequences. Nonetheless, the often brute and always naturalistic fact of chance intervening in existence has significant consequences for human well-being, and this is not something to dismiss lightly.

Whether it occurs by chance or choice we also demarcate our experience in terms of “change” which, itself, constitutes another fundamental or basic trait of nature, e.g. seasonal changes. Since the ancient Greeks, a major philosophical problem has been to explain stability in a natural world that is in a constant state of flux. However, most philosophies of flux deify change by seeking to make it universal, regular and certain.432 Since most of us recognize that nothing in the natural world is ever “absolutely” stable or instable, perhaps science offers the only way to ever understand change. This is because the process of scientific inquiry, when applied to the natural world, involves the

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432 Dewey, MW 1, 49.
measure, relation, ratio, knowledge of comparative tempos of change. In mathematics, some variables are constants in some problems, so it is in nature and life. The rate of change of some things is so slow, or is so rhythmic, that these changes have all the advantages of stability in dealing with more transitory and irregular happenings—if we know enough. Indeed, if any one thing that concerns us is subject to change, it is fortunate that all other things change…To designate the slower and the regular rhythmic events structure, and more rapid and irregular ones process, is sound practical sense. It expresses the function of one in respect to the other.433

Dewey’s commitment to pragmatic naturalism also yields a bi-directional analysis of change, in which it is possible to cash out the meaning of change in terms of its consequences, regardless of whether it is the result of chance or choice. His analysis recognizes that we experience change not just as moving in the direction of how the environment changes, but since our transactions with the environment are simultaneously moving in another direction, we also experience a change in ourselves as a result of our transaction with the environment. Finally, it is living in a world in which chance, choice and change are in constant operation that enables us to discriminate and then engage in the vital activities of discovery and creation that are so central in human experience and, consequently, to human well-being.

433 Dewey, LW 1, 64.
Discovery, Creativity and Human Well-being

Since the time of Plato, one of the more fundamental philosophical demarcations we have made in human experience is between discovery and creation. Perhaps William James’ distinction between a closed universe and a melioristic universe will helpful here. Since discovery (finding) always occurs in a closed universe, the same applies to any theories derived through it, i.e., they, too, are closed in that they only seek to describe existing reality by “discovering” something that already exists. In contrast, a melioristic universe, in recognizing that we cannot recapture existing reality, holds that the existing human universe can be changed and improved. For the most part, philosophical theories have come down on the side that human well-being is something which is wholly discoverable. The problem is that the understanding of discovery involved here interprets the world of nature as being “ready-made” and merely awaiting discovery, like something we might find unexpectedly in our dresser drawer. An unfortunate consequence of understanding discovery in this way is that the creative elements necessary for human well-being get lost in the very process of discovery. However, it may be possible to avoid this unhappy consequence by reconstructing the function and operation of discovery and creativity, in relation to human well-being, from within the context of pragmatic naturalism. Since pragmatic naturalism rejects either/or thinking, neither discovery nor creation alone can be taken to have exclusivity; hence human well-being becomes a matter of both discovery and creation. However, this requires adopting

435 Pragmatic naturalism views discovery and creation as organic human functions related to an environmental field that includes objects and goals. They constitute discriminations in experience of the ways of feeling, thinking and doing by which human beings navigate within and through their environing field. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 re-cast this distinction in terms of the operation of the instrumental mode and the aesthetic mode of well-being.
a different understanding of “discovery” since, in the context of human experience, its
importance lies in it having consequences in the world of nature. In this way it becomes
a moving force through which our experience of the world of nature becomes different in
some fundamental way.

Most theories of human well-being, whether ancient, modern or contemporary,
give inadequate attention to creativity in that they either fail to recognize the significance
of creativity at all or offer only an incomplete account of its function and operation. This
at least raises the question, for me, as to whether a solely or even dominantly discovery-
oriented theory can capture what is necessary for a full and complete understanding of
human well-being. Pragmatic naturalism offers an alternative to the traditional
understanding of discovery and creation in terms of their instrumental value, as
consequences, in both nature and human experience. It does so by first directing our
attention to the importance of language since it is the primary way by which we
communicate our experience. However, there is more to language than merely
communication because our use of language, itself, in reflecting the generic traits of
experience and their consequences, functions as a “tool” which we use in activities
relating to both the discovery and creation of human well-being.

Perhaps, by moving outside the typical philosophical way of demarcating
experience, I can push this point about language, as being the “tool of tools”, a little
further. Certainly, poets have a highly refined understanding of the instrumental value of

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436 The fact we make such a distinction in our experience presumes it has some degree of instrumental
value otherwise there would be no reason for us to make it in the first place.
437 In this sense, language is a bio-psychological function because it serves as a sign by means of which
individuals are able to draw inferences. Ideas (expressed as beliefs) are implicit dispositional tendencies
and plans of action that serve as vehicles by which humans can interact within a natural and social
environment. In this sense, language is a tool with jobs to perform.
language, even if they are not always masterful in their use of it. Consequently, poets very well may have something to offer in terms of the new understanding of discovery and creation that is now required. The modern American poet Charles Olson made the following observation about the “discoverability” of the human universe:

There are laws, that is to say, the human universe is as discoverable as that other. And as definable. The trouble has been, that man stays so astonished he can triumph over his own incoherence, he settles for that, crows over it, and goes at a day again happy he makes a little sense. Or, if he says anything to another, he thinks it is enough—the struggle does involve such labor and some terror—to wrap it in a little mystery: ah, the way is hard but this is what you find if you go for it. The need now is a cooler one, a discrimination, and then a shout.\textsuperscript{438}

It goes without question that discovering the “human universe” involves discrimination, in particular the discrimination of “root categories” or the generic traits of nature and of human transactions. However, Olson pushes our understanding of discovery further in holding that it involves more than merely the discrimination of experience (which remains important)—it also involves a shout. By understanding discovery in this sense, one recognizes it has a certain characteristic projective force as well. The idea of this projective force in discovery is also found in the epic poem \textit{Patterson} by William Carlos Williams, a contemporary of Olson’s, where he warns us that, “knowledge, undispersed, is its own undoing.”\textsuperscript{439} One might quibble over exactly what Williams’ means by “undispersed”, but since it is a poet speaking it is likely he understands that dispersing

\textsuperscript{438} Olson, \textit{Human Universe and Other Essays}, 3.
\textsuperscript{439} Williams, \textit{Patterson}, 12.
knowledge includes taking into account its consequences as well. Although perhaps in
different ways, it seems both Olson and Williams echo Dewey’s dictum that the only
power ideas have is when they become moving ideas, which means to cash them out
experientially in terms of their consequences.

Part of the difficulty in discovery, Olson reminds us, is that “definition is as much
a part of the act as is sensation itself, in this sense, that life is preoccupation with itself,
that conjecture about it is as much of it as is its coming at us, its going on. In other
words, we are both the instrument of discovery and the instrument of definition.”

Since language is a “prime of the matter” in terms of discovery and definition, Olson
presses the need to interpret it in the “double sense” of discrimination (logos) and of
shout (tounge). The problem here, the result of one legacy we inherited from the ancient
Greeks, is that we have come to live in a “generalizing time” wherein logos or discourse
has “so worked its abstractions into our concept and use of language” to the neglect of
language’s other function, speech. Olson’s understanding of the functions of language
appears to mirror that of pragmatic naturalism which holds that language is neither
wholly descriptive of the logos, nor simply an abstraction from or reflection of
“reality.” Instead, since language is both adjectival and adverbial, it is an instrument
of human desire and purpose with functions and uses in human experience. Olson
describes the central distinction here as that between language as the “act of the instant”
and language as the “act of thought about the instant”. However, because the habits of
thought are the habits of action, it is impossible to extricate language from action. For

440 Olson, Human Universe, 3.
441 William James refers to this as the problem of “vicious intellectualism.” The claim here is that language
is descriptive of reality and, when taken as such, results in the falsification of experience. This “vicious”
aspect of language led him to the notion of “pragmatic truth” and, later, led Dewey to view language as the
“tool of tools.” It is in this context that their notion of instrumentalism comes into play.
Olson, this means that “particularism has to be fought for anew….the Greeks went on to declare all speculation as enclosed in the “UNIVERSE of discourse”….as though language, too, was an absolute, instead (even as man is) an instrument.”\textsuperscript{442} This historical-cultural fact led Olson to conclude that “discourse has arrogated to itself a good deal of experience which needed to stay put—needs now to be returned to the only two universes that count, the two phenomenal ones, the two a man has need to bear on because they bear so on him: that of himself, as organism, and that of his environment.”\textsuperscript{443}

Over time, using language as an instrument in the discovery of the natural and human universe resulted in the expansion of the number of terms used to describe the various phases and conjunctions of the fundamental traits of natural existence. Dewey observed that the following are among the most common and familiar terms:

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 various phases and their conjunction, and the issue of living depends upon the art with which these things are adjusted to each other.\textsuperscript{444}

Regarding my particular interest in developing a theory of well-being that is consistent with nature and experience, I wish to draw particular attention to the last part of the quote

\textsuperscript{442} Olson, \textit{Human Universe}, 4.
\textsuperscript{443} Olson, \textit{Human Universe}, 4.
\textsuperscript{444} Dewey, \textit{LW} 1, 67.
above for two reasons. First, it provides the fundamental rationale for articulating a naturalistic metaphysics—our very living depends on it. If this is the case then a naturalistic metaphysics is necessary for human well-being and any such theory must take nature as its starting point. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it illustrates two significant claims that are relevant to the current inquiry. The first claim is that human well-being is a consequence of the naturalistic tension that results from the adjustment of the naturalistic traits of experience.\textsuperscript{445} The second claim is that because human well-being consists in the specific ways in which such adjustments to the natural traits of experience are made it is art.\textsuperscript{446} It is the consequences of man’s attachment to and detachment from these natural traits that “involve him in his perplexities and troubles, and are the source of his joys and achievements…Interest, thinking, planning, striving, consummation and frustration are a drama enacted by these forces and conditions.”\textsuperscript{447} A Deweyan account of human well-being begins with the natural traits of experience and follows them, in a naturalistically consistent way, to wherever they lead us.

However at this point, where we are concluding the inquiry, it may be beneficial to look outside philosophy once again to deepen our understanding of this point. The pragmatist turn towards naturalism found similar expression in the work of the modern American composer John Cage, who observed

\[w]\text{ever we are, what we hear is mostly noise…When we listen to it, we find it fascinating. The sound of a truck at fifty miles an hour. The static between radio stations. Rain. We want to capture and control these}\]

\textsuperscript{445} This was the focus of the discussion in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.
\textsuperscript{446} This was the focus of the discussion in Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{447} Dewey, LW 1, 67.
sounds, to use them not as sound effects, but as musical instruments….

Whereas, in the past, the point of disagreement has been between dissonance and consonance, it will be, in the immediate future, between noise and so-called musical sounds.\(^{448}\)

He also described music and the work of composers in naturalistic terms in noting that “[m]any composers no longer make musical structures. Instead they set processes going. A structure is like a piece of furniture, whereas a process is like the weather. In the case of a table, the beginning and end of the whole and each of its parts are known. In the case of weather, though we notice changes in it, we have no clear knowledge of its beginning and ending. At a given moment, we are when we are. The nowmoment.”\(^{449}\)

Perhaps the shift in understanding music and musical composition that Cage describes, from a structure to a process, has implications for our understanding of human well-being. It may be that in conceiving human well-being as a “structure”, either physically or formally (conceptually), e.g., Plato’s “tripartite soul” and Sumner’s establishment of certain conditions as necessary and sufficient, is reflective of a larger falsification because experience itself does not consist in a fixed relationship among parts.

The more intriguing part from Cage’s quotation, however, is his observation about “The nowmoment.” Perhaps the “nowmoment” can be helpful in differentiating between those times when our pre-reflective habits are operating smoothly and those

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\(^{449}\) Cage, *A Year From Monday*, 178. There has been a continuous extension of Cage’s view of composition during the past 30 years. Examples of the extension of Cages work is found in the work of contemporary avant-garde composers such at the game strategy compositions of John Zorn; the conductionist compositions of Lawrence “Butch” Morris; and the more recent “turntablism” compositions of Christian Marclay.
when our reflective habits come into play. In the former situations, we are able to negotiate the existential challenges presented in the course of our environmental transactions without engaging our reflective habits. In such situations, although we always are in the nowmoment, we are not necessarily aware of being in the nowmoment. This is because our awareness of being in the nowmoment is tensional, an awareness that is not merely cognitive but also felt in the problematic situation. We are always in the nowmoment pre-reflectively and, sometimes, we are aware of also being in the nowmoment reflectively. However, what serves to differentiate the nowmoment in a consummatory experience from pre-reflective and reflective experience in particular, is the removal of the tensional situation and the resultant unifying pervasive quality gained.

## Locating the Authentic in Human Well-Being

What does it mean to say that under certain conditions human well-being is, in some way, “authentic”? The examination of philosophical theories of human well-being in the Western historico-cultural tradition undertaken in Chapter 1 revealed that “happiness” is central and “authenticity” is significant in some way. Perhaps one reason happiness has achieved such a prominent place in theories of human well-being is because as Wittgenstein observed, if good or bad acts (of will) do alter the world then their effect must be that “…it becomes an altogether different world. It must, so to speak, wax and wane as a whole. The world of the happy man is a different one from the world of the unhappy man.”

If the world of the happy man is indeed different from the

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450 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 147. What follows Wittgenstein’s observation about happiness is, perhaps, even more curious, “So too at death the world does not alter, but comes to an end. Death is not an event in life; we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.” It is curious in the following
world of the unhappy man, then what are the specifiable conditions or features of the
world that account for this difference? During the course of this inquiry we have found,
ot surprisingly, that Western philosophy has offered many answers to this question.

Chapter 1 examined one answer that has appealed to some philosophers as
exemplified in the accounts of human well-being offered by Plato and Sumner. Both
conceive human well-being as consisting in a fixed relationship among parts of an
epistemic or a cognitive structure (e.g., a soul or a concept) and that well-being is a fixed
or final-end itself. It is not surprising, nor should it be, that this conception continues in
philosophy despite the vigorous and sustained effort by Dewey to put to rest the validity
of any claim as to fixed states or final-ends.\textsuperscript{451} Although he sought to accomplish this in
his typical head-on way, consistent with his grounding in pragmatic naturalism and its
naturalistically sufficient account of experience, it is obvious that the historical-cultural
tradition he battled was too strong to overcome. It is virtually undisputed in Western
cultural tradition that authentic happiness, however conceived, consists in some fixed
state or final-end. If understanding human well-being in this way is false, i.e., not
consistent with nature and human experience, then it is not authentic on its face. The
question then is how should we understand it?

Here again it may be helpful to step outside the traditional domain of philosophy
for a moment to examine another area of human experience in which the rejection of
fixed states and final-ends also finds expression. John Cage recounted the following
conversation with an unnamed fellow composer, “I asked him what a musical score is

\textsuperscript{451} Dewey, \textit{MW} 12, 119-120.
now. He said that’s a good question. I said: Is it a fixed relationship of parts? He said: Of course not; that would be insulting."  Aside from whether or not it is insulting, perhaps we can restate Cage’s question in terms of well-being as follows, “Is well-being a fixed relationship of parts?” Following Dewey, perhaps we can say that the authenticity of human well-being must be describable as a process of possibility and unfolding for which there are specifiable conditions. The kind of “authenticity” in this context is, perhaps, similar to William Carlos Williams’ description of the authenticity of a poem,

Its movement is intrinsic, undulant, a physical more than a literary character. Therefore each speech having its own character, the poetry it engenders will be peculiar to the speech also in its own intrinsic form. The effect is beauty, what in a single object resolves our complex feelings of propriety…When a man makes a poem, makes it, mind you, he takes words as he finds them interrelated about him and composes them—without distortion which would mar their exact significance—into an intense expression of his perceptions and ardors that they may constitute a revelation in the speech that he uses. It isn’t what he says that counts as a work of art, it’s what he makes, with such intensity of perception that it lives with an intrinsic movement of its own to verify its authenticity.453

The Transactional Self in a Deweyan Account of Human Well-being

Experience is not something that “belongs” to a person or self, but is the existential matrix in which the self participates. For Dewey, the human self is an

452 Cage, Year, 27.
453 Williams, Selected Poems, xvi.
embodied, acculturated organism whose distinctive activities and sensibilities emerge as a result of the complex interaction of: 1) the evolution of the human species, 2) the evolution of the particular culture into which one is born, and 3) the unique process of this individual being subjected to acculturation in these ways. Given this context, the self that a Deweyan account of human well-being recognizes is that of an individual agent who determines how the interaction is to proceed. Colapietro argues that Dewey’s view of agency can be best understood as an embodied, enculturated agent. Such a view of agency assumes

a being whose unity is, at bottom, a function of its continuity. The self as an enduring embodied agent underlies the self as an overarching integrative purpose: a being able to project and pursue aims comes, as a result of its projects and pursuits, to assure the integration of these as a task. But, in its most fundamental sense (in its metaphysical as distinct from moral sense), the self can no more be defined in terms of a function, for the execution of the task assumes an agent capable of devoting itself to the task. Thus, for me, what is presupposed at every turn is not the unity of an overarching purpose, but the continuity of organic agency.

This constitutes a significant factor in the creation of the results of inquiry because the inquirer’s own reaction and response to the environment are conditions for the outcome of an experience (situation). An individual does not have “an experience” to which the objective elements of the situation are added to where the “real” interaction (a mental state) supposedly takes place. It is not in some private, subjective state but in the

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454 Dewey stated “even the neuro-muscular structures of individuals are modified through the influence of the cultural environment upon the activities performed.” *LW* 12, 49.
455 Colapietro, “Embodied, Enculturated Agents”, 70.
situation that the various elements are emotionally colored and become integrated into the whole by a single quality. It is also essential to sustain this quality because it forms the foundation that further serves to define the individual’s “personality,” “character,” etc. Further, it is possible to identify this quality with an individual’s “life” because it operates not only in the present situation but also determines future activities.

Nakamura suggests that as the self’s transactions with the environment proceed, its viewpoint or purpose takes its shape from this quality, which is further modified and refined into an experience in which discrimination and unification are conditioned by a series of intelligent perceptions and judgments. The crucial point here in terms of the refinement of the self, is that what forms the purpose of the “individual”, as a unifying point in experience, is understandable only in relation to what actually exists. In this sense, it is possible to interpret the self as a characteristic in a “work of art” rather than something that is accidentally or contingently present. Understanding the process of the formation of the self is similar to discovering the intent of the artist by considering a succession of works that portrays his or her development over time. The same perspective and experience applies to the self in that its formation and development occurs through a series of intelligent perceptions and judgments on the part of the perceiver. The development of the self occurs whenever the particular transactional field, in which it participates, is either settled or unsettled. This field, consisting of the environment and the relations or elements brought forward from prior experience, becomes transformed in ways that lead to a new transactional field. As Dewey observed, “[i]ndividuality itself is originally a potentiality and is realized only in interactions with

the surrounding conditions. In this process of intercourse, native capacities, which contain an element of uniqueness, are transformed and become a self.”

**Embodied Knowing and the Existential Context of Human Well-being**

Chapter 1 examined philosophical accounts that conceive of human well-being in terms of an epistemic or cognitive state. For Plato, it is something that is non-natural and exists outside of nature that can be understood only in terms of some transcendent form or truth that resides in some transcendent realm. Although Sumner avoids the above problems, in the end his commitment to formalism and conceptualization of the experience requirement suggest an underlying cognitive state bias in his theory of human well-being. The consequence of adopting either theory is that it results in the disconnection of human well-being from the press/pull of nature and everyday human life. Surely one might claim that achieving such disconnection from experience is the point here, but I’m not sure that a “time out from reinforcement” one might need as a result of the transactional tension of lived experience is quite the same as the actual withdrawal from the world of lived experience into some transcendent epistemic realm or narrow cognitive state. Surely, one can engage in intense introspective reasoning about the transcendent form of “justice” or the necessary and sufficient truth conditions required for “authentic happiness” but, sooner or later, one must eat—you may be able to “hang out” in the transcendent realm or take refuge in formalism for a while, but you simply cannot live there. Furthermore, human well-being cannot be a consequence of the privileged position of the human species in the executive order of events since the only legitimate understanding of human well-being is as a part of “nature”.

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457 Dewey, LW 10, 286.
Another problem with adopting a non-naturalistic view of human well-being is that it creates a disruption in and falsification of our experience because there is nothing in nature that leads us, in any way, to posit the existence of anything in human experience that is fixed and final. It is a disruption because the categories of the “fixed” and the “final” are not root categories in nature or experience. The claim that there can be such non-naturalistic grounds for positing their existence is what constitutes a falsification of experience. However, it is possible to resolve this problem by adopting the approach of pragmatic naturalism because it recognizes that whatever understanding we have regarding the distinctions we make in experience (which we discriminate as values, ethics, and aesthetics) must be consistent with nature and human experience. The five themes presented in this Chapter allow for a reconstruction of human well-being grounded in Dewey’s distinction between the instrumental (as concerned with knowing) and the aesthetic (as concerned with meaning). Since Dewey’s instrumentalism denies the existence of any special realm of “pure” or “formal” thought, it is in Nature, understood as a continuously flowing stream, in which thought and language serve as instruments (tools) that are used to pass from a given situation full of ambiguities and disharmonies to a new and better situation. Embodied knowing (or embodied cognition) consists in forging ideal tools or instruments for use in coping with a given situation and the “mind” becomes an active instrument for realizing human purposes.

Because ideas are plastic and adaptable, they constitute “teleological weapons of mind” which owe their stability to the vital functions which they serve, i.e., to be used by human beings to solve their problems. However, the conception of “mind” in play here is one that emerges as, and further, is enacted through social cognition. Neither is there a
radical rupture with our bodily experience of meaning because it is not only carried forward but is given voice through language and other forms of social symbolic interaction and expression. One function of thought is that it has an *adaptive dimension* in that it serves to mediate interactions with the world. Whenever one moves into a “new” situation, although it contains elements implied in the former, it is richer and better because of its new meaning and greater complexity.

This means that “thinking” becomes inseparable from “doing” and “feeling” because it is a function of embodied individuals, leading to knowledge about themselves, however partial it may be. Dewey clearly evidences a proper understanding of embodiment in his reconstruction of “knowledge” as *embodied knowing*. What serves to characterize such knowing is that it is

1. A result of the evolutionary processes of variation, change, and selection.
2. “Situated” within a dynamic ongoing organism-environment relationship.
3. Problem-centered and operates relative to the needs, interests, and values of organisms.
4. Not concerned with finding some allegedly perfect solution to a problem, but one that works well enough relative to the current situation.
5. Often social and carried out cooperatively by more than one individual organism.

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458 Johnson and Rohrer, “We Are Live Creatures”, 17-54
459 Johnson and Rohrer, 22 note: “[t]his evolutionary embeddedness of the organism within its changing environments, and the development of thought in response to such changes, ties mind inextricably to body and environment… From the very beginning of life, the problem of knowledge is not how so-called internal ideas can re-present external realities…[but] to explain how structures and patterns of organism-environment interaction can be adapted and transformed to help deal constructively with changing circumstances that pose new problems, challenges, and opportunities for the organism….mind is never separate from body, for it is always a series of bodily activities immersed in the ongoing flow of organism-environment interactions that constitutes experience.”
Dewey’s view of cognition as embodied knowing is radically different from the one we are most familiar with in classical cognitive science. The traditional view assumes that cognition consists of the application of universal logical rules that govern the manipulation of “internal” mental symbols supposedly capable of representing states of affairs in the “external” world.

It appears that Dewey understood, even at the time he was writing, what contemporary biological science now accepts, i.e., that cognition emerges from the embodied processes of an organism that is constantly adapting to better utilize relatively stable patterns within a changing environment. Recent empirical research and developments within the cognitive sciences also reinforce his understanding of situated cognition, especially evidence about the comparative neurobiology of organism-environment coupling ranging from the amoeba all the way up to humans, which becomes the basis of meaning and thought in human beings. The patterns of these ongoing interactions constitute image schemas that ground meaning in our embodiment and yet are not internal representations of an external reality. Not only do they “constitute a preverbal and pre-reflective emergent level of meaning. They are patterns found in the topologic neural maps we share with other animals, though we as humans have particular image schemas that are more or less peculiar to our types of bodies. However, even though image schemas typically operate without our conscious awareness of how they structure our experience, it is sometimes possible to become reflectively...
aware of the image schematic structure of a certain experience, such as when I am
consciously aware of my cupped hands as forming a container, or when I feel my body as
being off balance."

Another way of expressing this rootedness of thinking in bodily experience and its
connection with the environment is to say that there is no rupture in experience between
perceiving, feeling, and thinking. Explaining more “complex” or “higher” functions
(e.g., consciousness, self-reflection, and language use) does not require the postulation of
new ontological kinds of entities, events, or processes that are non-natural or super-
natural. Instead, the more complex levels of organic functioning are just that—levels—and
nothing more, although there are emergent properties of “higher” levels of
functioning. Dewey referred to this connectedness of all cognition as the principle of
continuity. Based on the examination and analysis of this principle in Chapters 2 and 3,
its implications are that any explanation of the “nature and workings” of mind (even the
most abstract conceptualization and reasoning) must have its roots in our organismic
capacities for perception, feeling, object manipulation, and bodily movement. Although
all of these arise from our sensorimotor capacities, they are constrained by the nature of
our bodies, brains, and environments. From an evolutionary perspective this means that
we have not developed two separate logical and inferential systems, one for our bodily
experiences and one for our abstract reasoning (as a pure logic). Instead, the logic of our
bodily experience provides all the logic we need in order to perform every rational
inference that we do. Furthermore, social and cultural forces are required for human

463 Johnson and Rohrer, “We are Live Creatures”, 14.
beings to develop these capacities to their full potential, including language and symbolic reasoning.\textsuperscript{464}

Given the context above, Dewey’s reconstruction of cognition has the potential to serve as a full-fledged theory of human cognition because it provides an account of:\textsuperscript{465}

(1) The emergence and development of meaningful patterns of organism-environment interactions which, as patterns of sensorimotor experience, are shared by all organisms of a certain kind and meaningful for them because they are connected to the organism’s attempts to function within its environment.

(2) How we can perform abstract thinking using our capacities for perception and motor response by describing how bodily processes extend sensorimotor concepts and logic for use in abstract reasoning. It also explains how the processes embodying such abstract reasoning capacities are learned during the organism’s development.\textsuperscript{466}

(3) How values and behavioral motivations emerge from the organism’s ongoing functioning. This explanation includes (a) the physical and social makeup of organisms, (b) the nature of their emotional responses, and (c) the kinds of environments (e.g., material, social, cultural) they inhabit.

The theory of human cognition that emerges from Dewey’s work recognizes that philosophy and empirical science must develop together, through a process of mutual

\textsuperscript{464} Infants do not speak or discover mathematical proofs at birth; Dewey’s continuity thesis requires both evolutionary and developmental explanations.

\textsuperscript{465} Johnson and Rohrer, “We are Live Creatures”, 4-6.

\textsuperscript{466} This story has at least two parts: (a) an evolutionary and physiological account explaining how an adult human being’s abstract reasoning utilizes the brain’s perceptual and motor systems, and (b) a developmental and anthropological account of how social and cultural behaviors educate the sensorimotor systems of successive generations of children so that they may speak and perform abstract reasoning.
cooperation and criticism if we are ever to achieve an empirical understanding of the human mind and all of its marvelous capacities and acts.

Finally, the principle of continuity also explains how apparently novel aspects of thought and social interaction arise naturally via increased complexity of the organism-environment interactions that constitute experience. In this context, human beings are live creatures who “are acting when we think, perhaps falling in and out of step with the environment, but never are our thoughts outside of it. Via our bodily senses the environment enters into the very shape of our thought, sculpting our most abstract reasoning from our embodied interactions with the world.” As such, all of our traditional metaphysical and epistemological dualisms (e.g., mind/body, inner/outer, subject/object, concept/percept, reason/emotion, knowledge/imagination, and theory/practice) are merely abstractions from the interactive (enactive) process that is experience. However, such distinctions are not absolute ontological dichotomies because, while they sometimes serve us well, oftentimes they serve us quite poorly depending on what problems we are investigating, what values we have, and what the sociocultural context is. The relevance the preceding discussion has for a Deweyan account of human well-being is that the process of embodied knowledge is necessary and sufficient for living a good life because it is the “means of making goods—excellences of all kinds—secure in experienced existence.” Such instrumentalism, though, must be tempered by a “meliorism” that recognizes while “the specific conditions that exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or good, in any event may be bettered.”

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467 Johnson and Rohrer, “We are Live Creatures”, 22.
468 Dewey, LW 4, 30.
469 Dewey, MW 12, 181.
end, a Deweyan account of human well-being may mean a great deal for education and educators. Perhaps Sidney Hook was correct in claiming that if knowledge is to be used to “make a difference in creating a better world or resisting those forces and individuals whose actions would result in a worse world, [then] education must find the way.”


Jackson, Phillip. Dewey's *Experience and Education Revisited*. *Educational Forum* 60 (Summer 1996): 328-337.


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