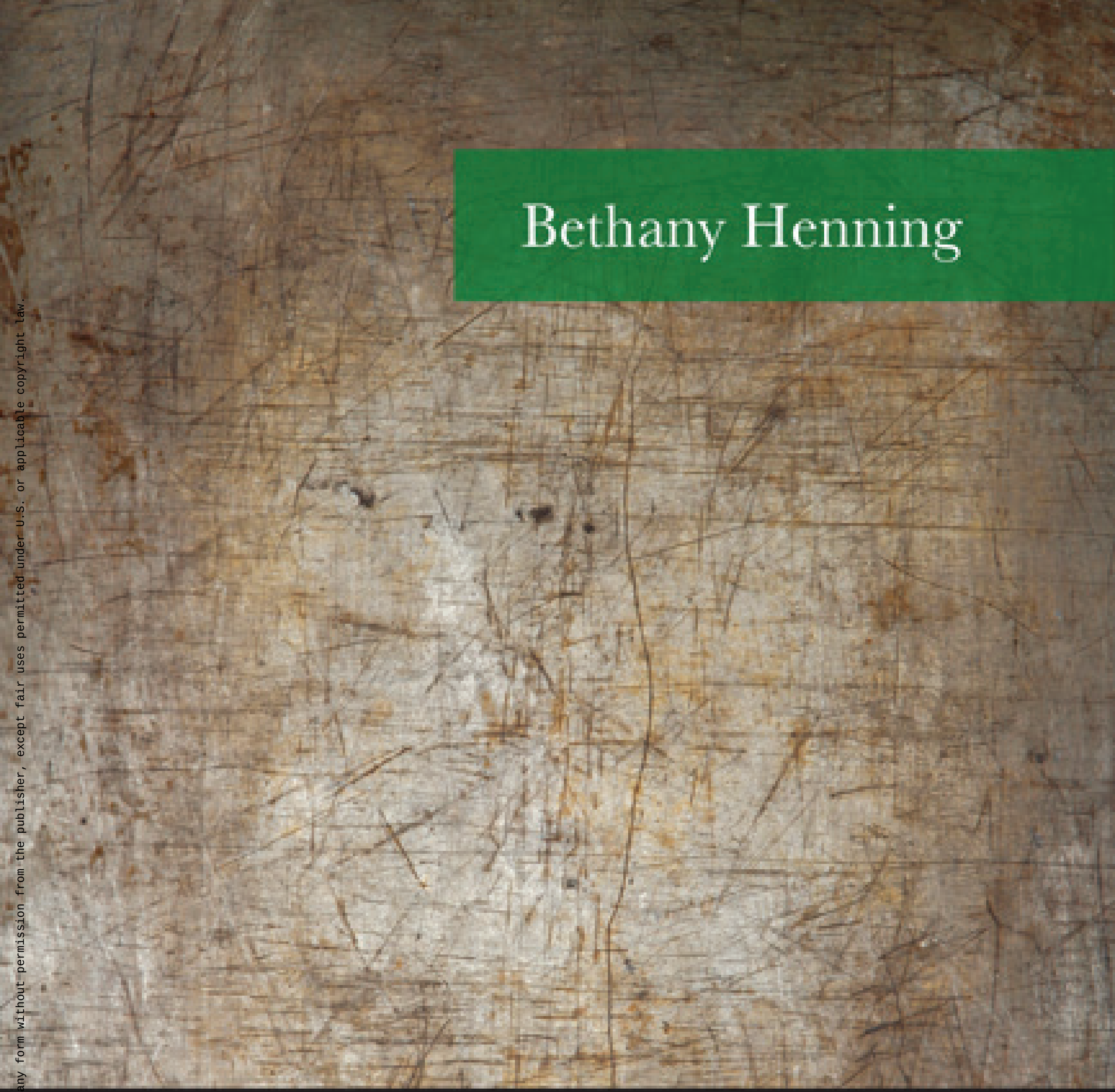

Bethany Henning

Dewey and the Aesthetic Unconscious

The Vital Depths of Experience

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The Vital Depths of Experience

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For Janis, who senses the meaning and restores it;
And for Michael, who sees the actual in the light of the possible.

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

There are many ways in which the defining character of twenty-first-century American life is its preference for a high-definition relationship with the world. This preference is reflected in our general enthusiasm for cognitive science, space operas, and cutting-edge technological achievement. In the decades since World War II, Americans have been fascinated by the ultra-modern, highly engineered objects that promise to increase our efficiency and to facilitate a greater capacity for the individual to control their environment. A reverence for innovative tools and for clever mechanism is so pervasive that it almost presents itself as a proto-morality. And why shouldn't it? For this is a culture that honors the usefulness of things. "Improved" is synonymous with "streamlined," and "faster," and "technologically advanced."

To offer a generous interpretation, one might say that this dimension of our culture has its roots in the American deference for the practical wisdom of the laboring class. There was once a time when Americans distinguished themselves from Europeans by emphasizing their Protestant work ethic and their repudiation of a landed gentry. Each of us, we thought, is responsible for making the world into what it is with the hard work of our bodies, the strength of our hands. These American virtues were reflected within the intellectual landscape, the popular culture, and all of the political discourse that emphasizes its place in "common sense." There is a definitively democratic thrust in our ideals, and we hear echoed in them a commitment to honor the perspective and the needs of the worker, the farmer, and the teacher. Philosophy, as it was once practiced in America, reflected this cultural style by prizing the unpretentious, earthy truths that must serve as the basis of any action. The intellectual character of the United States has largely disdained wisdom from esoteric sources, preferring to pursue those imaginative ideals that are manifest in daily life.

But the valorization of the "practical" and the "pragmatic" has been altered as the place and purview of technology have shifted. The earthy, concrete connection between the individual and the world has been thrown over for the promise of a world that is enhanced, made supposedly more accessible, through complex and inscrutable mediating layers that have replaced much of our actual lives with a sort of adjacent, virtual life. At this point, not even the designing engineers understand the algorithms that filter our media content, nor the extent to which a new kind of surveillance capitalism has access to our activities, but an implicit trust in technological and scientific rationality reassures us that every advance is a pragmatic triumph. If the American intellectual culture reflects shifts in the American culture-at-large, it would be hardly surprising that we demonstrate a preference for the highly refined products of intellectual reflection over the brute tumult of immediate, felt experience. The visceral, affective world that presents itself to our senses is altogether too vague, mysterious, and unpredictable We seem to enjoy encountering the world clarified for us, as accessible and unequivocal as if designed by a sophisticated software engineer. It is dangerous for us to become more accustomed to experience as filtered through technological devices, for many reasons, but chief among them is the extent to which they allow us to avoid the inconvenient turmoil of our noncognitive lives. When the sensual mess is cleared from the field, we are free to avoid the stickiness of a crude, ill-defined reality.

Likewise, philosophical training and work often seems to be an emphatically cognitive enterprise. Part of the craft to which we apply ourselves is the careful tracking of a discourse and a comprehensive grasp of complex arguments. The field of discourse in which we conduct our research is the accumulated archive of completed thought. We demonstrate our critical capacity in articulate conclusions, which present themselves as the voice of sober reliability. However, identifying the whole of philosophy as contained in concise and ordered definitions prioritizes only a single phase of thought. They are only the terms and conclusions that are the products of a careful inquiry. When we take them in isolation from the rich process that came before, we are working within a false simplicity. Even thinking cannot be said to be a wholly cognitive affair. The experience of thinking is a transformative, complex process that occurs as the result of uncountable, subtle exchanges. There are reveries and conversations, moods and suspicions that factor into trains of thought that are taken up or abandoned in accordance with delicate attunements and graceful avoidances. Intellectual activity is dynamic, accompanied by sensation, informed by emotional responses, and guided by desire and reluctance. This energetic reality, so much an obvious and necessary part of a good philosophy classroom, is largely hidden from view in scholarship. But the fact remains that sincere intellectual activity is creative, and it emerges from and responds to the richness of sensuous life.

Doing philosophy in America presents one with all the expected challenges of doing philosophy anywhere else: philosophy is divisive, undervalued, difficult, and often isolating work. But to do philosophy *as* an American, intentionally taking up an American tradition and from an American historical perspective, adds quite another layer of complexity. We may disagree about whether all philosophy must acknowledge the extent to which it is steeped in and responsive to a natural and cultural history, but surely, we can agree that some American philosophers *should* engage with their own intellectual tradition, if for no other reason that "American" is a particularly elusive identity, and thus presents fecund ground for philosophical inquiry. Who counts as American? What comprises the American tradition? What can be said about the emergence and status of American philosophy? Have we, as a body politic, come any closer to a shared connection, to an implicit sense of the complex whole that we call "America"?

For most of human history, we have lived in communities with long generational ties to a place. The great majority of Americans, by contrast, are relative strangers to their continent. The staggering majority of us have come here recently for various reasons: to flee, to exploit, or as the result of force. Our relationship to the land has largely been structured by a myopic colonialism that sees native life as raw material to be redeemed through its conversion into product. All of this generates a dark suspicion that to be an American is either to be deracinated, or to have inherited a history of working to deracinate those around us. There is a danger that Americans have developed, as a cultural trait, an insensitivity to the intimate relatedness human beings generally enjoy with the environments that sustain them. This relationship is usually explored and expressed as a set of place-specific cultural practices that have developed over the course of generations. But of course, since we have exterminated the vast majority of the indigenous populations, we have also extinguished the preponderance of native, place-specific memory. In the absence of a deep, native history of our own, we are left with the task of generating the sort of wisdom that is sensitive enough to inhabit the present, buoyant enough to imagine possibilities, and dynamic enough to come to terms with the wounds, traumas, and losses that haunt us. A meaningfully collaborative public depends on it.

When I say that Americans are deracinated, I mean to indicate a possible source of an identity crisis that sorely needs some tending. The United States is a young nation, and has thus far had quite a turbulent adolescence. In the twentieth century we demonstrated our military power, again and again, on the world stage. In the decades since the Cold War, we have proven our ability to demand that other nations embrace our economic vision, and we have come to know ourselves as potent and formidable. But, like many adolescents who find themselves in the sudden possession of physical power and increasingly complex social needs, we have developed insufficient tools for reflection; we have not yet had enough time to develop the habits that would set us at ease in the world, and at ease with ourselves.

My point here is not necessarily to condemn or endorse the philosophical efforts of any single era as a whole. I mean to indicate the possibility that American life is in the midst of a crisis, and to raise the concern that American philosophy has affected a method that includes detachment as a defensive response to this crisis. American philosophers, from the middle of the twentieth century onward, have demonstrated an increasing disdain for religious thought, a progressively stubborn tendency to equate “myth” and “falsehood,” and a dismissal of depth psychology like that of James or Freud. My concern is that this flight from the unconscious, dynamic, and esoteric dimensions of experience have also severed us from those philosophical methods that recognize the continuity between the individual and the community, and between the cultural and natural world. If we renounce myth, religious experience, and noncognitive experience, then we are estranged from primeval, enduring modes of human inhabitation. These so recently neglected dimensions of thought contain habits and ideas that are heirlooms, developed through generational attempts to make terms with a native land.

This heritage prominently includes the thought of Dewey. John Dewey has had an enduring influence over American philosophy, in part because he was uncommonly prolific, in part because he was distinctively engaged with matters of public interest, and in part because his insights were influential to subsequent American philosophical luminaries, such as Sellars, Rorty, Brandom, Putnam, and Chomsky, all of whom were instrumental in the American installment of the so-called linguistic turn. This is the other explanation for our continuous return to Dewey’s work: it inspired a movement that is somewhat at odds with his own philosophical vision. The turn to language and the relinquishing of “reality” in all its guises represents the loss of something important and vital. It is as though there was a decisive refusal to grapple with immediate experience, and that decisiveness is shocking enough to warrant a careful evaluation in the light of our current situation. One of Dewey’s most popular and influential theories was that of “habit,” the greater part of which is unconscious. Habits are our ways of incorporating the environment into our activity, Dewey tells us, and so that we do not think of ourselves as the active masters over a passive nature, he reminds us that the environment “has its say” in our manner of inhabitation.[1] Our habits are our “readinesses to act,” and comprise our relatedness to our surroundings. We are not left alone to form our own habits, and they are not our private possessions; they are transmitted in traditions and customs, some of which are so stable and enduring, so subtle and pervasive that we do not recognize that they were once novel inventions. They are continuously modified in the addition of new habits, the failure of old ones, and in the give and the resistance that we encounter in the materials of the world. Habits are how we act and practice just as much as they are how we see and interpret. Habits shape how our experiences come into relief for us so that we can reflect upon and communicate about them. A functioning, more-or-less stable set of habits is an ecosystem, it is a culture, and it is the most important achievement of a society. A well-functioning culture is well-integrated, it harmonizes the needs of its members in collaboration with the limits and rhythms of the surrounding environment. This interlocking nexus of habits is made all the more precious because its maturation takes time, measured in generations if not eons, and represents the collaborative efforts of interconnected communities to sediment *good* practices. Habits are formed in connection with a landscape, specific to a biosphere, and, when functional, tend toward mutually supported stability with the organic forms and seasonal rhythms that distinguish one land from another. As I write this, twenty-one years into the twenty-first century, it is our habits that have failed. Accepting the scope of that failure, and the indeterminacy of our future, will require a capacity to reflect on our situation without the benefit of being able to clarify the whole effort in advance.

Because Dewey came to prominence during an age when philosophy still had a meaningful place within the everyday lives of citizens, and as one of the last public philosophers in the United States, he represents a turning point in American culture. Arguably, he was a final contributor to a continuous, uniquely American intellectual tradition that has since undergone a distinct rupture. His comprehensive and revolutionary theory of "experience" was a new development of what could reasonably be understood as a nascent American wisdom-tradition that has largely been abandoned in favor of an epistemology-centric philosophy. Dewey thought that the primary human need was not for knowledge, but for meaning, and that philosophy must respond to this need with the flexibility of a metaphysical pluralism and the sensitivity of aesthetics. Meaning, on his account, is not merely the effect of a vocabulary ordered by syntax, it is also not the final definition for an elusive term; it is a *kind* of experience. Meaning is embodied in collective habit, and meaningful experiences are marked by a sense of fulfillment that results when the known and the felt come together. Meaning is fortifying; it is the signal that we are coming to terms with the world around us. Such experiences are impossible, however, without the capacity to foster an aesthetic (directly felt) connection between ourselves and the world. To feel our lives and our actions as meaningful, we need the sensitive capacities that are only possible on the basis of our acknowledgment and acceptance of the unconscious, tacit dimension that is the very depth of experience. In the United States, this dimension has been neglected, derided, or marginalized to the outskirts of serious intellectual activity. If we are to create a livable narrative of who we are, it is time to welcome aesthetic experience back into our philosophical lives.

After Dewey's death in 1952, the pragmatist school, with which he is generally associated,[2] suffered a schism as it struggled with the tension between the so-called "classical" American pragmatists, who tend to think of meaning as embodied and lived through intersubjective practice, the neo-pragmatists, who restrict meaning to socially defined semantic products, and the "new pragmatists," who argue that the future of American philosophy is dependent on our ability to go around, rather than through, Dewey's thought.[3] Unsure of what to do with difficult concepts like "experience," which resists any concise or familiar definition, some neo-pragmatists like Richard Rorty, Robert Brandom, and Hilary Putnam have dropped the word from their discussions altogether. They have often opted to replace "experience" with "language," since the latter concept has the advantage of being seemingly available to cognitive reflection and subject to regular laws and traceable mutations. Even Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience, although it continues to be of interest within contemporary scholarship, is often divorced from the immediate level of experience that is its very trademark. Everything within Dewey's philosophical method, from his theory of education to his account of religious experience, depends on the ontologically binding "quality," a dimension of experience that is "felt rather than thought," and, nevertheless, prefigures and "controls" thought. The elusiveness of the immediate, the ineffability of the qualitative, is both central to Dewey's philosophic method and seems to undermine philosophic activity.

There has been a reluctance to embrace Dewey's full theory of experience, perhaps for the fear that, in doing so, we would risk making philosophy unfriendly to a fully scientific epistemology. It isn't so much that recent American philosophers are determined to embrace scientific discourse as *true*—the ideas from Dewey's work that seem to have made it past the linguistic turn are the notions that truth is context-dependent, and that scientific knowledge is fallible—it is rather that much American philosophy has given up the search for the context, or else has decided that discourse is its own context. After all, to discuss what is inaccessible to discourse is, by definition, impossible. Philosophy is a highly reflective, and largely linguistic affair. Even if we admit that discourse must be grounded on what is nondiscursive, to search for or to refer to that ground as a necessary part of a philosophic method seems to flirt with the foundationalism that Dewey sought to avoid.

I propose that we not only include, but emphasize Dewey's theory of quality. I suggest that we follow Dewey's empiricism all the way to its receptive core, quite below the level of explicit consciousness, where we find an attunement to the subtle rhythms of the world, and to the transactional and relational dimensions of the self. Dewey was not suggesting that we come to *know* the qualitative, but that we acknowledge that the occasion for philosophy, that the invitation to think at all, is to be found in our intimate and visceral relationship with the world. Of course the nonlinguistic presents a *problem* for philosophic activity. Philosophy is a discipline of problems, not answers. And if we are in the business of engaging with real problems (rather than "pseudo problems") we must court precisely this area of resistance and fascination. Without the indeterminate, philosophy becomes so much inside baseball, addressing only a closed world.

If problem solving is a matter of moving from vague beginnings to definite endings, then it would seem counterintuitive, if not outright destructive, to propose a course of thought that moves us in the opposite direction: thinking in terms of myth, dreams, and imaginings is often derided as not really thinking at all. This book addresses the possibility that American life has cultivated a perilous aversion to the ambiguous and unconscious ground of thought. I think that we could identify this aversion as an attempt to avoid the anxieties that influenced mid-twentieth-century American culture, when the end of classical American pragmatism and the advent of radical behaviorism converge. These anxieties are particularly reflected in American intellectual attitudes surrounding psychology and the mind. My hope is that this effort is part of a larger attempt by scholars to understand the disconnect between the late-twentieth-century period of American philosophy and the so-called "classical" era of American thought, for which John Dewey will serve as the representative voice. A return to his work ought to allow us to rediscover possibilities within his philosophy that may have been neglected or forgotten in the precipitous shifts since. It is my wish that through this return we may find new ways of thinking about thinking.

If classical American philosophy has had a difficult time declaring its place in a discipline that is substantially more aware of continental philosophy (which understands itself in the context of European history and culture) and Anglo-American or analytic philosophy (which sometimes understands or presents itself as a-historical and thus a-cultural), that is probably due to the fact that American culture is largely unaware of itself as philosophical. Contributing to this imbalance, and resulting from it, is a continuing American identity crisis. If we make an analogy between the human life cycle and that of the United States, we could speculate that the latter entered into its adolescence in the mid-twentieth century, and during this time failed to cohere into a stable and confident national identity. In the decades since, conflicts at both intra- and international levels and our subsequent responses have not revealed to us a comprehensible national character as much as they have left us groping to articulate a core set of values by which we know ourselves.

It is beyond the scope of this book to interpret the psychological implications of the international policies of the United States. Instead, I am interested in how our understandings of the self and the mind have influenced America's cultural character in its domestic aspect. One contributing factor to a cultural identity crisis could be understood by pointing to the rupture in psychological schools during the middle of the century In the first chapter, I will demonstrate that there was an American psychological perspective in development within early American thought that took the relatedness between the person and the natural world as a key source of wisdom and insight. It considers the warm, associative logic of the Puritans and the integration of the self through non-discursive acts of the mind. The second chapter emphasizes that the depth psychology of James and Dewey holds more in common with psychodynamic understandings of the self than cognitive-behaviorism through its rejection of atomistic experience and its insistence on the felt experiential dimension of *relations*; however, this effort was abandoned in the twentieth century and stands now as unfulfilled. It waits for us still in the often-neglected work of Peirce and James, but especially in the work of Dewey. The third chapter pursues Dewey's emergent theory of mind, an aggressively anti-Cartesian perspective that understands thought as inseparable from sensuous dimension of the body. This is an ontology that rejects mechanistic, linear causality and embraces the continuity between the self and nature. The second half of this book will focus on Dewey's conception of aesthetic and religious experience, in which I find the most evidence for an implicit theory of the unconscious. The fourth chapter presents the argument that the concept and the concrete experience of "eros" help us to understand Dewey's philosophy of experience better than the words "interest" and "impulse" have, because they demonstrate how investment within experience yields meaning as a necessarily shared phenomenon that includes the ineffable and immediate. The fifth and sixth chapters demonstrate the character of the aesthetic unconscious through encounters with art. The fifth chapter will explore the so-called "unity thesis" of Dewey's aesthetic theory, by which experience is transmitted as a unity by a successful piece of art. This chapter considers the ways in which, if Dewey's psychology includes a conception of the unconscious, and can be meaningfully compared to psychoanalytic theory, artwork could be an analog to productive "working through." Because one of the most important contributions of psychoanalysis is its theory and treatment of trauma as a rupture within experience, I ask if art can work through a trauma which can never be unified. The final chapter uses John Luther Adams's recent musical composition "Become Ocean" as an aesthetic product that communicates the experience of shared global crisis, because it demonstrates the importance of "aesthetic adjustment" as we struggle to harmonize the biophysical, the sociopolitical, and the mythopoetic in response to our great existential threat. I argue that Dewey's understanding of religious experience is a further intensification of aesthetic experience, since it effects the reorientation of a coherent (and imagined) self to a coherent (and imagined) world.

It is no surprise that the body of philosophic ideas that gained the greatest public reputation in the United States in the twentieth century is what we refer to as "pragmatism." It is an interesting and attractive word around which a halo of attractive synonyms hovers—"useful" and "realistic" and "down-to-earth"—and thus seems to reinforce the rejection of those cryptic forces that would seek to master us from beyond some impenetrable curtain. Pragmatism was the first philosophical export of the United States; as a philosophical method and a perspective, pragmatism continues to have international adherents and benefit from critical developments. Leaving aside the specific claims of philosophic pragmatism, we have become comfortable with the understanding of the American personality as "pragmatic," at home and abroad. Colloquially understood, "pragmatic" might offer itself as a character defense of someone who is unsentimental, in terms of political or business concerns. However, there is a paradox here in that the moving and dynamic core of American philosophy and American pragmatism is precisely a way of esteeming the vague and the elusive, and a warning that the highly refined products of the intellect may only masquerade as final and certain—especially when they no longer help us to meaningfully connect with the world. The pragmatists, their precursors, and their followers developed a novel approach to the mind and a creative interpretation of the phenomenon of consciousness. If we pay careful attention to American philosophy, we notice that there is a pragmatic value to recognizing that the mind is much larger than consciousness.

In casual conversation we use the terms "consciousness," "the mind," and "the brain" interchangeably, but when these terms appear in the work of Peirce, James, and Dewey, they take on important distinctions and subtle gradations. The mind, for Peirce, was a "a multilayered system of intricately related habits," in which infinitely plastic instincts allow us to take on new habits and disrupt old ones.[4] And for James, "consciousness" was a thing of subtle shades, flights and perchings, and included a "fringe." James's fringe is the portion of the mental field that is sensitive to halos of ideas that may or may not resolve into our conscious focus.[5] Finally, Dewey would come to develop a philosophy of "experience" where "experience is something quite other than consciousness."[6] This last revelation presents something of a puzzle to those of us who attempt to trace the history and development of American ideas: If experience is something "quite other" than consciousness, does that imply that there is an unconscious in the dynamic sense? And if this is so, what is the nature, structure, or meaning of this unconscious?

In general, the American academy and American "common sense" have been wary of the suggestion that there exists something that we would call an unconscious. The distrust of the unconscious is bigger than America's troubled relationship with Freud, but this tension has played no small part in our reluctance to make use of the term in all but the descriptive sense. The dynamic unconscious posited by Freud, the chaotic, subterranean home of drives, the caster of dreams that may motivate our choices and yet resist our attempts at self-reflection, has never enjoyed a comfortable home in American academic philosophy or clinical psychology. We can explain this reluctance as stemming from a complex academic political history, but we can also speculate that Freudian psychoanalysis confronts us as unhelpful or threatening because it was situated within a particular cultural and historical context. It may be that the psychoanalytic framework and language presents an obstacle owing to a mismatched set of practices and mythologies. Family life takes on a unique style in an American setting, and our anxieties, desires, and neuroses are inevitably distinct from that of the European subject. This discomfort may be a factor in the rejection of Freud by the American academic world. What remains to be known is whether or not America could have accepted a dynamic unconscious, were it presented with an alternative mythology. It may be that every country must develop its own psychoanalysis.

NOTES

1. John Dewey, *The Middle Works: 1899–1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 14, *Human Nature and Conduct* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 15–16. (*The Middle Works* by John Dewey will be represented by MW.)

2. Dewey did not always call himself a pragmatist. Though his philosophy remains closely related to James, and though he acknowledges kinship with pragmatism in his logic, he ought not be held up as the standard bearer for the pragmatist school. However, it is right to read Dewey's aesthetics as pragmatic in this vein if one believes pragmatism to be a movement primarily concerned with how meaning is lived in experience. A part of this, for Dewey, entails making distinctions within experience, as long as they are useful for our understanding of the lived situation. He referred to his theory of knowledge as "instrumentalism," and, in his later work, he identifies his philosophy as "cultural naturalism." "I have come to think of my own position as cultural or humanistic Naturalism. Naturalism, properly interpreted, seems to me a more adequate term than humanism. Of course I have always limited my use of 'instrumentalism' to my theory of knowledge; the word 'pragmatism' I have used very little and with reserves." Dewey to Corliss Lamont, September 6, 1940, cited in Corliss Lamont, "New Light on Dewey's Common Faith," *The Journal of Philosophy* 58, no. 1, 1961, 26.

3. Robert D. Talisse, "Recovering American Philosophy," *The Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 49 no. 3, 2013.

4. C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 7.367, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931–1935).

5. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1950), 232.

6. John Dewey, *The Later Works: 1925–1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 1, *Experience and Nature* (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 369. (*The Later Works* by John Dewey will be represented by LW.)

Chapter 1

The Aesthetic Confrontation with Nature

John Dewey spent his career on a mission to find a philosophical method that would allow us to see all of our activity, including intellectual reflection, as arising from organic interaction within our environments. Every habit, impulse, and custom stems from the central principle that life is always interdependently adapting and adjusting to the environment in which it lives. For human beings, this process includes highly refined systems of symbolic communication, but it neither begins nor ends with our discursive systems. Experience is a continuous circuit that emerges from and reaches back into our intimate, visceral engagement with the world. Dewey may have been the last prominent philosopher in the American tradition to insist upon on the importance of direct, immediate experience, and to emphasize nature as a fundamentally aesthetic experience, but he was certainly not the first. The United States is the result of a colonial project, and it visited upon the world a voracious industrial capitalism, but despite this legacy, its most successful colony arose from motives that were philosophical rather than economic, and the enactment of that philosophy required an aesthetic awareness. Although the soundness of that philosophical vision is undermined by the extent to which it demonstrated a blind entitlement to an inhabited continent, and its grave, related misunderstanding of the wilderness it encountered as "raw" and "uncultivated," it still bears acknowledging that the Pilgrims who settled on the shores of North America had the intention of developing an intellectual tradition rather than merely reaping resources under the aegis of an empire. There is no disputing the fact that the European colonization of the Americas has resulted in a disastrous exploitation of the ecosystem, but it is with theological rather than commercial eyes that the so-called Pilgrims saw the world around them. Arguably, the success of the Plymouth colony is likely due, in some part, to the strength of their aesthetic sensibility.

Early American philosophy, despite its shortcomings, is distinctly characterized by a deep appreciation for the immediacy of the natural world, and is typified by courageous receptivity that we find in the works of figures such as Jonathan Edwards, Emerson, and Thoreau. Of course, the pastoral dimension of early American philosophy has garnered some well-earned suspicion. Commentators in the late twentieth century have read the Emersonian mystical connection between individual and nature as the precursor to a middle-class, suburban mythology that "projects an ideology of individual liberalism" onto the land itself,[1] or otherwise as a philosophy of sublimity that underwrites American expansionism and commercialism, thus emboldening the individual to discover his own capacity for feeling through inflicting himself on the natural world.[2] Thoreau's *Walden*, despite its enduring place in high-school and college curricula, earns the criticism that it is a romance of masculine self-assertion, a condescending fantasy of self-sovereignty. It is impossible to deny that the apparent ego of the nineteenth-century Anglo-American includes a sense of himself as the first on the scene to discover a new bit of terrain that he alone has understood, probably followed by a predictable formula in which he encounters a botanical or atmospheric process and uses it as a metaphor in a parable about manliness, courage, or meaning. However, if we follow a more sympathetic hermeneutic, we can see beneath the surface of the ego an earnest effort on the part of the writer to uncover the hidden, subtle dimensions of the self through its relationship with its environment. To the extent that Thoreau is pursuing a vanity project for narcissistic purposes, he takes himself to be an intrepid pioneer, thus missing the complex coordination of indigenous biota and cultural interpretations that he comes to in medias res. However, to the extent that Thoreau is analyzing the mysteries of his own psyche, he is engaged in an earnest attempt to discover and strengthen his receptivity to organic immediacy of experience. It is hard to take fault with the impulse of Puritans and Transcendentalists to develop an intimacy with the living, nonhuman world.

One of the signatures of the American philosophical tradition is that its more prominent contributors tend to blur the distinction between the philosopher and the naturalist. In retrospect, Emerson's Swedenborgianism and Thoreau's devoted attention to the life and rhythms of a pond suggest that the early generations of Europeans implicitly understood that responsible and fulfilling lives depended on the development of a *deep culture*, a culture that emerges from and responds to the distinctive and dynamic character of its ecological location. The pulse and ceremonies of the living world reveal to us much more than mere resources, or occasions for us to exhibit interminable devotion lyricism, or, as Lawrence Buell says, to serve as a "barometer of and stimulus to the speaker's spiritual development."[3] American philosophy has, for most of its young life, looked for ways to allow the world to speak through it. This receptivity was facilitated by a logic that has since fallen largely out of favor. Circumventing binary logics of opposition, early American thinkers thought in tandem with a self-evident logic of similitude, in which meaning, sense, and understanding are revealed in rich sensory experience. Without a reason to doubt that direct experience is revelatory, their efforts generated lush texts that convey a natural world that is shot through with associations, metaphors, and atmosphere.

THE ANXIETY OF INDIVIDUATION

Of all the myths of the founding of America, the journey of the Pilgrims on their Mayflower may be the most dear and familiar. Because it is a story told to schoolchildren every November while they construct capotains out of black construction paper, it has come to serve as a kind of creation myth for the American identity. Just like any myth, it is also meant to instill deeply held cultural values, including but not limited to: courage, vision, independent thinking, and of course, freedom. The actual complexities of colonial beginnings are left aside to be integrated at a later point in the education. Lacunas notwithstanding, the typical introduction to American history begins with the fantasy that America was the original creation of approximately one hundred intrepid voyagers who fled England in search of a new life free from religious persecution. While the story varies in its details, the moral center features Pilgrims who rejected the notion that belief and faith could be compelled by a monarchical government, and thus undertook a perilous journey across the Atlantic Ocean in a bid to realize a more democratic future. Although ideals like "democracy" and "religious freedom" stand in stark contradiction to the violent confrontations between warring religious groups shortly after the Pilgrims settled in New England, some elements of their original, somewhat democratic aims are supported by the letter of the Mayflower Compact and the original Brownist beliefs that moved them to separate from the Church of England.[4]

The line that we might sketch here from the religious and philosophical commitments of the Pilgrims to the work of Dewey in the mid-twentieth century isn't linear, it is genealogical. There is a cultural inheritance, buttressed by institutional continuity, that bridges the Puritan colonists and pragmatists like James and Dewey. The distinctive feature of Puritan faith is that pursuit of the divine includes revelations that are embodied through their direct experience, accessible without the aid of spiritual mediator. The theology of the Puritans was cemented, and somewhat democratized, through an aesthetic logic—much in the same way that we find Dewey's pluralist metaphysics is democratized and grounded through aesthetic experience.[5] Radical empiricism emphasizes that the world, in the seismic urgency of historical events and the paltriness of logical relations, is felt and therefore available for interaction. The Transcendentalists saw the divine as accessed through the faculty of "reason," understood in the expansive Romantic sense, to mean the immediate insight gained through an optimal encounter with nature. Likewise, in the Puritan worldview, there is considerable care taken to safeguard the relationship between the self and the divine by looking for the signs of natural providence, the signal that one has been the recipient of grace.

The Puritans formed their identities in Europe during a time of massive social disruption. The Reformation would eventually pave the way for the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, and these massive political and economic changes were both manifestations of and catalysts for the profound psychological shifts that prefigured the new science of seventeenth-century Europe. The dissolution of feudal, manorial, and clan relationships left the common European person unsettled, in need of new aims and concepts upon which to ground social and material life. There were pervasive feelings of having been betrayed by the main institutions, and a resulting need to fall back upon the self as all that one could trust.[6] Out of the loss of faith in the authority of the pope, the lord, and the king, we see a reclamation of the individual mind as the source of rightness, a sensed responsibility to order its logic and morality with conscientious care, and a concern to guard carefully against its susceptibility to surreptitious evils. These themes are easily discernible in Descartes's retreat into *res cogitans* and Luther's doctrine of redemption through faith and grace alone. In these twin expressions of distrust, the one secular and the other religious, there is a reclamation of the subject from its former role as *subject to* the lord or the king, so that it may now be the *sovereign subject* that guards and acts for itself. This idea, in its intrepid adolescence, traversed the Atlantic and took root at the core of the American mind.

Perry Miller, lifting a phrase from Samuel Danforth, has poetically described the Plymouth settlement in the title of his classic book on early America as an "errand into the wilderness." He understands the Puritan colonists as having set an errand for themselves, as willfully and decisively undertaking a mission to construct an ecclesiastical government rather than having been forced to flee by economic or religious persecution.[7] This errand was complex and carefully planned. In all of his writings about the Puritan mind, Miller stresses that these were people who possessed an uncommon degree of intellectual sophistication and a courageous resolve, both necessary to solidify a vision firmly rooted in a philosophical and theological perspective, the foundation of which is surely "the covenant." Insofar as American culture is still shaped by the values and ends of these colonists, insofar as schoolchildren make capotains and listen to retellings of the Plymouth landing, ties to this philosophical vision are to some degree retained.

According to Puritan theology, one's salvation and continued relation to God is formalized and sustained through a covenant between God and man. The human being participates in, and in some loose sense "makes," a covenant with God, but only because they have *already been* the recipient of grace. To receive grace is to have been given a permanent and unbreakable holy gift that ensures the salvation of the self and guarantees a correctness of "vision." In other words, the covenant ensures that the individual is a member of "the elect," predestined for eternal life, and has the ability to see the world through the lens of righteousness. To see the world correctly is to have faith, and this faith is the guarantor of certain salvation. The constant and pressing question for any Puritan is: "Do I have grace?" The question, at the center of the life of a Puritan, is asked through a continuous search for the signs of faith in oneself. Grace is spiritual confidence. If she asks herself, "Do I believe unquestioningly in the covenant?" she must find that her answer is a resounding "*yes*."

In the absence of a monarchical order, the Puritans participated in their community democratically, but the precondition of political and ecclesiastical inclusion was the demonstration of "rightness of vision." Only the recipient of grace was eligible for sainthood, and on earth, grace is demonstrated through an upright and pious life. Although every Puritan New Englander was expected to attend church, only the saints were eligible for full membership in the church, and only church members could vote and hold office. Sainthood was recognizable in two ways: first through a personal narrative delivered sincerely to the voting members of the church, secondly through the manifest signs of grace in one's life and appearance. According to Puritan belief, sainthood was *visible*, and God's grace would be apparent in the success of the faithful's projects, and directly perceivable in the personage of the elect. Success in one's endeavors would demonstrate the blessings of the spirit, "decorum" and "limpidness" would be observable in the physical countenance of the faithful. The relationship between the individual and the community, the only available shelter in the strange new continent, was therefore maintained through a kind of receptive, aesthetic sensitivity to the world and to others. Grace, to the Puritans, was a directly observable quality. A distinct psychological texture defined early American life. The true nature of the self could be discovered, directly perceived, in the success of his or her adaptation to the strange new world.

THE ASSOCIATIVE LOGIC OF RAMISM

Many scholars of the early American intellectual atmosphere have noted that Puritan thought was structured by a Ramian logic.[8] The logician and humanist Peter Ramus seldom appears on syllabi alongside Erasmus in Renaissance philosophy courses; however, his work had a profound influence on the philosophy of the following centuries. Ramism was taught as the official rhetorical and intellectual method at Harvard and Yale until the mid-eighteenth century, and continues as an undercurrent within classical American philosophy, including that of Dewey and Peirce.[9] Ramus attempted to reform the tradition of argumentation away from the binary logic of Aristotle that structured Scholastic disputations by emphasizing the role of dialectic and experience, rather than deduction, as we order the world.[10] Ramus's teachings emphasized a detailed observation of the natural world as a spiritual duty, and worship of God included the recognition of God as the "supreme artificer," in whose mind there exist perfect "archetypes" for entities—the idea shares much in common with Plato's "forms" or Augustine's "Illuminations." The divine ideals in the mind of God are "archetypes," but available to us in their sensible embodiment as "entypes." Ramist method of knowing the world entails finding the entypical fragments as they are echoed in the natural order, in poetry, and in scripture. If poetry and art are created by divinely inspired minds, we can look for proper connections and analogies between the sensible world and the ideas as we build "ectypes," *our* ideas of a thing. The search for truth is a project to construct "ectypes" that more closely resemble the perfect "archetype" in the mind of God. Ramist logic is, as Kenneth Stikkers has called it, a "logic of similitude" that "sees the world as disclosed in a play of resemblances," the ontological order of which is revealed to the devout and reflective mind.[11] Traditions and movements such as Calvinism, Transcendentalism, and Pragmatism are indebted to a Ramian heritage for their marked interest in the concrete, for their distrust in contemplation and speculation when it is disconnected from the practical activity of the human being, and for their veneration of art as an important interaction with the natural world rather than mere artifice. The obvious upshot of Ramist roots is a confidence in the communicative power of the perfect metaphor.

One of the notable effects of Ramism is the Puritan approach to nature. Rather than rely on a system of abstract rules to be brought to bear on the world in an effort to make it comprehensible (as one might if one's education had been mainly informed by Scholastic logic) the Ramist holds that the world as before us is already comprehensible, and we only need to attend to the logic as it is manifest in the order of nature to understand. That is, God as the creator did not make a world that resisted human curiosity; creation is already hospitable to the human mind. On the basis of Ramus's method, we do not need to master an abstruse system of rules and forms to study the divine, we are already equipped with the proper tools to apprehend reality. Significantly, from the perspective of the Ramist, there is no need to be suspicious that the mind invents concepts and categories in an effort to order the world, the mind is already ordered adequately. Thus, the empirical study of nature is not separate from the symbols of literature or the doctrines of the scriptures—they reflect and illuminate one another. The task of the scholar, the writer, or the preacher is not so much composing and inventing a system, but of revealing an ideal form through careful attention to analogies.[12]

Ramist logic may have had a role in shielding American philosophy from the predetermined "block universe" (as James called it) that is implied by binary logic and linear causality, but it also gave rise to a kind of "promised-land" myopia that prevented the Puritans from recognizing the extent to which they were strangers on this continent. It is the Ramism of the Puritans that encouraged their vision of New England as the "new Israel," and it is also Ramism that invited the American Puritans to look for signs of their salvation in the wild and "untouched" new landscape before them. A particular psychology follows from Puritan theology, so ordered by a Ramist logic: the interaction between the self and the world is dependent upon the quality of the relationship between the self and God. Our seeing the world clearly is the effect of our recognizing the essences correctly, that is, as God has ordered them. Sin is derangement and creates a disordered relationship between reason, will, and the imagination—the result is confusion. The extent to which the environment was hospitable to the Puritan's efforts resonated as a sign of grace, while disasters and failures signaled spiritual alienation. Grace restores order such that nature appears as it was conceived in the mind of God.[13]

THE WHOLE SELF

By the time Jonathan Edwards had begun writing sermons, John Locke had already published his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and it had come to Edwards's attention. The extent to which Locke influenced Edwards is still in dispute. In Miller's elegant biography, Edwards's theology can be fully understood only if one reads him with the *Essay* in mind, and he argues that it was Edwards's intention to modernize American religious thought by reconciling Puritan theology with the new science.[14] However, more recent scholars of Edwards's work caution against overreading Locke in Edwards's psychology. Marsden and Theusen evaluate Miller's claim as mostly a fiction, but with some biographical basis, while Conrad Cherry proposes that Edwards *was* profoundly affected by Locke's *Essay,* but stopped rather short of wholeheartedly embracing Locke's empiricism. Cherry proposes instead that Edwards uses Locke's theory of the mind as unified but equipped with two distinct powers to help overcome the faculty psychology that had begun to divide Puritan theology into separate camps.[15] Some Puritan theologians emphasized the role of the will in the primary act of faith, in which case belief and devotion are experienced as primarily emotional affairs, while others privileged the intellect, such that belief is a matter of the super-egoic rationality advising the will to assent to faith. Edwards, following Locke, denies that there are separate entities that collaborate in the act of faith, and instead holds that faith is an act "of the whole man," in which an entire *self* is unified in its orientation toward God.[16] We can hear the echo of this position in Dewey's recasting of religious experience as "an adjustment of our whole being to the conditions of existence." Theusen argues that Edwards straddled the positions of traditional Ramist Puritanism and the more cosmopolitan, European empiricism. Edwards, it seems, cannot be decisively categorized as a traditional Puritan or as a modern theologian because, while he was willing to allow philosophical and scientific minds to inform his theology, he also refrains from the early modern frenzy to ground theology in an epistemic program.[17]

In Roger Ward's scholarship on Edwards's *Religious Affections*, he identifies an architectonic in Edwards's thought that he sees as an anticipation of the architectonic of Charles Sanders Peirce. Ward finds an elaborate structure in Edwards's theory of religious conversion, by which the entire self is oriented toward God. It is by attending to psychological growth incurred through that process that the self can confirm that it is the recipient of grace. In contradistinction to Cherry, Ward presents Edwards as a faculty psychologist still, but also finds that conversion is the process by which the faculties of the will and the understanding (intellect) are unified through the "sense of the heart" that "knows" God in a way that is prior to any content of the understanding or the will.[18] It is only through the perception of God that the understanding and the will are unified, via their orientation to a discrete entity, enough to see the harmony of creation. A personal identity, a self as a coherent entity, is had only insofar as the soul overcomes the fragmentation of the will and the understanding.[19] The signs of grace are manifest to the self (and to others) by the affections that turn toward the divine that illuminates the beauty of God's arrangement. In other words, we know we are in grace because we can "see" correctly, moving beyond the narrow world that interests the solitary individual to embrace the divine order that permeates the universal.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Edwards's psychological theology is the extent to which grace manifests in an aesthetic awareness of the world. As both Ward and Cherry note, the integration of the self is realized through an act of faith, a "sense of the heart" that attunes to God.[20] But we can further clarify Edwards's psychology by situating him somewhere between Locke and the Cambridge Platonists. Sang Hyun Lee argues that Edwards departed from Locke at the theory of the tabula rasa, because the mind without any a priori structure cannot account *for the relations between ideas*. Locke's atomic non-arrangement of sensations into "simple ideas" blinds the mind to the real nature of things, because without given relations, we can never be sure about the structure of the world outside of our arbitrary groupings of them. Edwards agrees with Locke that discrete "sensations" comprise the material of knowledge, but contributes his own view of "habit" contra Locke. This is another moment in Early American thought that anticipates some of the most important features of Pragmatist psychology. It is "habit" that accounts for the relations between ideas by relating them through their spatiotemporal contiguity, causality, or through *resemblances.*[21] It is this final manner of arrangement, through relations embodied in habit, that firmly set American philosophy on a theoretical path that distinguishes the American "mind" from the European conception. For Edwards, a theory that recognizes relations as real is preferable because it squares with his theology: it is resemblance that provides us with the most direct insight to the divine essence of being. The structure of being is beauty, and beauty has the general character of similitude, resemblance, and harmony.[22] Thus, for Edwards it is through the process of conversion, accomplished through aesthetic insight, that the integrity of the self is achieved and we are able to arrange our sensations in accordance with the true and beautiful structure as it was ordered by God. Lee emphasizes that in Edwards's theory, this apprehension of beauty, which can only be the result of grace, occurs through a spontaneous, nondiscursive activity of the mind that orders simple ideas to increasingly match the beauty of the mind of God.[23] Both Ward and Lee note the similarities between the aesthetic as it appears in Edwards and Peirce, and that the significance of habit as a relation recurs in Dewey, but we should also note that Edwards anticipates Dewey's aesthetics by recognizing that a drive toward "beauty" integrates and affirms experience.

In first-generation Puritan Ramism and in Edwards's theology, we detect a common theme. There is an anxiety over the self that cannot be attained through the disputation of the reasoning mind, nor through a stable relative position in a complex hierarchy, nor through withdrawal and self-reflection à la Descartes. The self can only be found "out there," on the basis of an established relationship with the world. If we can deduce a dominant Early American psychology from its roots in logic and its theology, we rather unsurprisingly find a search for the self in the perceptions and interactions with the community of believers, the analogies of scripture, and (perhaps most distinctively) our aesthetic relation with the natural world. The ordering of the mind is accomplished by *orienting* oneself correctly, and this is affected through a nondiscursive but pervasive sense of rightness, a metaphoric suitability, and an affective relationship that pulses through the reasoning mind that gives it structure and direction. In the nascent beginnings of American thought, there is an inseparable relationship between truth and beauty. The psychological underpinnings of American philosophy demonstrate rather plainly that epistemology and aesthetics are intertwined. This fusion of natural beauty with personal truth reaches its literary, if not its philosophical apex with the Transcendentalists.

THE FLUID GOD OF THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS

If the importance of aesthetics was the result of the Puritan anxiety over the salvation and ultimate destination of the self, the Transcendentalists took that angst and alchemized it into a limitless creative expansion. The self, to a Transcendentalist, is not a given, it is a possibility.

In some ways, the Transcendentalist movement can be seen as a recovery of the fervor that animated the Puritans of Plymouth Colony and the charge that arced between Edwards's sermons and the Great Awakening. The Calvinism of the Puritans was replaced by a much more staid, tepid Unitarianism. The Arminianism (anti-predestination theology) that the Puritans had tried to resist for so long eventually attained a critical mass of Bostonian followers in the latter eighteenth century. In the beginning of the nineteenth, Locke was at the core of the curriculum at Harvard, and the school inaugurated its first Unitarian president. As traditional Calvinist beliefs such as predestination and irresistible grace were replaced with Enlightenment ideas about free will and rationality, the intellectual and cultural epicenter of the country shifted to a more liberal Christianity. Although this new offspring of American Protestantism entailed an increase of tolerance, insofar as redemption became a possibility for all human beings, it left something to be desired in the way of affective intensity.

In 1821, Sampson Reed, a recent convert to Swedenborgianism, took his MA at Harvard Divinity School and delivered his "Oration on Genius" to an audience that included Ralph Waldo Emerson. Therein he declared, "It needs no uncommon eye to see, that the finger of death has rested on the church," and insofar as that is the case, "genius, such as could exist on earth, should take its flight to the mountains."[24] It would be his farewell to a ministerial life in favor of work in an apothecary. Three years later, Emerson would enroll in the same program, and following Reed, make his own disenchanted exit after a brief career in the ministry. Reed had denounced the torpor of the church and the psychology of Locke, and promised that "genius" and the divine were to be more faithfully found in the study of nature. Emerson followed suit.

The philosophy of Swedenborg served as Reed's inspiration for reconceptualizing his duty to God, and Reed served as Emerson's. The ripple effects upon the American intellectual scene were such that American psychology made a decisive move away from that of Britain. Although the American Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Briton John Stuart Mill were nearly perfect contemporaries, the character of their thought could hardly be more dissimilar. Emerson's rejection of the Lockean conception of mind and Mill's approbation of it (as it comes to him via Hume) mark a decisive change in temperament of American philosophy. Mill's associationism presents the mind as a mechanistic object, as much subject to causal laws as the rest of nature. In British empiricism, "experience" tends to be restricted to experiences that produce *knowledge.* "Experience" is an association of "impressions" that one accrues when one observes and understands the mechanism of the natural order such that one's mental representation of the phenomenon is better equipped to make accurate predictions. Thus, in an empiricism that follows from Locke and Hume, the search for the "self" is abandoned as a metaphysical fiction. For Emerson, on the other hand, the "self," while not a given, is an achievement that may be had through experience. Emerson invests in a view of both the mind and nature as spontaneous and expansive. Whereas the tradition that follows from British empiricism sees the mind principally as a tool for grasping and analyzing (and clearly prioritizes these capacities) the American version that emerges from the Transcendentalists revels in the creative potential of an intuitive mind when it encounters the stirring and the enigmatic.

When Emerson went in search of the self, like the Puritans before him, he went to nature. Emerson resolutely resists the view that nature is a set of ineluctable laws that can be set down and understood once and for all. He encounters nature in the mode of gestalt apprehension that William James would later call the "much-at-once," rather than an endless system of serial causes and effects that would come to dominate American philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century.[25] To engage with nature is to contend with what Emerson tells us is both other and "opposite" to the soul and "the soul of my soul."[26] The natural world principally registers as immediate, sensuous, and exhilarating. The endless elaboration of natural forms provides the mind with the analogies and lessons that solidify into a perspective, and these analogies are the cache that I draw from to better understand my thought and my actions. The mistake, warns Emerson in *Nature*, *The Young American*, and "The American Scholar," is to turn chiefly to letters, scriptures, and theories written by others in an effort to find the self. I do not know what "I" think on the basis of knowing what others have thought in response to their world, I know what "I" think when I confront nature, which is both the subject and the "vehicle of thought." It is through interacting with nature, through the spontaneous arrangement of the sensual array into metaphors and associations, that the individual encounters the self as actualized in its primary and destined occupation: learning and maturation through the spontaneous activity through which we coalesce nature, and in turn cohere ourselves into a response to nature. We are drawn to the woods and the storms and the sky by their beauty, and it is on the basis of that beauty that the intellect discovers new relationships and establishes itself through its relatedness. We should of course note the echoes of Puritan and Edwardsean thought, both in the inclination to look to natural analogies as we seek ourselves, and also in the spontaneous apprehension of the beautiful that constitutes the mind. However, there is an important difference in the respect that the aim is not for our ideas to more closely copy the original in the mind of God, nor to render a perfect scientific categorization of all that is (which may amount to the same thing), but rather to come to better trust the genius of our instinct to discover original and unprecedented metaphors and analogies as we regard nature with the sense organs of our own unique temperament.

By Emerson's account, it is only by visiting and revisiting the natural world in its inexhaustible forms that we rediscover our inborn capacity for insight. One of the more inhibiting features of the Lockean vision of consciousness, and the Unitarian vision of rational Christianity as Emerson found it, was the extent to which both settle for abstractions to provide the final word on both the natural world and the holy. Neither implores us to enjoy "an original relation to the universe," through which we may encounter both science and poetry as equally crucial interactions with the world.

Emerson's marked delight and faith in nature certainly reflects the currents of German Romantic philosophy and British Romantic poetry as they made their first impact on the minds of New England, but as a metaphysical principle it shares something in common with the Neoplatonists as much as it does with Coleridge. In "The American Scholar," Emerson writes that nature is always a "circular power returning to itself," that is "without center, without circumference."[27] Like Plotinus, Emerson sees the ultimate metaphysical principle as a power rather than an entity. As a result, it is not possible to see the mind merely as a tool for grasping a simple idea or a sense impression to be arranged in the correct order; nature, as *natura naturans*, is dynamic flow from a living source—just as is the self. We must turn to nature because "nature is the opposite of the soul, answering it part for part."[28] I understand myself through my spontaneous, aesthetic relationship to the world because the world is spontaneous and beautiful. The "laws" and processes that we find in nature are also the "laws" and processes that we find in the mind, and we must become acquainted with the fluid, undulant nature of both. In Emerson's view, this does not undermine the project of natural science, it is rather an argument for its continued renewal. “Every age must write its own books,” he writes, and we might add that every epoch will have its own science.

The essay that first presents itself as the de facto choice for Emerson’s conceptions of the self and of the mind would likely be the celebrated “Self-Reliance”; however, from the first series of his essays, “The Intellect” provides us with a keener insight into his Transcendentalist psychology. He offers the intellect as endowed with circumfluous movement, a “solvent” power. It is prior to action, prior to ideation; it is the mind in its undivided wholeness. Emerson explains that at this layer, the mind is also ego-less: “it separates the fact considered from *you*,” and “discerns it as if it existed for its own sake.” It is also “void of affection,” and so, rather than regard the boundedness of any single whole, “pierces the form” and “embalms” truth as impersonal and permanent. The spontaneity and liquidity of this force of mind is the receptive expansion that animates thought without our will. We cannot predict, says Emerson, moment to moment what we will think. Emerson prizes this flash of intuition that precedes opinion even higher than he does knowledge. It is truth that the intellect receives in an intuitive instant; knowledge sits at the other end of the process, refined through opinion, convention, and will to be recorded as a fact. The receptive moment of the intellect is wonderment, and in this we are all equally endowed. We differ with respect to our artistry in our attempts to communicate what we have received.

SAVING THE INEFFABLE IMMEDIATE

In the American thought that we have surveyed thus far, the aesthetic, the religious, and the ethical stand as completions and realizations of one another rather than as discrete Kierkegaardean spheres that can be traversed only by a leap. They are interfused with one another, the result of our innate desire for beauty. The self that American philosophy discovered in its search was established on the basis of its new relationship, flawed and fragile as any budding romance, and entirely dependent on the ability of the mind to resolve experience into a bounded whole. But the accomplishment of that binding requires a unique force that is connective enough to hold our intellectual distinctions in relationship, and to call forth habits into an active engagement with the environment. This can only be a kind of noncognitive, preverbal awareness, and for Dewey, it can only be the qualitative immediacy that is known to us only in aesthetic experience.

The very heart of *Art as Experience* is its central casting of the sensuous immediate, valuing this over formal rules in the communication of meaning. An aesthetic experience, for Dewey, “begins with total seizure, an inclusive qualitative whole not yet articulated into members.”[29] Aesthetic experience, distinct from other kinds of experience, is characterized by a unity, not of knowledge, nor of subject and object, but of attention. The experience must be inaugurated by an interest that is powerful enough to draw the perceiver entirely into the experience. The mood comes first and persists after distinctions emerge—they emerge as its distinctions. The inaugural pull, which Dewey calls "impulsion," is the dawning of the ineffable pervasive quality. It is "the initial stage of any complete experience" that "[proceed] from a need," a hunger or desire, "that belongs to the organism as a whole" that propels us into an interaction with our environment.[30] We find the materials to answer our need in our surroundings, and if we are allowed to pursue our desire to completion, these reveal the structure and content of our desire to us. Aesthetic experience is the venturing into the sensuous, immediate world in pursuit of impulses that "do not seem to come from the self, because they do not issue from a self that is consciously known."[31] Thus, if the experience is complete, and therefore aesthetic, it begins in a searching appeal to the environment that is not on the level of conscious awareness; awareness comes through the sensuous encounter of obstacles, in a tension that "creates a ferment" of emotion, and gradually reveals the developing character of the relationship between the self and the environment.[32] These obstacles, selected through an attention devoted to a single quality, become the distinctions and features that can be intellectually named.

The experience continues to be dynamic—changes in intensity may occur—and obstacles become material for cognitive articulation, but what we have dedicated our attention to remains the same throughout: it is the quality. Experience is process of discovery. Because aesthetic experiences are governed by a qualitative attention that is itself unnameable, they must not be thought of as primarily intellectual. Although completely satisfying intellectual experiences *are also* aesthetic ones, the satisfaction is possible only on the basis of a qualitative awareness that is not itself cognitive. Quality demands a surrender so that the impulsion, the inaugural pull, may be satisfied. Only after we have satisfied our need and have finished our thought might we identify how it was set apart from other events, and retrospectively give it a name. But, when aesthetic experience is emphatic, defining it as such is not our primary enterprise. Awareness is devoted to the wholeness of the experience, from the beginning to the end, with the hope that it will consummate in something that may be identified *after* it has unfolded. The perceptive relationship between the organism and the surrounding medium of the environment is itself creative: a duet, a negotiation, a collaboration between the need of the organism and the natural environment ensues to reveal terms of an accord that cannot be known in advance. For such an experience to be had, attention must be directed by a strong qualitative dimension "that can only be felt, that is, immediately experienced."[33]

Dewey is clear that the qualitative is a felt dimension; it is "undergone" rather than "known," and as such it must be "emotionally intuited," thus making it particularly unfriendly for analytic parsing.[34] The pervasive quality that unifies an aesthetic experience or a successful piece of art is so thoroughly present that it is taken for granted. The emotional dimension of experience provides an immediate interpretive context. Aesthetic experience is not by any means restricted to art—both Edwards and Emerson find chiefly it in the majestic interplay of natural form—but in an age that no longer emphasizes the pastoral, our capacity and our drive to interpret the qualitative dimension of experience is rarely more obvious than in our experiences of art works. The elements of a successful and coherent piece blend together into a whole in a way that objects, taken for granted as physical and discrete, cannot. The elements of a work of art are bound by a belonging that registers as emotional relatedness. Images and sounds are made poignant through their belonging together. They ring in a particular key of grief or grandeur that is not any other kind of longing or triumph but exactly *this* precise one. This is why sad songs are not interchangeable. The notes of a symphony or the frames of a film may be isolated and discriminated, but the unifying quality cannot.

This is the aspect of Dewey's philosophy that has been largely left aside in the scholarship, although there are those that take this to be the very core of his philosophy.[35] The qualitative dimension of experience is direct and immediate, the tacit grasp of the world that supports and informs all explication. The trouble, as Richard Shusterman points out in his analysis of Dewey's aesthetics, is that the qualitative *does too much.* So much depends on this dimension of experience that resists our scrutiny. It is the medium through which connections are made and entities are distinguished, and it is the mood that influences and guides our interest; it is the irritant that begets an inquiry, and is the *potency* of all experience. It implies a metaphysics and denotes a reality that philosophy, that reflective enterprise of critique and delineation, cannot address directly. For a neopragmatist, the qualitative represents the specter of prescientific philosophy. As Wittgenstein warns in the *Tractatus,* "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent."[36]

Richard Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics* aimed to recover Dewey's aesthetics for neopragmatist efforts, and in this effort Shusterman has provided an account of why this aesthetics has been either rejected or overlooked by the neopragmatist philosophers who have occupied the mainstream of professional American philosophy. He writes that "one of Dewey's most crucial themes, in Aesthetics and elsewhere," is "the continuity thesis," whereby Dewey is "more interested in making connections than distinctions," and rendering visible the continuity between the realms of human activity that have been separated by compartmentalizing thought and institutions.[37] Shusterman also notes that, broadly speaking, the analytic style has taken scientific achievement and rigor as its academic model, and therefore thrives on making clear distinctions and precise definitions. He grants that the analytic approach to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, in its haste for analyticity, was in some respect an effect of the profession rather than faithful study of the nature of art itself: academic departments devoted to the study of literature or music or architecture could delimit and attend the critical work of their own field without the "wooly" umbrella term "aesthetics" mucking up the business. This has potentially had the effect of emphasizing Dewey's concern that relegating art to specialized fields would effectively sequester it from the concerns of life as it is actually lived in a democratic and diverse community, thus leading to a perceived and then reinforced esotericism such that art becomes the purview of the cultural elite.[38] Moreover, Shusterman correctly identifies anti-capitalist sentiments in *Art as Experience* that would have been particularly unfriendly to "the McCarthy era 1950's in which analytic aesthetics suddenly burgeoned," and during which Dewey died.

However, the analytic/neopragmatist critique of Dewey's aesthetics which Shusterman maintains concerns Dewey's theory of quality. He bases his critique of the qualitative on Rorty's critique (inspired by Sellars) of Deweyan metaphysics. Deweyan quality "seems to court the myth of a foundational, nonlinguistic given," and Dewey tries to "do too much with the concept of immediate experience (or, more particularly, with its immediate, qualitative feel) by using it to define not only art and artistic value, but also to ground the coherence of all thought."[39] Shusterman prefers that the Deweyan concepts of "habit" and "purpose" do the work that "pervasive quality" does for Dewey in *Art as Experience*. And so, Shusterman follows the basic curve of the linguistic turn, but where the neopragmatists reject a philosophical treatment of the direct and immediate because it is beyond discursive analysis, Shusterman rejects the ineffability of the qualitative because the qualitative is beyond the reach of *practice.* If we follow Shusterman (and Rorty) in their reading of Dewey-sans-quality, the role of philosophy within American life is to improve artistic (and political) practice. Ultimately, Shusterman proposes the Feldenkrais method as a somatic practice that benefits aesthetic experience, and finds that Feldenkrais upholds Dewey's valorization of the sensuous *and* answers the needs of organic, human life. Shusterman's reluctance to adopt the qualitative does not prevent him from upholding the felt dimension of experience, it is merely that he finds that engaging the senses and feelings of the body can be better achieved in purposive activity and the intentional cultivation of habit when we use an identifiable practice that is governed by intelligible principles. This allows him to retain a lush sensuality without relinquishing the discursive analyticity, because a *practice* allows us both precision and control in our sensitive encounters.

However, Dewey's intention for aesthetic experience was never narrowly aimed at improving either political discourse or cultivating practice alone. Dewey's interest in aesthetic experience is broader than these. He upholds aesthetic experience as the model for *meaningful* experiences, which is admittedly a much loftier and ambiguous goal than one would generally expect from a "pragmatist," a contemporary "naturalist," or an analytic philosopher. Philosophy is nothing if not lofty, even for an earth-bound pragmatist, and in our precarious global condition it no longer seems worthwhile to aim for restrictive conceptions of meaning. The hitch is that in broadening our view of meaning to include the unconscious and noncognitive, we do relinquish some intelligibility—that is, if we are committed to a notion of intelligence that is only willing to describe human intelligence. By following the classical reading, which includes the qualitative dimension as central, we may sacrifice the underwriting of a philosophical method that is discursively clear, but we admit much more room for both pluralism and ecological depth.

It is often imagined that philosophies of art are primarily useful for clarifying and demystifying art, or to render aesthetic practices explicit. In Dewey's system, however, art merely serves to highlight the extent to which aesthetic experience ought to be taken as the optimal mode of experience *in general*. There is no possibility for making what is aesthetic into an experience that is wholly explicit for Dewey. In this way there is a hint of mysticism in Dewey's aesthetics that harmonizes with the modest piety of the Puritans and the democratized reverence of the Transcendentalists. In aesthetic experience, the pervasive quality that begins as a "total seizure" controls attention throughout, and allows us to experience meanings as consummated, also carries us out *beyond* ourselves to *find* ourselves in the fulfillment of a transactional, reciprocal experience with the environment.[40] Of course, Dewey isn't a mystic, he is a naturalist who is averse to positing any kind of "super" nature, and he is certainly not interested in the kinds of mystical experience that forms a part of any familiar religious tradition. Even very effective art does not point us to a separate realm or a higher reality—it is merely intensified reality. Quality remains ineffable because it is the felt context that provides a fecund ground for significations, linguistic or otherwise, to emerge. Quality is the connective tissue that links what we say and how we act to a situational and contextual whole. When we experience meanings as "had" or "undergone" as we do in the aesthetic mode, it is because we enjoy an integration of the elements of meaning that is the condition for the emergence of any meaning.

If Shusterman is correct in his suspicions that the reason that Dewey's aesthetics has failed to reach a wider audience is because of antagonism with analytic philosophy, and if this antagonism is partly because pervasive quality is beyond the reach of grammatical scrutiny, then I suspect that the problem lurks in a deeper part of our cultural imaginary than a distaste for the vague, or an overdeveloped suspicion of antagonisms between science and philosophy. If philosophers refuse to consider a reality that is both experiential and evades our attempts to bring it linguistically to order, or if we are made uncomfortable by the attempt to draw together wisdom at the limits of thought and speech, then it behooves us to wonder if our problems lurk within our fear of the nonhuman, the environment that does not conform strictly to human intelligence, that spurns our efforts at detailing, demarcating, and quantifying. Our faithful adherence to systems betrays an anxiety about our impotence to control the world in which we are immersed. Vagueness exists. Situations include uncertainty or mystery and each is singular and concrete. A deep commitment to an empiricism that is radical, like Dewey's, will make unflinching attempts to wrestle with these features of experience. The narrowing of the meaning of pragmatism to a focus on *only* intelligible praxis does a disservice to pragmatism's more enduring pursuit of lived meaning, which must be attentive to what is immediately undergone, unforeseen and unresolved, as well as what can be denoted.

Philosophy in the West has made increasingly sincere attempts to come to terms with its own colonial history. This is particularly true in the continental tradition. The growing and influential field of postcolonial studies, indebted to the insights of Fanon, Foucault, and Edward Said, demonstrates the limits of an overly sanguine attitude regarding rationality and its offspring, scientific epistemology. These efforts have revealed darker agendas of power lurking behind the assertions of explicit consciousness, but they have done so with the benefit of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche. The American tradition shares in the colonial history with much of Europe, but our philosophical and biophysical environments are distinct. Cornel West rightly identifies the fact that when American philosophy is practiced as continuous with its own history, it is distinct from European philosophy in its evasion of "epistemology-centric" philosophy, and he has also acknowledged the inadequacy of Marxism and poststructuralism to help us come to terms with our own, distinctly American past.[41]

We have the beginnings of a rich cultural imaginary but, because we do not have a conception of the unconscious rendered from the perspective of American consciousness, we also lack a hermeneutics of suspicion that can detect the tacit, unintended meanings within. It has been difficult for us to read ourselves against ourselves, and thus to accept the hidden and unflattering defenses, as well as the hopeful and vulnerable fantasies that are between the lines of our narrative, and we do not have a compelling account of the manner in which they hide. When we tell stories about ourselves as Pilgrims or revolutionaries, they are fractured and shrouded by repression. Our unconscious interests are obscured from our actions, preventing us from learning about how our origins and projects reveal complex identities and contradictory beliefs. As a result, our historical narratives sound unconvincing, ironic, and thin. Just as we cannot merely import Marxism and poststructuralism for American concerns, we cannot simply import psychoanalysis to grapple with the complexity of the American mind.

Dewey is not America's answer to Freud, but he nevertheless presents us with a basic outline of the features of the unconscious that follows from Jamesean psychology. He sees it in his account of the way that the mind emerges from the body, in the way impulse weaves into and splits from habit, and in the attunement and the blending of the whole and unknowable self with the whole and unknowable other. This unconscious is not a swirling chaos of drives, the result of a decisive split that occurs when we repress feral mammalian instincts, and it is not somehow lurking "within" the self. This unconscious is the qualitative dimension through which the constant collaborative dialogue between the self and nature is taking place every moment. It is the aesthetic connection to the world that may be more or less emphasized within experience, and it reveals our joy and exhilaration as often as our anguish and shame. If we turn to this rich cache of insight, we may generate a livable and convincing American interpretation of American being.

NOTES

1. Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation: The Individual, the Nation, and the Continent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

2. Donald Pease, "Sublime Politics," *Boundary 2* 12, no. 3, Spring/Autumn 1984, 259–79, 278.

3. Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 123.

4. Stephen Tomkins, *Journey to the Mayflower: God's Outlaws and the Invention of Freedom* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2020), §26.

5. More extensive accounts of the connection between Puritan theology and American pragmatism can be found in William Dean, "Religion and the American Public Philosophy," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1, no 1, Winter 1991, and in Jared Hickman, "The Theology of Democracy," *The New England Quarterly* 81, no. 2, June 2008. Perry Miller, the Harvard professor and forefather of American studies, softens the popular view of the Pilgrim mission as a twin commitment to both democracy and religious freedom. While the principle of voluntary participation was a central tenet of the Brownist position, Miller holds that democracy was an accidental byproduct of those early attempts by Massachusetts Bay colonists to live together in an unfamiliar society. "The Puritan Way of Life" reprinted in *Puritanism in Early America*, ed. George M. Waller (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1950), 39.

6. Kenneth Stikkers, "The Aesthetics and Hermeneutics of the Self in Foucault and the American Philosophical Tradition" (unpublished MSS, a version of which was delivered as a lecture at Harvard in 2013).

7. Perry Miller, *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 4.

8. Perry Miller, introduction to *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1938), 31; Elizabeth Flower and Murray Murphy, *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1977), 14–22; William Samuel Howell, "English Backgrounds of Rhetoric," in Karl Richards Wallace (ed.), *History of Speech Education in America* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954).

9. Flower and Murphy, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 20.

10. Ibid., 14.

11. Kenneth Stikkers, "The Aesthetics and Hermeneutics of the Self and Foucault in the American Tradition," in *Pragmatismo ed ermeneutica. Soggettività, storicità, rappresentazione*, eds. Anna Maria Niedu and Vinicio Busshci (Italy: Mimesis, 2019), 191–212.

12. Miller, introduction to *The Puritans*, 32.

13. Flower and Murphy, *A History of Philosophy in America*, 43.

14. Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 54–58. Originally published 1949.

15. Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 12–27.

16. Jonathan Edwards, "Notes on the Mind," in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, eds. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth Minkema (New Haven, CT: Yale Nota Bene, 2003), 22–34, and *Freedom of the Will*, eds. Arnold Kaufman and William K. Frankena (New York: Irvington, 1982), 8–14.

17. Peter Theusen, "Edwards' Intellectual Background," in *The Princeton Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 16–33.

18. Roger Ward, *Conversion in American Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 14.

19. Ibid., 16.

20. Jonathan Edwards, "On the Nature of True Virtue," *Religious Affections* (1746) in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*.

21. Sang Hyun Lee, "Mental Activity and the Perception of Beauty in Jonathan Edwards," *The Harvard Theological Review* 69, no. 4, 1976, 365–96.

22. Jonathan Edwards, "The Mind," no. 1.

23. Sang Hyun Lee, "Mental Activity and the Perception of Beauty in Jonathan Edwards," 378.

24. Sampson Reed, "Oration on Genius," in *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, ed. Perry Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 52.

25. James expresses the idea that mystical experience is possible within his understanding of psychology. He explains it as a widening of the field of consciousness such that what is usually marginal becomes included in central awareness. Consciousness is always a much-at-once phenomenon, such that individual thoughts, memories,

sensations, etc., blend into a instantaneous present. The component parts can be individuated later in reflection through a purposeful narrowing of the field through attention. Mystical experience, on the other hand, includes the apprehension of that which is typically subliminal, subconscious—which is now available to attention and so informs the apprehension of the field. "A Suggestion about Mysticism," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods* 7, no. 4, February 17, 1910, 86. There is a lengthier discussion of this idea of James and the "field" of consciousness in chapter 2. The opposing, reductive view is represented by Daniel Dennett, who explains consciousness as the illusory, epiphenomenal effect of a number of impersonal, self-editing feedback loops, genetically encoded to receive and process input from the environment in terms of a predetermined order. The latter view excludes intentionality by explaining the whole in the terms of its parts. The former view takes the whole to be prior, both metaphysically and temporally, to the individuated parts.

26. These two sentiments can be found in the same essay, "The American Scholar," in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel LaPorte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 55–56.

27. Ibid., 55.

28. Ibid., 56.

29. John Dewey, LW 10: 195.

30. Ibid., 64.

31. Ibid., 71.

32. Ibid., 72.

33. Ibid., 137.

34. Ibid., 23.

35. Thomas Alexander, Mark Johnson, and David Hildebrand are contemporary philosophers whose works recognize the significance of "quality" within Dewey's concept of Experience.

36. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1922), 189.

37. Ibid., 12.

38. Ibid., 15–19.

39. Richard Shusterman, "Dewey's *Art as Experience*: The Psychological Background," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 1, 2010, 32.

40. LW 10: 202.

41. Cornel West, *The Evasion of American Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

Chapter 2

The American Unconscious

It is difficult to be truly comfortable accepting that one is in the possession of an unconscious, but Americans seem to be particularly defended against the notion. For the psychoanalytically inclined, it is a defense that begs for an interpretation. The disdain is mutual: Americans don't think much of Freud, but Freud didn't think much of America. Freud considered "Americans one and all as victims to an anal-sadistic retentiveness hostile to pleasure but conducive at the same time to the most aggressive conduct in business and politics."[1] No one wants to be interpreted thus by an analyst who, through interpreting my unconscious, may claim that he knows me better than I know myself. And yet, it must be acknowledged that for all of Freud's strange Victorian lascivious, and his tedious judgments on women and homosexuality, he has a point about America. A brief reflection on the consistent uproar about matters of sexuality buttress Freudian insights about the secret depths of foreclosed desires, the labyrinthine complexity of sublimation, and the paradoxically obvious fact that a great deal of darkness lies behind the façade of the ego. But the reason for the staying power of Freud's thought is not simply his shrewdness for detecting the hypocrisy endemic to polite society; it is rather the excellent case made by psychoanalysis that the human mind is infinitely complex, and that the central reality of being human lurks just below our brittle pretensions to the contrary. Psychoanalysis quite literally "reads us for filth," (to use a colorful but appropriate colloquialism), but it also presents us with the hope that behind our defenses there is earnestness, vulnerability, and a deep need for the mytho-poetic imagination. The hypothesis of a dynamic unconscious is an opportunity to change our relationship with what we have dismissed as brute or base: the feral and the puerile are invitations to invention and novelty.

In what follows, the term "unconscious" is going to become unavoidably more ambiguous, which seems appropriate when we consider the ambiguous matter of observing its effects. The unconscious is fascinating and menacing when we recognize it as the seat of drives that exert a felt pressure that, under normal circumstances, escapes my conscious attention and still directs my activity. It is all the more frustrating that drives are unknowable in themselves. According to Freud, a drive does not arise from our contact with the external world, but “from within the organism itself,” and, “since it impinges not from without but from within the organism, no flight can avail against it.”[2] The difference between an external stimulus which can be fled and internal stimuli “whose character of constant pressure exists in spite of it” is important for Freud because it is so formative for an infant. Discerning the character of internal and external stimulation generates the distinction between what is “inside” and what is “outside” the self. The inner/outer distinction, taken as a governing logic, is foundational for Freud’s entire system. These relentless drives aim to be satisfied by an “object.” However, the object is subject to alteration and substitution, and drives may exert varying quantities of pressure in relation to the urgency of a given need. Drives are not wholly intangible, they have a somatic source and a quantity of pressure, but they lack *content*. They can be represented by the objects at which they aim, but since the same drive can vary in its choice of objects, it is impossible to observe empirically, and thus I cannot *know* them. Furthermore, because drives are the motivations that occasion all human thought and action, the muteness and variability of drive means that any thought-process I have must undergo a formidable odyssey on its way to becoming conscious, representable, and communicable. This makes it very difficult to know what “I” want, why “I” act, and who “I” am.

A disquieting implication of the dynamic unconscious is the realization that thought does not originate in any traceable, syntactical configuration. The process is complex and entails some subterfuge. The drives of the unconscious are energetic and fluid, but as they proceed outward and toward action that aims toward a particular satisfaction, they must become conscious and actionable. In order to become conscious, drive energy must attach to a perceptual residue and a corresponding word-presentation. Drive links (cathects) to a perceptual memory (an image, perhaps) and then a word (which is also a remembered sound perception) and then submits the content to a preconscious filter. Sometimes the filter rejects the thought-process, interrupting and foreclosing the object, and that rejection is *repression*. The filter represses that which *must not* become conscious (mainly desires for objects and activities that would threaten my connection with the social order) and allows content through that passes muster. Thought processes that become conscious can do so because the drive’s aim has displaced to a more appropriate object, or sublimated to a meritorious activity. And here we have two crucial points about the unconscious/conscious distinction: the first requirement of a thought-process becoming conscious is that it become attached to a *representation* and a *symbol*, the second requirement is that it pass through the *filter* that rejects unacceptable thoughts. Conscious thought, then, is characterized by word and image, the unconscious thought-process is dynamic and original but nondiscursive. The "ego" is the portion of the psyche that serves as filtering mechanism, converts drive into representation and speech, and allies itself with reason and common sense. The "id" contains the passions.[3] The id is the engine, the fuel for all action and initiative, the ego translates the id's will into something acceptable by a hidden logic. These leads us to wonder about the particular relationship between the id and the ego. How much can I trust the work of this particular translator?

The ego/id distinction demonstrates much of the trouble with psychoanalysis. Although it is common enough to hear the "ego" referred to in popular conversation, we rarely reference the existence of the "id." In the model, of course, the ego and the id just represent the conscious and the unconscious portions of the same structure, simply the active and present part of the psyche that I understand as "me." But, since only one half speaks, it is the silent half that we have to wonder about. It seems to me that the id, as source of my passion, is much more *who I really am* than the ego, which merely does the work of camouflaging my real desires until they are suitable to . . . what? To consensus reality? To the ways in which I would like to construct myself? To an image that is simply an efficient deception? Regardless of how well I understand that the ego is a necessary part of a healthy and functioning psyche, in recognizing that I have an ego that I am invested in maintaining I also cannot escape the feeling that I am really a nexus of unacceptable urges, hidden deep "within" a semi-convincing costume, a masquerade that may fool myself better than it fools another.

Beyond whatever disquiet the ego/id hypothesis adds to the difficulties of being a person in the world, the psychoanalytic theory also clashes with Deweyan psychology in its insistence on the hard distinction between "inside" and the "outside." In the previous chapter, we saw the importance of nondiscursive aesthetic experience in nature. The affective allure of the landscape invites the American mind to come and to know itself as belonging to its environment. All of the tacit immediacy that has been so vital for ecological experience is perceptual, and exogenous, but for psychoanalysis, the nondiscursive and passionate drives of the id are decidedly endogenous.

From a neuropsychoanalytic orientation, Mark Solms has recently made a compelling argument that we ought to reverse our psychoanalytic understanding of the ego and the id. He presents the case that the condition for all experience, and the nature of consciousness, is much more endogenous and id-like, than it is exogenous and ego-like. The internal body is much more likely to be the source of what it "feels like" to be conscious, or as Solms says, "all the phenomenal states of the body-as-subject are experienced *affectively.*"[4] While on the other hand, the ego, the body-image that condenses an outward self, is comprised of memory-traces from "external" perceptions. Consciousness, Solms argues, is not inherently perceptual, *consciousness is primarily affective*, while perception, and my memory of these perceptions, are processes that more properly belong to the unconscious. One of the most important roles of the unconscious is the work it must do to stabilize my experience, providing me with "mental solids," based on the slow and constant accrual of perceptions that help me form expectations. Solms's best evidence for his hypothesis is that the cortex, which has long been understood as the seat of consciousness in the brain, can be missing or damaged without preventing a subject from being conscious. It is the brain stem, he argues, that must remain intact and functional for consciousness to persist. Clinical evidence from patients born without a cortex, or whose cortices have been damaged through disease and injury, support his thesis. This leaves psychoanalysis with a bit of a problem in understanding the relationship between affect, drive, excitation, and the conscious/unconscious systems, and it will be exciting to see how Solms's contributions alter both neurology and psychoanalytic practice and research. However, Solms's characterization of consciousness as primarily affective and his insistence that perception is, for the most part, an unconscious process, is much more in line with Deweyan psychology.

As promised, none of this has helped us in the slightest to clarify precisely what the unconscious is. The ensuing muddiness over the proper position of the ego/id, unconscious/consciousness is a nice demonstration of the ineffectiveness of the inner/outer distinction for understanding the nature of experience. It is also clear that regardless of whether or not it is primarily conscious or unconscious, in both Freud's and Solms's accounts of the psyche, affect is a primary feature of experience and is an unavoidable element of thought despite its nondiscursivity. The subsequent translation into images and languages is terribly important, however, if we would like to communicate our insights and interactions. In this book, I have largely followed the convention that associates consciousness with "knowing" and "rationality," and I have also used "discursive," "cognitive," and "syntactical" more or less interchangeably to refer to the portion of experience that Anglo-American philosophy and culture have favored as the "higher" functions of the mind. I have aligned the unconscious with the nondiscursive, tacit, immediate, and qualitative to indicate that dimension of experience that has been taken to be the unintelligent or unintelligible "lower" functions of mind. In Dewey's philosophy, "experience" really does not accommodate for such sharp distinctions because the characteristics that differentiate the "conscious" and the "unconscious" are not easily understood in terms of their structure, but rather in the manner of their contributions to experience, to a highly organized and coordinated interaction with the environment. The mind, in Dewey's philosophy, cannot be described in topographical terms because experience is *phasic* and *interactive* rather than the effect of a complex but mechanized system. In order to make sense of "unconscious" experience, it may be helpful to imagine the mind, not as a brain, but as the threshold between the self and the world. As this chapter traces the ways in which "the unconscious" is handled within American philosophy, it will do so with the aim of demonstrating the primacy of aesthetic experience, and that of arguing for the intelligibility of the qualitative dimension.

Although Dewey did not articulate a detailed theory of the unconscious, his theories of art, ethics, and his metaphysics all refer to a noncognitive, affective, and/or nondiscursive portion of mind that appears in his work as the greater part of habit, "impulsions," or qualities that are suffered or "had" without being "known." Each aforementioned feature of the experiential field affects the outcome or the shape of experience, but may or may not be explicitly directed or consciously recognized within activity. Dewey is clear that this nondiscursive, implicit portion must be negotiated within experience in order for us to reconstruct moral habits, to have aesthetic experiences, or to begin an inquiry, but the extent to which this dimension is below the level of direct awareness, and the implications of and unconscious portion of mind, is insufficiently emphasized in the scholarship. There are two obvious barriers to an exploration of the implications of a Deweyan unconscious: first, although Dewey's notion of experience is expansive and implores that we include dreams, insanity, ambiguity, and error as important elements therein, he did not take the time to outline a conceptual structure for the unconscious mind in a systematic way. Second, Dewey has made brief but pointed comments admonishing psychoanalysis for effecting too sharp a separation between the psychical and the physical.[5] Dewey is also suspicious about a theory of human motivation that appears to reduce complex phenomena to sexual impulse. Although the suspicion paints Freud with too broad a brush, there is nevertheless a sense of uneasiness that attends a juxtaposition of the two—the character of their thought, their public personae, their aims and interests seem so incongruous as to be dissonant. So perhaps it is no surprise that Dewey scholarship has opted to effectively sidestep the question of the nature of the unconscious within his work.

Difficulties notwithstanding, if we concede that some conception of the unconscious is indeed present, although latent, within Dewey's work, we will be closer to understanding the nuance and the complexity of what he meant by "experience," the central concept within his philosophy as a whole. Acknowledging that Dewey's theory of mind includes a role for the unconscious prevents our misreading (or continuing to misread) his theory as a quasi-British empiricism. The aim of experience is not only, nor even primarily, an accrual of knowledge; in his view experience is wider, more invested with the expansion of *meaning* than learning and ordering information. Even if we manage to avoid reading a Lockean psychology in Dewey where it plainly does not belong, it has been the temptation of later commentators to narrow Dewey's theory of meaning to linguistic meaning alone. Acknowledging the role of the unconscious helps to correct this restriction.[6] More broadly, however, it benefits the American intellectual tradition as a whole to take notice of the complex understanding of the mind that informs the theory and character of what we generally refer to as American pragmatism, the latest phase that continues to develop from a continuous, uniquely American tradition.

THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY

As with the rest of the natural sciences, psychology enjoyed a long gestational period within philosophy before its birth as an independent field of study in the nineteenth century. Prior to this split, any architectonic philosopher would have to include a theory of the psyche from which they could then hypothesize an approach to ethics, knowledge, perception, and aesthetics. However much mutual benefit the field of psychology and philosophy may have derived from the fecundity of their interdependence, as with any sufficiently interesting and timely philosophical insight, psychological theories drew adherents and then began to individuate. In the nineteenth century, psychology became impatient with its own theoretical incipience and burst forth into the world on a mission to prove itself. Psychology, no longer content to serve as a handmaid to theology and metaphysics, yearned to become both profitable and self-determining in the modern world, and the surest way for a line of inquiry to accomplish that goal is to declare itself a science. To become a science, psychology needed to devise a system for experimentation, observation, and, eventually (and perhaps most importantly for its widespread recognition) a practical application that would serve the interests of industrialized economies.

Many of the early nineteenth century forays stand self-consciously on the threshold between philosophy and psychology. They refer to "the philosophers" in passing refutations, and yet, insofar as these landmark texts are also threshold tests, they accommodate the fluidity that can only come from speculative and introspective humility. The writings of William James and Sigmund Freud both thrum with the creative hubris that marks the artistic personality of all theorists. Their questions demanded brave and radical answers, but many of their twentieth century progeny were impatient with the speculative temperament of their forebears. Both Jamesean psychology and Freudian psychoanalysis fell short of the physicalist certainty that empirical sciences demand, while the behaviorism of Watson and Skinner provided a compelling antidote to the threat of nineteenth century Romanticism and its preference for subjective drama over objective mechanism. In the middle of the twentieth century, intuitive reasoning was disavowed in an effort to favor the rigid methodologies of the laboratory. It was with behaviorism that psychology first found widespread economic legitimacy by making itself profitable to the needs of a world ordered by industrial logic. Behaviorist psychology presented itself not only as an empirical science that could be accounted for quantitatively, but also as a profitable method of engineering the school child, the housewife, and ultimately the worker into more predictable and efficient versions of themselves.[7]

The demand for scientific legitimacy does a good deal to account for the ascendancy of behaviorist approaches, especially in their current iteration as woven into cognitive behaviorism. However, this explanation and the anecdote about Freud's disdain at the beginning of this chapter, provide an incomplete account of why psychoanalysis was never able to braid itself into American life in quite the same way that it did in Europe. Psychoanalysis, as a treatment modality and an approach to the mental apparatus, privileges introspective reflection and favors a poetic mode of free association in the clinical setting. In contrast with experimental and behaviorist psychology, psychodynamic understandings of the mind tend to take the "subjectivity" of the individual as the starting point for its hypotheses. While psychodynamic approaches are still well represented in American clinical practice, the cognitive behavioral model enjoys preeminence in the clinic, the research laboratory, and within Anglo-American philosophy. If psychology is to follow positivist empiricist methods, then the reflections that emerge in the relationship between analyst and analysand cannot count as hard evidence. This critique seems to have been anticipated by Freud in 1923 when he warned of the need for a shibboleth.[8] However, the major school of American thought in the first half of twentieth century was well prepared to speak it: Peirce, James, and Dewey all regard consciousness as a quality of the psyche, rather than the sum of its existence. Thus, through the sharing of this central tenet, they stand on the threshold between *something like* psychoanalysis and "experimental psychology." Given this intermediary position between these two conflicting psychological frameworks in the twentieth century, we have the basis for making a rich intellectual comparison between two distinct psychological theories that follow from a psyche that functions dynamically beyond, beneath, or at the fringes of focal awareness.

The emergence of psychology in the United States as a distinct discipline, rather than as a subfield of philosophy, begins with the conversations between William James and Charles Sanders Peirce.[9] Later, Stanely Hall would expand Jamesean philosophy into developmental territory, and Dewey would further develop the central insights of James in light of Darwin's work. For the first half of the twentieth century, the Jamesean understanding of the mind dominated the American philosophical landscape. The theory of the psyche therein supports and follows from the major claims of pragmatism, and the emerging American school of psychology benefited from the openness of its inherent philosophical pluralism. While neither James, Peirce, nor Dewey embraced psychoanalysis, all three presented the mind as a complex field, a presence within the blooming world, composed of affective investments, gradient levels of awareness, and a complex and inconsistent capacity for memory. Immediate, felt experience took center stage for these pragmatically oriented, pluralistic philosophers. Their word "experience" would by no means be reducible to "consciousness," nor could "habit" be reduced to "behavior."

If we can take Emerson as having declared intellectual independence from European (particularly British) philosophers and psychologists, then there is also room to read Peirce and James as following in the same vein. Although the pragmatism of Peirce, in its original conception, is a rejection of Cartesian rationalism and the method of doubt as a foundation for truth, its development and articulation by James is equally a critique of nascent European psychological schools. This is not to say that American philosophy was occupied primarily with appraising European philosophy, nor was it simply an outgrowth of it. Rather, the American mind had begun to understand itself through the formation of a unique paradigm.

In characterizing mental activity as a stream of thought rather than a container for sensations, James broke decisively with the entire school of British Empiricism and its atomistic view of sensations and ideas. The rejection of the Humean and Lockean mind would require rebuilding a psychology without the benefit of a simple, linear, mechanistic logic. The *Stream of Thought* also represented an estrangement from the German school in addition to the British empiricists. James insisted on the continuity of experience and thus cannot tolerate the separation of ideas into *die vorstellungen.*[10] From the perspective of the primordial flow, regarding ideas as simple building blocks or as separate subjective entities is a convenient invention, but only at the price of inserting untenable ruptures everywhere in experience. But James's insistence on the continuity of mental life simultaneously implies an expanse of mental life that is ill-defined, out-of-focus, and evasive.

There is plenty of room in nearly any theory of mind for plain unawareness or a state of unresponsiveness to the external world, and in either of these circumstances we may speak of a person as "unconscious" in the descriptive sense without arousing any anti-Freudian panic. However, when we posit deeply hidden or typically obscured mental processes that intrude upon conscious life, when we are said to "do" something for an unconscious reason, we are in sympathy with what is known as the "dynamic model" of the unconscious, like the one posited by Freud as the seat of drives. If James found both the container-theory of the empiricists and the piecemeal consciousness of the idealists devoid of dynamic flow and insensitive to the fringes of mental life, then we must also ask if a portion of the mind wouldn't be better understood as submerged below, or something quite other than explicit consciousness. How, then, would we then understand its relation to this psychoanalytic model that includes energetic drives?

James rejected references to "unconscious states." He feared that the positing of unconscious states would prevent psychology from becoming a science and turn it instead into a "tumbling ground for whimsies."[11] From the perspective of the verificationist and physicalist positions that dominate philosophy of mind today, Freud's account of neuroses and psychoses could be accused of whimsy to the extent that they rely upon metaphor and make heavy use of mythology to name and understand groupings of symptoms as complexes. However, when James wrote *The Principles of Psychology*, he had never met Freud, and *The Interpretation of Dreams* would not be published for another decade. What James rejects in his systematic handling of each common argument for unconscious states is not the unconscious as such, it is *knowledge from unconscious sources.* It is not clear how he would have responded to Freud's dynamic model. By the time the two met one another at a small conference for psychologists in 1909, James was in failing health and would be dead within the year. James is clear enough in the *Principles* that there are elements of experience that affect our thought and yet cannot be made explicit to consciousness, and these elements are *felt* rather than *known*.

TRUTH AS FELT

Part of what unites pragmatism as a distinct philosophical tradition is that it develops a conception of human learning that is always a complex, community dependent process. In pursuit of this defining principle, and insofar as it takes the final measure of philosophy to be the social rather than the academic world, pragmatism remains grounded in the affective relationships that connect the mind and world. Any interaction between myself and the world requires following the affective threads that link the world of immediate experience to the world of organizable signs, even in the case of logical and scientific enterprises. For example, both Peirce and James held that we experience belief and doubt as sensations or feelings, in which "belief" corresponds to the feeling of secure footing that precedes action and "doubt" is first encountered as an irritation that denotes a lack of belief and resultant hesitation.[12] The irritation of doubt is the affect that serves to initiate my inquiry, and my feeling of relief signals that I have found a solution that settles doubt. In this way, both Peirce and James hold that the mind meets the world in accordance with feeling states rather than apodicticity to do its work.

If James's epistemology is the natural outgrowth of his psychology, it is also the result of a complex, career-long discussion with Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce, looking for an epistemology to counter the Cartesian account, likens truth to a serviceable habit of mind that is established when we hit upon whatever *functions* as true in relation to action. We can act in our various enterprises, supported by an ability to make efficient inferences, only when we are reasonably secure in our conception of the world around us. If our concept fails us and our inferences err, then we must go in search of a new way of conceiving things. If a newly discovered conception supports the recommencement of activity, it then functions—at least temporarily—as a truth.[13] But both the process of inquiry and the conceptions we discover are, at some level, the result of a collaboration with a community, and so may include or depend upon bad habits that do not serve our action. Either our irritation at these bad habits is strong enough to prevent us from resuming our activity, and in the caesura present the occasion for a correction, or else they are inconsequential enough that our activity resumes despite their inadequacy. Peirce's concerns were to provide a model for the practice of a reasonably scientific philosophy, but the perspective, situation, and feelings of the inquirer are always internally related to the problem solving process. The mind, as it appears in Peirce's philosophy, is defined by the learner's developing response to a socially defined world.

Much like James, Peirce's understanding of the mind and its search for truth depends on our having access to our feelings. Peirce says: "brain-matter is protoplasm in a certain degree and kind of complication—a certain arrangement of mechanical particles. Its feeling is but an inward aspect."[14] However, rather than take the brain-matter as the object of inquiry (as a hard-nosed materialist might do), it is the inward aspect, the inquiring as directly undergone, that Peirce is interested in understanding. Peirce understood the genesis of an idea as having a phasic progression, wherein the first phase of any idea is really an awareness of intrinsic quality, a brute occurrence that serves as an inspiration to think. Peirce calls this phase "firstness." Following then, if thought is to progress, it alights on an energetic associative pathway (secondness) so that it may connect with other ideas (thirdness).[15] In some ways, Peirce's general view of thought echoes the process of free association in a way that Freud would find familiar.

Vincent Colapietro has found sufficient evidence to sketch a theory of the unconscious from Peirce's collected works.[16] The mind, for Peirce, was "a multilayered system of intricately related habits," in which infinitely plastic instincts allow us to take on and disrupt habits.[17] Colapietro reads Peirce as suggesting that, in general, the disruption of established habits enlivens consciousness and the acquisition of new habits quells consciousness.[18] In addition, Peirce thought that we only naively hold "that our beliefs are principally determined by the exercise of our conscious intellect," and rather, daily life is "full of involuntary determinations of belief."[19] If our (perhaps defensive) assumption is that our beliefs are controlled by our conscious intellect, then through implication we can infer that there is *something other* than voluntary consciousness that influences our beliefs. This gives Colapietro a basis for theorizing that Peirce is in sympathy with a dynamic model of the unconscious. But Colapietro finds that Peirce's commitment to synechism, his word for the principle of continuity, distinguishes the Peircean ego from the Freudian model in this key feature: consciousness must not be sharply divided from the unconscious. Still, Peirce warns that:

> Men many times fancy that they act from Reason when, in point of fact, the reasons they attribute to themselves are nothing but excuses which unconscious instinct invents . . . The extent of this self-delusion is such as to render philosophical rationalism a farce.[20]

Colapietro reads this as pointing to an *unconscious* rather than a preconscious, but an unconscious that Peirce likens to a "bottomless lake" in which there are certain objects at "different depths" that "certain influences will give certain kinds of those objects an upward impulse" such that they may be brought to visibility—that they may be made conscious.[21] Although it is not the Freudian conception of the psyche, it is clear that the mind, at this stage in the development of American thought, is a complex but internally related system that is responsive to its world, quite capable of undermining its own projects, and irreducible to conscious awareness.

James's pragmatism was partially formed through his collaboration with Peirce, and while there is room for understanding James as directly expanding from Peirce's central claim, he reformulated pragmatist epistemology with an emphasis on the process of truth as something that *happens* to an idea when it is tested in practice (and something that can *unhappen* later), rather than the correspondence of the products of inquiry with reality. While Peirce understood his epistemological theory as primarily useful for scientific inquiry, James envisioned a much wider application. The process of verification is not the result of our aspiration to know the world for the sake of validating a theory, but is rather grounded in the visceral demands that stem from our *living* in the world. The strength of the truth or falsity of a hypothesis only has meaning insofar as it solves a problem that occurs during the course of our actual lives. Truth, as James sees it, is directly a matter of whether or not an idea can direct us to some vital satisfaction, and he suggests that we take the most urgent matters as paradigmatic for the truth-process.[22] The urgency of the question, and the extent to which the idea leads us to satisfaction, must always be held in relation to a context of my desires and needs. It is only within an actual context that I can experience satisfaction or frustration. These felt responses act as the instruments that help select which ideas are candidates for the process of verification. The connection, then, between consciousness and ideas, is always visceral. James's primary interest in pragmatism was its usefulness in solidifying continuity as the defining characteristic of mental life, but it also allowed him to carve a course between those psychologies as theorized by German idealists, and those of the British empiricists. The idealists presented a world unified solely by a purely intellectual principle, and he found that the empiricists could only present the world as atomized and disjointed. James's view of the connection between the mind and the world is known as Radical Empiricism.

James likened his radical empiricism to Hume's, insofar as it is a rejection of rationalism, except for one very significant difference: "the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experience must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system." James overcame Hume's fork by asserting that the relations between ideas are in fact directly experienced—we *feel* them.[23] Just as we should understand truth to be a quality that varies with respect to the urgency of the question, we can consider the extent to which we feel relations to be more or less potent: "to be with one another in a universe of discourse" is our least intimate encounter with relations, whereas systems of memories and strivings, those relations that organize the self, present us with a much closer connection to them.[24] James, constructing his philosophy of human knowledge on equally organic principles, conceived of an organic learner in an organic world. The core of pragmatism is the recognition that we relate to the world as motivated human actors who are capable of complex and minute levels of integration with one another and our environments. The complexity and nuance of these relations led Peirce, James, and Dewey to novel philosophies of mind that recognize a very important role for those elements in experience that cannot be fully explicated through discursive communication, but nevertheless exert considerable influence over our actions. There are elements within our vital experience that resist our conceptions.

THE NAMELESSNESS OF RADICAL EMPIRICISM

Anti-foundationalism and a respect for the importance of habit joined Peirce, James, and Dewey in a common approach to philosophy's role in the world. It should be acknowledged that, although we generally refer to them as pragmatists, "pragmatism" refuses to be unified under any singular maxim, and the word is an imperfect descriptor for any of their views. The tradition shares a preference for naturalistic metaphors and a commitment defending the integrity of experience as continuous. In light of these positions, the philosophy of mind that has developed in classical American pragmatism is one that stubbornly resists mechanization, refuses abstractions where they do not serve experience, and repudiates reductions. The tradition devotes itself instead to the twin goals of (1) producing faithful accounts of the nature of experience, and (2) recognizing meaningful action as the genuine goal of inquiry rather than permanent, insoluble confirmation of theory.

There is a strong resistance among the so-called pragmatists against characterizing experience in terms of atomized "objects" or "sensations." They do not reduce experience to algorithmic logic that governs a mechanized response, nor do they understand it as a spectatorship that takes an ever-expanding stock of the universe. Instead, experience is a "*fighter for ends*, of which many, but for its presence, would not be ends at all."[25] The cognitive powers of the mind are subservient to these ends, which include not only the instinct of the organism to survive, but also the ends it creates out of its own lived reality to deepen its experience, and to personalize its relationship with the world. It takes a considerable imagination to fight our self-undermining habit of thinking of the world as a host of mute objects and awaiting our discovery. The recognition that, at every moment, the world is being actively created and altered in the dynamic relationship between mind and world is accompanied by a dizzying sense of Heraclitean instability, but this is central to James's point. Reality assumes a shape for us through mobile and evolving patterns of selection. The objects we encounter are not independent of our need and desire for them; they are formed in and through our attempts to better create ends and to better achieve them. Our pursuit of those ends inevitably alters the shape of the world, which alters us right along with it.

If philosophy and psychology both tend to atomize the world into objects and ideas, this too is a mental habit that has coalesced over the course of our collaborations that have sedimented into tradition. The atomization of the world becomes fallacious, but it exists as a habit because it has undeniably served our purposes. It *is* easier to communicate isolated *products* of reflection rather than attempt to convey the *process* as a whole. As a result, we often analyze our experience into separate parts and then present these concepts and objects as preexistent, rather than account for the process that created them. The shorthand signifies where we have satisfied our needs in the past in the likely event that we have similar needs in the future. The propensity of consciousness to clarify and reflect upon experience, to translate it into communicable and distinct objects and concepts, is an important capacity. However, our tendency to atomize reality in this way has frustrated our attempts to understand the nature of our experience. James finds that it is a particular fallacy of psychology to assume that this capacity is the whole of the human mind. When philosophers try to define and describe consciousness, they often then fall into reporting the most obvious and reassuring feature—its ability to have clear content. As James puts it: "The *great* snare of the psychologist is the *confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact* about which he is making his report . . . We must avoid substituting what we know the consciousness *is* for what it is a consciousness *of*."[26] If we are going to approach consciousness honestly, we will have to soften our attachment to the focal center for the sake of seeing the contributions of the fringe.

The idea for which James is generally remembered is his characterization of consciousness as a stream. Although for twentieth-century writers this insight opened the door to the aleatoric properties of the mind, it also binds experience together as cohesive and thoroughly related. James thinks that it is senseless to present the mind as an unrelated sequence of concepts, names, and objects; the mind is best understood through the experience of consciousness, which is above all continuous, bound as it is by living interests and narrative flow. The procession between objects and thoughts includes the often-neglected shades and transitions. In James's physiological study of the brain and his hypothesis of the effects of habit, he asserts that the plasticity of the brain is such that it is being continuously modified by experience, and in turn, no perception can be repeated in the flow and no two identical sensations can occur. For a subject to have an identical sensation—that is, for there to be an absolute correspondence between the cognition indicated and the perception as had—"it would have to occur *in an unmodified brain*. But as this, strictly speaking, is a physiological impossibility, so is an unmodified feeling an impossibility."[27] Our capacity to experience any sensation grows and alters along with a kind of labile fluidity. There are no permanently existing sensations; thus there are no permanently existing ideas. The positing of any object or any concept requires an abstraction from the immediate experience of consciousness. This means that for James, in an honest psychology, the flow of experience takes primacy to any nameable concept. To reify an idea or an object is to abstract it from the "stream of thought," from the context of the experience in which it is initially encountered.

James's *Psychology* presents an extraordinarily dynamic conception of mind, and like any natural river, there will be changes to its velocity. Although the mind is undergoing constant change, we may still rest and contemplate selected objects of our thought "in a comparatively restful way" and we may contemplate these "sensorial imaginations" for "an indefinite amount of time."[28] I can regard a chair, or a glass of water, or a single leaf for long enough to draw it with circumspect attention to its details and contours. I may tune a difficult string to a perfect A440hz by holding the pitch in my mind once the tuning fork is struck. It is possible to abstract sensations and to do things with them, but thought requires making connections between sensorial imaginations about the relations between them. To help understand this feature of mind, James provides the "flights" and "perchings" of birds as an additional analogy to characterize the ineffable portions of consciousness. In between the ideas that provide us with the "perches" are the "flights" of relations. Relations will not submit to concretization, but are rather *felt* as they comprise the connective tissue of thought. This is how James's version of empiricism is truly radical: while a naive empiricism recognizes only the consolidated and easily communicated "perchings," James recognizes the relational "flights" as an indispensable contribution to the stream of consciousness.

Since James theorizes that relations are within the felt dimension of experience, he can bind experience in a continuous stream, an energetic accompaniment of every moment. Relations are most truly experienced in their *felt* reality, as the flight to the next thought. "If there be such things as feelings at all, *then so surely as relations between objects exist in rerum natura, so surely, and more surely, do feelings exist to which these relations are known.*"[29] James thinks that there are feelings of *and*, *if,* and *but,* and that our logical connectives are symbolic of these directly felt connections. The symbolic renderings of felt relations as logical connectives may be a gross abstraction from the experience of a rush as the mind feels its way to modifying a thought, but at its core, it marks the sense of the transition from one idea to another. Of course, there are feelings we do not symbolize; it is not *only* logical connectives that we feel. In James's view, relations are infinite, and come in shades of strength and nuance.[30] The most important thing to note here is that, for James, meaningful thought exceeds language, and that in James's psychology, the felt dimension is an indispensable component for even the most abstract thoughts.

Although James is unwilling to refer to an unconscious mind, he also does not restrict the mind to the focal elements of consciousness. James argues that our thought is fringed with an atmosphere that does not correspond to a definite object. The stream is accompanied by a "suffusion" or "psychic overtones" of feeling that allow consciousness to be "dimly aware" of relations and objects in the current of thought.[31] It is toward this fringe and these suffusions that consciousness takes its direction. The overtones of the felt experience of consciousness come as anticipation, or the grasping after the conclusion of a sentence or an argument or a next action, and it is this overtone upon which we depend to grasp the meaning of a word.[32] Thus, the words corresponding to objects and the grammar that governs their use are not sufficient all by themselves to account for meaning. The "fringe" allows one thought to lead to another, but because the "psychic overtones" are subtly shaded, some of our experience remains lost, or at least obscured by namelessness. This is no trouble for James, in whose philosophy namelessness is not only compatible with existence, but essential to the responsible practice of psychology: "It is, in short, the reinstatement of the vague to its proper place in our mental life which I am so anxious to press on the attention."[33] Our ideas, the objects of our notice and attention, are always going to be modified by a fringe that escapes our explicit grasp. That is, our conscious thought is modified by something that cannot be brought into focus. That consciousness shades off into subtleties and vagueness is essential to its associative functioning. The "fringe" is an embryonic, creative space where the world and the mind negotiate with one another to form a navigable reality.

Radical empiricism does not only acknowledge a role for inarticulate feeling, it senses that the fringe presents a horizon of possibilities, and it willingly sacrifices apodicticity. James's faithfulness to psychology draws his philosophy along into experiences that are necessarily ineffable and unclear. James believes those things I can *hold still* in my consciousness as explicitly stated, reflected upon, and defined are always affected by and dependent upon that which is beyond my awareness. James accepts the paradox that the interest that impels my attention and scrutiny will not be subjected to its own metrics for clarity. Thought requires unclarity, and the way that one stands in relation to the object will comprise a portion of the uncertain horizon. "Relation then, to our topic of interest is constantly felt in the fringe," he writes, "and particularly the relation of harmony and discord, of furtherance or hindrance of the topic."[34] The growth of thought happens in the shifting, ungraspable relations, and interest resides in the "fringe" of consciousness.

Dewey published his first book, *Psychology*, in 1887. It was an attempt to follow his Hegelian teacher, George Sylvester Morris, in articulating "the psychological standpoint." The book was an effort to merge idealist metaphysics with a physiological psychology to present a "science of the self." By this point, he had studied psychology with Stanley Hall, the eminent student of William James, but he had not read James's *Principles* for himself. James and Hall were unimpressed with the book as an addition to the emerging field of psychology, but not the central aim he inherited from his teachers, to unite the scientific empiricism of the Darwinian naturalists with an idealist, even transcendental view of the relation between the knower and the cosmos. When he did finally read James the following year, it had an irrevocable effect on his thought. He revised his own *Psychology*, and substituted his idealism with Jamesian radical empiricism.

The "fringe," the "psychic overtone," and the "halo" that consciousness tends toward all provide the flights of relations and associations such that thought can be dynamic and mobile. This is the conception of mind that provided Dewey with the necessary model to develop his concept of "experience." In Dewey, the "fringe" turns into the qualitative dimension that delimits the bounds of thought and discourse. However, while the "fringe" is the indistinct horizon toward which consciousness tends for James, Dewey drops the word "consciousness," in his general descriptions of the mind. Instead, he reserves the word "consciousness" to specifically indicate *only that phase of the system of meanings which, at a given time, is undergoing redirection and transformation*. In other words, only the focal center, the point to be verified or revised, is the concern of consciousness. Much like the Freudian conception, by far the largest portion of the mind is devoted to the background, contextual system of unconscious meanings.

Dewey's conception of "mind" bears a strong resemblance to that of James because it occurs within a field that shades off between the immediately relevant and focal, to the tacit present and pervasive feelings that guide, and the long-dormant that may or may not become matters of inquiry or interest once more. Given that Dewey's notion of experience includes more than consciousness, and that he does use the word "unconscious," what room can be made in Dewey's thought for unconscious experience? If the philosophical development of the American notion of mind can be traced from the work of Peirce and James until it is given its eloquent moments in Dewey, what kind of mind is this, and what sort of unconscious?

THE INFLUENCE OF THE TACIT

Dewey did not generally identify himself as pragmatist as such.[35] He would eventually refer to his theory of knowledge as "instrumentalism," while simultaneously rejecting epistemology because of its tendency to make minds individual, self-enclosed, and shut off from the world;[36] he held that the problem of truth and knowledge in actual human conduct affects us primarily on a social level. Like James, he holds truth to be a function of its value in our practical action. For a conception to be true, it must be usefully applied to human ends, to further our goals in the world. Dewey adds that insofar as we are social creatures, we have the responsibility to be truth-tellers, and when we are inquirers, we may look for propositions that serve as instruments to aid us in achieving our end. When the pragmatic theory of truth makes its way to Dewey, it is reformulated to emphasize these aims and ends: "The meaning of propositions is not exhausted, or even contained, in their reference to what is past; that, on the contrary, the point of a proposition is to take something past, something done, *in its bearings upon the future consequences which making the proposition helps us reach.*"[37] When we are at our best, we will have a self-corrective process of continuous inquiry. Rather than gathering propositions that accurately describe the world, propositions can be more meaningfully thought of as having productive instrumentality for an active organism within a dynamic environment. The coursing reciprocity between the organism and its environment always reaches for a better integration through which it can accommodate changes and heal ruptures as they occur.

Dewey shares with Peirce and James a commitment to faithfully describe the character of experience as it is lived through. Pragmatism's commitment to the process of inquiry and the internally related system of habits is developed within Dewey's work as creative responsiveness. His theory of mind is complex, but should never be thought of as describing individual brains, and though consciously directed inquiry is a significant part of human experience, like James's treatment of "consciousness" before him, he stresses the importance of the vague, and of tacit, within his concept of experience.

In the first version of the first chapter of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey writes:

> Experience is something quite other than "consciousness," that is, that which appears qualitatively and focally at a particular moment. The common man does not need to be told that ignorance is one of the chief features of experience; so are habits skilled and certain in operation so that we abandon ourselves to them without consciousness. Yet ignorance, habit, fatal implication in the remote, are just the things which professed empiricism, with its reduction of experience to states of consciousness, denies to experience. It is important for a theory of experience to know that under certain circumstances men prize the distinct and clearly evident. But it is no more important than it is to know that under other circumstances, twilight, the vague, the dark and mysterious flourish . . . what is not explicitly present makes up a vastly greater part of experience than does the conscious field to which thinkers have so devoted themselves.[38]

Dewey's notion of experience is arguably the most troubling and elusive idea within his philosophy. This is in no small part because the concept does quite a lot of metaphysical work in Dewey's oeuvre. It is shorthand for all forms of human inhabitation: all of the ways we may inhabit our environments, ranging from the institutional to the improvisational. Though it is natural and human to inquire after our problems, and these represent creative responses to the world, the range of adjustments that occur beyond or below consciousness are no less creative and deserve to be called "experience" as well.

Dewey recognizes, with James, that there is a realm of experience that does not make it above our level of explicit awareness, existing only as feeling qualities "and yet have an enormous directive effect on our behavior."[39] Dewey was strongly influenced by James's handling of consciousness in the *Principles*, but he makes an important distinction between consciousness and *mind*. James treats consciousness as coextensive with experience, but Dewey carefully distinguishes between them. Experience is coextensive with all human modes of engaging the world, while "consciousness" is only a small part of "mind."

> Mind is contextual and persistent; consciousness is focal and transitive. Mind is, so to speak, structural, substantial; a constant background and foreground; perceptive consciousness is a process, a series of heres and nows. Mind is a constant lumosity; consciousness intermittent, a series of flashes of varying intensities. Consciousness is, as it were, the occasional interception of messages continually transmitted, as a mechanical receiving device selects a few of the vibrations with which the air is filled and renders them audible.[40]

The rest of mind, for Dewey, is dominated by a background that registers as qualitative, and he says the world in which we immediately live is preeminently a qualitative world.[41] Dewey has argued that the qualitative dimension determines the silent context for all of our propositions. Qualities are not added to objects as "properties" via relations that can be determined, but rather, an entity or a situation is permeated by a quality by which we recognize them as coherently related throughout. The former, Lockean idea of quality allows us to take the world as piecemeal objects externally related; the latter holds that the world in immediate experience is already internally related—as are the organic interactions within an environment. As he explains in his 1930 essay, "Qualitative Thought," a subject is first experienced as a qualitative whole, and then it is analyzed in terms of its particulars. What we encounter, in an ineffable register, when we encounter quality is the "situation." I will briefly define the concept here, but there will be a much more extensive treatment in chapter 6.

The subject matter that one references in any proposition "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."[42] Any object we can reference within the situational frame has a meaning and a function only in connection with the quality that defines the situational whole. Moreover, "the situation as such is not and cannot be stated or made explicit," and yet, "It forms the universe of discourse of whatever is expressly stated."[43] It is quality that determines the horizons of what can possibly be made known, and much like James's fringe toward which intentionality is always aimed, it remains beyond the reach of consciousness. But "pervasive quality" is a less remote version of James's "conscious fringe." The pervasiveness is more than a mental relation to a new thought, it is also the active development of the immediate present. Dewey writes that we can designate the pervasive quality in psychological language by noting that it is *felt* rather than thought, but to term the quality "a feeling" would be to hypostatize it, whereas the pervasive quality actually "defines the meaning of feeling."[44]

Thus, for Dewey, there is an unacknowledged and noncognitive dimension that grounds all thought. Rather than subsisting mutely alongside explicit, discursive consciousness, the permeating quality guides its potential determinations. It is unsayable, and yet it is not silent. The ineffable realm is not *merely* ineffable for Dewey; it is a *dynamic* ineffable that draws the mind in some particular direction, or aids in the unfolding of awareness. Because quality is energetic and guides the direction of interest, it has something significant in common with the dynamic unconscious that Freud expresses as the seat of drives. However, the beauty of this mute horizon that makes up the greater part of mind is that, unlike psychoanalytic conceptions, it does not necessarily resist us. The boundary between what can make it into conscious awareness and what cannot is not formed through repression. The unsayable is not *necessarily* base; it is merely singular and brute. When the mind is working well, we progress toward it rather than masking or fleeing from its influence.

The aim of the mind as it reaches into the qualitative is not always clear and distinct. Emotion and sensuality, though lacking in precision, are real manifestations of our natural interactions with our environment and just as pertinent to the developing situation as are the clarified objects of intellectual inquiry, and just as rich a ground for philosophical reflection.[45] The registers of experience that color and shade the mind are shareable and contribute to the meaning of things. Even if they elude focal consciousness, they are culturally salient: "There is a contextual field between [the ideas of the moment] and those meanings which determine the habitual direction of our conscious thoughts and supply the organs for their formation." The unconscious is home to what Dewey calls a "larger system of meanings" that "suffuses, interpenetrates, colors what is distinct now here and uppermost; it gives them sense, feeling, as distinct from signification."[46] Since there is a system that draws interest and therefore manifests in thought and action, it is owed the care it is due. We attend to it by attending to the aesthetic dimension. This is where the unconscious register becomes shareable.

UNCONSCIOUS "MEANING" IN ANALYSIS AND ART

In *Art as Experience* and in the penultimate chapter of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey holds up aesthetic experience as the highest mode of human experience. In fact, the aesthetic is an innate possibility of optimality for every experience. Dewey's privileging of the aesthetic phase is, in no small part, because of how it demonstrates the way in which pervasive quality functions in experience to select and unify elements of the environment into significance that is also the signal of the integration of the human being with its environment. “Art is the living and concrete proof,” writes Dewey, at the opening of his book on aesthetics, “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.”[47] Art communicates ideas that are available to consciousness, but simultaneously acknowledges and depends upon a porous boundary between the creature and its environment in the process of its creation, and is the evidence of a lived openness between consciousness and the unconscious. An aesthetic experience is *an* experience that is carried toward a consummation that restores equilibrium and reconciles previously disorganized experience into coherence. The temporary cohesiveness of mood and object, of organism and environment, requires a cultivated sensitivity for the qualitative immediate. Aesthetic experience, in other words, requires active and intentional collaboration with the unconscious.

Thus far this recovery of the latent theory unconscious in James and Dewey has mainly aimed to demonstrate that the field of consciousness is much narrower than the field of experience, and that unconscious experience has a place in the constitution of meaning. Something we have left aside until now is how the Deweyan unconscious is structured in terms of its temporality. Dewey is clear on this point: aesthetic experience is “funded” with the meaning that has come to us from past experience.

> Each of us assimilates into himself something of the values and meanings contained in past experiences. But we do so in different degrees and at differing levels of selfhood. Some things sink deep, others stay on the surface and are easily displaced. The old poets traditionally invoked the muse of Memory as something wholly outside themselves—outside their present conscious selves. The invocation is a tribute to the power of what is most deep-lying and therefore furthest below the level of consciousness, in determination of the present self and what it has to say. It is not true that we “forget” or drop into unconsciousness only alien and disagreeable things. It is even more true that the things which we have most completely made a part of ourselves, that we have assimilated to compose our personality and not merely retained as incidents, cease to have a separate conscious existence.[48]

As Dewey does not theorize a repressive barrier between us and the unconscious, he also does not think our unconscious drives are manifest through negation, through a rejection of what it is we *really* want. The principle of continuity, the notion that the whole domain of experience and reality does not contain any atomistic or discontinuous elements, continues to hold for his theory of the mind. However, the Deweyan conception does make room for the possibility that past experiences, those that are not available to us in focal consciousness, may continue to exert an influence over thought and action. There is a subterranean history, and a prehistory, at work: he allows room for the influence of early sensual experiences and cultural patterns. The psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious hold that the experiences that we have in early childhood bear greatly on our subsequent development; frightful experiences in the past may jolt us when we suffer similar encounters later, and the kinds of attachments we form as children reinforce habits of attachment we repeat as adults. There is no repressive barrier for Dewey, but when we are very young or when we are otherwise distracted, confused, or distraught, we are prevented from bringing our full experiences into coherent order. Aesthetic experience, however, is marked by its lack of distraction, and is funded with meanings accrued in the past. Aesthetic experience is powered with the felt immediacy that has taken root in the unconscious and becomes available as it informs present activity.

From the passage above, it is clear that Dewey's theory of mind does demonstrably include a kind of unconscious that may be most fully active in aesthetic experience. Aesthetic consummations are reaped from well-nourished experience that has not only breadth, but also depth. "The scope of a work of art is measured by the number and variety of elements coming from past experiences that are organically absorbed into the perception here and now. They give it its body and suggestiveness."[49] The qualitative may be irretrievable to consciousness as it slips mutely into the past, but as the most proper domain of the qualitative, the aesthetic recovers these as it directs the attention within present experience.

Compare this notion of aesthetic recovery with Freud's dynamic model of the unconscious and its proposal of drives, psychical energies, that motivate human action but remain hidden from consciousness behind the repressive barrier. These strong and active psychical forces are organic, exert internal pressure, and correspond to either the demand for erotogenic satisfaction or the absolute reduction of tension—the death drive.[50] The original aims of the drives in the unconscious are crude, incommensurate with civilized life, and require either binding to a symbol or a process of sublimation. The unconscious, as it is theorized by psychoanalysis, is not an inborn property of the mind, it is *created* by this process of repression.[51] The incommensurability of infantile desires with the reality principle gives rise to the split between primary (unconscious, drive related) and secondary processes (desires filtered for consciousness, redirected drives): Since libidinal energy from the primary process must undergo revision and filtering by the preconscious before it can be borne as actionable content by the ego, the only way for a subject to understand the contents of the psychoanalytic unconscious is to undergo the process of analysis, to speak to an analyst who has been trained to recognize revisions in the analysand's speech. Dewey's conception of the unconscious must be understood as standing firmly *against* this notion. The contents of the Deweyan unconscious may be permanently on the fringes of awareness, to a degree they are always inexplicable for discursive thought, but they are not entirely irrecoverable. They can be accessed, communicated, and shared in successful works of art.

Still, prior experience may not resolve into actionable, shareable meaning until it has "matured and ripened." For James, and for Dewey, each experience alters the organism and its relationship to the environment, but these changes may not be perceptible until they are "stirred into action." The inspiration for works of art often "do not seem to come from the self, because they issue from a self not consciously known."[52] Aesthetic experience works directly with meanings acquired in previous moments that have not found an office yet in communicative life because they had not yet been needed. The most successful works of art call upon these levels of selfhood, "below the level of intention," and come together until "something is born almost in spite of conscious personality, and certainly not because of its deliberate will."[53] The work produced in the aesthetic mode will be meaningful in the sense that these contents, stored in the vital life of the organism from previous experiences, will be immanent in immediate experience.

While an experience of inquiry keeps us in the focal center of conscious awareness, and demands that we "know" what is happening rather than "have" our experience, aesthetic experience demands that we allow ourselves to be guided by interests that are noncognitive in nature. Aesthetic experience may resemble the process of psychoanalysis, where the goal is a more open and porous attitude, and the boundaries between the conscious phase of the mind and the tacit, visceral, and historical are blurred. This is not to say that in aesthetic experience the entirety of the unconscious becomes available to consciousness. No experience is wholly available to consciousness at any moment—this would hardly be desirable. In "Qualitative Thought" Dewey writes "quality immediately exists, or is brutely there. In this capacity, it forms that to which all objects of thought refer, although, as we have noticed, it is never part of the manifest subject matter of thought."[54] The quality in one can be referenced as an element in another situation that is dominated by a different permeating quality, but the unconscious qualitative still buzzes and blooms on the fringe and pulls our interest along.

Art speaks the language of quality, and therefore it also speaks the language of long-submerged memory. Despite the difficulty of an ever-elusive pull by an unknown horizon, the artist is able to generate work via the unconscious: "Aspects and states of [the artist's] prior experience of varied subject matters have been wrought into his being; they are the organs with which he perceives." Dewey's notion of the organism, taken from James's articulated continuity in the *Principles*, holds that each perception is a result of past interactions that provide experience with a direction and a significance. “Memories, not necessarily conscious, but retentions that have been organically incorporated in the very structure of the self, feed present observation.”[55] The preeminence of aesthetic experience is that the organic history is felt as welling up to the present with significance. While the pervasive quality of the present experience remains in the background, and the retentions that fund a consummation are an implicit piece of the rich experience, they are available for reflection when embodied in a sensuous object that allows itself to be contemplated, shared, and revisited. The past experiences that are woven into an expressive object are not consciously manipulated, but are there by “direct charge.” The unconscious is formed of quality and of past experience, but it is loaded in the present.

Dewey’s aim in positing an unconscious dimension to the mind was not for the purposes of diagnosing the pathological neuroses that manifest in symptoms. The lesson for philosophers, therefore, is not that we must fear influences from an alien part of the psyche, but that by focusing too narrowly on the discursive symbols we see nature merely in terms of its answers to our questions and we neglect the ways in which experience is deepened into consummate meaning. Insofar as the qualitative is immediate, both past and present, and consistently influences the scope and direction of thought, we are better served by theories of mind that recognize and value the extent to which conscious/discursive meaning is dependent on unconscious/qualitative meaning, and the extent to which both of these are necessary for human beings to be coherent and adaptive selves. Within Dewey’s philosophy, aesthetic experience provides us with the best opportunities to cultivate our sensitivity to the unconscious portions of experience, and to reveal the delicate relationships that facilitate ecological growth. Both psychoanalysis and Dewey’s philosophy of experience encourage us to develop methods for receptiveness to immediate feeling and to long-dormant memories with the aim of arriving at more thoroughly unified experiences. If we accept the Deweyan view of the unconscious, art becomes our mode for diagnosing the dispositions of mind and can serve like analysis does: art is an end in itself, but also becomes tool for critical reflection and a method for healing and discovery. The question that remains is what we are to do with a view that recognizes the unconscious without a formidable repressive barrier. Can the American view of the mind present as strong of a hermeneutic for diagnosing American culture as psychoanalysis has for European consciousness? If American thought comes to recognize an unconscious, what are the possible consequences for culture beyond the world of scholarship?

NOTES

1. Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life of Our Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 56.1.

2. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XIV, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 118.

3. Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XIX, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 23–25.

4. Mark Solms, "The Conscious Id," *Neuropsychoanalysis* 13, no. 1, 2015, 7.

5. John Dewey, MW 27: 61–62. Dewey also objects to the treatment of women by the field of psychoanalysis, finding them reduced to a reductive universality along with sex, 106.

6. For more on this, see the special issue of the *European Journal of American Philosophy and Pragmatism*, "Symposia. Language or Experience," ed. David Hildebrand, vol. 6, no. 2, 2014.

7. Techniques derived from operant conditioning were being tried out in the 1930s on chronic bedwetters in children's homes in the mid-1930s, but the bedwetting alarms that began as scientific experiments became products, designed and sold by Sears & Roebuck in the 1950s. Deborah Blyth Dorashaw, "An Alarming Solution: Bedwetting, Medicine, and Behavioral Conditioning in Mid-twentieth-century America," *Isis* 101, no. 2, 2011. In Watson's formulation, mothers were advised to care for their infants with as little emotionality as possible, infants were not to be coddled to prepare them for "jobs in commercial and professional life." The avowed idea was that affection and emotional care were not consistent with the capitalist needs for stable, reliable workers. John Watson, *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1928), 22.

8. Freud, "The Ego and the Id," in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XIX, 13.

9. It is worth mentioning that Wilhem Wundt is often cited as the father of experimental psychology. Wundt opened his Laboratory for Experimental Psychology at the University of Leipzig in 1879, two years after Peirce conducted and published the first psychological experiments in the United States on vision and color. James opened his own demonstration laboratory for experimental psychology at Harvard four years prior to Wundt's, but it was never used for original research. Thus, the real "father of experimental psychology" remains in dispute.

10. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1890), 196.

11. Ibid., 163.

12. Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 3, eds. Charles Harsthorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931–1958).

13. In an early formulation, the pragmatic maxim is: "Consider what effects that might *conceivably* have practical bearings you *conceive* the objects of your *conception* to have. Then, your *conception* of those effects is the whole of your *conception* of the object." C. S. Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 256. A later formulation reads: "Pragmatism is the principle that every theoretical judgment expressible in a sentence

in the indicative mood is a confused form of thought whose only meaning, if it has any, lies in its tendency to enforce a corresponding practical maxim expressible as a conditional sentence having its apodosis in the imperative mood." *The Collected Papers*, vol. 5, 14.1.

14. C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. 6, 6.61.

15. C. S. Peirce, *Essential Peirce*, vol. 1, eds. Nathan Houser and Christian J. W. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 148.

16. Vincent Colapietro, "Notes for a Sketch of a Peircean Theory of the Unconscious," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 31, no. 3, Summer 1995.

17. C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 7.367.

18. Colapietro, "Notes for a Sketch of a Peircean Theory of the Unconscious," 486.

19. Ibid., quoting C. S. Peirce, *Collected Works* 7.456.

20. Ibid., quoting C. S. Peirce, *Collected Works* 1.631.

21. Ibid., 491, quoting C. S. Peirce, *Collected Works* 7.547.

22. William James, "Lecture VI—Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," in *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York: Longman and Green and Co., 1907), 93–94.

23. This is Hume's argument that genuine knowledge could be built piecemeal from objects directly experienced, or reasoned abstractly from relations between ideas.

24. James's "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth."

25. A lengthier quotation demonstrates the extent to which James thought that consciousness could not be characterized by its capacity to recognize and organize facts about the world, but rather to discover facts that are material to its own existence: "In a word, survival can enter into a purely physiological discussion only as an *hypothesis made by an onlooker* about the future. But the moment you bring a consciousness into the midst, survival ceases to be a mere hypothesis. No longer is it, '*if* survival is to occur, then so and so must brain and other organs work.' It has now become an imperative decree: 'Survival *shall* occur, and therefore organs *must* work' *Real* ends appear for the first time now upon the world's stage. The conception of consciousness as a purely cognitive form of being, which is the pet way of regarding it in many idealistic-modern as well as ancient schools, is thoroughly anti-psychological, as the remainder of this book will show. Every actually existing consciousness seems to itself at any rate to be a *fighter for ends*, of which many, but for its presence, would not be ends at all. It's powers of cognition are mainly subservient to these ends, discerning which facts further them and which do not." James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1, 141.

26. Ibid., 197.

27. Ibid., 232. "To these indirect presumptions that our sensations, following the mutations of our capacity for feeling, are always undergoing an essential change, must be added another presumption, based on what must happen in the brain. Every sensation corresponds to some cerebral action. For an identical sensation to recur, it would have to recur the second time in an *unmodified brain.* But as this, strictly speaking, is a physiological impossibility, so is an unmodified feeling an impossibility; for every brain-modification, however small, must correspond to a change of equal amount in the feeling which the brain subserves."

28. Ibid., 243.
29. Ibid., 245.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 258.
32. Ibid., 264.
33. Ibid., 254.
34. Ibid., 259.
35. Dewey to Corliss Lamont, September 6, 1940, cited in Corliss Lamont, "New Light on Dewey's *Common Faith*," *The Journal of Philosophy* 58, no. 1, 1961, 26.
36. "The discipline termed Epistemology assumes, rightly or wrongly, a self-enclosed island of mind on one side, individual and private; over against this is set a world of objects which are physically of cosmically there—and only there. Then it is naturally worried about how the mind can get out of itself to know a world beyond, or how the world out there can creep into 'consciousness.' But to common sense, the mind of the individual means those attitudes of observance—or acknowledgement—and of reaching conclusions which have an effect, through intercourse, upon common practice and welfare. And objects mean only the materials, the tools and obstacles, which are familiar in this practice." John Dewey, "The Problem of Truth" (1911) as it appears in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 2, eds. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 104.
37. Ibid., 115.
38. Ibid., 369.
39. John Dewey, LW 1: 227.
40. Ibid., 230.
41. John Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, 195.
42. Ibid., 197.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 198.
45. See LW 1: 27. "Reverie and desire are pertinent for a philosophic theory of the true nature of things; the possibilities present in imagination are something to be taken into account."
46. Ibid., 231.
47. LW 10: 26.
48. Ibid., 76–78.
49. Ibid., 127.
50. The best overview of Freud's drive theory for a comparison to Dewey's organic theory of mind can be found in Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XXI, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 64–149.
51. Sigmund Freud, "The Conscious and the Unconscious," in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XIX, 15.
52. Ibid., 68.
53. Ibid., 76.
54. Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, 201.
55. Ibid., 96.

Chapter 3

The Feel of the Flesh, the Emergence of Mind

Although the twentieth century is teeming with refutations of Descartes, even beyond the anti-foundationalism of the pragmatists, the Cartesian *cogito* has, for the most part, enjoyed a dominance within the philosophical and popular imagination. It has been a convenient theory for Western thought: at the very least, mind-body dualism facilitates modern science. If the mind is theorized as disembodied, it is in a better position to achieve a solid epistemic grip as a disinterested observer of objects. But the notion of an immaterial mind has been passé for quite a while, having largely been replaced by more moderate dualisms that are more likely to play well with physicalism, which situates consciousness within the physical interactions of neuronal structures. For example, property dualism (the view that mental events have their cause in physical events, but retain separate "properties" and as such are ontologically distinct) and its offspring epiphenomenalism (the view that while subjective *qualia* exist as mental events, unlike physical events they are causally impotent) are popular contemporary theories. The retention of dualism on physicalist grounds is accompanied and sustained by a broader cultural tendency to be suspicious, if not outright derisive, of "raw feels." Americans have a cultural tendency to be stubbornly disconnected from their bodies. The residue of a puritanical disapproval of sexuality coexists paradoxically with the outlandish commercialization of sexuality, and serves quite well as an example of the kind of disconnection we suffer, but for the purposes of this chapter, the American preoccupation with technological advancements may be more instructive. Certainly, these are symptoms that flared during the atomic age. The American enthusiasm for automation during the mid-century has advanced into fantasies about the possibilities of commercial space travel, artificial intelligence, and the so-called technological singularity in which the dominant process of evolution shifts from the biophysical to the algorithmic.

That so many of our efforts attempt to eliminate the need for the body to contribute to experience is evidence of a cultural malady of the highest order.

If dreams of leaving the body and all its "feels" behind are as pathological as I believe them to be, the cure is to be found in rediscovery of the sensuous and aesthetic conception of mind that has been thrown over for a nightmare of a data-based reality. But in the American mind, before the atomic/space age obsession with economic and technological supremacy, there was a notion of intelligence that could not be handled separately from experience as directly embodied. The model of intelligence that comes from a Jamesean/Deweyan psychology has the advantage of both being synonymous with intelligent action and being consistent with the Darwinian theory of evolution. When Dewey took hard philosophical aim at our tendency to think in terms of dualisms, including the separation of the mind from the body, it was Darwin that he had in mind. Although Darwin's theory of evolution is often associated with a cynical materialism that would easily support a reductive or even an eliminative account of consciousness, this is a reading that is likely the continued effect of his most famous and polemical supporters, Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley, who used *The Origin of Species* as support for their conflict with the Church of England.[1] A very different side of Darwin's theory, a side that makes considerably more space for the intimate connection between the feels of the mind and the world, comes to us through Dewey's reading of Darwin. Dewey's philosophy emphasized that evolution, including cultural evolution, is possible only on the basis of organic continuity such that the inseparability of the mind and the body is equivalent to the inseparability of culture and nature. According to this theory, the degree to which action is intelligent corresponds to how inextricable that action is from its organic, originating context. The medium that enables and engenders that continuity, the glue of the world, is the qualitative dimension of experience. But, amid the kind of madness that beckons the technological rapture, "experience" has itself become a controversial concept.

Rorty famously balked at the Deweyan concept of "experience" for its metaphysical redolence. Instead, he advises that we talk about what it is possible to talk about, that is, we can discourse about discourse itself and acknowledge that "we should forget, for a moment, about that external world, and about the dubious interface between the self and the world called 'perceptual experience.'"[2] The consequence of this forgetting is a groundlessness that Rorty, Brandom, and the neopragmatists find to be consistent with pragmatism's anti-foundationalist roots: just let the qualitative context for all of our discursive activity be replaced with logical inference among propositions. All philosophy is contained, held aloft and discrete. Discourse, disconnected thus from the world, is left somewhere uselessly hovering beyond both the living creature and the environment in which it must somehow live. Some of the familiar features of Deweyan "pragmatism" remain after this revision, but to abandon the qualitative and its contribution to meaning is to abandon the possibility of organic continuity—and to abandon the body. This chapter will look at how meaning has often come to be associated primarily with disembodied, deracinated modes of communication, and the consequences this understanding has for our cultural and aesthetic vitality when the body is either ignored, or approached as an object. Our tendency is often to treat the body as static or mechanized, as an object of science rather than the constantly responsive site of interpretation and exchange. My intention is not merely to pursue an embodied consciousness, but to argue for the pragmatic value of an embodied *unconscious*. I suspect that the deracination of meaning in America is directly related to our reluctance to admit noncognitive, embodied contributions to our experience. If the last seventy years could be treated as an American adolescence, we might characterize this period as plagued by a kind of neurotic symptom. I propose we develop a Deweyan cure. The rehabilitation of an aesthetically attuned body draws us back into an organic world in which we are sensuously connected to experience.

Dewey's concept of the body is a counter to our common, mechanized, and masculinized presentations of the body. He provides us with an alternate aesthetic ontology that insists we relearn the body as an active collaborator in the processes of meaning. In this perspective, meaning must not be understood as an effect of semantic structure and cognitive processes. The features of discursivity are often key within an experience during the middle phase, and this is particularly true of inquiring experiences, but should any experience develop into its final phase and thus become a *meaningful* experience, meaning must be re-understood as consummatory and therefore including an ineffable *felt* component that is nevertheless shared, dynamic, and undergoing minute shifts in transaction with the environment. Because the necessary condition for meaningful, intelligent experience is qualitative, collaborations in this register cannot be fully cognitive, but nonetheless contribute to the "funding" (deepening in connections and remembered associations) of meanings that can be eventually felt, had, and shared in aesthetically charged communication.

THE QUALITATIVE GROUND

When Dewey says that the world we live in is a preeminently qualitative world,[3] what he means is that we primarily experience the world as affectively charged. We are allured, vexed, curious, repelled, charmed, or frightened by something even before we set about the business of defining the object, individual, or event as a *this* or a *that*. What exists for us, before definition, speculation, or action, is immediate and sensuous awareness of a situation and its inherent possibilities. Dewey's theory of quality is difficult to understand because when we speak of objects we tend to do so with unacknowledged Lockean assumptions, and so we speak of an object that *has* this or that quality in addition to being the thing that it is, for example, the pen that sits on the desk before me has the quality of being silver and solid in addition to its objecthood. The object is primarily its *substance*, the true nature of which is unknown to us but nevertheless supports *qualities*, which are available for perception.

Dewey is making a different claim. He is arguing that things come together—they are coherent and available to us—only insofar as they are pervaded by a single quality. We only subsequently make determinations about them or class them as *this* or *that* type of thing on the basis of our first, sensuous encounter. The qualitative dimension we encounter primarily is not replaced by our subsequent determinations, but persists throughout our engagement and guides the distinctions we will make. When taken seriously, this theory of quality has two major immediate advantages for our thought: The first is that we find we comprehend things better when we regard them as complex wholes rather than as composed of small, externally related pieces. The second is that our embodied, affective experience comes to have a new valence in our practical, social, and philosophical projects.

Insofar as the qualitative resists language, and is immediately and sensuously available, there is also a sense in which qualities guide experience *unconsciously*, or at least noncognitively, since the qualitative is not accompanied by either a word or a representation. It is precisely this feature that accounts for the controversy surrounding Dewey's theory of experience. American pragmatism has been united in its anti-foundationalism, that is, in the rejection of Descartes's claim that from a special cognitive state (radical doubt) it is possible to fashion an epistemology on irrefutable grounds. Peirce denied that anyone could sustain such a state, and even if an all-encompassing doubt *could* be experienced, it certainly couldn't lead to genuine inquiry. Doubts are specific, and are felt as the frustration of a habit or a disposition. These specific doubts lead us into inquiry so that we may correct a mistaken belief that no longer serves experience. It is possible to see Wilfrid Sellars refutation of the given as deepening Peirce's anti-foundationalism. He argued that knowledge, which is always propositional in nature, cannot be derived from non-propositional cognitive states. In short, it is not possible to link that which is linguistic to that which is nonlinguistic by definition. Thus, in the Sellarsian view, insofar as pragmatism is dedicated to anti-foundationalism, it is also dedicated to the view that when we philosophize, we must do so with reference only to the linguistic world. The interrelatedness of syntax and semantics serves as the guarantor that our propositions are meaningful.

The world is thus broken in two pieces: (1) that which can be symbolically rendered and (2) that which cannot.

It is true that Dewey's theory of quality constitutes a nonlinguistic component of experience. However, it is not clear that Dewey claims that the qualitative dimension is itself the originator for knowledge, at least as Sellars understands it, and it *is* clear that Dewey is unconcerned with the question of whether "knowledge" of facts is possible. The propositions that we interact with are not there for us to "know," they are there to take something done or tried in the past in terms of how it may or may not help us in a new situation, as we collaborate to pursue new ends. Propositions imply doubts, and also a search to determine their own applicability to a next state of affairs. Propositions are tools, and their value is determined not by how well they correspond to the universe of extant propositions, but by the degree to which they function in pursuit of shared ends.[4] The propositional tools themselves are based upon prior experiences, and although they originate from an experience of inquiry that emerges from a pervasive quality of doubt (a "unique doubtfulness" that begets each inquiry and controls the process of inquiry throughout),[5] the discursive reasoning that forms the explicit part of the inquiry is what is propositional, and it is that proposition that becomes true or false in experience. The qualitative itself is not made into a claim, it is simply where we find ourselves. It is also unclear that qualitative experience could be understood as a "cognitive" state. The pervasive quality becomes available for cognition only when the experience in question is emphatically an *aesthetic* experience. Therefore, pursuing the status of the nonlinguistic given *is* the key to understanding his theory of aesthetic experience and, in turn, we may need to accommodate an unconscious that operates at the point of contact between the flesh and the world to fully grasp the possibilities of Dewey's theory of mind.

To refer to an unconscious functioning of the mind amounts to a primary sin among many contemporary Anglo-American philosophical crowds, and is a risky thing to invoke in academic and nonacademic discourse alike, but it also points to an alternative horizon for American philosophy. More to the point, a reconsideration of experience that includes the unconscious supports a more humane and responsible intellectual culture and serves the interests of life beyond the world of philosophy. There is a concern that when philosophy courts the nondiscursive and direct, it moves beyond bounds, and in so doing addresses itself to a sphere in which it is not welcome and to which its methods are inadequate. But philosophy arises within a culture, both to (unintentionally) disclose that culture, and as an (intentional) reflective consideration of that culture and its problems. At present, a great deal of our contemporary lives involve highly mediated interactions. Our experiences are increasingly facilitated by devices that promise to clarify our communications, amplify our personal reach, and increase our efficiency. We have not cultivated a careful distinction between “connectivity,” meaning the power to have exchanges that are enabled by the highly refined products of an increasingly digital culture, and “connection,” the mode in which interactions are genuine exchanges in the sense that they are supported by a rich qualitative dimension. In disavowing the unconscious, qualitative portion of our lives, we have sacrificed our attention to a great portion of organic, immediate experience, for the sake of a carefully constructed reality that offers “connectivity” in the place of “connection.” The former has expanded the reach of commerce, technological advancement, and spectacle, but it has done so at the expense of the embodied and imaginative dimension that is the precondition for the aesthetic and ethical life.

THE AESTHETIC AND THE MECHANICAL BODY

It was not inevitable that in the past century we would see an explosion of increasingly disembodied practices in the name of convenience, efficiency, and accessibility, but it is hardly surprising. The prevailing view sees the living body as a complex system of insensible material, a sort of self-correcting chemical machine.[6] The cornerstone of Western medicine is its scientific objectivity, and the usefulness of medical science provides us with a strong argument for the value of its theory of the body. The price, however, is an ontological nihilism: to hold to the objectivity that medical science demands, we must see bodies as governed by knowable mechanical laws in which causes always precede and govern effects. This is one of the assumptions that lead to epiphenomenal views of consciousness in which our perceptions are dead ends, perhaps a glitch in an automated reality. At the most sophisticated levels of understanding within our current paradigm, the contribution of human agency is often doubtful in the wake of the hypothesis that our experience can be reduced to the effect of neurochemicals on synaptic connections, and lived experiences of the body lose ground to the authoritative voices of cognitive neuroscientists, geneticists, and biochemists. Scientific evidence can certainly be of use for philosophical inquiry, but when it is privileged in lieu of primary lived experience, the aesthetic body suffers, and meaning falters. When we fail to appreciate the contributions of the qualitative field, our experience is drained of richness and is less *convincing* to us. When I think of my body as a mere machine, I gain something like cosmopolitan cynicism, but I lose the porous reception of quality on which *my* experience is grounded; I lose the aesthetic body, the body that feels the nuances of its situation, the body that is in every moment finding new ways of making terms with its environment.

It is the role of a philosophical aesthetic to defend against the objectification of the body by protecting the sensuous, lived body as the primary reality. The obvious difficulty is that to the extent that we aim at a philosophy that issues from and reflects on the lived body, our target becomes increasingly ambiguous, shifty and fluid. One of the central virtues of pragmatism is its rehabilitation of ambiguity by identifying a philosophical presumption that treats reality as if it were something that is already known. When we take the results of a previous inquiry for a permanent truth and forget that, like all results, it emerged from a *unique* doubtfulness and may or may not be applicable to our present concerns, we cut ourselves off from the situation that is under way. We may be particularly prone to the temptation to treat the body in this way. When the body is *lived through* and the felt dimension is taken seriously, we are revealed to ourselves as uncertain, dependent, desiring beings. In attending to the affects of the body, we are powerfully exposed to shame, anxiety, pain, and frustration. However, if we distance ourselves from our bodies, treat the body as an impersonal and highly articulated object, we find that we have a powerful defensive measure against malicious influences—the shame from stigmatization, the assault of a physical attack or the memory of one, the pain of disease. However, defensive rationalizations are not useful in the long term. Since they sever us from our vital access to the world, insofar as we invest in them, we are also deprived of our only starting point for meaningful experience. Admittedly, it is also a risk to cultivate a space in which we are continuously arriving in a sensuous engagement with the environment. Thinking of our living bodies this way means that we must accept that there are subtle somatic changes that normally escape our awareness, but nevertheless influence the focal center of consciousness. To invite the body back into experience may feel, for the casual American dualist, like a diminishment of the intellect. But I hope that it ultimately serves as an invitation to a more compelling world. If Dewey's mature work represents the apogee of classical American philosophy, then one of his most important contributions was a subtle, embodied aesthetics. Hidden within the often-forgotten portions of the work of America's last true public philosopher is a call to keep a place open for the body—for my body, and yours, for bodies in their particular ecosystems, as events that are lived through in dynamic exchange with the surrounding environment.

A central aim in the Deweyan response to mind-body dualism is to replace the subject/object dyad with a process of reciprocal transaction. There are similarities with phenomenology here, and there are broad implications for ecological ethics, but the best way to understand experience as transaction is to take aesthetic experience as paradigmatic for all experience. In the service of our attempt to think through transaction as a dynamic process with a beginning, a middle, and an end, it is instructive to make a comparison with instinct or drive as the catalyst for any organic interaction. The inception of an experience is not occurring on the level of explicit consciousness, and the experience as of yet has no distinct terms—these will unfold over the course of the process. All subsequent determinations, and all egoic identifications or disidentifications, are first called into view and made possible by "impulsion." Dewey writes of embodied transaction in *Art as Experience*:

> Impulsions are the beginnings of complete experience because they proceed from need; from hunger and demand that belongs to the organism as a whole and that can be supplied only by instituting definite relations (active relations, interactions) with the environment. The epidermis is only in the most superficial way an indication of where an organism ends and its environment begins. There are things inside the body that are foreign to it, and there are things outside of it that belong to it *de jure*, if not *de facto*; that must, that is, be taken possession of if life is to continue. On the lower scale, air and food materials are such things; on the higher, tools, whether the pen of the writer or the anvil of the blacksmith, utensils and furnishings, property, friends and institutions—all the supports and sustenances without which a civilized life cannot be. The need is manifest in the urgent impulsions that demand completion through what the environment—and it alone—can supply, is a dynamic acknowledgement of this dependence of the self for wholeness upon its surroundings.[7]

This is a vision of the body, not as a thing, nor as the possession of a sovereign subject, but as a dynamic process that is connected with (however strongly or weakly) other processes in its environment. At this stage, what we call the "self" could be better approached as a locus of ongoing activity at various levels of intensity, an endless call and response between live creatures and the various changes in the surrounding environment. Over the course of this lived process, felt qualities ("hunger and demand") and patterns ("definite relations with the pen or institutions") emerge in and through exchanges with the environment, presenting us with coherent wholes, intrinsically related through a pervasive quality. In other words, when I recognize something as an individual in my environment, it is on the basis of its being held together by a quality that I have the capacity to experience it, directly and affectively, as a term within a context. That such a vision of a powerfully sensitive body should present in his theory of art and aesthetic experience, and that elsewhere Dewey says that a philosopher's aesthetic theory serves as the test of their ability to understand experience, points to the subtle levels of sublinguistic awareness that ground the watchword of classical American philosophy.[8]

In any aesthetic experience, not only those that involve formal art, the body becomes dynamic, porous, and social. Anything less is either haunted by that ghostly dualism that has plagued post-Cartesian thought, or otherwise collapses all relations into arbitrary proximities. As heir to the anti-foundationalism of James and Peirce, and as a philosopher in the wake of Darwin, Dewey was committed to conceiving a body that was dynamic enough to withstand the tempest of evolutionary theory. The lived body is not merely a set of behaviors, much less a collection of chemical systems. It is a site of adaptive adjustments. On his understanding of experience, the body is responsive to the brink of coalescence at the point of contact with the world, in which things that are “outside of it” belong to it “*de jure*” and sustain it through the completion of an impulse that arises within the body and “demand[s] completion” to maintain its wholeness. It is telling that Dewey introduces his aesthetics through a naturalist, organic description of life. It is this responsiveness of the body to what is *undergone* that ultimately allows for the transmission and translation of unconscious experience into the realm of human culture. The body is present and unified within experience to the extent that it is receptive to qualitative experience, and aesthetics is best served by a conception of a body that comes into full contact with the world.

If the test of a philosophic system is found in aesthetics rather than epistemology, we could also claim that the true test of the body’s health is not in the speed of its metabolism or the rate of the heart, but in the frequency and measure of its aesthetic experiences. The quality of an experience, the sense of things that gives an experience its character and trajectory, is first felt in the noncognitive layers that are prior to, or on the edges of, our intellectual grasp. However, we are not left without resources for intelligent engagement. The body is a field that registers constituents of meaning that are generally less available to explicit awareness. The sensuous dimension is continuously active, adjusting to the alterations in the environment, regulating and stabilizing in ways that can be, but are often not, brought to awareness. A receptive body registers moments of narrative and logical tension ensuring that all interaction is a multi-dimensional process, as it does when we listen to music, for example. Music is exceptionally paradigmatic because it both reveals and frustrates old notions of meaning that would restrict it to the symbolic dimension, theoretically accessible by disembodied consciousness. The actual experience of music demands that a listener allow visceral response without which given piece of music could not be experienced as musical. Restrictive theories of meaning (e.g., Robert Brandom’s inferentialism, Hilary Putnam’s semantic externalism) view meaning as the proper arrangement of symbols within a grammar. Thus, meaning is an effect of the interaction of terms governed by a context of rules. This approach works well with the cognitivist/behaviorist psychologies presented in the second chapter because interactions understood this way can be processed in the sense of being translated into something clear and distinct, can yield a truth value within the game or execute a command within a working system. They are testable, available to conscious understanding, and simple enough to assign or deny validity. If our primary concern is to be beings that *know* whether or not we are consistent with a system of thought, then a restrictive theory of meaning serves its purpose. However, they fail to hold up to our actual lived experience of the world. They are persistent because they represent a widespread cultural defense that has resulted from too sharp a cleavage between our conscious, egoic activity and the vital contributions of the qualitative unconscious.

BEYOND PRAGMATISM

Although, as we established in the previous chapter, pragmatist philosophers were interested in rejecting Cartesian epistemic doubt in the nineteenth century, philosophers beyond the world of pragmatism were working on refutations of Cartesian dualism in the twentieth century. In the Anglo-American world, the particular concern of philosophers was to produce tenable theories of the mind without reference to a supernatural, immaterial reality. Gilbert Ryle and Daniel Dennett provide us with rejections of Cartesian dualism that are particularly true to the character of the Anglo-American style that came to be known as analytic philosophy. Ryle's attack on Cartesian dualism provides us with the famous "ghost in the machine" description of our philosophical and psychological penchant for positing the addition of something called "mind" that is ontologically distinct from "body." He explains that this dualism is the result of a "category mistake," or in other words, it is a hiccup resulting from an imprecise linguistic habit that violates the logical principles that ensure semantic meaning—and Ryle thought that the entire work of philosophy consisted of correcting these semantic errors. In his view, what we call "the mind" is not a singular entity, but rather a collection of dispositions or tendencies exhibited by a person. Ryle argues that we tend to forget the fact that "mind" is a collective noun, as is "flock" or "fleet." When we invoke "mind," then, we are actually referring to a person's observable character or personality rather than a privileged "inner" realm of experience that remains their private province. Since we are capable of observing these actions and behaviors directly without the need to rely on firsthand reports, we preserve the empirical character of "mind" and thus our scientific access to its supposed secrets. In other words, there are no irreducibly private mental phenomena that cannot, in principle, be witnessed by an outside observer.[9]

Dewey would very likely agree to some extent with Ryle's characterization of the mind as a collection of tendencies. In fact, he uses the language of "disposition" and "tendency" in his description of "habits" as "readinesses to act" that "describe the shape of character."[10] Dewey would also agree with Ryle's rejection of the notion of an "inner" mind that is somehow separate and aloof from its surroundings, and would agree with Ryle's suggestion that taking highly theoretical abstractions as the starting point for inquiry is often a mistake and that we would do better to be wary of the unacknowledged presuppositions that come embedded in the results of a previous inquiry. However, that is where their agreement ends. Dewey sees distinct philosophical value in understanding things as complex wholes, and writes eloquently on behalf of individuals as agents and heirs of change. Although Dewey does not invoke supernatural principles in his explanation of mind, he maintains that there is a binding principle within experience that allows us to recognize entities as individual beings, albeit beings that are infinitely complex in their individuality. Dewey is thus able to invoke "mind" and "imagination" to refer to the embodied capacities of complex organic beings that are bound together in experience through a pervasive quality, which Ryle might be unintentionally indicating when he references "the shape of character." There is no character, no shape, unless the being before us is unified into a whole. Without reference to a binding agent, Ryle presents a reductionist solution to the mind/body problem, officially rejecting the disembodied ego for the sake of a naturalistic philosophy, but at the expense of a unified and coherent self.

Although Ryle's theory of mind is strongly redolent of behaviorism, and is thus considered passé in an era dominated by cognitivist philosophies of mind and cognitive psychologists alike, the essential thrust of his argument lives on in the work of his protege, Daniel Dennett. Dennett, perhaps the most ardent philosophical proponent of cognitivism, continues his doctoral advisor's attack on Cartesian dualism by denying the existence of a "Cartesian Theater." By this, he means our assumption that sensory data is integrated and projected in some central location for the purposes of a kind of master observer, an ego that makes decisions on the basis of its integrated mental experience. Dennett advises that we replace this imagined ego with what he calls the "multiple drafts model" of consciousness in which there are multiple editorial nexuses that interpret and track sensory input to produce "something rather like" a narrative stream.[11] Dennett denies that there is actually any such stream of consciousness, because at any point there are multiple streams undergoing editorial processes in the brain. Dennett has often been met with the criticism that he purports to "explain" consciousness when he is actually just "explaining away" consciousness.[12] Indeed, Dennett reduces all creativity, reflection, and insight to mechanical processes that are the "emergent" product of an unimaginably long process of evolutionary trial and error.[13] Dennett admits that in his view there is little role for the "self," and thus for the "artist" and for "genius," but he is quite comfortable sacrificing his own identity to aleatoric beauty. Dewey would have been sympathetic to much of Dennett's work here as well, particularly Dennett's commitment to Darwin's insight that the fantastically complex emerges over the course of natural changes—in which chance plays a considerable part. However, Dennett's refutation of Cartesianism from Darwinistic principles does not do as much as we, or as Dewey, might hope to actually repair the impact of dualisms in our intellectual prejudices, which is to say, we are not in a better position to interpret or make use of lived experience after we've read him. Dennett's interpretation of the *Origin of Species* reveals an ultimately mechanistic world that is in the main the result of linear causation, with some elements of randomness thrown in, and is doubtful about the extent to which the content of the mind plays a causal role in events, and therefore implicitly rejects *experience* as entering into the process of evolution. Thus, insofar as a physicalist like Dennett must also be a monist, it makes little difference whether we embrace body or mind as the ontological monad: and as we shall see, by denying the existence of "qualia," Dennett has eliminated both![14] In characterizing consciousness as a by-product of algorithmic arrangements that are essentially feedback processes, he turns the world into a closed system, neither physical nor virtual. Without reserving a contributing and "causal" place for the "content" of consciousness, and therefore our interpretation of the world around us, it is difficult to understand what pragmatically distinguishes Dennett's eliminative materialism from Spinozist rationalism, for example. Everything is an accident, *and*, *somehow* everything is causally determined. The manner in which I inhabit the world is beside the point.

While the materialists in the English-speaking world found themselves refuting Descartes's dualism by eliminating qualitative, firsthand experience from the question, phenomenology emerged in Germany and France to make a close philosophical study of the nature and structure of consciousness from *within* consciousness. In some ways, phenomenology could be understood as the attempt to repair the split between the mind and body by following Descartes's method of taking first-person, lived experience as the only genuine starting point for philosophical inquiry, while also critiquing Descartes for his bifurcation of reality. But where the physicalists restore ontological monism for the sake of a clarified epistemology, phenomenology embraces and revels in ambiguity as an intrinsic feature of experience as it is lived through. The phenomenological tradition (in which Dewey may retrospectively deserve an honorable inclusion)[15] does not attempt to explain consciousness by situating it within a series of causes or to prove its reality via a scientific vocabulary or a logical system; it readily accepts that consciousness is the only source of all such systems. Accordingly, in classical Husserlian phenomenology, the task is to see how it is that things like "objects" and "systems" could emerge from the given structure of consciousness. The immediate advantage to such an approach is that, with the restoration of the stream of consciousness, there is no longer a need for a philosopher to enact a dissociation from the "self" as a precondition for objective lucidity. However, the rehabilitation of first-person perspectival experience does not automatically entail a reevaluation of the body in which it is lived and felt. We are indebted to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which emphasizes the inclusion of the lived body as a contributor to the field of meaning.

Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* reframed consciousness as indistinguishable from the body, emphasizing the "constitutive duet" between perceiver and perceived, through which the world unfolds in gestures, movements, and our own imaginative projection of our bodies into the vital goings-on around us. Merleau-Ponty presents the body as the permanent and constant site of my perception, privileged and sensitive in its capacity to rediscover new horizons and dimensions for exploration. This is a philosophical method in which the body is reinstated within philosophical reflection as the organic and dynamic condition of my thought. Ambiguity and indeterminateness are not the signals of a glitch in the system, they are proof that the system of meaning remains continuously open to growth. Phenomenology thus offers avenues through which the dualism of Descartes is disavowed without resorting to monism. The efforts and influence of Merleau-Ponty in the first half of the twentieth century notwithstanding, our Cartesian prejudices have sedimented in the second half of the twentieth and in the early twenty-first centuries as more of our experience is enveloped by the precipitous incursion of personal technology.

I am indebted to Drew Leder for this line of thought. Leder is a trained medical doctor, has a PhD in philosophy, and brought a wider American readership to Merleau-Ponty. His 1990 book *The Absent Body* argues that the *cogito* has been so resistant to our attempts to overthrow its influence, in part, because our firsthand, lived experience reinforces our Cartesian habits. His perspective, and his prioritization of lived experience over a mechanized understanding of the body, was inspired by a close reading of Merleau-Ponty's final, unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible.* He argues that although the body is the ground of all experiencing, it is often "absent" in experience because it is rarely the "thematic object" of its own consciousness—it is "ecstatic" or "sending itself away" from itself in its perceptions.[16] Our bodies fade into the background so that we are free to direct ourselves to an activity that is external to our flesh. Hence, it is Leder's view that our experience, particularly insofar as we are formed through contemporary American sensibilities, encourages and supports Cartesianism. Leder rightly points out that, contra Merleau-Ponty, consciousness is not wholly marked by its corporeity; in our bodily schema we do not perceive our whole bodies, or even the greater portion of our bodies. Much of our kinesthetic and sensorimotor capacities depend upon visceral, inner responses that are absent from our conscious apprehension of ourselves. We cannot effectively sense our white blood cells, our lymphatic system, or our extracellular matrix as we project ourselves out into the world. Leder makes the further point that our intentional relationship with the world is often made possible by *forgetting* the body. This is particularly true within Western culture, where we are not encouraged to spend time building a sense of the body outside of the demands of directed, purposive activity, as do, for example, tai chi and yoga. There is a body that is still my body, it supports and contributes to my experience, but it is lost to me if it is relegated to a level below consciousness, and if I am also cut off from my means of retrieving this layer of my experience.

Leder is right that there has been a steady trend toward decorporealized experience as communication technology is increasingly digitized and as more of organic experience is replaced with inorganic devices that attempt to approximate the feel of organic life. My iPhone plays a pretty good sampling of birdsong these days to wake me up in the morning, and the graphic design on the applications is user friendly and subtle enough that it is enchanting and natural to work the touch screen that responds to my movements and the light in the room. There is an interesting contemporary paradox insofar as the more lavish these approximations, the more advanced and expensive our devices, the farther away we drift from the organic world that is lit by the sun and voiced by insects and birds. Leder, who was writing in 1990 and had foreseen the rapid development of personal devices even ahead of the smartphone explosion of the aughts, thinks we ought to understand these trends in technological innovation as having their source in the "modes of absence that are inherent to the human body."[17] Our bodies in their perceptual capacities have "intrinsic tendencies toward self-concealment" and these "may be exaggerated by linguistic and technological extension."[18] The way we perceive the world around us—and in so doing forget our bodies in our perceptions—reinforces the immaterial Cartesian *cogito*.

The *cogito*, with its sharp division between the extended substance of the body and the thinking substance of thought, pulls us toward a vision of the self in which an immaterial rationality is central. Experience, Leder argues, facilitates Cartesian dualism, even as he contends that the conceptual hegemony of mind-body dualism must be broken. On phenomenological grounds, Leder explains that the body is absent because it is always caught up beyond itself—it isn't really my body that I'm perceiving as my body accomplishes perception. Instead, I perceive the object that I am busy beholding. I do not hear my own ears; I am quite unaware of the functioning of endolymph and the cochlea because I am totally engrossed in the sounds of low, hushed strings as I turn toward them.

Much philosophy in the Western world is much more comfortable with the body as an object to be "known" rather than as flesh to be felt and lived. If Western thought, and its Anglo-American progeny, has treated the body in absentia, we are now living out the consequences of that dissociative illusion in the world of experience well beyond the world of philosophy. If we have developed habits to think of ourselves as disembodied perceivers of objects, then we have hindered our sensitivity to social, political, ecological, and intimate dimensions of experience, all of which depend on a sensuous engagement with the world. When the body is treated as mechanized or as an object like any other to be observed and known, we miss its real significance as the site of our opening to the world. Leder makes the case that our embedded Cartesianism lets us imagine ourselves as withdrawn, unaware of the extent to which we expose the world that we take to be our "inner" private life. A disembodied, rational *cogito* can pretend to have metaphysical privacy, but a fleshy, embodied self cannot. Some moods, gestures, and profiles of the body are known only to others.[19] Some postures of my body will reveal emotions that I was not consciously aware I was having. I can become aware of these dimensions of myself only on the basis of the embodied response from another. Human conversation is an unnervingly subtle activity, which also accounts for its charm and thrill. A good conversationalist is attentive to cues that are quite adjacent to our explicit reasoning, and responds to these facial expressions and vocal modulations, glances, and shifts that inform the interpretation of words. When we treat this unconscious, tonal dimension as inadmissible, it is hardly surprising when our once democratic communities begin to fracture. Moreover, to the extent that we interface with the world as disembodied minds, increasingly inseparable and indistinguishable from the machines we use sending and receiving data, we simultaneously offer ourselves up to surveillance capitalism and its craven politics. We take ourselves to be alone as we scroll and type on a device in an empty room, but it is hard to remember that with every tap of our fingers, data is tracked by an apparently rational but hidden logic. When the penalties for this illusion reveal themselves in the flesh, in the form of reactionary violence and ecological decay, we are caught bewildered.

Insofar as phenomenology emphasizes direct and immediate experience, it has become a useful method for feminist theories of gendered experience, queer theories of social and family life, and philosophies of human sexuality.[20] This is possible because instead of taking highly theoretical abstractions as its starting point, it strives to hold the established products of cultural sedimentation in abeyance, wherever possible, in an attempted restoration of the ambiguous potency of experience. If the phenomenologist sets out to understand a phenomenon, they set aside the familiar meaning that is naively assumed or "intended" in the attempt to observe how the phenomenon coalesces for us from a "horizon" of implicit, background meanings. It is from this ambiguity of experience that we create meaning, and so, the ambiguity of the body does not require clarification in advance. In other words, while scientistic philosophy treats objects (including synapses, chemicals, and organs) as fundamentally discrete and awaiting our discovery, phenomenology holds that all objects of our experience are continuously re-accomplished, that is, freshly perceived within a changed context, by the constitutive duet between the world and my body. The minutiae of *how* it is that *my body* accomplishes these acts of perception necessitate a flexible and generous vocabulary so that nuanced contributions can be made by a range of bodies that are differently oriented to the world rather than interchangeable. However, for all that rich generosity, phenomenology tends to ignore the contributions of an unconscious dimension and instead tends to treat all experience as conscious.[21] The question of levels of consciousness or unconsciousness is somewhat undecidable within Merleau-Ponty's work, since he allows for a portion of perception that is not the accomplishment of the active, intentional intellect, but is rather passively gleaned without my explicit attention. Since these perceptions are not the accomplishment of the ego, the implicit meanings are treated as belonging to a level of generality, a common corporeality that is the very condition of being in the world.

Victor Kestenbaum, in *The Phenomenological Sense of John Dewey*, does not argue that Dewey was a phenomenologist, but he does advocate that we attempt to bring a phenomenological orientation with us as we read Dewey in an effort to better appreciate the subtlety and power of those features of his philosophy of experience that often go overlooked. Dewey does benefit from such a reading, particularly the concept of "habit," which is so easily misread as either mechanized or mute contributions of a reflex rather than creative interactions with a dynamic environment. This suggestion recovers Dewey from a host of abuses, not the least of which is the tendency to mistake his radical, Jamesean empiricism for an overinvestment in laboratory science. One of Dewey's most attractive philosophical traits is his reticence to treat reality as a settled matter, and his adherence to the idea that there is both real potency and genuine creativity in the world. Kestenbaum emphasizes the extent to which the world and the self, habit and imagination, are reciprocally constitutive and dramatically rehearsed. He highlights the sense-giving role of "pre-objective intentionality" (Merleau-Ponty's term) in Dewey's "habit" as comprising a much greater, and a much deeper portion of experience than is usually admitted. The posthumous collaboration between Dewey and Merleau-Ponty is fertile soil for a dialogue, of sorts, between Dewey and Freud.

If phenomenology reveals the creative potency in Dewey's casting of the sensuous, psychoanalysis can recover the poignancy of organic interaction and ecological interdependence. We have not truly completed our rehabilitation of the body without an acknowledgment of the unconscious, even *something like* the Freudian unconscious. Psychoanalysis is unequaled in its power to acknowledge the extent to which we are formed through confrontations that are unspeakable in their intimacy, and remain hidden and recalcitrant insofar as they reveal our vulnerability. A psychoanalytic approach to our incarnate experience recognizes that the tacit dimension of habit and qualitative awareness is never accomplished without a negotiation of our desires, neuroses, and traumas. It recognizes that the body is organized and imbued with significance for us through the affective, visceral character of our confrontations with others. A complete theory of the lived body must account for the fact that the body necessarily emerges through an interpersonal drama of dependence, nurturance, and neglect. We will explore this intimate dimension thoroughly in the next chapter.

THE BODY AS CONNECTED

Part of the challenge for philosophers who wish to rehabilitate the aesthetic sensitivities of the body is to present it in its fluidity, and thus, its vulnerability. Once the Cartesian ghost has been banished, it is impossible not to experience my body as one and the same with the "self," and if there is to be a "self" it seems to us that it must be bounded, separate, and consistent. But organic beings are subject to constant needs of variable intensity, and needs compel us to incorporate and eject our surroundings with rhythmic regularity, and life entails periods of growth and decay, integration and disintegration. What we understand as the "self" is better approximated by the word "ego," or the portion of the system of meanings that I consciously identify as tightly bound up with my preferences and responsibilities within my environment. Beyond the perpetual presence of my body, I select from my experience those things that are relevant to my chosen image of myself, for a range of reasons that may or may not be serving the reciprocal interaction between my body and the environment, and in that selective process—which may be better or worse—there is a remainder that must somehow be addressed. In *Experience and Nature*, Dewey is concerned with the "exaggeration of the ego in modern philosophy," and presents the individual mind not as a stable and self-enclosed monad, but as occurring in moments when it embodies a creative response to its environment.[22] The satisfied individual that is "at home, consistently at one with its own preferences," is continuous with the events and relations that "reinforce its activities," and is thus a fulfillment of a process that is much larger than itself. But the "individual that finds a gap between its distinctive bias and the operations of the things through which alone its needs can be satisfied" is "broken off, discrete, because it is at odds with its surroundings."[23] If the individual in the second case surrenders, accepts the state of affairs and withdraws to its own private antipathy, an opportunity is lost. If the individual sets out to remake conditions in accord with its desire, intelligent action is underway. But the path to intelligence is not so simple. Even as the organism is consciously and linguistically making selections and taking action, there are the immediate and minute “welcomings and rejections” of the most “vibratingly delicate nature,” and transaction involves giving and receiving in ways that often elude my conscious control. “Even our most highly intellectualized operations depend upon them as a fringe,” he says, and these delicate, qualitative feelings “give us our sense of rightness and wrongness, of what to select and emphasize and follow up.”[24] There is much at stake in the question of how sensitive we are to the ambient shifts.

Dewey is poetic in his acknowledgment of the dynamic threshold between the body and the world, but just as he has no systematic account of the unconscious, he is also missing a systematic account of just how those “welcomings and rejections” beyond or beneath the level of consciousness occur, and precisely what might be said about their place in experience beyond the fact of their subtlety. What he gives us instead is an aesthetics that takes qualitative experience to be the defining feature, and a philosophy of experience that holds aesthetic experience to be paradigmatic for the whole. Psychoanalysis provides us with a dynamic picture of the individual psyche that develops and unfolds over the course of a personal history. Here, we find a complex model of selfhood that is undeniably an individual throughout, but is also porous, affectively responsive, and inseparably bound up with the fragility and vulnerability of the body. Indeed, this approach also furnishes us with an interpretation of the philosophical trouble in our focus.

OBJECTIFICATION AS DEFENSE

Part of our present tendency to casually objectify the body is of course bound up in the seventeenth-century scientific philosophy that developed in Europe—an intellectual period that overlapped and underwrote a colonial one. We ought to keep the far-reaching social and political implications of the rapid spread of the new science in mind as we consider the problem that Dewey called “the most fundamental in philosophy at present”: We need to decide whether to invest in the thought that the changes in the world (and those changes in ourselves) are merely the result of external redistributions of matter in space, or instead in the thought that individuals undergo meaningful qualitative change.[25] A commitment here decides a theoretical orientation that has implications for every other avenue of philosophical inquiry, but the way we answer this question in the popular imagination has even wider-reaching implications for our cultural ethos. A decision in favor of the former possibility is a self-protective defense that ultimately results in the disintegration of the self, a nihilistic death-wish that begs for a psychoanalytic interpretation.

Susan Bordo has begun this work in her reading of *The Mediations* that analyzes Descartes's unconsciously held cultural motivations, and as is psychoanalytically appropriate, she begins with his description of his own frightening dream.[26] She interprets Descartes's waking from his nightmare of uncertainty as a decisive moment in Western history. Bordo, like many before her, credits Descartes's rationalist project with setting the tone for Western scientific discovery for the next several hundred years. However, Bordo does not read Descartes's nightmare of uncertainty as an anxiety dream about finitude and human culture (as did Richard Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*) or as one of angst surrounding moral and intellectual uncertainty (as did Richard Bernstein);[27] Bordo instead interprets Cartesian anxiety as separation anxiety. In her analysis, the rationalist project is in fact a cultural lashing out, an aggressive flight from the pain of separation from the organic "female" universe that was the predominant quality of the Middle Ages.

Bordo's reading of Descartes is informed by medieval and Renaissance aesthetics. Paintings from this period look disorienting to the modern observer as he struggles to locate himself in space and time. It is often said that paintings in the medieval period and early Renaissance had not developed the technical capacity for spatial perspective, but Bordo argues that the kind of perspective that we are used to in modern paintings was not developed earlier because it simply was *not needed*. The medieval subject experienced herself as more thoroughly integrated with the world, less as the possessor of a privileged inner experience, less separate from the rest of the world—that is, more in the vein of Dewey's "continuous" and "satisfied" individual. The pre-Cartesian subject did not necessarily feel he was discretely bounded by the borders of skin and skull because he was not separated from his environment by a chasm of doubt. Bordo argues that pre-modern art shows us the world suffused with a more feminine experience, where subjects wear the world about them almost tactilely, like a garment.[28] Descartes, on the other hand, gives us the first real account of an unbridgeable gap between the self and world and, afraid of this gulf of uncertainty, sets up the *cogito* that regards the world from within the skull as "the only emphatic reality."[29]

Separation anxiety is the term for Freud's insight that an infant's condition of utter existential dependence on its mother occasions a child's earliest traumatic experiences.[30] When the mother turns away from the child to pursue her interests beyond the care of the infant, some needs will inevitably go unanswered. This is distressing for the infant, but it is also necessarily part of establishing a separate ego that is capable of distinguishing between self and other. However, separation from the world of the mother is not accomplished at once and suddenly. This process is difficult and painful and is accomplished in stages that are accompanied by longing on the part of the child for the certainty, comfort, and the warmth of the mother's body. Bordo argues that this process also plays out on a cultural level when "long-established images of symbiosis and cosmic unity break down (as they did during the period of the scientific revolution.)"[31] If this is true, then it is possible to interpret the work of Descartes as ensuing from the existential fright that accompanies fragile cognitive relations. If the changes in the scientific revolution were truly revolutionary, as Alexandre Koyré and Thomas Kuhn have argued, then the shift from the world we thought we knew to the universe the New Science revealed it to be must have been disturbing in the extreme. The ground of all relations shifted precipitously, and one did not know quite where to look to reassemble it. In other words, the *Meditations*, on Bordo's reading, is a most poignant example of the Western struggle with object permanence.

Descartes sought reassurance in the form of a rebirth—this time, a birth into a life that could be had without the uncertainties of the bodily senses that had become so fraught and untrustworthy for him. He wanted to begin again by securing the boundaries that mark off the "inner" experience of the *cogito* from the "outer" experience of the (maternal) object, and to sharply separate knower from known. In separating *res cogitans* from *res extensa*, Descartes had not only disallowed the body's role in perception and thought, he had also entirely drained spirit from nature. In dreaming of a purely rational, mathematical universe in which objects are matter devoid of experience and can be described with precision in terms of mechanistic relationships, the Cartesian *cogito* regards a world that "we grasp with instruments rather than sympathy."[32]

Bordo sees Descartes as having "masculinized" thought in the *cogito.* This is not masculinity in the phallic sense, much less is this masculinity as a style of embodiment. Bordo intends "masculine" rather in the sense of Francis Bacon's "Masculine Time." In *Temporis partus masculus*, Bacon's unpublished tract from 1603, he argues for an atomist view of nature as inspired by Democritus rather than the teleological empiricism of Aristotle. Bacon says that "Time," an all-seeing, all-revealing force that determines and controls nature, is the father of his daughter, "Truth." Truth, in this alternate analogy, does not spring from the earth, personified by the revelations of spring or the yield of the harvest. Truth is revealed in linear cause and effect. With this atomism and accompanying allegory, Bacon set the epistemological tone for modern science. Accordingly, "masculinization" describes the assumption of a cognitive style and an epistemic standpoint. Just as Bacon felt it is necessary to split science from religion, so too did Descartes feel it as necessary to split thinking from the body. The key to the masculine rebirth of experience, Bordo argues, is the need for *detachment*, from the senses, the body, from emotion, from nature, and most of all from *the object*.

In the New Science of Bacon and Descartes, the body is the site of obscurity, nondiscrimination, and of vagueness—and never more so than when it is bound up with the warm maternal body whose boundaries are disturbingly unclear. It is the place of nonspecific pains and indescribably minute adjustments of musculature. More than this, it is the site of immediacy and felt quality, which are resistant to clear and certain linguistic formulation. Rationalism thrust these away and rejected their indistinctness in favor of the kind of perspective that promises certain knowledge of its objects. The epistemological need that launched the process of inquiry was conceived in Descartes's *cogito* and demands a constant state of mental vigilance over the object that is made possible via the superior position of the immaterial subject; without both the hierarchy and distance, nothing can be certain. The cognitive style that enabled seventeenth-century scientific practice also cultivated a careful and powerful distrust of the world as it was known by traditional means: no previously reached conclusions, no past insights, no remembered information could be allowed to infect the perspective of the knower. An object of study must be fixed, demarcated, and verified by a sanctioned voice outside, separate from nature.[33] This is the epistemic standpoint that typically serves as the starting position for scientific inquiries. The *cogito* rejects the immediacy of feeling as part of nature and suspect on that account, and the body is a dangerous pathway to the world.

As we have seen, Cartesian dualism is no longer philosophically fashionable, partially because scientific materialism is undermined by the addition of an ontologically separate, nonphysical portion of reality that is not available to scientific inquiry. Accordingly, the dominant response, particularly in the United States, has been a rejection of dualism in the name of a physicalist "naturalism" that only serves to reify the body as a loosely assembled, inert object that is knowable only from a "view from nowhere." The irony of doing philosophy from such a position is thick, but it is also not lost on the physicalist philosophers. I would hazard that it is precisely the irony, rather than the epistemological soundness, that is the most attractive feature of the position. Killing the Cartesian ghost does not return us to the land of the living flesh, but it does afford us a bit of emotional protection from the alienation we have suffered from "mother" nature, and provides us with a way to take revenge and drain "her" of spiritual resonance. If we do not count the private sensations of the body as contributing meaning, and if the official doctrine of science holds that the order of the physical world is ruled by arbitrary, externally related atoms, then we needn't worry about being abandoned, forgotten, or rejected by the cosmos. If reality becomes less convincing, and less alluring, so much the better. If there is something to Bordo's analysis, then it would appear that when we make epistemology the ground of all philosophy, we display a foundational neurotic need to control and predict the whole of nature, and to harness its vital nourishment without concern for an invitation, as we construct it in fantasy as lifeless, mindless, and defenseless against our agenda. Of course, we are lost in the process, but we have learned to be sufficiently detached, ironic enough not to care.

Psychoanalysis and phenomenology are two European attempts to restore emotional dynamism and sensual richness, respectively, but they have limited resonance in the United States. This is surely because, while the future United States was colonized by England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, and welcomed (tolerated) many European immigrants from Germany, Italy, and Poland during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its culture has evolved in response to its own particular traumas and exclusions, not the least of which is its failure to recognize its non-European citizens as cultural contributors. As Americans, we are distinct from one another to the extent that the character of our particular deracination differs. A Black person descended from slaves stolen from their home culture is part of a different diaspora than is the child of Jewish immigrants escaping the Holocaust. A “daughter of the American Revolution” is situated differently on this land than a Native American with family on a reservation. However, we share the effects of the scientific revolution and its severing of the self and the environment, and so we share the need to rehabilitate the body and nature back into our cultural and philosophic lives. Our shared condition is one of alienation from our bodies, from our environments, and from one another as the result of quite distinct and often irrecoverable histories. What I am proposing is that every country must invent the version of psychoanalysis that it needs to recover its affective life. There is an urgent need to become natives, in the sense that we learn to develop a *deep* culture, one that is sensitive to the rich and emotive meanings in the entities of the world around us. On some level American philosophy had recognized this need, from Emerson to Dewey; developing modes of meaningful interaction with the organic environment was a distinct priority, until a quantitative and impersonal psychology exploded on the scene, right on the heels of World War II.

EMERGENTISM AND TRANSACTION

Dewey’s philosophy of embodiment does not come to us from phenomenology or psychoanalysis, and so he does not aim to recover the lost, lived experiences, absent from philosophy, in quite the same way or for quite the same reasons.[34] His philosophy looks to ground a notion of experience that can serve as a basis for human action without the need for an epistemological foundation. Dewey thought that epistemology was a waste of philosophical energy, that rather than securing immutable truths, we ought to be securing effective critiques over values.[35] Dewey's thought embraces embodiment by refusing dualism along with the rest of what he calls "binary thinking." He is concerned not only to warn against dividing the body from the mind in our habits of thought, but also to reverse the habits by which we divide the organism from the environment, and risk missing entirely what would otherwise serve as important terms in our comprehension of intelligence as it functions within nature. The most comprehensive picture of how intelligence emerges from organic life is found within chapter 7 of *Experience and Nature*. In the context of the whole work, Dewey seeks concepts that could restore the integrated interactions of complex and interrelated dynamic wholes, which are interactive by nature. In chapter 7 specifically, he looks to reunite the body, mind, and environment. The concept that serves Dewey best to express this complexity of the organism, sharing in mind, a product of continuous call and response with its environment, is "emergence."

Unlike the mechanistic view that we encounter in ordinary medical science, and the atomistic perspective that is entertained in cognitive science, the Deweyan body is not a thing, it is a process. When the body is an objectified thing, we confront it as an impersonal term in a chain of causes, an appliance for converting raw materials into refined assets for use. Interactions between a body and nature are then determined by the physical structures of a rigid anatomy that corresponds to a governing logic. It is fitting that Descartes thought that our emotions were caused by the agitation of the pineal gland by animal spirits.[36] Strong surprise, for example, had to do with the spirits interacting with cavities that hold impressions in the brain.[37] These agitations could cause any one of, or an admixture of, exactly six basic passions, having their subsequent effects in our musculature and the organs of sense.[38] When we revisit Descartes's understanding of the body-mind connection now, perhaps it seems primitive and unscientific by our computerized understanding, but the essential similarities are more remarkable than the differences. Descartes might as well have been talking about neural pathways and chemicals, he merely lacked the technology for brain scan imaging and chemical analysis that we have developed as ways to talk about and solve problems within the brain. When we believe that the truth of the body is primarily the purview of medical or scientific study, when it is first and foremost an object, then it must be measured and understood in terms of structures and quantities, and our firsthand experience is rejected as naïve. In Descartes's case, we can, in principle, measure quantities of spirits that affect the brain or the heart. The behaviorists would measure the strength of a stimulus giving rise to a reflex. Cognitive neuroscience may measure quantities of neurochemicals. In each case, the body is mechanized and fragmented, a "thing" among other things in the world that may stimulate, agitate, and then generate prefigured responses. The objectified body is depersonalized: it does not "feel," it is stimulated.

When the body is understood as a process, however, it is always organically involved in exchanges that may be either precipitous and flamboyant or gradual and subtle. In Dewey's view, as long as the career of the organism persists, the process is constant and unbroken and the structures of the organism are open to rearrangement. Dewey's understanding of the organism was heavily influenced by Darwin, and evolutionary biology informs his philosophy of emergentism, which holds that new forms of existence—like that of the highly complex human being—can emerge without being entirely the result of preceding circumstances. When bodies are sufficiently complex in their discriminatory capacities, "social communication and discourse supervene" because "organic activity is liberated from subjection to what is closest at hand in space and time."[39] Mind emerges from the kinds of interactions of bodies that allow for the making and sharing of associations, symbols, and meanings; but as such, *mind* has no special properties that sharply separate it from *body*. Instead, "interaction and connection have tighter or looser ties," so that the interactions on the physical plane are tightly bound up with one another, and influence but do not determine that which occurs on the plateau of "life," in which qualitative changes inform preferences in interactions of complex beings, that in turn, influence but do not determine the physical interaction. "Association" is the discursive plane that interprets (never exhaustively) the relationships of the other two plateaus. Each "plateau" is just a way of looking at the kinds of "causes," the various ways entities may relate and interact.[40]

Body and mind are continuous, just as body and environment are continuous. Continuity means here that body and mind are coextensive, and that the body emerges from the environment of which it is a part, but also that they achieve a dynamic fusion rather than maintain strict, separate identities. This can make it somewhat difficult to summarize what Dewey has to say about "the body." Many philosophers have a way of talking about "the body" that tries to reclaim it from modes of address that might objectify or mechanize it. Perhaps most notably, the phenomenologists will speak of the "lived body" to denote a body that is infused with the properties of mind, but is also pre-reflectively experienced by the first-person, while the thematized body is the subject of post-reflective analysis. In the following discussion, we will see how Dewey makes use of layers of organic complexity to describe the difference between bodies prior to reflective awareness and bodies that are capable of communicating these experiences post-analysis.

THE BODY AS A LAYERED PROCESS

It is the nature of all organic beings to seek the recovery of equilibrium as we move between need and satisfaction. This is the basis for our experience of pattern and rhythm. In any situation, tension is unevenly distributed: in the early summer forest the soil is warm, moist, and full of nutrients while the canopy is frenzied and imperiled by an incoming storm; the commuter on her drive alters between reflecting on the events of the day and responding to erratic traffic; a murmuration of starlings shifts and coils in the air to feed on insects or evade hawks; the organism in each case feels the instability of its situation as a need for safety, nourishment, or meaning. It then seeks to satisfy that need by interacting and altering the distribution of tensions within its environment.[41] Dewey is careful to point out that this change from tension to equilibrium in organic life is "a concrete state of events" rather than "an immaterial psychic force superimposed upon matter."[42] The feelings of a creature signal and mark changes taking place within a situation. Dewey's emergentism is committed to the notion that nature is a field of organic interactions, and organic life is continuously coming into finer organizations and adjustments. This creative, growth-promoting continuity can never be accurately represented by a formal series of cause and effect in which the cause bears more reality than the effect, or in which the component parts are given ontological priority over the complete whole—what Dewey will repeatedly refer to as "the dogma of the superior reality of 'causes.'"[43] Dewey is trying to push back against our habit of itemizing life into a set of static relations, piece by broken piece, in an effort to understand the phenomenon. Following James's work on consciousness in *The Principles of Psychology,* the essence of life for Dewey is the unbrokenness of it, the very wholeness of the organism as it is at work in its elicitations and expressions.[44] Rather than point out parts or structures of which the body is composed, or the mechanisms that enable the body in its systemic functioning, Dewey is careful to emphasize pattern, rhythm, and above all, the continuity between the organism and itself and the organism and its environment. The basic requirements for aesthetic experience—that we are sensitive and discriminatory—are already present even in plant life.

The organism that is continuously connected to its surroundings exhibits a "selective bias in interactions with environing things" as it operates to maintain its patterned activity.[45] The susceptibility of the body to the surrounding environment constitutes feeling, and the responses from the organism alter and develop the tensive situation as they act in favor of certain results rather than others. As organisms become more complexly organized, "bias becomes interest, and satisfaction a good or value and not a mere satisfaction of wants or repletion or deficiencies."[46] If the organism has the capacity for self-originating, lateral movement, then it is not limited to connecting only with its immediate surroundings, but is also "vitally connected with the remote" and can therefore develop expectations about future contact with more distant surroundings:

> Activities are differentiated into the preparatory, or anticipatory, and the fulfilling or the *consummatory*. The resultant is a peculiar tension in which each immediate preparatory response is suffused with the consummatory tone of sex or food or security to which it contributes. Sensitivity, the capacity, is then actualized as feeling: susceptibility to the useful and harmful in surroundings becomes premonitory, an occasion of eventual consequences within life.[47]

In Dewey's theory of experience, complex organisms like mammals and birds rely on the felt dimension of their present situations to draw them into an interaction whose end is distinguished by *qualities*—here presented as "tones"—through which situations have the character of being safe, important, desirable, or fearful. These complex animals experience qualities; they accept and act in accordance with qualities, but they do not reflect on the fact of the qualitative, and although they may navigate and signal through them, they do not signify *about* them.[48]

Mind is a phenomenon that emerges when situations, in their qualitative tone, are also socially significant so that interactions are aided by the mediation by symbols. Mind, for Dewey, refers neither to a collection of behaviors nor the function of a specific organ, but rather to a system of meanings that a creature shares in, a culture that renders each participant intelligible to one another. When mind is involved, the feelings that are the basis for selectivity are no longer simply "had" in their felt immediacy, they can also be "known," denoted and set apart from the contextual field. Qualitatively different feelings that guide an animal into an interaction are *had* or undergone, but as we assign names, qualitative encounters become wholes, and then may signify objective differences. However, in the emergentist account, an "objective" and an "object" are better understood as the desired goal of action rather than a cognitive stance that observes some predetermined "thing" awaiting our discovery. Mind, in other words, is the capacity to attach symbols to a portion of our experience, held together by a felt quality, that signals a possible end. This is how feelings come to make *sense*.[49] Feeling is the ability for an organism to connect with its environments. Mind is the ability of the creature to make a feeling into a term, to name the connection, and to enable further inclusive action.[50] Signs grow from the need-directed activities and the desires of the organism in contact with an environment and assist the cooperative fulfillment of our ends. Therefore, mind is not a separate entity, a separate realm, nor does this added layer entail a separation of the body from the organic situation; it is only a further capacity that allows finer nuances to emerge in an interaction.

I wish to stress two points in particular here: First, that the mind is another layer of experience that builds upon those that are already nourishing a creative and interactive environment. It denotes another kind of interaction and allows new complexities to emerge, and entails the broadening of our temporality—creatures that share in mind may recall and record satisfactions and anxieties that arouse their interest. Thus, mind enables cultural memory and expands the meaning of situations beyond a particular time and place. Second, the capacity for naming and reference that Dewey means when we add the layer of mind is *social*, not personal. This is not a consciousness that is set apart by a gulf from the world; mind is possible only on the basis of a shared sense of potential, collaborative ends. Mind allows for qualities to be named and referenced, so that the qualities which delimit the horizons of our thought can later be referenced and shared, even if the qualitative dimension, and the capacity to feel and respond to them, were already present on the level of organic life before mind came into play. But the system of meaning cannot cover the entirety of the field: mind cannot anticipate nor control what will become meaningful. Minute responses and exchanges occur on the bodily level below awareness and affect attention or fund the consummation of future meanings. This is the meaning of the aesthetic body.

INDETERMINACY

That a portion of the field remain open is essential to the creative potential built into emergentism. Symbols and meanings emerge from qualities that have importance to our activities, and this process is both familiar and unpredictable. All qualities are felt, merged into the general situation as tones or shades that guide us toward or away from interactions "until they are used, in language, as common or shared means to common ends. Then they are identified as traits of objects."[51] Dewey points out that the difficulty of distinguishing the qualities of acts conditioned by proprioceptor organs is considerable, because these just "tend to merge in the general situation" while qualities relating to exteroception are somewhat more distinctive.[52] It is difficult, for example, to explain what my body feels like when it is dancing, or to describe how to do a new dance move, while it is considerably easier to relate to someone the feeling of being sunburned. Not every quality will be marked off with such distinctiveness; there are many qualities that will pass through our bodies, as tastes or sounds, as subtle cravings or withdrawals; there are changes that we may never have the need to name that will nevertheless still be felt. Qualities acquire symbols as we find occasion to communicate them to others. There is no rubric for knowing in advance exactly which qualities will emerge as significant enough for symbol. This is the work of the poet as much as it is the world of the infant.

Dewey fleshes out the emergence of intelligent, symbolic mind from organic life, but he never details the bodily structures and their roles in assigning new symbols to qualities. Many embodiment philosophers take the time to reconstruct carefully how it is that ideas arise from their beginnings in perception, and many lavish attention on how different locales of the body come into play during different phases of awareness. Dewey does reconstruct a story, but as this story is told to us in terms of layers of organic complexity, the body retains so much plasticity and porousness with its environment that one is invited to leave the shape of the thematized creature considerably more open. The body that Dewey reconstructs is not as discrete as the one we are accustomed to. It evolves to respond to the qualities of situations. Thus, the Deweyan body is not arranged as a corpus of parts that could be disassembled or reassembled for our investigations, where one piece may be swapped out for another functioning component. *The whole organism is present in each part*. This merger of Darwin and James is a body of spatiotemporal layers, syncopations and harmonies. Its refusal of dualism and mechanism is so complete that it begs to be thought as growing, pulsing, unbounded.

Dewey writes that "the distinction between physical, psycho-physical, and mental is this one of levels of increasing complexity and intimacy of interaction among natural events."[53] The key in refuting mechanist/determinist conceptions is to carefully refuse to ascribe more reality to the cause than the effect. But the dogma of causality is also a well-established habit of the mind, and breaking it is a good deal trickier than it sounds. It has a philosophical history: in the transition to modern science, telos and formal cause were discarded as legitimate ways to know a thing, life and mind can only be explained by the conditions that precede it. But Dewey is not convinced descriptions of the matter out of which an entity is composed is definitive for a thing: "as far as the conception of causation is to be introduced at all, not matter but the natural events having matter as a character, 'cause' life and mind." The emphasis is on the event rather than a catalyst, on the whole of the interaction rather than the preceding state of affairs. But what do we lose when we give up the superior reality of cause, and how much do we stand to gain if we do?

Like Susan Bordo half a century later, Dewey agrees that a "dogma of causality" was engendered by the desire to control the natural environment.[54] Situations in their lush, ecological wholes are complex, and constantly escaping intellectual attention. As situations develop into shared ends, our means of accomplishing these occasionally call for a degree of control over our situations, our environments, and our bodies. By analyzing the complex into parts, we can intellectually grasp pieces of our environments and thus deliberately modify or rectify, at least temporarily, matters that might improve conditions for life. The tendency to view our bodies as collections of organs, locations, or structures that are specified entirely toward specific functions may allow us some regulation of their functions, but so long as we reify these structures as static, we will miss the dynamic coordination of the whole in perception, how each layer of the organism responds to qualities whether it has named them or not. It is a great intellectual error, James's "psychologist's fallacy," to assume that component parts as we have named them are consistently present rather than intellectual creations for the sake of temporary ends-in-view.[55] To build this error into a habit is to shut off the possibility of our openness to the rest of experience. In this case, the temptation to view the body as a set of structures or pieces undermines our experience of quality.

Because qualities are felt by the sensory organism and only potentially named, since qualities are "had" in their immediacy, they do not also need to be known. "Having" is enough to guide the organism within a developing situation. However, if the prevailing view in philosophy is still to identify the object of reality with the object of knowledge, then the tendency will also be to deny a conception of a body that is porous and amorphous enough, that is ecological enough, to "have" quality. Embodiment philosophy will want to first identify the structures and the mechanism by which a quality is perceived, thus circumscribing the direct and creative relationship that we have with the qualitative. The body that can thrive creatively and openly is the aesthetic body that is free to "have" even what it does not "know."

Every experience begins with what Dewey calls an "impulsion," a "movement outward and forward of the whole organism"; it is a "craving" or a "turning toward" as for water, food, or light.[56] He does not use the word "impulse," because impulses and reflexes are specified within locations on a piecemeal body, and impulsions are inclusive of the whole. The creature craves food and light, but the writer also craves the pen and the musician craves the instrument. The porousness of the organism is key here, because experiences begin in a longing from the whole of the organism for something beyond the boundaries of its skin that still must belong to it if it is going to thrive. This amounts to "a dynamic acknowledgement of this dependence of the self for wholeness upon its surroundings."[57] The connection between the self and the world, the drive that moves the body to reach for what it needs, whether those needs be the light of the sun or the feel of the pen, is primarily aesthetic rather than primarily rational.

This aesthetic connection with the world that is grounded in pre-rational experience is the basis of our need for art. Our participation in nature's rhythms is a partnership that is "much more intimate than is any observation of them for the purposes of knowledge."[58] The modes of interaction with the world, carried through constantly and with such minuteness, are felt as pushes and pulls that may be marked or symbolized and so remembered, and then modified, repeated, or deepened, but first they exist as actions that are carried through by an organism that is connected to the brink of coalescence with its environment. The experiences of a creature in a world have continuity, conservation, tension, anticipation, resistance, and culmination. Art deepens this connection and remakes an experience such that it can be shared as culturally meaningful with the tension, relations, and subtle layers of experience preserved. A piece of art is itself layered, and it is so because it is rendered by a layered being.

It is tempting to "masculinize" the body, in Bordo's terms—to think of the body as a collection of mechanized parts, or to standardize its functioning, analyzing it down to piecemeal components in an unconscious effort to retain the protective distance that is offered by a physicalist epistemology. The neuroscientific way of describing the mind and body are good within their intellectual frame and particularly useful for medicine and pharmacology. But medicine is not a self-enclosed field, and medicine serves the end of promoting life to attend to its other various ends. When the medical or neuroscientific framework and its language are taken as ideal for all philosophy, psychology, and everyday experience, we cut off vital access to experience. Our Cartesianism is not the inescapable destiny of our bio-social development; it does not necessarily come loaded into our bodily schema; philosophy and science create the concepts that inform our cultural milieu and so become habitual ways of thinking. Our experience is thus influenced by these cultural attitudes before we interact with full agency in our symbolic worlds. Notions of how the body is, what it does, and how it ought to behave are imposed on us from without when we are young explorers in the world—from those who participate much more fully in the symbolic world than we do.

My concern is that when a philosopher falls into the habit of discussing the body by detailing the constituent pieces of the body (the amygdala, the face-recognition center in the brain, the endocrine system, etc.), he merely explains the event in terms of the material and efficient cause, leaving the larger context of coordination and value aside and denying it any explanatory power. This habit misleads us to think of the *parts* of the body as more real than the experience that is being creatively had and undergone. Experience begins to feel like a product of cognitive mechanisms. Also, by this way of writing and discussing embodiment, it becomes very easy to write and think about the body as though it is a univocal, unambiguous thing. "The body," when it is a collection of parts, systems, and structures, also becomes standardized—this often means it is usually thought of as male, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender, and neurotypical.[59]

When Bordo critiqued Descartes for "masculinizing" thought, her concern was that the rationalist project, as exemplified by the *Meditations*, defined reality once and for all as the object of a rationalist science. If Descartes's writing the *Meditations* signals the larger cultural shift toward an objectifying tendency that facilitates modern science, experience has suffered a drastic loss of the "feminine" experience as Bordo understands it—a body that is continuous with the world. In other words, the new need for epistemology to be centrally located within philosophical discourses moved Western culture decisively in the direction of detachment and objectification, and a sacrifice of immediacy and felt experience. To circumscribe quality is to deracinate the self from the world, to cut it off from its best resources for fully interacting with the environment from which it has emerged and to which it must respond. It is pragmatically preferable as well as ecologically urgent that we develop arguments for the primacy of a qualitative reality that empowers us to be epistemic creatures on the basis of our aesthetic connections, rather than aesthetic creatures on the basis of an epistemological justification. If we wish to restore the aesthetic body, we must resist the temptation to treat experience as epiphenomenal, to treat the body as a set of pieces or components that may be objectified to validate what is immediately had.

NOTES

1. Ruth Barton, "Huxley, Lubbock, and a Half Dozen Others: Professionals and Gentlemen in the Formation of the X Club, 1851–1864," *Isis: A Journal of the History of Science Society* 89, no. 3, September 1998, 410–44.

2. Richard Rorty, "Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 93.

3. John Dewey, "Qualitative Thought," in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, eds. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 195.

4. John Dewey, "The Problem of Truth," in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 2, eds. Larry Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 101–29.

5. John Dewey, LW 12: 105–22.

6. This recent attempt at defining life comes from contemporary philosopher Mark Bedau in "A Functional Account of Degrees of Minimal Chemical Life," *Synthese* 185, no. 1, March 2012, 73–88. Like Dewey, he proposes a definition of "emergence" as an explanatory feature of the sort of complex systems that result in the phenomenon we recognize as life. Unlike Dewey, he joins Daniel Dennett in his enthusiasm for the hypothesis that artificial intelligence is indistinguishable from "natural" intelligence.

7. LW 10: 61.

8. Ibid., 278.

9. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949).

10. MW 14: parts II and III.

11. Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1991), 135.

12. Peter Carruthers, *Consciousness: Essays from a Higher-Order Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 247.

13. He uses the word "emergent" but its meaning is very different than in Dewey's philosophy. Daniel Dennett, "In Darwin's Wake, Where am I?," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association* 15, no. 2, 2001, 11, 13–30.

14. Daniel Dennett, "Quining Qualia," *Mind and Cognition*, ed. W. Lycan. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 519–48.

15. Victor Kestenbaum's *The Phenomenological Sense of John Dewey* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1977) makes this argument eloquently.

16. Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 11, 12, 20.

17. Leder, *The Absent Body*, 3.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 6.

20. Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Bodily Comportment and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3, no. 2, April 1980, 137–56; Sarah Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4, 2006, 543–74; Sara Heinamaa, *Toward A Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

21. This is a generalization. Paul Ricœur, for example, puts phenomenology in conversation with psychoanalysis in an effort to demonstrate the limits of consciousness in its search for truth and the importance of hermeneutics in our understanding of an Other in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970).

22. LW 1: 174.

23. Ibid., 188.

24. Ibid., 227.

25. John Dewey, "Time and Individuality," (1940) in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, 223.

26. Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," *Signs* 11, no. 3, Spring 1986, 439–56. Bordo followed this article with a book: *The Flight to Objectivity* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987).

27. In *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

28. Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," 443.

29. Ibid.

30. Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVII, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001).

31. Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," 446.

32. Bordo quoting Charles Gillespie, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," 446.

33. Ibid., 447.

34. However, Victor Kestenbaum has done remarkable work articulating Dewey's philosophy from the standpoint of pre-objective intentionality, and finds a kinship between Dewey and Merleau-Ponty.

35. LW 4: 21.

36. René Descartes, "On the Passions of the Soul," trans. Jonathan Bennet, 2017, http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/descartes1649part2.pdf. Last accessed: January 21, 2018, p. 17.

37. Ibid., 21.

38. Ibid., 20.

39. LW 1: 206.

40. Ibid., 208.

41. Ibid., 194.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. See chapter 2 for discussion of the relation of Dewey to James's *Principles*.

45. Ibid., 196.

46. Ibid., 197.

47. Ibid., emphasis added.

48. Ibid., 198.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 199.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 199.

53. Ibid., 200.

54. In *Discourse on Method*, Descartes wrote that science can make us "masters and possessors of nature." René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, ed. Roger Ariew and Eric Watkins (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1998).

55. "Naming our thought by its own objects, we almost all of us assume that as the objects are, so the thought must be. [. . .] As each object may come and go, be forgotten and then thought of again, it is held that the thought of it has a precisely similar independence, self-identity, and mobility. The thought of the object's recurrent identity is regarded as the identity of its recurrent thought; and the perceptions of multiplicity, of coexistence and succession, of perceptions. The continuous flow of the mental stream is sacrificed, and in its place an atomism, a brickbat plan of construction, is preached, for the existence of which no good introspective grounds can be brought forward, and out of which presently grow all sorts of mental paradoxes and contradictions. [. . .] The great snare of the psychologist is the confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact about which he is making his report. I shall hereafter call this the 'psychologist's fallacy' *par excellence*. The psychologist, as we remarked above (p. 183) stands outside of the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its object are objects for him . . . Psychology assumes that thoughts successively occur, and that they know objects in a world which the psychologist also

knows." William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1890), 195–97.

56. LW 10: 60.

57. Ibid., 61.

58. Ibid., 154.

59. I am indebted to my conversations with Robin Zebrowski for this idea, which served as the basis for her dissertation: "We Are Plastic: Human Variability and the Myth of the Standard Body," University of Oregon, 2009.

Chapter 4

Eros and the Primacy of the Aesthetic

Vulnerable, sensitive creatures are also dynamic creatures. Every experience begins indefinitely. The first phase, even of inquiry, begins in a feeling, a vague sense that something is remiss, the irritation of a doubt. As inquiry progresses, through its stages, the initial quality guides the inquirer through questioning, hypothesis, testing, and so on, until an indeterminate situation changes into a "determinate" one. But not all situations progress as inquiries and epistemic "doubt" is not the only kind of indeterminacy that invites our thought and action. Desire throws the boundaries of the body and the meaning of language into question, and the opening of this kind of uncertainty invites us to create new and shared meaning. In an erotic situation, tension between lovers is a felt indeterminacy too, vulnerability to what is not yet understood, attention for how a gesture develops into an embrace, and consummation is not a matter of definition known but of meaning directly *had*, signifying vital growth and expansion. But not every qualitative indeterminacy develops into an experience done and undergone. When we are alienated from our bodies, less sensitive to the subtle approaches and withdrawals that develop our encounters, we may experience the indefinite beginnings of desire as alien and threatening.

Dewey tells us that the "live creature," the organism that lives and grows as opposed to the one than dies or merely subsists, is the one that can reach out into the environment after disruption or alienation and make adjustments to restore a phasic equilibrium. The recovery is not a return to stasis, but an enrichment to a more extensive balance with the environment.[1] Dewey calls the spark that inaugurates an experience "interest." To be alive in the fullest sense, to be a thing that is healthy and growing, is to be sensitive enough to be interested in making connections. "The moment of passage from disturbance to harmony is that of intensest life," which is also "the initiation of a new relationship to the environment," inaugurated by selective interests in the sensed possibilities of consummatory meaning.[2] Interest may begin as subtle, but through attention interest nourishes ideas and curiosities from their vague and fragile inception to their place as the founding myths of great cultures, and shepherds the voice of the new generation as it critiques outmoded ways of thinking. Interest alerts us to the need of nourishment or care that binds families and communities, and draws infants from uncoordinated helplessness into the curiosity of childhood. But "interest" has associations with the pecuniary, and lest we be led astray by a monetizing, objectifying consciousness that perverts and reduces "aesthetics" into its most quantifiable, marketable form, we must replace it with a concept that resists commercialization. "Eros" binds us to one another in richer arrangements, it is felt vulnerability, and precipitates our openness to a call and response between the self and the environment. Eros, unlike the interest of commercial investment, is not objectifying: it is an urge to connect through what is powerful and mysterious.

Philosophy's concern for the question of "meaning" focuses primarily on language, and it typically takes its models from our attempts to communicate the explicit contents of objectifying consciousness. Objectifying consciousness is characterized by its narrow interest; when an inquiry sets up functional distinctions in service of a narrow project, clarity and precision are the yield. Precise language results when component pieces of an experience are abstracted from their connection within the larger ecological whole, and as an inquiry develops, ambiguity is limited as much as possible. When engineers communicate, for example, to solve a breakdown in a complex machine, it would muddle the problem-solving process to reflect simultaneously about the value of the machine and its place in the world. That doesn't mean that the machine's place in institutional or commercial goals is irrelevant and will not be asked after in a later phase; the value is tacitly there in the need to attention to the trouble. But the engineer's attention selects the specific components that must be fixed or replaced, and the language will be focused, guided by the inherent logic that governs the machine itself, not its applications and uses. The invention of the machine, the process of reasoning that resulted in the object under study, are missing from the direct communication and are only implicit in the undertaking unless they become significant as the problems develop. Likewise, the objects that we posit during theoretical activities are the products of a process of careful selection for the purposes of formal inquiry, and the resulting language is often precise and focused. But, in positing objects, we tend to forget that we have *selected*, rather than discovered, the reality before us. If we mistakenly think that these selected objects are revelatory of reality in general, if we forget that this kind of language is only a phase of thought related to particular narrow problems, and if we forget that narrowness and precision are only a phase of thought rather than the whole, philosophy loses both its erotic sensitivity and its allure.

But all experience begins on an affective level. Experience in its wholeness includes penumbral feeling states and minute accommodations negotiated within a complex environment. Sharing experiences in their wholeness requires another mode of perception, and a corresponding mode of communication, so that the concrete immediacy of experience is present in signification. Erotic communication is anti-reductive by nature, it is enhanced by suggestion and metaphor. It is also the necessary complement to theoretical inquiry—insofar as inquiry can justify its value for lived experience. As erotic beings, we wish to feel that every dimension of our experience—particularly the affective and qualitative—is, in principle, transmissible. Eros implies a need to make possible that which confronts us theoretically as dubious at best: the achievement of reciprocal awareness of brute immediacy and affective response. Erotic experience entails the attempt to draw what is unconscious in one phase of experience into central conscious focus with the intent to communicate with another, and it is in erotic connection that we find ourselves at fullest attention.

Our need for connectedness with others is first both in terms of chronology and in terms of importance. This inescapable condition of life needs no rigorous proof, since our having lived through infancy is itself a demonstration that we have established nutritive and protective bonds without the benefit of language. But the effort to understand others and make ourselves understood is continuous, we do not age out of it. This is, as Dewey would say, a "generic trait" of human experience. Our endless hunger for meaning is an inescapably collaborative project. In order for our experiences to be meaningful, we must either actively share an experience as reciprocal and contemporaneously collaborative, or else feel the *possibility* of conveying the experience to another. On Dewey's account, this need catalyzes the emergence of intelligent consciousness from the physical and biological: "Whenever a situation has this double function of meaning, namely, signification and sense, mind, intellect, is definitely present," and values that are enjoyed in the present and immediate sense can be collaboratively sought. "By this fashion, qualitative immediacies cease to be dumbly rapturous," and "learning and teaching come into being."[3] Qualitative awareness is the bridge between our biophysical lives and our participation in symbol. Psychoanalysis recognizes this qualitative dimension as "affect," the nameless charges of somatic activity that we experience as emotion, aiming from the inner world and the self in its trajectory to another. In Dewey's view of experience, affect does not originate in the self, it radiates in the connection between the self and the world, the self and another.

In the previous chapter, we explored the dangers in conceiving the body as an object, caught in a causal chain and implicitly denied a role in conscious experience. Whatever else we might say about the body, we cannot help but acknowledge that it is the site of continuous affective response. But when we attend to the affective level, our concepts tend to melt at their edges. A felt crescendo of affect can powerfully shift attention and still thwart our efforts to give a communicable account. One of our primary reasons for seeking psychotherapy from a trained clinician is so that we become better able to interpret our shifts in the affective dimension. To recognize affect is to know the self in the present. But, in a culture that continuously discourages the effort to translate the nondiscursive we are tempted to leave it mute. As a result, desires and sufferings become opaque, outside of the system of established meanings.

Art demonstrates that we *can* refer to affect obliquely with the help of poetic allusion, metaphor, dance, abstract painting, music, and so on. The psychoanalyst and philosopher Julia Kristeva finds affective life as traceable in the "semiotic" modality of language that accounts for the infra-linguistic elements of speech and representation. In her view, it is the semiotic force that completes meaning, loading language and symbol with drive.[4] Daniel Stern, the famed developmental psychologist, calls these untranslatable yet meaningful facets of experience "vitality affects," which constitute the continuous emotional yoking of our perception. Vitality affects also, importantly, accompany every action that we witness in another, cluing us into intentions and mood even in the absence of linguistic communication.[5]

Dewey's narrative of the emergence of consciousness takes an evolutionary rather than intimate perspective, and the process from which he speculates is illustrated by efforts to cooperate as a community in a precarious environment, whereas psychoanalysts like Stern and Kristeva draw their insights from infant care and the family romance. Where Kristeva writes of "semiotic motility" and Stern writes of "vitality affects," Dewey references the "indirect consequences" of human transactions, the "impulsions" that are the various cravings of organic life, and human beings' fundamental need for meaning.[6] In each of the above accounts, life is a collaborative and libidinal affair. Recent readings of Dewey from Jim Garrison and Thomas Alexander also understand this continual search for meaning as an erotic drive.[7] While there is no single and final definition of eros, poet and classicist Anne Carson invokes it as the force that drives poetic insight, itself irreducibly multifaceted—and this is not just true for the poets, philosophy has found a nearly constant office for "eros" since Plato.[8] Dewey does not make much use of the term within his own writing, but its overtones permeate his aesthetics. In *Art as Experience* and in *Experience and Nature*, the want for meaningful consummation is undeniably eros par excellence. Consummatory experience is the direct demonstration of how affective meaning can be communicated without loss, and provides us with our only genuine possibility of sharing experience holistically with another. Psychoanalysis, particularly as it is interpreted later by commentators such as Julia Kristeva and Daniel Stern, recognizes the threat to meaningful interaction, and undertakes a similar search for recovery of meaning for a subject. Where analysis traces suffering and sublimation in the conflict between repression and drive, Dewey follows the "silent logic" of quality as we unfold an experience in search of its consummatory close. Erotic attention does not always lead to rapturous pleasure, and likewise, aesthetic experience is not always pleasurable, but it *is* revelatory.

Thomas Alexander defines "eros" as the urge of the human psyche toward a full experience of meaning, and it is from a Deweyan perspective that he reflects on the ways that human beings work together to transform a biophysical environment into a "world" filled with meaning.[9] The eros that begins in the infant's search for care continues in a constant project of attunement between the self and the world and allows us to form communities that are joined through common interests.[10] Working together for the sake of a shared idea is erotically charged, even if eros is not taken as the defining character of the experience. Our shared environment solicits our adjustment, and when our relationship to the world is deepened we feel it as *rewarding* rather than simply pleasurable. Alexander writes of these shared environments as "aesthetic orders," which provide us with "an interpretive horizon within which we encounter and realize our humanity in acts of expressive communication."[11] We are in agreement here, but a comparison with a psychoanalytic account of meaning gives us a better sense of the depth of the intimate and visceral stakes in an account of meaning, and the specific role of the body in its formation.

What has been left mute in Alexander's work are the more familiar understandings of the word "eros," which are not separate from the philosophical employment that he intends. The aesthetic order that is the purview of lovers likewise presents an illustrative paradigm experience for eros. Our affective attunement is not merely to the qualitative horizons of the world at large, it is primarily to one another. If eros is a pull toward a *mutually inhabited* world, so it is always a pull toward one another, and demands that we experience meaning *through* each other. Engaging the imagination to see possibilities implies sociality and new possibilities of intercourse. Sexual fulfillment is not merely a matter of securing pleasure for oneself, it also realizes our ability to temporarily transcend or expand beyond the boundaries that seemed to separate the self from another. Without a collaborator (even one that is implied, intended, or imagined) the erotic pull is devitalized, the world becomes merely physical, and the project of meaning is incomplete. But in the mode of connection with another, I see the world as deepened in its allure through its potential as a shared one. Erotic perception allows us to inhabit the perspective of another through the arc of shared embodied responsiveness—this is the vital difference between good sex and mere release, between consummation and concession.[12]

In this chapter, although eros is understood in a wider sense than the sexual desire for a particular other, I will allow the paradigmatic example of eros to retain its alignment with its classical history: eros incarnate. Sexual longing can be powerful, profound, and has the potential to develop rich and revelatory consummation. It requires no wild interpretive leap to read sex into every page of *Art as Experience*—and the use of "consummation" suggests that Dewey may well have it in mind as a model. In pursuing the creature in its *aesthetic* life, we have much to gain from an analysis of how eros functions to support meaningful exchange in a sexual context. Eros is applicable to any attempt to connect and share experience—including the portion that belongs to the tacit, ineffable register. The sharing of intimate experiences in private life reacquaints us with our preverbal selves, but the artistic achievements that address themselves to a public are no less driven by eros, and these will sediment to become the fertile soil of a culture, present with us in every pursuit. At both ends of the spectrum, eros arcs, connecting us with the immediate, embodied richness of aesthetic experience.

Ideally "good sex" would automatically imply an encounter that is fulfilling and enriching for both members, but in actual fact, this isn't an omnipresent ideal. In our cultural present there is a concerning tendency to dismiss the preconditions of consent and respect as unreasonable expectations, although these are the minimal requirements for legal, non-abusive sex. And consent alone is insufficient to secure the additional recognition of those subtleties that are also essential for enriching sexual interactions; for example, a preparedness to obtain "consent" from our sexual partners does not also guarantee that they will try to imaginatively inhabit our experiences. Is it too much to hope that our partner will extend sensitive awareness beyond the borders of their own epidermis? In sexual encounters, will we be seen as having depth and complexity that differentiates us from objects of use? To expect that sex be a shared experience is to expect that it be an aesthetic experience, transformative, and revelatory. What most women have known for quite some time has become abundantly, publicly clear: good sex, that is, sex that is communicative and shared, is disturbingly rare. A 2015 study published by the National Institute of Health found that 30 percent of women compared to 7 percent of men experience pain during intercourse, and "large proportions" do not report this pain to their partners.[13] When men report a "bad" sexual experience, they often mean that it was boring. When women report that a sexual experience was "bad," they often mean that it was coercive, painful, or dehumanizing. Of course, these are cultural ills that must demand recognition as belonging to a larger system of misogyny. However, and likely relatedly, this is also a crisis of communication and a crisis of eros. We do not emphasize those resources that aid us in sharing immediate experience and perceiving erotically.

THE CRISIS OF HUMAN CONTACT

In *Eros the Bittersweet,* Anne Carson's touchstone work on the poetic imagination, we follow a series of impressions and analyses from Sappho through Virginia Woolf. In her exploration of Sappho's fragments, she presents eros as an emotional paradox, as a powerful force that splits the mind. It is a drive that seduces us as an ecstatic longing, a call to exceed our present and familiar experiences for the sake of something new and powerful. The lyric poets rendered it as a "dilemma of body and senses."[14] For the Greeks, she says, the act of love and sex was a mingling "of the boundaries of the body, categories of thought are confounded" as the borders between self and other give way in a heady confusion of the pleasure of fulfillment and the pain of uncertainty, as the self destabilizes.[15] This is why, according to Carson, Eros is sometimes rendered in classical poetry as an enemy. It is both a threat and a promise. The power of erotic longing is an alteration that threatens the identity with dissolution, but entices with the fulfillment of desire. Eros entails risk.

Carson reads Sappho's most famous fragment 31, "φαίνεταί μοι" (He seems to me) as an exegesis of what *erōs* does to the psyche. The poem is sometimes read as relating the watching of a jealous lover, but Carson rejects this reading as beneath the complexity of Sappho's poetic deftness. The poem is about the effect of *Eros* on the psyche. The man who "seems equal to the gods" is not enviable, he is hardened and oblivious to the rare beauty before him, as if he were a god, or a stone. He listens to the "lovely laughing" and "sweet speaking" of the woman before him and fails to be affected at all. The poet, on the other hand, is entirely vulnerable to the beauty of the woman before her. Eros *is* threatening to the warrior who must never let his guard down, as it is also threatening to the stasis of order in general, but it completely dissolves the poet—her senses, her language, and her place in the world. She is vulnerable to her beloved, and her boundaries are confounded and her speech is silent, but insofar as she is a poet, Sappho is not static and frozen in the order of the world. The poet has a lifeline that the static, stony hero lacks. "Desire moves," Carson says, "Eros is a verb."[16]

In the previous chapter the porousness of the body in aesthetic experience was weighed against the objectified body of epistemic consciousness that defends itself by means of a boundary, a gap between itself and other objects. In Carson's treatment, erotic experiences are precisely crises of boundaries. (This is fitting, since one of the major tropes of Greek culture is the respect and care for limits—the limit between the public and private, between the mortals and the gods, the limits of states and justice.)[17] When we are infants we are obsessed with the boundaries of things because they frustrate and defy us in our exploration, and in romantic passion, we are similarly frustrated by the border that separates the self from the desired other. Our selfhood is in some ways the effect of some border that delimits what is "me," and the "what" of my desire exists because some border decrees it as well. But eros is the urge to dissolve the boundary between me and the personage of my desire, to merge us so that we finally might be together—seemingly as we belong, at least for the moment. As we are overtaken by eros, we become aware of our borders *and* their porosity. It is thrilling to be permeable, it allows us to draw some things in and to send away others; but an erotic encounter could signal lush growth or a devastating loss of vital parts of the self.

Carson notes that at the cusp of the meeting of boundaries when lovers couple, which really becomes a blurring of boundaries in the act of love, there is "an instinctive and mutual sensitivity."[18] Carson calls it *aidōs*, which she translates as "shamefastness," a "sort of voltage of decorum discharged between two people approaching one another for the crisis of human contact."[19] It comes up between lovers particularly because they know that the boundaries between human beings that, under normal circumstances, keep us at a respectful distance from one another may be breached in sexual contact. We are exhilarated as the prospect of our susceptibility comes to the fore. The moment before contact is charged, the gulf that separates us into selves warps and staggers, and eros and *aidōs* arc palpably to form the necessary intimacy. The way boundaries play into eros as a force is key, because revealing and meeting one another in experience requires both a respect for boundaries and a relinquishing of them.

The ancient Greek work *erōs* denotes both "want" and "lack."[20] Carson tells us that *Eros* presents an interesting dilemma, long lingered over by philosophers and poets, ancient and modern.[21] Though the wanting itself might be uncomfortable as it throws boundaries into uncertainty, erotic longing is also pleasant for us as the awareness of sensation is heightened and the world is thrown into a new relief, charged with possible new meanings, and awareness benefits from a new energy. If the world has gone lifeless and dull, desire makes it interesting again. But wanting is only possible as a state of not-having, and entirely closing the gap between the self and the object of desire would bring an end to this moment of possibility. *Eros* is bittersweet, but it is also a delicious tension hovering between presence and absence, and it is *eros* only if it is active.

The erotic context has a texture and a mood that is unique to each encounter—in other words, each rendezvous has a unique and pervasive quality. There is an indefinite tone that is nevertheless enacted and developed through the shared gestures, caresses, and susurrations of sexual activity. Good sex is emotionally rich and complex; what one feels and wants may be communicated in ways that are subtle and nuanced, or overt and direct, but always laden with imagination. Some boundaries are never crossed, others are pushed readily aside, some are left in question, or else gently or insistently explored. Anticipation builds and rhythms are passed back and forth between lovers as expressions of desire or affection that develop as the experience unfolds. Sex may be either a simple or an elaborate affair, accompanied by studied rituals or guileless candor. There are countless possibilities for sexual connection, and specific sexual practices and acts have given rise to a symbolic intricacy that verges on the kind of discursive complexity that could ground a whole field of study. We can particularly see the continuity between the affective seeking of pleasure and symbols or icons when they are displayed as an array in the sexual subcultures that have flourished in queer and fetish communities. And yet, even amid these cultural cornucopias, the central dimension of sex is an immediate good that is *had*, directly felt, and itself irreducible to symbol. These examples demonstrate how discourse stands in relation to meaning and experience: the symbols and signs point to selected features of experience, aid in the development of the interaction, but can only ever insinuate the immediate good for whose sake they are invoked. Within the extreme intimacy of a bonded pair, sexual practices have meanings with a semiotic force of their own within the intimate situation, that invoke but do not define the core reality of a relationship that is at once infinitely complex, directly *had*, and *known*.[22] But the single most important requirement for the meaningfulness of the encounter, and for the successful culmination of erotic desire, is that the experience be shared.

The lovers' embrace is the continuation of a history of exchanges and intimations that intensifies and deepens in the erotic melting of boundaries. The gestures, glances, and invitations are interactions that occur on every layer of our human nature. The lovers "do" and "undergo" together, they "have" and "enjoy" meanings in their present immediacy, together. They "do," in Dewey's technical sense of *doings* as activity that makes a difference, as in lovers "make" love, they enact, they work with the material of one another's bodies and voices as "active" participants. But just as they are active, they must also be "appreciative, perceiving, enjoying," undergoing an experience, taking on the role of the other in imagination.[23] Such experiences must be principally understood as candidates for aesthetic experience *par excellence* insofar as we understand, following Dewey, that aesthetic experiences are well balanced between the doing and the undergoing: "The doing may be energetic, and the undergoing may be acute and intense. But unless they are related to each other to form a whole in perception, the thing done is not fully esthetic." If the artist does not inhabit the present situation as qualitatively unique, if they "[do] not perfect a new vision in [their] process of doing, [they act] mechanically and repeats some old model fixed like a blueprint in his mind," a disappointment for sure.[24] Allowing the affective quality to select and guide experience demands "an incredible amount of observation and of the kind of intelligence that is exercised in perception of qualitative relations," and cannot be merely technical demonstrations or emotional wallowing. For sex to be erotic, for the promise of shared meaning to be sustained, this balance must be unrelentingly pursued.

Of course, sex is not always Erotic—it is often pornographic, made for entertainment or advertisement. When sex is pornographic, the meaning of sexual acts is *not* negotiated by the semiotic force of what is immediately "had," but is determined by what can be performed, what can be won, and at whose expense. Pornography is a means to an end, and the end is external to the encounter that is represented. Erotic sex is governed by the felt experience of the participants, pornographic sex is governed by the opportunity for profit. The complication that sex is represented in our culture by the rules of the latter obscures the role of the former in experience. Sex "sells." But what is sold isn't the genuine article; it is generally a vision of power, status, or mastery. Of course, it is not impossible to artistically convey an erotic experience in principle—the reader will probably be able to bring a number of films, songs, paintings, and photographs to mind that fit the bill—but it is substantially more likely that the work produced within an entertainment industry will tend toward the pornographic. Well-done erotic art must play by the rules of artistry rather than business.

The intimate scene of sex is a good example of the aesthetic phase of experience, particularly insofar as such experiences realize aesthetic culmination in a very concrete form, but eros has much more work to do for lovers than to bring them together for sexual satisfactions. The ardor that is nourished in courtship may deepen into trust. If eros makes the body and mind porous and vulnerable, susceptibility is developed into a capacity to accept the essential nourishment of attachment. Eros may lead lovers to sex, but eros is the desire to share our felt experiences with another, to verify that this world is a shared world and so also a meaningful world. It is the sense that what may be "felt" and "had" immediately can also be communicated in a confirmation of our shared immanent reality. The desire for connectedness is deeper than consciousness and requires more than our symbolic structures can support. Eros moves us, but it also shifts our symbolic world. Eros draws us into the aesthetic.

VITALITY AFFECTS AND THE EMERGENT SELF

In the ninth chapter of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey announced that he has found "a problem so deep-seated and far-reaching that it may be said to be *the* problem of experience." Human intelligence, when it has identified a problem and embarks on inquiry, separates its activities into cause and effect, means and ends, that which is utilized and that which is enjoyed. However, experience is not complete simply because we come to the object that resolves the inquiry. The task remains to connect the process that takes us from means and ends into unified *meanings*. "When the task is achieved, the result is art: and in art everything is common between means and ends." The problem of experience is "converting physical and brute relationships into connections of meanings characteristic of the possibilities of nature."[25] We find nature in the brute relationships between ourselves and everything else, qualities in their immediacy. When we are supported by an aesthetic order, we can develop them into objects, symbols, and stories.

The "characteristic human need" to possess and appreciate meanings is the principle of our growth. All human activity, in its political, social, scientific, philosophic, and biological dimensions, attempts to answer this need. The need to experience the world as meaningful, to resolve the inchoate into the coherent, and to have lives that explore actualities in terms of their possibilities, propels us into constant minute exchanges with one another. While we tend to emphasize meanings as signified, we do not begin our lives by experiencing them this way. What prefigures signification, and must ground it, is affective sensual awareness. Meaning must be *felt,* had and undergone, in a way that is primarily qualitative rather than primarily cognitive. At core, the self is not verbal or rational. It *is* affective and inquisitive.

Thomas Alexander, whose work has been central in establishing Dewey's contribution to "ecological pragmatism," appeals to "eros" to underline the nonseparation between nature and culture, not merely as an implication from Darwinian principles, but as a manifest feature of our lived condition. We are born into environments that are already worlds because we are cared for by adults who have already been nourished by a culture. We are surrounded, sheltered, and guided through a system of meanings that helps us navigate an environment to satisfy our vital needs. In this way, "culture is presupposed in our biological existence." Every infantile need that is met with care comprises the child's sense of the world and builds into the "infant's prereflective history of desire," which will continue to have resonance for our sense of the world well into maturity.[26] A child also transforms the culture of the couple into the culture of a family. Raising a child calls forth a long process of development on the part of every member of the family. Alexander calls this the “aesthetics of human relationships” in which we learn to secure and deepen relationships through the discipline of care. The discipline of care thus lies at the foundation of the self and the manner in which it comes to share the world. These are basic, foundational experiences, without which human beings could not live at all, and through which we learn to seek fulfillment.

Infants and young children learn to attune themselves, well before they are discursive participants in the culture, to the particular idiosyncrasies of their caregivers as they simultaneously acquire and shape the culture of the family. In *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, Daniel Stern summarizes his attempts to understand preverbal experience from a psychoanalytic perspective, which are complicated by the fact that psychoanalytic theory is based upon analysis of speech. The psychoanalytic account tends to conceptualize infancy in terms of psychosexual dramas that result in the organization of drive. Desires must be satisfied in accordance with cultural restrictions, and the infant must find realistic possibilities for the satisfaction of desires that are, according to Freud, fundamentally incompatible with civilized life. The psychoanalytic narrative begins by describing a being that is determined by unrestrained desire and fantasy, but progresses to a competent, autonomous self that participates in culture only insofar as it learns to sublimate its urges into higher functioning.[27] Later, individuals may experience symptoms of psychological distress that may indicate that failures and accidents have occurred during preverbal life. These failures may result in phobias and fixations that correspond to a stage of development that is associated with a primary task, for example, orality, elimination, autonomous movement, and so forth. Psychoanalysis casts these stages as a series of crises in which drive comes into conflict with cultural inhibitions; the corresponding resolution is the discovery of a socially sanctioned pathway for discharging drive energy. Stern, however, is not primarily looking for the causes of psychopathology in infantile life, so he does not describe stages in terms of crisis. Instead, he is interested in the developmental phases in a normal, healthy infant. From this view, the tasks that the infant encounters and negotiates in its first few years of life are neither completed nor unresolved, they are continuously negotiated throughout a lifetime.[28] At the same time, Stern is wary of empirical approaches to developmental psychology because they tend to observe the infant from an adult perspective that is meaningless in terms of the felt quality of the infant’s actual experience. In other words, they treat the infant like an object. Stern looks for clues that can help us understand how the infant relates to their world.

Like psychoanalysts and empirical psychologists, Stern approaches the infant in terms of the progression of its newly learned capacities, but he argues that we ought to think of these stages of infantile development as emerging from one another, implying the retention and continued presence of the earlier senses of the self without loss. In other words, these stages are not broken into discrete arcs that end with the accomplishment of a specific task, and the emergence of a new capacity doesn't replace a previous ability, but subsumes the previous stage within it. For example, from birth to about two months of age, the infant is developing behaviors and sensitivities that Stern calls the "emergent self."[29] The infant follows an urge to test situations for stable features in order to develop expectations about kinds of experiences. The infant's experience is characterized by seeking stimulation, exhibiting preferences in sensation, and a nonseparation between affective and cognitive states. Stern argues that the infant can experience the *process* by which experience becomes organized in curiosity and perceptiveness. The experience of emergent organization implies a sensed temporal continuity, and the presence of affect. Stern specifies that this emergent self is not experiencing the "categorical" affects that we can easily name (joy, sadness, fright, anger) that are linked with specific and identifiable facial expressions. Rather, the emergent self experiences what he calls "vitality affects" that are not directly available for signification, but are easily perceivable in gestures, vocal tone and inflection. The infant can detect these in the way adults move or speak despite the fact that they lack an awareness of the content or intention of the action or words. Vitality affects are still very much a part of the adult experience, but we are still limited in our capacity to name them directly. We may allude to such feelings in poetry and painting, but they are particularly central to our experience of dance and music. We experience them as dynamic or kinetic, thus, the "attack" of pitch or the "swell" of a crescendo or the "burst" of a sforzando better approach vitality affects than words that we usually use to describe emotions.

Between the ages of two and six months the infant is occupied with developing a sense of what Stern calls a "core self." This sense of self implies the continued presence of all of the features of the "emergent" self, but represents a "quantum leap" in the integration and application of the previous features of experience. The innate drive to seek out stimulation and test experience for its commonalities and novelties is still present, but this is now accompanied by the sense of the infant's body as an integrated whole, and under the infant's own agency. The attention to affect that was characteristic of the emergent self is still unifying and guiding experience, but as the infant's ability to hold the gaze of another develops, this attention blossoms into the possibilities of seeking attunement or a refusing of attunement, and the infant now has the sense of being a self among other selves. "Selfhood" here implies that the infant has a sensed continuity of its own affective history. We can see how the advent of the "core" self with a more complex sociality is continuous with the earlier "emergent" sense, and how all of the capacities of the "emergent" self are implied in the developing "core" self. Furthermore, neither the infant nor the full adult ceases to negotiate the world in terms of the emergent self. These capacities remain with us as we navigate and connect to the world, and they continue to develop throughout the life cycle, even though they typically remain unconscious.

The "verbal" self represents the leave-taking of infancy and the transition into childhood. Language opens up new avenues for sharing experiences that were not previously possible. The ability to represent the self and to tell a story about where the self has been and what it wants commences a new era of complicated relatedness to others, and now the infant has a relatedness to itself across time. However, the development of language also interferes with experience as it is lived in its immediate, qualitative dimension. Language also introduces a level of alienation from others. Psychoanalysis sometimes treats language as the necessary precondition for intersubjectivity, but Stern tells a different story. In the earliest experiences of the infant, there is a nascent sense of the self and an interconnectedness with others on the level of affective attunement and bodily care. The arrival of language makes it possible for the child to experience situations and others as impersonal, abstract, or theoretical. The addition of language introduces a rift between the rich, qualitatively experienced world of affective attunement and the world of representation through which we typically communicate with one another. This is also the stage in which we come to see ourselves "objectively," or as available for representation in a form that is apart from our own felt experience.[30] The verbal stage may alienate the child from the enthralling sensuousness that characterized earlier experience, but the earlier stages do not atrophy. Verbal communication implies and involves the earlier orders of awareness. They remain with us, and occasionally come to the foreground of consciousness as they continue to develop and ground experience through the rest of our lives.

This all underscores the extent to which aesthetic experience, as Dewey understands it, is primary for us because it is there in the very emergence and core of the self that connects with the affective tone, the qualitative dimension of situations as it relies upon and tests its bonds with its parents. However, as we have been thinking along with Stern, we have somewhat slipped into a very different, less Deweyan usage of the word "experience" that is common to psychoanalytic and psychodynamic philosophers. These theories take "experience" to have a privileged inner character, as enclosed within the psychological apparatus of the individual, infant or otherwise. However, Dewey's concept of experience is irreducibly *transactional*. Experience occurs *between* the individual and the environment as the site of mutual adjustment, it is not enclosed within a perspective that is a private possession.

"Experience, a serial course of affairs with their own characteristic properties and relationships occurs, happens, and is what it is." We may denote selves within the mix; "natural events—including social habits—originate in thoughts and feelings" that are occasioned by and expressed through our every interaction.[31] Stern's work supports this view when he acknowledges that the "quantum leaps" that occur as the infant develops a new sense of self are just as likely to have been catalyzed by a change in the way that a caregiver interacts with the infant as a kind of internal achievement of organization, and a moment's reflection reveals that these changes must be simultaneous. An infant does not awake one morning, altered after having undergone some sort of neural update; they undeniably shift and reorganize in response to alterations in the manner in which they are treated by family members.[32] Even if it is possible to identify some probable interactive changes that are consistent with developmental shifts, it is not possible to isolate and enumerate them in terms of specific behaviors—the adjustment is a result of a qualitative shift.

Adjusting to qualitative shifts is the process by which we evolve as complicated beings whose environment includes biophysical, interpersonal, technological, political, and cultural layers. Each of these facets of human inhabitation includes shifts in qualitative experience, although it is more likely in some of these that the qualitative will escape our experience. In each, eros is present insofar as interaction aspires to be meaningful, both affectively engaging and potentially expansive. Even in the mundane, and the tedious, depth and resonance are given through the promise of mutual influence and the possibility of adjustment toward the better. To the extent that we are sensitive beings, what is otherwise alienated or obscured by discursive habits can be redeemed by affective ones.

SEMIOTIC RESOURCES

The verbal self that is caught up in a linguistic world is, to a degree, alienated from its immediate and felt experience, but it is not without resources for communicating the felt dimension. One might judge that communication is successful and that language is meaningful when symbols contain a reference to a specifiable object. Meaning would then be the effect of a successful connection between a symbol and a referent so that the grammatical subject is clear in terms of its relation to the object. Or, we might judge communication and meaning as something that occurs when two individuals understand something about one another that is significant to a shared experience. We should not think of these two modes of communication as mutually exclusive. In fact, one often implies the other—just as the aesthetic character of an experience does not preclude that experience from also having a scientific character, or vice versa. For a scientist "there exists a fulfilling and consummatory quality, for conclusions sum up and perfect the conditions that lead up to them."[33] To categorize an experience as scientific or aesthetic is a matter of which part of the experience receives our emphasis. Meaning is there in transactions between at least two parties that share some dimension of a symbolic world. But identifying meaning as belonging to the formal structure of language obscures the intersubjective reality that occasions it. This is the basic idea behind Kristeva's work.

Making use of Lacan's theorized split between "the subject of the statement" and the "subject of the utterance," Kristeva theorized the symbolic and the semiotic as two modalities of language that, taken together, produce meaning. According to Lacan, the subject of the statement is allied with the ego, or the person that the subject consciously takes themselves to be. When the subject speaks, insofar as we attend to the letter of the statement, we are attending to the conscious intention of the speaker. This egoic subject is also the subject that makes a claim to objectivity. On the other hand, the subject of the *utterance*, spoken language in its acoustical occurrence, contains the embodied, sensorial elements of speech.[34] These include tone, gesture, false starts, stammers, mumbles, pauses, inflection, and other components of speech that are not necessarily planned by the speaker. The subject of the utterance is more closely allied with the unconscious because this is where accidents and slips of the tongue occur that may reveal the intention of the speaker behind their constructed self-presentation. The sensorial aspects of language *exceed* the consciously intended meaning of the statement. Kriseva adds to this theory the insight that the statement corresponds to the "symbolic" modality of language, in which signification and syntax provide a structure that can point to and organize experience into discrete and ordered objects; however, the subject of the utterance, who proffers language its tonal and rhythmic components, its allusions and suggestiveness, its play between consonance and assonance, provides language with its necessary "semiotic" component. Because the utterance is accomplished on the level of the body, drive and affect infuse language with its infra-linguistic elements, and it is this dimension of language that gives it its potential to be metaphorical, poetic, suggestive, and *convincing*. In other words, it is the musical elements of speech that allow us to connect with another as present and available when we encounter a complex but unified whole—dynamic, corporeal, and in process.[35]

Kristeva's development of the subject-in-process who discloses themselves through the semiotic elements of speech provides some insight on the significance of immediate experience as it is explored in American philosophy: American life is suffering from a cultural malady that overemphasizes the symbolic modality of language at the expense of the semiotic, and sanctions a theoretical or objectifying consciousness at the expense of the qualitative immediate. This is not merely the effect of a cultural paradigm that is determined by industrial and technological innovation, it is also deepened by the products of that very paradigm. The ultra-modern devices that increasingly mediate our communication strip the infra-linguistic elements of language. Largely hollow snippets of commentary, valued for their brevity and irony, now constitute the bulk of our social interaction. Text messages, GIFs, memes, and tweets are sent and consumed with an alarming rapidity. They make brief and disconnected impressions within our awareness, and are forgotten, never having passed into reflective thought. More disturbing than the speed with which we notice and forget communiques is the extent to which we live in an illusory world in which people are only ever identified with their statements, drained of their immediate and sensorial qualities. The occasions on which we encounter them as dynamic, present, others in living environments are increasingly infrequent.

Technological advancements in communication technology provide us with "live" updates and "meetings" enhanced by video conferencing software, promising endless new avenues through which we can "connect" with one another despite physical and spatial barriers. These enhancements to our communicative reach are convenient and have greatly expanded our potential to collaborate in an age that has included a long, interruptive pandemic. There was a time when the internet largely democratized access to cultural artifacts and current events, but our curiosity and our loneliness has since been weaponized by social media companies that have skillfully monetized our engagement. In the world that is increasingly digitized, the "subject" of psychoanalysis and the "live creature" of Dewey's aesthetic realm is converted into a "user" by the data stream. Data-based communiques are drained of the sensorial, immediate elements of corporeal others, they are also limited in their potential for aesthetic resonance and imaginative identification. The semiotic modality is suppressed in these communicative formats because we do not have the benefit of the vitality affects that would otherwise accompany social and political interactions. However, because when we communicate we consider ourselves as primarily *verbal* beings, rather than the aesthetic beings that we are, we tend to feel isolated and disconnected *without knowing what we're missing.* The erotic need for meaningful connection is still there, but it is misdirected and stunted as we reach for satisfaction in devices that promise instant interactive gratification. The connection that in another age we would have found at the corner bar, the village church, the agora, the town hall, is increasingly replaced with the connectivity of data transfer. Perception, led by unconscious desire, still gropes for a world, but it is now appropriated and rendered by algorithmic spies, reduced to the preferences and tendencies that can be captured by a browser history. Habits are no longer understood as readinesses for action in a vital organic world, they are the relative probability that a particular marketing tactic will induce us to buy a product. The body persists, with its sympathies and affective responses, but it is further removed from awareness as we devote our attention to virtual rather than lived experience. We have not ceased to *undergo* experience, but the distinctive property of aesthetic experience that supports the mutual adjustment between the self and the environment is the balance between *having* an experience and *knowing* it, and it seems less likely that we are doing either particularly effectively.

Kristeva's vision of signification as a *process* that involves the whole subject amounts to a rehabilitation of the affective, embodied self as reunited with the verbal self. When our verbal exchanges are semiotically charged with the sensorial dimensions of the utterance, we are offered the possibility of coherence in two senses: first, with the inclusion of the semiotic elements of language we are able to interpret beyond linguistic denotation to the affective context as it is felt by the speaker, and secondly we are drawn into a unified attention through a sympathetic identification with the felt experience of another.[36] Dewey says of language that it is "participative": we put ourselves "at the standpoint of a situation in which two parties share," and we respond to speech that takes the relationship of the other to world into account. When we are heard by another, it demonstrates to us in an immediate way *that we are intelligible*.[37] Insofar as the speech of another is embodied with the qualitative immediacy of the live creature, the interaction expands with imaginative possibilities for collaborative action, and we can see that reality is a collaborative effort.

In our erotic selves, we are better at drawing the symbolic into an accord with the ineffable qualitative and allowing these registers to be experienced without friction. The unconscious, as it is presented by Freud, confronts us as the dark and mysterious source of pathology, and exploring it can be perilous. However, in the noncognitive dimensions of the self that are available to us in Stern, Kristeva, and Dewey, there are pathways for making the nondiscursive communicable, which ought to soften the accompanying dread. This is why new meanings emerge in the aesthetic realm. The artist, following the silent logic of selective interest, has the power to restore continuities between past and present, sensuous and symbolic, familiar and fantastic. What was previously hidden in experience, that which lay below the level of explicit consciousness or buried within the flesh, comes finally into relevance. "Through art, meanings of objects that are otherwise dumb, inchoate, restricted, and resisted are clarified and concentrated, and not by thought working laboriously upon them, nor by escape into a world of mere sense, but by creation of a new experience."[38]

THE "PRODUCT" OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

At its core, what links the desires for sex and art is not a need for mere expression, or worse still, some kind of mindless discharge of organic tension. Although this is a frequently held commonplace opinion, aesthetic expressivism, the notion that works of art are primarily produced in order to "express" the inner emotions of the artist, has also enjoyed some reign as a prevalent philosophical aesthetic theory. The most famous proponents of this theory include Benedetto Croce and R. G. Collingwood. This mistake about human activity, when taken naively, is also a misunderstanding about the nature of sex that has some disturbing cultural ramifications. This again comes from the idea that people have boundaries separating themselves from a world, and that tension builds within the individual rather than the environment. The individual (who is always male, always referred to as "he") is encouraged to "express" in order to relieve tension, ease his mind, and achieve catharsis. Dewey refers to this as mere egotism.[39] The aesthetic unconscious does not obey Freud's pleasure principle, in which all activity seeks merely to discharge excitation. It is an inevitable exploration of the condition of our relationship with the world. This relationship implies a culture, a common coastal shelf of habits and symbols from which we draw to form our explicit beliefs and practices. Culture forms the very basis of our action with the biological habitats around us, and includes the search for consummations, which are moments of reconnection between the organism and the environment. The distinction between the "useful" and the "beautiful," the "biological" and the "psychological" is abolished when we understand ourselves as complex beings situated within complex ecologies. Not everything that human beings do is art, not every action restores our equilibrium with the surrounding environment, but these are the inherent possibilities in every human practice. The analogy between art and sex is meant partially as a demonstration that aesthetic experience is not limited to art, but those practices that aspire to "art" from the outset are not artifice, they are attempts to better inhabit the world.

Dewey is often counted among the pragmatists, but he is uneasily related to pragmatism, particularly in his theory of art. Pragmatism is concerned with how our philosophical concepts play out in the world of human action. Pragmatism aims at the integration of ends with means which entails an intelligent critique of the ends we have chosen. It must not be, however, a utilitarian orientation toward the world, a position with which pragmatism is easily mistaken. As an export, pragmatism has not been reduced to practicality. Abroad, pragmatism is largely an approach to philosophy as the engine of social change and tends to reorient theoretical efforts to praxis. This orientation has developed a fallibilist, anti-Cartesian resistance to epistemic violence, and a renewed sense that the essence of the political consists of praxis rather than theory.[40] There is the emphatic belief that a vision of an improved community is not enough, it must be lived through in action and revised. Dewey's thought is well put to either of these purposes, but he aims beyond questioning the means (actions) to get what we desire, he also believes we must recover a method of questioning the desire. A human life does not aim at simple expediency; it aims for comprehensive fulfillment. Dewey thinks that art comes as the realization that through activity experience can come to embody more and more meaning—it is not more *activity* that is the goal, but more *meaning*.

There is a widespread attitude that sees aesthetic concerns as merely fanciful, extraneous to intelligent, political conduct. Aesthetic concerns are delayed or treated with a dismissiveness that goes unquestioned. It is as if our reason and our praxis would suffer or sacrifice their seriousness through dissimulation or embellishment. However, if we follow Dewey's suggestion that we take aesthetic experience as paradigmatic for experience in general, and if we view our intimate contact with the world as fueled by erotic perception, we end up serving the ends of both inquiry and praxis. Social goods are realized only through securely emphatic attachments to a community that stands to benefit from our efforts. Erotic attachment and aesthetic fulfillment are both phases of political experience, they contain the spark of revolution or recommitment. When we recognize this, we are in a better position to see the way that art invites us to question those desires that ground our inquiry and practice. Restoring these continuities yields intellectual honesty, and renews critical reflection. The kind of pragmatic integration that we're after is optimally achievable in the aesthetic register because it helps us restore continuities between our desires, our ideals, and our actions. Aesthetic experience engages in relationships directly.

Consider the following discussion of "impulsion" and "boundaries" in chapter 4 of *Art as Experience*: Dewey calls impulsion "a movement outward and forward of the organism," and a "craving" which he compares to the heliotropism of plants as the sensitive leaves slowly turn toward or away from light.[41] The impulsions proceed from the need of the whole organism, to the things that belong to its being, despite and often because of resistances, and from the whole self an energy is called that transforms materials into media of expression. What occurs is a "transformation of energy into thoughtful action, through assimilation of meanings from the background of past experiences."[42] Eros works well as a translation of "impulsion" in part because of its dynamic flow, but also because of how it functions with boundaries.

> Refusal to acknowledge the boundaries set by convention is the source of frequent denunciations of objects of art as immoral. But one of the functions of art

> is precisely to sap the moralistic timidity that causes the mind to shy away from some materials and refuse to admit them into the clear and perceptive light of purifying consciousness. The interest of an artist is the only limitation placed on the use of material, and this limitation is not restrictive. It but states a trait inherent in the work of the artist, the necessity of sincerity; the necessity that he shall not fake and compromise.[43]

The desire that governs interest and promises sincerity is the allegiance that yields effective art. We know artworks are good when they move us powerfully: we feel them as having a cohesive and singular mood. In order for a work to be good, it must also challenge or reach us on some level; after we experience the work, something must shift for us. These shifts, known to Dewey as "consummations," occur as the relationships of nature find a new balance. They are feelings of growth. "The perceiver, as well as the artist, has to perceive, meet, and overcome problems" in order for meaning to complete its process. "In order to perceive aesthetically, he must remake his past experiences so that they can enter integrally into a new pattern." He cannot dismiss them or dwell among them as they were. Eros is both the dissolver of boundaries and the builder of form.

Insofar as an artist is sincere, they faithfully trust an erotic impulse that has not yet been given shape, that may actually prove to be corrosive or in opposition to the extant rules and symbols.

> Impulsion beyond all limits that are externally set inheres in the very nature of the artist's work. It belongs to the very character of the creative mind to reach out and seize any material that stirs it so that the value of that material may be pressed out and become the matter of a new experience.[44]

Not unlike Freud's conception, the eros that we find in Dewey's theory of art flouts the established norms governing reason. The unconscious has a "silent logic" that is prior to the patterns that are established and employed by explicit consciousness. It is precisely this labile nature that gives art its social and political potency. Decorum be damned; when art has caught the scent and the texture of a moment that is ripe for our full attention, the artist will demand that we give it. The capacity that impulse has to detect a social concern that has not yet been expressed in words makes it indispensable for our attempts to detect and redress failures in the public world—a feature of aesthetic experience that will be explored in the following chapters.

Dewey's terminology can be misleading. What we generally refer to as "artworks," Dewey will refer to as "art products." This is because he says that the "work" of art is what it does with and in experience, while the "product" of art is the external and physical thing that is produced by an artist. He employs this distinction to discourage us from imbuing *pieces* of art with quasi-religious value, thus impeding our ability to recognize their connection with the experiences that occasioned them. However, it is difficult to separate the word "product" from a thing that is packaged and sold on the market for a profit—particularly given that Dewey tells us that aesthetic activities are governed by "interest." Dewey's theory is contrary to the thought that art somehow implies a market, or that our artistic exploits are ploys for profit. Dewey saw the pursuit of profit for private gain as working in direct opposition to the actual ends of art—the personal financial considerations that drive mass production, advertisement, and mere spectacle are narrow and sharp. They are packaged to appease us, not to develop our freedom.[45]

The effect of those "arts" that are deployed in the service of capitalist interest is not to deepen and enrich experience, it is to entertain and distract. What we colloquially understand as "products" are not the outcome of erotic perception, they are the result of a compartmentalizing consciousness that proffers a shallow substitution to stall and interrupt the work of the imagination. That is why so much of our experience with mass media, popular music, and fast fashion leaves us feeling empty as soon as we spend our money or our time on them. They have appropriated aspects of sensual consciousness but have left it divorced from the critical consciousness that would otherwise complete the experience. Not unlike the cheaply produced and easily procured, shelf-stable "junk" food that momentarily satisfies hunger, but fails to nourish us, the supposedly "aesthetic" objects that are generally sold as such ultimately do not unify experience so much as rend it. We do not have a sense of having learned anything, and our relationship to our social realities is not reconfigured.

On the other hand, genuine artistic invention is inescapably political because erotic perception is sensitive to the first intimations of the suffering that results from repressive and exploitative policies. The failure of a public to integrate within itself and within its environment is affectively had before it is critically known. Art, with its capacity to communicate the direct, qualitative level of experience, clues us into problems before they become a matter of public discourse. Artworks demonstrate and direct us to the failures of the public to support and allow meaningful experience. This is true whether or not an artist has the intention to make a political point or not—the political situation is preserved and included in the work of art by virtue of the fact that successful art stabilizes and communicates experience as a whole. Art always reveals the current social and political climate because the impulsion of the artist does not conform to the morality of the establishment. Art is social criticism, whether it wants to be or not.

Aesthetic consummations are necessary for a community to make adjustments and integrate experience, but they are not guaranteed to be plentiful or frequent. The above discussion about connectivity and connection was first written in early 2019. As I write these words now, it is 2021, and the world has been beleaguered by a pandemic during nearly the entire course of my writing. These frustrations with the digital world have become a common sentiment: the connectivity that allows us to practice the "social distancing" technique to slow the spread of the virus is a blessing and a sorrow. There is an upshot, if we allow ourselves to see the actual present in the light of the possible. Although the threat of disease has been exceptionally profitable for tech companies, it is becoming increasingly clear that connection is a resource that cannot really be commodified. It is painfully obvious that we need each other in the flesh. We have an urgent need to establish habits that protect us from an increasingly disposable, shallow, incorporeal culture that severs our verbal selves from our affective lives. If we do not cultivate our erotic intelligence, we risk losing our capacity for sincerity and our speech will feel unconvincing, devolving into the ironic but mirthless tennis of meme culture.

As David Foster Wallace charged more than two decades ago, insidious irony is one of the more distasteful features of postmodernity that has plagued culture at nearly every level.[46] From the sardonic fiction of Don DeLillo to the flippant pop-art of Jeff Koons, the late twentieth century found it banal that we should want art to mean anything at all. There has been a shift in perceptions about how art is supposed to work, he writes, "a transition from art's being a creative instantiation of real values to art's being a creative instantiation of deviance away from bogus values." The expectation of earnestness is outdated, and the custom of candor is as clichéd as the search for truth. The contemporary scholar, like the contemporary consumer, is praised for their disillusionment with whatever presents itself as authentic. Increasingly, cleverness has replaced poignancy as the primary goal of art and philosophy alike. Cleverness becomes the measure and standard for all of culture where we are not expected to "have" experiences, but to "know" them, where immediacy and ineffability are sacrificed at the altar of perpetual control and clarity. Perfect explicitness, in the end, cuts us off from the root of meaning.

Despite the trend in our habits toward distraction and disillusionment, eros will have its say, one way or another. Psychoanalysis warns of "the return of the repressed." Freud says that that the material of the unconscious is indestructible, and whatever we fail to attend to will appear, one way or another, in conscious life. It is clear that we have symptoms: we are suffering in our alienation from our core needs. At the same time, a symptom is evidence that our affective life, however we ignore it, does call out to make itself known. Eros tends to be most acute when we sense the potential to recover or to consummate experiences that have remained in our latent memories as interrupted or unfinished. Dewey writes that "moments and places . . . are charged with accumulations of long-gathering energy" of stored childhood nostalgia or trauma.[47] Every environment that calls to us in terms of its quality deepens the content of a personal history that carries the past into the air and colors the moment with the possibility of growth and renewal. It is the lure of the environment that draws us to become active participants in any kind of project, and these signals may be the subtlest feelings, sensuous petitions from the fringe. The interplay of light and sound, the grain of surfaces and the mood of days, is available to be explored because we are curious and hungry for shared meaning and value. We can be impelled to immerse ourselves in a shared world only on the basis of a promise that there is the possibility of genuine sharing. At every moment the human being, at the deepest layers of the self, is working to attune itself to the world. The conscious ego can either work alongside this depth, or work to refuse it.

NOTES

1. John Dewey, LW 10: 19–20.

2. Ibid., 23.

3. LW 1: 200, 132–33.

4. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

5. Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant* (London: Karnac, 1998), 52–60.

6. LW 10: chapter 9.

7. Thomas Alexander, *The Human Eros* (New York: Fordham, 2013). Jim Garrison has also discovered "eros" at work within Dewey's philosophy in *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Heart of Teaching* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2010).

8. Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

9. Alexander, *The Human Eros*, 5, 11.

10. Ibid., 148.

11. Ibid., 151.

12. In chapter 5 of *Experience and Nature*, Dewey puts forth that the basic requirements of communication, quite before grammar and syntax, are that we respond to one another *from the other's standpoint*. We perceive the things that our communicative partners intend in experience "instead of just ego-centrically." And we only address ourselves to others who could conceivably understand and grasp our meaning. "To understand is to anticipate together," which "brings about a partaking in a common, inclusive, undertaking." The heart of language is not "'expression' of something which is antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in any activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership," LW 1: 141.

13. D. Herbendick, V. Schick, S. A. Sanders, M. Reece, and J. D. Fortenberry, "Pain Experienced during Vaginal and Anal Intercourse with Other-Sex Partners:

Findings from a Nationally Representative Probability Study in the United States," *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, no. 4, April 12, 2015, 1040–51.

14. Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 7.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 17.

17. Ibid., 30.

18. Ibid., 21.

19. Ibid., 20.

20. The earliest mentions of the word we find in ancient Greek come from Homer, which could easily mean desire for a woman or for food and drink, and then in Hesiod as a primordial god. The adjectives *eranos, erateinos, eratos,* could be applied to people and mean "lovely" or "attractive." But, in the seventh century BC, the connotation of *erōs* becomes exclusively sexual, and often, at certain quantities would result in a "madness." Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 43–46.

Sometimes, "Erōs" referred specifically to the presence of the deity, and would be felt as an assault or a disarmament for divine purposes. The personification of *Erōs* as a major inconvenience may partially have been the result of the *nomoi* (laws, customs) that kept citizen men and the daughters, wives, sisters, and widows of these citizens strictly separated, thus, love is not celebrated as wonderful, but as a dangerous inconvenience that threatens not only the boundaries of the self, but the boundaries of the social order. This threat to the segregation of the sexes in Athenian society aside, *erōs* was also reserved by the Greeks to mean very strong response to stimuli, a desire that borders on obsession for only the one particular thing that would satisfy that craving. "Love" is *philia* while *erōs* implies a particular preoccupation with the singular object of one's affections and the need for its satisfaction.

21. Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in The Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994), 141, 210–12. Carson mentions Lacan and Sartre as philosophers who emphasize the dilemma of Eros, the inevitability of satisfaction and the infinite demand of the erotic.

22. In Kristeva's sense of the semiotic, and not Saussure's. For Kristeva, there are two modalities, or dimensions, of meaning. Communicative discourse with syntax and propositional content belongs to the "symbolic" modality, and the nondiscursive, connotative dimension of meaning is what she calls the "semiotic" modality. The "semiotic" is drive-laden and "musicalizes" the "thetic" symbolic. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

23. LW 10: 53–54.

24. Ibid., 57.

25. LW 1: 277.

26. Alexander, *The Human Eros*, 136–38.

27. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 79–80.

28. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 10.

29. Ibid., 47–68.

30. Ibid., 162–66.

31. LW 1: 179.

32. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 9.

33. LW 10: 202.

34. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 2007).

35. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

36. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 21–37.

37. LW 1: 140–42.

38. LW 10: 138.

39. R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938) and Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic*, trans. Douglas Ainslie (London: Macmillan, 1909). Alexander corrects this mistaken reading in *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: Horizons of Feeling* (New York: SUNY, 1993).

40. Internationally, pragmatism has been a philosophic resource for new approaches to education and to revolutionary and postrevolutionary social practice. *Pragmatism in the Americas*, ed. Gregory Pappas (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011) served as my introduction to the international contributions of pragmatism, particularly in Latin America.

41. LW 10: 60.

42. Ibid., 63.

43. Ibid., 197.

44. Ibid., 197.

45. Ibid., 344–48.

46. David Foster Wallace. "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13, no. 2, 1993.

47. LW 10: 30.

Chapter 5

Uncomfortable Art and American Trauma

Reconsidering Dewey's Unity Thesis

Dewey is an optimistic thinker. He fits into a vein of pragmatism known as meliorism, which holds that the condition of the world can be improved through intelligent, imaginative action. For this reason, it is tempting to read Dewey as permanently cheerful—particularly when we compare him with philosophers from the continental tradition who work on similar themes. However, it is important to remember that meliorism holds that improvement is *possible* through intelligent engagement—and it is not guaranteed. Dewey's philosophy has been misunderstood as overly sanguine, and his aesthetics in particular have been charged with lacking a solid account of the tragic. Such misreadings beg for correction, since Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience is, in many ways, a response to the problem of the suffering that arises from rupture and loss. This is an understandable mistake, given that the distinguishing mark of the Dewey's theory of "aesthetic experience" is its "consummation" or "closure." Indeed, Dewey identifies his aesthetic theory as the test of his total system[1] because it is through such "closures" that divisions between the immediate and the abstract are healed in a "unity of attention." Such a unified attention, once followed to its natural conclusion, will result in an "adjustment of the whole organism to its environment."[2] However, there is no need that the unity that draws the experience into a finality be cheerful or pleasant—Dewey gives examples of consummations that are fearful, angry, and wretched. If aesthetic experience answers the "characteristic human need" for "appreciation and meaning," then we must find meaning in desolation and disappointment too.

However, the text of his work is missing a fully developed way of accounting for the *uncomfortable* aesthetic experience. Philosophers such as Richard Shusterman, John Lysaker, and Noël Carroll have contended with several implications of the so-called "unity thesis," questioning whether it has proven too inflexible a standard for art, particularly art that forms a response to sociopolitical trauma in the late twentieth century. At the same time, like many American thinkers before him, Dewey's aesthetic theory primarily values qualitative intensity and a relaxing of instrumental thinking in favor of intuition, imagination, and a careful attunement to the sensuous dimension in experience—all features that make his work particularly amenable to artistic practices that defy formalism and favor Abstract Expressionism. To ask whether an American pragmatist view of aesthetics can accommodate powerful but uncomfortable art is also to test whether it can accommodate a powerful but uncomfortable history. There have been significant aesthetic movements and historical moments since the publication of *Art as Experience* that put Dewey to the test. This chapter considers the aesthetic unconscious of experience in the light of art that primarily expresses the unresolved and unreconciled, in other words, what could a Deweyan unconscious do with trauma?

It is particularly tempting to misread Dewey's aesthetics, in part because the progressive era in which Dewey lived often strived for an optimism and that quality is embedded within the personality of his prose. The selection of the word "unity" to characterize the integrating feature of aesthetic experiences could certainly carry overtones from its usage as political jargon during the Great Depression. But, it is the nature of that "unity" that characterizes aesthetic experience that leads to the question of whether traumatic moments are available as aesthetic experiences. Within this chapter, traumatic experience should be understood as one that significantly overwhelms consciousness, leaving the subject with a gap or rupture that refuses to coalesce into a coherent narrative. In psychoanalytic terms, it is a breach: an event of such intensity that the subject is incapable of adequately symbolizing, responding to it, or even remembering it. In short, the subject fails in its most characteristic and primary need: to feel the experience as meaningful.

It is the aesthetic phase that allows for the recovery of meaning when experience goes awry. The features of our lives that often escape focal consciousness, either through denial or inattention, can be brought back into play through the aesthetic privileging of the affective and visceral responses. One of the benefits of positing an aesthetic unconscious in Dewey's work is that art summons us to become interpreters of this nondiscursive dimension, and the activity of interpretation calls forth the affective level. In criticism, we deepen experience and improve our perception of the experience as a whole, and we do this together—not wholly unlike an analyst and analysand may work together to interpret a dream. It is easy enough to understand how an aesthetic experience can draw what is lost through negligence or distraction, jogging our memory through our senses. The recovery of the portions of experience that are lost to ordinary defense mechanisms, such as a desire for erotic freedom or anger at an authority figure, are similarly conceivable—art frequently piques the impertinence that we would otherwise ignore. Trauma, on the other hand, *fractures* experience. Since the work of art is, for Dewey, an attempt at restoring continuities, it is worth asking whether his aesthetic theory is up for the task of understanding ruptures. However, the twentieth century is laden with art that directly interacts with trauma and horror, and I will consider two such examples here. The first is the indeterminate music from Morton Feldman which courts existential terror in the collapse of sonority. For the second example, I will use Billy Holiday's recording of "Strange Fruit" in conversation with Alfred Frankowski's recent work on trauma in the "post-racial" society. These are art products that test the limits of meaning and provide an insight into gnawing moral problems that demand imaginative care before they can enjoy a democratic response.

It might be helpful to give one preliminary example of an uncomfortable work of art that resists resolution. In Michael Haneke's 2005 film, *Caché*, a couple living in Paris is disturbed by the repeated appearance on their front porch of mysterious surveillance films, proving that someone has been keeping a close watch on their home. The film effectively rings for us in the register of anxiety, which manifests in the narrative as the main character returns to a moment of childish malice with long-lasting effects. I watched this film with a friend who, three days later, turned to me while walking down a Chicago street and asked, seemingly from nowhere, "Was that about racism?"

My friend was affected by the film strongly and viscerally in the watching, as I was, but although the film was powerful, when we turned to discuss it immediately after our viewing, we found ourselves turning over Haneke's technical choices, or certain scenes that had left us breathless for the tension. Nevertheless, the narrative worked deeply on us when the focus of our consciousness was occupied with other things. In the following days, my friend and I did not speak of, nor I did not actively ruminate on *Caché*, but it was with us both—coloring our encounters with strangers, haunting the banality of our chores. The unresolvable doubt of the protagonist became our own through channels that were obscured to our explicit awareness. The guilt and dread that pervaded the script brought us each into a poignant relation with our own (often unacknowledged) sense of complicities and our nightmares of discovery. In short, the film was a thoroughly effective, deeply uncomfortable work of art. Such discomfort must no doubt evade our conscious awareness because direct accusations of our culpability in the perpetuation of a traumatic culture might very well be subject to denials, refusals, and repressions. If we wish to access trauma, even this shared historical trauma, we must attempt to do so indirectly.

The success of this film was, I believe, in no small part because I do not fully understand whether it *was* intended to be about racism. Perhaps my friend and I merely read it that way because we are in fact complicit as the recipients of systemic privilege that is maintained by racial violence. While I can search through my own working through of the film, I will never know for sure what has transpired between Haneke, my friend, and I. When I watch *Caché*, I don't know quite what I'm watching, and, for a while afterward, I'm not sure who I am. Art like this simultaneously proves some very important aspects of Dewey's work in *Art as Experience*, while it throws others into question. The film does something to me, but it is unclear what, and how, and this confusion is essential to the power of the film. When Dewey introduces us to the idea of "Having an Experience" in the third chapter of *Art as Experience*, he manages to shift considerations of aesthetic effectiveness from art objects to what art does "with and in experience." In other words, we may let the measure of artistic achievement rest not on the artist, the product, or the perceiver, but rather on how all of these have been altered by the interaction.

That some work be done in communication is not Dewey's only requirement for aesthetic experience. The event must also have a temporal dimension, it must have a beginning, middle, and an end. The end should be no mere cessation, but a moment of "closure," a "consummation," in which all that was present within the experience, every element and association, coheres into a whole. The consummation must be present, implied and sensed throughout the experience. He describes this wholeness as "unity of attention" that is clarified by a collaboration of intellectual, emotional, and volitional capacities.[3] To achieve such a unity, the whole creature must be present, a rapt participant of the unfolding event. Dewey writes that successful aesthetic experience moves us naturally in the direction of growth, to a readjustment between a live creature and its environment, in the direction of "greater order and unity."[4] This description highlights the contrast between aesthetic experience, in which we are fully aware, and "ordinary experience." Dewey identifies the "slackness of loose ends," "dissipation," and "incoherence" as enemies of the aesthetic, as belonging rather to our more ordinary, unfocused modes of living. If ordinary experiences tend to lack coherence, it is because we are not attuned to the pervasive quality that guides our selection within a lived situation. Quality does not simply bind the experience into some kind of representational whole, it also binds experience into a temporal whole, so if attention drifts from the task at hand to future cares and interruptions, then we will fail to achieve the culmination that accompanies an experience *undergone*. But, If the creature and its surroundings cohere in an organic and dynamic attunement, it is an aesthetic experience.

Dewey has drawn criticism and suspicion for this account of the aesthetic since Stephen Pepper accused Dewey of a latent Hegelianism, believing his aesthetics to have an “organicist” approach that ties aesthetic value to greater degrees of coherency. Pepper charged that Dewey had committed to the notion of beauty as harmony.[5] This accusation is related to the notion that Dewey retains an idealism from an early engagement with Hegel’s system. While Dewey’s standard for successful aesthetic experience was a fullness of meaning rather than an ideal of beauty, there has remained substantial concern about whether a “unified experience” is a desirable or attainable standard for aesthetic experience and, more broadly, whether this unity implies “an absolute” that haunts Dewey’s philosophy as an idealist ghost.

Richard Shusterman has defended Dewey against these charges, rightly pointing out that the aesthetic standard of unity is phasic rather than permanent, and therefore cannot be taken as an absolute: “[F]or Dewey, the permanence of experienced unity is not only impossible, it is aesthetically undesirable; for art requires the challenge of tension and disruptive novelty and the rhythmic struggle of achievement and breakdown of order.”[6] He notes that the moment of emphasis within the aesthetic experience is the passage from disturbance to subsequent accord. Aesthetic experience *requires* disorder and frustration so that it might affect a shift that is temporally felt, which accounts for the dynamism within aesthetic experience. Thus, according to Shusterman, there is no movement to permanent unity in the aesthetic, but aesthetic experience includes a tendency toward cohesion. However, as noted in the first chapter, Shusterman has also expressed doubts about “pervasive quality,” which operates as the unifying and binding force within Dewey’s aesthetics. He is concerned that Dewey tries to “do too much with the concept of immediate experience (or, more particularly, with its immediate, ineffable qualitative feel) by using it to define not only art and artistic value, but also to ground the coherence of all thought.”[7]

Noël Carroll has also disputed Dewey’s claim that aesthetic experiences are unified by a quality, and that they unfold within a temporality. He uses John Cage’s 4’33” and the paintings of Rothko as counterexamples. These pieces, he contends, are unambiguously aesthetic experiences, and yet they either overwhelm us all at once without a temporal unfolding (as in Rothko) or purposefully direct us toward the dispersion and distraction that accompany “ordinary experience” (as did 4’33”). He argues that pragmatist aesthetics, in the light of these products, must be abandoned.[8] Carroll contends that these pieces do not provide us with closure, but rather achieve aesthetic success by subverting precisely the aesthetic norms that Dewey sets out in his text. Carroll’s insight to test pragmatist aesthetics against powerful landmarks in twentieth-century art was rather inspired because Rothko and Cage illuminate new avenues and possibilities for aesthetic experience. However, Carroll has forgotten that the art *product* does not need to have any particular duration for the art *work* to unfold temporally. Instead, the encounter between perceiver and product culminate in a transaction: a dynamic exchange between the organism and the environment. Rothko's work may astonish us, but it accomplishes this astonishment by playing upon the expectations of figurative representation and providing us with sensuous ephemerality. It is hard to imagine anyone standing before a Rothko and looking away quickly, finished with the experience in a single moment. If they did, the art would not have *worked*, no adjustment would have been accomplished.

John Lysaker has also expressed doubts over Dewey's valuation of unity within aesthetic experience. Like Shusterman, Lysaker recognizes nuance within the unity thesis. He acknowledges the importance of tension and resistance within his aesthetic. And still, he is apprehensive of an aesthetic theory that ultimately favors completion, "unity as telos," he calls it.[9] He finds Dewey's preference for fusion perplexing because Dewey recognizes that the need for art lies deep within the conditions of the community. Lysaker is therefore disappointed that Dewey does not allow social tensions to enter into the work of art, leaving these instead to be worked out via theoretical or instrumental consciousness. Lysaker's final evaluation is that for Dewey, art is reconstructive, but not critical, and he ultimately argues that the human world requires that art be both.

Lysaker is right: art, aesthetic experience, must be both critical and restorative in order to fulfill its purpose. And so, the "unity thesis" must be carefully interrogated to determine whether the Deweyan aesthetic can accommodate art that takes aim at our most distressing problems and *works* to reveal crises that resist us. In order to adequately understand the nature of unity that underlies aesthetic experience, we need to see how aesthetic experience works an encounter with a cultural unconscious that operates on the immediate level of experience. If there is such an aesthetic unconscious, then art products may do their work to such a degree that the unified self is *undermined* when certain works of art are successful. Though pervasive quality binds experience such that it may be fruitful for meaning, the qualitative may also serve to temporarily unravel consciousness and recall it to a crisis.

PERVASIVE QUALITY AND THE AESTHETIC UNCONSCIOUS

Dewey tells us that our world is primarily qualitative, and that quality is directly experienced "present and prior to reflective analysis." Since distinction emerge from qualitative experience, and refer back into it, our best opportunities for insight and wisdom occur when we are aware of the qualitative character within which our interactions are situated. Although we experience it directly, without the ability to refer to it directly, the binding force of our situational whole is often neglected in favor of the problems and interruptions that appeal to objective consciousness. So, the qualitative, although rich and grounding, is also ephemeral. The world evolves and the nature of our interactions change whether we are aware of it or not. When we are busy attending to some factor of our lives, the environment continues to shift, and we miss moments in their integrity. When our actions and symbols are detached from the qualitative context, they lose meaning.

However, art *stabilizes* the qualitative. It effectively attunes us to the ineffable immediate by re-creating the qualitative and rendering it shareable. Dewey writes that when our experience is not governed by a pervasive quality, it is marked by confusion and incoherence; tragically, as beings within a highly linguistic culture, most of our experience is this way. We continue to labor and pursue, but with a decreased effectiveness: we rely on our qualitative awareness to focus our attention to one problem, one reverie, to accomplish one task well. But, our attention is so focused, the experience will be aesthetic, even if it is also intellectual, political, or domestic. The role of art is precisely to stabilize the qualitative and thus share these moments of unified attention. Art allows us to not only point to experience in its wholeness, but to *feel* and *share* them, and make them available for adjustment, for attunement, for adequate response. Art is the corridor between the qualitative unconscious and explicit consciousness.

In *Art as Experience*, Dewey writes that the "miracle of mind" is that it can make connections and build new meanings so long as the qualitative provides the selective filter to the varied parts of experience.[10] Because "mind" refers to a system of shared habits and meanings rather than an individual consciousness, we must think of the majority of mind as a set of interrelated habits and histories that is, at bottom, collaboratively negotiated and continuously tended. "Mind" is "contextual and persistent, structural, substantial," "a constant luminosity," whereas consciousness is "focal and transitive," "intermittent," "process," and "a series of heres and nows."[11] There is a spectrum between how the background "Mind" and the foreground "consciousness" stand in relation to one another. Dewey writes: "There is a contextual field between the [focal ideas of the moment] and those meanings which determine the habitual direction of our conscious thoughts and supply the organs for their formation."[12] The extent to which the tacit dimension is allowed to guide the conscious unfolding is determined by our willingness to admit the unconscious as an influence in our interactions.

Our cultural sensitivity to the social world depends on our capacity to sense the qualitative context and to discriminate how the contents that are individually significant to us singly play out against the cultural background that we share in common. We are indebted to the affective body, the impulsions that gain significance as they attach to elements in the experience that appear as characters, colors, leitmotifs, and melodic contours that have been discriminated from the developing qualitative background. This qualitative awareness is acutely important in the human world because it allows us to assume and navigate the background system of cultural meanings. Particularly adept artists might allow themselves to be guided by quality so utterly that they perceive meanings from the deepest background, from layers of inhabitation that are irretrievable *except* with certain kinds of aesthetic capacities. When Dewey writes about the "resonances of dispositions acquired in primitive relationships" that are "irrecoverable in distinct or intellectual consciousness," as key within artistic creation, he presents the artist (and the philosopher for whom philosophy is an art) as one who can freely associate.[13] To move adeptly into aesthetic experience means to be skilled at loosening focal consciousness.

As focal consciousness relaxes its effort to define and control, a more nuanced selective capacity comes to the fore. The way we select the material and content of art is made possible through the cultivation of essential porousness with the world. That world is not just a present environment, but a present that has developed from a past that is not explicitly remembered. It is subtly felt in emotional tendencies and reluctances that exert influence and shape a creative response. Dewey writes that the artist, in the act of expression, works with "[m]aterials undergoing combustion because of intimate contacts" and "elements that issue from prior experience" and seem to issue from elsewhere.[14] Artistic perception requires an intimate connection with the universal background; in other words, the aesthetic presents an opportunity to relax the hold on our intellectual grasp and allow intimate desires and refusals to surface in the imaginative working through of potent desires or primal fears. "Aspects and states of [the artist's] prior experience of varied subject matters have been wrought into his being; they are the organs with which he perceives . . . Memories, not necessarily conscious but retentions that have been organically incorporated into the very structure of the self, feed present observation."[15] The artist, negotiating between "doing" and "undergoing" in creative working through, perceives the world with an aesthetic unconscious.

Art historian James Elkins has argued that our experiences with art demonstrate the extent to which our vision is governed by the unconscious. When we are confronted with a visual image that powerfully reminds us of sex, race politics, or death, or when these combine in a particularly scintillating or frightful arrangement, our perceptual power is rendered erratic and unreliable. The unconscious takes control of what we must or must not see, and we are plagued by either magnetic staring or blindness as we gaze at or look away from art or images that are too powerful to take in. Elkins writes of our "inconstant seeing, a way of looking that skips over some parts and emphasizes others in the service of some unrecognized anxiety or desire."[16] These unconscious ways of handling cultural trauma can make for very interesting presentations as the artist works with his or her own unreconciled desires or anxieties to render what is too enticing or too wretched to frankly see. The vision of the artist is caught up in a nexus of desire or anxiety, and the artist makes artistic "choices" that manifest the return of the repressed. Tensions that are repressed intellectually are then questions that are asked and answered at the level of the art itself.

Elkins finds this inconsistency of our vision is demonstrated well by students working to render a nude male model in a life drawing class: what the drawing hand ignores and what it lingers over is recorded on the page, an extracted conversation in real time between the hand, the eye, and the model/object. The body on display gives rise to the desires or anxieties that are recorded in lines and shades. Elkins notices that evidence of the model's race and gender, and the way the body is arranged for the eye of the student, creates "pools of attention and inattention, lines of force and resistance."[17] Accidents slip into aesthetic attention through anxiety and desire, noticeable, for example, when "a life drawing of a male model might have an intricately drawn penis, or it might have only a gap where the penis should be."[18] This inconsistent attention demonstrates how the cultural background makes its way into art, "the most obvious effects of the suppressed sexual and social dialogues that accompanies life drawing."[19] Here, we have a telling example of the aesthetic unconscious as it betrays desires and anxieties when it is relaxed and selective, governed by the qualitative instead of a predetermined intellectual frame. Aesthetic attentiveness or inattentiveness reveals how we stand in relation to the cultural background.

Elkins argues that there is an "optical unconscious" that curves vision toward and away from things that might disturb a benign and orderly world.[20] While genital sexuality poses an embarrassing problem for students drawing nudes, other refusals more forcefully test the attention. Death and pain are unbearable to see, and Elkins uses a series of four photographs of a Chinese ritual execution known as death by a thousand cuts, or *lingchi*, "the slow process," to demonstrate the incomprehensibility of the visual field during the horror of death. In the reproduced images, a half-naked woman is dismembered before a group of male onlookers. Her breasts are removed by the second photograph, and her face clearly demonstrates perceivable distress. Her arms have been detached by the third. In the final photograph, her head is not clearly visible, possibly because it has been removed. The executed body is no longer identifiable for us. Elkins includes the detail that many of the victims of these executions were accused adulteresses. The photographs are not meant to be art.[21] They are merely unbearably powerful images that capture cultural trauma, violence, and pain. In other words, they form part of the background context of cultural meanings to be contended with. That these photographs were taken in China sometime in 1924 means that they are in many ways removed from my own personal responsibility to reckon with their meaning. Nevertheless, something happens when I look at them, and now that I have seen them, I cannot erase them from my mind, and they remain in that background luminosity that is always somehow structurally available. I also cannot describe the pictures for you with much detail because, when I look at them, I do not know what I am looking at. Elkins makes the case that it is the way that death is trapped in the sequence of the photographs and between the frames that is permanently unsettling, and my visual unconscious protects me from confronting what I must not see.[22] It is here that I must ask myself how my visual unconscious would protect me if these were photographs of a lynching. How would my attention curve and pool to avoid that violence and that pain? What would and would I not be able to see?

THE CRACKS WHERE THE LIGHT GETS IN

While I see an unarticulated American unconscious in Dewey's work, Victor Kestenbaum finds an American sublime. Kestenbaum takes a close look at how the unreconciled plays out in Dewey's thought in his book, *The Grace and the Severity of the Ideal*. Kestenbaum argues that although the most common reading of Dewey is the one in which he has rejected idealism (and with it, transcendental ideals) in favor of pragmatism, the transcendent nevertheless reappears in the reorganization of energies that occurs during the consummatory phase of the aesthetic. Ideals slip in during unexpected places where the hold on the verified world of practical action is loosened: "[O]ne of the most demanding and rewarding hermeneutic challenges in reading Dewey," Kestenbaum writes, "is to understand how much of the human contribution to the instrumental and the consummatory is 'offstage' in the background, under the surface."[23] He reads Dewey against himself, looking for the moments where something unearthly has slipped in from behind the back of the rational. He argues that although transcendence has been disavowed by pragmatism, it reappears in Dewey, recast in more organic trappings. Kestenbaum looks for the big ideas that must do a lot of conceptual work to find where naturalism opens to the transcendent. These concepts—habit, the imagination, growth, the consummatory—require a collaboration between the intentional and the pre-reflective, the conscious and the unconscious. His method is to look for the places where the concrete and the immaterial meet, the cracks where "the transcendent leaks in."[24] He writes: "The intangible is buried in Dewey's theory of meaning and habit, with a small, though not exclusive, entry point through the familiar territory of the qualitative."[25] Although I would argue that the consummatory is much "smaller" than the qualitative, since the qualitative delimits the horizon of what is thinkable and the consummatory is the fulfillment of the promise of a singular quality, I agree that quality functions as a gateway to the unbidden, bewildering elements of human experience.

Kestenbaum is particularly drawn to Dewey's discussion of "Negative Capabilities" in the second chapter of *Art as Experience.* "Negative capabilities" allow the artist to work within the hidden, the unknown, the fields of meaning that withdraw from explicit awareness. Dewey takes the phrase from Keats:

> ". . . There may be reasonings, but when they take instinctive form, like that of animal forms and movements, they are poetry, they are fine; they have grace."
>
> In another letter [Keats] speaks of Shakespeare as a man of enormous "Negative Capability"; as one who was "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." He contrasts Shakespeare in this respect with his own contemporary Coleridge, who would let a poetic insight go when it was surrounded with obscurity, because he could not intellectually justify it; could not, in Keats' language, be satisfied with "*half*-knowledge." I think the same idea is contained when he says, in a letter to Bailey, that he "never yet has been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning. . . . Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever arrived at his Goal without putting aside numerous objections" . . .
>
> . . . Even "the greatest philosopher" exercises an animal-like preference to guide his thinking to its conclusions. He selects and puts aside as his imaginative sentiments move. "Reason" at its height cannot attain complete grasp and a self-contained assurance. It must fall back upon imagination—upon the embodiment of ideas in emotionally charged sense.[26]

On Kestenbaum's reading of Dewey, imaginative play allows the poet and the philosopher alike to put aside instrumental consciousness in the pursuit of conclusions and consummations. However, as we have seen, Dewey's aesthetic is phasic. Dewey celebrates the "negative capability" of Shakespeare and Keats because it allows for an indeterminate phase, familiar to us as inspiration. Aesthetic adepts must be guided by the qualitative as it is sensed affectively in the surrounding environment. When Dewey says that reason must fall back upon the imagination and emotional charge in lieu of self-contained certainty, he might be suggesting that we must accept some ideals that are invented by the creative imagination and temporarily freed from the strictures of fact, but I rather think that he is suggesting that in the aesthetic mode, meaningfulness is governed by the subtler laws that correspond to immediate sensual experience—like desire and fear. Elements and tendencies that have laid dormant for indeterminate periods may be set loose and fruitfully explored by one with "negative capabilities." In art, these primitive relationships are restored on the plane of sense and meaning. This is what he admired in Emerson when he called him "The Philosopher of Democracy" in 1903 with a "finely wrought logic" implicit in all his writings, for whom "perception was more potent than reasoning"[27] Emerson finds the ideals of philosophy in sensuous nature, and emotionally charged from a "primordial self" that is found in "the manifold meaning of every sensuous fact."[28] Kestenbaum has a point that Dewey's philosophy is often rising—it is optimistic, it finds avenues for growth and improvement. And since we must *find* avenues for growth, and rise, where do we find them, and toward what do we rise if not toward some ideal?

If ideals might slip through—even pragmatic ideals that are unfixed, meliorative, and fluid—then what about the absurd? Ideals are heights; the ends-in-view are mediating actions that are ultimately directed by an ideal or an end. These provide the possibilities for human betterment, the things by which aiming toward, I might improve. But the absurd is a challenge to accept what cannot be reconciled and put toward better ends. A traumatic experience is one in which the brutality of the event is powerful, disturbing, or violent enough to break through the organism's defenses and overwhelm its capacity to cope with the sudden flood of incoming information. Freud described it as "a breach" in the protective shield of the psyche from the external stimuli of the world.[29] Trauma is a fact of the world, socially enacted, institutionally sustained, systematically ignored. Dewey's aesthetics is a recovery and a working through of immediate experience on the plane of meaning and communication. Could there be a communicable quality in traumatic experiences that waits for us, embedded in immediate sensuous experience? Can it be recovered? There is a distinct human need here for the acknowledgment of my suffering or our mutual failure. How can an aesthetic that is fundamentally aimed at unities of attention and the coherence of meaningfulness answer the human need to transmit and share ruptures that cannot be fully reconciled?

A MUSICAL ABSURD

In the 1930s, while Dewey was writing *Art as Experience*, indeterminate music was just beginning to emerge in the work of Charles Ives, and John Cage was just beginning to fall in love with music as a medium. Morton Feldman, with whom indeterminacy reached a new realm of sensitivity and fineness, was a young child in the 1930s. Feldman's music is often less about the integration and building of moments of tension and resolution than it is about gently insisting on a confrontation with irresolution. He was bothered by our overattentiveness to the attack of pitch and instead sought after the decay of sound. In his pieces, shades of pitch that are well outside of conventional tonality emerge with eerie quietude and then slowly fade as the ear follows them into an abyss of silence. His compositions often employed a notation style of free duration, in which it is left entirely up to the performer to decide how long a particular pitch lasts. He also made use of a graph-style notation of his own invention in which the performer decides for themselves which pitch to play given very loose parameters (high, medium, or low). Even of his precisely notated pieces, Feldman has said that he is "not interested in the aspect of completing, or satisfying a need to make what we think are terrific, integrated pieces of music."[30] He compares the style and effect of his work to Kafka, to Pollock, and to Rothko. He has titled orchestral works after Christian Wolff and Samuel Beckett. It makes sense that he resolutely finds his artistic company with postwar Abstract Expressionists who bring us into proximity with the dread of the unresolved. In short, Feldman's music is about decay—the decay of sound and the decay of form.

Feldman also composed with an interest in duration. Performances of the second string quartet can sometimes take up to five and a half hours. Merely listening to his pieces is an exercise in stamina even for a sensitive and attuned aficionado of contemporary classical music. To commit to a careful listening of Feldman is to feel how the ear gropes for shape and how the memory struggles to hold together tones and dynamics without any of the usual signposts that would normally allow one to anticipate, for example, rhythmic swell. What we are given instead is repetition without a pattern to anchor us. This composer is not interested in exploring intervallic relation or in discovering the energy of tempo. It is difficult to light onto musical ideas in Feldman's pieces because nothing resembles a discrete motif so much as spontaneous wandering through a tangle of half steps or else hesitant and questioning moans. These pieces do not culminate their explorations in a revelation so much as they wonder at the capacities of musical attention and find them wanting.

In Feldman's 1982 composition "Three Voices," a soprano voice wanders in uncomfortable proximity to two identical soprano voices. The piece is to be performed by a singer in the company of two giant loudspeakers that project prerecordings of the two other parts. The loudspeakers are meant to be the symbolic tombstones of poet Frank O'Hara and painter Philip Guston, both Abstract Expressionists working in their respective mediums. The composition in performance becomes a dirge for the lost artists who carefully limited their use of working materials to achieve their artistic ends—as did Feldman. The voices, though achieving clarity in sound and occasionally harmony, are more often dissonant, arrhythmic, and mournfully lost. They waver uncertainly up and down semitones, chasing one another into endless darkened corridors of lonely rooms. Because two of the voices are preserved and played on a recording, once removed from the present performance, they cannot achieve an easy vocal blend that is so often the mark of skilled vocal ensembles. When they achieve harmonies, they are dead harmonies. The effect is ghostly. There are no lyrics for the bulk of the composition, except for some fragments from Frank O'Hara's poem "Wind," which comprise the text for the sixth piece in the composition, one that O'Hara addressed to Feldman.[31]

Because much of indeterminate music invites us to resist the structures and systems that allow us to locate our place in music, we encounter a troubling vagueness: when we manage to attend carefully to the sound, we chase after an ephemeral acoustical substance as it dies precariously away into uncertain silence. Simultaneous pitches tremble on ambiguities that aren't quite harmonies; stressed attacks come and go in configurations that aren't quite rhythms. As our attention inevitably drifts, we are recalled over and over to an active listening to that which we had only been hearing. In other words, there is a perceptual ambiguity as we struggle to unify the musical experience, falter, and struggle again to make sense of what we have heard. Feldman's music is uncomfortable. It is eerie. The postmodernist composer Luciano Berio once said that the quietness of Feldman's music expressed a kind of existential terror.[32]

Our attention gropes for something that dies away in quiet sounds, and we are never sure whether these quiet sounds resolve into music or not. They hover on the edge of meaningfulness without resolving into the aesthetically coherent. Perhaps this is the primordial existential terror: the horror that one's senses cannot make sense any longer. Dewey says that perception is never passive. Perception is a creative act in which the perceiver reaches out to meet the experience, to compose it for oneself, and the artwork perceived must include comparable felt relations to that which the artist underwent when the artwork was produced.[33] This is a test of optimality for the aesthetic adept: we must allow the immediately sensuous to reach to us and provoke us, and let it carry us where it must.

On Dewey's account, part of what sets aesthetic experience apart from ordinary experience is the arranging of the elements—sensuous, emotional, symbolic—into a coherent whole. However, most of our lives are lived in non-aesthetic experience, drifting in and out of inchoate experiences much like the voices Feldman uses in his compositions. These inchoate experiences are characterized by distraction and dispersion, and they are in need of a pervasive quality to bind our attention and articulate thought—to merge the sensual and the spiritual. But in Feldman's pieces, the attempt to compose the piece into coherency on the part of the listener fails; we are left in confusion as we chase unraveling musical threads in pursuit of a melodic or rhythmic contour. Are we experiencing a *lack* of pervasive quality or a quality *of* dispersion? Or is Feldman's work of art the demonstration of the limits of our aesthetic attunement?

Dewey requires that an aesthetic experience resolve into some kind of unity, but this is achieved through the intensity of a pervasive quality. Feldman's music develops moods that hover between reverence and eeriness. The Rothko chapel series, like the work of Rothko himself, brings us into direct and intimate contact with vagueness. It challenges our perceptual frames by withholding the familiar and withdrawing from our attempts to resolve it into a coherent piece, but it *is* intense and replete with quality. It is important to remember that for Dewey, the work of art is not the piece of music, but how the music works in and with experience to rearrange energies. By resisting our typical aesthetic frames, Feldman (and Rothko and Cage) forces us to acknowledge the disquiet in the mundane, in the memories that resist us, and in the horror of the vague by forcing us to create this experience along with him. Feldman and Rothko compel us to take creative responsibility for experiences that do not come to us readily packaged, accessible, and inviting. To have an experience with Feldman, we must collaborate in our own absurdity.

If Dewey believed that all art products must resolve, tonally or pictorially, then there would be no way to account for much of the work that was accomplished through twentieth-century movements that favored microtonal dissonance in music or lyrical abstraction in painting, for example. Could Dewey's theory be hopelessly limited to pre-twentieth-century art? Perhaps, but I think it is more philosophically fruitful to try to approach his aesthetics through the "work" rather than the "product." The work that art accomplishes is the restructuring of experience via an aesthetic product. The question is if the *experience* needs resolve for it to be consummatory, and what *kind* of resolution it must be. Is there a meaningful transaction between the artist, the art product, and the audience, and has something changed once the experience has ended? In the case of films like Haneke's and music like Feldman's, it is clear that something has shifted. Do we need to say for certain what it was? Do these new energies, now rearranged, need a definable resting place for the experience to properly be called "aesthetic"? This is the question we must be asking in our interrogation of Dewey's unity thesis. In other words, must I be raptly attentive to a pervasive quality in an aesthetic experience so that it unifies me? Or could a vexing disturbance that intentionally draws me to witness my own essential divisions qualify as aesthetic experience as well? Dewey's aesthetic has no problem directly accommodating the contentious and the tragic, which reveals a painful knowledge. Perhaps it must be adapted for the traumatic and the absurd, which forces a confrontation with the unknowable. The sensuous world cannot always be a wonder and a thrill; it is also a violent wound that I can neither see nor unsee.

ART AND THE TRAUMATIZED COMMUNITY

The aesthetic mode is a field in which the traumatic becomes shareable. While Feldman's music shows us that aesthetic incoherence can manifest as an impersonal void, where meaninglessness seduces and confounds us in acoustical terrors, the work of art is all the more uncomfortable and urgent when it is tied to a violent historical situation that deforms present relations. The film *Caché* and the photographs from a *lingchi* execution have this effect, but as I previously mentioned, they are removed from my own cultural history. Although my ability to compose these representations into coherent forms is compromised, I can also distance myself from the responsibility to answer for the violence depicted. The closer we draw to the traumas that deform our present culture, the better we can clarify the trouble in the "unity thesis" and demonstrate the need for the aesthetic to support traumatic experience. The next portion of this section will focus on an acoustical portrayal of a violent practice that can neither be made fully present, nor be shut away in the past.

Billie Holiday began singing Abel Meeropol's song "Strange Fruit" (1937) in nightclubs in 1939 at the end of her set to a darkened room with one spotlight illuminating her face.[34] The original Commodore recording has a seventy-second improvisational introduction—otherwise, only sparse piano and low horns accompany Holiday's voice. As she sings, the instruments quiet to a hush, providing a solemn support. This is an enactment that puts the lyrics and Holiday's expressive, penetrating voice at the inescapable center of the song. The vowels are tender, and the consonants are attacked. This is quite a different vocal approach than the Holiday we hear in "I'll Be Seeing You," in which some of the consonants are left aside, mere suggestions to a listless romantic longing. In "Strange Fruit," however, Holiday ensures that each word is enunciated carefully for optimal impact. "Blood" and "bulging eyes" and "burning flesh" strike against "gallant south" and "scent of magnolia," asking us to call to mind the impossible image of a desecrated and defiled corpse.

Holiday's performance of the song is incredibly intimate. There is no space we can take from the text as Holiday brings us into a confrontation with the remnants of excessive cruelty. In his book *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization*, Frankowski argues that "'Strange Fruit' traverses that rarely charted territory between memory and memory gone silent."[35] It does this by bringing to light a past that is typically withheld, and while the song remembers lynching as a past violence, it "makes the present a fluid boundary" that does not reconcile history for us.[36] The song is a site of "conflict between memory and neglect" because it "displaces what memory would grab on to, since it makes exactly what would be the object of remembrance an object that escapes the aesthetic."[37] Of special interest to Frankowski are the absences of the song—there is no particularity in the text, no personalizing detail about the victims of the lynching or the perpetrators, no actions that detail the moments of trauma, just the "brutal materiality of the situation," the evidence of a finished lynching, a violence enacted without names or explanations. The lack of these details is peculiarly expressive because it points at an omission that continues to deform our present situation: we do not know the details of this particular violence because we are not supposed to mention them—history has anonymized them all. As Frankowski says, the song "intervenes in a present that actively maintains a silence surrounding that past" and "provides a context for those contextual and atmospheric forms of violence." Thus, "Holiday sings the world of violence in the mode of neglect." The song traces a monstrous gap that, for Frankowski, is "violence in the mode of neglect," a neglect that traces an omission that is a rupture that shapes the present.[38]

Frankowski uses DuBois's analysis of "sorrow songs" to help us sketch out the ineffable register that is explored and developed in "Strange Fruit." Frankowski argues that *sorrow* is about retaining the sensibility of being broken from a place of origin. It is particularly helpful as we try to reveal how it must be possible for aesthetic experiences to refuse coherence and unity. Frankowski writes that "the aesthetics of sorrow exposes a situation that normatively is there, but has gone silent or is broken from the sphere of articulation."[39] So, for the black listener, "Strange Fruit" is emblematic of a loss that cannot be recovered, a violent erasure that takes the place of a history. These are gaps that will not be represented or unified, but must rather be left bare, incoherent, and questioning, left irretrievably and horribly "strange" if they are to be sincerely honored. "Strange Fruit" confronts the white listener with gaps as well, but these are the gaps made by the denials that maintain complicity.

Holiday made "Strange Fruit" famous, but I did not hear her version first. I came into contact with the song in my teenage years when I stumbled upon a rare recording of a cover performed by Tori Amos. Amos is a white woman, an alternative rock singer-songwriter who grew up in the South and recorded "Strange Fruit" as a B-side to her sophomore album in 1992. The first time I heard "Strange Fruit," I did not know what a lynching was. I did not hear about lynching from a teacher, a parent, or a text, but from the whispered voice of a white woman covering Holiday's song about lynching. My fascination with the unnerving melodic line coupled with my shock at the evidence of the violence thematized therein was sufficient to be called "an experience," in Deweyan terms. It is set apart from what came before and what came after and closed with an adjustment between me and my environment—however, it has not come with a closure because the work of art that "Strange Fruit" accomplishes is to leave me permanently unsettled. The experience was visceral and emotional and remains unresolved and disunified because it reveals an inherited disunity that has been central to and hidden from American experience. For me, the song was "an experience" of precisely what Frankowski says: it was an experience of "violence in the mode of neglect" that implicates me as having been unaware, and thus complicit with the various ways we are kept distanced from the atmospheric violence that deforms our cultural relations. The particular violence is not addressed in "Strange Fruit" because to represent a violent act in its particularity would be to confine it to a historical moment. Frankowski writes that "Strange Fruit" does not memorialize racial violence, but mourns it, when mourning is "a search for making sense of the world by setting out to uncover the ways the world appears normative, through actively tracing out its questionability" and "an intensification, a concentration on the disunity in the world."[40] In other words, "Strange Fruit" works because it draws out the negative capabilities of the listener into the unresolvable past and leaves the question ragged. The song summons a confrontation with ideals and reveals them as false.

Given how Dewey's philosophy of experience makes room for nondiscursive, affective features, which then take center stage in the aesthetic register, it seems that asking his aesthetics might accommodate direct conflicts between consciousness and the unconscious, how the aesthetic might help us come to terms, not with only the dimensions of the world that are inexplicable, but with those elements and events that are radically unthinkable—*unspeakable*. This is particularly important as we reflect upon twentieth-century art. What is there in the world that traumatizes, frightens, or entices me and also refuses to be directly experienced must be somehow indirectly experienced. The aesthetic illuminates the creative imagination even as it exhumes our unease between the world as "known" and the world as "felt," and the exploration of the qualitative may disclose unsettling contents. Depending on the severity of personal or cultural trauma, it is unlikely we shall be capable of directly symbolizing what we need to share. My perceptual powers may fail when I am called to witness how deeply one human being has deprived another of dignity and meaning in my own cultural past. The negative capabilities that inspire us to poetry and coherence may also draw us to witness the otherwise mute malice that forms and deforms our cultural fabric.

The American "Mind" in its Deweyan manifestation is cultural and qualitative, social, and ecological. It is influenced by a past that informs present relations that are *felt* before they are intellectually revealed. What has been unclear until this point is whether the Deweyan unconscious is marked by repression. In his investigation into the question of a Peircean unconscious, Vincent Colapietro has remarked that there could not be a sharp barrier dividing consciousness from the unconscious, because such a boundary would violate the principle of continuity that is a dominant feature of Peirce's philosophy.[41] Dewey also tends to defend continuities over schisms, and so, while a firm repressive boundary would not befit a Deweyan approach, Peirce makes room for the temptation of self-deception to claim reasonableness where "unconscious instinct" is rather at play,[42] and Dewey acknowledges meanings that are "stored below the levels of consciousness" at "different levels of selfhood," and determines "the present self and what it has to say."[43] A repressive barrier has a good deal of hermeneutic value within psychoanalytic theories of trauma, but Dewey's conception of mind lacks distinct boundary. But an unobstructed theory of experience allows us to accommodate the tendency for experience to shade off in layers that range from focal consciousness (directed action) to the tacit fringe (pervasive quality), and for this reason *can withstand* disturbance or persistent trouble as we attempt to join these poles to yield meaning without locking it away in a private quarantine. This trouble that we encounter when translating environments that are affectively distressing indicates one of the most vital human needs to which the aesthetic responds; even traumas that cannot be directly "known" must be somehow *shared*. The aesthetic, as that domain that is devoted to intensifying the experience of meaning, seems the only mode available for this work. An aesthetic that is governed by the qualitative dimension as Dewey has offered it must account for traumatic ruptures, particularly in areas where conscious awareness has failed. Moments that do not give themselves as unities in our personal or cultural histories must be present in the aesthetic unconscious.

Our experience includes so much that we cannot consciously direct, but art must respond even to that which cannot be reconciled. Focus will wax and wane, pulled by resonances and dispositions of the past, of the body, or of both. Experience slips from us faster than we can cope with what has happened and thwarts our attempts to prepare for what comes. It may well be that only art, if it cannot make comfortable that which is entirely opposed to comfort, can allow us to dwell with it.

Dewey's work continuously relies on the notion that quality is present and pervasive, and delimits the possibilities for what may be thought, what may be said, or what accords may be reached between us. His aesthetics teaches us that connecting with the tacit qualitative dimension allows the promise of an experience to be fulfilled such that we may adjust ourselves more finely to a world of shared meaning. And yet, if we are sincere in our aesthetic pursuits, we will be confronted with irresolution, with problems, with the unharmonious elements of the world where comfortable adjustments cannot be made.

This unrelenting attention to the uncomfortable, unresolved, perhaps unresolvable, can bring us to the spaces that demand difficult social and ethical work to be done, where habits can be painstakingly redirected to mind the gap between the ideal world and the real. The first crucial step is listening to that which refuses to cohere into a final form. This is where our unfinished work can be found.

NOTES

1. John Dewey, LW 1: 115.
2. LW 10: 26.
3. LW 10: 43–44.
4. Ibid., 109–10.
5. Stephen C. Pepper, "Some Questions on Dewey's Esthetics," in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, eds. Paul Arthur Schilpp and Lewis Hahn (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1989), 371–89.
6. Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 32.
7. Richard Shusterman, "Dewey's *Art as Experience*: The Psychological Background," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 44, no. 1, 2010, 26–43.
8. N. Carroll, "Four Concepts of Aesthetic Experience," in *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
9. John T. Lysaker, "Binding the Beautiful: Art as Criticism in Adorno and Dewey," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 12, no. 4, 1998, 237–38.
10. LW 10: 49.
11. LW 1: 230.
12. Ibid., 231.
13. LW 10: 35.
14. Ibid., 71.
15. Ibid., 93.
16. James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 92.
17. Ibid., 105.
18. Ibid., 95.
19. Ibid., 92.
20. Ibid., 102.
21. Although looking became something of an aesthetic experience famously for Bataille, who famously kept a photograph of a man being put to death in this way on his desk so that he could look at it every day, the image of pain simultaneously "ecstatic and intolerable" to him. Georges Bataille, *Tears of Eros* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1989).
22. Ibid, 115.

23. Victor Kestenbaum, *The Grace and the Severity of the Ideal: John Dewey and the Transcendent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 3.

24. Ibid., 7.

25. Ibid., 18.

26. LW 10: 39–40.

27. Ibid., 36.

28. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet,” in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), 447.

29. Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XVIII, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 28–30.

30. Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, “Interview with Morton Feldman,” in *Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers* (Metuchen, NJ and London: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 164–77, 169.

31. Frank O’Hara, “Wind,” in *The Collected Poems of Frank O’Hara*, ed. Donald Allen (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 269.

32. Tom Service, “A Guide to Morton Feldman’s Music,” *The Guardian*, November 12, 2012, (https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/nov/12/morton-feldman-contemporary-music-guide). Accessed February 1, 2016.

33. LW 10: 228.

34. Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 5.

35. Alfred Frankowski, *The Post-Racial Limits of Memorialization: Toward a Political Sense of Mourning* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 53.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 53–54.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 57.

41. Vincent Colapietro, “Notes for a Sketch of a Peircean Theory of the Unconscious,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 31, no. 3, 1995, 482–506, 486.

42. Peirce, 1.6.3.

43. LW 10: 76–77.

Chapter 6

From the Organic Plentitude of Being

In the 1970s, John Cage sat down to write a mesostic poem for composer Lou Harrison. Left to right, the text reads, "first the quality of your music, then its quantity and variety, make it resemble a river in delta. Listening to it, we become ocean."[1] Perhaps through the logic of poetic condensation, we can surmise that when listening to Harrison, Cage experienced that elusive "oceanic feeling" that Freud referenced in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud's friend Romaine Rolland said that it is not an article of faith but the subjective fact which is the source of religious energy that feeds every religious system: the oceanic feeling is a sense of connection with eternity, a feeling of something limitless and unbounded (Freud admitted that although Rolland might be right about this subjective fact, he himself had never had occasion to feel it). In Cage's poem, he compliments Harrison's life's work by crediting his art with fostering a connection precisely to the limitless and the eternal.

The intimate connection between the religious and the aesthetic has been well explored philosophically by Augustine, Kierkegaard, and, as I noted in chapter 1, Jonathan Edwards; but the evidence for the intimate linkage between these two modes of experience is deeply embedded within art itself, and from the perspective of human history, the arguments of philosophical aesthetics are likely gratuitous. The grandest, most enduring, most affecting works of human culture have largely been attempts to consecrate space, and to imbue experience with a sense of the holy. The Rothko Chapel, and the Sistine Chapel, while grounded in quite different (possibly opposed) theologies, are united by the belief that we make better contact with the divine when we are supported by an aesthetically charged space. Music, like that of the choral masses during Advent or Holy Week, or the secret songs of Native Americans, demonstrate that one of the enduring and important ways that human beings consecrate space is through the sonic. In his study of Chauvet

Cave, archeologist David Lewis-Williams tells us that thirty thousand years ago, paleolithic visitors cast beautiful, ghostly images onto its walls in shamanistic ecstasy, breaching the spirit world.[2] We can only imagine the acoustic rituals that may have aided the shamans in their passage.

For much of human history, and seemingly during prehistory as well, the aesthetic and the religious dimension of human experience have been inextricably linked, one kind of experience giving way to another. Perhaps this is why we did not need a formalized philosophy of art until the Enlightenment secularized inquiry in the Western world. In the eighteenth century, Baumgarten borrowed a word from the ancient Greeks to rearrange and formalize our relationship with art. Where *aesthesis* once meant responsiveness to the sensuous, Aesthetics is now a field of study in which we try to determine the proper attitude for understanding art. Philosophers have done some good work here—we have theories that draw out the complexity of art in its movements and practices, or that teach us to detect the propagandist in the guise of the artist, or that demonstrate the indispensability of the artist for liberatory movements and the fortification of a cultural identity—however, it seems that the general effect of philosophical aesthetics in the West has been to create a distance between art and the audience. Perhaps this is because it is only by establishing distance that critique becomes possible. In thrusting art away from me, I am better able to regard it objectively, as an ideal spectator.

Let's think of this shift in the nature of space; a moment ago, I considered chapels and caves as examples of aesthetically charged physical spaces in which one is encouraged to foster a connection to the divine. However, as an intellectual *field*, aesthetics has forfeited sacred, physical space in the effort to create a secular, psychological distance. A correlate to the Cartesian impulse of science, philosophical aesthetics realized that an attitudinal detachment can be engendered between the audience and a piece of art. From this detachment we have developed schools and methods for contemplation, criticism, and judgment. "Space" is now less a field through which one moves and in which one dwells, it is now something that one *takes* in the attempt to sever the mind from the sensuous and affective world to achieve an observational stance, to become an immaterial *cogito*. In this achievement, we sacrifice the *experience* of "space" in terms of the the tension that delimits boundaries and thresholds, arenas and territories, as an embodied and synesthetic negotiation. The question of what sort of space best supports our understanding of art indicates an important problem for aesthetics. It also indicates an important tension within American philosophy, and American identity. I try to approach this problem through a set of interconnected questions.

Where is America? Is it a location that we inhabit, or is it an ideal? Have we cultivated a sufficiently aesthetic connection to the lived space that constitutes America, or do we hold it within our theoretical consciousness as an object of cognition? What sort of spaces have we held open for American art? Do we hear our music better when we hold ourselves back from it, reserving a gap for judgment so we can take it as an object for critique? Should we give ourselves over to the sensuous responsiveness of aesthetic rapture, ecstatic or transfixed as we gaze upon the paintings of Pollock and Wyeth? If we do, will we also sacrifice the rich field of aesthetic criticism on the altar of the divine, and risk returning to a precritical and prescientific aesthetic naivete? Would we lose our ability to critique America if we were invested, attached?

One answer arises if we imagine ourselves in the position of the politician, a different one would issue from the jurist. We would also find different insights from the critic and the curator. And then we ought to imagine posing the question to an artist. However, given that art contains the first signals of public distress, perhaps without the conscious awareness of the artist (as I explained toward the end of chapter 4), I propose that we issue these questions to art itself.

> A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live. This fact, I think, is the explanation of that feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling that accompanies intense esthetic perception. We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live our ordinary experiences. I can see no psychological ground for such properties of an experience save that, somehow, the work operates to deepen and raise to great clarity that sense of an enveloping whole that accompanies every normal experience. This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves.[3]

There are many ways in which art criticism has misunderstood the relationship between the artist, the work of art, and the audience. Through a Deweyan encounter with John Luther Adams's Pulitzer-prize-winning composition *Become Ocean*, we are better prepared to see the way that art emerges from and reaches back into an environment. *Become Ocean* also serves as an opportunity to reflect on the way we inhabit biophysical space in its ecological aspect, and to consider the ways in which an aesthetic unconscious becomes a gateway to religious adjustment. I believe that, despite the general disposition of the philosophy of art over the past several centuries, aesthetic critique is not accomplished by a dispassionate viewer, but is a crucial part of the work that is done in the nexus between the three. In other words, it is my hypothesis that our practice of aesthetic criticism conceals the more poignant truth: critique moves the other way. Our attempts to measure pieces of art may be a defensive strategy: art is the vital sign of a living culture, and as such, issues warnings that can be ignored or anesthetized, or else resonate within the core layers of the self. In other words: art measures us.

AN ACOUSTICAL LANDSCAPE

John Dewey's theory of art is unabashedly predicated on a rejection of what he refers to as "the museum conception of art," whereby we are trained to regard art as cordoned off from the experience(s) that gave rise to its emergence. In museums, we tend to treat the plastic arts as mysterious artifacts: they are labeled perhaps with the artist's names and a few scant details, but the information that may help us to connect with the art (What was life like in the community in which the artist lived? What were his friends up to? How is this piece situated in relation with the rest of its contemporaneous culture?) tends to be missing. It is left up to the viewer to have the appropriate foreknowledge that would fill in these gaps. The museum conception asks us to isolate, critique, and appreciate a piece of art as quarantined from the larger forces that might influence us. Perhaps this approach allows us to appreciate and understand art products on their own terms, or in light of just the formal qualities of the piece—but in so doing it has also disempowered the art from doing its *work*.

In chapter 4, I reviewed Dewey's distinction between "the art product," which refers to the piece of art that has been produced by an artist, and the "work" of art, which refers to how experience changes on the basis of an interaction with art.[4] When we see that the purpose of art as a practice is not simply to produce a celebrated external object, but to constitute *an aesthetic experience*, we can see how art products only have meaning when they are embedded in the cultural, physical, and spiritual environments in which they fomented. Aesthetic experiences are those in which we find ourselves connected to the rhythms and tensions of the life-world. We are awakened, interested, and our attention is unified as we become more sensitive to and creatively invested in the unfolding of the world around us. When we separate the art from the experience of art, we miss the way art is embedded in the environment from which it emerged—and to which it reaches back in.

John Luther Adams is an ecological composer, both in the sense that his pieces are derived from his experience with environments and landscapes, and in the way that he thinks about music. Adams is less interested in exploring melodic intervals, rhythms and cadences. He is associated with minimalism, but where Max Richter, Phillip Glass, and Arvo Part tend to feature striking melodic motifs played by a solo instrument with scant accompaniment, Adams's music is much more interested in texture that arises between resonances than in sequences. He works from the perspective of tonal wholes before he considers individual voices, and composes by looking for the emergent interactive patterns between sonic elements. While the formal elements of Adams's pieces are intellectually available, and the extant sheet music would allow us to analyze the formal features of his work (sometimes he composes using fastidious methods of precise mathematical formulae), he is above all looking for the interactions and exchanges that transform his music into a sonic ecosystem. His inspiration, his inaugural interest, is always the natural world. He composes his music out of the noise that he hears in a landscape, in seismic activity, in weather and birdsong. His ambition is to allow us to experience "sonic geography," to feel as if we are immersed in the world while we listen to his music.

Adams spent the bulk of his life as a composer living in Alaska—a place to which he felt called, a place he credits with his creative inspiration. In the seventies he was both a composer of music and an environmental activist. His creative work has resulted in a litany of evocative titles, including "Strange Birds Passing," "Dark Wind," "The Wind in High Places," and "How the Sun Came to the Forest," but in 2014 the Seattle Symphony performed his masterwork *Become Ocean*, a roiling, deep, overwhelming acoustical encounter. *Become Ocean* was composed and is performed as a series of overlapping palindromic waves. Each wave has its own crest, and together they form mega-crests at three nearly deafening crescendos of wind, brass, strings, and percussion spaced 110 bars apart, each followed by the receding of sound, with two triple pianissimo periods of rest between the swells. *Become Ocean* is a 42-minute meditation on loss, terror, glory, and hope.

Alex Ross has called it "the loveliest apocalypse in musical history."[5] Although the description is poetic, this is actually not editorializing on Ross's part. Adams has written extensively on his process, his inspirations, and has interpreted his own work. In his writings on *Become Ocean,* he acknowledges the influence and subsequent loss of John Cage and Lou Harrison, but also the influence and subsequent loss of the Arctic world and the melting of the polar ice caps. His warning is not complex: we came from the ocean, and as the Arctic melts, to the ocean we shall return. If we succumb to Adams's music, we grieve the individual lives and entire ecosystems that we lose each season to powerful and destructive waves of tortured seas. We can detect individual voices among the roar, and we witness them as they are drowned out by brass and timpani, or we lose them in the sputter and decay as they arpeggiate beneath our perception. Then, as soon as we are lulled by the hush, great waves of sonority overtake us; we feel both eagerness and dread, rapture and horror. As they recede, we are left reeling, strangely bereft in the terrifying decay of sound, and we catch our fragile breath, straining our suddenly delicate ears in the moments of quietude. We are listening to an apocalypse, and it is punishingly beautiful in the same way that hurricanes, tornados, and tsunamis tend to be: the ineluctability of destruction is awesome, the god of death is still majestic, but death, from an ecological perspective, is simply rearrangement. The ocean also promises life. The ocean will continue to exist—without us, if it must.

The emergent ecology of sound is there in the relationships between the instruments as they echo and fill the room and calls out to an ecology of the self: we are revealed in our infinite complexity to be at once delicately vulnerable and grotesquely fearsome, both the victims and the perpetrators of ruin. Somehow, within the balance of the piece, we find that seemingly opposed affects are balances in a revelatory tension. The self is a paradox of conflicting impulses that is at every moment regulated by an environment that it also has a hand in regulating. Experience is collaborative, arising between minute and continuous levels of organic interaction. When we are unified through aesthetic attention, we do not become simple; we are a synergetic entity, a continuously related complex.

There is hardly a need to remark on the ways in which this piece, and Adams's larger oeuvre, are timely. We are just coming to the moment when awareness of the Anthropocene and its ramifications for our ecosystems are gaining widespread acknowledgment. Adams's music is powerful in its formal details, certainly, but what draws us into the piece is our own grief and confusion, our own forgotten connection to the landscape, and this shared anguish draws us closer to the world. The product of *Become Ocean* is the ecosystem of sounds, but its work is to let us feel the awesome beauty of the ocean, to marvel at its fearsome power, to admire its mysterious fecundity, and to mourn its growing acidity. In other words, the piece is a *necessary expressive complement* to what climate science states: our habits are not adapted to our environment and if we do not change them, global organic life support systems will continue to fail, rapidly and dramatically. *Become Ocean* cuts through the cognitive dissonance allowing us to feel dwarfed by, and merge with, the coming apocalypse.

The correspondence between the statement of climate science and the expression of *Become Ocean* is a succinct demonstration of why aesthetic experience is a primary requirement of human life. Dewey tells us that "Life itself consists of phases in which the organism falls out of step" with the environment and then rejoins it. The falling out of step is a tension, the recovery is a release. In the commonplace, falling out of step may look like a period of discontent within a relationship, a marriage, for example, that resolves when communication restores a connection, and the relationship is altered and renewed. The recovery is a relief, but the experience will have failed, incomplete, if each party merely resumes the previous habits. The reward and satisfaction come from having achieved a mutual adjustment. Rejoining the environment is not a return to the prior state: life is enriched through periods of resistance. The falling out of step with the environment is inevitable, the reconnection with the environment is a culmination. When we undergo an aesthetic experience, we are enjoying a culmination that means we have established a reunion on better ground. Works of art are there to aid us in accomplishing these culminating events whose effects are an adjustment of our whole being to our surroundings. Art reveals to us those dimensions of the environment (in aspects that may be primarily organic, economic, social, etc.) that have existed tacitly, felt without being known. When our attention is directed elsewhere, when explicit consciousness is alienated from our qualitative awareness, we lose touch, we are at odds. While we are preoccupied with the abstract, the petty or the pecuniary, the environment shifts without us. When the world moves on, we must learn to alter ourselves if we are to rejoin an altered world.

The environment is a Deweyan "situation," not an entity, and its contents cannot be precisely and exhaustively named. A "situation" is a principle term within Dewey's ontology, and refers to a contextual whole, bound by a pervasive quality, from which objects and events emerge and through which they are interrelated. The situation provides relevance: it has problems, systems, relationships, signals, and possibilities—elements that are only what they are because they are bound up with one another. Situations nest like Russian dolls—a family is a situation, a self is another, a university, a forest, a climate, a world are further situations that occur simultaneously. Each is infinitely complex, dynamic, and ultimately unavailable for precise definition. It is no wonder that we tend to lose track.

We tend to treat the world as if it were composed only of objects waiting to be discovered or manipulated, but this is a fiction. In the same vein, we also tend to act as though music were made up of tones, pitches, and rhythms, musical symbols that await our arrangement, but it is not. Individual objects and individual pitches exist through their relation to the immediacy of the whole, bound together by a qualitative tone that provokes and invites us into a relation. Given the influence of British empiricism over our intellectual habits, it seems counterintuitive to say that our immediate encounters are infinitely complex, prior to our grasping simple, isolated objects, but that is precisely what Dewey has in mind. Resolving the qualitative situation is the result of a process, but wholeness is not. Qualitative immediacy is the sensed atmosphere of possibilities, akin to a mood, that resolves into objects and ideas only through our efforts. We discover the world as we pursue it in explicit conversations, thoughts, actions, and inquiries. It is quality that pervades and binds individual events, songs, and people into coherent wholes and gives them their unique character. It is this quality that we draw upon first when we call individuals to mind. It binds phenomena together, but as itself it is boundless. We may be able to speak eloquently about a situation, say, an individual person, a piece of art, or a place we once visited, but we will never be able to speak exhaustively about any of these. Qualities belong to dynamic complex wholes, not fixed identities.

This is why art is so vital to the human experience. No inquiry, policy, or principle makes sense without a context, and if such contexts are unnameable then we will need a way to acquaint ourselves with and communicate them. To say that life is an organic affair is to say that it is composed of dynamic and indeterminate complex wholes. Art allows us to better recognize and communicate wholes in their qualitative richness, and to relate to them as unities where we have been distracted by abstractions. It is not a significant stretch to suggest that art allows us to understand complex wholes as they are in their *sacred* aspects.

FAITH IN THE POSSIBLE

Dewey's work on religious experience picks up where his work on aesthetic experience drops off. In *A Common Faith*, Dewey proposed religious experience as the source of inclusive ideals; however, he was insistent on the point that religious experience must be thought of as something very much separable from *religions*: the latter entails a commitment to a set of propositional truths, usually entailing the belief in a supernatural entity, that must be followed faithfully as a doctrine. However, if we can imagine religion detached from doctrine, and from the requirement that we invest our value in an absent world, what we are left with is religious experience—a phase of experience that "will be free to develop of its own accord."[6] Then, the religion that we "practice" amounts to our efforts to assume the right attitudes toward ends and ideals. Religious experience also provides us with an opportunity to develop and deepen the relationship between the self and the world in its wholeness.

The American intellectual tradition has largely avoided discussions of faith in favor of a decidedly secular approach to moral discernment; but the circumvention of the religious in philosophy and science is at odds with a public that mostly insists upon itself as a Christian nation. Questions of values and conduct are held within the context of an implied Christianity, but our reflective theoretical activities superciliously ignore the milieu, insisting on a seventeenth-century-style freedom from superstition. A commitment to liberal democracy implies that we ensure religious freedom, but tolerance practiced as avoidance has complicated the extent to which we can acknowledge the surviving remnants of a repudiated supernaturalism. "God" is invoked, but as an empty placeholder, "faith" is advised, but lacks a foundation. As a result, this dimension of culture has been left to atrophy or molder below our explicit awareness. However, as repressed elements of our culture, religious sensibilities are likely to return where we would least like to find them—often within fascist eruptions or as manipulative political tools.

Dewey attempted to provide a path forward for democratic values to emerge in religious experience in his late book, *A Common Faith*, in which he theorized that religious ideals emerge from the imagination. The Terry Lectures, from which *A Common Faith* was written, were intended to be Dewey's statement on the possibilities for a naturalistic basis for faith, a proposal for a bridge between Darwinian secularism and religious feeling. These conclusions divided scholars on the question of the philosopher's proper relationship to questions of God and the religious. Sidney Hook famously objected to Dewey's use of the word "God" to mean "the active relation between the ideal and the actual."[7] Doug Anderson bristled at Dewey's "Half-God," a god that might be real in the sense of ideals and possibilities, but certainly not an existent being.[8] However, Dewey's definition of faith as "the unification of the self" through "inclusive ideal ends," and his assertion that wholes are imagined rather than literal ideas, is consistent with his broader philosophy of experience. More to the point, his conception of religious experience is an important complement to a democratic culture that finds itself faced with problems that exceed our intellectual capacity to respond to them—particularly given Dewey's admission that inclusive ideals come to us "beyond conscious deliberation."[9] As William James has eloquently argued, faith is pragmatically indispensable for human action. A failure of faith spells a breakdown in praxis.

For Dewey, the religious denotes attitudes that may be taken toward ends and ideals, and presents itself as an opportunity to relate one's life to its ultimate source. He describes this phase as "an adjustment in life, an orientation that brings with it a sense of security and peace."[10] "Adjustment" is a voluntary modification of our whole being in its entirety toward the better. The effect of such an experience is harmonizing: there is "a change of will conceived of as the organic plentitude of our being, rather than any special change *in* will," such that the self is integrated into a whole. Only a powerful imaginative ideal has the power to integrate the self into such a unity. For "The idea of a whole, whether of a whole personal being or of the whole world, is an imaginative, not a literal, idea."[11] This differs from the Protestant conception of faith in that Dewey's ideal is not available for knowledge and reflection—Dewey's God cannot be expressed propositionally. Given this unavailability, Dewey says that adjustments are not an act of will, but are only volitional in a qualified way; this is a voluntary submission to an experience that possesses the will. In order for an experience to be productive of an ideal, it must also be of the consummatory kind that is connected to the layers of the self that are attuned to the qualitative dimension. So, imaginative ideals that are compelling enough to effect an adjustment of the will emerge from experiences come to us from beyond conscious deliberation. “The self is always directed toward something beyond itself and so its own unification depends upon the idea of the integration of the shifting scenes of the world into that imaginative totality we call the Universe.”[12]

Imagination explores the relationship between our present conditions and the actions that carry us into alternative future paths. Or, as Thomas Alexander defines it: “Imagination is the ability to see the actual in the light of the possible.”[13] The imagination extends the environment beyond the factual present to the conceivable and the desirable. It is vital to this process that moral discernment remain flexible, responsive to a variable environment, so that we may see ourselves as acting as a part of a dynamic ecological whole.[14] Dewey’s thought here continues to be informed by James’s theory of consciousness as “a fighter for ends.”[15] But since they do not exist before we imagine them into being, in what sense do we choose them and how can they compel belief?

Dewey’s view of the imagination presents a significant shift from conventional philosophical understandings. Philosophy has usually held that the imagination is a faculty that is directly related to knowledge, such as the power to form mental images or concepts that are not purely derived from sensations. For Kant, the imagination is a blind function of the soul that completes the work of the senses: it synthesizes sensations into objects. Susan Langer inherits something of the Kantian view but changed through Cassirer; Langer says that imagination is the ability to create virtual symbols that are detached from the living body, while still using the sensations of the body as a source.[16] In contrast to the idealist view, there is also Sartre, for whom the imagination grounds our ontological freedom. In the existentialist account, the imagination is our ability to negate the actual. In each of these views, the imagination offers us the possibility of a human experience, a necessary mental capacity to discover objects, participate in language, or fashion our own response to our conditions. Imagination thus understood takes us outside of the world of the actual, and into the realm of symbolic or the virtual. The imagination in these formulations celebrates the preeminence of abstraction, and offers human culture a pathway away from thinghood to mastery. The imagination so conceived is the realm of constructs. If this kind of imagination were to provide us with a God, it would truly be a “half-God,” a merely powerful fiction.

Unsurprisingly, Dewey does not conceive of the imagination as a possible pathway away from nature and into the realm of culture—Dewey does not think that there is any boundary here to traverse. Imagination is a process that is grounded in the body and its qualitative awareness of the tacit dimension, and as such it does not demonstrate a preference for the abstract products of purely intellectual or symbolic consciousness. As Alexander says, "Imagination is not the negation of the perceptual present for a fictitious image," it is "intimately connected to perception, action, and intelligence."[17] The ideal that is imagined is rooted in existence already; as in aesthetic experience, it is funded with primitive dispositions acquired in long past experience that are irrecoverable in intellectual consciousness. The clues are immanently available, had qualitatively in the situation. The imagination alights on these ideals through the "emotional deposit" connected with a "prior teaching" that is, Dewey writes, "perhaps too sacred to allow inquiry."[18] Like the instinct to hold a hand, to protect a child, or to mourn the dead, the source of unifying ideals is there for us *unconsciously*—that is, as creative possibilities lying below the level of consciousness. Dewey's "God" is present in the actualization of these imagined ideals; in our realization of them in action carried through.

The imaginative ideals that occasion religious experience do not have their source in the supernatural; however, the arrival of ideals may *appear* as supernatural because the source of the adjustment is complex and is accompanied by the grandiosity of religious feelings. Dewey says we often cannot trace these back intellectually to their precise individual origins. This is why we tend to identify adjustments as having their source somewhere "beyond" this world. What these adjustments point to is the deepening of the sense of values that sustain us through difficult or precarious periods. They are the rooting of the stabilizing forces that provide a measure of protection against destructive forces: war, pestilence, or famine. For such values to penetrate deeply enough and sustain one through considerable trials, the imagination must make use of the deposits that are stored in the sensitive depths of the unconscious.

THE VITAL SIGNS OF CULTURE

America suffers from a number of worsening crises: they are economic, educational, political, and cultural in nature. We are currently facing a worsening cultural-environmental toxicity that is tipping decisively into cataclysm. There is a clear need for a reorientation toward public and ecological goods that are imaginable but indefinable and infinitely complex—and there must be *faith that it is possible.* Any chance for meaningful action in the direction of ecological repair depends in the first place on the restoration of our faith in the possibility of such a repair.

If we can accommodate Dewey's naturalistic, American-Romantic conception of the imagination, then it might be possible to begin speaking without embarrassment of a recovery of faith. The challenge is to embrace a God and a self that we cannot know, thereby cultivating a reverence for the unknown as a decisive factor in experience. If such a commitment seems half-hearted to us because it is caught up in immanence, or because it isn't available for verification, then we will neither be capable of democratic inclusiveness or ecological recovery. We are blithely unaware of our most tragic deficiency: our culture lacks a necessary depth. We have not yet developed a store of habits that are embedded within the biophysical space that sustains us, and as a result of this lack of accord between ourselves and the environment, we are failing to sustain one another. I fear that American philosophers have largely refused to entertain the unknowable as a factor in the natural world and the unconscious as a factor in experience out of a suspicion that through such an admission, we might slip into a prescientific or precritical era. However, the inclusion of the vague, the mysterious, and the sacred in our highly reflective discussions does not imply an aversion to inquiry or method, it only acknowledges that our inquiries are situated, embedded within a dynamic ground that has its say. Granting that does not incapacitate us, it merely recognizes the need to cultivate different phases of experience *alongside* a rigorous science. We find resources for deepening culture in the aesthetic and the religious dimensions of experience.

If Dewey provides a "half-God" in the Terry Lectures, Dewey also gave us an incomplete ethics and an unfinished aesthetics. There is no propositional *literal* God, much like there is no expressible moral maxim, nor a final definition to delimit the activity of art. The lack of fixed-ends is meant to leave us to develop our own, elastic ends to respect the shifting context of an ecologically complex world. The elasticity of ends allows us to create and re-create them so that they are inclusive of a shifting and dynamic whole.

In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey argues that the most stable elements of moral life are not the rules that might be rationally constructed by traditional ethics, but rather the habits that we develop as we navigate problematic moral situations. These situations are given qualitatively, and must be felt through as we intelligently imagine possibilities for action. The whole self, the whole world, and the whole universe are not scientifically or literally knowable because they contain histories, tendencies, and possibilities which have not been explored or developed within focal consciousness. This is why we can grasp them imaginatively, as qualitative wholes, rather than literally as systems. Individual wholes include dimensions that normally escape our consciousness. Aesthetic experience brings us back into the world so that we can feel it as immediate and available, and religious experience modifies our orientation to the whole.

The fact of climate change is, as it happens, inconceivable, because it concerns the condition and fate of an infinitely complex whole. Even the environmentally conscientious among us continue to have goods shipped to our doors from Amazon, purchase airline tickets, toss single-use plastics, and drive gas-powered cars. We are unwitting accomplices in a tacitly enacted murder-suicide because it is not possible for us to comprehend the scale of loss as it could be stated through science, economics, or politics—although these are the discursive strategies we have largely employed. The cognitive dissonance between our daily lives and the coming floods of destruction persists because the loss of ecosystems cannot truly register for us on a quantitative scale; it is a qualitative shift. The phenomenon is *oceanic*. Our habits, our strategies for both avoiding and confronting global warming, are falling short because we need an aesthetic experience to wake us.

Art such as Adams's *Become Ocean* does not call for a critique, because it *is* the critique we could not have managed to produce by other means. Adams accomplished it by living, embedded in ecologies that are most acutely and rapidly deteriorating. He created a piece that could transmit that experience in its qualitative richness to listeners. Although I think this principle applies to almost any product of art, I believe that *Become Ocean* is a paradigmatic example of how we get art wrong when we think philosophical aesthetics ought to help us develop a critique. We have misunderstood the purpose of art when we *judge* it. The art that a culture produces *is* the judgment of the culture. Art registers the ways in which we succeed or fail to come to terms with the environment—it records an environment, in its qualitative wholeness. Because we are primarily aesthetic beings, the existence of art is not the immaterial stratosphere of human culture, it is the vital sign of the life or death of that culture. There is no yardstick to measure art. Art is the measure of us.

IN DEFENSE OF THE SACRED

Freud counted art among the possible "substitutive satisfactions" that act as a palliative measure against life's unavoidable suffering.[19] He can explain the existence and our fascination with art by connecting it to fantasy. In Freud's version, the "imagination" is that psychical function that allows the ego to play out the desire for the lost object (originally the mother's breast) by projecting a scene that allows the subject to find fulfillment in a socially acceptable substitution. In this view, art aids us in creating illusory worlds that ease our transition into a civilization. Art may be helpful, but it had also better be pleasurable if it is going to fit comfortably in Freud's schema. Art is a temporary relief from the pressures of a reality that systematically denies us the pleasure that we are always seeking. It is difficult to agree with him, given that there seems to be so much art that draws us into bleak, inconvenient realities that we would rather deny than confront. Additionally, given that Freud sees art as merely an aid to imaginative fantasy rather than constituting the whole of it, it ought to occupy a rather superfluous role in culture. We should then be able to theoretically imagine a human society in which art is nonexistent: try as I might, I cannot seem to do it. As the hundred years since Freud have demonstrated, psychoanalysis does seem to fare better as an interpretive framework when it treats art as representing the core of psychical life rather than its periphery.

More famously, Freud dismissed religion and religious feeling as the residue of infantile helplessness. Our longing for a God is really the remnant of our longing for the protection of the fathers of our individual prehistory. Religion understood in this way is not simply superfluous, it is dangerous—delusion rather than illusion—particularly because it is *unscientific.* Freud envisions a "better path" for us in "becoming a better member of the human community" by "going over to the attack of nature and subjecting her to the human good will."[20] This final comment did not age particularly well over the course of the century, but it also demonstrates the central discrepancy between the Freudian unconscious and what I have called the Deweyan unconscious.

In both versions, the unconscious is closely aligned with "nature." For Freud, this is because the unconscious is governed, not by the demands of human culture, but by the "primary processes" of the drives and thus represents the original libidinal urges, unalloyed by the moralizing forces of the superego. For Dewey, the unconscious lies close to "nature" in the sense that qualitative awareness allows us to respond to the dynamic complexities of a shifting ecology. For the American philosopher, nature is not an enemy, and neither is the unconscious. The remnants of infantile life are not shameful: infancy is a period of extraordinary growth and malleability because, as infants, we are constantly attuning to qualitative immediacy. If we retain these capacities, we are better positioned to attune ourselves with the qualitative ground of situations.

In book 2 of Plato's *Republic*, Glaucon presents the perspective that justice is a compromise between a desire to do injustice and a fear of getting caught. Justice is merely the price that most of us will have to pay to enjoy the protection of living in a community. Freud's employment of the "pleasure principle" in *Civilization and its Discontents* casts desire in a similar role. Our desires in each case are for the gratification of the self and we must be satisfied with a half answer. Socrates's efforts throughout the rest of the dialogue are aimed at convincing Glaucon and the rest of his interlocutors that "justice," along with all the rest of the "highest things," are not things to which we concede, but things that we desire as ends in themselves. The Deweyan unconscious is satisfied by the culminations and consummations within the aesthetic and the religious, because Deweyan art and religion are not displacements or distractions, they are essential phases within experience that are continuous with our efforts to adjust to our real conditions. There are impediments to the healthy function of our unconscious, and these may be institutional or political in nature, but it is counterintuitive in the extreme to take it as a central tenet that human existence is fundamentally incompatible with its ends and desires.

One of the prominent defenses of religion is that it can entertain unavoidable questions where the intellect consistently falters. For example, the question of the purpose of human life. At first, Freud dismisses the question as presumptuous, but provides an answer anyway. He proposes “happiness,” which, for Freud, amounts to an absence of pain accompanied by feelings of pleasure. I join William James in making the fundamental assumption that life is meaningful beyond the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain simply because I have to. The other option is, frankly, unlivable. Given that I must live from the unproven theory that life is inherently meaningful, I have taken it as the given fact against which all philosophical considerations must be judged. Since life itself is meaningful, the ideals that are powerful enough to integrate the self with the ground from which it emerges are sacred. Affording these their proper space may very well make all the difference in the world.

NOTES

1. John Cage, *Empty Words: Writings ‘73–’78* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 6. Quotes from “Many Happy Returns” in the book *Empty Words: Writings ‘73–’78* © 1979 by John Cage. Published by Wesleyan University Press. Used by permission.
2. David Lewis-Williams, *The Mind in the Cave* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002).
3. John Dewey, LW 10: 202–3.
4. LW 10: 9.
5. Alex Ross, “Water Music,” *The New Yorker*, July 8, 2013.
6. John Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 2.
7. Sidney Hook, “Some Memories of John Dewey,” *Commentary Magazine*, September 1, 1952.
8. Douglas Anderson, “Smith and Dewey on the Religious Dimension of Experience: Dealing with Dewey’s Half-God,” *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 14, 1993, 161–76.
9. Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 18.
10. Ibid., 11.
11. Ibid., 17.

12. Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 18.

13. Thomas Alexander, *The Human Eros* (New York: Fordham, 2013), 196.

14. John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 208–9.

15. William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1890),144.

16. Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Scribner, 1953), 128.

17. Alexander, *The Human Eros*, 196.

18. Dewey, *A Common Faith*, 12.

19. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. XXI, ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), 75.

20. Ibid., 79.

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