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4. Morris Weitz, ed., *Problems in Aesthetics* (New York: Macmillan, 1959).
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6. George Dickie and Richard Sclafani, eds., *Aesthetics, A Critical Anthology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977).
7. Patricia Werhane, ed., *Philosophical Issues in Arts* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984).
8. Joseph Margolis, ed., *Philosophy Looks at the Arts* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).
9. Ralph A. Smith, ed., *Aesthetic Concepts and Education* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970).
10. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.
11. John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920).
12. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979).
13. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Intrinsic Value," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 26 (1965):16.
14. Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Experience Regained," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28 (1969):3.
15. All of these observations, it must be insisted, bear only upon American aesthetics. (Other English-language philosophies of art, such as the British, have never seriously attended to Dewey.) Recent Chinese aesthetics, on the other hand, has been increasingly interested in Dewey, paralleling a fondness among philosophers in China for his general philosophy, related not only to his demonstrated curiosity and concern for their land and people during his lifetime, but to a basic compatibility between pragmatism and current Chinese thinking.
16. The central arguments are found in Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1958; reprinted Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981); "Aesthetic Experience Regained"; and Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen, eds., *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays of Monroe C. Beardsley* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), chap. 16, "Aesthetic Experience."

Why Dewey Now?

I

There is nothing in Anglo-American aesthetics that can compare with the comprehensive scope, detailed argument, and passionate power of Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934).¹ Yet though this book initially aroused considerable interest, practically no one studies it today. Pragmatist aesthetics was, by the late fifties, totally eclipsed by analytic philosophy of art, which by and large dismissed Dewey's aesthetic theory as "a hodge-podge of conflicting methods and undisciplined speculations."²

But there are signs of change. Analytic aesthetics' hegemony in the English-speaking world is being severely challenged by Continentally inspired aesthetic theory based on hermeneutic, poststructuralist, and Marxian philosophies. In contrast to traditional analytic philosophy but in accord with pragmatism, these philosophies oppose foundationalist distinctions and ahistorical positive essences, emphasizing instead the mutability

and socio-historical praxical constitution of human thought and its objects. In aesthetics they emphasize, like Dewey, art's socio-historical context *and* responsibility. Frustrated with analytic aesthetics' failure to treat these themes, American theorists of the arts have rushed to embrace them in contemporary Continental philosophies, forgetting that they are powerfully present in Dewey, where they find a clearer, more direct, and more encouraging expression. The time is right for American aesthetics to rethink and redirect itself, and I believe Dewey's aesthetics provides the right direction. In what follows I shall suggest its more prominent points of redirection by showing where it diverges from analytic aesthetics and how it accommodates the most appealing themes of Continental theory.

II

1. One of the most central features of Dewey's aesthetics is its naturalism. The first chapter of *Art as Experience* is entitled "The Live Creature"; and both it and all the subsequent chapters are dedicated to grounding aesthetics in the natural needs, constitution, and activities of the embodied human organism. Dewey aims at "recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living" (p. 16). Aesthetic understanding must start with and never forget the roots of art and beauty in the "basic vital functions," "the biological commonplaces" man shares with "bird and beast" (pp. 19-20). For Dewey all art is the product of interaction between the living organism and its environment, an undergoing and a doing which involves a reorganization of energies, actions, and materials. Though human arts have become more spiritualized, "the organic substratum remains as the quickening and deep foundation," the sustaining source of the emotional energies of art which make it so enhansive to life (pp. 30-31, 85). This essential physiological stratum is not confined to the artist. The perceiver, too, must engage her natural feelings and energies as well as her physiological sensory motor responses in order to appreciate art, which for Dewey amounts to reconstituting something as art in aesthetic experience (pp. 60, 103-4).

The major thrust of analytic aesthetics is sharply opposed to naturalizing art and its aesthetic value. G. E. Moore established this attitude with his doctrine of the naturalistic fallacy, a fallacy which "has been quite as commonly committed with regard to beauty as with regard to good."³ Aesthetic qualities must not be identified with natural ones and are not even reducible or logically entailed by them. This is precisely the point of Frank Sibley's seminal analysis of aesthetic concepts, and it is why Margaret MacDonald held that "works of art are esoteric objects."⁴

2. Part of Dewey's naturalism is to insist that art's aim "is to serve the whole creature in his unified vitality," a "live creature" demanding natural

satisfactions (p. 122). This stands in sharp contrast to the extreme emphasis on disinterestedness that analytic aesthetics inherited from Kant. This emphasis goes beyond the mere Moorean point that beauty, like good, is a purely intrinsic value or end in itself, which can only be misconceived as a means. There is the further characterization of art as something essentially defined by its noninstrumentality and gratuitousness. Peter Strawson explains the impossibility of any general rules for art by defining our interest in art as totally devoid of any "interest in anything it can or should do, or that we can do with it"; and Stuart Hampshire likewise tells us that "a work of art is gratuitous," something "made or done gratuitously, and not in response to a problem posed."⁵ The underlying motive for such analytic attempts to purify art from any functionality was not to denigrate it as worthlessly useless, but to place its worth apart from and above the realm of instrumental value and natural satisfactions. However noble the intention, this attitude portrays aesthetic experience as eviscerate and socially irrelevant. No wonder many have turned to the theories of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Foucault for recognition of the bodily factors and desires involved in the aesthetic, just as they turn to Continental Marxian theories for greater appreciation of art's historico-political and socio-economic determinants and its power of praxis.

But these very themes we can find in Dewey. Though no less devoted than the analysts to defending the aesthetic and to proving its infungible worth, Dewey did so by insisting on art's great but *global* instrumental value. For anything to have human value it must in some way serve the needs and enhance the life and development of the human organism in coping with its environing world. The mistake of the Kantian tradition was to assume that since art had no specific, identifiable function which it could perform better than anything else, it could only be defended as being beyond use and function. Dewey's important corrective is to argue that art's special function and value lie not in any specialized, particular end, but in satisfying the live creature in a more global way, by serving a variety of ends, and most importantly by enhancing our immediate experience which invigorates and vitalizes us, thus aiding our achievement of whatever further ends we pursue (pp. 140, 144, 199, 265). The worksong sung in the harvest fields not only provides the harvesters with a satisfying aesthetic experience, but its zest carries over into their work and invigorates and enhances it. The same can be said for works of high art. They are not merely a special function-class of instruments for generating aesthetic experience (as they essentially are for Monroe Beardsley, the analyst closest to Dewey's account of aesthetic value and experience); they modify and enhance perception and communication; they energize and inspire because aesthetic experience is always spilling over and getting integrated into our other activities, enhancing and deepening them.

3. Dewey's recognition of the global functionality of art is related to another view where he seems to differ sharply from analytic philosophers—the philosophical primacy and centrality of art and the aesthetic. For Dewey, the aesthetic experience is the "experience in which the whole creature is alive" and most alive (pp. 33, 24-25, 109). "To esthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is" (p. 278). While Dewey saw art as the qualitative measure of any society,⁶ analytic philosophers see science as the ideal and paradigm of human achievement. And analytic aesthetics, at least initially, was largely an attempt to apply the logically rigorous and precise methods of scientific philosophy to the wayward and woolly realm of art. Yet Dewey, appreciative as he was of scientific method and progress, could not help but regard scientific experience as thinner than art. For art engages more of the human organism in a more meaningful and immediate way (pp. 90-91, 126, 278), including the higher complexities of thinking: "The production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being 'intellectuals'" (p. 52). He therefore held "that art—the mode of activity that is charged with meanings capable of immediately enjoyed possession—is the complete culmination of nature, and that 'science' is properly a hand-maiden that conducts natural events to this happy issue."⁷

4. Dewey tries to deconstruct the traditional privileging opposition of science over art not only by reversing the privilege but by denying there is any rigid dichotomy or opposition between the two. He insists that "science is an art," for "esthetic quality . . . may inhere in scientific work," and both enterprises perform the same essential function of helping us order and cope with experience.⁸ Like Derrida's idea of the general text, Dewey's central *continuity thesis* was aimed at breaking the strangle hold of entrenched dualisms and rigid disciplinary distinctions which stifle creative thinking and fragment both individual experience and social life. He sought to connect aspects of human experience and activity that had been divided by specialized, compartmentalizing thought and then more brutally sundered by specialist, departmentalizing institutions in which such fragmented disciplinary thinking is reinscribed and reinforced. In these ways he also anticipates Theodor Adorno and Michel Foucault.

Dewey's aesthetic naturalism, aimed at "recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living," is part of his attempt to break the stifling hold of "the compartmental conception of fine art," that old and institutionally entrenched philosophical ideology of the aesthetic which sharply distinguishes art from real life and remits it "to a separate realm"—the museum, theater, and concert hall (pp. 14, 9). But Dewey's aesthetics of continuity and holism undermine not only the art/science and art/life dichotomies, it insists on the fundamental continuity of a host of

traditional binary notions and genre distinctions whose long-assumed oppositional contrast has structured so much of philosophical aesthetics: form/content, fine/practical art, high/popular culture, spatial/temporal arts, artist/audience, to name but a few. There is no space here to discuss his critique of all such rigid dualisms and distinctions; nor to belabor its affinity to deconstruction and postmodernism, and its radical contrast to analytic aesthetics whose quest for clarity typically advocated “a ruthlessness in making distinctions” combined with a respect for entrenched disciplinary divisions and critical practices.⁹

5. Analytic aesthetics, pursued under the ideal of science, tended to shirk issues of evaluation and reform. The aim was to analyze and clarify the established concepts and practices of art criticism, not to revise them; to give a true account of our concept of art, not to change it. In vivid contrast, Deweyan aesthetics is interested not in truth for truth’s sake, but in achieving richer and more satisfying experience. For Dewey’s pragmatism, *experience*—not truth—is the final standard. The ultimate aim of all inquiry, scientific or aesthetic, is not knowledge itself, but better experience or experienced value; and Dewey insists on “the immediacy of aesthetic experience” and its experienced value (pp. 294, 123, 125, 297-98). From this follows his view of the supremacy of the aesthetic: art’s “immediately enjoyed,” active experience is the “culmination of nature, for which truth or science serves as an auxiliary ‘handmaiden’” (p. 33 n.). It also follows that aesthetic values cannot be permanently fixed by aesthetic theory or criticism but must be continually tested and may be overturned by the tribunal of changing experience (pp. 100-101, 110, 325).

6. A more dramatic and radical consequence of this experiential standard is that our aesthetic concepts, including the concept of art itself, are revealed as mere instruments which need to be challenged and revised when they fail to provide the best experience. This can account for Dewey’s obvious attempt to direct his aesthetic theory at radically reforming our concept of art and the aesthetic, an attempt which was alien to the essentially accepting, clarificatory spirit of analytic aesthetics. While analytic aesthetics followed the romantic and modernist tradition of defending art’s value and autonomy by identifying the concept of art with the concept (and associated sublimity and genius) of *high art*, Dewey deplores this elitist tradition, which he attacks under the labels of “the museum conception of art” and “the esoteric idea of fine art” (pp. 12, 90). The prime motive for his opposition to the spiritualized sequestration of art was not ontological considerations of naturalistic continuity and emergence. It was the instrumental aim of improving our immediate experience through socio-cultural transformation, where art would be richer and more satisfying to more people because it would be closer to their most vital interests and better integrated into their lives. The compartmentalization and spiritualization of

art as an elevated "separate realm" set "upon a far-off pedestal," divorced from the materials and aims of all other human effort, has removed art from the lives of most of us, and thus has impoverished the esthetic quality of our lives (pp. 9-12).

But more than art suffers from its spiritualized sequestration; nor was this compartmentalization established simply by and for aesthetes to secure and purify their pleasures. The idea of art and the aesthetic as a separate realm distinguished by its freedom, imagination, and pleasure has as its underlying correlative the dismal assumption that ordinary life is necessarily one of joyless, unimaginative coercion. This provides the powers and institutions structuring our everyday life with the best excuse for their increasingly brutal indifference to natural human needs for the pleasures of beauty and imaginative freedom. These are not to be sought in real life, but in fine art, an escape that gives temporary relief. Art becomes, in Dewey's mordant phrase, "the beauty parlor of civilization," covering with an opulent aesthetic surface its ugly horrors and brutalities which, for Dewey, include class snobbery and capitalism's profit-seeking oppression and alienation of labor (pp. 14-16, 27, 346). Here again, we find Dewey anticipating currently influential themes in aesthetic theory which we have imported from the Marxian Frankfurt school.

7. Analytic theories of the historicity and institutional nature of art are painfully narrow and rarefied compared to Dewey's, which sees "the compartmentalized conception of fine art" and the austere esotericism of contemporary high art not as mere "internal development" of art,¹⁰ but as largely a product of nationalism and imperialism (which fed the museum) and of industrialization and world-market capitalism (which deprived art of its "intimate social connection"). Modern socio-economic forces have so divided between joyless "externally enforced labor" and free enjoyment, between production and consumption, that the "chasm between ordinary and esthetic experience," art and real life, has become theoretically convincing. Dewey realizes that not only art but philosophical theories about art (and everything else) are significantly shaped by "extraneous" socio-economic conditions; thus our concept of art needs to be reformed as part and parcel of the reform of society which has so constituted it.

8. I conclude with perhaps Dewey's most central aesthetic theme: the privileging of aesthetic experience over the material object which ordinary, reified thinking identifies (and then commodifies and fetishizes) as the work of art. For Dewey the essence and value of art are not in such artifacts but in the dynamic and developing experiential activity through which they are created and perceived. He therefore distinguishes between the "art product" and "the actual work of art [which] is what the product does with and in experience" (p. 9). In contrast, analytic aesthetics has been rather suspicious of aesthetic experience (at times even denying its existence),

while privileging the art object. It expended enormous efforts in trying to fix the precise criteria for identifying the same art object in its various manifestations (e.g., copies or performances) and for individuating it from other objects and inauthentic manifestations (e.g., forgeries). Analytic aesthetics did this because its scientific ideal was objective truth about art rather than the Deweyan goal of enhanced experience. Privileging objective critical truth meant privileging objects. Thus even Beardsley, whose first book followed Dewey in making aesthetic experience the crux of aesthetics, eventually gave uncontested privilege to the object as the guarantor of objective criticism. "The first thing required to make criticism possible is an object to be criticized—something . . . with its own properties against which interpretations and judgments can be checked." Beardsley therefore posits the reifying principles of "Independence" and "Autonomy": "that literary works exist as individuals" and "are self-sufficient entities."¹¹

Undoubtedly much of poststructuralism's current appeal derives from its attack on the static, closed notion of the artwork as a fully fixed, self-sufficient, and inviolable object and from its ardent insistence on the active role and openness of reading as textual practice which reconstitutes literary meaning. Such themes, central to the fashionable Continental theories of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Foucault, are anticipated in Dewey's move from closed artistic *product* to open, transformative aesthetic *experience*. But Dewey's theory is saner, for while rejecting structural fixity and reification, he clearly preserves the notions of structure, unity, and object by reconstituting them in a functional, contextual form rather than suggesting their total rejection as inescapably rigid, foundational, and retrograde.

My conclusion should be obvious. Since Dewey's aesthetics offers crucial insights lacking in the analytic tradition and obtainable from Continental theory only at the costly price of conceptual obfuscation, rebarbative jargon, and irrelevant theoretical baggage, it represents the best point of departure for new aesthetic thinking in Anglo-American philosophy. Though some of Dewey's views are undeniably dated, pragmatist aesthetics is not simply a curiosity of the past; it points to the most promising future we can envisage for aesthetic inquiry. To fulfil that future we will have to read and develop its Deweyan past.

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NOTES

1. I shall be quoting from the new scholarly edition of John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987). Page references will appear parenthetically in the body of the text.

2. The quotation is from A. Isenberg, "Analytic Philosophy and the Study of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1987):128. The rise and debatable fall of analytic aesthetics is discussed at length in my "Analytic Aesthetics: Retrospect and Prospect," and in other papers in the same special issue of *JAAC* on analytic aesthetics which I guest-edited. Further and more recent discussion of analytic aesthetics' past achievement and continuing value can be found in Richard Shusterman, ed., *Analytic Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
3. G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 201.
4. See M. Macdonald, "Some Distinctive Features of Arguments Used in Criticism of the Arts," in *Aesthetics and Language*, ed. W. Elton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), p. 114. Frank Sibley's frequently anthologized article "Aesthetic Concepts" originally appeared in *Philosophical Review* 68 (1959):421-50.
5. See Peter Strawson, "Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art," in his *Freedom and Resentment* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 178-88; and Stuart Hampshire, "Logic and Appreciation," in *Aesthetics and Language*, pp. 161-69.
6. "Neither the savage nor the civilized man is what he is by native constitution but by the culture in which he participates. The final measure of the quality of that culture is the arts which flourish" (p. 347).
7. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Norton, 1929), p. 358. Similarly in *Art as Experience*, Dewey describes science as "but a central art auxiliary to the generation and utilization of other arts" (p. 33).
8. See *Experience and Nature*, p. 358; and *Art as Experience*, pp. 33, 125-26, 202.
9. The quote is from John Passmore, "The Dreariness of Aesthetics," in *Aesthetics and Language*, p. 45. I assess the power and value of analytic aesthetics' argument for distinctions and the way pragmatism can accommodate them by reinterpreting their nature, in Richard Shusterman, "Analytic and Pragmatist Aesthetics," in *Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of Aesthetics* (forthcoming), and in "Analytic Aesthetics, Literary Theory, and Deconstruction," *Monist* 69 (1986):22-38.
10. The analytic aesthetician Arthur Danto characteristically argues that the factors and imperatives directing art's history are those of its "own internal development" in his *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 97-111, 204. The citations here from Dewey are from *Art as Experience*, pp. 14-15, 285.
11. M. C. Beardsley, *The Possibility of Criticism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), p. 16.

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