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Art Education, The Art of Education and the Art of Life. Considering the Implications of Dewey's Later Philosophy to Art and Music Education.

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Art Education, The Art of Education and the Art of Life. Considering the Implications of Dewey's Later Philosophy to Art and Music Education.

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I

 From Dewey's naturalistic standpoint,¹ culture develops from nature, and critical communication is one of its possible operational modes. It is this fact of the contingency of cultural cultivation that makes pedagogical critique indispensable: in order to make a home in the hazardous world, human beings have to learn to reflect in advance on the possible outcomes of their choices and to deliberate their co-operative actions accordingly. Hence, there arises a commitment to develop critical consciousness, for without the will to deliberate, we are at the mercy of our impulses. Here the pragmatic humanism of Dewey's naturalism becomes explicit: in order to flourish, human culture has to be able to use critical reflection in communication. Cultural formation is realized in the shared creative drive towards the unforeseen.

 In my reading, Dewey's later philosophy can be seen as a manifestation of a kind of critical – one might even say pedagogical – anthropology, as it emphasizes human culture's potential to transform its natural habitat by intelligent action. Logically, this can be described in the terms of situation, inquiry, and context: through *inquiry*, the indeterminate problematic situation is transformed into a determined course of action.² This transformation takes place in, and in the terms of, a cultural *context*.

 While, for Dewey, *situation* is something that is given in the sense that that we find ourselves in it,³ it is as important to acknowledge that context is dynamic, and, thus, flexible. While the context is also given as a framework of the possible cultural implications of the situation, in the process of reflective inquiry it is transformed along with the dispositions of the inquirers. Cultural ideas are worked dialectically in relation to their pragmatic implications, as culture is transformed in a *praxis* of deliberation.⁴ Put differently, the formation of culture, along with the education that steers this formation, is characteristically

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reconstructive. The reconstruction takes place in hope that emergent cultural formations may help societies to solve their problems and to evolve as communities. In Dewey's scheme, philosophy should function as a principal factor in this project by providing critical reflection on cultural reconstruction. In this role, philosophy can even be conceived as "the general theory of education," a vision of the pedagogical potential of the cultural (trans)formation.⁵



II

From the standpoint of Dewey's later philosophy, the cultural power of transforming the immediate situation through intelligent inquiry can be regarded as "art" in itself. In the most extensive sense, this is the civic art, or the moral art, of participation in a democratic culture.⁶ Accordingly, I propose two interconnected levels at which art education – music education included – can be considered: (1) the level of the "general" art *of* education that aims at critical reflection in communication; and, (2) the "specific" level of art education that aims at learning particular artistic practices. If one accepts that all education ought to target the general *praxis* of the "art of life," the point is that every educational encounter at level (2) should also reach out to level (1).⁷ Hence, from this perspective, the general goals of education should be kept in focus even in the most specialized fields of arts education.



There is more to this scheme than the romantic notion that human life may be viewed as an artistic creation.⁸ The idea of the "art of life" is based on a genealogical view of the development of the manual and fine arts out of the art of living in a community.⁹ One can catch a Peircean underpinning in this genealogy: specific forms of art are taken as expressions of the same semiotic approach that is the logical core of all understanding.¹⁰ Historically, art was born of our need to comprehend the relationships between our environments and ourselves: in this sense, it is as much a mode of understanding as any other epistemological endeavor. This explains why science can also be regarded as an art: sharing the logic of manual and fine arts in its constitution, it differs from the latter in its subject matter. While science deals with specific sign-formations that can be used in mediating between other things to maximum explanatory effect (that is, with general concepts and theories), art grasps the realm of immediate.

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III

The distinction between “immediate” and “mediate” requires careful clarification in Dewey’s naturalist pragmatism. To begin with, Dewey did not build his epistemology on a supposed metaphysical split between qualities that belong exclusively to the outer world and qualities that belong solely to inner experience. Many of his opponents read this as a sign of idealism – a reading that was encouraged by his all-embracing use of the word “experience” that was taken as a remnant of his earlier Hegelianism.¹¹ However, noticing only what they saw as Dewey the idealist, his critics missed a central point in his later writings. Adopting the Peircean semiotic perspective as a point of departure, Dewey set out to reconstruct the classical epistemological problem of how to mediate between the transcendental object and the experiencing subject, thus anticipating contemporary epistemological naturalists.¹²

From the naturalistic standpoint, we are worldly beings who, through natural evolution, have developed the ability to use signs of the relations between the things we encounter and the things we already possess to our own benefit. To perceive something as an object is to already attribute it with a meaning, and meaning is always a sign-function – which from the pragmatist standpoint is always a function of use. This makes a generally recognized object a generalized sign that may be utilized in a similar fashion by others. Such an ability to use signs collectively is based on the preceding ability, as part of evolution, to respond to changes in the environment. The ability to cope with change, then, is the naturalistic base of all organic significations, including the social-cultural use of symbols.

To have a sensation is thus to detect a *signifying relation*, even if we can not yet name it. But signification, even at this basic level, is not a one-way street: we sense something actively, as readiness to make a change in our disposition. Then, if needed, we may act according to the changed disposition. In a way, we “make sense,” interpret, all the time as we go through our daily pursuits. Higher semiotic processes are carried by the bodily functions that take place as such active responses (as distinct from mere reactions) to events that may concern us. Hence, there is a sense in which a thing may be taken as a sign immediately. However, this only means that its qualities have not been yet taken into further consideration and interpreted in the terms of generalized habits.

This naturalistic account of signification is the rational basis for Dewey’s theory of experience, a notion that he began to develop early on and continued to expand throughout his long career. According to this view, the situation is first experienced holistically – Väkevä, L (2007) “Art Education, The Art of Education and the Art of Life. Considering the Implications of Dewey’s Later Philosophy to Art and Music Education.” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6/1: http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Vakeva6_1.pdf

 qualitatively, as having some kind of emphasis, suggesting some kind of response.¹³ The value of the suggested response as an answer to the specific situation is not determined yet: the holistic situation is “felt” immediately, and this intimate feeling may continue as we begin to make sense of the situation through inquiry. This qualitative background of experience is for Dewey the immediate “material” of the artistic expression, and thus the material of “art-centered experiences,” as well.¹⁴

 At its best, art expresses the pervasive feeling of individual life-situations in its subject matter. “Individual” does not refer here to an individual, perceiving human subject: rather, in Dewey, the “subject” indicates a specific kind of emphasis arising from the background of experience that may (or may not) eventually be built into an “esthetic” whole.¹⁵ The “subjects” that the arts deal with are not just what the “primary texts” of the arts explicate or suggest; there is a deeper meaning involved, as the “work of art” is worked out in the experience of the persons involved. In Dewey’s vocabulary, the “work of art” refers to the transformation of the expressive subject matter in experience rather than to the form of an art object (or artistic performance). The latter is but the material locus of the work of art, not yet sufficient to determine its “esthetic” value.¹⁶

IV

 For Dewey, art is always an expressive form, which means that it is also communicative.¹⁷ Indeed, communication can be indicated as the binding force that unites the specific arts with the general “art of life.” Again, to understand this we must pay attention to the naturalistic underpinnings of Dewey’s approach. What does it mean that art expresses the quality of an individual life-situation in communication? How can art mediate the immediate?

 According to Dewey, human understanding originates in the practical, in the sense that the “problems of Men” [sic] concern the demands of human life.¹⁸ While the source of all art is *techne*, understood as the skillful ability to use tools to some pre-defined end (such as getting one’s daily nutrition),¹⁹ specific art forms have later picked up a cultural role that warrants the discussion of their power to transform the immediate conditions of life. It is very important to acknowledge the word “cultural” in this connection: the transformative power of art is not an inherent transcendental value or quality that some (art) objects have, once and for all. Nor is it a secondary quality that one attaches to such objects through perception. From a

Deweyan standpoint, the transformative power of art is related to its role in cultural reconstruction, its place in the art of life.

Even if the specific art forms such as music are social-cultural developments and thus subject to cultural critique, further criteria of evaluation can perhaps be specified that grants a unique cultural position for the so-called “fine arts.” As already mentioned, Dewey shifted his focus from the artwork to the artistic “working”; that is, from the pre-formed *object* of experience to the *process* of transformation. From the Deweyan standpoint, “fineness” in the arts is expressed in the way that they re-formulate human experience through community, suggesting a kind of cultural transformation of individual life situations. This is not a transcendence of the experience, as becomes clear when one remembers that there is more to experience than the immediate situation. Rather, as generalized signs, the arts may be experienced communally, providing an immediate and shared sense of meaning to a social life. In fact, according to Dewey, communication via art of any kind is communication to a maximum effect: by re-formulating the subject matter of immediate experience, the arts can most efficiently transcend the “gulfs and walls that limit community of experience.”²⁰



V

Understood in regard to the civic art that defines the conditions of good life in a democratic community, Dewey’s criteria for “esthetic” (i.e., consummatory) experience may also be applied to cultural transformation itself. In this way, the arts hint of the “esthetic” possibilities of community life. I find this one of the most interesting ideas of Dewey’s later philosophy; it also frames nicely the two-leveled scheme of art education presented above.

To understand how such “esthetic” criteria may be applied to community life it is important to pay closer attention to the way Dewey extended the concept of art to cover all reflective (and thus critical) practices that balance two aspects of human experience: (1) the pragmatic aspect that stresses the future, and (2) the “esthetic” aspect of “an experience” that focuses on the immediate. Only when these two aspects are balanced, may we speak of “the aesthetic” as a general, philosophical category.²¹ It does not really matter how extensive a practice is: the “esthetic” criteria of “an experience” – of consummatory experience – may be applied at every level, from practicing one’s craft to the *praxis* of social life. However, these kinds of criteria do not suffice solely as the criteria for good life. Since every experience has its feet, so to speak, in the practice of human life, and since every reflection refers back to Väkevä, L (2007) “Art Education, The Art of Education and the Art of Life. Considering the Implications of Dewey’s Later Philosophy to Art and Music Education.” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6/1: http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Vakeva6_1.pdf



this practice, there is always a pragmatic value involved. The “art of life” does not just aim at immediate gratification: at its best, it is a consistent effort to organize daily life so that the results may be judged as satisfying, both morally and “esthetically.”

This naturalized criterion of the good life suggests changes in the way we approach specific arts. In the case of music – the art that many have taken to be most impractical – this indicates re-evaluation of the traditional aesthetic bases of critique based on intrinsic ideas of “music alone” on one hand, and its possible outside extrinsic references on the other, to the holistic web of relations that are involved in all social-cultural practices of music. The web of relationships that frames musical expression may warrant what has been called “aesthetic experience,” but always in pragmatic context. Such experience, then, is never purely disinterested in the sense depicted by modernist aesthetic theory. While “esthetic” gratification may stop us in awe, it also moves us, takes us somewhere. From Dewey’s logical standpoint, “esthetic” experience can be conceived as a phase in pragmatic life, marking the consummative quality that our inquiries sometimes acquire along their pragmatic way.

VI

What, then, are the specific implications of the Deweyan naturalistic pragmatism for the theory and practice of music education? Firstly, from the pragmatist standpoint, theory and practice are not separate: theorizing in music education – as in all education – is rooted in practice and gets its significance from its pragmatic consequences. This position of course, is commonplace in pragmatism: there is nothing so practical as a good theory.²² What may be more uncommon is the insistence that there is nothing so theoretical as a good practice – if, that is, theory is interpreted as a tool that helps practice to become more critical, and thus, more educative.²³ The origin of all conceptualizing is functional: that is, conceptualizing serves a purpose, even if most of the signification that takes place in human life is pre-symbolic. Hence, there is a sense in which pre-reflective experience is semiotic; however, this meaning is pragmatic rather than cognitive (depending, of course, of how widely “cognitive” is understood).²⁴ Theory, when pragmatically effective, informs the practice, and practice, when truly pragmatic, feeds back to the theory at stake, providing it with an empirical basis.²⁵ In music education, recognizing the pragmatic link between theory and practice can liberate us from too strictly separating academic and practical thinking.

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Secondly, there is the implication that so-called aesthetic enjoyment may be involved in every kind of musical practice, however commonplace. This is because “esthetic” value is *realized* in (or as) *praxis*; it does not hide in the pre-formed structure of composed musical works waiting to be “discovered.” It is “out there” only potentially, in the modalities of artistic expression that may inform the experience as lived through. This also makes the “esthetic” experience something that can be reached by every student, regardless of formal training.²⁶ In turn, this implies that a democratic challenge exists in music education that should be taken seriously. The more extensive task is to organize art education in a way that everyone gets a chance to explore the rich qualitative possibilities of life.²⁷

Thirdly, as cultural education, music education covers more than what is usually considered as fine art or high culture. Understood in naturalized terms, “culture” is not a superstructure that transcends everyday experience. It is the experience itself, as lived, refined, and cultivated in community life. In the broadest sense, the concept of “culture” is extended to refer to the art of life through which people attempt to understand the world they live in. Even the loftiest expressions of the fine arts, such as the classics of Western art music, are linked to everyday semiotic processes of the art of life. If the pragmatic ties between the various specific arts and everyday life are severed, something valuable is lost from our understanding of the art and the aesthetic realm in general. Relegating that realm to the fine arts alone, Dewey teaches, denies its potential for building human life as an art. This way we may lose sight of the promise of empowerment that naturalized aesthetics suggests for music education.

What is this promise? One may observe it from the angle of the “art of life” as a chance to refashion the conditions of the aesthetic experiencing in a community. The modernist notion that “good art” is fine art, and that modernist aesthetics is the rationale for “understanding” fine art, disavows this potential. Thus, fourthly, every effort should be made to guarantee that the music curriculum is open to difference: not just the difference in musical expression, but the difference in various ways that culture informs musicking, and vice versa. To acknowledge this difference, we should not sever the ties between “school music” and music in society. What we do in music class is no less political than what our colleagues do in other classes; and recognizing and accepting this opens up new possibilities for considering music education as a positive contribution to the moral art of life. Only in this way can music education be conceived as truly critical – and truly praxial, as well.

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There is also a logical reason for keeping our eyes open to difference: the more we have possible interpretations at hand, the more options we have for understanding. If we frame music education in the curriculum of general education too narrowly, we limit the musical-semiotic reach of our students. While we may be professionally efficient in focusing on performance instruction or on music “appreciation,” we may neglect other, as (or perhaps more) valuable, ways of making music a part of our students’ lives. This would betray our goal of making music education truly “general.”

Fifthly, a pragmatic notion of the curriculum of music education, understood in terms of Dewey’s theories of inquiry and experience, suggests a holistic perspective of curriculum as an expression of the experience of the student. There is an ongoing need for both vertical and horizontal integration of curriculum, not just at the level of individual subjects but, more importantly, at the level of the learning communities. The severest problem of integration is not institutional: it is the theoretical approach that divides curriculum into separate streams. Considered from the standpoint of naturalistic pragmatism, all aspects of experience, from immediately sensual to highly abstract, should be approached directly as phases in the continuum of inquiry. Acknowledging the role of the culture in framing (but not pre-determining) the semiotics of all learning, we end up with a socio-cultural view of learning not unlike the perspectives endorsed by contemporary social constructivists.²⁸

Finally, there is a strong tendency in Dewey’s pedagogical writings toward integration of the student and the curriculum. Because Dewey considers curriculum from the pragmatic standpoint, it is easy to see that the need for integration is really between the individual and culture.²⁹ In music education, a Deweyan perspective suggests that rationalizing pedagogical value of music cannot lean solely on individualistic grounds: while music, along with other arts, can contribute to personal well-being and experience, this always takes place in a social-cultural context and partly in terms of its conditions, as becomes clear when one considers Dewey’s logic. As an art, music can formulate (or, rather, express and communicate) our shared experience in such way that our life is transformed. This transformation does not involve total transcendence of experience, but it may involve transformation of any restricted view of experience, including musical experience. Such a restricted view can be as much a result of specialized music training as of any other expert practice. Opening the vista fully to all human experience is also educating in a way that learning, in itself, becomes a *praxis* for living.

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VII

I have taken here certain ideas as representative for Dewey's later philosophy, especially his attempt to maintain a naturalistic frame of reference in understanding and critiquing culture. In ontological terms, the result is a "softened" version of naturalism, removed from positivistic and "hard" naturalisms that tend to reduce philosophy to science (or to the meta-level critique of the latter). "Softness" should be taken metaphorically here: in fact, Dewey set out to use his philosophy as a critical weapon against what he saw as fatal weaknesses of his own culture.³⁰ In my reading, the naturalist revitalization of so-called aesthetic experience is one of the most important aspects of his critique, and it still holds great potential as a general pedagogical ideal.

Without the awareness of the critical flavor of Dewey's naturalism it is hard to appreciate his version of pragmatism. Over the years, we have read naïve interpretations of pragmatism that have fed on and thus promoted misimpressions of what its classics originally sought to convey. Instead of reducing philosophy to a technique of trying to solve philosophical dilemmas with technical methods, pragmatism, especially as Dewey formulated it, was conceived as an attempt to break Western philosophy's incessant quest for the Absolute and to liberate it as a critical tool in dealing with common, everyday human problems. In this respect, naturalism was not taken as an overwhelming rationalization of human condition and fate, as in social Darwinism; rather, it was applied to make sense of the relativism that threatened to undermine the central mind-structures of classical and modern thought. This makes Dewey's pragmatism a predecessor of contemporary postmodernism, but also one of its most notable alternatives.³¹

Overall, Dewey's pragmatism may be conceived as an attempt to apply modernism's basic confidence in the human potential to the challenges of modern society.³² Considered in this way, it promised more to its contemporaries than the rationalist logic and abstract moral(ist) systems of previous centuries. Most importantly, classical pragmatism set out to show that reason does not have to be based on universal *a priori* categories that transcend everyday experience, but, rather, that reason can be seen as evolving out of culture and society in terms of human needs. What Dewey and his fellow pragmatists left us to ponder is the possibility that reason is realized through the pragmatic negotiations that we participate in

daily in making sense of the world and our place in it in order to live more successfully as a human community.

The implications of this perspective for art educators are clear: the arts, including music, should be considered as integral fruits of human cultivation, but the latter should be conceived as no more insubstantial than cultivation of the land. Both depend on the natural resources and both serve human life by actualizing its possibilities.

Notes

¹ My focus is here primarily on the works published after Dewey moved from Ann Arbor to Chicago (1894), and especially on the texts written after he moved from Chicago to New York (1904). I submit to a widely accepted interpretation, according which there is a substantial difference between Dewey's early, idealistic, and his later, naturalistic, philosophy – despite the fact that throughout his career Dewey continued to develop seeds that were already blooming in his youth. However, there are different readings of how Dewey's thought evolved throughout the years; see, e.g., Alexander, T., *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 18; Boisvert, R., *John Dewey. Rethinking Our Time* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 15–16; Rockefeller, S. J., *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1991), p. 19; Westbrook, R. B., *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 60–62; Shook, J. B., *Dewey's Empirical Theory of Knowledge and Reality*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), p. 20.

² The most throughout presentation of Dewey's mature logic is his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry, LW 12*. In what follows, Dewey's *Collected Works* is referred to in using the customary symbols: *EW* (*Early Works*), *MW* (*Middle Works*) and *LW* (*Later Works*), followed by volume number and page number.

³ But not in the sense that it precedes signification, as will become clear in the following. For Dewey, situation does not consist of the bare sense data of the empiricists, nor does it refer to any transcendental reality behind our empirical reach.

⁴ *Praxis* is here interpreted as sociopolitical practice aiming at a common good through moral conduct (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097^b12, 1141^b23–33; see, Squires, G., "Praxis: a dissenting note", *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 35(1) [2003], pp.1–7. See also Bowman, W., "Discerment, Respons/ability, and the Goods of Philosophical Praxis." *Finnish Journal of Music Education* 5(1–2) [2001], pp. 96–119). An important issue is how general the *praxes* may be: for instance, can the *praxis* of education ever hope to be truly comprehensive? This marks also the question of universalism in education, criticized by postmodern pedagogical thinkers. While classical pragmatism has been read as a precursor for postmodernism, Dewey's philosophical approach is clearly modernist in its meliorism; that is, in the trust he placed in human societies for being able to overcome their problems. The two World Wars put a severe test on Dewey's trust. However, he preserved his almost religious belief in the

power of reconstruction of culture, even in his later years. See, e.g., Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, chap. 14. About Dewey's relation to modernism, see, Diggins, J. P. *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), chap. 1. See also note 31 below.

⁵ MW 9, p. 338.

⁶ Regarding the term "art," the point is that moral values are working concepts, not something that precede moral deliberation. Moral action (*viz.*, action according to deliberated values) can be conceived as artistic in the sense that it requires skill as well as vision and subsequent reflection on one's actions that, in effect, are always creative because they are always coping with ever-new situations and contexts.

⁷ The "art of life" is mentioned by Dewey only in the passing in *EW 3*, p. 101 and *LW 3*, p. 26. For an interpretation of the concept, see, Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art*, chap. 5; see also Jackson P. W., *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 6. Dewey also indicated education as "the supreme art" in *EW 5*, p. 93. The relatively liberal use of the word "art" in English hides the problem one faces in Finnish, in which the respective term ("taide") is often associated with fine arts but not too often with craft or skill. This may relate to the history of the term, since it was introduced to Finnish reading public at the time when the concept of fine art was already established in Western academic culture. The etymological roots of the word, however, refer to skill ("taito" in Finnish). Ilkka Niiniluoto discusses this issue in his opening words to a Finnish philosophical colloquium focusing on the concept of "Taito". In Halonen I., Airaksinen T. & Niiniluoto, I. (eds.) *Taito. Suomen Filosofisen Yhdistyksen Helsingissä 11–12.1.1990 järjestämän kolokvion esitelmät*. (Helsinki: Suomen Filosofinen Yhdistys, 1990), pp. 1–10.

⁸ That idea, which in itself may be traced back to the Greek philosophers, is also picked by those postmodernists who intentionally efface the modernist line between ethics and aesthetics. See, Richard Shusterman's *Taide, elämä ja estetiikka. Pragmatistinen filosofia ja estetiikka*. (Tampere: Gaudeamus, 1997), pp. 176–178, 236. Translated by Vesa Mujunen. This is the Finnish version of Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. (London 1992). Also see the 2nd edition of the book (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), especially chap. 10.

⁹ E.g., *LW 1*, chap. 3, *LW 4*, 3–20, *LW 10*, chap. 2.

¹⁰ Pentti Määttänen outlines the consequences of Peircean semiotic to the philosophy of human understanding and cultural action in, *Action and Experience. A naturalistic approach to cognition* (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, Annales Academiae scientiarum Fennicae, Dissertationes humanarum litterarum 64, 1993). There are different interpretations of the role of the influence of Peirce on Dewey's philosophy. See, Sleeper, R. P., *The Necessity of Pragmatism: John Dewey's Conception of Philosophy*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1986), chap. 2; Shook, *Dewey's Empirical Theory*, pp. 14–16, 130–131, 213–214; Prawat, R. S., "Dewey and Peirce, The Philosopher's Philosopher". *Teachers College Record* 103(4), pp. 667–721; and the ensuing dialogue in the following issues of the same journal.

¹¹ "Experience" meant for Dewey the field of transactions, natural as well as socio-cultural, that frame the semiotic processes. In his later years, he regretted using the term so extensively and suggested the term "culture" instead (*LW 1*, p. 361). The connection to Hegel is not incidental, though: Dewey began his career as neo-Hegelian idealist and later confessed that

Hegel left a “permanent deposit” in his thinking (*LW 5*, p. 154). This does not mean that he accepted idealism in his later years. See, e.g., Alexander, *John Dewey’s Theory*, chap. 2; Shook, *Dewey’s Empirical Theory*, chap. 3.

¹² Different varieties of pragmatism and naturalism are analyzed e.g. in Sami Pihlström’s *Structuring the World. The Issue of Realism and the Nature of Ontological Problems in Classical and Contemporary Pragmatism*. (Societas Philosophica Fennica. Acta Philosophica Fennica vol. 59, 1995).

¹³ Holder J. J. “An Epistemological Foundation for Thinking: A Deweyan Approach.” In: Garrison, J. (ed.) *The New Scholarship on Dewey*. (Dordrecht: Kulwer Academic Publishers, 1993), pp. 7–24.

¹⁴ The notion of “art-centered experience” is here borrowed from P. W. Jackson; see his *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 35. Jackson uses the term to make a distinction between Dewey’s general concept of “esthetic experience” (as Dewey consistently spells it) or “*an* experience”, and the type of “aesthetic” experience that traditional aesthetic theory connects with specific artistic practices. As this traditional view of “aesthetic experience” may be seen as being in opposition to Dewey’s “soft boundary” approach to art and the aesthetic, the distinction should be taken as heuristic. See, also, endnotes 15 and 21 below.

¹⁵ *LW 12*, pp. 88–89; Boisvert, *John Dewey*, pp. 35–36. As noted in note 14 above, “esthetic” was Dewey’s chosen word for referring to the “consummatory,” qualitatively fulfilling, dimension of “an experience,” in distinction to experiences we simply “undergo” (i.e., merely “to experience” something). “Esthetic,” consummatory experiences, whether or not involving the arts, underpin Dewey’s arguments for the earlier mentioned concept of the “art of life.” Whether he used this particular spelling purposely to draw a line between his thought and Baumgartian-Kantian aesthetic tradition of “aesthetic experience” is up to interpretation. However, it is not in dispute that Dewey severely criticized the idealist tradition of aesthetics, suggesting a pragmatist and naturalist approach as an alternative. I have analyzed this alternative in my *Kasvatuksen taide ja taidekasvatus. Estetiikan ja taidekasvatuksen merkitys John Deweyn naturalistisessa pragmatismissa. [The art of education and art education. The significance of aesthetics and art education in the naturalistic pragmatism of John Dewey.]* (Oulu: Acta Universitatis Ouluensis. Series E, Scientiae rerum socialium, 68). See also my “Naturalizing Philosophy of Music Education.” *Finnish Journal of Music Education* 5(1-2) [2000], pp. 73–83 and “Music Education as Critical Practice: A Naturalist View”. *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11(2) [2003], pp. 141–156. The Finnish discussion of Dewey’s philosophy in connection with aesthetics and art pedagogy has been quite lively in recent years; see, the other articles in the *Finnish Journal of Music Education* 5(1–2), Määttänen, P. (ed.) *Pragmatist Viewpoints on Art. Working Papers*. (Helsinki: University of Art and Design Helsinki UIAH F 19) and Westerlund, H., *Bridging Experience, Action and Culture in Music Education* (Helsinki: Sibelius-Academy, Studia Musica 16).

¹⁶ *LW 10*, pp. 9, 68–71.

¹⁷ *LW 10*, p. 110.

¹⁸ *LW 15*, pp. 154–169.

¹⁹ A thorough account of Dewey’s notion of technology is Larry Hickman’s *John Dewey’s Pragmatic Technology*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990)

²⁰ *LW 10*, p. 110.

²¹ N.B.: “The aesthetic” should be taken here as referring to the philosophical issues that are customarily discussed in connection with aesthetics as a philosophical sub-discipline, namely, questions that concern art and so-called aesthetic value and the perception of the latter. While I do acknowledge the historical and thematic rootedness of modern(ist) aesthetics (as well as the term itself) to the German Enlightenment tradition and understand the need to reconstruct its basic tenets, especially in respect to what can be included in its realm, I do not subscribe to the view that aesthetics as a general philosophical category could (or should) not be discussed in connection to postmodern, critical or naturalistic theories. This notwithstanding, I fully agree that there is a need to make a distinction between Dewey’s holistic naturalism in dealing with the “esthetic” aspect of human experience in relation to the kind of aesthetic theory developed in the Baumgartian-Kantian tradition. Hence, I reserve the terms “aesthetic” and “aesthetics” in this paper only to situations where a more general concept is needed to relate Deweyan ideas to general discussions of art and related matters. Concerning the distinction between these two traditions in respect to the theories of meaning and experience, see aesthetic experience.” ;
<http://www.siu.edu/MUSIC/ACTPAPERS/ARCHIVE/Maattanen.pdf>.

²² This aphorism is usually credited to Kurt Lewin; see his *Field theory in social science; selected theoretical papers*. D. Cartwright (ed.). (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), p. 169. See also Dewey’s first edition of *How We Think*, (Mineola: Dover, 1997), p. 139.

²³ At issue in recent commentaries on Dewey is the question of whether his logic of inquiry and the related pedagogical ideas settle for merely “experiential” results or seek the more generally reflective “experimental” application that necessitates conceptualizing on a more abstract level. See, e.g., the Deweyan critique of David Kolb’s experiential model of learning in Reijo Miettinen’s “The concept of experiential learning and John Dewey’s theory of reflective thought and action”. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 19(1), pp. 54–72; also, see Prawat, R. S., “The Two Faces of Deweyan Pragmatism: Inductionism versus Social Constructionism.” *Teachers College Record* 102(4), pp. 805–840, and the follow-up thread of discussion in the same journal.

²⁴ Holder, “An Epistemological Approach”

²⁵ Recalling the experimental bent of Dewey’s later epistemology, perhaps one could say that practice provides theory with an *experimental* basis.

²⁶ This is *not* to say that formal training would necessarily dampen our senses to “esthetic” value: it is only to remind us that its conditions are contextual and thus relative to the situation *and* the context. There is thus no point in making a comparison between the kind or degree of aesthetic enjoyment of an amateur and a pundit.

²⁷ The democratic implications of the Deweyan approach to music education are also discussed in Paul Woodford’s *Democracy and Music Education* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2005). See, also, Westerlund, *Bridging Experience*. It may be pointed out that as Dewey wrote practically nothing about music education *per se*, the application of his ideas in this field is always interpretative (even if Dewey had his progressivist followers in American music education; see, Mark M. L. & Gary C. L., *A History of American Music Education*. [New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1992] and Humphreys, J., “Instrumental Music in American Education: In Service of Many Masters.” *Journal of Band Research* 30 [Spring 1997], pp. 39–70). Dewey’s main concern was visual art, as is clear when one reads his writings about art education. He was also interested in poetry, which may be the only art

that he practiced himself. See, Boydston, J. A. (ed.), *The Poems of John Dewey*. (Carbondale, Ill.: The Southern Illinois University Press, 1977, Ryan, A., *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*. (New York, N.Y.: Norton & Co, 1995), p. 253; and Martin, J., *The Education of John Dewey. A Biography*. (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 398–405.

²⁸ Dewey is often mentioned as a forbearer of contemporary constructivism. However, there are differences between his later pedagogical philosophy and contemporary constructivist views. These also implicate differences in the ways we may approach musical learning, and should be acknowledged. However, here it suffices to recognize the thematic similarities between Dewey's and social constructivists' ideas. See also Prawat, R. S. "The Two Faces of Deweyan Pragmatism: Inductionism versus Social Constructionism." *Teachers College Record* 102(4) [2000], pp. 805–840; and "Dewey meets the 'Mozart' of psychology in Moscow." *American Educational Research Journal* 37(3) [2000], pp. 663–696.

²⁹ This theme is strongly pointed out by Westerlund in her *Bridging Experience*. See, also, Woodford's *Democracy and Music Education*.

³⁰ Sami Pihlström analyzes the implications of "soft" naturalism as cultural critique in his writings of naturalism and pragmatism. See, e.g., his *Structuring the World*.

³¹ Thus, I would not go as far as Woodford, in his *Democracy and Music Education*, chap. 3, where he appears to condemn postmodernism as harmful for the liberal enterprise of the philosophy of music education. As I understand it, even at its most extreme, postmodernism offers valuable tools for critiquing essentialist claims. For example, postmodern critique is central to much feminist and other gender research, including in music education. In fact, its most important value may be that it may force us to ask difficult questions about the grounds of the democratic liberalism that we seem to take for granted (compare to Wayne Bowman's "Re-Tooling 'Foundations' to Address 21st Century Realities: Music Education Amidst Diversity, Plurality, and Change." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music education* 2(2) [2003]:

<http://www.siu.edu/MUSIC/ACTPAPERS/v2/Bowman03.pdf>.

³² Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism*.

About the Author

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