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# Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society

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Steven A. Fesmire

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## Dramatic Rehearsal and The Moral Artist: A Deweyan Theory of Moral Understanding

Contemporary moral theorists are increasingly attentive to the ways human beings actually make sense of their moral experience and compose meaningful lives. Martha Nussbaum's re-introduction of Aristotelian practical wisdom and Alasdair MacIntyre's emphasis on narrativity are good examples of a shift in focus away from tedious polemics about the single "right thing to do" in a situation.<sup>1</sup>

But recent theorists have tended to lack a highly articulated philosophical framework — especially a full-blooded theory of moral belief and deliberation — that would enable us better to wend our way along the trails they have blazed. We are born, MacIntyre proclaims, with a social past, a *tradition* into which we grow. Yet MacIntyre advances a new moral vision independent of recent philosophical traditions that might accommodate and direct his own insights and inquiries. Classical American pragmatism, especially as developed by John Dewey, provides a framework that can clarify and extend the achievements of contemporary moral theory. I contend that a thoroughgoing reconstruction of our moral vision would profit immensely from looking back to Dewey's theory of moral understanding. I propose here to articulate the center of vision of this theory by developing a Deweyan conception of deliberation as imaginative *dramatic rehearsal*.

## I. Overview

Dewey's conception of deliberation as dramatic rehearsal has been neglected in the philosophical literature.<sup>2</sup> Dramatic rehearsal is the hunting phase of *any* situation (scientific, aesthetic, or moral) involving doubt. When problematic situations arise, we "try on" in our imaginations various possibilities for acting. We do this in search of a path that will integrate competing desires and restore equilibrium to our experience.

The idea that we imaginatively rehearse possible avenues for acting before trying them out is easy to grasp. What is needed is to reconstruct a coherent and defensible moral theory by placing Dewey's scattered discussions of dramatic rehearsal within the context of his philosophical corpus. I strive here to set forth a précis of that project.

When deliberation proceeds intelligently we are stimulated to act in a way that is *felt* as the culmination and resolution of the process. This felt quality, while emotional, is not a *blind* emotional preference. Nor is it subjective. It is a fermented and incubated emotion, a feeling of the connectedness and continuity of the whole deliberative process, and of the chosen course as the best at hand for reestablishing fluent activity. An imagined outcome is felt to cohere with our prefigured experience and with our expectations of the future. The projected action thus "fits," and this feeling of "fit" is a function of the developing hue of deliberation. This tonality of deliberation is what Dewey calls the "aesthetic."

The aesthetic is not only the felt sense of closure that follows on the heels of an experience. It is also the feeling of fluid development that suffuses and unifies the whole experience and guides or steers our thoughts and actions. We feel and savor the movement of our purposes and interests toward fruition. The aesthetic is the opening of awareness of a situation's latent possibilities for growth and meaning.

Such aesthetic experience is possible because of our capacity for *imagination*. Imagination, like *drama*, is story-structured and is spurred by conflicts and contrasts among characters and contingent

events (see LW 1:77). It is vivid and emotionally moving, and brings competing tendencies and instabilities to resolution. Rather than being a lyric outburst, imagination (and thus the aesthetic) is constrained and guided by the exigencies and pressures of a situation along with our vast array of internalized *social habits*.<sup>3</sup> Dramatic imagination is neither rapturous and effusive nor reserved and formal.

For deliberation to be brought to a dramatic resolution, it must develop so as to have a form that expresses coherently the conflicts that originally set the problem for inquiry. Dewey calls this pattern of maturation toward consummation "*an* experience" or "consummatory experience." It is exemplified by aesthetic experience, but is also a generic pattern of clarification and development in experiences which are not distinctively aesthetic.

Dealing comprehensively with conflicting tendencies is demanded of all deliberative processes. In *moral* deliberations, *an* experience is "complete" or "consummated" when we deal fruitfully with the whole system of desires pressing for recognition and resolution in a problematic situation, such as conflicts of long-range ends and short-range ends-in-view, along with pressing needs, desires, and ends of our own and of others, as well as contingent events, etc.

Dewey's discussions of the "democratic ideal" clarify this. We must aspire to an ideal of associated living because we are not isolated atoms, but are irreducibly social organisms whose lives attain meaning and value through social interaction. The pattern of *an* experience emphasizes dealing "*ecologically*" with the competing values in a situation. That is, competing values are not localized and isolated from each other. Experience is complete only when conflicting tendencies in a situation are treated with an eye to the way they affect values elsewhere in the situation. In this way, a consummatory *moral* experience must be one that strives for a democratic ideal. As a direct result of this, it is claimed here that Dewey's moral standard is per-sonified by the refined imagination of a "moral artist."

This implies that moral theory must become moral aesthetics. This claim poses pivotal problems for Deweyan ethics. I address two

areas of concern: (1) the obstacles presented by our Enlightenment heritage, and (2) the problem of aestheticism.

An aesthetically "complete" dramatic rehearsal<sup>4</sup> strives to weave the interests and purposes of ourselves and others into an integrated and enduring tapestry. Hence, not only must we forecast consequences for ourselves, but also, as Mead observes, we must (and do) dramatically play the role of others whose lives interlace with our own. We must imaginatively project ourselves into the emerging dramas of *their* lives to discover how their life-stories or "narratives" may be meaningfully continued alongside our own.<sup>5</sup> Immoral conduct is thus not merely a deficiency in one's capacity to follow moral laws or rules. Much more than this, immorality stems from a scarcity of moral imagination and a failure in moral artistry.

This essay addresses such controverted Deweyan concepts as "problem," "habit," "aesthetic," "*an* experience," and the "democratic ideal" from the perspective of Dewey's theory of moral belief and deliberation. I bring Dewey's neglected theory of dramatic rehearsal to the fore as a cornerstone of his thought and thereby disclose the centrality for Dewey of an aesthetics of moral intelligence.<sup>6</sup>

## II. Dewey's Theory of Belief: The Rhythm of Growth

It is a familiar fact that Dewey's theory of deliberation functions in the broader context of his theory of belief. But recent misinterpretations warrant a few stage-setting remarks.

In the analytic tradition, misunderstandings of Dewey have stemmed in part from the supposition that beliefs primarily take the form of propositional claims about objects or states of affairs in the world. Basically, the view is that we hold these propositions before the mind, and then we supply either our assent or dissent, or we take an "attitude" toward the proposition. A belief may then be described as a "propositional attitude" which ideally corresponds to or "maps" *objective* entities which have specifiable properties and stand in determinate relations to one another.

This presupposition hinders interpretation of pragmatism, as ex-

emplified by C. L. Stevenson's introduction to the critical edition of Dewey's 1908 *Ethics* (MW 5). Stevenson, without regard for the dramatic and qualitative aspects of thinking, reduces Dewey's analysis of dramatic rehearsal to a quest for "scientifically true propositions" (MW 5:xxi). These propositions are very literally the outcome of appeal to already established scientific knowledge (MW 5:xxii). Once Stevenson clears up what he calls Dewey's "analytical clumsiness" (MW 5:xxxiii), Dewey appears to be a neophyte analytic philosopher pursuing justified true beliefs.

As Kestenbaum observes, such a "scientific" interpretation of dramatic rehearsal diminishes it to a mere prelude to the *real* work of moral evaluation — i.e., moral accounting.<sup>7</sup> The grain of truth in Stevenson's analysis is that the tentative solutions we come to in our deliberations must be restable in the world. But this testing is intelligible only as the closing phase of a search to resolve a problematic situation, a fact to which Stevenson fails even to allude.

For Dewey, the life of an organism is a rhythmic process of flights and perchings, of interruptions and recoveries. Thought, that is, *reflective thought*, as distinguished from the general stream of consciousness, random chains of "thought," and prejudicial beliefs, is occasioned by problematic situations. The appearance of incompatible factors motivates a readjustment from old habits to new ones.<sup>8</sup>

The life of a problem often goes through what James calls a "subconscious incubation" or "fermentation" process. Perplexities are deposited by life experiences, then they mature and ripen, until finally "the results hatch out, or burst into flower."<sup>9</sup> Countless incubating perplexities in myriad stages of maturity simultaneously constitute much of our identity or sense of self. Problematic situations are never eternally resolved, but they may be brought to relative states of closure, relative consummations of lines of inquiry.<sup>10</sup>

Dewey re-captures the richness of human beliefs without reducing them to stimulus-response events or to propositional attitudes. Beliefs are neither intellectual abstractions nor emotive artifacts. They are habitual modes of behavior that define our characters and emerge as unified structures of what MacIntyre has called a "narrative history."

## III. Deliberation As Dramatic Rehearsal

Having articulated the motivating conditions of deliberation, we are in a position to study the phenomenon of reflective thinking itself. In addition to a state of doubt, reflective thinking involves "an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity" (LW 8:120-21). This section explores the generic traits of this search for material to resolve a problematic situation, a search that Dewey calls "dramatic rehearsal."

The history of Dewey's theory of deliberation from the mid-1890's on is one of gradual clarification rather than radical change. A sufficiently detailed chronology of dramatic rehearsal is, however, beyond our scope. I therefore limit my focus to Dewey's mature articulation of the theme. This provides a framework for developing and defending a Deweyan conception of moral artistry.

Although overt action is arrested by disturbing circumstances, the impulsion toward action persists. The tendency "is diverted and takes the form of an idea or a *suggestion*," which acts as "a substitute for direct action" (LW 8:200, my emphasis). Dewey echoes Peirce's concept of "abduction," remarking that "suggestions just spring up, flash upon us, occur to us" (LW 12:113-14).<sup>11</sup> Various suggestions for action occur to us and vie with one another for primacy as we imagine them carried through. In *How We Think*, Dewey explains:

[Deliberation] is a vicarious, anticipatory way of acting, a kind of *dramatic rehearsal*. Were there only one suggestion popping up, we should undoubtedly adopt it at once. But where there are two or more, they collide with one another, maintain the state of suspense, and produce further inquiry. (LW 8:200, my emphasis)

In both the 1908 and 1932 *Ethics*, Dewey crystallizes his terminology for deliberation:

Deliberation is actually an imaginative rehearsal of various

courses of conduct. We give way, *in our mind*, to some impulse; we try, *in our mind*, some plan. Following its career through various steps, we find ourselves in imagination in the presence of the consequences that would follow. (MW 5:293 and LW 7:275)<sup>12</sup>

These statements occur in the context of a discussion of moral intuition [otherwise called "prizing," "direct sensing," or "appreciation" (LW 7:275 and LW 13:195)]. A suggested stimulus to action provokes a "direct sense of value" (MW 5:293) that has to be entered subject to revision and correction by ongoing observation and questioning (LW 7:273). Intuition is a naturally conditioned, felt appraisal that appears as part of a dramatic rehearsal. It is not an apprehension of a timeless essence.

Dewey's more familiar discussion of deliberation appears in *Human Nature and Conduct*. He writes:

[D]eliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action. ... Deliberation is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like. ... Thought runs ahead and foresees outcomes, and thereby avoids having to await the instruction of actual failure and disaster. (MW 14:132-33)

Like Homer's Penelope, who *overly* weaves and unweaves Laertes' shroud, we weave and unweave *in imagination* possible narratives for action. That is, we project ourselves in imagination into alternative futures always with the option of undoing the imagined outcome.

Deliberation is not a mathematical utilitarian calculation, nor is it a Kantian determinate judgment; it has a dramatic story to tell. A playwright or dramatic poet configures a present line or verse with a delicately refined aesthetic sense—a sense for possible meanings within a maturing situation. In good drama, characters think, feel, and act in ways that fit what has gone before. The dramatist cultivates com-

peting tendencies until they are matured.

Likewise, the deliberative drama is grounded in the “whence” of our prior habits and inclines us toward the “whither” of future situations. The possibilities “suggested” are not simply rehearsed, but are *dramatically* rehearsed, because they are “as meaningless in isolation as would be the drama of Hamlet were it confined to a single line or word with no context” (LW 10:29). A refined imagination opens up an expansive horizon of possibilities and fosters a capacity for choosing actions that will meaningfully continue our life-dramas.<sup>13</sup>

All metaphors emphasize certain features of our experience and deemphasize or hide others. The metaphor of dramatic rehearsal dilates the present moment, emphasizing the way we actively consolidate and reconstruct our world. We are not, however, merely characters in a dress-rehearsal for a ready-made play. We are co-writers and actors rehearsing for frighteningly open-ended performances co-written by a precarious environment.

Let me conclude this section by placing dramatic rehearsal in the context of organism-environment interaction. Some have viewed Dewey and Bentley’s distinction of “interaction” from “transaction” in *Knowing and the Known* (LW 16) as marking a shift away from an earlier mentalistic view of deliberation toward a far more thoroughgoing organic-environmental approach.<sup>14</sup> But such a view ignores that thought is a part of *action*.

The chief work of our tentative rehearsals is to reflect on consequences of actions before they “affect physical facts outside the body” (MW 14:133). But Dewey never de-emphasized the role of tactile activity or physical coordination in deliberation. The “erotic dialectic” of sexual expressiveness, for example, reminds us that intertwining bodies engage in the reflexive process of moral deliberation. Or consider everyday problem-solving: if I am deliberating on how to drive a stick-shift, it will do little good merely to sit and ponder the matter. I must physically manipulate the objects in my immediate environment (clutch, brake, gear shift, etc.). In both cases, deliberation is *part* of the overall action — it *is* the action in its intelligently directed aspect. A theory of deliberation articulates the way we fig-

ure out *how* to express affection or *how* to drive a stick-shift. There is nothing “mentalistic” about such a view.

#### IV. Habit and Dramatic Rehearsal

Dramatic rehearsal can be clarified by placing it in the context of Dewey’s treatment of habit and habit-change. Several aspects of Dewey’s theory of habit bear special emphasis here.

The habits that form our characters are horizontal, not focal, in our experience, and are mostly unconscious. This horizon, dominantly constituted by social habits, rethens our dramatic rehearsals. *Social* habits are collective patterns of interpretation (e.g., symbol systems, imaginative structures, beliefs, values, gestures) that precede personal habits. They open up (and conceal) possibilities for living with meaning. Social habits are, as Merleau-Ponty observes, our “stable organs and pre-established circuits.”<sup>15</sup> Dewey’s central purpose is to explore how individual “impulses” are shaped and directed by social habits or “customs.”<sup>16</sup>

This helps to explain how habits comprise the framework of our moral imagination. They constitute our horizon of possibilities for action and enable our intuitive sense of the probable outcomes of projected actions. “Immediate, seemingly instinctive, feeling of the direction and end of various lines of behavior [the “intuitive” element of dramatic rehearsal] is in reality the feeling of habits working below direct consciousness” (MW 14:26). Our imaginative survey of alternative futures is thus a function of our habits marking out a limited range of viable courses of action.<sup>17</sup>

“Habits are arts,” Dewey explains (MW 14:15). Just as the artist’s medium has definite properties and *resists* being given just any sort of form, and the good artist is one whose habits are coordinated with these properties, so our objective environment is recalcitrant. We must strive to assimilate this environment into our habits of action so that our surroundings assist and support us rather than destroying us. However, our habits cannot incorporate the entire environment, especially as this environment is in perpetual flux. Because some dis-

parity between habit and environment is intrinsic to experience, experience is at root problematic, and habits must be plastic, flexible.

An example should help clarify that dramatic rehearsal, functionally understood, is identical to the process of reconstructing frustrated habits. Tragic experiences like the loss of a significant relationship, disease, or injury are graphic examples of how an apparently well-adapted web of habits can almost instantaneously become nightmarish and maladapted. Tragic examples highlight features that are at work in non-tragic transformations of habit.

Imagine that you awaken from an accident to find your right arm (or left, if you are a "southpaw") amputated. A massive cluster of habits has emerged to guide your interactions, habits that incorporate into their very *fabric* the *objective fact* of your right hand being there fully functional. Now this relative equilibrium or harmony with your environment is fractured. You are maladapted to your environment, and no amount of pure personal volition, lamentations, or "if onlys" will change this.

The door knob does not yield to the strivings of a non-existent hand, but the propulsion to turn the knob remains. So with writing, page-turning, phone dialing, waving, and hugging. Your prior habits continue to exert themselves, resulting in agonizing frustration. These habits manifest themselves in desire for the proper functioning of the lost arm.

A new cluster of habits must emerge that will restore fluent interaction. But the prior habits will not simply give way to the new habits; rather, they will themselves ground, motivate, and structure the readjustments. Failure to turn the knob effectively with the lost hand *provokes* us actively to inquire, to search, to grasp for a new mode of acting which will effectively re-establish our capacity for negotiating doorways, typing, writing, and piano playing. This deliberation stimulates our *imagination* of alternative courses of action, say, turning the knob with the other hand, developing a one-handed typing method, or finding piano music for the left hand.

In sum, we have in the past experienced easy negotiation of doorways, etc. We find ourselves, however, in a situation where the sup-

port of our environment is objectively denied. The habit, no longer overtly expressible, lives on in imagination. The amputee imagines the door opening, the typewriter keys responding, the piano playing. These imaginings are not "thoughts" in the usual sense of "pale bloodless abstractions." Rather, they are "charged with the motor urgent force of habit" (MW 14:39).

Thus the central function of imagination is just this transformation of a prior habit into a new one. As Dewey observes:

Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings [i.e., those derived from prior experiences] can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. (LW 10:276)

In fact, the prior habit sets the prospects for future effective action. New habits are imaginative transformations of existing habits, grounded in the propulsive power of the prior habit that lives on in imagination. The new habits incorporate the changed organizational features of the new objective environment. Alternative routes for expression emerge from formerly satisfying routes, so that the very habits which are the source of our current agony and frustration provide the fertile soil for better adapted habits.

This tragic transformation of habit highlights the features of ordinary habit-change, revealing that dramatic rehearsal is exactly this process of reconstructing frustrated habits. This emphasizes that moral thinking is more than armchair application of rules to cases. Moral thinking is imaginative, and imagination "elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual" (LW 10:348). Or, as Alexander explains, imagination is "a creative exploration of *strategies* inherited from past experience which thereby allow[s] the future as a horizon of possible actions, and so of possible meanings, to guide and interpret the present."<sup>18</sup> Now that we have seen the workings of dramatic rehearsal *in concreto*, we can explore some lines along which we might deliberate *better*.



## V. Dramatic Rehearsal and The Moral Artist

Dewey defines a "choice" as "simply hitting in imagination upon an object which furnishes an adequate stimulus to the recovery of overt action. ... Choice...is the emergence of a unified preference out of competing preferences" (MW 14:134). But, as I will discuss, this unified preference might prove malicious. Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, in *Crime and Punishment*, emerges from a long period of deliberation with a unified desire. But dramatically rehearsing an axe murder can hardly be construed as a warranted stimulus to action. Are there, then, any empirically warranted standards of valuation that enable us to discern a praiseworthy line of action from a reprehensible one?

Some philosophers will suppose a leap is being made here from "moral psychology," with its "prudential" concerns, to "moral philosophy." Moral philosophy is presumed to be a rational (and not an empirical) discipline, determining how we *ought* to think and act. How we *do in fact* think and act is a marginal concern for psychologists to address. Consequently, "moral philosophers" have almost entirely ignored moral imagination. I am arguing, however, that we discern how we ought to act in a fundamentally imaginative way. Thus, a moral theory that marginalizes human imagination is irresponsible and, still further, morally reprehensible.

## A. An Experience and the Democratic Ideal

In contrast to a *fixed* moral standard, traditionally centered around imperative duties or possible pleasures, a pragmatic standard or ideal must be a method that has guided us in adapting to past problematic situations, and might, therefore, be helpful in a present one. Dewey, in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, explains how a pragmatic ideal differs from a formula, law, or universal prescription:

We know that some methods of inquiry are better than others in just the same way we know that some methods of surgery, farming,...are better than others. It does not follow in any of these cases that the 'better' methods are ideally

perfect, or that they are regulative or 'normative' because of conformity to some absolute form. They are methods which experience up to the present time shows to be the best methods available for achieving certain results, while abstraction of these methods does supply a (relative) norm or *standard* for further undertakings. (LW 12:108)

What might such a better method of moral inquiry be? Dewey's proposed standard for moral valuation, the "democratic ideal," was very likely influenced by James's essay, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (1891).<sup>19</sup> James encourages a sort of imaginative play over the consequences of various possible actions suggested by a situation, placing the highest value over that option which promises "the richer and more *inclusive* arrangement" (MPML, 208). We must choose an action "that doesn't entangle our progress in frustrations," one that *fits* and adapts us to the empirical situation (PM, 97). This "fit," for James, is attained by acting so as "to satisfy at all times *as many demands as we can*." The best act, then, is that which "makes for the *best whole*, in the sense of awakening the least sum of dissatisfactions" (MPML, 205). James concludes that, because all desires impinging on a situation cannot be satisfied simultaneously, we must pray for victory of those ideals on "the more inclusive side" (205).

Dewey develops James's notion of inclusiveness in the 1908 *Ethics* (and earlier), asking whether there is a good that is satisfying both immediately and long-term. He asserts: "The true good is...an *inclusive* or expanding end" (MW 5:261, my emphasis). The true good, he explains in *Human Nature and Conduct*, is "a working harmony among diverse desires" (MW 14:136). Such a good, he concludes in the 1932 *Ethics*, brings about "an inclusive and enduring satisfaction" (LW 7:308). While we may in fact choose activities that suppress, ossify, divide, and dull our imaginations, we *really* want to pursue activities that will unify our interests and make life more fertile (MW 14:202-3).

Dewey's (relative) standard for intelligent moral action, then,

centers around an inclusive satisfaction, a harmonious unification of a person's "whole system of desires," rather than merely satisfaction of "a particular want in isolation" (LW 7:197). In discussing this "whole system of desires," Dewey sometimes emphasizes the desires of the individual doing the deliberating, and other times emphasizes the "desires" of the whole physical and social situation, the ecological "system." These two emphases are by no means mutually exclusive. I here emphasize the ecological system as more clearly suggesting Dewey's overall moral vision.

A democracy shuns isolation and exclusiveness, and encourages intimacy in relationships. Dewey writes of the democratic ideal that, far more than a form of government, democracy "is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (87).<sup>20</sup> Democracy entails that we each refer our "own action to that of others, and...consider the action of others to give point and direction" to our own (87). A democratic imagination opens up a more expansive field of contact to which we have to respond. This "greater diversity of stimuli" (87) enlarges our vision of competing values that are struggling for recognition. The chance is thus afforded for an integrative value to emerge that will blend and fuse conflicting values so that we may *mutually* grow. Thus dramatic rehearsal must begin in a *social* moral imagination that brings competing tendencies to successful issue.

Consider this in relation to Dewey's notion of an experience. An experience has a coherent *story* to tell, from perplexity to consummation, about a tensive situation. In the moral domain, an experience is intensified and made complete by dealing ecologically with the entire system of pressing desires. The democratic ideal thus embodies consummatory experience as a moral standard. Aesthetic and moral experiences have the same generic pattern, a pattern exemplified by experiences that are emphatically aesthetic. This supports the inference that Dewey's democratic moral standard is personified by an *artist* of morals.

Essentially, as Joseph Kupfer explains, "we judge whether our imaginative projection of alternative futures proceeds in an *aestheti-*

*cally complete way.*"<sup>21</sup> Intelligent deliberation requires that we reach a unified preference or desire for an object (now become determinate) which stimulates action with the transformed quality of "*an* experience."

Most experience lacks this quality. This, Alexander observes, is for Dewey "the human tragedy, for it signifies that most experience is unconsummated in its meaning."<sup>22</sup> Sometimes we are unengaged, undevoted, and bored; plodding along in a confused, horizon-less daze. At other times, we are ecstatically devoted to a future end to the impoverishment of an amplified imagination in present activity. In both cases, our imagination is contracted and our dramatic rehearsals abbreviated. The world has for us very few possibilities. Dewey observes in *Art As Experience* that in such "drifting" experiences "one thing replaces another, but does not absorb it and carry it on. There is experience, but so slack and discursive that it is not an experience" (LW 10:47).

Being moral *demand*s a rich imagination, without which life is barren of prospects for constructive thought and action. The best way to *act* effectively in a situation is to *imagine* effectively. To be moral is to live in an aesthetically funded present.

A conception of the aesthetic is therefore central to the development of an empirically warranted standard for moral valuation. The aesthetic does not merely characterize such activities as writing a poem, and it is not merely a delightful subjective pleasure. The aesthetic emerges not from formalized art, but from patterns or habits of ordinary life. "I have tried to show," Dewey summarizes, "...that the aesthetic is no intruder in experience from without, ... but that it is the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience" (LW 10:52-53). Dewey leaves no doubt that he intends this paradigm to apply to morals. For example, he wrote of *Art as Experience* in 1950 that the "principle of development" from everyday to "artfully developed" subject matter holds for "morals, politics, religion, science, philosophy itself, as well as the fine arts" (LW 16:397).<sup>23</sup>

Intelligent dramatic rehearsals, then, are directed toward con-

summation in *an* experience. This standard is not a mechanical measure, a necessary and sufficient condition of moral value, enabling us to judge conclusively "X is good, Y is bad." Rather, it is the paradigm for consummating and revivifying meaning and value.

#### VI. Some Problems of Moral Aesthetics

I am claiming that Dewey's moral standard, the democratic ideal, is constructively understood in terms of an aesthetically complete dramatic rehearsal. This standard is personified by a "moral artist" whose expansive imagination enables sensitivity to the social bearings and consequences of possible avenues for action. If this is so, then moral theory must become moral aesthetics. Let me anticipate some criticisms of this claim.

##### A. Enlightenment Obstacles

Our enlightenment heritage habituates us to compartmentalize the moral, scientific, and aesthetic. This presents the greatest obstacle to seeing the art of morality, because it leads us to suppose there is something artificial or contrived about understanding morality as an art. For some, this is because morality is seen as the following of moral laws or rules rather than as fundamentally imaginative, while art (*because* it is imaginative) is thought to be a spontaneous outpouring of feeling. For others, art and the aesthetic are thought to be too far removed from ordinary life to shed light on moral complexities. But aesthetic experience is not a pristine flight untarnished by everyday habits. Instead of providing a niche for the aesthetic, and defining "experience" as *conceptual* experience (like Kant), Dewey treats aesthetic experience as paradigmatic<sup>24</sup> of *all* experience.

Note that aesthetic experience is always meaningful, but may be a horrific encounter. It is not merely "pretty," "delightful," or "pleasurable." In the domain of "art" narrowly construed, Wordsworth's "The Daffodils" is delightful; Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is not. Ivan Ilyich's encounter with the inescapable fact of his mortality was aesthetic, but his three days of incessant screaming could hardly

be construed delightful. Our own aesthetic encounter with Tolstoy's story is painful, yet transformative. We feel the moral growth, but this growth is inescapably ridden with dread.<sup>25</sup>

Moral artistry, therefore, is not an idyllic ideal. A working and moral outcome of a problematic situation, although consummatory, might not in any *prototypical* sense be beautiful. When an addict is given a safer synthetic substitute to help curb an addiction to cocaine, this may be moral artistry. Only one immune to tragedy could suppose the moral life to be a series of pretty or delightful objects.

In fact, both our forbearance in the face of tragic events and our perception of the ambiguities of moral judgment are magnified when we recognize that the habits of effective moral deliberation are embodied in an artist of morals. We thereby perceive that the discovery of an integrative value among competing values is no rosy affair. Many schools of morals have taught that human reason is capable of sifting through an *agynant* competition of values to discover the single utopian channel for action that will be mutually satisfactory to all appropriately reflective creatures. Even those whose metaphysics no longer supports the pre-Darwinian assumption of an ideal universe often continue to presuppose an order whereby all "legitimate desires" (those in accord with "duty") can blossom into action simultaneously.

The mediation of intelligence can and must do its utmost to discover a mutually traversable path. But situations arise in which equally "legitimate" desires cannot be simultaneously realized, and no course of action under the sun will allay the slings and arrows of fortune from falling more heavily on some roofs than on others. The theme of unrequited or unconsummated love in poetry and literature serves as a persistent reminder of this tragic existential fact. Indeed, in his own poetry Dewey laments "the woes of fresh made hells" that arise when we must be satisfied not with fulfilled aspirations, but with bitersweet memories.<sup>26</sup>

One further obstacle must be cleared. To say that morality is dramatic and aesthetic is not to collapse the moral into the aesthetic. Moral experience is, as Dewey says in *Art As Experience*, "dominantly different" (LW 10:44) from aesthetic experience, in that it is more

distinctively “practical” than “emotional.” Moral experiences are guided throughout by very different purposes and interests than guide emphatically aesthetic experiences. They follow the same generic pattern, but they differ in their *materials*.

We must be wary of being taken in by the clarities that reflection brings. *An* experience *as lived* is “neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual.” But reflection may find that “one property rather than another was sufficiently dominant so that it characterizes the experience as a whole” (LW 10:44). In “final import,” Enrico Fermi’s experiment on fission was intellectual. But in its “actual occurrence” it was “emotional as well” (LW 10:44). In fact, moral, scientific, and artistic thinking have “the same extent” of “emotionalized thinking” (LW 10:80). The scientist simply feels this qualitative field with less immediacy than does the artist.

The aesthetic concerns more than subjective feeling. Hence, I am not suggesting that a subjective state of mind (a mistaken notion of the aesthetic), rather than an effective adaptation of and to envionring conditions, is a standard for moral action. I propose simply that an inclusive and therefore more developed consummatory quality characterizes actions where we have striven toward a democratic ideal. Action along these lines *tends*, when put to the test, to “work” to bring about determinate, desirable changes in the world. And our imaginative capacity is our primary tool for tapping into possible working outcomes of action.

Ethical thought is pervasively aesthetic, but it does not typically lead to a *distinctively* aesthetic result. The aesthetic and moral are irreducibly interlacing domains. Consequently, insofar as we isolate the aesthetic from the moral by educating habits of moral law-following or means-ends calculation, rather than nurturing habits of a refined moral imagination, we become alienated from the urgency and richness of the moral life.

#### B. The Problem of Aestheticism

Another pivotal problem stems from throwing an experience and the democratic ideal into the same pot — an aesthetic ideal on the

one hand, and a moral, political, and educational ideal on the other. The problem is that even a poor moral decision can have aesthetic quality. This is the reason we are often taken in by our poor moral judgments. Dewey alludes to the issue in *Art As Experience*: “There is interest in completing an experience. The experience may be one that is harmful to the world and its consummation undesirable. But it has esthetic quality” (LW 10:46). The dramatic rehearsals of Napoleon or Caesar, Dewey observes, may have aesthetic quality, while stifling the desires of all but the state. Dewey implies that Caesar’s *moral* experience was *an* experience, and yet was immoral. It is clear, at least, that one cannot simply equate being moral with having *an* experience.

Consider Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. Here we encounter the deliberative process of a man about to commit a brutal murder. Why, Raskolnikov asks, should this worthless pawn-broker go on living when her murder would very *effectively* eliminate her future pettiness? By imaginatively rehearsing her murder, Raskolnikov is seeking to deal with conflicting tendencies in a problematic situation. He becomes obsessed with this line of action, and is finally stimulated to act.

Raskolnikov was confronted with a problem, he deliberated on the best course for dealing with it, and his choice was accompanied by the “esthetic stamp” of the rational sentiment. So, does a Deweyan moral theory ultimately collapse into radical relativism and aestheticism, putting Raskolnikov’s consummated experience on a par with any other? Does Dewey fall prey to Kierkegaard’s portrayal in *Either/Or* of “A,” the aesthete? At the very least, it is *prima facie* clear that murder is not a method that has proven effective for promoting social cohesion, so we may be forced to conclude that *an* experience and the democratic ideal are at odds with one another.

Julius Caesar, in his *Commentaries* on the Gallic Wars, records how hundreds of thousands of Gauls were slaughtered in the name of Rome. In a sense, Caesar dealt very “effectively” with a problematic situation—the dealt with a system of desires by brutally eliminating the troubling ones. Caesar plainly knew the value of weaving a com-

plete tapestry that would not unravel to cause future problems. His experience was consummated through the "pacification" of the Gauls, and it surely had some aesthetic quality. As a result, 200 years of relative peace were bestowed upon Gaul and the Roman borders were secured.

The pragmatic theory of truth as "workability" is commonly criticized in just this way. Thus Paul Carus writes in *Truth On Trial*, his polemical response to James's *Pragmatism*:

Was not the night of Bartholomew a success? ... Was not the Reformation suppressed by foul means in Bohemia, when at the time of the Hussite movement it seemed to be lost to the Church? Must we be reconciled to a pragmatic policy of this kind because it works within certain limits? It certainly paid those who acted upon this pragmatic conception of truth.<sup>27</sup>

The misunderstanding in these examples is, of course, a familiar sheep in wolf's clothing. It is a misunderstanding of means and ends in the pragmatic theory of belief, such as we find in the colloquial use of "pragmatic" as synonymous with "opportunistic." Although it is well known that the sense of "effective," "productive," "fruitful," etc. used by pragmatism concerns more than attainment of a pre-fixed end, it is essential here to investigate exactly what this entails for *moral* deliberation.

To be sure, Caesar was aware of the threat to his established goals of Roman border extension, acquisition of fertile land, and personal glory if he did not "deal" with the competing desires at hand. But Caesar's moral tapestry was woven of exclusively Roman (and Caesarian) strands. Thus Caesar was blind to creative possibilities, to the way his own desires and ends might be reconstructed in order better to co-exist with the Gauls.

Caesar dealt with conflicting tendencies and followed a problem through to its consummation. But the experience was incomplete and under-developed. He did not project himself into the stand-

point of the Gauls to discover alternative paths. Likewise, because Raskolnikov's conduct, like Caesar's, was not inclusive in an expansive and comprehensive sense, that is, because he did not strive to coordinate his own ends with those of others, the degree of consummation was relatively slight.

Neither Raskolnikov's nor Caesar's immorality is attributable merely to missing out on the satisfaction of loving others. Although such satisfaction is intrinsically valuable and is crucial to morality, we surely do not think: "Poor Caesar — his heart was not filled with aesthetic richness!" He was immoral because of the *effects* of his undemocratic and poorly consummated moral deliberation. I am proposing, then, that the best method available for acting toward social good is the path of a moral artist who *risks* striving toward a democratic ideal. This method works so well because the aesthetic, far from being subjective, emerges through fluidity of *interaction*. The aesthetic, I have said, is the opening up of latent possibilities for growth, meaning, and fruitful action. And these possibilities will escape our notice unless we strive toward a democratic ideal by taking up the role of the other.

It should be apparent now that whatever is aesthetic is *not ipso facto* good. Reading Dostoevsky, for example, can be a very intense aesthetic experience, placing us at risk of having to change our world-views. Reading a Harlequin Romance, meanwhile, may have a certain aesthetic intensity, but is unlikely to provoke any significant reconstruction of experience.

Caesar's experience likewise lacked depth. He did not become immersed in events in a way that put his ends at *risk* of modification. Caesar committed the ultimate act of violence: he eliminated that which would put his beliefs at risk. In changing objective conditions, we must transform our ends and modify our habits as directed by the situation.

*Any* decision that resolves a state of doubt has some aesthetic quality. But poor moral decisions lack an "inclusive and enduring satisfaction." A reasonable moral decision involves a shared and therefore more developed and intensified consummatory quality — more

significant because it deals sensitively with desires that demand attention rather than stifling them. Failure to deal with these desires in our precarious world may have monumental consequences for self and others. Needless to say, many moral decisions are relatively fleeting in their consummations. And fleeting satisfaction *alone* is not what anyone *really* wants.

An aesthetically complete dramatic rehearsal strives to weave the interlacing values of a situation into a tapestry that will persist and grow. Hence, we must imagine ways in which others' lives can meaningfully develop alongside our own. As Dewey observes in *Democracy and Education*, "the moral and the social quality of conduct are, in the last analysis, identical with each other" (358).

There is seldom a single, determinate right course of action, nor is there a set of circumscribing conditions that can be solidified into an overarching rule for conduct. But there are certain methods that have proven effective in adapting us to our physical and social environments. Paying attention to the aesthetics of morality helps to disclose such methods.

#### VI. Morality As Art and Dramatic Rehearsal

By claiming that the democratic ideal is best personified by a "moral artist," I am implicitly pursuing the hypothesis that morality is fruitfully understood metaphorically as art. In this final section I briefly explore this metaphor and allude to what it means to be an artist of the moral life.

Art is here conceived not along the lines of Romanticism's spurts of creativity, but along Deweyan lines as social communication through refined interactive skills. Inquiry into the nature of artistic production, experience, and evaluation is revelatory of any meaningful and valuable experience. Art *is* experience clarified and intensified. "Es-  
thetic experience," Dewey observes, "is experience in its integrity" (LW 10:278). We can thus fruitfully understand moral experience metaphorically as art. The lesson, indeed, the "*moral*" of the fine arts is that other domains of experience could *potentially* be as richly

intensified and developed.

In *Love's Knowledge*, Martha Nussbaum observes that moral knowledge entails "seeing a complex, concrete reality in a highly lucid and richly responsive way; it is taking in what is there, with imagination and feeling."<sup>28</sup> Morality, she argues, is far more a matter of finely textured sensitivity and immersion in situations than mere following of laws or rules.

To be moral is to sense and feel one's way through a tangled web of relationships with a discerning eye for possible paths of interaction through which this web may be artfully woven. Artists exemplify this pattern of sensitivity toward the world fused with a capacity for orchestrating disarrayed features into coherent wholes, and it is especially for this that we esteem them. Artists disclose possibilities for us that might otherwise escape notice.

A highly abbreviated analysis of the metaphor "MORALITY AS ART" reveals that the moral thinker's imaginative rehearsal of prospects for constructive action can be understood in terms of the artist's imaginative perception and exploration of the potentialities of the medium. The competing values that press for our attention can be understood in terms of the recalcitrance of the artistic medium. Meanwhile, the empathetic imagination of the moral agent can be understood in terms of the imaginative projection by the artist of an audience, a projection that enables a dialectical interaction that gives point and focus to art.

Good art gives coherent (clarified and developed) form to the structures or habits of ordinary human action, thought, and feeling. The moral artist must be equally sensitive to these structures. The artist must have a "dilated" eye (to borrow Emerson's metaphor)<sup>29</sup> — an enlarged and amplified receptivity to the patterns of everyday life and to the possibilities of the present moment. Just so with the moral thinker. We fail morally primarily because, like Raskolnikov or Caesar, our range of creative prospects for physical, cultural, and interpersonal interaction becomes contracted.

Understanding the moral agent as an artist is supported by the nature of our best everyday decisions. Our wisest deliberations are

aesthetic through and through, characterized by perception and inquiry, expressiveness, creativeness, and skill. Exploring artistic production, experience, and evaluation discloses this aesthetic dimension of morality, revealing that morality *could* be as richly developed.

#### VII. Conclusion

Dewey's theory of deliberation as dramatic rehearsal provides a framework for further inquiry into our social moral imaginations. This treatment of imagination can be clarified by empirical studies of how we concretely tap into or project ourselves into a situation's latent creative possibilities. Some recent work in cognitive science is helping to illuminate this process by highlighting the role of *metaphor* in deliberation. A growing body of evidence reveals that metaphor is central to human understanding, and that metaphorical structure is grounded in our embodied activity. Metaphors are "habits" that emerge through our transactions as structured modes of understanding and adapting to our environments.<sup>31</sup>

Mark Johnson has recently argued in *Moral Imagination* that metaphor is "the locus of our imaginative exploration of possibilities for action."<sup>32</sup> That is, possible alternative courses for thought and action emerge for us because the metaphor(s) through which we conceptualize a situation lends itself to these courses. Hence, our possible avenues for moral action are guided by the metaphors we live by.<sup>33</sup>

A vast project for moral theory thus beckons us. We must explore the metaphors that guide our dramatic rehearsals this way rather than that (i.e., the metaphors we use to frame situations), and we must also explore the metaphorical structure of our shared moral understanding (i.e., the metaphors that define our basic moral concepts). Further, we must explore alternative metaphors for morality itself, such as the metaphor of morality as art.

Our poorer moral deliberations are not unreasonable *a priori*, but rather because we fail to be good moral artists. We may fail to weave an integrated tapestry, or, equally likely, leave an initially tangled

situation in everlasting knots.

Morality is not a mere matter of following criteria for choosing the single "right" action. It is primarily a matter of cultivating habits of refined moral sensitivity, discernment, and perception — habits analogous to those of an artist. A moral theory developed along the lines of moral artistry alludes to the kinds of habits we should strive for as intelligent and irreducibly social organisms who "have a world" aesthetically.<sup>34</sup>

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#### NOTES

Unless noted otherwise, Dewey citations are from *The Collected Works*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (SIU Press), indicated by series (EW for *Early Works*, MW for *Middle Works*, and LW for *Later Works*), volume, and page number.

1. As examples of this shift in focus, I have in mind such works as Charles Taylor's "The Diversity of Goods" in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*, Bernard Williams' *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Nussbaum's *Fragility of Goodness* and *Love's Knowledge*, MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Mark Johnson's *Moral Imagination*, and Owen Flanagan's *Virtues of Moral Personality*.

2. Dramatic rehearsal has not been entirely ignored. See, for example, James Gouinlock, *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value* (Humanities Press, 1972), 302-4. Also see Joseph Kupfer, *Experience As Art* (SUNY Press, 1983), 141-70. Another good discussion is Victor Kestenbaum's preface to *Theory of the Moral Life* (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1980), xvii-xviii. A surface exposition of the subject can be found in William R. Caspary, "Ethical Deliberation as Dramatic Rehearsal: John Dewey's Theory" in *Educational Theory* 41, no. 2 (1991), 175-188. For a more recent treatment, see Thomas Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rory toward a Postmodern Ethics" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 29, no. 3 (1993), 369-400. A number of people outside of philosophy, like Erving Goffman and Robert Coles, have worked on dramatic rehearsal. See Robert

Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

3. Recent work in cognitive science discloses the operations of such social habits as conventional metaphors and categorization principles. See George Lakoff's *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (University of Chicago Press, 1987) and Mark Johnson's *The Body In The Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1987). These offer sustained treatments of the irreducibly social nature of human imagination, meaning, and reason. In the American tradition, Mead develops the idea that imagination is a result of social action which is internalized. In "The Social Self," *Selected Writings* (University of Chicago Press, 1964), Mead writes that "the mechanism of thought, insofar as thought uses symbols which are used in social intercourse, is but an inner conversation" (146). For Mead as for Dewey, imagination begins with communicative social interaction. Cf. Thomas Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience & Nature* (SUNY Press, 1987), esp. 148 ff.
4. I owe this phraseology to Joseph Kupfer, *Experience As Art* (SUNY Press, 1983), 142.
5. This aspect of imagination is explored by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975). Genuine "understanding," which is the consummating phase of the "logic of question and doubt," is essentially a "fusion of horizons." In this way, past "prejudices" are transformed into new ones. See, e.g., 273-4.
6. For a discussion of the "aesthetics of moral intelligence," especially in relation to aesthetics proper, see *John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Moral Intelligence*, by David I. Seiple, Columbia University Doctoral Dissertation, 1993.
7. Kestenbaum, preface to *Theory of the Moral Life*, xvii.
8. We may note in passing that contemporary philosophers who discuss the "narrative unity" of experience, such as Ricoeur and MacIntyre, have little in the way of a clearly articulated "mechanism" for simulating the change from old to new habits. Pragmatism offers a framework for this.
9. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1903; New York: Mentor, 1958), 186.
10. Critics and admirers alike sometimes take Dewey's instrumentalism as a master plan for ready-made problems, forgetting that ends become

determinate through deliberation within an indeterminate situation.

11. In *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Indiana University Press, 1993), Joseph Brent discusses Peirce on habits and thought experiments. He maintains: "Beginning with a suggestion from Berkeley's work on vision, Peirce conceived the possibility of forming habits from imaginary practice....He claimed that by exercising the imagination, we can visualize the occurrence of a stimulus and mentally rehears the results of different responses. That which appears most satisfactory will influence actual behavior as effectively as a habit produced by reiteration in the outside world" (45).
12. This is discussed under the heading "Deliberation as Dramatic Rehearsal" in the 1908 *Ethics* (MW 5:292). It should be noted that Dewey did not alter his 1908 description of dramatic rehearsal for his 1932 rewrite of the *Ethics*. This supports an important claim made by Edel and Flower in their introduction to the 1932 *Ethics*. They observe that, although many notable changes occur, "the analysis of conduct and its psychological background, which is central to the 1932 *Ethics*, has not changed from the 1908 *Ethics*" (LW 7:ix).
13. Alexander observes: "imagination is temporally complex, an operation in the present, establishing continuity with the past, anticipating the future, so that a continuous process of activity may unfold in the most meaningful and value-rich way possible" (*Transactions* 29, no. 3 (1993), 386).
14. See Thelma Levine's introduction to the critical edition of *Knowing and the Known* (LW 16) for an excellent treatment of this work in the context of Dewey's corpus.
15. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, tr. Colin Smith (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1962), 87. Quoted in Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience & Nature*, 143.
16. Gadamer's concept of "prejudice" is similar to this. In *Truth and Method*, he writes: "A hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see" (272).
17. Dewey observes that "the more numerous our habits the wider the field of possible observation and foretelling. The more flexible they are, the more refined is perception in its discrimination and the more delicate the presentation evoked by imagination" (MW 14:123).
18. Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination," 371.



19. In *The Will to Believe* (1987, New York: Dover, 1956), 184.
215. The basic ideas in James's essay appear in Dewey's 1894 *Syllabus on Ethics*.
20. Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1916).
21. Kupfer, *Experience As Art*, 142.
22. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature*, 198.
23. Dewey discusses the aesthetics of ordinary decision making in *Art As Experience*. With the example of a job interview, he shows how our imaginative projection of consequences and ends are aesthetically guided: "The employer sees by means of his own emotional reactions the character of the one applying. He projects him imaginatively into the work to be done and judges his fitness by the way in which the elements of the scene assemble and either clash or fit together. The presence and behavior of the applicant either harmonize with his own attitudes and desires or they conflict and jar. Such factors as these, inherently esthetic in quality, are the forces that carry the varied elements of the interview to a decisive issue. They enter into the settlement of every situation, whatever its dominant nature, in which there are uncertainty and suspense" (LW 10:50).
24. There is a controversy current among Dewey scholars as to whether Dewey's theory of inquiry should be approached primarily by way of his aesthetic theory or whether Dewey's aesthetic theory should be approached primarily by way of his theory of inquiry. I do not see the two views as incompatible. In fact, I have striven to show that Dewey's aesthetic theory and his theory of inquiry are fused together in his theory of deliberation. On the one hand, I have argued that dramatic rehearsal is not only Dewey's theory of moral deliberation but is also his theory of reflective thinking or intelligence as such. Dramatic rehearsal, therefore, may legitimately be seen as a key to Dewey's theory of inquiry. On the other hand, I have argued that the most important aspect of dramatic rehearsal is the aesthetic opening of awareness of a situation's latent possibilities for growth and meaning.
25. Dewey writes: "For 'taking in' in any vital experience is something more than placing something on top of consciousness over what was previously known. It involves reconstruction which may be painful. Whether
- the necessary undergoing phase is by itself pleasurable or painful is a matter of particular conditions. It is indifferent to the total esthetic quality, save that there are few intense esthetic experiences that are wholly gleeful" (LW 10:48).
26. In his review, in *The Philosophical Review* 43 (1934), of Dewey's 1932 *Ethics*, Dewitt H. Parker speaks of "one great defect" of the book: "an insufficient sense for the tragic in moral conflicts, with the related absence of any appreciation of the bearing of religion and art (except historically) on ethical problems (525). In contrast, I have tried to show that Dewey proposes an *aesthetic* standard for valuing one line of action over another, especially valuable in cases where ends of desire *conflict* and cannot be carried into overt action simultaneously.
27. Carus, *Truth On Trial* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1911), 7.
28. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1991), 152. Cf. Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, 210-11. Alexander observes, however, that "while Nussbaum seems caught in something closely resembling an ethics of sympathy, vaguely urging us to act so long as we feel for the other, Dewey has a robust theory of experimental, moral conduct, conflict resolution, and the pluralistic, integrative ideals of the democratic life" ("John Dewey and the Moral Imagination," 395).
29. The metaphors of "dilation," "contraction" and the "horizon" of the "eye" are widely used by Emerson. (For "dilation," see e.g., "Nature," 193, 204 in *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Signet Classic edition.) A dilated mind's "eye" has an enlarged receptivity to ideas, feelings, and sentiments latent in a situation just as a dilated pupil has an enlarged receptivity to light. The mind's eye dilates in order to integrate the creative possibilities of the present moment.
30. Cf. Johnson's *Moral Imagination*, 210-15, for his use of these categories to treat the MORALITY AS ART metaphor.
31. For a treatment of metaphorical structure from the standpoint of Dewey's conception of habit and experience, see Steven Fesmire, "What Is 'Cognitive' About Cognitive Linguistics?" *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 9, no. 2 (1994).
32. Johnson, *Moral Imagination*, 35. For a discussion of Johnson's "cognitive semantics" in relation to Dewey, see Johnson's "Knowing Through

the *Body*," *Philosophical Psychology*, 4, no. 1 (1991), 7-8.

33. In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey shows, albeit briefly, how metaphors can constrain and guide our moral deliberations, in an analysis of utilitarian deliberation as calculation of profit and loss. The metaphor he analyzes involves understanding our moral "deliberation upon what purposes to form" in terms of "business calculation of profit and loss" (MW 14: 148-49).

34. I wish to express my gratitude to Thomas Alexander for his encouragement and suggestions throughout the long development of this article; to Mark Johnson for nudging me toward viewing morality metaphorically as art; to Joe Betz for his sincere and challenging commentary on an earlier portion of this work presented to SAAP; to Larry Hickman and Lyle Eddy for their helpful feedback; to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale graduate philosophy students for their helpful comments at a departmental forum; and to Chris Fleege and Heather Keith for our engrossing conversations of imaginative sensitivity in moral conduct.

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*Michael J. Mc Gandy*

## John William Miller's Metaphysics of Democracy

A Nation announcing itself,  
I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated,  
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce them all in my own forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,  
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to objections,  
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,  
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,  
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the variety of ourselves,  
We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves.

— Walt Whitman, "By Blue Ontario's Shore"

Like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, John William Miller insists upon seeing the United States as a nation whose character is radically unique. Whereas the peoples of Europe are seen as politically burdened by their long history and philosophically impeded by their tradition of dogmatic metaphysics, America is considered to be unique in its ability to reorient itself with regard to those constraining structures. This ability allows the people of America to be a responsible force in history rather than passively constructed by the forces of history. It is in this New World and within its democratic ethos, all three contend, that we are not subject to a fate but are responsible for our own fate. As such, the American spirit exalts self-creative and responsible activity while looking askance upon tradi-